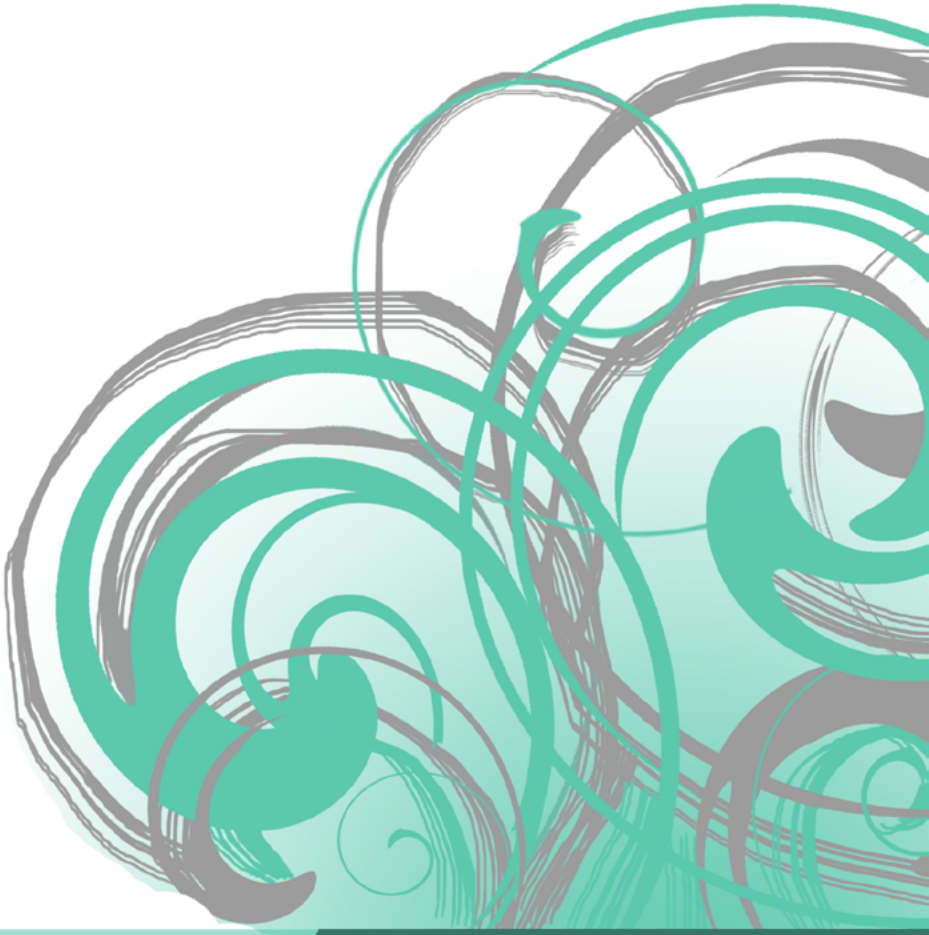


STANCE

An International Undergraduate Philosophy Journal

STANCE

An International Undergraduate Philosophy Journal

Stance: An International Undergraduate Philosophy Journal is produced and edited entirely by undergraduate students. We aim to enrich student learning by providing an opportunity for undergraduate students to have their original scholarly work reviewed by, or published in, a peer-reviewed academic journal.

Stance is published annually in April. The deadline for submissions is mid-December. All papers are carefully considered in multiple anonymous reviews. Notification of initial decision is in February. All authors receive constructive feedback concerning submissions.

 Having an international standard serial number [ISSN 1943-1880-print; ISSN 1943-1899-electroning], *Stance* is registered with the U.S. Library of Congress. *Stance* is listed in *The Philosopher's Index*.

Further information regarding *Stance* is available at:
http://stance.iweb.bsu.edu.
Back issues can be found on the Ball State University Virtual Press at:
http://www.bsu.edu/library/virtualpress/stance.

Inquiries should be directed to David W. Concepción, Ph.D.,
dwconcepcion@bsu.edu.

Stance gratefully acknowledges Ball State University's support of the publication of this journal.

STANCE STAFF

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Beliefs and Blameworthiness ***7***
Liz Jackson

A Defense of Form: Internet Memes and Confucian Ritual ***19***
Nicholas Brown

Rusbridger's "The Snowden Leaks and the Public" and Mill's Utilitarianism: An Analysis of the Utilitarian Concern of "Going Dark" ***29***
Casey Hladik

Resolving the Paradox of Fiction: A Defense of Irrationalism ***41***
Anna Brinkerhoff

The Productive Citizen: Marx, Cultural Time, and Disability ***51***
Lauren Pass

Mathematical Infinity and the Presocratic Apeiron ***59***
Austin Heath

An Existentialist Critique of Punishment ***69***
Nicholas Logan

The Insubstantial and Exclusionary Nature of Plato's Aesthetic Theory ***79***
Nicholas James Alcock

Feminist Critique of Joseph Stiglitz's Approach to the Problems of Global Capitalism ***89***
Jenna Blake

An Examination of Disgust and Its Relation to Morality ***97***
Jessa Wood

Ideological Domination: Deconstructing the Paradox of the American Dream and the Working Class Promise ***105***
Betty Stoneman

Bodies of Philosophy: An Interview with Elizabeth Grosz ***115***

Author Biographies ***127***

Beliefs and Blameworthiness

Liz Jackson

Abstract: In this paper, I analyze epistemic blameworthiness. After presenting Michael Bergmann's definition of epistemic blameworthiness, I argue that his definition is problematic because it does not have a control condition. I conclude by offering an improved definition of epistemic blameworthiness and defending this definition against potential counterexamples.

