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ABOUT THE COVER



Stance 14's cover pictures a person walking over a threshold and through a doorframe as thought-smoke emerges from their mind. The cover represents the idea of entering into a space to think, be that a literal or mental space. We hope to show that anyone can participate in philosophy and that this journal can encourage conversations, through the representation of ideas presented, as one steps into a new perspective or dimension. Everyone published within this journal has contributed to the spread of new ideas, just as the doorframe provides an entrance into these thoughts. The person on the front cover could be anyone as they step into the contents of *Stance*.

The color purple has been incorporated into this year's edition because it is an abstract color that represents creativity and is not decisively tied to emotion or gender. This further follows the idea that anyone with any opinion can be a philosopher.

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dreamstime

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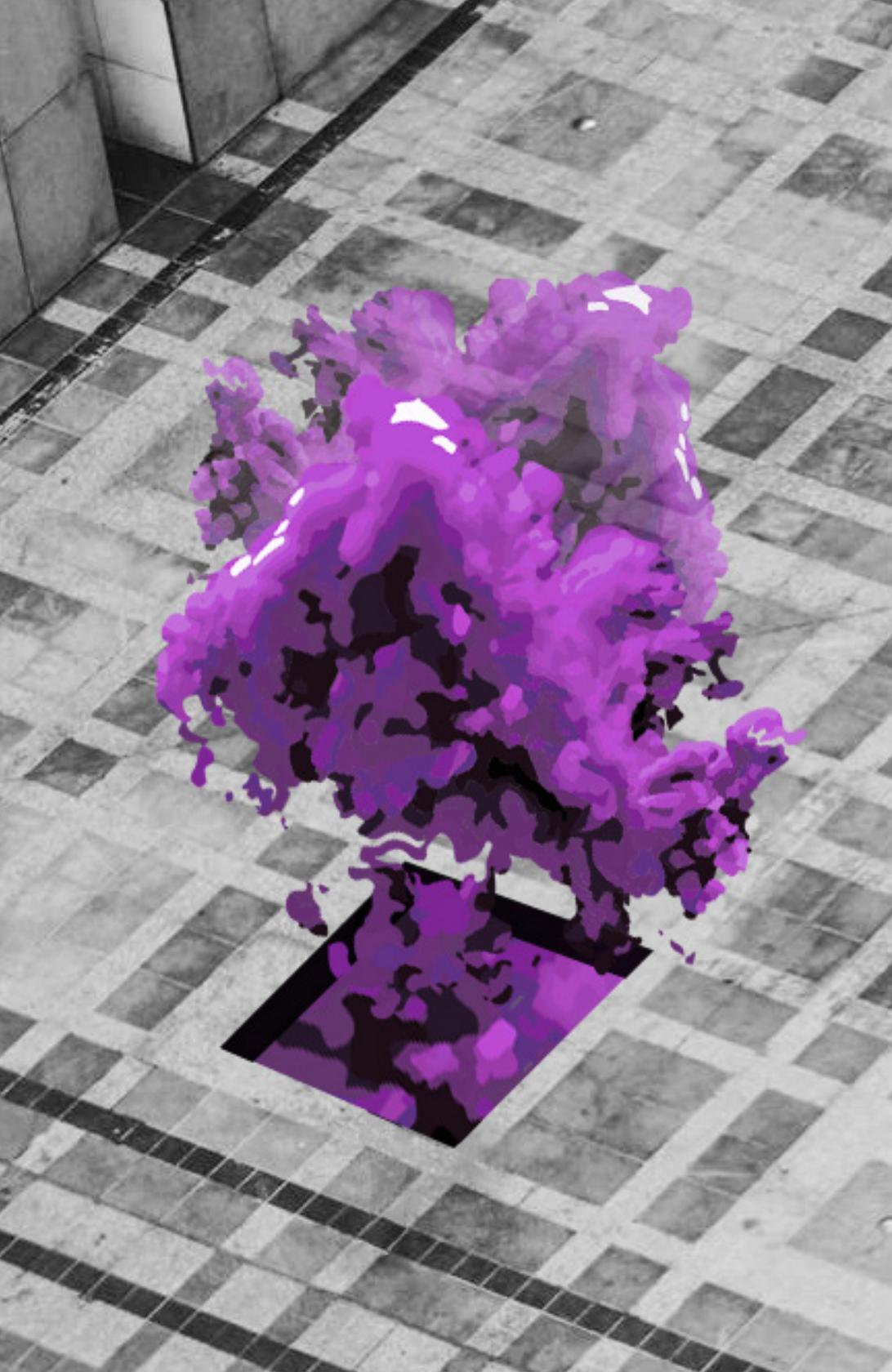
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Stance staff members attend the conference and select one or two papers to consider for publication. We are grateful to the University of Louisville Philosophy Department for their support of our partnership and especially to Steven Humphrey for his gracious hospitality. We look forward to the enduring exchange of ideas fostered by this partnership between *Stance* and the Humphrey Colloquium.

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THE PLATE IS POLITICAL:
A Foucauldian Analysis of
Anorexia Nervosa



GRACE WEBER

ABSTRACT

In this paper, I investigate why anorexia nervosa emerged in non-Western nations after Western globalization efforts. Using Simone de Beauvoir's theory of gender from *The Second Sex* alongside Michel Foucault's conceptualization of the "docile body," I argue that the emergence of anorexia nervosa in non-Western nations reflects the Western sovereign's subordination of women. While patriarchal oppression is not exclusive to the West, I contend that the political ideology behind Western industrialization has allowed new avenues for patriarchal oppression to permeate. To conclude, I demand that mainstream discourse on anorexia nervosa consider the political conditions which are catalytic to its occurrence.



I. INTRODUCTION

In Apple's 1991 hit song, "Paper Bag," she melancholically declares that "hunger hurts but starving works."¹ Nearly two decades later, these five words flooded "pro-anorexia" blogs. Truthfully, I had never heard of Fiona Apple nor listened to her music when I first read those lyrics on a pro-anorexia blog back in 2011. While I am not qualified to speak on behalf of Apple's intent behind "Paper Bag," I am qualified to discuss the false sense of power by which many anorexics become disillusioned. This is by no means a unique qualification. Currently, it is estimated that at least 9% of the global population suffers from an eating disorder.² Despite this concerning figure, the global prevalence of eating disorders is increasing rapidly.³ While anyone can fall victim to an eating disorder's wrath, the deadliest disorder—anorexia nervosa—overwhelmingly occurs in adolescent females at three times the rate of their male counterparts.⁴ Additionally, the instances of anorexia nervosa in women are continually increasing, while the instances in men remain steady.⁵ An ongoing American study has revealed that the gender gap between the adolescents who experience anorexia nervosa has consistently widened over the past fifty years, because more women continue to develop the disease.⁶ Evidence highlighting the rising rates of anorexia nervosa in women is not limited to the United States. From the 1970s onward, the global rate of anorexia nervosa in adolescent girls has been consistently climbing within non-Western countries that are exposed to Western influence alongside globalization and industrialization.⁷ The emergence of anorexia nervosa in non-Western countries after exposure to Western culture raises a critical question: why does exposure to Western culture lead young women to starve themselves? In this paper, I will answer this

1 Fiona Apple, "Paper Bag," track 5 on *When the Pawn...*, Epic Records, 1999, compact disc.

2 M. Galmiche et al., "Prevalence of Eating Disorders over the 2000-2018 Period: A Systematic Literature Review," *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 109, no. 5 (2019): 1402-13, 10.1093/ajcn/nqy342.

3 Frédérique R. E. Smink, Daphne van Hoeken, and Hans W. Hoek, "Epidemiology of Eating Disorders: Incidence, Prevalence and Mortality Rates," *Current Psychiatry Reports* 14, no. 4 (2012): 406, 10.1007/s11920-012-0282-y.

4 Anna Keski-Rahkonen et al., "Epidemiology and Course of Anorexia Nervosa in the Community," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 164, no. 8 (2007): 10.1176/appi.ajp.2007.06081388.

5 Alexander R. Lucas et al., "The Ups and Downs of Anorexia Nervosa," *International Journal of Eating Disorders* 26, no. 4 (1999): 397, 10.1002/(sici)1098-108x(199912)26:4<397::aid-eat5>3.0.co;2-0.

6 Lucas et al., "Ups and Downs," 397.

7 Kathleen M. Pike and Patricia E. Dunne, "The Rise of Eating Disorders in Asia: A Review," *International Journal of Eating Disorders* 3, no. 33 (2015): 2, 10.1186/s40337-015-0070-2.

question by applying the work of Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* alongside Michel Foucault's theory of the "docile body" from *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* to form the argument that anorexia nervosa is unique to Western culture because of the West's privatization of punishment coupled with its individualization of discipline.⁸ Thus, the existence of patriarchal social constructions of gender alongside the West's creation of the "docile body" has bred new avenues for oppression to express itself.⁹

To substantiate my claim, I first provide the reader with context regarding the current debates about the cause of anorexia nervosa. Within these debates, I will underscore the tendency of medical professionals to view gender as secondary to culture instead of as a byproduct of culture. Second, I use Beauvoir's commentary on the influence gender has on one's lived experiences to demonstrate that it is a social construction. Third, I affirm the theory that anorexia nervosa is a product of Western culture by connecting Beauvoir's idea that gender is a social construct to Foucault's argument that the contemporary Western sovereign relies on individuals to discipline themselves. Fourth, I use the synthesis between Beauvoir and Foucault to establish that anorexia nervosa is political. And finally, I highlight the dangers of framing anorexia nervosa as a strictly personal ailment.

II. THE WESTERN PLAGUE

In the 1980s, scholars were baffled by the rapid emergence of eating disorders across newly industrialized non-Western nations. Up until the 1970s, eating disorders were non-existent outside of the Western world.¹⁰ Previously, Western scholars had debated whether the causes of eating disorders were psychological or biological, but the data showing that eating disorders subsequently emerged alongside globalization efforts led others to question if eating disorders were neither psychological nor biological, but instead cultural. In 1985, psychiatrist Raymond Prince hypothesized that anorexia nervosa is a "culture-bound syndrome (CBS),"¹¹ which he defined as, "a collection of signs and symptoms which is restricted to a limited number of cultures primarily by reason of certain of their psychosocial features."¹²

8 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Random House US, 2012), 135.

9 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 135.

10 Pike and Dunne, "Rise of Eating Disorders," 2.

11 Raymond Prince, "The Concept of Culture-Bound Syndromes: Anorexia Nervosa and Brain-fag," *Social Science and Medicine* 21, no. 2 (1985): 197, 10.1016/0277-9536(85)90089-9.

12 Raymond Prince and Francoise Tchong-Laroche, "Culture-Bound Syndromes and International Disease Classifications," *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* 11, no. 1 (1987): 3, 10.1007/BF00055003.



With this definition, Prince argued that anorexia nervosa is a CBS precisely because of its presence in Western, industrialized societies and absence in non-Western cultures.¹³ Prince thus attributed anorexia nervosa's rise in non-Western countries to the countries' newfound contact with Western culture.¹⁴ While Prince drew attention to Western culture's ability to manifest anorexia nervosa, his proposed criteria to validate anorexia nervosa's CBS status excludes the group it primarily affects: women. In his article, "Culture-bound Syndromes and International Disease Classifications," Prince outlines the parameters in which CBS status may be applied to an illness, stating that, "epidemiological features ... such as global prevalence or age/sex differentials of those affected should not be used as basis of CBS status."¹⁵ I find Prince's criteria ironic, considering that he also acknowledges that beauty standards exclusive to Western culture have a detrimental impact on women's self-esteem often responsible for the development of eating disorders.¹⁶ How is it plausible to separate the influence of Western culture from its impact on groups of people? Is it not culture that creates epidemiological distinctions?

In my view, Prince's attempt to draw a distinction between the Western ideal of thinness from the people it targets is an act of erasure. Given that 90% of those experiencing anorexia nervosa are female,¹⁷ gender cannot be reduced to a simple "epidemiological factor."¹⁸ To do so ignores the notion that gender is created and defined by culture. Western beauty standards are avenues for gender roles to assert themselves but are not primarily responsible for oppressive gender roles. Beauty standards cannot exist without the construction of gender. If gender did not exist, then the beauty ideal would have no subject to penetrate. And here lies the fundamental problem I have with mainstream discourse over anorexia nervosa: the reduction of gender to a neutral chromosomal factor pathologizes the sufferer and not the culture which led them to suffer; this perpetuates anorexia nervosa's prevalence. Understanding the social construct of gender is necessary to view Western media as gender's reinforcer. To prevent anorexia

13 Wioleta Polinska, "Bodies under Siege: Eating Disorders and Self-Mutilation among Women," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 68, no. 3 (2000): 572, 10.1093/jaarel/68.3.569.

14 Polinska, "Bodies under Siege," 572.

15 Prince and Tchong-Laroche, "Culture-Bound Syndromes," 3.

16 Prince, "Concept of Culture-Bound Syndromes," 199.

17 Columbia University, "Anorexia Nervosa," Columbia, Columbia University Department of Psychiatry, last modified 2020, <https://www.columbia.edu/psychiatry/research-clinics/eating-disorders-clinic/about-eating-disorders/anorexia-nervosa#:~:text=While%20many%20different%20types%20of%20people%20may%20have,adulthood%2C%20though%20onset%20may%20occur%20earlier%20or%20later>.

18 Prince and Tchong-Laroche, "Culture-Bound Syndromes," 3.

nervosa, the relationship between gender and the West's unique reinforcement of gender must be understood as political, not personal.

III. THE BODY AS A BATTLEGROUND

Beauvoir famously wrote, "One is not born, but rather becomes, woman."¹⁹ For Beauvoir, the word, "Woman," extends beyond the chromosomal category; instead, the status of "Woman" is relative to her negation of "Man." Because Woman is defined by her relationship to Man, Beauvoir writes that "She is the Other."²⁰ Woman's status as Man's "Inessential Other" determines her movement in the world which surrounds her.²¹ Thus, the definitive characteristic of a Woman for Beauvoir is not biological, but the political status given and assumed by those who negate Man's authority to define and govern the virtue of humanity. The process of becoming Man's Other does not begin until puberty. In childhood, Beauvoir argues that children fail to recognize sexual difference since both girls and boys use their bodies as "the instrument that brings about comprehension of the world."²² Further, Beauvoir notes that both the boy and girl "apprehend the universe through their eyes and hands, and not through their sexual parts."²³ This fact is instrumental to refute Prince's classification of gender as an "epidemiological factor."²⁴ And while it is true that male and female bodies carry anatomical differences, these differences are not inherently meaningful unless society gives them meaning. The problem is when anatomical differences are weaponized to assign the category of Woman against one's own will. In other words, if Western society did not weaponize sexual differentiation to assign identity, then Prince's decision to exclude gender from basing CBS status would be valid. But since Western culture does weaponize sexual differentiation, it is necessary to analyze the political ramifications of sexual differentiation in Western culture.

In childhood, girls may notice differential treatment compared to their male peers, but these differences do not solidify until puberty. In addition to 90% of anorexics identifying as women,²⁵ it is not a coincidence that the average age of onset for anorexia nervosa is

19 Simone de Beauvoir and Constance Capisto-Borde, *The Second Sex* (New York: Vintage Books, 2011), 283.

20 Beauvoir and Capisto-Borde, *Second Sex*, 6.

21 Beauvoir and Capisto-Borde, *Second Sex*, 6.

22 Beauvoir and Capisto-Borde, *Second Sex*, 283.

23 Beauvoir and Capisto-Borde, *Second Sex*, 283.

24 Prince and Tcheng-Laroche, "Culture-Bound Syndromes," 3.

25 Columbia University, "Anorexia Nervosa."



eighteen.²⁶ Beauvoir notes that when the girl begins puberty, her body transforms “into a screen between the woman and the world.”²⁷ If Man and his body represent humanity, Woman and her changing flesh are thus inhuman, alien. Whether or not the child consents to the gendered identity assigned to their changing anatomy, the process persists. Puberty marks the solidification of Woman as Man’s Other, not because her flesh is inherently inferior, but because she is thereby unable to escape how others perceive her. According to Beauvoir, “she becomes a stranger to herself because she is a stranger to the rest of the world.”²⁸ The feeling of estrangement that engulfs the pubescent girl as she observes the public, cultural perception of her flesh is immutable.

During this tumultuous transitory state, adolescent girls may attempt to confront or accept the looming threat of imminence associated with their changing body. Adolescence, for the girl then, is articulated by Beauvoir as, “the divorce between her properly human condition and her feminine vocation.”²⁹ As she becomes aware of the powerlessness prescribed to her physical features, she loses confidence in herself. Beauvoir refers to the Woman’s body as the “hysterical body.”³⁰ According to Beauvoir, the girl’s realization that her body is “hysterical” is what leads to low self-esteem.³¹ Rather than project her anxieties outwards towards the world, rendering her passive, she is forced to internalize them. Unlike her male counterpart, the girl is unable to express herself publicly. Her body then becomes the means through which she communicates with the world. Here, it is important that I reiterate my earlier claim—one cannot claim that Western beauty standards are responsible for the rising cases of anorexia nervosa in adolescent girls unless the signification of those beauty standards are understood. At the heart of women’s desperate attempts to achieve the Western beauty ideal is the power and privilege that thinness represents. However, patriarchy is not exclusive to the West. Thus, it is now necessary to explore why Western culture plagues women with anorexia.

IV. THE MEDICAL MYTH’S DOLL-CILE BODY

Now that I have demonstrated that gender is inseparable from culture since it is culture which defines gender, I wish to highlight

26 James I. Hudson et al., “The Prevalence and Correlates of Eating Disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication,” *Biological Psychiatry* 61, no. 3 (2007): 363, 10.1016/j.biopsych.2006.03.040.

27 Beauvoir and Capisto-Borde, *Second Sex*, 342.

28 Beauvoir and Capisto-Borde, *Second Sex*, 342.

29 Beauvoir and Capisto-Borde, *Second Sex*, 348.

30 Beauvoir and Capisto-Borde, *Second Sex*, 345.

31 Beauvoir and Capisto-Borde, *Second Sex*, 345.

the following question that Beauvoir raises: “How will she decide to become the inessential? If I can accomplish myself only as the *Other*, how will I renounce my *Self*?”³² Even though Beauvoir acknowledges that there are many ways in which adolescent girls will respond to this question, I analyze only one of the potential responses. First, I argue that anorexia nervosa in marginalized bodies is both the acceptance of and the rebellion against her politically mandated passive role. Second, I explain why anorexia nervosa is unique to Western society by applying Foucault’s theory of the Western “docile body”³³ to Beauvoir’s argument that women are men’s “Other.”³⁴ My goal in this section is two-fold: to explain why anorexia nervosa is unique to the West even if gender-based oppression is common worldwide and to illustrate the political nature of anorexia nervosa that the medical model seeks to erase.

In the United States, the *DSM-5* defines anorexia nervosa as a condition “assigned to those who become preoccupied with maintaining a low body weight.”³⁵ Furthermore, the *DSM-5* lists three symptoms that must be met for the diagnosis of anorexia nervosa to be made: one, caloric restriction resulting in a “significantly low body weight”³⁶ relative to the individual; two, the “intense fear...of becoming fat, even though underweight;”³⁷ and three, the “disturbance in the way in which one’s body weight or shape is experienced.”³⁸ The issue with these listed characteristics is that they attempt to individually pathologize a political reaction. When I speak of pathologization, I speak of the process in which the medical model attempts to separate the patient’s actions against their body from the political ramifications that their body carries within their respective society. In other words, pathologization occurs when the medical model attempts to subtract the patient’s body from the patient’s actions against their body. The foundation of my argument is that everybody existing in society—in public life—is a political subject. Political status, in itself, is neither negative nor positive. It simply exists. But as Beauvoir spends the entirety of *The Second Sex* explaining, socialization shapes a person’s essence which permeates the body’s expression. Beauvoir’s partner, Jean-Paul Sartre, famously declared, in *Existentialism is a Humanism*,

32 Beauvoir and Capisto-Borde, *Second Sex*, 348.

33 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 135.

34 Beauvoir and Capisto-Borde, *Second Sex*, 6.

35 American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-5* (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Publishing, 2013), 338.

36 American Psychiatric Association, *DSM-5*, 338.

37 American Psychiatric Association, *DSM-5*, 338.

38 American Psychiatric Association, *DSM-5*, 339.



that, “existence precedes essence.”³⁹ While it is true that existence precedes essence, society precedes both existence and essence, thereby rendering any body born into it a political actor. The problem, then, is not the body’s inherent political status but whether socialization has given the body a negative essence to carry. An individual’s specific upbringing undoubtedly varies, but the body’s inherent political status is immutable.

It is through the process of pathologization that the body becomes depoliticized; and it is through depoliticization that an individual’s agency is erased. Under the mask of medicine, the pathologization of anorexia nervosa further dehumanizes its victims by framing their active revolt against cataclysmic political conditions as an irrational illness. The inability to comprehend the logical motivation for why a person, especially a woman, would go to such lethal lengths as a desperate attempt to impose control over their body is largely due to the medical model’s depoliticization of the body as a whole. The medical model’s pathologization of those suffering from eating disorders enables the catalytic conditions of eating disorders to persist. To eradicate the existence of anorexia nervosa, it is necessary to frame them as political.

I have already demonstrated that much of the adolescent girl’s distress during puberty is due to her inability to exert sovereignty over how she is perceived in her new body. Whether the adolescent female wishes to be perceived as a woman is beyond her control. The same mechanisms that prohibit the girl from choosing how she is perceived also determine the space she is allowed to occupy. In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison*, Foucault argues that in the eighteenth century, the West began to shift the nature of punishment from a public practice to private.⁴⁰ Even though punishment disappeared from the public eye in the mid-nineteenth century, Foucault is careful to note that this does not mean punishment’s “hold on the body” also disappeared.⁴¹ What allowed punishment to privatize its practice in the eighteenth century was the West’s creation of the “docile body” as a disciplinary modality.⁴² The “docile body” is defined by Foucault as “something that can be made; out of a formless clay, an inapt body the machine required can be constructed.”⁴³ The “machine” which Foucault references is the sovereign power which used the compliant,

39 Jean-Paul Sartre et al., *Existentialism is a Humanism: (L’Existentialisme Est Un Humanisme); Including, a Commentary on the Stranger (Explication De L’Étranger)* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 20.

40 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 15.

41 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 15.

42 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 135.

43 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 135.

malleable “docile body” to build their “political anatomy.”⁴⁴ Rather than rely on its own jurisdiction to discipline its constituents, Western sovereignty was able to rely on the collective membership of “docile bodies” to execute its demands.⁴⁵ Simply put, alongside the shift from public to private modalities of punishment, the responsibility of discipline shifted from the authority of the sovereign down to the hands of the individual.

In contemporary Western society, the “docile body” is complicated when it belongs to a woman.⁴⁶ In her analysis of childhood, Beauvoir argues that little boys can “boldly assume their subjectivity” since they are able to grasp the world around them as their own alter-ego.⁴⁷ On the contrary, little girls cannot imagine themselves in a world that has erased their existence. To compensate for the inability to form an alter-ego beyond herself, Beauvoir adds that the little girl is given a doll.⁴⁸ These modalities for children to channel their alter-egos are not equal. Beauvoir highlights that the doll “represents the whole body ... and is passive.”⁴⁹ From this view, the “docile body” is like the little girl’s doll.⁵⁰ Both the “docile body” and the doll are mediums for which the owner’s consciousness can solidify the role of its body.⁵¹ As such, the connection between universal, patriarchal oppression and the West’s creation of the “docile body” validates Prince’s hypothesis that anorexia nervosa is a culture-bound syndrome.⁵² The emergence of anorexia nervosa in non-Western nations that are exposed to Western culture is not because it is only the West that defines women as “Other,” but because Western culture’s utilization of the “docile body” manufactures more possibilities for women to discipline themselves in place of their respective sovereign.⁵³

The first characteristic of anorexia nervosa that the *DSM-5* lists—caloric restriction that leads to significant weight loss—calls attention to the actual act of starvation. The “docile body” which starves itself affirms its passive role dictated by the sovereign.⁵⁴ Starvation is both an act of surrender to the Woman’s passive role and an attempt to reach the privileged status of the Man. If the Woman’s body represents immanence, inhibited by its own immutability, then the physical

44 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 135; 138.

45 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 135.

46 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 135.

47 Beauvoir and Capisto-Borde, *Second Sex*, 293.

48 Beauvoir and Capisto-Borde, *Second Sex*, 293.

49 Beauvoir and Capisto-Borde, *Second Sex*, 293.

50 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 135.

51 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 135.

52 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 135.

53 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 135.

54 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 135.



contortion required to shrink oneself regards movement that is exclusive to the Man. However, the Woman quickly learns that the sense of control she experienced, which is the first time she ignored her grumbling stomach, was disillusioned. Starvation quite literally encapsulates Beauvoir's statement that "the anguish of being a woman eats away at the female body."⁵⁵ The Woman's manipulation of her physical body will never release her from the chains of immanence since it is that Man who demands thinness as the price for her existence.

The second characteristic of anorexia nervosa illuminates the failure to understand the anorexic's act of shrinking as the pursuit to rid one's body of its immutable status. The *DSM-5* states that anorexics possess an "intense fear" of fatness even if they are clinically underweight.⁵⁶ It is not fatness that anorexics fear; instead, it is the fear of occupying space that they have been conditioned to avoid. Setting unattainable beauty standards allows Western culture to gatekeep women's public existence. By exclusively displaying images of thin, "desirable" women, little girls receive the message that they must earn their existence through bodily comportment. But since there is no possible way for every single woman to look like Kate Moss, women begin to fear that their existence is unwanted. What emphasizes the message to her that she is unwanted is the constant threat of ostracization accompanying the occupation of public space. In a desperate search for an out, the anorexic resorts to self-starvation in hopes of gaining control over the cumbersome body. It does not matter whether the anorexic is starving to control the agency of who and when the public can see her body or if the anorexic is starving to gain closer proximity to the privilege thinness promises. Both paths carry the same result: death.

Anorexia nervosa's mortality rate is ten times higher than the mortality rate of any other causes for women between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four.⁵⁷ The mortality rate of anorexia nervosa makes the *DSM-5*'s final characteristic of anorexics its most insulting: "disturbance in the way in which one's body weight or shape is experienced."⁵⁸ As I have attempted to convey thus far, it is not the anorexic's brain that is disturbed; it is the culture, which the anorexic's emaciated body reflects, that is deeply egregious. Similarly, the question we all ought to be asking is not whether anorexics experience their physical body in a disturbed manner. A much more horrifying question to pose—but one that's inquisition is imperative to eradicate the

55 Beauvoir and Capisto-Borde, *Second Sex*, 345.

56 American Psychiatric Association, *DSM-5*, 338.

57 Smink, van Hoeken, and Hoek, "Epidemiology of Eating," 406.

58 American Psychiatric Association, *DSM-5*, 339.

existence of anorexia nervosa—is whether anorexics are experiencing their bodies in the way that patriarchal power wants them to.

V. WAS FIONA APPLE CORRECT?

So, does starving “work” quite as well as Apple led pro-anorexia bloggers to believe? I have refuted Apple’s figurative line by proving to you and me both that no—starving does not work. Then again, the answer depends on how you define “work.” If you aspire to knock on death’s door and hate yourself more than you had ever imagined to be humanly possible—sure, starving works. As a recovering anorexic, I am well aware that nobody aspires to become so frail that a simple slip fractures your back. If your goal is to become powerful, to gain control, or to be beautiful, starving is the least productive strategy you could possibly employ. In fact, starving makes you powerless. I was not “in control” when I was too weak to walk and had to crawl across my floor to reach a bottle of Gatorade on my desk. As long as discipline, through means of self-mutilation, remains the sovereign’s primary way to punish its marginalized groups, the anorexic will never be in control. Real power consists of challenging punitive beauty standards. And most importantly, real power is making the decision to live even though society wants you dead.

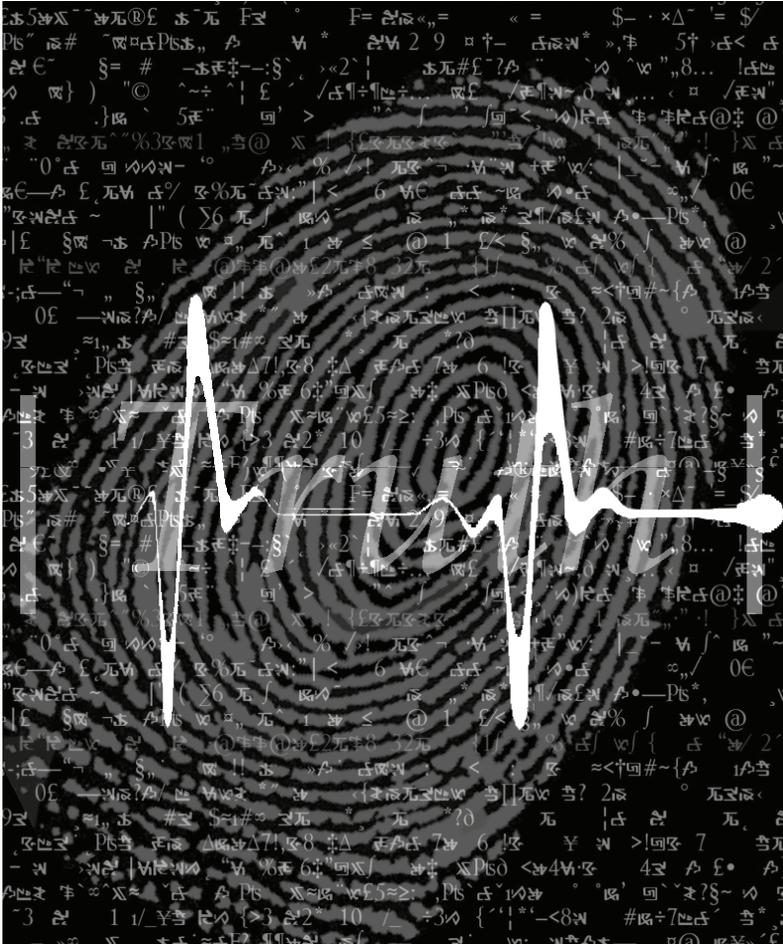




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A TWO-PART DEFENSE OF INTUITIONISTIC MATHEMATICS



SAMUEL R. ELLIOTT

ABSTRACT

The classical interpretation of mathematical statements can be seen as comprising two separate but related aspects: a domain and a truth-schema. L. E. J. Brouwer's intuitionistic project lays the groundwork for an alternative conception of the objects in this domain, as well as an accompanying intuitionistic truth-schema. Drawing on the work of Arend Heyting and Michael Dummett, I present two objections to classical mathematical semantics, with the aim of creating an opening for an alternative interpretation. With this accomplished, I then make the case for intuitionism as a suitable candidate to fill this void.



Any justification for adopting one logic rather than another as the logic for mathematics must turn on questions of meaning.

—Michael Dummett,
“The Philosophical Basis of Intuitionistic Logic”

I. INTRODUCTION

As Arend Heyting and Michael Dummett present it, mathematics, when interpreted classically, is concerned with issues of fundamental (which is to say, metaphysical) mathematical truths. The assumption which underlies this interpretation is that there exists a “realm of mathematical reality, existing objectively,”¹ “some world of mathematical things existing independently of our knowledge,” which mathematics is concerned with studying.²

To put this another way, the assumption which underpins the classical interpretation of mathematical statements is that the domain of natural numbers \mathbf{N} is populated with objectively existing, mind-independent abstract objects; the referring-terms of our mathematical language (i.e., the natural number names) refer to these objects, which determinately satisfy or fail to satisfy certain properties. In short, classical mathematicians are realists about numbers. This assumption is metaphysical—it concerns the status of being of the members of \mathbf{N} , the quantificational domain of our mathematical language.