Introduction

It is not uncommon to say things like, "She should have believed that," or "He ought to have known that." Behind these common phrases lies the assumption that we are responsible for at least some of our beliefs. Given this assumption, one might wonder what it means to fail to live up to one's epistemic responsibilities. Roughly, I take epistemic blameworthiness to be a failure to fulfill some of our duties related to our beliefs.

What does it take for one to be blameworthy for a particular doxastic attitude?[1] In this paper, I will present an analysis of epistemic blameworthiness. First, I will give Michael Bergmann's definition of epistemic blameworthiness and propose a slight modification to one of his conditions. Then, I will argue that his definition is missing a further condition, specifically a "control" condition, so called because it is about whether one has control over one's doxastic attitudes. I will propose a specific formulation of the control condition and evaluate the revised definition with respect to potential counterexamples.

[1] S has a doxastic attitude toward proposition P iff S believes that P, withholds belief that P, or disbelieves that P.

Epistemic Blameworthiness

Bergmann's Account

What is the proper understanding of epistemic blameworthiness? Bergmann defines epistemic blameworthiness as follows:

> **EBW:** S's believing P at t is something for which she is epistemically blameworthy iff either (i) S believes at t that she ought not to believe P or (ii) S's failure to believe at t that she ought not to believe P is relevantly due to some other doing or failure of hers for which she is epistemically blameworthy.[2]

First, I will motivate conditions (i) and (ii) with an example. Tom has good evidence that Company X is exploiting innocent people overseas in order to produce a cheaper product. *Ceteris paribus*, Tom would believe that Company X committed human rights abuses, but Tom loves the cheap products produced by Company X. Tom convinces himself that 'Company X is not exploiting its workers.' At the same time, he remains committed to an inferential standard such that he also believes that, given the evidence, he ought not to believe that X is not exploiting its workers. I take it that we would want to say of Tom that he is blameworthy for his failure to believe that X is exploiting its workers. This fits Bergmann's analysis because Tom fulfills condition (i).

Alternatively, assume again that Tom has substantial evidence that Company X is exploiting people. However, in this case, let's also assume Tom believes A, 'I should believe everything my mother tells me,' and she assures him that Company X is not exploiting people. Because of this, Tom believes B, 'Company X is not exploiting its workers,' although the only reason he believes this is the testimony of his mother. If we stipulate that Tom is epistemically blameworthy for his belief that A, and A is the basis for his belief B, then it appears that Tom is also epistemically blameworthy for his belief B. Tom fulfills condition (ii) of Bergmann's definition, so Tom's intuitive blameworthiness for B in this case also fits Bergmann's analysis.

---

[2] Michael Bergmann, *Justification without Awareness: A Defense of Epistemic Externalism* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2006), 92.

Still, there are two initial difficulties with Bergmann's account. First, I want to note that Bergmann's analysis only applies to the attitude of believing P, when it is intuitive that one can also be blameworthy for withholding belief in P[3] or disbelieving P.[4] Bergmann may have only been interested in questions about when someone is blameworthy for holding a belief, but it would be helpful to have an analysis that applies to all doxastic attitudes.[5]

Second, consider the following scenario: Sarah disrespects her teacher, so she fails to listen in class or read the syllabus. Sarah's teacher is a jerk, so the disrespect (which one could characterize as a complex belief) is not something for which she is blameworthy. However, Sarah is blameworthy for allowing the disrespect to cause a failure of attention. Because of her lack of attention, she does not know that the exam is today, so she fails the exam; hence she is blameworthy for not having the belief E, 'the exam is today.' She does not believe that she should believe E, so she does not fulfill condition (i); at the same time, she does not fulfill condition (ii) because she is not epistemically blameworthy for her failure to prevent her disrespect from causing her lack of attention. Therefore, Sarah's case is a counterexample to Bergmann's analysis; (i) and (ii) are not necessary for blameworthiness.

Intuitively, Sarah is epistemically blameworthy for failing to believe E because she is morally blameworthy for her failure to prevent a particular causal relation—she is responsible for letting her disrespect cause her lack of attention. More generally, it is possible for a person to be morally or pragmatically[6] blameworthy for an action (not a belief), which, in turn, causes a belief for which the person is then blameworthy. Therefore, I want to suggest that condition (ii) should read "some other doing or failure of hers for which she is blameworthy," (rather than epistemically blameworthy). When we make this change, Sarah will fulfill our new condition (ii), and Sarah will be blameworthy.

---

[3] S withholds belief that P iff S has considered p and neither believes P nor ~P. For example, it would be rational to withhold belief that there is an even number of stars.

[4] S disbelieves that p if S believes ~P.

[5] This is not necessarily a defect or problem with Bergmann's definition; I am just interested in a different kind of analysis.

[6] I take pragmatic blame to be, roughly, a failure to be prudent or efficient—a failure to meet or work toward one's goals.

This change has a second advantage. One may be worried that Bergmann's definition suffers from circularity. Bergmann claims that clause (i) of his definition functions as a base clause and clause (ii) functions as a recursive clause, so all blameworthiness that results from clause (ii) being satisfied must ultimately trace back to clause (i) being satisfied.[7] In other words, all of the beliefs one may be blameworthy for are beliefs that can be traced back to the belief that you should not believe something. But consider the following case: S believes that P. S would believe 'I should not believe P' if it were not for another belief S has, Q. S would also believe 'I should not believe Q' if it were not for S's belief that P. In this case, because S neither believes 'I should not believe P' nor 'I should not believe Q,' S's failure with respect to P and Q cannot be traced back to S's belief that she should not believe something. For these reasons, there are worries that Bergmann's definition may fail to be a successful inductive definition, but changing epistemically blameworthy to blameworthy in clause (ii) will eliminate these worries.

In summary, we want to modify our definition such that it (1) applies to all doxastic attitudes, not just believing that P, and (2) avoids our counterexample and circularity problems by changing epistemically blameworthy to blameworthy in clause (ii). We can edit Bergmann's definition to include these two changes:

> **EBW_1:** S's doxastic attitude toward P at t is something for which she is epistemically blameworthy iff either (i) S believes at t that she ought not to hold that attitude toward P or (ii) S's failure to believe at t that she ought not to hold that attitude toward P is relevantly due to some other doing or failure of hers for which she is blameworthy.[8]

There are various other grounds on which one might challenge Bergmann's account or developments of it such as the modified analysis immediately above. For example, one might appeal to cases in which one's beliefs about what one should believe are mistaken. If one grants that there are objective facts about doxastic duties, then it will be possible to violate those duties even if one does not believe that one

[7] Bergmann, *Justification without Awareness*, 90.

[8] Ibid., 92.

has violated them. There is no such possibility on Bergmann's account. However, I will lay these concerns aside for now, as I am concerned with exploring one particular source of unease: Bergmann's analysis lacks a control condition.

A Control Condition

Consider the following case: An undergrad, Fred, is taught Hume's problem of induction, so he forms the belief that he ought not to believe P, 'the future will imitate the past' (fulfilling condition (i)). However, as Fred leaves the classroom, he finds himself thirsty and so goes to get a drink of water. He proceeds to take many similar actions that show he still believes that P. We do not hold Fred accountable for believing P because we do not think it is psychologically possible for him to not believe P. Because Fred does not have a choice about whether or not to believe that P, he is not epistemically blameworthy for this belief, even though condition (i) is fulfilled; EBW_1's analysans is not sufficient for epistemic blameworthiness.

This counterexample shows that what Bergmann's analysis is lacking is a control condition. If we grant the commonly held meta-ethical principle that "ought implies can," it would seem that one who lacks control over a doxastic attitude cannot be blamed for that attitude. Hence, it is reasonable to assume that some kind of control over a doxastic state is necessary for epistemic blameworthiness with regard to that state. Given this, we can edit Bergmann's definition again:

> **EBW_2:** S's doxastic attitude toward p at t is something for which she is epistemically blameworthy iff (1) either (i) S believes at t that she ought not to hold that attitude toward p or (ii) S's failure to believe at t that she ought not to hold that attitude toward p is relevantly due to some other doing or failure of hers for which she is blameworthy and (2) S has control over her doxastic attitude toward p at t.

This definition looks better, and it appears to deal with our counterexample. Fred does not have control over his belief that the future will mimic the past, and for this reason he does not fulfill condition (2). Fred's case is not a counterexample to EBW_2.

What Kind of Control?

To ensure EBW_2 is sufficiently informative, it may help to make clause (2) more specific. We can borrow from Alston's analysis of control.[9] Alston distinguishes three main kinds of control over our beliefs that could satisfy this condition: direct control, long-range control, and indirect influence. In this section, I intend to do two things: first, describe each of the three kinds of control, and second, argue that each kind is, at the very least, possible.

Direct Control

What distinguishes direct control over the other kinds of control is that it is immediate and short-term, rather than a long-term control of a belief over time. It is the ability to bring about a doxastic attitude "right away, in one uninterrupted intentional act."[10] But can we ever have direct control over our beliefs? Alston thinks we rarely do, if ever.[11]

However, I disagree with Alston on this point. For example, consider a story told by Clifford.[12] A particular ship owner was about to set sail in his ship, *Providence*. However, *Providence* was old, not built well, and had been repaired many times; for these reasons, he had doubts that she was seaworthy and thought she might need to be totally overhauled before she was safe to sail. But the ship owner managed to overcome these doubts before the voyage, reminding himself she had safely completed many other voyages, including ones with serious storms. He chose to trust *Providence* and made the decision to believe she would protect her passengers and take them safely to their destination. He chose to dismiss all of his doubts about *Providence*, and in doing so he "acquired a sincere and comfortable conviction that his vessel was thoroughly safe and seaworthy; he watched her departure with a light heart."[13]

In this example, the ship owner has inclinations both to trust *Providence* and to distrust her. He clearly wavers between believing

---

[9] William Alston, *Epistemic Justification: Essays in the Theory of Knowledge* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1989), 119-42.