In introducing his defense of L. E. J. Brouwer’s intuitionistic project, Heyting insists that such metaphysical questions should not be made to bear on mathematical issues.³ Intuitionism takes it as an uncontroversial fact that we do practice mathematics and that we do so in certain ways. The project of intuitionism, as Heyting presents it, is to study just this process of doing mental mathematics; that is, intuitionistic mathematics is the study of mental mathematical construction as such, without assuming anything about the fundamental metaphysical nature of mathematical objects.⁴

1 Michael Dummett, *Elements of Intuitionism*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 5.

2 Arend Heyting, *Intuitionism: An Introduction* (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1956), 3.

3 “Mathematics ought not to depend upon such [metaphysical] notions as these.” See Heyting, *Intuitionism*, 3.

4 “Brouwer’s program . . . consisted in the investigation of mental mathematical construction as such, without reference to questions regarding the nature of the constructed objects, such as whether these objects exist independently of our knowledge of them.” See Heyting, *Intuitionism*, 1.

Dummett seconds this articulation of intuitionistic mathematics in the introductory remarks of his *Elements of Intuitionism*.⁵

In other words, the intuitionistic interpretation of our mathematical language begins from the rejection of the metaphysical assumption underlying classical mathematics. On an intuitionistic interpretation, the domain of our mathematical language is still the set of natural numbers \mathbf{N} , but the members of \mathbf{N} should be viewed as “mental mathematical constructions.” For our purposes, we may understand “mental mathematical constructions” as being pre-analytical ideas (perhaps of some requisite clarity or distinctness): that is, mind-dependent entities. Dummett, again, seconds this analysis: “To an intuitionist . . . mathematical objects themselves are mental constructions . . . They exist only in virtue of our mathematical activity, which consist in mental operations.”⁶

I shall here present intuitionistic mathematics as differing primarily from classical mathematics over the interpretation of the meaning of mathematical statements. This issue of meaning can be decomposed into two related issues: what is the domain of our mathematical language and what is its truth-schema? I shall begin by briefly outlining the classical interpretation of mathematical statements and how this interpretation addresses these two questions. Drawing on Heyting, I will then make an Ockhamian case for preferring an intuitionistic domain to a classical domain on the grounds of ontological parsimony. I will then argue, following Dummett, that we ought also to replace the classical truth-schema—rooted in a notion of fundamental (metaphysical) truth—with an intuitionistic schema rooted in the notion of proof. I will conclude by considering some objections and possible replies.

II. CLASSICAL SEMANTICS

Following Dummett’s lead I will take a “mathematical statement” to be any statement which takes as its referring-terms, the natural numbers \mathbf{N} .⁷ For simplicity, we may confine our discussion to a toy mathematical language \mathbf{L} , whose domain is the set of natural numbers \mathbf{N} , containing only a few classes of sentences:

5 “To an intuitionist . . . mathematical objects themselves are mental constructions . . . They exist only in virtue of our mathematical activity, which consist in mental operations, and have only those properties which they can be recognized by us as having.” See Dummett, *Elements of Intuitionism*, 5.

6 Dummett, *Elements of Intuitionism*, 5.

7 Michael Dummett, “The Philosophical Basis of Intuitionistic Logic,” in *Truth and Other Enigmas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 215.



Predicate–subject sentences of the form “ α is π ,” where “ α ” is a referring–term, and “ π ” is a (unary) predicate:

E.g., “7 is a prime number;”

Negations of the form “not ϕ ,” where “ ϕ ” is a sentence:

E.g., “4 is not a prime number;”

Existential sentences of the form “some x is π ,” where “ x ” is a variable and “ π ” is a predicate:

E.g., the Ordinary Perfect Number Conjecture (OPN):

“There is an odd perfect number (equal to the sum of its positive non–equal divisors);”

Universal statements of the form “every x is π ,” where “ x ” is a variable and “ π ” is a predicate:

E.g., Goldbach’s Conjecture: “every even integer greater than 2 can be expressed as the sum of two primes.”⁸

Formally, the sentences of L can be defined recursively as follows:

$$\phi ::= \pi(\alpha) \mid \neg \phi \mid \exists x\phi \mid \forall x\phi$$

As we have said, the assumption which underpins the classical interpretation is that the domain of natural numbers \mathbf{N} is populated with objectively existing, mind–independent abstract objects, to which the referring–terms of L refer, and which determinately satisfy or fail to satisfy certain properties. On the basis of this assumption, we can formulate an inductive definition of truth (in L), in the form of a Tarskian truth–schema, using a metalinguistic \mathbf{T} –predicate (ranging over the sentences of L) as follows:⁹

“ α is π ” is \mathbf{T} iff α (the member of \mathbf{N} to which “ α ” refers) is π ;

“Not ϕ ” is \mathbf{T} iff ϕ is not \mathbf{T} ;

“Some x is π ” is \mathbf{T} iff some member of \mathbf{N} is π ;

“Every x is π ” is \mathbf{T} iff every member of \mathbf{N} is π .

This schema can be synthesized with our previous assumption about the metaphysical nature of the members of the domain \mathbf{N} to give the following generalization of the classical interpretation of mathematical sentences:

“ ϕ ” is \mathbf{T} iff ϕ is *true* (in some metaphysically–committed sense);

8 Christian Goldbach, *Letter to Leonhard Euler*, June 7, 1742.

9 Alfred Tarski, “The Semantic Conception of Truth: And the Foundations of Semantics,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 4, no. 3 (1944): 341–76, 10.2307/2102968.

Following Gottlob Frege's claim that the reference of a sentence is its truth-value, we can give the following restatement of this generalization (which, for our purposes, we may take as equivalent):¹⁰

“ φ ” means that φ is *true* (in some metaphysically-committed sense).

III. HEYTING: AN OCKHAMIAN OBJECTION

If “to exist” does not mean “to be constructed,” it must have some metaphysical meaning. It cannot be the task of mathematics to investigate this meaning or to decide whether it is tenable or not.

—Arend Heyting, *Intuitionism: An Introduction*

The first concern I would like to raise regarding the viability of this classical interpretation concerns the initial assumption that the domain of our mathematical language should be populated by mind-independent, abstract objects, existing in a transcendent realm of mathematical reality. Rather than attempt to refute this assumption directly, I would simply argue, following Heyting, that it is neither desirable nor necessary to found mathematics on such metaphysical assumptions.¹¹

By virtue of being realist about numbers, the classical mathematician's interpretation of \mathbf{N} requires a supporting ontology containing numbers as a *sui generis* class of mind-independent entity. Following Ockham's razor—the principle that “entities should not be multiplied beyond necessity”—we should hold an interpretation of \mathbf{N} which did not require such ontological commitments to be theoretically preferable (on this count, at least).¹²

Moreover, this is precisely what the intuitionistic mathematician offers; with an intuitionistic interpretation, the domain of our mathematical language is still the set of natural numbers \mathbf{N} , but the members of \mathbf{N} should be viewed as “mental mathematical constructions.” Returning to our toy mathematical language \mathbf{L} , the intuitionist holds that, as the members of the domain \mathbf{N} , it is these mental mathematical constructions to which referring terms like “7” refer, which satisfy predicates such as “is prime,” and over which the existential and universal quantifiers “ \exists ” and “ \forall ” quantify.

Of course, the ontology required to support this interpretation must include “mental mathematical constructions,” which may seem

10 Gottlob Frege, “Sense and Reference,” *The Philosophical Review* 57, no. 3 (1948): 209–30, 10.2307/2181485.

11 Heyting, *Intuitionism*, 3.

12 Alan Baker, “Simplicity,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/simplicity/>.



dubious, especially in the absence of a precise definition. However, as we have presented it, “mental mathematical constructions” are, essentially, ideas (or a subclass thereof), and I would venture that any serious classical mathematician would acquiesce to an ontology containing such entities as ideas (in their mental ontology, if not in their mathematical ontology).

This argument is hardly conclusive, nor does it leave us with a clear indication of how we are to understand the sentences in our mathematical language. How, for instance, are we to understand the attribution of the property “being prime” to the number 7, *qua* mental construction? However, it does lend some theoretical weight to the choice of an intuitionistic domain over a classical domain. As Heyting puts it, it is a primitive psychological fact that we do practice mathematics: to found this on a basis of metaphysical assumption is both unnecessary and undesirable, for our conclusions are only as certain as the assumptions which ground them.¹³

IV. DUMMETT: A WITTGENSTEINIAN OBJECTION

A stronger repudiation of the classical interpretation of our mathematical language can be found in Dummett’s “Philosophical Basis,” directly attacking the viability of the classical truth-schema. Dummett’s argument draws heavily on Ludwig Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*, particularly the doctrine that “the meaning of a word is its use in the language”¹⁴ and “The meaning of a mathematical statement determines and is exhaustively determined by its use.”¹⁵ If use determines meaning, it follows (by something similar to the causal adequacy principle) that the meaning of a sentence cannot consist in anything which is not present and manifest in its use. The justification for this doctrine is that it does not make sense to talk about a statement as having meaning when divorced from its linguistic context, no more than it makes sense to say of a chess piece that it has particular powers (“it can move any number of squares diagonally but cannot leap over other pieces”) when removed from the context of a game of chess.¹⁶

13 “We have no objection against a mathematician privately admitting any metaphysical theory he likes, but Brouwer’s program entails that we study mathematics as something simpler, more immediate than metaphysics.” See Heyting, *Intuitionism*, 2.

14 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: MacMillan, 1953), 43.

15 Dummett, “Philosophical Basis,” 216.

16 Dummett, “Philosophical Basis,” 216.

Recall, from our consideration of the toy language \mathbf{L} , we inductively derived the following general classical truth-schema for our mathematical language:

“ φ ” is \mathbf{T} iff φ is *true* (in some metaphysically-committed sense).
Following Frege’s claim that the reference of a sentence is its truth-value, we then gave the following (roughly) equivalent restatement:

“ φ ” means that φ is *true* (in some metaphysically-committed sense).
However, returning to consideration of \mathbf{L} , we can show that the truth-values of existential and universal sentences in \mathbf{L} are not necessarily decidable under the classical truth-schema. To make this argument, we must be clear in drawing a distinction between the \mathbf{T} -predicate we introduced earlier—a predicate ranging over sentences in \mathbf{L} —and (what we have called) “*truth*,” in the metaphysically-loaded sense.

Let us assume that we have a decidable predicate F , such that for any given $x \in \mathbf{N}$ produced, we can determine whether $F(x)$ or $\neg F(x)$ actually obtains—that is to say, whether $F(x)$ or $\neg F(x)$ is *true*, and hence, whether “ $F(x)$ ” or “ $\neg F(x)$ ” is \mathbf{T} . Given that we take the universal quantifier “ \forall ” as quantifying over an infinite domain \mathbf{N} , we cannot verify *a posteriori* (by cases) that “ $\forall x F(x)$ ” is \mathbf{T} , as it is not possible to individually confirm for every $x \in \mathbf{N}$ that $F(x)$ is *true*, nor, by the same token, that “ $F(x)$ ” is \mathbf{T} . Nor is it necessarily possible to verify *a priori* that “ $\forall x F(x)$ ” is \mathbf{T} : for instance, we might assume that $F(x)$ obtains for every x , but does so purely by accident or coincidence, and hence that there exists no finite set of reasons for determining that $F(x)$ obtains for every x . In such a scenario, “ $\forall x F(x)$ ” would be \mathbf{T} , but would not be verifiable *a priori*. Hence, the \mathbf{T} universal sentences of \mathbf{L} cannot necessarily (which is to say, in general) be verified either *a posteriori* or *a priori*.¹⁷

Similarly, falsifying an existential sentence “ $\exists x F(x)$ ” is equivalent to verifying its negation “ $\neg \exists x F(x)$,” which is in turn equivalent to verifying the universal “ $\forall x \neg F(x)$.” By the same logic as above, we cannot verify “ $\forall x \neg F(x)$ ” *a posteriori* nor necessarily *a priori*, even if it is \mathbf{T} , and hence, it follows that we cannot necessarily falsify the **not-T** existential sentences of \mathbf{L} .

It follows that, under the classical truth-schema for \mathbf{L} , we are not in general capable of verifying that a \mathbf{T} universal sentence of \mathbf{L} is \mathbf{T} , nor that a **not-T** existential sentence of \mathbf{L} is **not-T**. This conclusion generalizes outside of \mathbf{L} , to our full mathematical language.

As such, it is not clear how the actual *truth* of a mathematical statement could manifest itself in our use of that statement, given that

¹⁷ Dummett, *Elements of Intuitionism*, 3.



we are not, in general, capable of recognizing that these conditions obtain when they obtain. To put this anecdotally: if the actual *truth* (or *falsity*) of a mathematical statement is beyond our knowledge, what difference could its being *true* or *false* make to how we use the statement? “This conception violates the principle that use exhaustively determines meaning.”¹⁸

The problem is that, if use determines meaning, and the meaning of a sentence cannot consist in anything which is not present and manifest in its use, then it is unclear how the notion of *truth* can figure in any effective exposition of the meaning of a large class of sentences in our mathematical language. Hence, if we accept the Wittgensteinian doctrine that meaning is use, we should reject the classical mathematical semantics rooted in the notion of *truth* (at least as it applies to universals and existentials).

Note, our argument here need not give way to general skepticism about mathematical truths. We may concede that, for a particular number, α , and a decidable predicate, π , there is no problem in assuming that a grasp of the *truth* or *falsity* of $\pi(\alpha)$ could determine our use of the sentence “ $\pi(\alpha)$,” and hence, that such predicate-subject statements, interpreted classically, could be meaningful. The problem is that mathematics, as a subject, concerns itself with the investigation and assertion of universal and existential claims about the set of natural numbers \mathbf{N} , whose *truth* is, as we have shown, in general, undecidable.

V. INTUITIONISTIC SEMANTICS

This argument, of course, does not constitute a positive argument for adopting an intuitionistic interpretation of our mathematical language, but only gives grounds for rejecting the classical interpretation. Nevertheless, it does give a clear criterion for adequacy in mathematical semantics: the meaning of our mathematical language must be rooted in some decidable property, such that, in general, we are able to know that a mathematical sentence is **T** when it is **T**.

Again, intuitionism offers a solution here. As Dummett puts it, “We must, therefore, replace the notion of truth, as the central notion of the theory of meaning for mathematical statements, by the notion of proof: a grasp of the meaning of a statement consists in a capacity to recognize a proof of it when one is presented to us.”¹⁹

On this basis, we can formulate an alternative inductive definition of truth (in our toy language \mathbf{L}), as follows:

18 Dummett, “Philosophical Basis,” 224.

19 Dummett, “Philosophical Basis,” 225.

“ α is π ” is **T** iff it is proven that α is π ;

“Not φ ” is **T** iff it is proven that not- φ ;

“Some x is π ” is **T** iff it is proven that some member of \mathbf{N} is π ;

“Every x is π ” is **T** iff it is proven that every member of \mathbf{N} is π .

In general:

“ φ ” is **T** iff φ is proven;

And hence:

“ φ ” means that φ is proven.

To see how this schema avoids the pitfalls which troubled the classical schema, we should reintroduce the conclusion of our previous argument—that the domain of our mathematical language is populated with mental mathematical constructions.

On an intuitionistic interpretation, an existential statement, “ $\exists xF(x)$,” means that we have constructed a proof of $\exists xF(x)$. On a Brouwer, Heyting, and Kolmogorov (BHK) interpretation, this is tantamount to saying that we have constructed at least one example where $x \in \mathbf{N}$ and a demonstration (proof) that $F(x)$ for that x . For example, “There exists an odd perfect number” (OPN) means that we have constructed an example where $x \in \mathbf{N}$, and a proof that x is both perfect and odd. Since we have not effected such a construction, it follows that OPN (interpreted intuitionistically) is **not-T**.

Similarly, a universal statement “ $\forall xF(x)$ ” means that we have constructed a proof of $\forall xF(x)$: that is, a function which maps (or would map) each $x \in \mathbf{N}$ to a proof of $F(x)$. For example, “every even integer greater than two can be expressed as the sum of two primes” means that we have a construction which maps (or would map) every constructed x which is both even and greater than two (this being a subset of \mathbf{N}) to a proof that x can be expressed as the sum of two primes. Since no such construction has yet been effected, it follows that Goldbach’s Conjecture (interpreted intuitionistically) is **not-T**.²⁰

To my mind, this intuitionistic account adequately circumvents the decidability issue which had destabilized the classical interpretation. With clear standards for what constitutes a proof of a universal or existential mathematical statement, it should be generally decidable whether a given statement is proven or unproven. Hence, there is no

20 “A mathematical assertion affirms the fact that a certain mathematical construction has been effected.” See Heyting, *Intuitionism*, 3; “From an intuitionistic standpoint, therefore, an understanding of a mathematical statement consists in a capacity to recognize a proof of it when presented with one; and the truth of such a statement consist only in the existence of such a proof.” See Dummett, *Elements of Intuitionism*, 4.



obvious issue with supposing that such a notion of proof should figure in our use of such mathematical statements, or that such a notion should ground the meaning of our mathematical language.

VI. OBJECTIONS & REPLIES

For balance, we ought to take this opportunity to note some consequences of the intuitionistic semantics presented above. Those skeptical of intuitionism will no doubt be inclined to view these consequences as failures of our semantics or of my argumentation. Although I shall not attempt a full rebuttal of these claims here, I hope to give some indication of how the intuitionist might respond.

First, it should be noted that, speaking precisely, the intuitionist should say that sentences like OPN or Goldbach's Conjecture are **not currently T**; they have not been proven, but perhaps they might be proven someday. For this very reason, the intuitionist schema must be dynamic, allowing sentences to change their truth-value across time. While there is certainly something odd about the suggestion that, say, Goldbach's Conjecture is not currently true, but might be true in the future, I would suggest that this oddness is a hangover from our (pre-analytic) inclination to think classically about the mathematical domain. It may be intuitive to think of mathematical statements as being determinately *true* or *false*, but this intuitiveness is not a guarantee of theoretical adequacy. As Heyting puts it, "In fact all mathematicians and even intuitionists are convinced that in some sense mathematics bear upon eternal truths, but when trying to define precisely this sense, one gets entangled in a maze of metaphysical difficulties."²¹

Second, as a consequence of the above, we should not admit that the negation " $\neg \varphi$ " of a sentence " φ " is **T** unless $\neg \varphi$ is proven; that is, under the BHK interpretation, it is proven that φ will never be proven. In this respect, the logic of intuitionism is weaker than classical logic. It is not intuitionistically valid to infer that " $\neg \varphi$ " is **T** from the fact that " φ " is **not-T**; that is, the Law of Excluded Middle is not intuitionistically valid. This may not sit well with those schooled in classical logic, but again, I would argue that any discomfort felt here was a consequence of our tendency to think classically and to equivocate over the *truth* of a state of affairs φ and the truth of the corresponding sentence " φ " (that is, its satisfaction of the **T**-predicate). If we think of the **T**-predicate as signaling something closer to adequacy (without any metaphysical presuppositions), then the loss of the Law of Excluded Middle looks less objectionable. Naturally, the formal semantics necessary to explicate this logic are more complicated than for classical logic, but they can be formulated.

²¹ Heyting, *Intuitionism*, 3.

Third, the arguments I have presented here go no way to establishing that intuitionism is the only adequate interpretation of mathematical language, that mental construction is the only suitable interpretation of the members of the domain \mathbf{N} , or that proof is the only suitable notion for grounding mathematical semantics. Nor are my arguments immune from rebuttal from the classical mathematician. Such a rebuttal would most likely have to take one of two forms. First, one could accept Wittgenstein's doctrine that "meaning is use," but contend that the classical interpretation is not in contravention of this (or, possibly, only that the intuitionist is as guilty as the classicist of contravening Wittgenstein). This would leave us at an impasse with no consensus on an admissible mathematical semantics. Second, one could directly reject Wittgenstein's claim that use determines meaning, and thereby salvage a classical interpretation, even as this interpretation contravenes our actual use of mathematical language. I do not mean to argue that such rebuttals are not possible; I hope only to have shown that the burden of proof is on the critic of intuitionism to refute the intuitionistic interpretation.





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BLACK WOMEN IN FANON'S *BLACK SKIN, WHITE MASKS*:

The Intersection of Race, Gender,
and Oppression



EMMA MING WAHL

ABSTRACT

In this paper, I focus on the representations of Black women in contrast to Black men found within Frantz Fanon's philosophical work *Black Skin, White Masks*. I propose that while Fanon's racial dialectical work is very significant, he often lacks acknowledgement of the multidimensionality of the Black woman's lived experience specifically. Drawing on the theory of intersectionality, coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, I argue that Fanon does not recognize the different layers of oppression operating in Black women's lives to the degree that he fails to include them within his framework of both liberation and resistance from racial oppression.



Throughout the work, *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon outlines the layers and nuances that compose both the Black lived experience as well as the opportunities for resistance and liberation from oppression.¹ He primarily focuses on the inferiority complex generated by the enforced superiority of the White man. Fanon also writes within a heteronormative framework of gender with the conception of only two separate genders. Furthermore, Kimberlé Crenshaw's work in 1989 provides us with a more comprehensive way of looking at the structures of oppression through her conception of intersectionality, which notes the multiplicity of perspectives and identities involved with oppression.² While Crenshaw inaugurated the word, she drew upon many other prior thinkers like “Anna Julia Cooper, and Maria Stewart in the 19th century in the US, all the way through Angela Davis and Deborah King.”³ For the purposes of this essay, we will use the term intersectionality specifically in Crenshaw's adaptation. We will address the multidimensionality of the Black female identity while also examining the multiple forms of oppression the Black woman faces (like that of racism and sexism combined). Fanon did not consider this contemporary view of intersectionality as he wrote prior to the construction of this word, although he lived in a time of Black feminism. Yet, his works still heavily contribute to critical race theory in general. In this paper, I will argue that Fanon's argument lacks more contemporary gendered intersectionality—specifically failing to acknowledge the differences in oppression and lived experiences that the Black woman faces—as he only conceptualizes the Black man as capable of recognizing and escaping the inferiority complex created in relation to the White man. His works then must be adapted to fit a more contemporary schema of resistance and liberation that better includes the thinkers which Crenshaw draws upon and Black activists working today.

The inferiority complex that White people enforce in order to maintain their superiority in part generates the Black lived experience for Black men and women. According to Fanon, the promotion of the White individual throughout society creates this inferiority complex where Black individuals, alongside other people of color, are taught

1 Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2008).

2 Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color,” *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241-99. 10.2307/1229039.

3 Bim Adewunmi, “Kimberlé Crenshaw on Intersectionality: ‘I Wanted to Come up with an Everyday Metaphor that Anyone Could Use,’” *New Statesman*, April 2, 2014, <https://www.newstatesman.com/lifestyle/2014/04/kimberl-crenshaw-intersectionality-i-wanted-come-everyday-metaphor-anyone-could>.

to perceive themselves as lesser beings. Fanon posits that the complex manifests in different ways for men and women, but both genders have the impression that they must get close to the “superior” White individual. He writes that, “from the moment the Black man accepts the split imposed by the European, there is no longer any respite, and ‘from that moment on, isn’t it understandable that he will try to elevate himself to the White man’s level?’”⁴ With this concept of aspiration, Fanon argues that the Black man aligns himself with and becomes more like the White man because of the societal conditioning specifying his inferiority. He attempts to be closer to the White man so that he can obtain the same degree of subjectivity, or the ability to operate without limitations, while being fully seen as a person with an identity. Fanon writes that the Black woman specifically feels so inferior “that she aspires to win admittance into the white world.”⁵ Here, Fanon posits that the Black woman acts similarly to the Black man in that they both desire to be closer to the ascribed superiority of the White man. For the Black woman, Fanon adds another layer to their desire to be closer to the White world; specifically, he means that the Black woman desires to become Whiter and join their world, not just becoming more similar.

Although Fanon initially frames his argument regarding Black men and women to be somewhat similar in their lived experiences through their governing inferiority complex, his argument only includes the Black woman’s experience in relation to men, either Black or White. Throughout *Black Skin, White Masks*, he contextualizes himself using language solely surrounding men and having the default of personhood as a man. He continually uses vocabulary with a masculine connotation such as mankind, brothers, and he/him/his pronouns when referring to all of humanity. While it could be argued that his language is historically accurate to the way that many used “man” as a default for humanity as a whole, Fanon’s arguments, then, do not explicitly include the Black woman. Gwen Bergner notes how Fanon “takes the male as the norm.”⁶ Bergner argues that for Fanon, “women are considered as subjects almost exclusively in terms of their sexual relationships with men.”⁷ The subject and object relationship will be explored more in depth later in this essay. However, women are only granted identity when in relation to men. They do not operate solely as themselves but almost strictly in their desires to be Whiter and to be in

4 Fanon, *Black Skin*, 63.

5 Fanon, *Black Skin*, 41.

6 Gwen Bergner, “Who Is that Masked Woman? Or, the Role of Gender in Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks*,” *PLMA* 110, no. 1 (1995): 75–88, 10.2307/463196.

7 Bergner, “Masked Woman,” 77.



relationships with specifically White men. In his argument surrounding the Black woman's desire for a romantic relationship with a White man, Fanon writes that there are only two reactions for a woman of color in response to the White man: "The black woman has only one way open to her and one preoccupation—to whiten the race. The mulatto woman wants not only to become White but also to avoid slipping back."⁸ Fanon, thus, reduces the Black woman to her desire to be Whiter and to obtain a relationship with a White individual. He writes that the White man looks at the Black woman with distaste and that "she is not tolerated in certain circles, because she is a colored woman. Her facticity was the starting point for her resentment."⁹ The Black woman's desire for a relationship with a White man, as well as her wish to be Whiter, likely stems from her feelings of inferiority in comparison to the White person. Fanon argues that the Black woman's feelings of inferiority go beyond simple resentment for her non-Whiteness and the rejection this brings and into moving actively toward desiring the life of a Whiter individual. Repeatedly in his anecdotal evidence, Fanon describes Black women as solely focused on their goal to obtain a White partner. He juxtaposes two comments: one woman saying that, "it's not that [Black women] want to downplay the credentials of the Black man, but you know it's better to be white,"¹⁰ and the other saying to him, "there is a white potential in every one of us; some want to ignore it or quite simply reverse it. Me, I would never accept to marry [a Black man]."¹¹ In both of these comments, he posits that women fall prey to the continual indoctrination of White superiority and the desire for a similar status. These comments, taken from select individuals, are then used to generalize the Black woman's experience into something that only has her operating in pursuit of and in relation to men of either race rather than as her own autonomous being.

Fanon's argument on the relationship of subject and object positions the White individual into a place of superiority and subjectivity, granting them the full capacity of their identity alongside personal and bodily autonomy. The Black individual, however, is relegated into objecthood where they are continually deemed inferior and stripped of the fullness of their identity and agency. Throughout the majority of the text, but particularly in the chapter, "The Lived Experience of the Black Man," Fanon argues that the White man objectifies the Black man. However, with this relationship, he recognizes the Black man's experience of being objectified, yet only

8 Fanon, *Black Skin*, 37.

9 Fanon, *Black Skin*, 27.

10 Fanon, *Black Skin*, 30.

11 Fanon, *Black Skin*, 30.

minimally critiques the forced objectification that the Black woman suffers. He roots much of this argument in the Black man's experience in the relational qualities of the Black and White man, writing that, "not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man."¹² The White man's objectification of the Black man, through forced relation, generates the Black Man's lived experience for Fanon. The Black woman is objectified by both Black and White men, although for different reasons. As such, both of their views of her fully saturate her lived experience. Fanon's concept of the Black woman, in context to men, continues to relegate her into an objectified status by not referencing the multidimensionality of the Black woman's lived experience outside of the context of men. Crenshaw points out a similar idea in her landmark texts that define intersectionality, as she argues that Black women have to move through the world in a radically different way due to the multiplicity of oppressions that they face in the contemporary world.¹³ Many people, not simply White men, fragment the Black woman's identity through a combination of racism and misogyny. Angela Davis additionally writes on this within the context of American enslavement of Black people, and she argues that after emancipation, Black women had to evade gendered and sexualized violence by White men brought about through the combination of racism and sexism.¹⁴ While not as overt as the objectification of the Black man, in terms of the identity fragmentation crucial to Fanon's argument, the objectification of women by both Black and White men is pivotal to the Black woman's fundamentally distinct lived experience.

For Fanon, acknowledging oppression itself and understanding its perpetuation is one of the only ways of combatting racial oppression. He writes that the Black man "on his home territory is oblivious of the moment when his inferiority is determined by the Other."¹⁵ Despite Fanon's reference to the moment in which oppressive racial superiority was created and justified, he writes that Black people lacked the awareness of their imposed inferiority. Knowing and understanding this moment is key to Fanon's conception of liberation for both Black men and women. Furthermore, Fanon's premises of the body schema for the Black man are integral to his process of resistance and liberation. Much of his work involves the relationship of the body and the self, particularly in how the Black man must be aware of his body moving throughout the world. The body, for Fanon, moves through the world such that sight and race are intimately conjoined, forcing Black men to constantly be aware of their race. He writes that as he grew in

12 Fanon, *Black Skin*, 90.

13 Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins," 1241-99.

14 Angela Davis, *Women, Race, and Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983), 90.

15 Fanon, *Black Skin*, 90.



acknowledgment of racial oppression operating in his life, he “cast an objective gaze over [himself and his] blackness.”¹⁶ While this bodily awareness was imposed upon him by the White man in way of asserting bodily superiority, noting its genesis and its action on how Black men are forced to move in the world is a necessary step in acknowledgment.

By understanding the interacting power dynamics that operate to ensure the Black man’s inferiority and difference in societal movements, one can interpret Fanon’s argument on the acknowledgement of oppression for the Black woman. As laid out earlier in this paper, Fanon often does not consider the Black woman’s experience within his schema of race and power. His arguments for the necessity of acknowledgment as one of the first steps in combating racial oppression do not account for the Black woman and the multifaceted ways in which her identity can manifest. Through the previously mentioned anecdotes of the female students that Fanon encountered, he constructs the Black woman as wholly rejecting her identity and being singularly focused on her goal to become whiter. He critiques one such woman, writing that, “instead of acknowledging that she is black, she turns the fact into an accident.”¹⁷ Rather than looking at her identity in a more blatant and critical fashion, something that he posits the Black man does more of, Fanon determines that the Black woman refuses to engage with her own identity and deems it a mere coincidence. This lack of acknowledgement, for Fanon, prevents the next step of combatting racial oppression: actively moving against oppression and criticizing its effects on the body and the Black identity.