[10] Ibid., 129.

[11] Ibid., 125.

[12] William Clifford, "The Ethics of Belief," *Contemporary Review*, 29 (1877): 289.

[13] Clifford, "The Ethics of Belief," 289.

Providence is reliable and *Providence* is not reliable, but he chooses to believe the former in a short, uninterrupted act, so this is apparently a reasonable instance of direct control. Wolterstorff notes that this story does not seem bizarre; in fact, it seems like we could come up with a host of similar examples. Direct control is more plausible and more common than Alston thinks.[14]

Long-Range Control

A second kind of control we might have is long-range control. This is "the capacity to bring about a state of affairs, C, by doing something (usually a number of different things) repeatedly over a considerable period of time, interrupted by activity directed to other goals."[15] We have long-range control over things like our weight and our blood pressure; we may also have a similar type of power to influence our beliefs. For example, it seems plausible that I can set out on a project to get myself to believe God exists. I can study arguments for God's existence, spend time with theists, find smart theists to address my questions and objections, etc.

Alston is suspicious that we can reliably influence our beliefs via long-range control. While he acknowledges that this sometimes works, he nevertheless doubts that the success rate for this is substantial.[16] Because of the low success rate, Alston does not want to count this as legitimate control. However, Wolterstoff points out that we often use long-range control not to acquire or get rid of beliefs but rather to maintain or strengthen ones we already have: "to maintain our belief in Marxism, to maintain our atheism, to hold fast to our Presbyterianism."[17] This is common and seems to be much more successful. Additionally, it does seem like sometimes we can use long-range control to acquire or get rid of beliefs, such as the example of believing in God. While this may not always be successful, it is more common and more fruitful than Alston acknowledges.

---

[14] Nicolas Wolterstorff, *Practices of Belief* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 76.

[15] Alston, *Epistemic Justification,* 134.

[16] Ibid., 135.

[17] Wolterstorff, *Practices of Belief, 76.*

Indirect Influence

A final category of control that we may have is what Alston calls "indirect influence." This type of control is different than the others in that it does not involve altering a doxastic attitude toward a specific proposition. Rather, it refers to the control we have over the things that influence our beliefs and belief-forming habits. Indirect influence includes how long I look for relevant evidence or reasons, reflect on a particular argument, seek input from other people, search my memory.[18] Exerting indirect influence involves "training myself to be more critical of gossip, instilling in myself a stronger disposition to reflect carefully before making a judgment on highly controversial matters . . . ."[19] Supposing there are intellectual obligations, one would presume that they include obligations to do more rather than less of each of the things in the quoted list; doing these things seems to help us seek truth and avoid falsehoods. Of all three types of control, this one seems the most clearly psychologically possible.

Given these three categories of control, we can edit our definition of blameworthiness again, making it even more specific:

> **EBW$_3$:** S's doxastic attitude toward P at t is something for which she is epistemically blameworthy iff (1) either (i) S believes at t that she ought not to hold that attitude toward P or (ii) S's failure to believe at t that she ought not to hold that attitude toward P is relevantly due to some other doing or failure of hers for which she is blameworthy and (2) S had (i) direct control or (ii) long-range control or (iii) indirect influence over her doxastic attitude toward P at t.

Proposed counterexamples to EBW$_3$

We have significantly edited Bergmann's definition, but even with these modifications, does our definition suffer from counterexamples? We will consider several potential counterexamples to the EBW$_3$.

---

[18] Alston, *Epistemic Justification,* 138.

[19] Ibid.

(1) One species of counterexamples to EBW_3 appeals to pragmatic oughts. For example, imagine that there is a belief-removal machine. With this machine one can remove any belief one desires from one's brain. However, this machine is extremely expensive. Suppose Bob believes proposition R and also has the deep conviction he should not believe R. Because of this machine, Bob has long-range control over R—let's stipulate this is the only way Bob could make himself not believe R. But the belief-removal machine is so expensive that Bob would have to work for 25 years in order to save enough money to buy the machine. Since the machine is so expensive, it is supposed to be intuitive that Bob is not blameworthy for his belief that R. Buying the machine is pragmatically impractical and inefficient, and some say this cleanses Bob of his epistemic blame.[20]

However, I think the proper understanding of the case is to say that if Bob does not buy the machine, Bob is still epistemically blameworthy but he is pragmatically blameless. It is unhelpful to talk about what Bob "ought" to do in a situation like the above without qualifying which type of "ought" we are talking about. As Richard Feldman says, "[It is very unclear] that there is such a thing as just plain ought, as opposed to the various kinds of oughts philosophers have succeeded in distinguishing."[21] Given this, it is reasonable to say that two different species of oughts are making demands of Bob: relative to his epistemic duties he should take one course of action, and relative to his pragmatic duties he should take another course of action.

(2) A second group of counterexamples for EBW_3 involves moral oughts. Borrowing from counterexample (1), let's again say Bob believes proposition r and also has the deep conviction he should not believe r. There is an evil demon that has the power to control Bob's beliefs, and he makes Bob an offer: if Bob will brutally murder 10,000 children, then the demon will cause Bob to no longer believe r. Intuitively, Bob is not blameworthy for continuing to believe r because the only alternative involves doing something that is seriously morally wrong.

We can respond to this counterexample similarly to the way we responded to the first counterexample: if Bob does not murder the

---

[20] Thanks to Amelia Hicks and Katrina Prichard for this case.

[21] Richard Feldman, "The Ethics of Belief," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 60, no. 3. (2000): 692.

children, he is epistemically blameworthy but morally blameless. This raises some other interesting questions about the correct course of action when two kinds of "oughts" conflict each other. In cases (1) and (2), one ought is much more demanding than the epistemic ought, so, intuitively, that ought "overrides" the epistemic ought. However, there may be cases where one ought does not as clearly override another and the correct course of action is unclear.[22]

(3) Let's take a case similar to Tom's second scenario on above in which we stipulated that Tom was blameworthy for his belief 'I should believe everything my mother tells me.' However, in this case, let us suppose he is not blameworthy for this belief; it results from an honorable, deep respect for his elders. Let us also suppose his mother firmly tells him not to believe P, so Tom forms the belief Q, 'I should not believe P.' At the same time, suppose Tom has mounds of overwhelming evidence for P, so he is not blameworthy for believing P. Apparently, Tom is not blameworthy for his belief that P, but at the same time, believes he should not believe that P. If we suppose Tom has control over his belief that P, then this is a potential counterexample to EBW_3.[23]

The defender of EBW_3 might respond in several ways. First, although Tom has overwhelming evidence for P, if Tom has the deep conviction that Q ('I should not believe P'), then Tom is blameworthy for believing P; Tom should follow his convictions. As long as Tom chooses to maintain his belief that Q, EBW_3's defender can simply maintain that Tom is blameworthy for not following his convictions.

A second factor we must consider when thinking about this case is that ordinary folk, when presented with overwhelming evidence for P, would suspend their belief that Q ('I should not believe P'). When we are thinking about this case, we are thinking about ordinary folk, so our intuitions about the case are not clear. Therefore, while this

---

[22] Some philosophers argue that moral oughts always override other oughts. See Feldman, "The Ethics of Belief," 692. Others, such as Trent Dogherty, "Reducing Responsibility: An Evidentialist Account of Epistemic Blame," *European Journal of Philosophy* 20, no. 4 (2012): 534-47. argue that all oughts are ultimately moral. Finally, some, such as Feldman himself, argue that "there is no meaningful question about whether epistemic oughts 'trump' or are trumped by other oughts" (694). See also Eugene Mills, "The Unity of Justification," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 58 (1998): 27-50, and Feldman, "The Ethics of Belief," 667-95.

[23] Thanks to Salvatore Florio for this case.

third counterexample might put some pressure on EBW_3, it is not a devastating counterexample; there are several potential responses.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to propose DBW_3 as a potential definition for epistemic blameworthiness. I am unaware of any serious counterexamples to DBW_3, and I think this definition furthers our understanding of what it means for one to be epistemically blameworthy.[24]

[24] Thanks to Andrew Moon, Bruce Glymour, Robert Audi, Graham Leach-Krouse, Neil Sinhababu, Salvatore Florio, Andrew Arana, Andrew Rogers, Chris Gadsden, Amelia Hicks, and Dennis Whitcomb for valuable discussions about this paper and/or helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper. Thanks to the audience of Kansas State Philosophy Club for their questions and objections that helped this paper along.

A Defense of Form: Internet Memes and Confucian Ritual

Nicholas Brown

Abstract: By applying the normative basis of Confucian ritual activity to the repeatable designs of internet memes, this essay explores the ways in which socially recognized forms can allow individuals to engage in thoughtful activity with what is represented by but cannot be reduced to form: the particulars of human experience. The goal of this insight is to suggest that the value of art and ideas cannot be isolated from how individuals interact with them, and thus critique should examine how well an idea or piece promotes an active, creative, and critical relationship to a person's own experiences.

To a generation that spends a large amount of time on the internet, memes have become a part of life. Although they appear infrequently on professionally-minded websites, one click into the realm of social networks, blogs, and forums reveals that internet memes are posted and referenced almost constantly. The notable internet meme research website *Know Your Meme* explains, "Internet memes have risen in popularity with the rise of Internet Culture as more and more people identify with and participate on the Web as their primary method of expression and content consumption."[1] Given their prominence in modern entertainment and communication, memes undoubtedly have cultural importance and should be subject to critique. But what about them can we critique?

To answer this question, we must first know what makes a meme. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines a meme as "a cultural element or behavioural trait whose transmission and consequent persistence in a population, although occurring by non-genetic means (esp. imitation), is considered as analogous to the inheritance

[1] "About Know Your Meme," *Know Your Meme*, accessed December 8, 2013, http://knowyourmeme.com/about.

of a gene."[2] In simpler terms, *Know Your Meme* describes an internet meme as "a piece of content or an idea that's passed from person to person, changing and evolving along the way."[3] According to both descriptions, the nature of a meme is organic—it is a cultural process akin to the biological processes that perpetuate life by creating diversity. The key attribute of a meme, then, is the way that its common form is used differently in each reproduction. Each type of internet meme has recurring elements by which it can be recognized. These elements might include a repeated image or character, a common text or speech pattern, an expected action that takes place, a specific graphic layout, or other similar structures of content. Because the formula of a meme is explicit, those familiar with a meme recognize its reproductions by name even more easily than one might recognize the genre of any work of art, film, or literature. Thus, the savvy viewer already understands the way the meaning is meant to be portrayed. The form provides the context for the jokes or observations that each individual meme is making with the content that is not already prescribed by the form, including any breaks from the expected form. Over time, these individual changes become part of the general form of the meme, as new versions of a meme are inevitably made with the old versions in mind. In this way, memes maintain an awareness of their own history; they bear the stamp of their genealogy in each particular creation.