Fanon posits that Black masculine liberation requires directly fighting against racial oppression and its enforced lenses. Throughout his work, he details the various ways in which he, himself, directly confronts racial oppression. Beginning with speaking the same language as the White man, he attempts invisibility first, then the appeal to rationality in the terms that the White man set, and finally, the reservation to irrationality with the appeal to emotions. While not every attempt is successful, he continually tries to move against the imposed White superiority. In the final appeal to emotion through irrationality, he offers evidence of Black people using visual and literary arts as a way of understanding their own culture and promoting their “irrational” way of being in opposition to the “rational” way of being that White people control. Earlier, Fanon notes the sharp contrast between the White man and the Black man due to their societally-shaped lived experiences. The Black man’s culture and customs, Fanon argues, “were abolished because they were in contradiction with a

16 Fanon, *Black Skin*, 92.

17 Fanon, *Black Skin*, 28.

new civilization that imposed its own.”¹⁸ The use of these “inferior” cultural elements—poetry and song—allows the Black man to reclaim parts of his identity and history that were forcibly taken. Confronting this reality is necessary for Fanon’s conceptualization of resistance and his pathway of possible liberation from the forced hierarchy of race. Fanon, however, does not allow the Black woman to have access to this confrontation, nor does he include her in the Black man’s personal resistance.

Fanon’s portrayal of resistance against the White man only includes the Black man because only his direct actions are featured, while the Black woman is never mentioned nor included in this necessary clash against both the oppressor and the oppressive system. In one of the singular instances that Fanon does write on the Black woman in active resistance, he uses the words of Mayotte Capécia as she writes that when she was a child, “[she] took [her] inkwell and threw it, showering his head.”¹⁹ This woman attempts to use the ink in order to turn a White classmate of hers into someone visually more similar to her. By doing this, she has a degree of active resistance previously barred from her. However, immediately after, Fanon writes that, “this was her way of changing whites into blacks. But she realizes early on how vain her efforts were . . . so, unable to blacken or negrify the world, she endeavors to whiten it in her body and mind.”²⁰ He refocuses her moment of agency into her desire to be Whiter and to enter the White world. Rather than noting her different lived experiences and the different circumstances that create them (leading to these actions), Fanon presents her as generally lacking the knowledge necessary for resistance. For him, even if she did have recognition as a child, she turns away from this resistance and follows her imposed desire for a Whiter lifestyle. Myriam Chancy writes specifically on Fanon’s examination of Capécia’s writings, arguing that he explicitly overlooks complexities of her book. She detailed that later in her life, her Black father pushed her to find a White partner.²¹ Instead of actively engaging with this layer of sexism, Fanon maneuvers around it, pinning the blame of searching for a White partner solely upon Capécia herself. In these two examples, Fanon still places the Black woman within a different schema entirely and implies that she chooses her own oppression. In implying that the Black woman chooses her own oppression and barring her from his

18 Fanon, *Black Skin*, 90.

19 Fanon, *Black Skin*, 28.

20 Fanon, *Black Skin*, 28.

21 Myriam J. A. Chancy, “Subjectivity in Motion: Caribbean Women’s (Dis) Articulations of Being from Fanon/Capécia to the *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands*,” *Hypatia* 43, no. 2 (2015): 434–49, 10.1111/hypa.12138.



modes of resistance, Fanon's understanding of racial oppression and the Black lived experience does not include the Black woman in the manner that she should be represented.

An alternative interpretation of Fanon could yield an understanding that while Fanon does not often explicitly include the Black woman in his arguments, she is included through his holistic references to the general Black lived experience. Bergner writes that, "Fanon uses the term *le noir* 'the black man.' This masculine 'universal' refers not to humankind generally, however, but to actual men—since Fanon describes these colonized subjects as studying in Paris, lusting after white women, and competing with white men for intellectual recognition."²² By pointing out the specificity of Fanon's argument in relation to Black men as in Paris, Bergner argues that even considering Fanon's "universal language" as being universal could be erroneous. Although Fanon often uses the linguistic default of man and masculine terminology, not just referencing the Black men in Paris, he could also be interpreted as including women in those definitions. Furthermore, he writes that, "the black experience is ambiguous, for there is not one Negro—there are *many* black men."²³ Additionally, he writes that, "every experience ... has to become a component of reality and consequently play a part in the restructuring of this reality."²⁴ Together, these highlight Fanon's capability of including multiple perspectives that cover different experience's understandings and their possibilities of shaping others. However, even if Fanon implicitly includes the Black woman and her lived experience, he does not consider some of the more impactful aspects of oppression that might hinder a woman of color. Moreover, his argument of combatting racial oppression only features the Black man, thus leading to the inference that only the Black man can move with the level of agency required for resistance. Despite the possible interpretation that Fanon does include the Black woman into his matrix of combatting racial oppression, this inclusion only occurs at disparate moments and does not continue throughout his work.

Although Fanon's work largely disregards the Black woman's lived experience and displaces her from his framework of resistance to both racism and colonialism, his works still can be both adapted to be used contemporarily and also still be used as a basis for critical race theory. His writings still conceptualized Black ontology and the subject/object bodily dialect, something that remains incredibly important and worthy of note today. The Black Lives Matter movement, started in July 2013

22 Bergner, "Masked Woman," 76.

23 Fanon, *Black Skin*, 115.

24 Fanon, *Black Skin*, 31.

by three Black women—Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi—purportedly draws upon these ideas introduced by Fanon according to Kimberly Ann Harris. She writes on the many recent deaths of Black men like those of Mike Brown, Philando Castile, and Trayvon Martin, arguing that the fear of their objectified Black bodies was part of both their murders and their killers' court testimonies.²⁵ These contemporary thinkers and activists still consider Fanon's ideas on subjectivity, while others like Kimberlé Crenshaw, Angela Davis, and bell hooks are able to bring feminist philosophy and writings into conversation with Fanon's works.²⁶

Fanon's works are integral in discussing Black bodily ontology; however, with the coinage of the term intersectionality, it is also true that his framework of liberation and resistance must be adapted to better include the Black woman. In acknowledging their similar and also different layers of oppression, the totality of Black oppression can be better grappled with and resisted. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon presents the Black lived experience as wholly relating to the racial oppression forced upon Black individuals by the White man. He focuses on the impact of the imposed inferiority complex for both the Black man and the Black woman, arguing that each operate differently. Based on this interpretation, I point out that he does not consider the varying experiences that encompass the totality of the Black lived experience, and instead singularly focuses on the Black man. This analysis of the Black lived experience, alongside Fanon's exclusion of the Black woman within his conception of resistance and liberation, highlights the need for gendered intersectionality within frameworks of understanding racial oppression. Only with attention to multiple perspectives and identities can there be the full acknowledgement and resistance Fanon calls for.

25 Kimberly Ann Harris, "What Does it Mean to Move for Black Lives?," *Philosophy Today* 63, no. 2 (2019): 275-91, 10.5840/philtoday2019731265.

26 bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 2014).

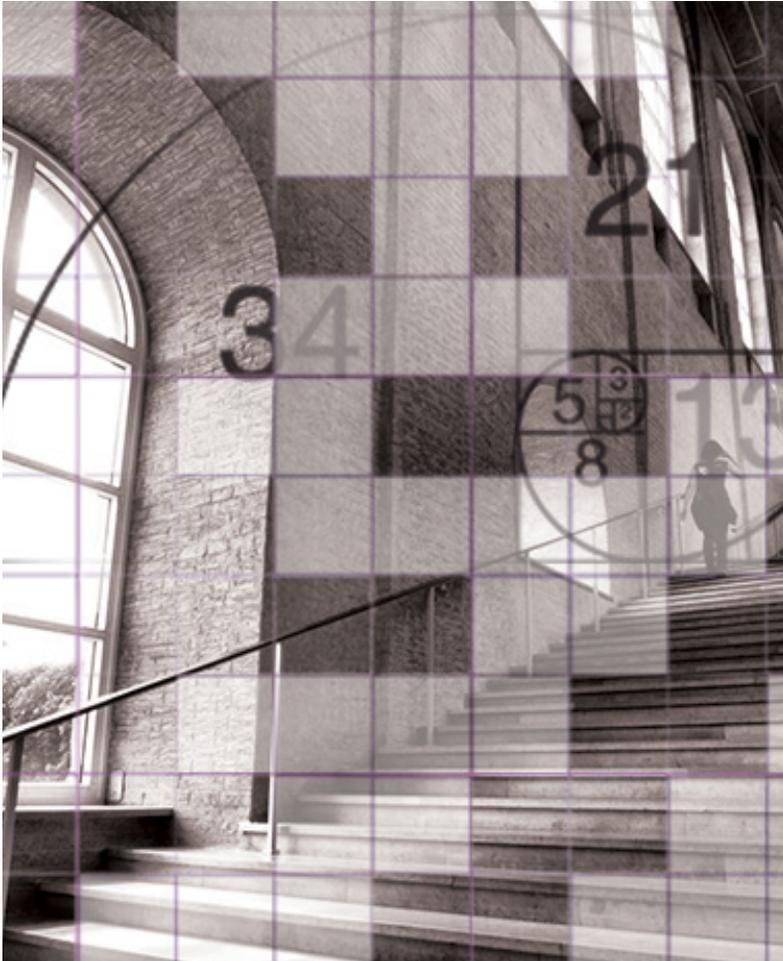




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FULL-BLOODED CONCEPTUAL REALISM AS A RESPONSE TO SKEPTICAL RELATIVISM



MICAH PHILLIPS-GARY

ABSTRACT

In this paper, I discuss full-blooded Platonism (the claim that all possible mathematical objects exist) as a response to the skeptical problem in the philosophy of mathematics as to how empirical beings can cognize non-empirical mathematical objects. I then attempt to develop an analogous position regarding the applicability of concepts to reality in response to the skeptical problem regarding how we can cognize an objective reality through human-constructed concepts. If all concepts meeting certain minimal conditions structure reality under some aspect, then objective knowledge is possible, regardless of how these concepts arose historically.



I. INTRODUCTION

Realism in the philosophy of mathematics leads naturally to an epistemological problem of access. Namely, how do we, as empirical beings in an empirical world, obtain knowledge about non-empirical mathematical objects? As Paul Benacerraf points out, a belief state (ordinarily) only counts as a knowledge state if it is caused by its object. Because non-empirical mathematical objects are non-causal, this implies that mathematical knowledge is impossible given mathematical Platonism (the claim that mathematical truths are true descriptions of such non-empirical mathematical objects). Full-blooded Platonists try to avoid this skeptical conclusion by claiming that all possible mathematical objects exist. With mere knowledge of possibility not requiring such a causal link, we can attain mathematical knowledge without mathematical objects being able to cause our belief states.

Realism as a more general metaphysical position faces a seemingly dissimilar skeptical argument with, I believe, a similar solution. All of our cognition is conceptual, even basic sense-perception. When I see a cup, I do not merely experience a bundle of sensations, but my act of perception has a conceptual content which alone allows me to come to know something in this act. But, our concepts are not set in stone. Rather, they are a product of our cultural context and place in history. A nineteenth-century gentleman would not be able to recognize my laptop as a laptop. How, then, can we attain knowledge of an independently existing reality through such concepts? Plainly, this reality must, in some way, already be “structured” by these concepts independently of our activity if a correspondence between them and our beliefs is to be possible. But, to establish such a correspondence would seemingly require some privileged position independent of any conceptual framework. In the absence of this, to maintain the possibility of objective knowledge, we must posit a multi-aspectual reality such that any conceptual framework meeting certain minimal conditions can be regarded as structuring reality in one of its aspects. Such a position I call, by virtue of the analogy with full-blooded Platonism, full-blooded conceptual realism. I argue here that this position is necessary for us to conceptualize the possibility of our attaining objective knowledge as culturally-situated subjects, just as full-blooded Platonism is necessary for us to conceptualize the possibility of our attaining mathematical knowledge as spatiotemporally-situated subjects.

II. FULL-BLOODED PLATONISM AS A RESPONSE TO BENACERRAF

Benacerraf provides a popular way of formulating the problem of how it is that knowledge of mathematical objects is possible without a causal link.¹ As philosophers, we should pursue, as much as possible, the achievement of a unified theory of knowledge and meaning. Thus, to the extent that we understand certain things about the meaning and conditions for knowledge of empirical propositions, we should like to extend these truths to apply to mathematical propositions.² But, to interpret mathematical propositions analogously with empirical ones is to say that mathematical objects exist in some strong metaphysical sense.³ Because we cannot plausibly identify such existent mathematical objects with any objects in the empirical world, we must posit them as ideal objects existing non-spatiotemporally. In other words, we must be mathematical Platonists in a sufficiently broad sense. Yet, for my belief about an empirical object to count as knowledge, the existence of the object necessarily “must figure in a suitable way in a causal explanation of [my] belief.”⁴ If we, in accord with our desire for theoretical unity, extend this principle of empirical knowledge to mathematical knowledge, then, in accord with our earlier Platonism where mathematical objects are non-spatiotemporal and thus acausal, we must deny that mathematical knowledge is possible.

Mark Balaguer counters Benacerraf by offering a positive account of how mathematical knowledge is possible despite this lack of a causal link, which he calls full-blooded Platonism. This is the claim that “all the mathematical objects which possibly *could* exist actually *do* exist.”⁵ Full-blooded Platonism gets around the requirement of a causal link for knowledge, because the correspondence between our beliefs about mathematical objects and those objects themselves is accomplished simply by the fact that whatever claim we make or mathematical theory we suggest (so long as it is logically possible or consistent, i.e., not self-contradictory), there must exist some mathematical objects for which this claim or this theory would be true. If all possible mathematical objects exist, then for me to have knowledge of mathematical objects

1 While Benacerraf’s argument is typically taken as an argument against Platonism rather than as one for skepticism, strictly speaking, its conclusion is that Platonism is incompatible with the possibility of mathematical knowledge, which implies skepticism given Platonism.

2 Paul Benacerraf, “Mathematical Truth,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 70, no. 19 (1973): 666–67, 10.2307/2025075.

3 Benacerraf, “Mathematical Truth,” 663.

4 Benacerraf, “Mathematical Truth,” 671.

5 Mark Balaguer, “A Platonist Epistemology,” *Synthese* 103, no. 3 (1995): 304, 10.1007/bf01089731.



it is sufficient for me to “dream up” an applicable mathematical object of some kind, so long as the existence of this object would not imply a contradiction.⁶

One worry about full-blooded Platonism is this: how can we know that our mathematical theories are consistent without access to the objects these theories are about? Balaguer responds to this critique by noting that our knowledge of the consistency of empirical claims does not depend on our having access to their objects.⁷ “I do not need access to the seventh child born in 1991 in order to know that the sentences asserting [them] to be female and Italian are consistent with each other.”⁸ Thus, under full-blooded Platonism, we can attain mathematical knowledge despite the lack of any metaphysical relation that would bring us into contact with them.

III. THE CULTURAL RELATIVITY OF CONCEPTS AS AN ARGUMENT FOR SKEPTICISM

Can a generalized version of full-blooded Platonism fill the role with regard to general skepticism that full-blooded Platonism does with regard to skepticism about mathematical knowledge? That is, not providing a refutation of skepticism, but rather making clear the conceptual possibility of a non-skeptical epistemological position on the basis of certain metaphysical claims. The particular kind of general skepticism I have in mind is one based on the cultural relativity of concepts. If all of our cognition is by way of concepts and all concepts are culturally relative, then how can we attain knowledge of an objective world? Why should we think that the world contains, independently of us, things corresponding to just these concepts with which we make our judgments? Friedrich Nietzsche seems to suggest an argument like this when he says, “Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions—they are metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous force.”⁹ All of our concepts are formed out of experience by way of a process of metaphor and abstraction.¹⁰ This process, obscured in the subsequent use of the concepts so formed, is both arbitrary and culturally contingent. Thus, judgments made with such concepts cannot claim to capture reality in its essential nature, only our own cognitive processes.

6 Balaguer, “Platonist Epistemology,” 304.

7 Balaguer, “Platonist Epistemology,” 320.

8 Balaguer, “Platonist Epistemology,” 320-21.

9 Friedrich Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense,” in *Truth: Engagements Across Philosophical Traditions*, ed. José Medina and David Wood (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2005), 17.

10 Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lies,” 16.

So, what does this general skepticism look like? This argument begins with the premise that all knowledge is conceptual, a relatively non-controversial claim. After all, we typically think of the immediate object of knowledge as a proposition. When I know something, what I know is a proposition, and only through this do I know an object. For example, I know of my red coffee cup (when my knowledge of it is propositional) by virtue of knowing that my coffee cup is red. Knowledge of this kind, propositional knowledge, is obviously conceptual insofar as a proposition is built up out of concepts.

We might, however, be inclined to think that perception amounts to an immediate kind of knowledge that is non-conceptual, which would thus allow us to escape from the cultural relativity of concepts. These underlying perceptions, then, would be non-conceptual and thus, at the most, biologically rather than culturally relative. Whether or not there exists such immediate sensations, Edmund Husserl's phenomenology makes it clear that such a sensation could count neither as perception nor as knowledge. For a mental state to count as knowledge or as perception, it must refer to some object as what is known or perceived, i.e., it must be intentional.¹¹ For this intentionality of a mental state, sensation alone is insufficient.¹² Sensation must be afforded sense, or meaning, by an act of consciousness for it to refer and, thus, for it to count as knowledge or as perception.¹³ Although perhaps I could passively receive sensations of redness, for me to perceive something on the basis of these, e.g., my coffee cup, requires me to afford these sensations with conceptuality.

The second premise of this general skeptical argument is that all of our concepts are culturally relative. Thus, we can only know reality insofar as it is likewise something constituted by our individual cultural contexts and conceptual frameworks. Without giving a detailed argument for this position, I can give two examples of this relativity of concepts in order to motivate the conclusion with regard to concepts in general. When we try to think of concepts that are not culturally relative, two plausible suggestions are basic sensory concepts and the concepts of logic and mathematics. It is undoubtedly on this basis that the rationalists and empiricists, in their attempts to overcome cultural particularity, turned to mathematical reason and sensory experience, respectively.¹⁴ Yet, Ludwig Wittgenstein gives us reason to think even

11 Edmund Husserl, *Ideas I*, trans. Daniel Dahlstrom (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2014), 169.

12 Husserl, *Ideas I*, 172.

13 Husserl, *Ideas I*, 173.

14 Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 178.



these concepts are culturally relative. For in a culture where everyone had a crushing fear of the number 13, they might conceivably skip 13 when counting and on the basis of this, a totally different system of mathematics than ours would arise.¹⁵ Likewise, we could imagine a culture where the colors were taught to children very differently than in ours, such that what we regard as simple or “primary” colors would be regarded as mixtures of other colors and vice-versa.¹⁶ Supposing that the case is similar with all our other concepts, the cultural relativity of all knowledge follows.

IV. SCIENCE AND ETHICS AS PRIVILEGED STANDPOINTS

While Wittgenstein denies that either mere sensation or pure reason can provide privileged positions from which to cognize an objective reality, we can find reasons to think that science and ethics can. Charles Sanders Peirce suggested the former, arguing that only in science is there “any distinction of a right and a wrong way” and therefore any possibility of knowledge or justification in a non-trivial sense.¹⁷ Emmanuel Levinas suggested the latter, arguing that culturally relative meaning is only possible “on the basis of the epiphany of a face,” i.e., the appearance of another person as one to whom I am responsible, which thus precedes culture and “enables one to judge it.”¹⁸ Without some method of intersubjective verification with reference to an independently existing object of knowledge, Peirce says, there is no sense of truth and falsity which is binding for all, or in other words, of “truth as something public.”¹⁹ Similarly, Levinas says that knowledge requires the possibility of critique and so it is only possible given the other person who puts into question my arbitrary freedom.²⁰ Else, we could draw no distinction between knowledge and opinion. Thus, by virtue of science having an independent object and of ethical responsibility being a precondition for all meaning or knowledge, they seem to escape the relativity of our culturally specific concepts.

While the idea that any objective knowledge must be in some sufficiently broad sense “scientific,” (i.e., have an independent object) the properties of which can be intersubjectively verified, and likewise

15 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics*, ed. Cora Diamond (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), 83.

16 Wittgenstein, *Foundations of Mathematics*, 235.

17 Charles Sanders Peirce, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, ed. Charles Hartshorne, Paul Weiss, and Arthur Burks (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931-1935, 1958), 5.385.

18 Emmanuel Levinas, “Meaning and Sense,” in *Collected Philosophical Papers*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987), 102; 100.

19 Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.384.

20 Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2016), 85.

must be grounded in ethical responsibility, will be significant for the position sketched out below, neither of these philosophers' views can stand alone as an adequate response to our general skeptical argument. For them to do so, either science or ethics would have to be able to provide a privileged conceptual framework in accordance with which all of objective reality could be described, along with norms to distinguish this unique "objective" reality from all the others, which would thereby be reduced to mere illusion. This is John McDowell's point when he says that to conceive of scientific reasoning broadly enough that it is even plausible that it is not itself culturally relative is to conceive of it so broadly so as to be unable to determine by means of scientific reasoning the one true conceptual framework which captures the world as it really is.²¹

At most, then, science conceived this way can give us minimal conditions for knowledge of reality, not a privileged standpoint on reality. Something similar, I think, can be said about the claim that ethics gives us objective reality in some privileged sense. For even if my responsibility to the other person must precede the particularities of culture in order to establish language, the way in which this responsibility gets actualized in concrete acts seems to vary culturally. Therefore, this responsibility does not even give us a determinate set of ethical norms, much less a way of determining reality as a whole in opposition to illusory culturally particular pictures of reality.

V. FULL-BLOODED CONCEPTUAL REALISM

Thus, all of our knowledge is mediated by concepts, but these concepts are all culturally relative. So, the reality that we know through them must likewise be culturally relative and, in this sense, not an objective reality at all. In the absence of any possibility of non-conceptual knowledge, it seems that objective knowledge is only possible if objective reality correlates with some privileged set of concepts, such that knowledge claims made using this conceptual framework can map onto said framework. Yet, neither science nor ethics provide us with such a determinate conceptual framework that could uniquely "structure" reality in this way, insofar as to conceive of these in a way that is even plausibly non-relative is to conceive of them so abstractly so as to remove the specificity necessity for them to serve such a function. Objective knowledge, thus, seems to be an impossibility.

On the surface, this skeptical argument bears little resemblance to that which we can draw from Benacerraf. Both, however, are ultimately

21 John McDowell, "Aesthetic Value, Objectivity, and the Fabric of the World," in *Mind, Value, and Reality* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 126.



based on the lack of any basis on which to decide between possible alternatives. Without some means of access, we cannot rationally decide between possible mathematical theories. Without a privileged standpoint, we cannot rationally decide between possible conceptual frameworks under which reality can be described. But, if all possible (i.e., non-contradictory) mathematical theories correctly describe some universe of mathematical objects, then such a means of access is unnecessary for mathematical knowledge. Likewise, if all possible conceptual frameworks allow us to describe some aspect of objective reality, then a privileged standpoint from which to decide between them is unnecessary for objective knowledge.

This idea, which I call full-blooded conceptual realism, requires further clarification on two points in which it differs from full-blooded Platonism. First, for full-blooded Platonism, all possible mathematical theories describe some universe of existent mathematical objects. This is obviously untenable for non-mathematical propositions. It is unique to the kind of being that mathematical objects have that all possible mathematical objects exist.²² Instead, we must say that all possible conceptual frameworks can give rise to descriptions of objective reality. A conceptual framework is not itself a theory or set of claims that can be true or false, but rather an interconnected set of concepts on the basis of which we can make claims that can be true or false. To say that these claims are descriptions of objective reality is to say that their truth or falsity does not depend on the factual existence of any subject (except insofar as they are claims about factually existent subjects). Thus, to say that all possible conceptual frameworks can give rise to descriptions of objective reality is to say that even if no factual subject existed, objective reality would still conform to the ontological structures necessary for it to be describable using concepts. This would be the case regardless of what those concepts may be and regardless of the fact that those concepts considered as cultural products arise under specific historical conditions.

Further, conceptual frameworks cannot contradict because they are not sets of propositions, and so possibility cannot be identified with being non-contradictory, as is the case with mathematical theories.²³ Instead, when we say that all possible conceptual frameworks can give rise to descriptions of objective reality, what

22 Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations: Volume 2*, trans. J. N. Findlay (Abingdon: Routledge, 2001), 250.

23 Insofar as a conceptual framework gives rise to a set of tautologies, e.g., "A bachelor is an unmarried male," there is some sense in which a conceptual framework could be logically inconsistent, but the condition here is trivial.

we mean by possibility is the possibility of making claims using a conceptual framework that can be true or false in a non-trivial sense. As we saw in section IV, some conditions for this are given by Peirce and Levinas. Namely, a claim that can be true or false in a non-trivial sense must have to do with an independent object and also must be open to other persons who are able to subject the arbitrariness of my individual ego to critique, such that intersubjective verification is possible (at least in principle). That this is (at least in part) a function of the conceptual framework with which we are making claims can be seen by thinking of Immanuel Kant's *Ding an sich*²⁴ and Wittgenstein's beetle in a box.²⁵ A conceptual framework which consisted only of such concepts as that of an incognizable *Ding an sich* lacking all conceptual structure and that of an essentially private object would not allow us to make claims that could be intersubjectively verified, and so would not be a "possible" conceptual framework in the relevant sense here.

Finally, there is one significant critique of this view that needs to be addressed. Namely, it seems that we can, under different conceptual frameworks, truly describe the same reality in seemingly contradictory ways. For example, the same motion, say, of my arm, can be described as physically-caused or as voluntarily-performed. However, is this truly a contradiction? Certainly, it is a contradiction to call an action both voluntary and involuntary, because these concepts belong to the same framework which accords them the status of being contradictory.²⁶ Likewise, to call an action both physically caused and not caused would be contradictory (though admittedly this latter concept is only a limiting concept in the conceptual framework of the physical sciences). The concepts of being caused and being voluntary, however, belong to different conceptual frameworks. Thus, whether or not the ascription of both concepts to the same reality is contradictory depends on to what extent relevant concepts in the two frameworks can be correlated with each other. While there clearly must be some correlation between concepts in the conceptual frameworks at hand, such that the same reality can be identified under these two different frameworks, this

24 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Werner Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996), 317.

25 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 4th ed., trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, P. M. S. Hacker, and Joachim Schulte (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 106.

26 This is naturally an oversimplification. Nevertheless, I think it is clear that the same action cannot at the same time be voluntary in the way that my making a carefully thought-out decision is, and involuntary in the way that snoring in my sleep is.



is not enough to establish that these latter concepts are translatable into each other's contradictory opposites.²⁷ It is not even enough to establish that any direct "translation" is possible, except for perhaps in the case of certain fundamental concepts that allow for the same object to be recognized across multiple descriptions. Unless we can establish the possibility of such a translation, we are free to consider true descriptions made under different frameworks like other true descriptions with regard to unrelated properties of the same object. For example, a word's qualities of being a noun and being eleven letters long have nothing to do with each other, and a word's having a certain number of letters could never contradict its being a certain part of speech.

Further, in proposing an alleged correlation between concepts under different frameworks, the principle of charity applies. That is to say, all other things being equal, we ought to translate descriptions made under one framework to descriptions under another such that they end up true. Thus, that there be a correlation between conceptual frameworks making it possible for true descriptions made under one framework to contradict true descriptions made under another is, while not impossible, highly implausible.

Hence, the claim that we can find contradictory descriptions of reality made under different frameworks that are both true is suspect at best. To establish that this is the case would require overwhelming evidence to overcome the principle of charity, which tells us that in positing correlations between different frameworks, we should always tend towards mapping true descriptions under one framework to true descriptions under another. Seeming examples, like that of the same movement being both voluntary and physically caused, are thus highly problematic. The minimal correlation between frameworks necessary to identify the caused movement with the voluntary movement is insufficient to show that, e.g., the concept "voluntary" maps to "not caused."

VI. CONCLUSION

In the above, I have outlined the position I call full-blooded conceptual realism. Under this view, for any possible conceptual framework (any conceptual framework allowing for the possibility

27 This is not to say that there has to be a minimal correlation between any two frameworks for them both to be able to give rise to descriptions of reality, only that if the same object can be referred to using concepts belonging to different frameworks, then there must be a minimal correlation so as to make this object identifiable as "the same" across the different ways of referring to it (e.g., there need not be any correlation between the frameworks of mathematics and of psychology).

of the intersubjective verification of judgments), there is an aspect of objective reality which these claims describe. Thus, objective knowledge is possible despite these conceptual frameworks arising from contingent historical conditions. This position is analogous to Balaguer's full-blooded Platonist position in the philosophy of mathematics, according to which all consistent mathematical theories truly describe some universe of mathematical objects.

Note that neither position provides a definitive refutation of skepticism. Rather, they serve to defuse skeptical arguments (Benacerraf's and Nietzsche's, respectively) by showing how the possibility of knowledge is still conceivable despite conditions that the skeptic claims are incompatible with this possibility. While I do think such a refutation can be produced, thereby showing that we possess objective knowledge, how we possess objective knowledge would nonetheless be inexplicable without our having clarified it in advance, as we have done here.





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BEING MORAL ISN'T QUITE
ENOUGH:
The Role of Nonmoral Virtues in
Moral Sainthood



SEYEONG HANLIM

ABSTRACT

Attempts to define morality or stress its importance are the center of ethical debates that aim to provide guidance for human life. Deviating from this goal, Susan Wolf shines a light on the significance of “nonmoral virtues” by discussing how a moral saint’s life, too immersed in morality, could be lacking in other spheres. She states that a moral saint’s life would be unattractive or dull, as one is not able to value or pursue nonmoral activities such as the arts or cooking due to one’s commitments under moral sainthood. I challenge this argument, which belittles moral sainthood in an attempt to give more credit to nonmoral qualities in life, by arguing that nonmoral virtues could be necessary and valuable for a moral saint in carrying out her duties.



I. INTRODUCTION

In “Moral Saints,” Susan Wolf explores the extent to which human lives should be moral by investigating the qualities abundant or lacking in moral saints: those that are considered the ultimate role-models of morality. She defines a moral saint as someone whose every action is maximally moral and lives solely to devote themselves to the welfare of others.¹ Although Wolf acknowledges the prevalent notion that “one ought to be as morally good as possible,” she argues that moral sainthood does not allow room for personal well-being.² Wolf then identifies qualities that are valuable, yet do not have a moral connotation. These are “nonmoral virtues,” which one can achieve through pursuing nonmoral interests, skills, or activities such as cultivating one’s talents in art, music, or cooking. Wolf elucidates that moral saints lack nonmoral excellence because they do not have time for personal projects, as moral sainthood requires the sole devotion of one’s life to society’s welfare. Hence, moral saints are “too good for [their] own well-being.”³ Wolf then considers examples of moral saints whose devotion to moral perfection prevents them from pursuing nonmoral excellence. One example is the utilitarian Loving Saint, who strives to improve the welfare of others out of genuine love for humanity. Wolf explains that a Loving Saint’s commitment to utilitarianism gives her “one thought too many” to be able to pursue nonmoral virtues with the correct motivations.⁴ Therefore, Wolf argues that moral sainthood is not a desirable form of human life as it lacks nonmoral excellence. I think that Wolf’s account is inaccurate regarding the role of nonmoral virtues in moral sainthood, particularly in that of a utilitarian Loving Saint. I believe that a moral saint can value and pursue moral and nonmoral virtues simultaneously; this is possible because nonmoral excellences are attached to the fundamental qualities of successful moral sainthood.

In section II, I argue that moral saints end up possessing nonmoral virtues in their attempts to achieve moral ends. I follow up this argument with a potential objection that a moral saint’s possession of nonmoral qualities might be coincidental; as a result, one might worry that she pursues these excellences in the wrong way.⁵ Next, I point

1 Susan Wolf, “Moral Saints,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 79, no. 8 (1982): 419-20, 10.2307/2026228.2.