Let us look at an example. An internet meme that has recently been popular is referred to as "Doge," which is, according to *Know Your Meme*, "a slang term for 'dog' that is primarily associated with pictures of Shiba Inus (nicknamed 'Shibe') and internal monologue captions."[4] Typically, a manipulated photo of a Shiba Inu will include text in the Comic Sans font scattered across the image, with formulaic words such as "wow," "much," "such," and "so" paired with words, occasionally misspelled, that are related to what is happening in the image. Part of the humor is derived from the cuteness or oddness of the dog's expression and imagining the pronunciations of the words. The text is often implied to represent what the "doge" is thinking. To make one's own version of a "doge," one would begin by taking an image of a

---

[2] *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "meme," accessed November 20, 2013, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/239909.

[3] "About Know Your Meme."

[4] "Doge," *Know Your Meme*, accessed February 9, 2014, http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/doge.

dog and similarly captioning it by following these rules. There are then many things one might choose to do to make this "doge" different than the normal instance of the meme, such as how one manipulates the image of the "doge," what setting it is placed in, and what kinds of words are chosen to fill in the captions.

This example might already have one wondering: what is the point of an internet meme? Some might suggest that memes are a low form of art or even question if we can refer to them as art at all. They are a logical product of the internet age, successfully propagated because they are instantly understandable, extremely repeatable, and easily sharable. People catch on quickly, become fluent in the rules, and soon feel like a clever member of a community from the comfort of their own homes. On a cultural stage that is democratically accessible to all (at least, to all with internet access), memes appear to be the lowest common denominator, a medium that asks little of both its audience and its creators. Many would argue that this makes them trivial or reduces their meaning. But if we want to remain critical towards meme culture, we should neither write off memes as harmless entertainment nor approach them with the instinctive resistance we often have toward popular culture. We first need to have a good argument as to what about them can have value or be problematic.

This task is not specific to memes, of course, but I believe that internet memes have an explicit awareness of their own forms that makes them unique. This awareness, I will argue, actually gives them the potential to have great expressive value, a value that can easily be overlooked by a deconstructive postmodern worldview that asks us to be resistant to forms and their biases. Because memes use a repeated form as a means for expression, I find them to be reminiscent of the account of ritual action in Confucianism as described in *The Analects of Confucius*.[5] I will use the ideas of this tradition to examine how the familiarity of a repeatable form can be used positively and creatively, which in turn will provide a standard by which we can productively critique memes and other popular culture trends.

At first, Confucianism sounds nothing like internet memes. Confucianism is an ancient Chinese philosophical system that seeks to make virtues and ethics into an achievable practice. It is a methodology for cultivating an ideal communal existence and passing

[5] Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr., trans., *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1999).

it down to others. Internet memes, on the other hand, are images or other media files that require little practice or technical skill to make, and they rarely aspire to do more than entertain. A "doge" is not likely to have a significant impact on one's ethical approach to the world. Despite the dissimilarity, the two concepts share common traits in their methods of expression. In the *Analects*, *li* or "ritual propriety" is what most directly provides a blueprint for how one should act in order to achieve the ideal Confucian existence, and it is what I find analogous to the forms of memes.[6] In short, *li* is the ritual tradition that guides proper actions and interactions in social circumstances. Though the norms of *li* during Confucius's time are not described in detail in the *Analects*, the purpose of adhering to *li* is frequently discussed. It is this purpose that will give us a way to articulate the potential value of cultural objects such as internet memes.

In Confucianism, *li* serves as a vehicle for positive personal transformation because it improves interpersonal expression. To explain this interpretation of *li*, we must first discuss what the self is to Confucianism. According to Tu Weiming, Confucian thought believes that personhood cannot be realized in isolation from others because "human beings come into existence through symbolic interchange."[7] It is the expressing and sharing of meaning in a communal setting that creates the individual in any sense that can be considered human, given that a reflective self-awareness cannot develop without relating to other perspectives. Subsequently, Confucianism wishes to create effective relational beings. This does not simply mean that a person is able to communicate with others, but that all relationships are understood not to the extent that they are useful for personal gain but to the extent that other people have their own perspectives as well. To successfully be a person is to be attentive to other people, a mode of being that is best represented by the concept of *ren*. *Ren* is often translated as "benevolence,"[8] but, as Tu notes, it is perhaps more meaningful for Confucian thought when it is considered as "co-humanity."[9]

---

[6] Ibid., 51.

[7] Weiming Tu, "Jen as a Living Metaphor in the Confucian *Analects*," *Confucian Thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation* (Albany: State University of New York, 1985), 82.

[8] Sin Yee Chan, "Can *Shu* be the One Word that Serves as the Guiding Principle of Caring Action?" *Philosophy East and West* 50.4 (2000): 508.

[9] Weiming, "Jen as a Living Metaphor in the Confucian *Analects*," 84.

Since knowing others requires understanding how to treat them ethically, being humane and empathetic is entailed within the Confucian idea of a social existence.

If the truest nature of humanity is the social aspect of experience, then personhood in the highest sense—to live based on an attunement to intersubjectivity, or in a state of *ren*—is only achieved when a social awareness is integrated seamlessly into one's activity without the need for abstract reasoning or forced attention. According to Confucianism, we are most human when we internalize what it means to be a person within a community. Achieving *ren* requires making meaningful interpersonal conduct into a habit, and this is the purpose of *li*. As a reproducible system of suggested actions, *li* sets defined and mutually accepted parameters for expressing respect and the personal nature of relationships. Instead of rendering expression trivial and impersonal, *li* is meant to provide clarity without reducing meaning. Its ability to do so can be found in the process of mastering *li*. Simply reproducing the forms of *li* does not mean that one has reached an intersubjective awareness that can be considered *ren*. *Li* is a method that is used in the process of achieving *ren*, but it does not constitute *ren* in itself. The *Analects* are rich with metaphors about music that serve to help clarify this process. To become truly talented in music, "one begins by playing in unison and then goes on to improvise with purity of tone and distinctness and flow, thereby bringing all to completion."[10] Likewise, one first apprentices oneself to *li* so that he or she can learn the shapes required to effectively perform and communicate within the established tradition. Only once these shapes are understood can the purpose of the form be understood on a greater level, allowing nuanced expression through innovation and improvisation within *li*.

This innovation is derived from the specific experiences of the individual as opposed to the rules of tradition, translating subjective insight into actions that make it understandable and compelling to others. In this manner, *li* turns from a rigid set of patterned activity that one must learn into a system with a fullness of expressive meaning and emotion, allowing for an individual aesthetic style to arise in each particular action. Though *li* provides the structured context necessary for communal understanding and the directed training necessary to integrate a social awareness into one's daily action, the style of this action is meant to be individualized so that *ren* can be expressed.

[10] Ames and Rosemont, *The Analects of Confucius*, 88.

Chenyang Li compares *li* to the grammar that allows language to convey meaning, making fluency analogous to the mastery of *ren*.[11] Li writes, "Whereas *li* has an emphasis on social objectivity, just as grammar has an emphasis on linguistic commonality, *ren* has an emphasis on human subjectivity."[12] Similar to the way that poetry can create meaning by breaking the rules of grammar, one who has achieved *ren* has the ability to shape and alter the actions of *li* based on their attuned understanding of human interactions. Deviations from form are unintelligible if the form is not first known, but once a community has grasped the forms of the language or of *li*, any deviations can be communally understood as a resistance to the form in order to favor *ren*. Even within *li*, true feelings are meant to be the core of what guides action and not the details of *li*. "In mourning," the *Analects* say, "it is better to express real grief than to worry over formal details,"[13] and likewise, the value of "polite language" is not for the sake of being polite alone but "in drawing out its meaning."[14] Confucius would often consider the "appropriateness" (*yi*) of rituals, and he tells us that questioning *li* "is itself observing ritual propriety."[15] This suggests that the system of *li*, though it must be consistent in order to maintain a common meaning, is still meant to be questioned critically so that it retains the affective nature of expression and remains relevant to interpersonal dynamics.

Just as an understanding of *ren* treats the self as a network of context with other people, achieving *ren* is not something that affects only the individual. It is perhaps for this reason that Ames and Rosemont chose to translate *ren* specifically as "authoritative conduct"[16] in their translation of the *Analects*. The choice implies that the individual who has achieved *ren* is an innovator, an author of *li*, and also that they impact others in a way that carries authority. This authority contributes to how others understand *li* and human intersubjectivity. A person who has mastered *li*, according to Tu, is "exemplifying a form of life worth living . . . by establishing a standard of self-transformation as a source

---

[11] Chenyang Li, "*Li* as Cultural Grammar: On the Relation between *Li* and *Ren* in Confucius' *Analects*," *Philosophy East and West* 57.3 (2007): 317.

[12] Ibid., 322.

[13] Ames and Rosemont, *The Analects of Confucius*, 83.

[14] Ibid., 131.

[15] Ibid., 86.

[16] Ibid., 48.

of inspiration for the human community as a whole."[17] The rituals of *li* gain their efficacy for expressing human experience because they are shaped by those humans who have achieved a compelling understanding of interpersonal living and are able to demonstrate it authoritatively. They provide not just a model for the realization of the individual but for the type of activity required to achieve community. As Tu writes, it is the "active participation in recognizing, experiencing, interpreting, and representing the communicative rationality that defines society as a meaningful community."[18] Thus, the self, constituted by communal relationships, creates the community that in turn, through the shaping of *li*, gives the individual a way to express, and thus realize, the self. It is this reciprocity that reflects what the *Analects* deem "the most valuable function of observing ritual propriety"—"achieving harmony (*he*)."[19]

Ultimately, the Confucian mode of being allows for experience to be shared without reducing our understanding of ourselves to the abstraction that is required by the very act of expression. It is always aware that there is something more than form within experience that cannot be adequately generalized and expressed completely. This awareness comes from the way it maintains a dialogue between *ren* and *li*—and subsequently between style and rules, experience and expression, self and others, and subjectivity and objectivity. A form is made familiar to a community so that the individual, unfamiliar, irreducible experience of a person can be expressed as something new and yet related to the experience of others. This leads others to examine their own experience and become creative, attentive beings.