2 Wolf, “Moral Saints,” 419.

3 Wolf, “Moral Saints,” 421-22.

4 Bernard Williams, “Persons, Character and Morality,” in *Moral Luck: Philosophical Papers 1973-1980*, ed. Bernard Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 18; quoted in Wolf, “Moral Saints,” 430.

5 She/her/hers pronouns are used for the author’s reference to the Moral/Loving Saint in this paper.

out that a utilitarian Loving Saint, in particular, would value nonmoral interests as a part of her own flourishing as she understands how they are crucial to humankind's flourishing. I then address the concern that the Loving Saint's ability to see values of nonmoral practices in others might not extend to herself. Introducing section IV, I consider the counterargument that even if a Loving Saint values nonmoral interests correctly, her appreciation might be shallow, as she will always prioritize morality. I claim that even if the Loving Saint might give up nonmoral interests when they conflict with her moral duties, this fact does not weaken her attachment to the nonmoral virtues. I suggest that she is only valuing nonmoral things from both moral and nonmoral perspectives, which can be intrinsically consistent with one's moral sainthood. I conclude this paper with a consideration that nonmoral and moral virtues might be interchangeable.

II. CAN MORAL SAINTHOOD REQUIRE NONMORAL EXCELLENCE?

Wolf states that, "A moral saint will have to be very, very nice ... as a result, he will have to be dull-witted or humorless or bland."⁶ This owes to the fact that moral saints are unduly dominated by the desire to achieve moral perfection, which subsumes or demotes their other desires and requires them to negate the pursuit of nonmoral projects.⁷ According to Wolf, these traits make moral saints unattractive or undesirable, because they lack nonmoral virtues developed through genuine appreciation of nonmoral interests. However, Wolf does not consider the possibility that nonmoral virtues might also be attainable through moral activities or interests. Achieving moral perfection requires tremendous effort, which as a result, can cultivate a combination of nonmoral virtues such as rationality, intelligence, persistence, courage, or humor in a moral saint. For example, a moral saint's duties that Wolf describes as "feeding the hungry or healing the sick or raising money for Oxfam" cannot be done by someone who lacks nonmoral virtues.⁸ One needs to be persistent enough to communicate with a starving child who refuses to take medicine, rational and intelligent enough to take care of a dying elder who gets violent out of pain, witty and personable enough to persuade donors or lead an auction for charity, and passionate and courageous enough to persist in moral sainthood while facing the burdens of accompanying duties. What is required of one to become a moral saint includes nonmoral strengths and virtues and pursuing morality does not inhibit

6 Wolf, "Moral Saints," 422.

7 Wolf, "Moral Saints," 424.

8 Wolf, "Moral Saints," 421.



one from enriching such human qualities, but rather pushes one to develop them. In sum, moral sainthood mandates efforts and skills to successfully perform moral activities that capture what Wolf views as valuable in nonmoral excellence.

Following this sense, a philosophical concept that might signal the essentiality of nonmoral qualities in moral sainthood is the idea of *phronēsis* or practical wisdom. An Aristotelian-inspired concept, *phronēsis* means, “a true and practical state involving reason, concerned with what is good and bad for a human being.”⁹ *Phronēsis* involves the knowledge that enables its possessor to “reason correctly about practical matters” to do what is right in any circumstance,¹⁰ and only those that are morally excellent can possess this ability through life experience.¹¹ For instance, if a moral saint’s duties include directing a moral organization, she can utilize her practical wisdom in assigning the appropriate amount and type of tasks to the right kind of workers so that the organization functions well for its purpose. Since *phronēsis* is tied to the ability to make correct decisions involving morality in this case, its nonmoral value might not be evident. However, someone who is cunning or wicked can also possess the practical knowledge involved in *phronēsis* to commit evil.¹² Therefore, this general ability to make good choices concerning practical matters to the extent to which that could be applied in nonmoral contexts seems to depict a nonmoral quality. In other words, *phronēsis* is not necessarily moral, but one cannot become a successful moral saint without it. As practical wisdom is an essential element in moral sainthood, this makes a case that a moral saint would have to develop a quality that we might classify as nonmoral and is therefore perfecting certain nonmoral abilities in pursuing a moral life.

With regard to the argument concerning the role of nonmoral virtues in moral sainthood, Wolf acknowledged that aspirations to moral sainthood can give one a reason to work hard to develop nonmoral virtues such as courage.¹³ While she noted that one might not be liable to be successful in developing certain nonmoral virtues such as wit and charm for moral reasons, she claimed that the perspective of a moral saint can certainly make one appreciate the instrumental value of

9 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Roger Crisp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 107.

10 Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 12.

11 Gideon Rosen et al., “Virtue Ethics,” in *The Norton Introduction to Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2018), 824; 828.

12 Rosen et al., “Virtue Ethics,” 829.

13 Susan Wolf, email message to author, October 30, 2020.

these qualities in achieving moral ends.¹⁴ Here, Wolf highlights how a moral saint's appreciation of such human qualities comes from a moral perspective. Even if the moral saint can attain nonmoral excellence while pursuing moral perfection, she is not thereby treating nonmoral qualities with the correct motivations. In fact, when asked "whether the things that we find appealing about the nonmoral excellences might be conceived of in such a way that it is purely formal so that those abilities might manifest themselves in the moral saint," Wolf answered that, "there's an incompatibility between moral sainthood, and what I find most attractive in these (nonmoral) ideals that is not just about the skills or activities that they engage with but about their motivations and relationship to these activities."¹⁵

In short, Wolf is saying that what we value about nonmoral virtues is something more than the formal traits describable under the very general heading that manifests different sets of nonmoral human skills. This leads to a fundamental concern that even if moral saints are capable of attaining nonmoral excellence in practice, they are not doing so with the correct motivations, as they develop these qualities accidentally or supplementally while achieving their moral ends rather than directly out of passion with no regards to moral contexts. My reply in the next section offers a different view to this discussion.

III. CAN MORAL SAINTS APPRECIATE NONMORAL PRACTICES?

Wolf denotes that, "for a moral saint, the existence of these (nonmoral) interests or skills can be given at best the status of happy accidents."¹⁶ Nevertheless, it does not occur to me that moral saints would consider nonmoral interests to be valuable only within their contribution to morality and dismiss them when they do not. To expand on this point, I will focus on the specific example of Loving Saints and how they would be able to value nonmoral interests "for their own sakes as distinct, independent aspects of the realization of human good."¹⁷ Loving Saints can appreciate nonmoral activities outside of the limited circumstances of these values aligning with their moral missions by chance. This is because Loving Saints are genuinely concerned about the flourishing of other humans, and thus, the flourishing of humankind in general, and nonmoral practices are the fundamental attributes of life that are crucial to an individual or

14 Wolf, email message to author.

15 Susan Wolf, (special guest at lecture by John McHugh, Denison University, Granville, OH, September 17, 2020).

16 Wolf, "Moral Saints," 425.

17 Wolf, "Moral Saints," 425.

humankind's well-being. A Loving Saint pursues morality out of love, as she is nice, sacrifices herself to put others' happiness first, and derives happiness from doing so.¹⁸ To pursue maximum happiness for the whole population, she will be attentive and interested in others' lives and welfare. Then, she will observe how nonmoral interests are meaningful in a way that is essential to human lives. For instance, by observing someone who devotes thousands of hours into the somewhat bizarre act of trying to control a ball with two feet or someone who will never trade a childhood art piece even for a million dollars, a Loving Saint will come to an understanding that there are things in life that people unconditionally love and value. While promoting others' welfare, a Loving Saint will learn how some activities bring meaning to others' lives and that such qualities do not always have to do with morality. When she sees that nonmoral activities or interests are crucial in human life, she will come to recognize their worth outside of their contribution to morality or overall happiness. It is hard to believe that a Loving Saint's attitude toward nonmoral practices would remain superficial after the realization of their essentiality for human well-being. Nonetheless, one can worry that even if a Loving Saint can see the true values of nonmoral interests or activities in other people, she might still be unable to value them for herself. But once a Loving Saint can value nonmoral practices in others, it would be an artificial stretch to assume that she will not thereby value them in herself as well. A Loving Saint's goal in life is to maximize overall happiness, which includes helping others cultivate nonmoral qualities. As a product of her moral efforts in achieving moral perfection, she also cultivates nonmoral excellence within herself, as shown in section II. Given these reasons, if a Loving Saint is already committed to the understanding that it is good for others to pursue a nonmoral project, it would be natural for her to think that for herself as well.

IV. IS THERE A BETTER WAY TO VALUE NONMORAL PRACTICES?

Wolf agrees that a Loving Saint could, for instance, recognize that others love art for its own sake, and thus, support herself in her efforts to appreciate art if there is nothing more morally valuable to do with her resources.¹⁹ Wolf implied that if a Loving Saint saw the beauty in a work of art, while doing so, she would unavoidably value it for its own sake. The problem is that, in a certain hypothetical situation, the saint might face a tension between her moral sainthood requiring her to donate to a food bank for maximal general happiness and her genuine

18 Wolf, "Moral Saints," 420.

19 Wolf, email message to author.

appreciation of nonmoral interests making her want to spend that money to go to a museum to enjoy art for its own sake. While there are people who love art so much that sometimes they make the latter choice, a Loving Saint will be inclined to do what is strictly moral. This means that while a Loving Saint appreciates nonmoral virtues, such appreciation is not free of saintly moral duties or concerns. Wolf explained that in this case, the Loving Saint appreciates art in the right way but does so weakly; she truly loves art but gives it up at the drop of a moral hat.²⁰ To introduce Wolf's idea as a formal objection, one might contend that a Loving Saint's appreciation of nonmoral values remains weak even after the realization that nonmoral interests are crucial to human well-being. This is because a Loving Saint will always be willing to exchange her enjoyment of nonmoral activities for other things that produce a greater amount of general happiness.²¹ I respond that there is no reason to think that a moral saint's willingness to give up nonmoral activities in the face of a moral demand indicates her shallowness of attachment to the former. As shown in sections II and III, a moral saint develops nonmoral virtues as a necessary journey to successful moral sainthood, and she also sees the true value of nonmoral activities outside of moral contexts. These qualities remain in her even if she has to prioritize moral duties, and questioning her depth of commitment to nonmoral values in these instances of conflict seems to be a different question.

On the other hand, a plausible counterpoint I see here is that the Loving Saint's consideration for her moral duties in giving up nonmoral activities signifies that her engagement in nonmoral interests will always involve moral perspectives, which might indicate a wrong approach to nonmoral values. However, what I see going on here is not the Loving Saint valuing nonmoral interests less than moral ones as a result of her moral concerns, but her valuing nonmoral things from both moral and nonmoral perspectives. In "Persons, Character and Morality," Bernard Williams discusses Charles Fried's example of a man who takes both moral permissibility and personal relationship into account in his decision to save his wife's life over his friend's, given that the two people are in an equal situation of danger.²² Williams responds by saying, "But this construction provides the agent with one thought too many: it might have been hoped by some (for instance, by his wife) that his motivating thought, fully spelled out, would be the thought that it was his wife, not that it was his wife and that in situations of this

20 Wolf, email message to author.

21 Wolf, "Moral Saints," 429-30.

22 Charles Fried, "The Value of Life," *Harvard Law Review* 82, no. 7 (1969): 1432-33, 10.2307/1339754.



kind it is permissible to save one's wife."²³ Williams assumes that if a man chooses to save his wife, the optimal reason to do so is that she was his loved one, not because it was his moral duty. He asserts that if the man starts to think about the moral permissibility in this situation, such moral concern indicates that he is now having "one thought too many."²⁴ I agree with the view that it is wrong for the man to save his wife solely for moral reasons, but I do not find it an issue to take into account both nonmoral interests (his love toward the wife) and the moral permissibility in making such a decision. For instance, after the man rescues his wife, he might put his daily duties or activities aside to visit his wife at the hospital, and there might be two reasons behind doing so: one is he loves his wife, and the other is it is morally right to visit his wife. I do not find a reason for the man's moral reflection to bring "one thought too many" for him as the fact that his decision involved moral considerations does not diminish his nonmoral interest, or in this case, the love he has for his wife. These are simply two different spheres of consideration and the fact that the man's conduct involved both nonmoral and moral interests does not signify that he is treating the other virtue shallowly. I believe that there is nothing intrinsically inconsistent with the Loving Saint's moral sainthood about valuing nonmoral things both morally and nonmorally at the same time. For example, when a Loving Saint engages in developing musical talents, she might be doing so to increase overall utility in the world to achieve her moral ends, but she may also value and appreciate such nonmoral activities outside of utilitarian moral contexts. This does not signify that the Loving Saint is lightly treating the nonmoral project but regards it as valuable, both morally and nonmorally, which is possible, if not good. It is not misguided for a Loving Saint to value nonmoral things from both moral and nonmoral perspectives, and it might be an overstatement to say someone is weakly attached to a nonmoral project if there is a slightest moral consideration involved in doing so.

V. FURTHER DISCUSSION: ARE MORAL AND NONMORAL QUALITIES CONNECTED?

So far, I have shown that moral saints cannot perform their moral duties without nonmoral virtues and will develop such qualities to successfully meet their moral ends. Furthermore, a Loving Saint will be able to value nonmoral practices for their own sake as she understands, through observation, that they are essential to others' and humankind's flourishing. To the worry that a Loving Saint's ability to see the true value of nonmoral practices in others does not mean that

23 Williams, "Persons, Character and Morality," 17-18.

24 Williams, "Persons, Character and Morality," 17-18.

she can do so in herself, I respond that the extension of a Loving Saint's attitude toward other people is a product of her care for them, and their flourishing can be built in for herself as well. In response to the other concern that moral saints value nonmoral practice in a shallow manner—as they might ultimately prioritize morality—I suggest that a moral saint is merely valuing nonmoral qualities from both nonmoral and moral perspectives, which is consistent with moral sainthood. My claim in this essay has been that both moral and nonmoral qualities are essential for moral sainthood, as a Loving Saint needs to cultivate nonmoral excellence to attain moral perfection, while she values the nonmoral interests the right way.

I would like to end by exploring the possibility that nonmoral and moral qualities are intertwined. Wolf argues that moral saints can only cultivate nonmoral qualities by accident while pursuing their moral ends.²⁵ The fact that the pursuit of a moral quality may naturally lead to an acquisition of a nonmoral quality suggests that these two aspects are intertwined, as one might entail the other. This can be further demonstrated by Wolf's examples of what constitutes cultural ideals and my argument of what moral sainthood requires of moral saints. Wolf implies that some degree of morality is a necessary condition of personal excellence when she gives examples of people who are not moral saints but are cultural ideals, as she mentions, "there is certainly nothing immoral about the ideal characters or traits."²⁶ What this suggests is that there is a minimal bar of moral permissibility that one has to cross in order for the life dedicated to nonmoral qualities to be acceptable. Similarly, moral saints must have some virtues that, strictly speaking, are nonmoral to achieve their moral ends. For instance, there are figures who seem to be maximally moral but are lacking in practical or nonmoral abilities which get in their way of attaining moral perfection. Nonmoral qualities are indispensable to moral sainthood as one cannot pursue the task of caring for others' welfare without a genuine understanding or acquisition of such qualities.

Engaging with "Moral Saints" and Wolf's personal insight, I understood that her ultimate conclusion is not that life dedicated to morality is unattractive, but nonmoral virtues are just as valuable as moral ones. Nonetheless, Wolf might have overstated the potential criticisms of the moral saint in the process of making her argument that life dedicated to nonmoral ideals is defensible. As nonmoral and moral spheres are connected, I believe that it would be possible to emphasize the pursuit of nonmoral qualities without necessarily criticizing or undermining the life dedicated to moral sainthood as barren or undesirable.

25 Wolf, "Moral Saints," 425.

26 Wolf, "Moral Saints," 422.





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CLASHING CONSCIOUSNESS: A Cure for Modern Medicine's Epistemic Privilege



BRADLEY HOLDER

ABSTRACT

In this paper, I consider practical strategies for resolving the epistemic injustice that ill persons face when seeking medical treatment. My arguments will expand upon those initially made by Havi Carel and Ian James Kidd in “Epistemic Injustice in Healthcare: A Philosophical Analysis.” My approach to this problem is twofold. First, I will demonstrate how the phenomenological toolkit, as it currently stands, emphasizes the patient’s experience and leaves the doctor’s experience unadjusted. After this, I will explain how the toolkit can be improved to include the doctor’s perspective.



I. INTRODUCTION

A hospital is, in many ways, an excellent microcosm of the society within which it exists. In the developed world, we see public interest colliding rather chaotically with private interest, we see highly trained and well-paid medical personnel scrambling to treat a perhaps unsustainable plethora of patients, and we see chronically ill persons, a special type of patient, whose schedule of visits to the doctor's office is not quite as terminal as the illness they probably possess, consistently overstepped and ignored. All this, and more, in the spirit of the scientific method. What is it exactly that causes and permits this overstepping, and what might we, as philosophers and medical professionals, do to fix it?

The issue stems primarily from the disproportionate values assigned to the knowledge of the doctor and the knowledge of the chronically ill patient. Because medicine is, in fact, an applied science, the level of importance granted to objectively acquired data, like lab results for example, always exceeds that of subjective testimony, such as the patient's feelings of pain or discomfort. This type of prejudice ensures that modern healthcare professionals (HCPs) regularly devalue the testimony of their patients, even when said testimony pertains to the patient's wellness plan, simply out of convention: "The patient can't possibly know more about their cancer than I do. They're just a patient. I'm the doctor." This sense of entitlement, acquired from, among other things, the social prestige of the position, is called epistemic privilege and is the source of the mistreatment of chronically ill persons. In the following, I will refer to this mistreatment as epistemic injustice.

The question remains, however: How can the study of philosophy rid the medical field of epistemic privilege and epistemic injustice? Something must be done beyond simply proving that patient testimony is useful. What needs to happen, then, is that doctors must be given the opportunity to properly see the patient not merely as an object but also as a subject. If the patient/doctor interaction can be altered to include a mandated and overseen shared experience, then compassion will prevail, and the significance of the patient's testimony will be reasserted.

In the following sections, I will provide a critical summary of Havi Carel and Ian James Kidd's essay, "Epistemic Injustice in Healthcare: A Philosophical Analysis," in addition to providing a counterargument to the authors' conclusion. I will demonstrate that while Kidd and Carel's "phenomenological toolkit," as it stands, may be useful against individual instances of epistemic injustice, unless it undergoes considerable revision, it will be unable to affect the much larger

problem of epistemic privilege.¹ The altered toolkit, after these revisions have been implemented, will include three steps: (1) bidirectional expression of intent, (2) formal mediation, and (3) posthumous review. I will explain the details as well as the significance of these steps at considerable length in the pages that follow.

II. CRITICAL SUMMARY OF CAREL AND KIDD'S ARTICLE

Havi Carel and Ian James Kidd, in “Epistemic Injustice in Healthcare: A Philosophical Analysis,” explain the various types of epistemic injustice that occur within modern medical practice between doctors and patients. They attempt to determine the exact source of this epistemological imbalance—i.e., the medical practitioner’s unquestioned authority over the patient—and ultimately provide a “phenomenological toolkit” to allow patients to express their concerns and beliefs regarding their respective illnesses. This expression of concern is supposed to enable the patient to experience a type of catharsis; furthermore, the doctor, by virtue of having witnessed this expression, can better sympathize with the patient’s illness.

The authors divide epistemic injustice into two broad categories—testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice—the former referring to instances where a patient’s testimony is devalued (i.e., not believed) and the latter referring to instances where a patient is not given the opportunity or ability to communicate properly with their doctor.

Epistemic privilege is the mechanism by which ill persons experience epistemic injustice. The healthcare industry, as an archetype of society, encourages a delimiting hierarchy of values, including, but not limited to, certain modes of communication. As aforesaid, within this system, the doctor, in part because of the sheer convenience of it, possesses a flexibility of expression not shared by the patient they treat. The most immediate consequence of this privilege is the ability, both as a passive and active force, to determine which modes of communication are valid. Their epistemic privilege, then, is twofold; on the one hand, their knowledge is considered superior by default, both internally and externally, and on the other, they, alone, decide how the broader conversation develops.

Consequently, Carel and Kidd use vocabulary reminiscent of social activism. This diction suggests that the issue is not merely

1 Havi Carel and Ian James Kidd, “Epistemic Injustice in Healthcare: A Philosophical Analysis,” *Medicine, Health Care and Philosophy* 17, no. 4 (2014): 531, 10.1007/s11019-014-9560-2.



a philosophical (or scientific) one—consisting of abstractions and hypotheticals—but one of a specific, human importance: relevant, applicable, and necessary. In this way, “ill persons” are analyzed as a subset of disenfranchised people, and HCPs are deemed socioeconomically exalted, or “privileged.”

Spread throughout Carel and Kidd’s analysis of how a culture of medical professionals has continued to unjustifiably objectify their patients is the suggestion that what best characterizes a successful patient/doctor relationship is absolute trust given and received by both parties. When hermeneutical injustice occurs, and a patient is not given the tools by which to communicate their pain or their concerns, the lack of communication contributes to a lack of trust. Similarly, when a doctor disregards a patient’s testimony (i.e., testimonial injustice) as frivolous or unprofessional, the patient is discouraged from providing testimony in general. Carel and Kidd write

But we might also find that even when the clinician’s assumption of epistemic authority in relation to matter x is correct, the clinician’s style of interaction is overly dismissive. Her disregard of the patient’s perspective on x might still be detrimental to the patient’s well-being, not least since the judgment that one’s testimonies have been disregarded tends to undermine one’s ability and willingness to engage in further interpersonal exchanges.²

The clinician’s style, irrespective of content, can damage the trust necessary for the doctor to adequately do their job, which is ensuring the mental and physical well-being of the patient.

Perhaps most intriguing is the authors’ solution to the issue of epistemic injustice: the phenomenological toolkit. According to Carel and Kidd, “It provides a flexible individual tool which patients and clinicians can use to develop their understanding of their illness experiences. It includes three steps: [1] bracketing the natural attitude, [2] thematizing illness, and [3] reviewing the ill person’s being in the world.”³ For Carel and Kidd, the patient’s lack of trust in the self as well as their overwhelming “trust” for their doctor—although perhaps holy dread is a better term—coupled with the doctor’s overwhelming trust in themselves and abundant lack of trust in their patient is the precise social climate that allows epistemic injustice to thrive. The best way, then, to undermine this process is for the patient to derive a specific meaningfulness from their ill state (a type of objectification: an ownership) and for the doctor to derive a specific meaningfulness from the patient (a type of subjectification: a letting-go). Taken together,

2 Carel and Kidd, “Epistemic Injustice in Healthcare,” 531.

3 Carel and Kidd, “Epistemic Injustice in Healthcare,” 537-38.

the three steps of Carel and Kidd's phenomenological toolkit allow the patient to experience their illness in a way that is comfortable and uninhibiting. It is assumed—because the authors do not discuss the toolkit from the doctor's perspective—that the medical professional, by virtue of having seen this phenomenon occur, is now made aware of the patient's actual ontology.

The toolkit's first step, bracketing the natural attitude, is designed to permit both the patient and clinician to observe the illness, not as a disease entity, but as a total experience. The focus, here as elsewhere, is on patient testimony—ultimately in the hopes that they may perceive the illness in less prescriptive ways. Thematising the illness brings into question the various perspectives that HCPs, patients, and family members may have vis-à-vis the illness's identity function—e.g., what the HCP may see as malignant and objectively bad, the patient may see as an essential part of themselves.⁴ Carel and Kidd suggest that this step of the toolkit be applied via focus group. The final step, by way of practical application, encourages the patient to consider themselves as existing in the world in the newly-defined context of the disease experience. It is the culmination of the first two steps and occurs both individually and subjectively, i.e., independent of the HCP.

While the central thesis of “Epistemic Injustice in Healthcare” is for the most part exemplary, it does suffer from one major blindspot, inasmuch as it fails to address the actual source of the problem: it does nothing, or at least very little, to combat the epistemic privilege possessed by HCPs. In this vein, the paper would have benefited greatly from a clearer explanation of how the phenomenological toolkit directly adjusts the doctor's perception of the patient—the most lasting change, as it were, occurring from within.

III. MY ARGUMENT

Considering the risk/benefit of implementing any such toolkit for any such egalitarian purpose, the authors' assumptions regarding the existence of epistemic injustice against ill persons seem plausible enough to warrant reform of the kind described. The phenomenological toolkit, in permitting ill persons to express themselves, could potentially resolve both complaints, albeit in different ways. What is perhaps most concerning about the toolkit, however, is that it does not apply to the doctor's own subjective experience enough. While the problem of systemic epistemic injustice is sociopolitical, it is also philosophical, insofar as the epistemic imbalance results not only from a lack of trust, socioeconomic status, or even professional

4 Essential to this step is the juxtaposition of distinct, though not necessarily antithetical, viewpoints.



authority, but also a lack of empathy. Both doctor and patient represent complex, subjective states of being, such that a truly useful forum for open communication ought to involve more than just an opportunity for the patient to speak and be heard. This means that the boundary of the phenomenological toolkit needs to be broadened.

As it stands, the first two of its three steps—bracketing the natural attitude toward illness and thematizing illness—do encourage some involvement from clinicians. Carel and Kidd suggest, in the former, that both doctor and patient, instead of believing in the disease entity itself, ought to learn to see the disease as it expresses itself through the patient’s direct experience (e.g., through symptoms, fear of death, et cetera). Similarly, in explaining the second step, the authors recognize that, “[patients, family members, and health professionals] each will thematize an illness differently.”⁵ It is the third step, however—“reviewing the ill person’s being in the world”—that isolates the ill person’s experience from that of the doctor.⁶ What is more, each step can be improved by encouraging the patient to access the clinician’s own subjective experience.

Because one’s preconceptions are inextricably linked with one’s sense of identity (or one’s subjectivity), the only way for these preconceptions to be constructively challenged is for them to clash with another identity, forcing the objectification of one’s own subjectivity, which naturally facilitates empathy (i.e., the acknowledgement of an equally valid subjectivity in someone else). This cannot be a passive experience. Carel and Kidd’s undeveloped toolkit, even without the steps required to accomplish this, already has this goal in mind: “The toolkit is a patient resource, but it is also aimed at training clinicians. If clinicians are trained in this way and, consequently, become more open to patients’ experiences and better able to interpret them, this would be yet another way to address the hermeneutical gap.”⁷

I suggest three amendments be made to better realize Carel and Kidd’s goals: (1) bidirectional expression of intent, (2) formal mediation, and (3) posthumous review. (1) The doctor, in addition to the patient, will be invited to participate in each of the three steps of the phenomenological toolkit, not passively but actively. This means that both patient and doctor will be given the opportunity to reevaluate what it means to be ill, specifically in relation to the self. The doctor and patient will each reassess the disease entity, its thematization,

5 Carel and Kidd, “Epistemic Injustice in Healthcare,” 538.

6 Carel and Kidd, “Epistemic Injustice in Healthcare,” 538.

7 By “hermeneutical gap,” Carel and Kidd are referring to the communication gap caused by hermeneutical injustice; See Carel and Kidd, “Epistemic Injustice in Healthcare,” 537.

and also how these alterations affect each of their roles in the doctor/patient relationship. In this renewed environment, the doctor will be encouraged, just like the patient, to express their beliefs/perspectives with respect to each of Carel and Kidd's steps. Unless the doctor subjectively experiences the patient subjectively experiencing the doctor, it runs the risk that the patient may feel understood without it actually being the case. This, as it were, treats the symptom but not the disease. (2) Formal mediation will include a trained professional supervising the dialogue between doctor and patient, ensuring that it is clear and symmetrical. The mediator will also document the implementation of the toolkit. It is important that the mediator approach the exchange free of bias. (3) The last step will include an uninvolved board of clinicians and volunteer patients/mediators reviewing all pertinent documentation, evaluating the overall efficacy of the exchange, suggesting improvements, and reinforcing effective techniques. This final step is significant in that it takes place after the toolkit has been implemented. Its aim is to improve the efficacy of future toolkits.

I am well aware that these suggestions involve a drastic reconfiguration of common healthcare practices, most of which will be rather expensive and time-consuming to implement, but—as many have said before me and are sure to say again—human equality, if anything, is worth the trouble.⁸

IV. COUNTERARGUMENT/OBJECTION TO MY VIEW

Readers will notice two notable weaknesses in my thesis. The first addresses the efficacy of the model, and the second addresses its efficiency. In an attempt to legitimize the personhood of the patient to the doctor, I have suggested that the doctor's personhood concurrently be demonstrated to the patient. This requires that Carel and Kidd's phenomenological toolkit—the aim of which is to give the patient's word with respect to their illness more epistemic value, to the doctor and to themselves—extend itself out to the direct experience of the doctor. This runs the risk, however, of reestablishing, by default, the epistemic privilege experienced by the doctor (i.e., before the application of the toolkit). Taking into consideration that the ultimate goal of the toolkit is to lend a voice to the voiceless—in the form of phenomenological expression—if the doctor, who already possessed a rather deafening voice to begin with, is elevated in concert with the patient, then the old dynamic (i.e., of a doctor who systematically holds more epistemic authority than the patient) has simply been reinstated.

8 Training, recruiting, and paying full-time mediators is the most considerable of these administrative concerns.



Injustice stems from an imbalance or an inequality. While it is certainly a point of contention to admit it, the only viable method of reinstating equality (i.e., correcting the imbalance) is by an act, however temporary, of inequality.

What is more, the application of my modified toolkit, which includes three steps—bidirectional expression of intent, formal mediation, and posthumous review—is almost impossible to implement unless at great financial cost to the healthcare industry. Because of its specific and formal structure—a quality that Carrel and Kidd’s unmodified toolkit lacks—the toolkit I propose requires immense administrative overhauls, redistribution of funds, and even the generation of a new career field. Unless it can be demonstrated that these changes are effective (e.g., in some sort of clinical trial) not to mention how they will be funded, the risks associated with making these changes outweigh the benefits.

V. RESPONSE TO OBJECTION

While these critiques are reasonable, they are founded upon incorrect assumptions and the misrepresentation of my overall argument. Left unchecked, Carrel and Kidd’s phenomenological toolkit fails to adequately address the doctor’s perspective. My objective—different from theirs—is to correct not epistemic injustice, but epistemic privilege. To address the first critique, unless the doctor more actively participates in the patient’s experience (regarding their own illness), like a conversation or a friendship, then this is impossible. The worst possible result—though admittedly better than what we have right now—is the patient walking away having been forever changed, while the doctor remains the same. This is especially disconcerting when considering that the doctor must treat patient after patient. Claiming, as stated above, that the “only viable method of reinstating equality . . . is by an act . . . of inequality” presupposes two mistruths: that (1) systemic injustice rests on a two-dimensional plane, and that (2) justice must be retaliatory.

While it can probably be said that privilege itself must be taken away from one group before it can be given to another, the redistribution of privilege is not our objective. We do not desire patient privilege; we desire doctor/patient epistemic equality. The doctor’s perspective need not be lowered beneath that of the patient; the patient’s perspective, instead, must rise to meet the doctor’s. Despite my confidence in this motion, the second step of my modified toolkit is specifically designed to address this issue, to ensure that epistemic justice prevails in each and every doctor/patient interaction. By the introduction of an impartial third-party (ideally not medically trained

but rather professionally trained in mediation), the “old dynamic” mentioned above will be avoided.

In forming my thesis, I anticipated the possibility that these ideas may be overly ambitious and difficult to implement without adequate preparation. While this remains true, this does not, however, prove that they will not be effective or that they should not be attempted. The medical industry is incredibly lucrative, and while its resources are limited, my modified toolkit contains, if desired, a new field of expertise: doctor/patient mediation. This could have far-reaching implications not only on modern medicine, but also on many aspects of society—education, economics, and psychology—the least of which may be wealth creation. As a final note, the gradual application of these principles, if necessary, could better facilitate their total implementation.

VI. CONCLUSION

As we have seen, epistemic injustice derives from a systemic prejudice against ill persons within the medical profession. Its source, epistemic privilege, is a result of (1) HCPs overestimating the value of their own knowledge, (2) HCPs underestimating the value of their patients’ knowledge, (3) patients overestimating the value of their doctors’ knowledge, and (4) patients underestimating the value of their own knowledge. Because an undue lack of trust has caused and continues to perpetuate this issue, restoring this trust ought to be our main objective.

In this paper, I have analyzed and supplemented Carel and Kidd’s alleged solution to epistemic injustice, the phenomenological toolkit, with some additional steps of my own. The purpose of these steps is to extract the doctor’s own perspective on existential issues, so as to elicit a clash of consciousness. This clash—perhaps best summarized as a moment of epiphany during which a subjective being becomes aware of their own objectivity in addition to the subjectivity of someone else—is meant to facilitate empathy. Once this empathy has been allowed to thrive, an environment rife with open communication will restore the trust that epistemic injustice, by way of epistemic privilege, had destroyed.

Because these notions are theoretical only, and because they could, if implemented, restructure an industry that usually resists change, I recommend that researchers in the field undergo extensive experiments to validate my hypotheses. These experiments should include one-on-one discussions between doctors and patients, both addressing their individual roles in the process, with the assistance of a third-party mediator, likely being filled by a volunteer during the beginning



stages of the experiments. Researchers should then conduct individual interviews with each of the three participants, observing, if possible, a correlation between the clinician's openness and the patient's level of trust. These qualities should be tracked with an assigned number value—e.g., 1 for “not significant” and 5 for “very significant.”

As I have stated previously, the doctors of today—perhaps, tragically, without knowing it—have a vested interest in the successful eradication of epistemic privilege. The true healers—those who have taken the Hippocratic Oath in earnest, those who serve the public out of compassion and not economic or social prestige—must admit that a lack of trust between themselves and their patients, especially from their patients, inhibits the doctor in their quest to heal the sick. It must be admitted, then, that this system, in its current form—that which treats its patients like objects, that which concedes to the disease entity more humanity than the person afflicted—is inimical to the core philosophy of modern medicine. As we have seen throughout history, social change is not easily obtained. What is more, it is often difficult to imagine how necessary social change is until we have already grown accustomed to the ways in which it has improved society. We are, then, indebted—now not unlike then—to those among us who are able to see the wind before the storm. Might there, then, be no better assessment of a society's compassion than the way it treats the weakest of its citizens?



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HEGEL'S PROJECTED NIHILISM: A Study of Orientalized Buddhism



RYAN CURNOW

ABSTRACT

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's historical analysis of Buddhist philosophy not only fails as a sound interpretation of that tradition, it also well-exemplifies the Western practice of Orientalism as elucidated by Edward Said. I attempt to demonstrate this in three major parts: the nature of Orientalism as a concept and practice, the Orientalist analytical process that Hegel employs in judging Buddhism as well as religions in general, and how Hegel's understanding does not work against a more charitably interpreted Buddhist defense. Moreover, I argue that the Orientalist erroneousness of Hegel's reading deeply complicates his hierarchical philosophy of world history.



I. INTRODUCTION: THE DEEP PROBLEM OF HEGEL'S ANALYSIS

Few figures in the history of Western thought represent the mindset of Orientalism better than the German Idealist philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Moreover, few prominent systems of thought originating from the so-called Orient have been as significantly marred by the reductionism of Orientalism, both in its popular reputation as well as with the opinions of scholars, as Buddhism. Uncoincidentally, these two subjects are related. Hegel, as he and others did with many other rich systems of thought born in Asian countries, imperialistically swept the systematic philosophy of Shakyamuni Buddha and his many intellectual successors into his grand vision of a hierarchically structured world-system of religions. In doing so, Hegel ultimately served as one of the first prominent intellectual figures of the West to cement the popular superficial understanding of Buddhism as a form of crude nihilism. Through his reductive and instrumentalizing attempt to reveal Buddhism as a religion that is supposedly obsessed with indeterminate Nothingness, and therefore as inferior in the ordering of history (an understanding of the religion which he gained through superficial and secondhand European accounts), Hegel's obfuscating analysis exhibits some of the essential attributes of Edward Said's conception of Orientalism. Moreover, the fact of Hegel's Orientalism, the fact of his erroneousness, both in his interpretation of Buddhism and in his subsequent use of it in constructing his Eurocentric view of religious history, poses a deep challenge for his overall system as it is oriented around the latter formulation. The problem of Hegel's Orientalism is not just that his descriptive interpretation of Buddhism is significantly false, but that this hermeneutic inaccuracy puts his historical-religious teleological project into question.

II. WHAT IS ORIENTALISM?

Although Said employs multiple definitions of the term, the broad meaning of Orientalism, relevant to the aim of analyzing Hegel's comparative philosophy, is encapsulated in the West's self-defining through a negative characterization of the Other. However, for the purpose of briefly noting the influence of Hegel's views on the history of Buddhism's Western reception, it is also worth mentioning another meaning. Orientalism may also be conceived as an epistemic representation of the discourse of power between the West and the East, more materially speaking.¹ This dynamic, in which the act

1 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 6.

of portraying another culture in a certain way subordinates them in the eyes of the depicting society, is naturally influenced by the intellectual culture of the aforementioned society. Hegel, as one of the most influential intellectuals in the history of Western thought, consequently, has a clear role in bringing about this initially conceptual and subsequently social subordination upon the culture of Buddhism. This is all rooted, of course, in Hegel's system of thought itself. What Hegel's system of thought employs is notably comparable to the more theoretical methodology of Orientalism introduced above. This is the conception of Orientalism which is centered around an idea of the Orient as one of Europe's "deepest and most recurring images of the Other."² The Orientalist mindset uses the Other—that is, the Middle East and Asia—to establish oppositional binaries which portray the West in a positive light and the East in a negative light. One of the most prominent and impactful of these binaries is the supposed distinction between European rationality and non-European irrationality.³ It is in this way that the philosophical nature of Orientalism is revealed, as a comparative venture in forming the essences of both Western and Eastern civilization. Of course, this comparative venture is, ultimately, a misrepresentative one in, at the very least, how it portrays the essence of Eastern peoples and their thought.

In trying to categorize the Orient as embodying some kind of negative aspect contrary to the Occident, the methodology which an Orientalist uses to establish this dichotomy is inherently based in overgeneralizing readings of a handful of popular cultural texts. In attempting to exhibit the Orient as irrational, among other attributes, Orientalists tend to focus on the most superficially representative pieces of text within a broad tradition and then extrapolate judgments from such texts about the culture as a spatiotemporal whole. An example of this sort of analysis would be that of Gustave von Grunebaum, an Austrian historian who strongly inherited the discourse of Orientalism concerning Arab culture. Von Grunebaum attempted to show that Islamic culture, in particular, is a monolithic, authoritarian, and irrational entity through, in part, "half-a-dozen references to Islamic texts drawn from as many periods as possible."⁴ In other words, the study which leads von Grunebaum to make such assertions of Islamic culture being based in irrationality is a study which is not founded in systematic analysis. Rather, it is founded on the glossing-over of perhaps the most obvious of literature. This reinforces Said's claim

2 Said, *Orientalism*, 1.

3 Margaret Kohn and Kavita Reddy, "Colonialism," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2017 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, last modified August 2017, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/colonialism/>.

4 Said, *Orientalism*, 298.



that one of the central dogmas of Orientalism are “abstractions about the Orient, particularly those based on texts representing a ‘classical’ Oriental civilization, are always preferable to direct evidence drawn from modern Oriental realities.”⁵ This is also exemplified by another reference of Said’s where he refers to the tendency for Arabists and Islamologists to forcefully apply doctrinal aspects of the Koran to entire particular cultures in the modern Islamic world.⁶ While, in this specific case, the dogma of Orientalism pertains to the specific studying of “classical” texts and extrapolating from those texts, this sort of principle can be generally applied to the practice of exclusively using readily available texts taken in isolation to make abstractions, which lead to judgments about the whole system. Hegel’s analysis of non-Western religions functions in precisely this manner.

III. ORIENTALISM AND THE HEGELIAN PROJECT

The Orientalist nature of Hegel’s incorrect reading of Buddhism into his world system is found in how he structured this system hierarchically and reductively as well as in the manner by which he derived it from other scholarly sources. In terms of its own theoretical content, Hegel’s writing on Buddhism is Orientalist in how he seeks to show the philosophical superiority of Western Christianity over Buddhism, and how he instrumentalizes a projected image of Buddhism to this end. Like the common Orientalist dichotomy between the rational Occident and the irrational Orient, Hegel tries to display the concretely grounded and dialectically mediated nature of Western metaphysics as a distinct accomplishment contrasted by the abstractness of Buddhism. Moreover, Hegel was able to write on this false, culturally biased dichotomy merely through the reading of the sparse and superficially documented sources on Buddhism that existed at the time. Hegel gained most of his knowledge on supposedly Buddhist concepts from the inherently incomplete encyclopedia, *Allgemeine Historie*, on Buddhism that was available during his life. Through its German mistranslations, this source provided Hegel with the term “Nothingness” as the ultimate metaphysical view of Buddhism, or what was in actuality the mistaken misinterpretation for “emptiness.”⁷ The severity of this interpretative mistake will be shown later. While Hegel cannot be blamed for the lack of accurate knowledge available on what was, at the time, such a distant tradition, he can

5 Said, *Orientalism*, 300.

6 Said, *Orientalism*, 301.

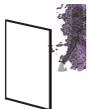
7 Timothy Morton, “Hegel on Buddhism,” in *Romanticism and Buddhism: Romantic Circles Praxis Series*, ed. Mark Lussier (College Park: University of Maryland, 2007), para. 1-42, <https://romantic-circles.org/praxis/buddhism/morton/morton.html>.

in fact be blamed and deemed a pernicious Orientalist for using the little crude information that was available to construct a Eurocentric worldview. Like the Orientalists, which Said studied in his analysis of the power relations between the West and the Middle East, Hegel took the most readily available and obvious resources for a Westerner and used those texts in isolation to extract widely judgmental claims from them. Even if Hegel had the best possible intentions in his thought, believing not that the West ought to be brought up at the intellectual expense of the East, but rather, simply that the West has attained a more sufficient rationality for the East to learn from, only makes Hegel's project more Orientalist. His genuine belief, as a matter of purported objective fact and not merely as a result of subjective supremacist intentions, in the categorical inferiority of non-Western philosophy reveals the Orientalism (par excellence!) of his thinking. In other words, even if Hegel's own intentions were not explicitly Orientalist, his acts of judgment—in which he declared to himself in the manner of, “well, this is just the way it is,” that an entire non-Western intellectual culture is rationally inferior—nonetheless were.

Even with his analysis of religion as a whole, Hegel shows a tendency towards the instrumentalizing of other systems of thought towards Western idealistic ends. His philosophy of religion is characterized primarily by how religion dialectically unfolds into more actualized forms over time. As Hegel says, “The whole of philosophy is nothing else but a study of the definition of *unity*; and likewise, the philosophy of religion is just a succession of unities, where the unity always [abides] but is continually becoming more determinate.”⁸ When Hegel speaks of unity and its becoming more determinate, he is referring to the process of reality constituting itself dialectically throughout history, or more specifically, through the process of sublation. Sublation is what occurs when two supposedly opposed concepts in history overcome their inherent contradictions and achieve a greater resolution. This dynamic is in essence what is meant by the dialectic, for Hegel.⁹ Starting from this philosophical foundation, Hegel then seeks to show how the reality of religion is determined in this way just as well. Starting from the abstract concept of religion, Hegel attempts to demonstrate how particular real-world religions arise and how, eventually, they become synthesized with an abstractly universal idea of religion into the ultimate individual consummate form. For Hegel, this consummate religion, not unexpectedly, turns

8 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 379–80.

9 Mario D'Amato and Robert T. Moore, “The Specter of Nihilism: On Hegel on Buddhism,” *Student-Faculty Collaborative Research Publications* 28 (2011): 26–27, https://scholarship.rollins.edu/stud_fac/28/.



out to be Christianity.¹⁰ This status is attained through its thoroughly mediatory elements, as conceptually embodied by the idea of the Trinity. For Hegel's view of Christian theology, the Father represents a purely immanent conception of God as "in and for itself," and the Son represents the differentiation of God into the world, as well as its reconciliation with God the Father. Along with the Holy Spirit as religious community, this view of the mediated Trinity "articulates the complex life of God, which unfolds from self-identity through differentiation and otherness to completion and wholeness."¹¹ Because God, for Hegel's conception of Christianity, does not simply reside within itself as pure Being, but rather dialectically includes itself in the specific determinations of our perceivable or conceivable reality, it is a more rational and in fact the rational system of religion. By contrast, in Hegel's view as shall be soon shown, Eastern religions such as Buddhism have not surpassed conceiving of the ultimate *qua* merely immanent or abstractly immanent, and are thus inferior.

Altogether, this reflects Hegel's broader perspective that, historically, the West stands as the ultimate end of progress, whereas the East may always resemble its lesser stages.¹² Despite the West and non-West being coeval and equally inhabited by rational human beings with remarkable forms of thought, the various cultures of the non-Western world are taken as mere prior steps leading up to the pinnacle development of the West. It is in this sense that, in the fashion of a typical Orientalist scholar, Hegel seeks to instrumentalize the meaning of the East towards the end of a positive construction of the West; that is, he takes an image of a philosophy that is purported to be a truthful description of said philosophy and uses it to uplift European intelligence into supremacy. With Hegel's altogether Eurocentric understanding of the philosophical history of religion presented, his interpretation of Buddhism and the role that its intellectual culture plays within his system will now be shown.

IV. THE HEGELIAN-ORIENTALIST CRITIQUE OF BUDDHISM

Overall, Hegel sees Buddhism as a philosophy dedicated to the indeterminate universal reality of Nothingness. In other words, this idea of Nothingness is the basis of all reality. Furthermore, as Hegel

10 D'Amato and Moore, "The Specter of Nihilism," 29-30.

11 Peter C. Hodgson, "Hegel's Philosophy of Religion," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. Frederick C. Beiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 244-45.

12 Heinrich Dumoulin, "Buddhism and Nineteenth-Century German Philosophy," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 42, no. 3 (1981): 460, 10.2307/2709187.

says, “If an analysis of these various forms were attempted, they would lose their quality; for in themselves all things are one and the same inseparable essence, and this essence is Nothingness.”¹³ The Buddhist, for Hegel, views ultimate reality as nothing more than an all-encompassing Nothingness, in that any form that is supposedly determinate or individual is, in actuality, ultimately reducible to this Nothingness. One may tentatively describe Nothingness in this sense as pure Nothingness. This is useful for these purposes, because it more clearly reflects Hegel’s notion of absolute, or pure Being. This relation is evident, for Hegel, in that when one considers pure Being—you have nothing but Being in itself without any specifiable determinants. In other words, you have Being as a purely abstract concept. Because Being is completely abstract when considered in this manner, it is in fact no different from pure Nothingness. It is for this reason that Hegel says that “The Nothing which the Buddhists make the universal principle, as well as the final aim and goal of everything, is the same abstraction” as pure Being. Hegel would say, then, that the highest metaphysical principle of Buddhism is that “the Absolute is the Nought.”¹⁴ The practical implications of this doctrine, by Hegel’s interpretation, amount broadly to the goal of uniting oneself with Nothingness. This specifically results in the attainment of doing nothing, absolutely, thus reaching a sort of complete detachment from all activities.¹⁵ Altogether, Hegel seeks to characterize Buddhism as a kind of nihilism, not in the sense that Buddhism posits that there is no meaning to life or reality, but in the sense that it worships Nothingness *qua* total nihility, both theoretically and practically. Hegel’s critique of Buddhism, then, as an inferior system of thought, is that it reifies and worships the abstract.

V. INTERPRETATIVE RECTIFICATION: “EMPTINESS,” NOT “NOTHINGNESS”

Through a rectified understanding of Buddhist “Nothingness” instead of “emptiness,” one may see that Hegel’s assessment of Buddhism as a fanatical school of nihilism is deeply erroneous. If one is to examine systematic Buddhist philosophy as it has manifested itself under the dominant discursive trends of the Mahayana sect (this sect in particular being the main instantiation of Buddhism that German scholars encountered, as with the encyclopedia referenced

13 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (Kitchener: Batoche Books, 2001), 187.

14 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Hegel’s Logic: Being Part One of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, trans. William Wallace (Pacifica: Marxists Internet Archive, 2009), 229.

15 Dumoulin, “Buddhism and Nineteenth-Century,” 462-63.



above), one may see that this metaphysical concept which Buddhism espouses is not concerned with nothingness in the relative, void-like sense, but instead specifically regarding the idea of self-existence, or inherent existence. It is in this sense that the term “emptiness” is preferable, as this Buddhist philosophy simply sought to show that no entities in existence have a metaphysically independent status; that is, all things are interdependent or relational, or “empty” of inherent existence.¹⁶ As it turns out, Buddhist doctrine in actuality could not possibly worship nihilism, because that would entail that nothingness exists in itself, which is an impossibility according to the metaphysical notion of emptiness: “For a Buddhist, to say that emptiness is absence of determination is a determination.”¹⁷ Hence, Hegel’s critique of pure Nothingness, in fact, has rather little to do with the ultimate metaphysical views of the systematic Buddhist philosophy which he claimed to understand. Rather, Hegel’s attribution of pure Nothingness to the core of Buddhism is more like a projection of his own conception of the dialectic onto the world—this dialectic, with regards to the development of religion, ultimately culminating in what he saw as the inherently more dialectical form that is Christianity. In his own religion, Hegel saw the accomplishment of critically logical thinking in religion; Christianity was to be given the prime seat philosophically. But, by Hegel’s own view, if the Christian God is to be conceived as absolute insofar as “Absolute spirit is utterly connected with everything; it is nothing but relationality,” then how can a religion in which, as expressed above, the ultimate truth is nothing else but the absolute relationality of all things be any worse off?¹⁸

The projection aspect of Hegel’s view must be stressed: what we see with the error of Hegel’s analysis of Buddhism is not only just error in itself, but, more importantly for Hegel’s own beliefs, its impact on his view of history. Hegel claims that the history of religions must be understood as a progression, as a unified development that positively unfolds more and more over time, becoming more and more united with itself. With this in mind, for Hegel, the societies of the world variably express this progression through their unequal roles in its hierarchy. By this view, although the West was indeed once just as undeveloped, non-Western regions of the world such as India or China reveal the way in which societies may be merely following the progress of the West from behind through their comparative inferiority. Hegel thus claims to offer a view from nowhere, having supposedly attained a kind of absolute or totalistic knowledge of the world and the nature

16 Morton, “Hegel on Buddhism,” para. 29.

17 Morton, “Hegel on Buddhism,” para. 40.

18 Hodgson, “Hegel’s Philosophy of Religion,” 245.

of its advancement. Now, we may see that the falsity of his particular judgments of Buddhism (alongside what are likely equally problematic interpretations of other non-Western religious-philosophical traditions) complicates this absolutizing view strongly. While Hegel claimed to have demonstrated a form of transcendentally systematic knowing of religion, in actuality, the interpretation that he employed in the foundational premises leading up to his absolutist conclusion has been revealed to be little more than a spurious mapping-onto with what are really Hegel's own notions. Hence, his conclusions are anything but transcendent; rather, they are more so utterly provincial in how they derive from what are veritably Western notions which could only describe Buddhism inaccurately.

VI. CONCLUSION: HEGELIAN HISTORY CHALLENGED

As a matter of methodology, interpretation, and instrumentalization, Hegel's philosophical treatment of Buddhism is Orientalist. Methodologically, Hegel drew his reading of Buddhism as a whole from inherently limited non-Buddhist resources which were marked by crucial mistranslations. Interpretatively, using the most essential mistranslation of "Nothingness" as opposed to "emptiness," Hegel showed the result of his Orientalist methodology through his misunderstanding of the core concept of the Mahayana Buddhist view; he interpreted the philosophy to be engaging in a conceptual reification, when in fact it was itself a critique of reification. Finally, this untrue representation of Buddhism was used to prop up Western philosophy and religion. Hegel's Western judgment believed that the wrongness of the East played an essential role in exhibiting the rightness which the West had attained. Each of these stages in the process of his Orientalist analysis also play a role in displaying how this very attempt at elevating the West fails. Given that Hegel's glorifying of his own cultural sphere hinges on the relative deficiencies of Eastern thought, exemplified in particular by Buddhism, the actual non-existence of these perceived deficiencies proves that this self-aggrandizing view of history is untenable. A more careful and charitable reading of the non-Western philosophical traditions of the world will tend to, as has been demonstrated with the case of Buddhism, reveal rational theories that are certainly comparable to those of Western traditions. Consequently, a historicist view, which places one culture above the other, will generally not stand.

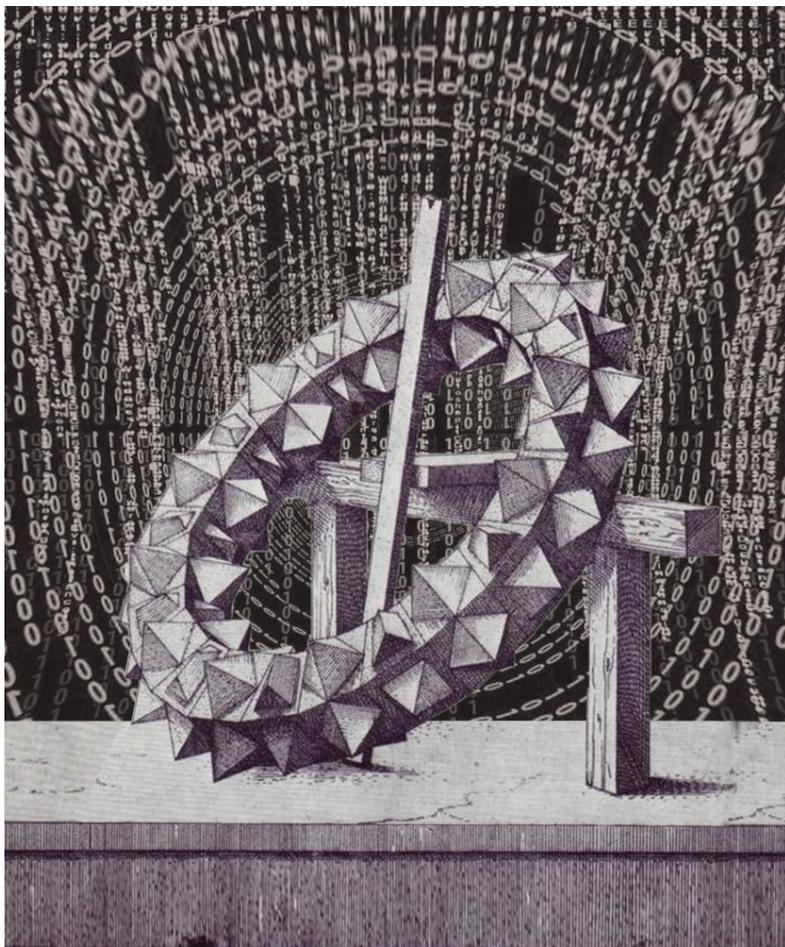




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IN DEFENSE OF PLATONIC ESSENTIALISM ABOUT NUMBERS



MEGAN WU

ABSTRACT

In defense of anti-essentialism, pragmatist Richard Rorty holds that we may think of all objects as if they were numbers. I find that Rorty's metaphysics hinges on two rather weak arguments against the essences of numbers. In contrast, Plato's metaphysics offers a plausible definition of essentiality by which numbers do have essential properties. Further, I argue that Rorty's argumentative mistake is mischaracterizing Plato's definition. I conclude that Plato's definition of "essential" is a robust one which implies that many properties, beyond those we might intuitively think of, can count as essential properties of objects.



I. INTRODUCTION

The overarching project of Plato's *Phaedo* is to offer an account of the immortality of the soul, prompted by Socrates' imminent death. To construct this argument, Socrates is pressed by his interlocutors to defend the existence of abstract objects like the soul, the Good, and Beauty. To do so, Plato asserts the existence of entities called Forms. Though he is not explicit in *Phaedo* about the nature of the relationship, Plato suggests that Forms are related to properties of material objects despite not being the same as the objects. For example, despite having hotness as a property, fire is not the same entity as "the hot" itself.¹ Further, Plato describes how objects that contain a particular Form cannot take on the properties of the opposite Form without perishing—that is, a flame cannot admit the form of the Cold.² This suggests that the properties of objects to which Forms are related are properties that are essential to the object: without such properties or being related to the Form in the same way, the object would no longer be itself. This view of Forms makes Plato out to be a metaphysical essentialist; his theory of Forms implies that objects have natures which can be described by unchanging, abstract properties.

In stark contrast to Plato's essentialism, American pragmatists, such as Richard Rorty, broadly reject any appeals to metaphysical essential natures, preferring a metaphysics where all properties of objects are merely external relations—that is, the property is external to the object itself because properties are really describing something about the object which is useful for "human needs or consciousness or language."³ For a pragmatist like Rorty, the sentence, "X is blue," communicates that it is useful to think of X as blue rather than describing anything intrinsic to the object X.⁴ As Rorty tells it, one motivation behind such a pragmatist metaphysical project is to do away with distinctions like "subject versus object" and "mind versus body," which have stoked seemingly irresolvable disputes throughout the history of Western philosophy.⁵ More broadly, Rorty's move towards pragmatism is responsive to the linguistic turn in the nineteenth century; pragmatism acquiesces to the worry that our knowledge of things, in themselves, is fundamentally altered by the language with which we capture that knowledge.⁶ Implications of Rorty's pragmatism

1 Plato, "Phaedo," in *Plato: Complete Works*, trans. G.M.A. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 103c8-d3.

2 Plato, "Phaedo," 104c1.

3 Richard Rorty, "A World without Substances or Essences," in *Philosophy and Social Hope* (Westminster: Penguin Books, 1999), 50.

4 Rorty, "Substances or Essences," 51.

5 Rorty, "Substances or Essences," 47.

6 Rorty, "Substances or Essences," 50.

include the obliteration of the correspondence theory of truth, because pragmatists instead posit that truth is a matter of social utility; further, pragmatism entails that ethics is reducible to mere norms.

To sketch out the broad, metaphysical picture that his pragmatist view entails, Rorty suggests that his readers “think of everything as if it were a number,” because, as he argues, numbers are not the type of thing which have essential natures.⁷ If Rorty is incorrect and numbers can have essential properties, then his entire anti-essentialist metaphysical theory becomes significantly less plausible—both because he is substantively incorrect that no object can have essential properties, and because the picture of the world he takes to be the most compelling reflects the opposite of what he believes.

Contra Rorty, in *Phaedo*, Plato asserts the existence of essential properties of numbers by defining a theory of Forms that can cause certain essential, non-relational properties in particular objects, such as numbers, which instantiate them. I outline Plato’s account of numbers as having essential properties, and I argue that Rorty’s objections—that all properties of numbers are really relationships between the number and other numbers and that numbers have no essential natures—ultimately fail, in large part because Rorty mischaracterizes Plato’s definition of “essential.” I finally argue that there might be even more types of essential properties than those Plato suggests, by arguing that some scalar relations between particulars can also be essential by the provisional definition of “essential” that Plato gives in *Phaedo*.

II. NUMBERS IN PLATO’S *PHAEDO*

Plato begins his argument by describing the relationship between Forms and the objects which instantiate their properties. He writes that, “it is through Bigness that big things are big ... smaller things are made small by Smallness,” thereby suggesting that Bigness is an essential property of big objects, because they were “made” to be that way by the form of the Big.⁸ Then, Plato puts forward the contradiction that if a big object was said to be bigger than something else by an amount smaller than itself, such as a “man [who] is taller than another by a head,” then that man would be made bigger by something small—the Small would be what causes Bigness.⁹ This would contradict Plato’s initial account of the causal powers of Forms, because the Forms, in this case, cause the opposite of themselves—the Form of the Small causes the man to be bigger, despite the initial assertion that big things are big because of the Form of the Big. To avoid this contradiction,

7 Rorty, “Substances or Essences,” 52.

8 Plato, “Phaedo,” 100e5-6.

9 Plato, “Phaedo,” 100e7-01a1.



Plato concludes that it is not the relative difference or the relationship between two material objects which gives them a property like bigness or smallness. Rather, it is Forms which cause properties like Bigness to appear in objects. In the context of numbers, Plato's argument implies that it is not a comparative relationship between numbers, like addition or division for example, that can cause a property like Twoness—besides the Form of Two, there is no “other cause of becoming two except by sharing in Twoness.”¹⁰ For example, the number 2 is not the number 2 because it is one more than the number 1, or because it is half of 4—it is the number 2 because it possesses the property of Twoness, which is given by the Form of Two. In so arguing, Plato suggests that Forms (such as the magnitude of numbers) are what give numbers their properties and that those properties are intrinsic to the object, not dependent on comparison to other objects.

Plato then goes on to explain the apparent contradiction between the different relationships that objects can have to other objects. Plato reiterates that, “the opposite could never become opposite to itself,” because a property will “retreat before [its opposite] or be destroyed.”¹¹ Then, Plato characterizes particular instantiations of Forms as “something else that is not the Form but has its character whenever it exists.”¹² For example, the number 3 is not the Odd but has the property of being Odd: “it must always be called both by its own name [three] and by that of the Odd.”¹³ Note here Plato's equivocation of the copula: saying that the number 3 is 3 is to state an identity relationship between 3 and itself, but also saying that 3 is Odd is to apply the propositional description of Oddness to the number 3. To illustrate how instantiations of Forms will “perish or give way” before admitting their opposite, Plato describes how “three will perish or undergo anything before, while remaining three, becoming even.”¹⁴ In other words, making 3 even (perhaps by adding or subtracting 1) will cause 3 to perish and become 2 or 4; there is no way to make 3 even while retaining its three-ness. This suggests, importantly, a definition of essential properties of objects: a property of an object is essential if replacing that property with its opposite would cause the object to no longer be the same object.

Assuming the existence of forms, one argument against Plato's theory of Forms is that it is unclear what things are Forms and which are not, and therefore, it is unclear which of an object's properties can

10 Plato, “Phaedo,” 101c4-5.

11 Plato, “Phaedo,” 103b2-3; 103d6.

12 Plato, “Phaedo,” 103e3-4.

13 Plato, “Phaedo,” 104a5-6.

14 Plato, “Phaedo,” 104c1; 104e2-3.

be said to be essential. For example, Plato discusses the number 3 as if it is a particular that instantiates the Form of the Odd in the second section of his argument,¹⁵ but also refers to things like “Twoness” as being an essence of the number 2.¹⁶ That raises the question of whether numbers are particular objects or are themselves abstract entities like Forms. While *Phaedo* is not particularly explicit about this apparent ambiguity, there are ways to reconcile this tension. We might hold that individual numbers are particulars, because they are instantiations of Forms like the Odd that Plato is committed to and that they also instantiate other forms like Twoness. If we think that the form of Twoness causes the property of having two elements in its instantiations, then this holds for the number 2, because it has two elements, each with a size of one. This view still allows us to hold that numbers, like 2, are themselves objects that are distinct from their Form in the same way that a cup is distinct from the Form of the Cup, despite being more abstract than physical objects like cups. Fortunately, given that Plato believes in the existence of Forms themselves, he would likely also be willing to maintain that individual numbers exist distinctly as abstract particulars.

Another issue with Plato’s argument is his conflation of binary and scalar properties of objects. When explaining why the properties of objects which Forms instantiate cannot be relational and must be essential, Plato uses the example of Simmias being “taller than Socrates but shorter than Phaedo” to conclude that Simmias has both Tallness and Shortness—which Socrates concludes is a contradiction.¹⁷ However, it is only because Plato seems to hold that Forms are essential that there is a contradiction; if we hold that Tallness is a primarily relational or scalar type of property (i.e., to say something is tall implies that it is tall in relation to other things), then Simmias’ relation of tallness does not produce a contradiction. This interpretation of the property of tallness is most consistent with how we describe height in ordinary language. For example, under Plato’s interpretation of tallness as an essential, non-relational property, we could never say that a child is tall because they are taller than other children their age (despite being shorter than almost all adults). The Platonist might respond by bracketing out all properties which seem relational (such as Tallness, Bigness, or Warmness) from the set of things that are legitimately Forms. However, doing so would mean that Forms are essential, not relational, just because they have been so defined and not because of a metaphysical fact about their nature.

15 Plato, “Phaedo,” 103-04.

16 Plato, “Phaedo,” 101c5.

17 Plato, “Phaedo,” 102b3-4.



III. AGAINST RORTY'S ANTI-ESSENTIALISM

It is the force of this final objection that motivates a pragmatist response to Plato's theory of numbers. As part of his broader project of sketching out an antiessentialist metaphysics, Rorty suggests we "think of everything as if it were a number," because he holds that numbers do not have essential properties.¹⁸ Despite only providing two arguments against essentialism about numbers, Rorty's claim that numbers are both essence-less and like all other objects in existence has powerful implications. To take Rorty at his word would first mean committing to the view that no material objects have any essential properties and are, only truly describable in relation to other objects. Second, Rorty's view implies that even other entities that are as abstract as numbers—beliefs, moral maxims, or perhaps even colors, for example—do not have essences either; they, too, are mere conventions. Adopting Rorty's view would have powerful implications for the way we as humans think about our material, moral, and epistemic roles in the world, to say the least. Despite the strength of Rorty's conclusion, however, I argue that his two arguments in favor of it are in fact relatively weak.

Rorty's first argument for why numbers, like 17, do not have essential properties is that there are many ways to describe 17 in terms of operations that can be done on other numbers, but none of them seem to capture the essential properties of 17 better than any of the other descriptions. Rorty's second argument is that because each way we might describe 17 does specify "all its relations to *all* the other numbers," a mathematician attempting to describe an essential property of 17 would have to refer to arithmetic and set theoretic axioms that specify the relations between all numbers.¹⁹ However, Rorty holds, these axioms do not uniquely describe 17; "they are equally the essence of 1, or 2, of 289, and of 1,678,922."²⁰

Overall, I am skeptical of whether Rorty's arguments against essentialism constitute actual problems for the essentialist. His first argument is that no essential description of 17 exists because no description can capture "the intrinsic seventeeness of 17—the unique feature which makes it the very number that it is."²¹ Rorty's claim is ultimately that essences of objects cannot exist, because no description of an object could describe a property that makes it unique from other objects. This is a clear conflation of essential properties and unique properties. Rorty's argument is analogous to the claim that an essential description of the cup-ness of a cup on my desk must capture the

18 Rorty, "Substances or Essences," 52.

19 Rorty, "Substances or Essences," 53.

20 Rorty, "Substances or Essences," 53.

21 Rorty, "Substances or Essences," 53.

essence of that particular cup rather than a shared essence of cups in general. Even if Rorty is correct that essential properties could only be true of one object, it is still possible for there to be properties of a number, like 17, that are unique to it and essential by Plato's definition of "essential." For example, every integer has a unique decomposition into prime factors, and if that decomposition were different, the number itself would have to be a different number.²² But, besides Rorty's conflation, his argument does not pose a significant challenge for Plato's view. Returning to *Phaedo*, Socrates describes how "two and four and the whole other column of numbers; each of them, while not being the same as the Even, is always even."²³ Under Plato's own view, Evenness is a Form because it gives the essential property of being even to the set of numbers given by the series (2, 4, 6, ...), and no even number is more even than any other. Forms are general and abstract because they cause properties that many different particulars may share, and particulars therefore cannot be the same as the Forms whose properties they possess. Rorty's objection is, therefore, resolved by Plato's characterization of Forms as abstract entities which can give essential properties to multiple objects.

Ultimately, Rorty is conflating essential properties of numbers with unique properties of numbers. Rorty seems to want a description of the essence of 17 (i.e., Seventeen-ness) that is completely different than Twoness or the essence of any other number, but Plato's theory of Forms does give an account of the essential properties of numbers, even if those essential properties are not unique to any one particular number. Recall the provisional definition of "essential" given by Socrates: that the object could not admit the opposite of its Form without perishing.²⁴ By this account, Oddness and Prime-ness are essential properties of 17, because 17 would have to be an altogether different number to be even or not prime. Moreover, this means that even those relations between 17 and other numbers are essential relations. For example, 17 is related to 18 by being smaller by 1. If 17 were smaller than 18 by 2, it would no longer be 17, it would be 16, and it would perish. We can infer from this definition that relations between 17 and other numbers are internal relations and therefore, are essential to Seventeen-ness.

Rorty's second argument (against the mathematician who claims that set theoretic axioms offer an essential description of 17) is that set

22 Seventeen is decomposable into $17 * 1$. A number, like 20 for example, is decomposable into $2^2 * 5$. It could not be the case that 20 decomposes into $2 * 5$, because the original 20 would perish and be replaced by 10.

23 Plato, "Phaedo," 104b2-3.

24 Plato, "Phaedo," 104c2-3.



theoretical axioms apply to all other numbers. In other words, Rorty's charge against Plato's essentialism is that the theory of Forms needs to offer an account of essential properties where different objects cannot share any properties in common. This is not a wholly reasonable objection, because two different objects can have some properties in common and other properties that are different, whether those properties are essential or not. For example, even though 17 and 2 are clearly different numbers and therefore, have some things about them that are different, they may also share certain properties by virtue of both being numbers. For example, 17 is odd and 2 is even, so Seventeen-ness would not be able to admit the Even, while Twoness would, which offers a partial explanation of why 17 and 2 cannot be the same number. Despite this difference, we can still hold that both Seventeen-ness and Twoness both admit the Forms of the Integer and the Prime. All this is to demonstrate that distinct objects, and therefore, distinct forms, can share some properties while having some properties that are different. This disproves Rorty's objection because, under Plato's view, it can be true that an object has an essential property that other objects also have. There is no reason why an essential property has to be unique to a certain particular. It is possible for set theoretic axioms to be essential properties of the number 17, because if 17 were not equal to the set of all natural numbers less than it, then it would either be a different natural number or not a natural number at all—both of which would essentially change the nature of 17. Therefore, set theoretic axioms do constitute an essential feature of numbers.

Plato's essentialism about numbers is thus resistant to Rorty's objections. I return, then, to the problem posed earlier in Plato's proof by contradiction—that Plato's account of Forms must be that the properties given by Forms to objects are intrinsic to the object, not describing the relationship between it and something else. Perhaps, it is even not impossible for relational attributes to be essential *qua* Plato's definition of "essential." We can make sense of this by considering my previous argument that the relationships between 17 and other numbers are essential, because changing those relationships would require us to define the number 17 differently—that is, the number 17 would perish. With reference to the example of Simmias being taller than Socrates yet shorter than Phaedo, this understanding of relations as essential would hold that Simmias would not be the same Simmias if he were, for example, shorter than Socrates rather than taller. Of course, it is slightly harder to find this example to be intuitive, because defining personal identity is not necessarily clear. This view requires a fairly strong conception of personal identity such that changing one's height,

personality, ethnicity, etc. would constitute a change in a person's identity.

An antiessentialist might broadly reply to the claim that relations between objects could be essential by pointing out the existence of relations that, if changed, clearly do not make an object perish. Neither this argument for essential relations nor Plato's essentialism denies that there can be properties of objects that are not essential, so the existence of non-essential relations between objects does not constitute an objection to either theory of essentialism. For example, ownership of my sweater is a relationship between me and my sweater, but if my sweater were owned by someone else, it would still be the same sweater even though it would not be related to me in the same way. All that would show is that ownership is the type of relation between objects that is internal, and therefore, ownership does not constitute an essential property of an object; this supports neither the conclusion that no relations are internal nor that relationships cannot be internal.

IV. CONCLUSION

I have outlined and defended a Platonic account of the essential natures of numbers. In doing so, I have identified a definition of essential properties given in *Phaedo* and used that definition of essential to respond to Rorty's antiessentialist arguments about numbers. That analysis suggests that perhaps even relations between numbers are essential to them—though they seem external—and that if it is possible for relations between objects to be essential to those objects, then essentialism about numbers and properties might even be stronger than what Plato suggests in *Phaedo*. In particular, if it is the case that relational attributes can be essential properties, and that essential properties must be given by Forms, there are infinitely many possible ways to relate an object to other objects. This might imply the existence of infinitely many Forms, which would indeed result in a very bountiful, yet cluttered metaphysics.

Some final questions that merit further investigation are what sorts of standards might be used to determine whether a particular object perishes in the face of its opposite, or by how much an object must change to be said to be no longer the same object. Despite these minor ambiguities in Plato's definition, preserving the view that abstract entities like numbers can have essential properties gives us cause for optimism about the existence of other physical properties like color. The highly essentialist contours of Plato's philosophy, therefore, offer a promising and compelling alternate view to pragmatist metaphysics.

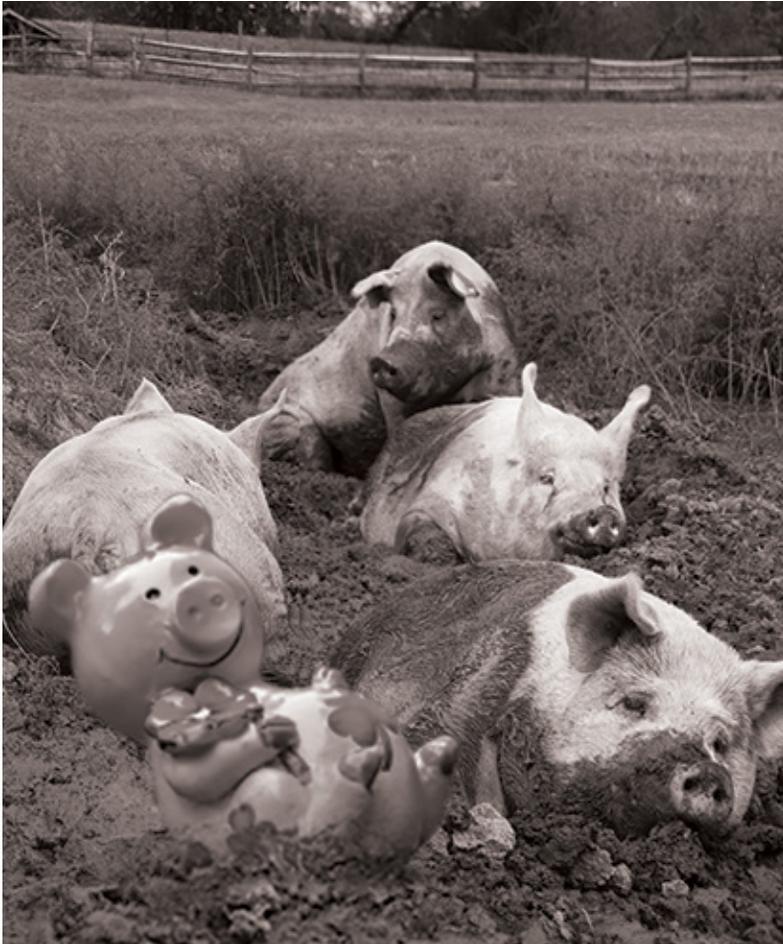




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AVOIDING THE SWINE: A Hedonist's Dilemma



JEE WON CHOI

ABSTRACT

What constitutes a good life? A hedonist's answer to this question is rather simple—more pleasure, less pain. While hedonism was previously a widely accepted belief, it now suffers from several crucial objections. A challenge particularly vexing to hedonists is the Philosophy of Swine: could it be possible that our lives may be less than that of a theoretical swine? In this essay, I argue that lifetime hedonism, the view of hedonism concerned with one's total lifelong well-being, does not survive this objection. In particular, I will refute the counterarguments that modern-day hedonist, Ben Bramble, presents against the Philosophy of Swine objection.



I. INTRODUCTION

What constitutes a good life? What does it mean to live well? A hedonist's answer to these questions is rather simple: more pleasure, less pain. While hedonism was widely accepted by philosophers in the past, arguably dating back to Plato, it has now few advocates as it suffers from several objections.¹ A challenge that is particularly vexing to hedonists is the Philosophy of Swine: could it be possible that the life one lives is less than that of a theoretical swine?

Rather than biting the bullet and saying that may well be, modern-day hedonist Ben Bramble argues that this is impossible.² I briefly summarize Bramble's view of hedonism, the Philosophy of Swine objection, and Bramble's response. Then, I refute each of his claims to disprove lifetime hedonism, ultimately showing how a lifetime hedonism cannot escape from the Philosophy of Swine problem.

II. BRAMBLE'S ACCOUNT OF HEDONISM

Bramble defines hedonism as the idea that pleasure and pain just consist in determining one's lifetime well-being, which is the view that evaluates the pleasures and pains experienced by an individual throughout their life as a whole. He claims that lifetime well-being holds greater normative significance than momentary well-being.³ He then explains his model of hedonism, Hedonism about Benefiting and Harming (hereby HBH)—the idea that benefiting and harming consist in affecting pleasures and pains in various ways, where benefiting or harming someone is to make their lives better or worse off in respect to their life as a whole. The motivation and basis for HBH is the Experience Requirement, which Bramble takes for granted. This requirement states that for something to benefit or harm a person, it must affect that person's experience phenomenologically.⁴

He then introduces two main branches of hedonism: the felt-quality theory, which he believes in, and the attitude-based theory. The felt-quality theory, also known as phenomenalism, is the theory that pleasure or pain is a mental state or property that is or has a certain phenomenology—that is, a subject's experience. On the contrary, the attitude-based theory, or intentionalism, states that pleasure and pain are intended phenomenologies. Bramble rejects the attitude-

1 Roger Crisp, "Well-Being," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2017 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/well-being/>.

2 Ben Bramble, "A New Defense of Hedonism about Well-Being," *Ergo: An Open Access Journal of Philosophy* 3, no. 4 (2016): 85-86, 10.3998/ergo.12405314.0003.004.

3 Bramble, "Hedonism," 85-86.

4 Bramble, "Hedonism," 88.

based theory, as he writes that the intentionalist would also have to accept that one's pleasures and pains could change if there is a change in one's intention to maintain their current phenomenology. Even if this intention could be considered a separate phenomenology on its own, it would have to be connected to the phenomenology it resulted in. To suggest such a connection between distinct phenomenologies, then, would indicate a certain shared phenomenology among all phenomenologies that allows them to be interpreted as pleasurable or painful.⁵

However, this does not seem to be necessarily true. For instance, one may abandon lifetime hedonism in favor of the momentary well-being view of hedonism. Instead, one can claim that all pleasures do not share a common qualitative characteristic that allows for the evaluation of lifetime pleasures and pains as wholes. A momentary-intentionalist's view, then, could be phrased as such: intent phenomenology A could have a common phenomenology with its resulting phenomenology A' but not necessarily with a different intent phenomenology B nor its resulting phenomenology B'.

III. THE PHILOSOPHY OF SWINE

In *Pleasure and the Good Life*, Fred Feldman describes Porky's case, a human being who lives in a pigsty and pleasures greatly from engaging in sexual activities with the pigs. He has no other sources of pleasure, such as human relationships or learning, and has never experienced pain in his life.⁶ The threat that the Philosophy of Swine objection poses to hedonism, reformulated by Bramble, is:

1. Hedonism entails that Porky's life could be as high in well-being as the life of a normal human being.
2. Porky's life could not be as high in well-being as the life of a normal human being.
3. Therefore, hedonism is false.⁷

IV. BRAMBLE'S RESPONSE

There are two ways a hedonist could defend hedonism against the Philosophy of Swine objection: by either denying the second premise—that is, to bite the bullet and admit that Porky is as well off as a normal human being—or the first premise, claiming that hedonism does not entail that Porky is as well off as a normal human being.

5 Bramble, "Hedonism," 90-94.

6 Fred Feldman, *Pleasure and the Good Life: Concerning the Nature Varieties and Plausibility of Hedonism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 40-41, 10.1093/019926516X.001.0001.

7 Bramble, "Hedonism," 95.



In response to the Philosophy of Swine objection, Bramble takes the second approach and presents what he considers a “better response” than biting the bullet:

1. Porky’s pleasures are not as especially pleasurable as the pleasures of a normal human.
2. Porky’s pleasures are not as diverse as the pleasures of a normal human.
3. Hedonism does not entail that Porky’s life could be as high in well-being as the life of a normal human being, as his pleasures are lacking in these two aspects.⁸

Against the first premise, Bramble argues that a pleasure is not especially pleasurable if it is easy to attend to. A pleasure is easy to attend to if it (1) pertains to a certain bodily location rather than permeating one’s experiential field, such as the pleasures of orgasms or massages, (2) comes suddenly rather than building up slowly over time, or (3) involves little to no mental absorption in a certain pleasurable activity or thing. Pleasures derived from, say, sex or drugs are not as pleasurable as they fulfill all three criteria. He explains why pleasures that are not easy to attend to, such as those of learning or aesthetic appreciation, are more pleasurable as he quotes Henry Sidgwick; that is, “the genuine artist at work seems to have a predominant and temporarily absorbing desire for the realization of his ideal of beauty.”⁹

Meanwhile, Bramble’s argument concerning the second premise is twofold. He argues that Porky’s pleasures are not as diverse as a normal human being’s because they are purely (1) repetitive and (2) physical. Purely repeated pleasures add nothing to one’s lifetime well-being as they cannot introduce anything qualitatively new to the pleasurable of a person, and purely bodily pleasures offer little qualitative diversity. Conversely, he explains why his examples of multi-dimensional, non-physical pleasures, such as those of love, learning, and aesthetic appreciation, are qualitatively diverse. For instance, pleasures that come from learning are diverse in character, because people can acquire different information and interact with this information in various ways.¹⁰

He then proceeds to argue against Chris Heathwood’s objection that Porky could have various experiences as well. For instance, what if Porky could engage in various sexual activities with different animals, never to be bored? To this concern, Bramble argues that there will still be a lack of qualitative distinction between his experiences. To Porky,

8 Bramble, “Hedonism,” 96.

9 Henry Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1913), 49.

10 Bramble, “Hedonism,” 98.

having sex with pig A would not be too different from having sex with pig B, or even cow C, for he cannot experience love, which is a more diverse pleasure.¹¹

Bramble also refutes the claim that at least some purely repeated pleasures can contribute to one's well-being. In response to this concern, he first claims that most of the pleasures that seem to be purely repeated still introduce new elements. For example, the pleasure of drinking coffee may seem one-dimensional but can be diversified by introducing other factors such as where or with whom one drinks the coffee. In addition, he also states that even pleasures that are purely repeated can have instrumental values and act as a sort of "oil for our joints" that fill in the gaps between impactful pleasures.¹²

V. IMMEDIACY OF PORKY'S PLEASURES

As in his first argument, I do not intend to argue with the criteria Bramble sets for easily accessible pleasures. Rather, I will show why his claim, that such pleasures are not as pleasurable, contradicts his version of phenomenalism, which he calls the felt-quality theory of hedonism. Phenomenalists claim that we desire pleasures because they feel good; they are pleasurable. If slowly-building pleasures truly provide higher levels of pleasure, it would be more likely for one to have higher desire for such pleasures. But this does not seem to be the case. In fact, it is more common for immediate pleasures, such as sex or drugs, to have this effect. How is it that people often display higher desires for immediate pleasures if they are less pleasurable than slowly-building pleasures?

There are two possible counterarguments that Bramble could provide to this claim. The first is to say that more people desire slowly-building pleasures than those who desire immediate ones; since more people desire it, the appeals of such pleasures are greater. However, I believe that it is faulty to directly attribute the widespread preference of slowly-building pleasures to their appeal, as other factors also come into play. For instance, those who do not desire immediate pleasures are often not fully aware of the phenomenology that they provide or are affected by sociocultural factors such as stigmas against sources of instant pleasures. Yet, many of those who have experienced immediate pleasures desire them greatly despite these negative sociocultural factors, which shows the strong appeal of such pleasures. Moreover, those who have already experienced immediate pleasures still desire to experience them again. An apparent type of expression of such desires are withdrawal symptoms. The desires are not gone, but are merely

11 Bramble, "Hedonism," 99.

12 Bramble, "Hedonism," 100.



repressed within the individual due to factors such as social stigma or health issues.

Another potential counterargument Bramble could give is that the addictiveness of quick pleasures comes from their immediateness, not their level of pleasure. Their appeal could be that they are low-quality but cheap and accessible. However, this argument begs the question as it is already based on the assumption that immediate pleasures are not as pleasurable, for which he does not provide sufficient reasoning. For Bramble, in order to accuse quick pleasures of being “low in quality,” he would first have to define the factors that account for such low levels of pleasure that they provide.

VI. DIVERSITY OF PORKY’S PLEASURES: REPETITIVENESS

To refute Bramble’s second argument, I could either state that Porky’s pleasures are not purely repetitive and physical, or that purely repetitive pleasures can add to one’s lifetime well-being and that bodily pleasures can be qualitatively diverse. I take the latter approach.

Bramble does not provide convincing evidence as to why purely repeated pleasures cannot affect one’s lifetime well-being. Earlier in his paper, Bramble establishes his model of hedonism, HBH, which accounts for minimal hedonism—the full determination of one’s well-being by pleasures and pains. However, there is nothing inherent in pleasures and pains that explain why only new pleasures and pain can affect one’s well-being. In his rebuttal against Bramble, “Is pleasure all that is good about experience?,” Willem van der Deijl words this concern perfectly: “if only pleasure and pain matter intrinsically, why would then only some pleasure and pain matter?”¹³

Bramble could argue that purely repetitive pleasures gradually decrease over time as the level of attention paid to an object, event, or person decreases due to familiarity. Consider the life of a human who lives for about an average of eighty years. If Porky’s life were extended to the point where the average cumulative pleasure felt in his life trumps that experienced in a human’s life, Bramble may then argue that Porky’s repeated pleasures would eventually arrive at zero, not gaining any pleasure from the same activity, provided the decreasing trend in pleasure levels were to continue. However, he would then have to explain the nature of habit; even though humans do get bored of a repeated activity, there are activities that humans rely on as a consistent source of pleasure. Even if we may not recognize as much pleasure from drinking water compared to drinking a new juice, there is still some

13 Willem van der Deijl, “Is Pleasure All that is Good about Experience?,” *Philosophical Studies* 176, no. 7 (2019): 1781, 10.1007/s11098-018-1090-y.

consistent pleasure that one derives from their thirst being quenched. The challenge that Porky presents, then, still remains: after a certain amount of time Porky outlives a human, would he eventually be happier than all of us?¹⁴

Let us now return to Bramble's rebuttal against the counterargument that some purely repeated pleasures can add to one's well-being. His first claim that most purely repeated pleasures seem to subtly introduce new elements is irrelevant to the discussion of Deijl's problem; it only rules out seemingly repetitive pleasures. Rather, what matters is his second argument that purely repetitive pleasures are not significant to one's well-being, but can have instrumental values. In explaining his definition of instrumental values, he writes that, "[repetitive] pleasures can relax or stimulate us. They can rejuvenate or sustain us."¹⁵ How are these pleasures, then, any different from non-repetitive pleasures? Are relaxation and stimulation not ways to affect one's phenomenology? Bramble's distinction between non-repetitive pleasures and instrumental "filler" pleasures appears to be an unsuccessful attempt to avoid accepting that repeated pleasures do affect one's phenomenology. If he were to accept this, he would have to admit that repetitive pleasures also benefit people and therefore, add to their lifetime well-being, according to HBH. Thus, Bramble fails to show why purely repeated pleasures cannot affect one's well-being.

VII. DIVERSITY OF PORKY'S PLEASURES: BODILY PLEASURES

Bramble also fails to prove that purely bodily pleasures lack in qualitative diversity due to the sorites paradox, where the boundaries of a certain condition are unclear. The paradox evokes this question: how many types of pleasures should a source of pleasure provide to be considered as "qualitatively diverse?" If Porky did not have any diversity in his pleasures, then it would surely be impossible to deem them as being qualitatively diverse. However, Bramble accepts that "we might succeed in adding some new kinds of pleasures to [Porky's life]."¹⁶ If Porky can have some variety in his pleasures, Bramble should be able to provide a criterion that determines a pleasure's qualitative diversity to state that Porky's purely bodily pleasures are not diverse enough.

A possible counterargument that Bramble could make is that a source of pleasure, regardless of the number of pleasures it may provide, requires specific qualities to be qualitatively diverse. Such qualities

14 Crisp, "Well-Being."

15 Bramble, "Hedonism," 100.

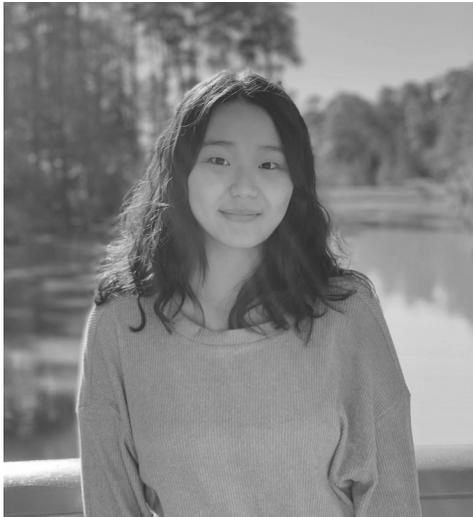
16 Bramble, "Hedonism," 99.



may be derived from interactions with unique personal characteristics, aesthetic value, or a deepened understanding of the world. In this case, the burden again seems to be on Bramble to answer Dejjl's question: if only pleasure and pain matter intrinsically, why would then only some pleasure and pain matter in the discussion of qualitative diversity?

VIII. CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have demonstrated the failure of lifetime hedonism against the Philosophy of Swine objection by disproving Bramble's claims that Porky's pleasures are not as pleasurable nor diverse compared to those of a normal human being. If he cannot prove that Porky's pleasures are inferior compared to a normal human being, an immortal Porky would eventually be happier than all of humanity. It seems that the only options left for a lifetime hedonist, then, are to either bite the bullet and conclude that Porky is as well off as we are or to abandon the sinking ship that is lifetime hedonism.



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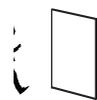
WHY THE READINESS POTENTIAL DOES NOT DISPROVE FREE WILL



EVEN TOTLAND

ABSTRACT

Neuroscientist Benjamin Libet has conducted a series of experiments that reveal the existence of certain neural processes in the brain of human subjects, initiating an action prior to the human subject's intention to act, thus seemingly threatening our idea of free will. The purpose of this paper is to show how these processes do not disprove any idea of free will one might have as one would, if accepting such a thesis, be committing two distinct mereological fallacies and ultimately, would treat the human subject as inhabiting some of its parts as opposed to being the sum of its parts.



I. INTRODUCTION

In 1982, neuroscientist Benjamin Libet conducted a series of experiments where his objective was to determine the exact time the brain of a human subject initiates an action and, subsequently, the time of the subject in question consciously deciding to perform the action as well as performing it.¹ According to these findings, certain neural activities (called the readiness potential or RP) in the brain of the subject take place before the act is made and unbeknownst to the subject who only after a brief period after RP makes the conscious intention to act. Fully formed actions are thus organized in three consecutive stages: the readiness potential, the intention to act, and the act itself. Libet concludes that these results clearly indicate that “volitional” acts are not volitional at all since the brain would initiate them before the human subject forms the intention to perform the act. Free will could therefore be an illusion.

I aim to show that free will is not threatened by Libet’s findings. His experiments are problematic because they are committed to an awkward form of dualism that includes two mereological fallacies. For the results to disprove free will, they must necessarily treat the human subject as consisting of two different substances, and Libet does so by privileging the subject’s conscious awareness. Anything outside of this limited awareness, it follows, is given a property disconnected from the subject and treated as though not an authentic part of it. This is a peculiar commitment to make, even if there were a justification for it. While the results prove the existence of certain neural activities initiating an action before the subject’s awareness of it, they do not prove that there is no free will. Thus, my critique is not directed at the existence of these neural activities, themselves, but rather at how one decides to consider them in relation to the human subject.

I start by summarizing the format and conclusions of Libet’s experiment. Next, I present two arguments one might draw from Libet’s conclusions and show that each commits a mereological fallacy.

II. THE FORMAT OF THE EXPERIMENT

Libet instructed the participants of his experiment to look at a moving dot that indicated the time and asked them to move their wrist at a time of their choosing, all the while their brain activity was monitored. They were so asked to make a personal note of the precise time—based on where the dot pointed—they had decided to move their wrist.

1 Benjamin Libet, “Do We Have Free Will?,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, ed. Robert Kane (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 551, 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195178548.001.0001.

Libet noticed that each time the participants moved their wrist, the act was preceded by a “specific electrical change in the brain that begins 550 msec before the act.”² This was called the “readiness potential” or RP. In addition to preceding the actual act by 550 msec, it also preceded the subject’s intention to make the act by 350–400 msec. The act itself took place ultimately 200 msec after the subject had made the conscious intention to do it. A fully formed action was thus consecutively comprised of:

1. the readiness potential
2. the conscious decision to act 350–400 msec later
3. the performance of the act 200 msec later

Parts (2) and (3) were conscious to the subject while part (1) was not. Libet concluded that these findings clearly indicated volitional acts to not be volitional.³ While these results could threaten the idea that humans have free will, Libet did not yet fully affirm this, and specified that the participants could decide not to make the act after becoming aware of the intention to do so: “The role of conscious free will would be, then, not to initiate a voluntary act, but rather to control occurrences of the act.”⁴ An action could then consecutively look like this instead:

1. the readiness potential
2. the conscious decision to act
3. the subject deciding against performing the act
4. the subject not performing the act

For Libet, part (3) is where free will is taking place. The outcome in part (4) is therefore not as wholly determined by part (1) as implied in the first example. Though I grant that the human subject’s ability to veto the act in (3) could be understood as an act of free will, I deny that the existence of RP negates free will. Thus, I argue that Libet does not need to resort to (3) to preserve our idea of free will.

III. ASSESSING THE ARGUMENTS

Syllogistically, the first argument I draw from Libet is:

1. If human subjects’ brains initiate an action before the human subjects make a conscious decision to so, then human subjects do not have free will
2. Human subjects’ brains initiate an action before the humans make a conscious decision to do so
3. Therefore, human subjects do not have free will

2 Libet, “Do We Have,” 551.

3 Such a conclusion necessarily stems from an idea that part (1) is the determining factor in the act.

4 Libet, “Do We Have,” 560.



There is, clearly, something queer about this argument. What or where, exactly, is the human subject supposed to be, and what is the irrelation to the brain? After all, the brain is a part of the human subject. So, how can it be that the brain is performing certain functions without the human subject? Such would be tantamount to the legs of a human subject walking without the human subject, but that is clearly nonsense. When we utter certain phrases like, “My leg is hurting,” we do not mean that our leg has told us that it is hurting, and now, we express this hurt on behalf of it. The leg is not hurting, it is the human subject whose leg it is who is hurting.

This form of ascribing to the constituent parts of some attributes that logically apply only to the whole is often called a “mereological fallacy.” When committing a mereological fallacy, one says things like, “The brain is thinking,” not realizing that “thinking” can only be done by the human subject. As Bennett and Hacker write

It is not that as a matter of fact brains do not think, hypothesize and decide, see and hear, ask and answer questions, rather, it makes no sense to ascribe such predicates or their negations to the brain. The brain neither sees nor is it blind—just as sticks and stones are not awake, but they are not asleep either. The brain does not hear, but it is not deaf, any more than trees are deaf. The brain makes no decisions, but neither is it indecisive. Only what can decide, can be indecisive. So too, the brain cannot be conscious, only the living creature whose brain it is can be conscious—or unconscious.⁵

Libet’s argument commits the mereological fallacy by having the brain initiate an action when, in fact, the brain can do no such thing. Only the human subject can initiate an action, just like it is only the human subject who can walk, not their legs. This is a conceptual clarification, but there is a related scientific one as well.

When we think, it is tempting to say that we are thinking with our brain, as if the brain is the sole engineer in that enterprise. But the brain is only a segment in an otherwise intricate chain of processes that altogether constitute thinking. Putting a brain in a vat, as some epistemological thought experiments would have it, will not allow the brain to think. For the brain to have thoughts it needs oxygen transposed via blood vessels from the lungs. The lungs, themselves, need a respiratory system to obtain oxygen from outside the body. This, in turn, requires there to be oxygen to obtain from the outside. Cutting all these other components off from the act of thinking and having the brain pull the ship alone would yield disappointing results.

5 M.R. Bennett and P.M.S. Hacker, *Philosophical Foundations of Neuroscience* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 72.

Even designating the brain as the essential component of this process seems unfair and arbitrary. The essential component—or rather the essential whole—is the human subject in possession of all the faculties within a certain environment.

Realizing the absurdity of the previous argument, one could say that the neural processes compromising the readiness potential are simply subconscious, and that it is, hence, not initiated by the human subject consciously. In this way, we avoid the awkwardness of talking about the brain making decisions and trying to relate these to the human subject. Instead, we divide the human subject into an “inner amalgam” of the conscious and the subconscious. Syllogistically:

1. If human subjects are not conscious of the processes involved in their decision making, then they do not have free will
2. Human subjects are not conscious of the processes involved in their decision making
3. Therefore, human subjects do not have free will

This argument appears sounder than the previous one. In fact, it is precisely this type of argument Sam Harris is thinking of when he writes, “Consider what it would take to actually have free will. You would need to be aware of all the factors that determine your thoughts and actions, and you would need to have complete control over those factors.”⁶

But now, two questions emerge: What, exactly, are the necessary and sufficient conditions for something to be labeled conscious as opposed to subconscious and vice versa? Does the human subject as a whole have free will?

However, while the human subject is not conscious of the processes involved in their decision making—the subconscious claiming ownership of those processes—the subconscious too is a part of the human subject. Thus, the human subject is both the entity where the conscious resides and where the subconscious processes are taking place. In other words, a part of the human subject does not have free will because another part of the human subject is precluding that possibility.

Furthermore, how does one decide what experiences are to be classified as conscious as opposed to subconscious? Consider the act of walking; this act is often performed subconsciously. However, situations where walking is consciously performed are far from uncommon, so what do we classify walking as?

6 Sam Harris, *Free Will* (New York: Free Press, 2012), 32.



One way to justify all of this would be to think of the human subject in a Cartesian fashion where some acts are thought to stem from a more authentic nature of the human subject, with all else being somewhat inessential. This more authentic nature is often termed “the self” and is what the pronoun, “I,” is sometimes meant to point to. But how does one justify attributing the “I” only to that which is conscious? If the “I” is only to be found in the conscious part of the human subject, could we say that the subconscious part where these subconscious processes are happening, has free will? If so, a part of the human subject does have free will and saying, “I do not have free will,” will thus have to mean that the “I” is separate from the human subject, while simultaneously being a part of it. This culminates in a paradox where the human subject both has and has not free will.

This move to a Cartesian dualism, where some arbitrarily selected segments of the human subject (those constituting the “conscious realm”) are treated as an expression of its more authentic nature seems an utter misconception. “What is hopelessly confused is the supposition that the subject of experience is an entity within a human being.”⁷

This argument, like the previous one, is guilty of committing some version of a mereological fallacy. This time, however, it is more informative to use Anthony Kenny’s similar term, homunculus fallacy, “since its most naive form is tantamount to the postulation of a little man within a man to explain human experience and behavior.”⁸

The fallacy of the argument consists of treating the human subject as made up of (in this case) two homunculi where one is even depicted as being more important than the other and personifying the “real you” when in fact, “you” can be nothing but the whole of the human subject—or both homunculi, if you will. As with the designation of the brain as the essential component of thinking, the designation of which is taking place within the human subject’s conscious realm as some essential nature of the human subject is unfair, arbitrary, and fallacious. Furthermore, the awkward dualism the argument promotes ultimately culminates in a paradox.

IV. CONCLUSION

The main thesis of this paper is that Libet’s experiment, powerful and admirably ambitious as it is, does not disprove free will. I assume, without further argument, that any definition of “free will” one might appeal to would not make his findings more likely to disprove it.

7 P. M. S. Hacker, *Human Nature: The Categorical Framework* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 259.

8 Anthony Kenny, “The Homunculus Fallacy,” in *The Legacy of Wittgenstein* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), 125.

The first objection is against that of treating the brain as a subject for psychological predicates. The second is asking if it would, in any way, be justified to suggest that anything taking place subconsciously is less within the domain of the human subject as that which is taking place consciously. I have argued that it would not be justified to suggest that; the human subject is the sum of their parts and cannot be reduced to some of their parts. The questions of free will are deeply perplexing, but Libet's argument does not threaten any belief in the truth of free will.

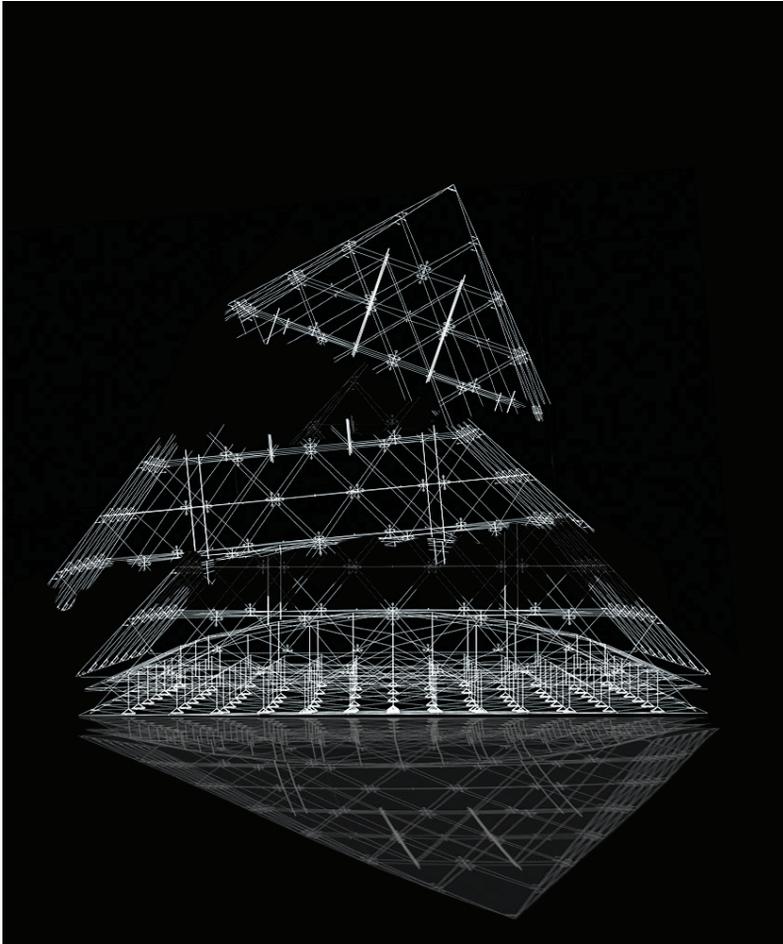




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POST-HIERARCHICAL RACE:
Reconsidering the Nature of
Hierarchy within Haslanger's
Account of Race



MAX DAVIDSON-SMITH

ABSTRACT

In this essay, I consider Sally Haslanger's social constructivist account of race and propose a modification to the nature of hierarchy specified. According to Haslanger, race will cease to exist post-hierarchy, given that she builds in a requirement of synchronic hierarchy for the existence of race. While Haslanger maintains that racial identity would linger beyond hierarchical treatment in the form of ethnicity, I will suggest this fails to provide adequate conceptual justice for the cultures and aesthetics which emerged out of past oppression. In response, I propose a modification which would allow us to recognize the possibility of post-hierarchical races.



I. INTRODUCTION

Sally Haslanger's work has made a profound impact on the field of critical race theory.¹ Her approach challenges any suggestion that there is a biological basis for race; instead, she focuses on our social ontology and the operation of race in everyday discourse. While broadly in agreement, I propose a modification to the nature of hierarchy within Haslanger's social constructivist account of race. I first outline Haslanger's social constructivist framework, defending her revisionary or "ameliorative" antiracist intentions, before focusing on her account of race as hierarchical social positioning. I then distinguish between Haslanger's requirement for synchronic ongoing hierarchy and a historical connection to hierarchy which is no longer occurring, before proposing to modify her account to allow both as constituting races within her social constructivist framework.

Justifying this modification, I outline two purposes for post-hierarchical race as predicated on historical connection to hierarchy. First, post-hierarchical races maintain awareness of past hierarchical treatment in society and guard against its re-emergence. Secondly, the Black Art Movement will signify a positive case for introducing post-hierarchical races based on historical connection to hierarchy, which allows us to properly respect and also celebrate the cultures and aesthetics which emerged out of past oppression.

II. SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM AS A FRAMEWORK

Haslanger makes use of the externalist referential account of meaning. Through locating what best explains our use of the term "race," she attempts to specify the nature of this concept. Given "ordinary folk" manage to talk about race independently of authority, this is an important consideration for Haslanger in the sense that everyday discourse largely accounts for the meaning of race in society. Resisting the need to defer to scientific experts, Haslanger is unashamedly engaged in the task of determining the meaning and nature of race as it is actively used in society. While genetics and biology suggest that there is no adequate biological referent, a social kind best refers to our ordinary usage of race.² Despite race being socially constructed, its existence is as real as other ontological kinds.

Haslanger's framework also contains a distinctly ameliorative project with her account designed to provide "effective tools in the fight against injustice."³ Drawing on Hilary Putnam's semantic

1 Sally Haslanger, *Resisting Reality: Social Construction and Social Critique* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

2 Haslanger, *Resisting Reality*, 307.

3 Haslanger, *Resisting Reality*, 226.

externalism, Haslanger argues the meaning of race is partially fixed by external factors.⁴ Race exists as a socially constructed kind which depends on our creation and usage in discourse for its maintenance. The fact that race as a concept is socially constructed makes society somewhat responsible in defining the concept for our legitimate purposes and therefore justifies the revisions conducted by Haslanger. In light of this, Haslanger asks what, if anything, can our concept of race do for us going forward. Against the objection that this approach distorts the ordinary meaning of race, Haslanger claims that, providing central functions of the term remain the same, and the revisionary goals being served are politically acceptable, her targeted concept will “represent itself as providing a ... (possibly revisionary) account of the everyday concepts.”⁵ Motivated by a critical and antiracist goal, Haslanger’s intentions are arguably justifiable and commendable.

III. SOCIAL POSITIONING ACCOUNT OF RACE

Haslanger’s account of race examines how groups are socially positioned and what physical markers serve as a supposed basis for hierarchical treatment

A group is racialized iff its members are socially positioned as subordinate or privileged along some dimension (economic, political, legal, social, etc.), and the group is “marked” as a target for this treatment by observed or imagined bodily features presumed to be evidence of ancestral links to a certain geographical region.⁶

Bodily features, called “color,” are physical characteristics presumed to be linked to and explained by geography, such as hair texture or skin tone. According to Haslanger’s account, “race is the social meaning of color,” which positions members in a social hierarchy through systematic subordination or privilege.⁷ Race, therefore, functions through identification of individuals within and by a society based on a perception of physical features being linked to a purported geographical ancestry, thereby marking them out as a group for systematic hierarchical treatment.

By building hierarchy into an account of race, Haslanger intends to “locate the mechanisms of injustice and the levers for social change” central to her ameliorative antiracist intentions.⁸ Focusing specifically on the way in which hierarchy functions within race as a defining

4 Hilary Putnam, “The Meaning of ‘Meaning,’” *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science* 7 (1975): 131-93, <https://hdl.handle.net/11299/185225>.

5 Haslanger, *Resisting Reality*, 224.

6 Haslanger, *Resisting Reality*, 236.

7 Haslanger, *Resisting Reality*, 236.

8 Haslanger, *Resisting Reality*, 184.



feature, Haslanger hopes individuals will realize their own position of privilege or subordination before considering their wider role in challenging and dismantling racial injustice.

IV. MODIFYING HASLANGER'S NATURE OF HIERARCHY

I now propose a modification to the nature of hierarchy specified by Haslanger, where synchronic and ongoing color-based subordination or privilege is deemed necessary for the existence of races as social kinds. It is worthwhile to consider the possibility of a future without the existence of such color-based hierarchical treatment and subsequent implications for the existence of races. Accordingly, in a post-hierarchical future without color-based hierarchy, Haslanger maintains that races will cease to exist. This follows from the particular nature of hierarchy outlined within her account of race.⁹ Theodore Bach, however, suggests it is plausible that races might survive the loss of any hierarchical properties yet still linger in existence.¹⁰ While synchronic hierarchy seems to be an integral feature for the emergence of races, this does not mean ongoing hierarchy is the only means by which race might continue to exist. I propose Haslanger's account of hierarchy be modified to also include a historical connection to hierarchy as a constitutive factor for races to remain in existence. A post-hierarchical race would preserve some of the valuable features of a previously racialized group but within a societal context free from hierarchical treatment.

A key reason in favor of accounting for post-hierarchical race is that this plausibly captures our use of the concept, reflecting how we view races as capable of enduring rather than liable to simply disappear. Our intuitions here are being tested on what is currently only a hypothetical future. It does, however, seem that the concept of race has the potential for having more permanence than surviving based only on the contingency of hierarchical treatment. Even if we accept that synchronic hierarchical treatment is an important component of the concept of race and accounts for how it first arises, this does not mean that, were the conditions of hierarchy to change, race would necessarily be defunct. It is possible that, were the hierarchical circumstances to be eliminated, the concept of race might still hold some positive relevance in society.

The maintenance of races post-hierarchy might consist of members considered by themselves as well as by society as being meaningfully

9 Haslanger, *Resisting Reality*, 248-52.

10 Theodore Bach, "Review of Sally Haslanger, *Resisting Reality: Social Construction and Social Critique*," *Ethics* 124, no. 3 (2014): 617, 10.1086/674829.

historically connected to, but not currently experiencing, the past hierarchical treatment of racial ancestors.

[Post-hierarchical races definition]: A group (2) is racialized post-hierarchy iff its members are positioned by themselves and adequately recognized by society as being meaningfully linked and historically or culturally connected to ancestors of a group (1), where that group (1) experienced hierarchical treatment on the basis of observed or imagined bodily features, “color” presumed to be evidence of ancestral links to a certain geographical region.

The proposed definition of post-hierarchical races should be considered as an addition but not a replacement to Haslanger’s account, which is useful in allowing us to determine the continued existence of races post-hierarchy. When considering the initial emergence of races and their existence during synchronic hierarchy, Haslanger’s original definition will be relevant.

On my modification, I have purposefully built in as a requirement that members of a post-hierarchical race play some part in deliberately and actively linking themselves with the former hierarchically-treated racial group. In doing so, we can encapsulate the fact that there is some degree of agency needed for post-hierarchical races to continue. I consider that this conceptual requirement may be useful in ensuring that the purpose of post-hierarchical race is beneficial. Given that there would not be post-hierarchical races lingering without intent and desire from the members of that group, we can reasonably infer that their reason for identifying and connecting with former racial groups serves a meaningful purpose and that what is being remembered and celebrated is likely to be worthwhile.

I have provided just a sketch of the nature of post-hierarchical race. In doing so, I have suggested post-hierarchical race would entail a collection of individuals who have chosen to closely associate themselves with a formerly hierarchically-treated racial group. Importantly, this is based on a meaningful connection which might, for example, include following unique traditions or sustaining memories through the retelling of stories. Finally, in order for post-hierarchical race to be a useful feature of mutual cultural understanding, this connection to former racialized groups is adequately recognized as such by other members of society outside of these groups.

I will now make use of Haslanger’s own ameliorative framework to justify my modification to the nature of hierarchy and the conceptual inclusion of post-hierarchical race. In doing so, we can suggest how post-hierarchical race might in fact better serve our legitimate political purposes. First, maintaining use of post-hierarchical race is an effective



tool in guarding against the potential re-emergence of racial injustice. There is reason to suggest that by acknowledging the existence of post-hierarchical race, which would be predicated only on past hierarchy, we are able to more effectively guard against the active re-emergence of that same past hierarchy or one of a similar kind. Introducing post-hierarchical race to our concepts can be of instrumental value in tackling the ever-present risk of hierarchical treatment from being a resurgent force in society, in both recognized and new forms. Over and above the transfer of memories and stories, post-hierarchical races apply to a real existing group which can help form a stronger and more effective reminder in the present of the reality of past oppression.

Ron Mallon detects an objection that maintaining the use of race connected to past hierarchy might be misunderstood as legitimizing or unnecessarily prolonging past oppression.¹¹ While I agree that historical connection to hierarchy does keep past hierarchy alive, importantly, this is through remembrance instead of material practices. Rather than prolonging oppression, post-hierarchical race can spread awareness of past oppression, providing a much-needed guard against any re-emergence of potentially dormant material hierarchy.

By way of rejoinder, it could be contested that remembrance might in fact lead to outlets for material practices of hierarchical treatment, perhaps by giving those inclined a central focus to rally against. Any empirical evidence that remembrance might encourage and enable hierarchical treatment is hard to locate; however, I suggest that if there is such a causal relationship, then it is only something which takes place in the exception. This is not to dismiss the importance of addressing any amount of material hierarchical treatment. It may be the case that remembrance really does, on occasion, risk the remnants of former hierarchy resurfacing, but this, in fact, enables us to confront the challenge head on. Through the often-public practice of remembrance, we can locate and address any such material hierarchical tendencies rather than have them perpetuated out of sight and away from the mainstream. Remembrance can help to tackle and confront hierarchical prejudices before they have the opportunity to spread further into society. It would be naive to assume that once hierarchical races have been dismantled, the synchronic hierarchy which led to their creation might never re-emerge. Haslanger's own ameliorative goal of tackling racial injustice is perhaps therefore better served by modifying race to include historical connection to hierarchy as constituting post-hierarchical races.

11 Ron Mallon, "Race': Normative, Not Metaphysical or Semantic," *Ethics* 116, no. 3 (2006): 549, 10.1086/500495.

A further legitimate purpose for the modified account of hierarchy is that post-hierarchical race is intrinsically valuable in itself. With reference to the Black Art Movement, a positive case for race predicated on a historical connection to hierarchy can be established. Black aesthetics emerged during the Black Art Movement as a response to racial subordination during the 1960s. John Coltrane's composition, "Alabama," written in reaction to the 1963 Birmingham church bombing, provided a model for the emerging Black Consciousness Movement.

Trane was the spirit of the 60's
 He was Malcolm X in New Super Bop Fire
 Baaahhhh
 Wheeeeeee . . . Black Art!!!¹²

In this poem, Amiri Bakara, considered by many as a leader within the movement, points to Coltrane's significance in expressing a positive "Black" racial identity.¹³ Born out of hierarchical subordination and acute forms of oppression, black aesthetics established a positive reclamation of race both by and for that group. It is possible to point to other cases where a new aesthetic or culture was in part crystallized by the hierarchical treatment of a racial group. Richard Courage provides one such study of the impact of black artists during the depression era saying, "Chicago's black artists of the 1930s and 1940s sought to reframe perceptions of African American life and to re-present the black subject as something other than an object of contempt or amusement beneath the privileged gaze of the white viewer."¹⁴ If we were to fast-forward to a post-hierarchical future, Haslanger's requirement of synchronic hierarchy becomes problematic as it means that black aesthetics will no longer refer to a real group given that, for Haslanger, the race has ceased to exist. But even if—as we undoubtedly strive for—synchronic hierarchy ceased, black aesthetics, which emerged in response to previous hierarchical treatment and are intimately bound up with a racial group, would still be relevant to our society.

Haslanger's account has two problematic implications. First, there is a concern about aesthetic appreciation. If the representational content of art in some way impacts its aesthetic value, then by rejecting

¹² Amiri Bakara, *AM/TRAK* (New York: Nadja Editions, 1979), st. 5, <http://eclipsearchive.org/projects/AMTRAK/html/contents.html>.

¹³ Bakara, *AM/TRAK*.

¹⁴ Richard A. Courage, "Re-Presenting Racial Reality: Chicago's New (Media) Negro Artists of the Depression Era," *Technoetic Arts: A Journal of Speculative Research* 11, no. 2-3 (2012): 317, 10.1386/tear.10.2-3.309.1.



the existence of post-hierarchical race, Haslanger in effect reduces the value of such art by denying its applicability to any real existing group. The content might tell a story, but an aspect of its meaning and reality is taken away by its failure to properly refer to race. Following on, it also seems that for those individuals who do strongly self-associate with past hierarchical racial groups, perhaps by celebrating the distinct culture and aesthetic which emerged, Haslanger's claim that races do not exist post-hierarchy implies that these individuals are in some sense misguided. Their opinion would be wrong in that while they can perhaps celebrate the Black Art Movement, they are mistaken to think of themselves as belonging to that same group.

By contrast, within my modified account, allowing for post-hierarchical races means that those groups, historically connected with past subordination, can preserve what emerged as a positive culture and a celebrated aesthetic by tying this to a real, continuing, and existing race. Haslanger might object that my modification is merely semantic given that what I am talking about is just racial identity, which can be adequately captured by the term "ethnicity."¹⁵ For Haslanger, the concept of race is something which we should aim to ultimately eliminate, seeing as it is not a meaningful concept without a color-based hierarchy. She suggests there are other terms instead, including ethnicity, which could be used as a way of recognizing and addressing past injustices. However, it is not clear, even as an idealized concept, how the concept of ethnicity might operate in a post-hierarchical context, leaving some doubt about its utility and value in this situation. Furthermore, Haslanger's decision to do away with race seems to rest on the imperative that "the main issue is how we draw distinctions between humans for the purposes of justice."¹⁶ Her preoccupation with dismantling contemporary racial injustice is commendable but falls short of acknowledging the full potential for what our concept of race might be able to achieve. Specifically, by doing away with the present reality of race in a post-hierarchical age, the concept of ethnicity does not adequately provide justice to the cultures which emerged out of historical racial subordination. If we accept that providing such conceptual justice and recognition is a legitimate political purpose, then we are encouraged instead to modify our account of race to serve this goal as well as tackling synchronic injustices.

V. CONCLUSION

Having outlined Haslanger's ameliorative social constructivist framework, I have proposed modifying the synchronic nature

15 Haslanger, *Resisting Reality*, 245.

16 Haslanger, *Resisting Reality*, 259.

of hierarchy within her account of race. This includes historical connection to hierarchy as a constitutive factor for the existence of post-hierarchical races. My modification serves two main purposes which justify maintaining the use of race post-hierarchy. First, serving Haslanger's own antiracist goal, historical connection to hierarchy is one tool which helps guard against the re-emergence of synchronic hierarchy. In addition, post-hierarchical race can provide conceptual justice to the cultures and aesthetics formed out of historical racial oppression which remain important to recognize in their own right. Haslanger's framework provides the opportunity to formulate a more complete account of race containing both aspects of hierarchy, therefore best tackling racial injustice while preserving the posterity of racial cultures.





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ORIGIN, IMPACT, AND REACTION TO MISOGYNISTIC BEHAVIORS:

An Interview with

Kate A. Manne, PhD



ABOUT KATE A. MANNE, PHD



Kate A. Manne is an associate professor at the Sage School of Philosophy at Cornell University, where she has been teaching since 2013. Before that, she was a junior fellow at the Harvard Society of Fellows (2011–2013), did her graduate work at MIT (2006–2011), and was an undergraduate at the University of Melbourne (2001–2005), where she studied philosophy, logic, and computer science. Her current research is primarily in moral, feminist, and social philosophy. She is the author of two books, including her first book *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny* and her latest book *Entitled: How Male Privilege Hurts Women*. Manne has also published a number of scholarly papers about the foundations of morality, and she regularly writes opinion pieces, essays, and reviews in venues—including *The New York Times*, *The Boston Review*, the *Huffington Post*, and the *Chronicle of Higher Education*.



STANCE: We wanted to reiterate our thanks to you for being here. We're all super excited and grateful that you could interview with us. For our first question, we were wondering what your undergraduate years as a philosophy student were like, and how are they related to how you do philosophy now?

MANNE: I was primarily interested in logic as an undergraduate. I studied with Greg Restall and Graham Priest at the University of Melbourne. In some ways, that's very different from what I do now. I would say, though, those years doing logic in the philosophy department and also the computer science department gave me a certain amount of confidence that stood me in good stead for graduate school and made me able to change course when I became interested in ethics and feminist philosophy.

STANCE: We've noticed some of the major themes in your work are misogyny and entitlement. Could you give us a gloss of these concepts and talk about how they're connected?

I DEFINE MISOGYNY
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PATRIARCHAL
NORMS AND
EXPECTATIONS.

MANNE: Absolutely. My definition of misogyny is opposed to what I call the naive definition of misogyny. The naive definition of misogyny says that misogyny is the hatred of any and every woman and girl or, at least, women and girls very generally. I oppose that definition and propose something more structural and social rather than psychological. I define misogyny as a system that functions to police and enforce a patriarchal order by visiting women and girls with hostility and hatred, paradigmatically because they violate patriarchal norms and expectations. That immediately led me to this question: what are patriarchal norms and expectations, especially in a superficially egalitarian milieu like America today?

My answer to that is contained in my second book, which discusses the concept of entitlement. I think there are still norms and expectations that say that privileged men, at least, are entitled to certain goods from women, things like sex, most obviously, but still more insidiously, things like care, love, attention, admiration, as well as power and claims to knowledge. So, I don't offer a definition of the concept of entitlement. I think

it's difficult to define. I think there are various semi-synonyms for the concept of entitlement, like what someone has a right to, what someone is owed, or what they deserve. These are all ways of getting a similar idea of what someone is due.

STANCE: Diving more into your work, we have a question about "Chapter One" of Down Girl. You say misogynist hostilities will often target women quite selectively rather than targeting women across the board. You give examples of Rush Limbaugh, Donald Trump, and even Elliot Rodger, the Isla Vista killer. Do you think men with hostile attitudes purposely look for women who are acting against the patriarchy, or are their hateful displays reactive?

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MANNE: That's a great question. I think their hateful displays are almost always reactive and not any kind of deliberate attempt to enforce the patriarchal order. They're typically—and I think I can say this in all of those three cases—reactions to women who thwart, cross, or challenge these men in some way, or perhaps a bit more broadly, who violate their sense of what women owe men. In the case of Elliot Rodger, there was the sense that he was owed sex, love, affection, and admiration from "hot blonde girls." His subsequent reaction was very volatile and violent when he felt he wasn't being given what he believed he was due. That went hand in hand with a lot of moralistic rhetoric.

He said, for example, that it was very unfair, that he'd been done a great injustice, that it was a crime. So, it's not so much that he was looking for people to punish. It's rather that he felt like he'd been done a grave injustice or harm and that his reaction—revenge or retribution—was deserved. It was striking. He called the final YouTube video that he uploaded before committing his murders "The Day of Retribution." Again, you find this highly moralistic attitude purveyed by misogynists. I think that's also true of Rush Limbaugh. He ironically thought that Sandra Fluke was acting overly entitled to contraception, in holding it should be covered under health insurance at the religious institution of Georgetown, where she was in law school. He advertised the view that these women were doing him and his listeners, *qua* American taxpayers, an injustice by acting overly entitled to birth control.



Donald Trump is usually someone who lashes out very reactively when women thwart, cross, or challenge him. A classic example of that would be when Megyn Kelly challenged him during a debate saying, “How will you represent women, given that your record on women is not very good?” She challenged him on the likelihood of his being able to do justice to women when it came to health care. He said, “She had blood coming out of her eyes and her wherever,” thereby coining a new euphemism for the vagina. He was painting Megyn Kelly as the aggressor in doing that. He was acting like he was the one who was the victim or the one who’d been done an injustice or wrong, and his hostility took the form of portraying her as the perpetrator.

STANCE: Let’s move to “Chapter Three” of Down Girl. You argue abortion wasn’t a significant religious issue until the Nixon campaign made it one. How much of a role does religion play in enforcing misogynist ideals, or is religion really just another part of the sexist framework within patriarchy?

MANNE: That is a tricky question to answer because religion is so diverse. I’d be very hesitant to make any broad brush strokes or sweeping claims about the role of religion. For one thing, many world religions don’t have a particularly oppressive attitude toward women or particularly sexist attitudes. I think contemporary Buddhism is perfectly friendly to, and compatible with, feminist ideals, for example. But even if we’re looking more narrowly within Christianity, we shouldn’t lose sight of a very progressive and, to my mind, salutary Christian left, who try to make things better for girls and women. I think of it more as there being certain political movements, such as the anti-abortion movement, that are very regressive and look to fairly small and local elements of institutions, including religious institutions, to essentially exploit people into thinking their vote should go to Republicans because of what are essentially trumped-up issues like abortion. But this wasn’t a major issue for anyone but strict Catholics during most of the 20th century, up until the early 70s, and prior to *Roe v. Wade*. My point is mostly that it was a drummed-up issue, that it wasn’t a grassroots campaign against abortion that led to it becoming a big political issue in this country. It wasn’t actually *Roe v. Wade*. It was a deliberately engineered attempt to manipulate people into voting Republican by making this more of an issue than it actually was to most religious people prior to the early 70s.

STANCE: In Down Girl “Chapter Six,” you discuss how women are rewarded by society when they engage in behaviors that don’t threaten the patriarchal

system. However, when they become a victim of misogyny and speak out against it, their credibility is questioned, or their perpetrator is shown sympathy, especially if the perpetrator is of a higher status or position than the victim. You call the show of sympathy for perpetrators “himpathy.” Some of us have experienced the harms of what you call “himpathy.” Could you talk about what some good responses are when one is harmed this way?

SYMPATHY IS A GOOD THING. IT'S JUST THAT IT CAN BE MISDIRECTED IN VARIOUS, IMPORTANT WAYS.

MANNE: First of all, I'm very sorry for anyone who has had that experience of not being given the sympathy one is owed as a victim of injustice, misogynist hostility, sexual harassment, or assault. In terms of responses, my hope is that the coining the concept of “himpathy” can help both victims themselves and also their allies or accomplices to push back against “himpathetic” reactions. When someone says, “Oh poor him,” because he is being held accountable for doing something that was misogynistic, such as sexual assault, and isn't thinking about his current or future victims, I hope that with the concept of “himpathy,” we can draw attention to that dynamic and how harmful it is, and redirect sympathetic attention to where it primarily belongs, namely to the victim of a sexual assault.

I hope that can be one good response, that people who are trying to be moral can be woken up to realize they are directing their sympathetic attention where it doesn't primarily belong; that, actually, they should be focusing more on the victim than the perpetrator. Sympathy is a good thing. It's just that it can be misdirected in various, important ways. Sometimes what you have is a case of someone well-meaning, well-intentioned, and who has good moral instincts, who has, nonetheless, been redirected in their emotions by patriarchal forces and who could perhaps be woken up to realize they are sympathizing essentially with the wrong person, at least in the first instance.

STANCE: As you discussed, women that are victims of sexual assault and then are met with “himpathy” can experience it as gaslighting. In particular, it can cause a person to believe they are not justified in blaming the perpetrator. Do you think a better understanding of “himpathy” can reduce the injustice that results from victims doubting their understanding of their experiences? More

generally, how might an understanding of “himpathy” help people make sense of their experiences and combat injustices?

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MANNE: That’s another excellent question. I definitely think the phenomenon of gaslighting intersects in interesting ways with “himpathy.” One of the ways it does that, as you point out, is by making people feel guilty or ashamed for hanging onto the truth about what happened to them, or about what some bad actor did, or about what some institution is really like. In the most classic cases, gaslighting preys on someone’s sense of what is rational to believe. It can make someone “crazy,” or allege that someone is “crazy,” for not buying into the gaslighter’s version of reality. But, just as importantly, it can make someone feel guilty, as if they are a bad person. Gaslighting dismisses victims as either irrational or immoral for maintaining their own correct version of reality. It can make it extremely difficult to hang onto the truth in the face of both social power and rational and moral pressure to bend to another person’s version of reality, when they strongly insinuate you’d be crazy or bad for not agreeing with what they say. So, it’s a way that people in dominant social positions—perhaps typically, but by no means exclusively, men—can effectively control the narrative and make people stick to a particular version of reality without it being true or at all compelling in terms of the evidence for it.

Sometimes gaslighters even succeed in having people assert what they know to be false, which is a quite striking social achievement in the face of the actual evidence or the epistemic facts. Again, my hope is that authors that have drawn attention to the phenomenon of gaslighting—and in the philosophy world these are people like Kate Abramson, Veronica Ivy, and many other authors—can help provide tools for victims to resist being gaslit.

I think it's very powerful to think this is a more general dynamic; you are not actually crazy or bad for maintaining your side of the story. You can understand you are being subject to undue pressure to cave, and maybe resist a particular mechanism that would try to make you abandon an important truth about what's happened to you, or about the world.

STANCE: In several of your works, you describe how women are expected, by society, to be psychological and moral nurturers or caretakers for the men and children in their lives. If moral nurturing helps children develop healthy psycho-social habits, how can we support this moral nurturing without stereotyping women and making women do an unjust amount of caregiving?

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MANNE: That's really important, because I would hate for my work to be misunderstood as devaluing typically feminine-coded traits, activities, and virtues. It seems to me that caregiving is tremendously important. It will always need doing. It's humanly valuable, meaningful work. I think my argument here is really simple. I think men should do just as much caregiving, and should be socialized to view it as just as much their work, as women and girls. Everyone, be they man, woman, boy, girl, non-binary adult or child, should view themselves as responsible for caring for those around them in ways that are sustainable, warm, and loving, and also, when appropriate, reciprocal. When adults care for each other, that can be done in a reciprocal way, and there can be something very affirming about the possibility that both partners, including in a straight or heterosexual relationship, might be able to get what they need from each other, and also give each other what they need. So, I think of these ideals as really egalitarian, and not as questioning the value of care.

STANCE: Do you believe that there are certain neurobiological predispositions in men and women to approach nurturing in different ways? Or, do you believe those are entirely due to social norms? And if they're biological, should they be accounted for and respected? Or, is it the responsibility of an individual to overcome it and share the nurturing role equally?



MANNE: I think the most striking thing is that it would be very difficult to know at this point in human history whether anything we observe by way of these gender differences is biological or innate. I think that we do have a lot of evidence that there are many social processes that make men and women responsive to different social norms, and that can shape our behavior. It's possible that there's a residual biological difference of some kind, but I suspect we won't know for a long time, because we don't have a control group of men and women raised in a non-patriarchal, gender-neutral society that we could analyze to see if there are any remaining gender differences. I tend to proceed as if these are all learned and socialized differences because I don't think we lose a lot by acting as if that's the case, and that's compatible with the possibility that we might eventually learn that it's not the case. If it were the case, I think, as you rightly point out, we'll have an interesting question on our hands having to do with the is-ought gap. Even if it is the case that things will be slightly easier for men or slightly easier for women, if they are good to do, does that mean we should have any gendered division of labor, or should women do more or men do less? It's not clear that that's the case. It might just be that we might need certain people to try harder to fulfill their basic moral responsibilities, e.g., to care for others around them properly.

STANCE: This notion of women as nurturing, communal caregivers seems incompatible with the idea of them being untrustworthy. Yet, much of your work revolves around people not trusting women to lead, to be aware of their own bodies, or to tell the truth about sexual assault. Where do you think the idea of women being untrustworthy came from?

MANNE: That's a really sharp observation. I think women are regarded as very trustworthy in certain areas, including caregiving. There's a tendency, occasionally, in the epistemic injustice literature, to make statements that are perhaps a bit too sweeping, like, "Women are not regarded as knowers." The anecdote I often like to give to cast some doubt on that sweeping claim is that I'm regarded as a knower in most of the domains that are traditionally feminine. If I'm at the supermarket, people often ask me, "What do you do with a rutabaga?" or "How do you make a mango curd?" Whereas my husband, who shops with the same grocery list, is subject to fewer of those queries. I'm not saying it's wrong to ask people how to cook with ingredients. I'm happy to answer those questions. I just think it is interesting that men in a completely comparable position within the same grocery basket doesn't get as many of those inquiries.

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I think white women are often regarded as highly trustworthy when it comes to caring for their own children. And non-white women who are positioned as caregivers for other people's children—those subject to the “mammy” stereotype discussed by Patricia Hill Collins—are often regarded as supremely trustworthy with regard to other people's children, like the white children that black women were often tasked with caring for. It's when women challenge the status quo, or the patriarchal order, that their trustworthiness tends to be doubted. It's less the idea that women are untrustworthy than that we wheel out this ad hoc idea that women are untrustworthy when they challenge male dominance or threaten a powerful man's position. We see this a lot with the #MeToo movement when some women had been silent about certain truths in their lives for years and years and years, because they knew they wouldn't be believed about that particular matter because it was threatening to powerful and privileged men. But, that's perfectly compatible with being overly reliant on women's knowledge when it comes to caregiving and other feminine coded duties.

STANCE: Let's transition to your book Entitled. In “Chapter Seven,” you discuss the inequality of housework and caregiving in straight relationships and the double bind that this puts women in. The first part of this bind is that if you ask your husband for help, you break the social code by expressing unacceptable, resentful emotions. Since this is a societal code, is it possible for a straight couple to break this double bind and find a healthy balance of who does what? Do you think such relationships exist?

MANNE: Yeah, I am optimistic about that. I think such relationships do exist. I think I'm in one. But a lot of hard work is required to undo powerful and prevalent social norms that say women should do more of the material and domestic and child-giving labor, while also doing it in a completely seamless, loving, and willing spirit—so that they shouldn't even ask for “help” around the house and that they should absorb all the shock of extra work that piles up, say, during a pandemic, without having



any demands placed on their male partners. It's both a matter of evening the amount of work people do, but also having good communication that allows both partners to be in constant dialogue about whether things are equal. Is the amount of paid and unpaid work appropriately balanced? I think that's a difficult thing to pull off, but it's perfectly possible.

STANCE: That's reassuring. In much of your work, you discuss the concept of humanism. Given your argument that humanism doesn't well explain misogyny, what conceptual framework would you use to cover the shortcomings of humanism?

MANNE: I have a very unpithy name for it: a socially situated approach to understanding bigotry and hatred. The idea is to understand some people as positioned by dint of features like their race, their gender, their class, or their intersection, as well as other things like being trans, being disabled, being a certain age—such marginalized people can be positioned, unfortunately, as somehow threatening or even as an enemy or as deviant or as in need of being taught a lesson. All sorts of characteristically human faults and flaws can be attributed to individuals or groups of people on the basis of things like the aforementioned group memberships, and that can, thereby, attract very hostile and hateful treatment, even though these people are seen as fully human.

SEEING THEM AS FULLY HUMAN IS A PREREQUISITE FOR HOLDING THEM TO BE BAD, DEVIANT, PUNISHABLE, OR IN NEED OF POLICING OR BEING TAUGHT A LESSON.

In fact, seeing them as fully human is a prerequisite for holding them to be bad, deviant, punishable, or in need of policing or being taught a lesson. Because we don't generally hold these attitudes towards non-human animals, we generally don't regard non-human animals as enemies. If we do, it's some kind of a conceptual mistake, crystallized by Moby Dick. The idea that a non-human animal can't really be an enemy, because they have no conceptualization of you, as such, is a powerful and compelling idea enshrined by such literature.

STANCE: Several of your articles talk about the dehumanizing principle, which you have long argued does not apply to cases of violence against less privileged peoples. How can you see the conversation around these types of violent crimes changing based on your ideas? In what ways will recognizing that humanness is necessary for the kind of hate directed at these peoples influence the way we prosecute perpetrators either morally or judicially?

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MANNE: I think one of the things I hope the most is that we let go of a myth about perpetrators of brutal violence as having made a more or less innocent mistake, of just not seeing other people as human, that if we're subject to certain forms of oppression, we just need to make our humanity visible and legible to the perpetrators. I think that's a really pernicious and damaging lie that casts the perpetrators as not fully responsible for what they do, because they're just missing something, something that could be made plain to them, and then, they would see the light morally and do better. Also, it tends to place a certain amount of responsibility on victims to humanize themselves rather than thinking of perpetrators as bad actors who fully understand the humanity of their victims and want to do them a cruelty in spite of that, or sometimes precisely because of that.

STANCE: Given the traps of humanism that you elucidate very well in your work, do you think it still has a valuable place in the contemporary world?

MANNE: That's a really good question that I've honestly struggled with back and forth. The thing I've explicitly argued for at the most length in my work is that humanism can't explain all kinds of horrible cruelty and brutal treatment. It often can't explain misogynistic violence that's premised on recognizing the humanity of the victim. But, as I argue in the last part of that chapter in *Down Girl*, if we don't need to resort to the idea of dehumanization to explain some brutal violence, there's this question: do we ever need to invoke this idea? Is it useful? Is it consistent with principles of parsimony, or is it always surplus to explanatory requirements? That's a question I want to leave open, but I've yet to be fully convinced we ever need to invoke this mysterious idea that people genuinely see others as non-human, subhuman, or non-human animals in order to explain brutal violence. I think it also has this problematic tendency to exoticize violence and make us think that something really radical needs to happen in people's minds to explain violence, as opposed to it being a very ordinary thing. As we see with domestic violence, it doesn't take very much to have a situation where societies have prevalent, widespread,

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horrible violence that a significant percentage of women will face, even if that's only perpetrated by a small percentage of typically, although not always, men. I think the dehumanization paradigm looks on society as peaceful and then wonders what goes wrong when it comes to big, mass movements that are violent. Whereas I tend to look at society as quite violent, unfortunately. Sometimes the forces that may explain domestic violence could be unleashed on a much broader swath of people in ways that require political momentum to set loose. That's at least why I'm a bit skeptical that dehumanization has a valuable explanatory role to play, but I do want to leave that possibility officially open.

STANCE: We did want to ask, if dehumanization is not really what's going on in the underlying causes of those sorts of violence, then what sort of things do you think are happening when people use dehumanizing language, like when Trump compared Mexicans to cockroaches and bugs?

MANNE: To me, it's a very general derogating mechanism. We have, for better or more likely worse, a hierarchy that places God at the top, human beings next, and then, a hierarchy of non-human animals pretty much bottoming out in vermin like a cockroach. One very powerful way of derogating people is to liken them to non-human animals, especially ones that we find disgusting or think are disease-carriers like cockroaches. I think a lot of other similar, derogating moves rely on other hierarchies. It's of a piece of the fact that Trump will call black women "low IQ individuals." He will help himself to whatever hierarchies are salient to him and then derogate people who he doesn't like or who he's prejudiced against by reaching out to a hierarchy and downranking people according to it. Although this is obviously controversial, I tend to think the great chain of being type of hierarchy is just one hierarchy among many where he'll downrank people by invoking it. It's not that he literally thinks of Mexican people as cockroaches. In reality, he regards people from derogated ethnic and racial groups as a threat, and I don't think he would regard people as a threat unless he realized that we're people.

STANCE: Moving on to some of your stand-alone articles, in “Non-Machiavellian Manipulation and the Opacity of Motive,” you argue that sometimes people are not consciously aware of much of the manipulative behavior they display. Can you relate this concept to the concept of microaggressions? What kind of unintentional behaviors of this type should be tolerated by oppressed peoples, and how should they be responded to?

MANNE: That’s a really nice question. I hadn’t previously made that connection, so I really appreciate the thought. This theme you’ve brought out really nicely is in a lot of my work. A lot of bad behavior is unintentional. I counsel focusing on the impact, not the intention. Manipulation usually isn’t intentional as such. People usually don’t set out to manipulate others. They usually don’t think, “I’m going to get agent A to do Phi.” They don’t tend to think in terms of manipulation. They tend to think, “That’s what ought to happen.”

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Similarly, there are a lot of behaviors that can be aptly described as microaggressions that have this feature of being unintentional. They might be questions leveled out of genuine curiosity, like “Where are you from?” or someone touching someone’s hair because they’re unfamiliar with that hair texture. These are racist behaviors that we need to recognize as racist. But that doesn’t require attributing to someone, necessarily, a bad motive. I tend to think the motive doesn’t particularly matter. It’s all about the impact.

STANCE: In discussions of oppression, what do you think your obligations are as a white woman writing about the struggles of women and of other oppressed groups?

MANNE: That’s something I’ve thought about and worried about a lot, especially since I think of myself as someone privileged along really every dimension bar gender. I think of myself as someone who is white, albeit Jewish, as middle class, as having institutional privilege. I’m straight and I’m cis. All of those things add up to a pretty weighty responsibility to listen to the voices of people who are in more marginalized communities relative to me and to really be attentive to things being said by black women and trans women as well as men who are poor or illegalized, about their unique experiences of misogyny, misogynoir, or transmisogyny, or classism, or xenophobia—things that I won’t personally experience. So, part

of the obligation is to listen. Part of the obligation is also to try to synthesize some of those observations and try to include those perspectives in my work, as well as having the humility to recognize that I'll get it wrong a lot of the time and be unable to fully do justice to those vital perspectives. Part of what I want to do is to advert to the work of women of color, as well as trans women, and women in other demographics, and say that you really need to listen to people in these groups; "Here is a resource for understanding misogynoir," or "Here is a resource for understanding transmisogyny." I can gesture towards some of the things I've learned from scholars in these groups, but I won't always be able to do justice to the experience. It's a balance between trying to incorporate other voices and trying to signal boost to other scholars who are vital to read and to listen to on these subjects.

STANCE: That is something that we appreciated when reading your work. We noticed that you pointed to a lot of resources that we could look at if we wanted to hear from a more diverse perspective.

MANNE: Excellent. That's great to hear.

STANCE: "Don't Trust Your Gut on Hillary: Why the Visceral Suspicion of Her Is Predictable—and Untrustworthy" elaborates on the idea of disgust driven morals. Disgust can, in some ways, be considered a socially applied connotation but also a bodily imperative. For example, an infant that sits in their soiled diaper too long and starts to cry does so with their bodily imperative of discomfort and disgust; they wish to be clean. How can one distinguish this learned bodily imperative, which is deemed to be universal and non-negotiable, from truth and fiction?

MANNE: That's a very interesting question. As you're picking up on there, I do think of certain bodily imperatives as the heart of moral truth. I do think that a baby's desire to be fed, the piercing cry of an infant in the night who needs to be fed, changed, or just soothed, represents that bodily imperative on their part and represents a moral imperative on the part of the parent to meet those needs. As you point out, some bodily imperatives have a disgust basis. Feeling dirty and wanting to be clean is a powerful bodily imperative, and it's really tricky. Unfortunately, sometimes those bodily imperatives, as they apply to more subtle and complicated matters, can become misleading. An example would be the sadness of an incel whose bodily imperative is to have soothing ministrations from a woman. I think that isn't a moral imperative that anyone should be rushing out to satisfy. Similarly, someone's sense of disgust at a woman in power isn't a bodily imperative that deserves to be satisfied.

One of the things that differentiates those bodily imperatives from ones that ought to be satisfied is the fact that they can be changed and learned and unlearned. It's not universal or non-negotiable to have a sense of disgust at a woman's power. Similarly, an incel's sense of sadness and yearning for a woman to meet his perceived needs—that's by no means a universal human condition. It's a product of a sense of entitlement, primarily, and is something that could be unlearned and lead to not having that visceral response. So, the bodily imperatives that have the most claim to be moral imperatives are the ones that are non-negotiable and universal, and really couldn't be otherwise in that particular individual at that time.

STANCE: About universality, in "On Being Social in Metaethics," you argue that much of ethics is influenced by social norms. Under this framework, how do you believe social change arises? Are all societies turning towards establishing similar social norms or will there always be a large distinction?

MANNE: I think there will often be residual differences in social norms between societies. That's a little beyond my pay grade as a philosopher, because that's really a sociological speculation on my part. One of the reasons why social norms differ widely is that there are often different norms that essentially have a similar function. In different cultures there can be different norms of politeness. A friendly wave in one culture might be a gesture of disdain in another.

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Even so, I suspect there will be differences. I think social norms have more of a claim on us, normatively speaking, when they help us meet our mutual needs as individuals and as a society. One of the ways this jibes with the idea of bodily imperatives is that if a set of social norms helps everyone's bodily imperatives or most basic imperatives to be met—to help us be fed, healthy, happy, and content—then there's more of a claim that those norms have genuine normative purchase. So, that's one of the litmus tests I propose for social norms that should be regarded as moral norms, that they are actually conducive to everyone's bodily imperative of a moral kind being satisfied.

STANCE: In "Internalism about Reason: Sad But True," you convey the idea that in order to change someone's behavior, an agent must connect to them with



mutual respect and persuade them to change through ideal reasoning. In a patriarchal society that often times deems women not equal to men, in moral agency nor respect, is it possible for women to change misogynist behavior? Or, must men do it?

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MANNE: That's a very good question. The sad thing—another sad truth—is that often someone who's best positioned to talk about a lack of social power or injustice will, because of that lack of social power and because of that very injustice, have a difficult time getting through to a large number of people. I do think there's an important role for male allies or accomplices to talk to people in a clear or even sharp way about misogynistic behaviors or problems in society. I think there's a role for everyone, whatever their degree of privilege, in playing a part in helping convince other people of what needs to be done in order to achieve gender justice, among other kinds of justice.

STANCE: *In that same article, you state that when we are incapable of reasoning with someone through an interpersonal connection, we are left with the less effective ability to blame and criticize. Do you think that shaming could be a useful middle ground or form of compromise between interpersonal reasoning and objective criticism?*

MANNE: I'm interested in this possibility because I do think that we lose something when we can't blame someone in the intimate sense that presumes that they might do better and that they have, themselves, an interest or desire to do better and could be persuaded to do better through good reasoning. As you point out, I think, along with Williams, that even if we can't play the blame game, we can do other things. We can label them sexist, selfish, nasty, brutal, and "other disadvantageous things," as he put it. It's interesting to think about the idea of shaming as a bridging practice. The idea would be that by shaming people, perhaps we could bring them back into a community of people who we could reason with interpersonally to get them to do better. I like the idea. I'm not completely sure that it would work because one thing that's very striking about shame is how aversive it is. People do a great deal to avoid being shamed. We see this when we have shaming labels, like misogynist and racist, that entail that there's

something shameful about fitting that description. People will do an enormous amount to avoid being saddled with that label.

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Because I take seriously this property that they have, when it comes to the idea of being a misogynist, we should apply it very sparingly, because people will go to such great lengths to avoid it. They won't so much avoid the behavior, but they will avoid by various defensive moves having the label applied to them, even if it would be deserved. So, I think we need shaming labels to be warning labels that we apply very sparingly to help people avoid misogynists and racists. I'm not saying we shouldn't use them. But I don't see them as having a big role in persuasion, because I think people tend to flee from their very possibility and behave in irrational and often immoral ways, rather than facing up to the possibility that the label really fits.

STANCE: Do you think the notion of disgust, as you talk about it, has any relation to the visceral reaction against those shameful labels that you mentioned?

MANNE: Yes. I think it is the first-person analog of third and second personal disgust. I think blame and guilt are pairs in that way. The first-person internalized analog of blame is guilt. The first-person internalized analog of disgust is shame. And, that helps explain the fact that it's so aversive, because it's a form of self-disgust, or it at least shares a lot in common with disgust directed at the self. Because of that, people will do an awful lot to avoid it, even if they should feel self-disgust, even if they should feel shame, for racist or misogynistic behavior. It usually does more to alienate than to convince, which doesn't mean we shouldn't use the labels, but I think we should use them to warn others about a misogynist or a racist, not to help people come back into the fold, because people who are self-disgusted or who are filled with shame are pretty volatile.

STANCE: Sometimes the desire to shame another is primarily about satisfying the desire of the shamer. It is very different than giving a gift of moral alarm to a person by saying, "I am experiencing something you are doing as harmful or problematic." This is described as a gift, because this also says, "I'm not



dehumanizing you or turning you into something I am attempting to control with moral force.” Rather, this says, “I want to be in a relationship with you, and you are doing something that is making that relationship difficult.” Yet, in formal relationships, as opposed to informal ones, there might be a role for shame if the potential harm is significant. The point here is that shaming is bad most of the time.

MANNE: I really like that observation. It reminds me of the way Erik Erikson says, “Shame wants to destroy the eyes of the world.” I think that quote is an exaggeration, because there is plenty of shame that, rather than wanting to hide from the world, wants to divorce your own eyes from the world’s eyes by hiding yourself away rather than destroying anything. Nonetheless, there is something about shame that severs the sightlines between self and other.

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Lashing out behavior, hiding behavior, wanting to be invisible, and wanting to disappear are all the characteristic bodily imperatives that attend shame. Because of that, there’s not a whole lot we can do with it to restore interpersonal connections. Again, I’m not saying it has no role. In some circumstances, it is good to say certain people are beyond the pale. Using a shaming label about Trump, to me, helped identify ways in which he was harming people who are marginalized by his rhetoric and his policies. It could be helpful to say he is beyond the pale and beyond the reach of reasoning. It is not something that helps bring him back into the fold. This is something we do when we are beyond the training, conversations, and reasoning processes that we engage with with each other to try to lift all of our moral game. It is something we do when we realize we need to get away from a person and sever a connection. It takes a lot to get to that point.

STANCE: *We could decide which term we want to apply to which concept, but blaming is frequently good. Blaming is a reaching out to reestablish or reorient a relationship in a positive way. But, shaming is a breaking.*

MANNE: I totally agree. Blaming is often important in the context of an intimate interpersonal relationship. It implies a degree of trust and a degree of hope. It holds someone accountable, but for a particular behavior that you think they can do better on, and that you rightly expected more from them with respect to this. Remonstrating with someone by blaming them is very different from shaming them for a behavior, attitude, or practice. Blame is something that both relies on, and aims to improve and restore, interpersonal connections.

STANCE: We've been thinking about the roles misogyny and entitlement play in undergraduate philosophy education. Do you have any suggestions for how we can reduce the roles of misogyny and entitlement in our academic programs while we're still students?

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MANNE: I am a big believer in the kind of thing you are doing, which is doing philosophy together with diverse practitioners. This can be really helpful. Instructors have a big role to play in getting together syllabi that are representative of a diverse group of people and a diverse set of interests, ideas, and philosophical problems, including political ones. When I teach contemporary moral problems, I include a unit on racism and/or misogyny, which is a way of helping make the discussion a little broader and more politically in-tune with people's current concerns, rather than what you might find in a textbook.

Instructors also have a big role to play in doing simple things to improve equality within the academy, like calling on everyone equally as much as that's possible. If you are a man, a woman, or someone who's non-binary, and you raise your hand, there must be an equal chance of being called upon. That's often not true, sadly, as things stand, because even well-meaning people with egalitarian beliefs often exhibit unconscious gender biases that have them orient towards white men in the classroom. So, there are simple measures we can do to reduce that. Things like alternating who you call upon, assuming it is a reasonably balanced group of people, or you can modify that if the numbers are very skewed. Also, things like anonymous grading are a good measure that I've implemented in my classes both to reduce



the chance of implicit bias, and also to say very deliberately to students that I am not above this.

GENDER BIASES ARE COMMON, AS ARE RACIAL BIASES, AND IT IS SOMETHING WE SHOULD ALL TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR MINIMIZING HOWEVER WE CAN.

Gender biases are common, as are racial biases, and it is something we should all take responsibility for minimizing however we can. If you can grade anonymously, there is a good argument for doing so. I think most of the responsibility falls on instructors. My hope is that people are increasingly open-minded about how to make the classroom, and philosophy in particular, more welcoming to everyone.

STANCE: Is there anything that you wished we had asked? Do you have any questions that you would like us to answer?

MANNE: I thought your questions were brilliant. I really enjoyed them. I would love to hear from you. What is the best thing an instructor has done, or could do, to make your undergraduate education philosophically or socially richer?

STANCE: Philosophy professors are really willing to approach you first and work with you. I tend to be a quieter student, but I've still had lots of professors reach out to me and ask if I was interested in doing different things. It's useful that they won't ignore you just because you're quiet.

MANNE: I think that's so important. I try to make it clear that participation needn't be in one form; it doesn't just have to be speaking up in class. It could be having discussion questions that are written that are really good, coming to office hours and having one-on-one discussions, or talking after class.

STANCE: Philosophy classes are very different from my other classes. I love seeing how the professors think through the material with you. They're not just lecturing. They are, in a sense, but they are also thinking through the material and considering their own thoughts and questions. When you make a point, you can see them react and come up with their own new ideas. I have found that type of engagement really unique to my philosophy classes, and that's what I really love.

MANNE: Oh, I love that. One of my favorite things is thinking through things together, seeing someone think on their feet, and watching students think. Getting to do that thinking-through process together is totally what it's all about.

STANCE: Especially this year, my professors being cognizant of what we're going through has been really nice.

MANNE: Well, that's so good to hear. I've been really heartened to see, not just students, but professors too, rising to this profound challenge we have in front of us. I'd love to have an email from any of you and follow up on anything. Thank you all so much for a great conversation.

STANCE: Thank you.





THE PLATE IS POLITICAL

ART BY ALLISON LOTH

The image depicts a plate of food thrown against a wall as a literal interpretation of a person's rejection of food due to anorexia nervosa (and its causes depicted in the author's paper). It was crucial to include the solemn woman in the foreground as a physical representation of one's suffering due to this illness and the societal expectations that can provoke it.



A TWO-PART DEFENSE OF INTUITIONISTIC MATHEMATICS

ART BY A. LOTH

This art encompasses the relationship between truth and mathematics as explained in this author's paper: that truth can exist within the latter, although it is not entirely apparent. The heartbeat and fingerprint represent the physical nature in how we experience mathematics—how it can be used to explain what we know to be true.



BLACK WOMEN IN FANON'S BLACK SKIN, WHITE MASKS

ART BY MALEQUI PICAZO

This Tesla coil is a visual representation of intersectionality which explains connections between race, gender, and oppression in this paper in particular. Three distinct electric sparks show how separated, yet dynamic, different people experience life given these variables.



FULL-BLOODED CONCEPTUAL REALISM AS A RESPONSE TO SKEPTICAL RELATIVISM

ART BY KARINA KASMAUSKIS

This art represents how numbers are tangible even though they are ideas. The possibility for all things to be seen through a mathematical lens that is, although quite abstract, also real and physical.



BEING MORAL ISN'T QUITE ENOUGH

ART BY A. LOTH

As the patron saint of writers and authors, Saint Catherine of Sienna was chosen to be depicted in this image. The duality of the picture represents the clear, moral values (left) of the saints as well as those actions that are nonmoral, yet critical (as the author states) to a wholistic, fulfilling life. Those nonmoral actions seem a bit unclear, especially in our understanding of how they can still be accepted, which is why the right image is distorted.



CLASHING CONSCIOUSNESS

ART BY K. KASMAUSKIS

The stethoscope represents a doctor's ability to listen to a patient, but without a doctor on the other end, it represents the possibility for the listening to be completely empirical and not involve human interaction and empathy.

ARTWORK INDEX



HEGEL'S PROJECTED NIHILISM

ART BY M. PICAZO

The author discusses Nihilism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam in this paper, which could be interpreted as a deck of cards that contains religions and philosophies. The author mentioned that the philosophy of religion is a "succession of unities," which is represented with the four suits of cards. The faces on these cards are the individuals referred to in this writing, Georg Hegel and Edward Said.



IN DEFENSE OF PLATONIC ESSENTIALISM ABOUT NUMBERS

ART BY M. PICAZO

This artwork is an abstract "Form" which has been placed on this stage for observation. The stage is set in front of a backdrop vortex of numbers and data that attempt to explain the essence of this object.



AVOIDING THE SWINE

ART BY K. KASMAUSKIS

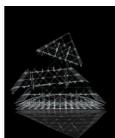
The seemingly happy pig, that is clearly not real, represents a state of ignorance. This pig seems happy with the real pigs, even though it is not a real pig itself. The pig is porcelain, representing how easily this state of ignorance could be shattered.



THE READINESS POTENTIAL DOES NOT DISPROVE FREE WILL

ART BY A. LOTH

The image demonstrates a relationship between our brain activity/intentions (as represented by the abstract cellular linework) and our actions (the hand). These two entities are shown as separate objects—neither controlling that of the other but rather, coexisting to result in the act of free will. This coincides with the author's findings that our actions are not just a sum of our physical parts or a simple reaction to our conscious thoughts.



POST-HIERARCHICAL RACE

ART BY M. PICAZO

A pyramid is the standard representation of hierarchy, so a logical action in a post-hierarchical racial atmosphere is to break it apart. In the reflection though, one can see the lingering image of the hierarchy that was once there or of one that may return in another form in the future.



AN INTERVIEW WITH KATE A. MANNE, PHD

ART BY K. KASMAUSKIS

The mirror represents the importance for people to look past themselves as well as their tendencies to justify or defend their misogynistic, repressive actions and listen. The reflection represents that it is not just one individual moment—it is every person's experience, through all of time, and all of it matters. The mirror's cracked glass is an ode to breaking the glass ceiling.



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