The similarities between internet memes and *li* have hopefully become apparent. Both involve a community choosing to adopt and follow guidelines so that specific acts can have a common context upon which creative expression can be exchanged. Even a simple "doge" is a relatively complex object of communal fluency, representing a tradition while adding to a continuing conversation. A significant difference, of course, still stands: the tradition that a "doge" participates in seems much less important and valuable than the Confucian tradition. This is, to a degree, undeniable. With my comparison, I do not mean to

[17] Weiming Tu, "Embodying the Universe: A Note on Confucian Self-Realization," ed. Roger T. Ames, *Self as Person in Asian Theory and Practice* (Albany: State University of New York, 1994), 183.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ames and Rosemont, *The Analects of Confucius*, 74.

imply that internet memes are the tools that will allow humankind to achieve a new mode of being. I am, however, suggesting that the repetitive and seemingly low-brow nature of many modern cultural trends is not inherently problematic.

If creations such as internet memes use their reproducible forms as a means to express something more complex than their form, then they, like the actions of *li*, can be vehicles of meaning that put us in touch with human experience, even if their typically simplistic and flippant nature might prejudice us to believe otherwise. Their accessibility means that it is easier for more people to actively participate in the community by creating their own versions without simply replicating what other people have made. On the other hand, we can now see the problems that come from engaging in nothing more than replication—an act which is inevitable within any sizeable community. Form can become arbitrary and disengaging when it arrests the viewer at familiarity; people can consume unthinkingly and begin to understand their lives in terms of externally-prescribed forms instead of using the forms as a way to create their own terms. To speak in someone else's terms without using them to say something new is like following the rituals of *li* as if they are simply rules that must be met and then thinking that one has gained a nuanced understanding of oneself and other people in the process. Such a relationship to form prevents people from having a genuine awareness of themselves and their relationships, which, in Confucianism, prevents them from achieving personhood—their expressive stagnation reflects a lack of individuality.

How might these positive and negative implications look with our "doge" example? It is easy to imagine a "doge" meme that fails to be original or funny. Once one has encountered a number of "doges," examples that do not add to the form or involve an unexpected twist are bound to be found boring. It might feel like the creator is trying too hard to participate. The people who make such memes are not exemplifying an expressive fluency within the community, for they do not recognize what it is that makes the meme humorous. There must be more than a dog sitting in the same place as the last "doge" meme, with the words slightly altered—perhaps much more than this if one is not a big fan of the "doge" meme. A successful "doge" meme, on the other hand, might cause one to see something normally taken seriously through the eyes of a silly dog with an odd speech pattern, revealing something new and unexpected about it. Instead of encountering

this situation through the lens of that "doge" meme, however, it is encountered with the added experience that the meme presented, making one look at the experience in more, as opposed to fewer, ways and presenting new creative tools to express what is seen. A meme that succeeds in doing this could be described as authoritative—an exemplification of *ren*.

From these cases, we see that a positive or negative relationship to cultural objects is not inherent in the object but in the way that people use the forms given to them. We can find productive and creative ways to look at our own experience using just about anything if we look hard enough, but those creations that present everything as familiar and repeatable can be seductive when their forms provide all of the answers and ask only for passivity. Contrastingly, when memes and other cultural objects hold up to reflective examination and are made authoritatively and compellingly, they can promote an empathetic relationship to others, an active, creative and critical mode of being, and the very attainment of self. It is the capacity of art to allow us to exercise our selfhood that we should seek in cultural objects when we set ourselves to the critical task. By making our own memes to express our own insights, we can become (at least slightly) more human.

Rusbridger's "The Snowden Leaks and the Public" and Mill's *Utilitarianism*: An Analysis of the Utilitarian Concern of "Going Dark"

Casey Hladik

Abstract: In the wake of the controversial Snowden leaks, Alan Rusbridger observes that the National Security Administration [NSA] and Government Communications Headquarters [GCHQ] maintain that their mass spying is justified because it prevents the world from "going dark." This paper will explore the meaning and philosophical significance of "going dark" and argue that the NSA and GCHQ's claim appeals—wittingly or unwittingly—to J.S. Mill's ethical principle of utility. This paper will therefore critique this argument within Mill's utilitarian framework to demonstrate that its appeal to utility is illegitimate. Finally, this paper will argue that utility dictates that this mass surveillance is unjustifiable and should be terminated.

Introduction

In "The Snowden Leaks and the Public," Alan Rusbridger describes his recent run-in with the British government as the editor of *The Guardian*.[1] Five weeks prior to the incident, Rusbridger's newspaper had come into possession of documents infamously leaked by Edward Snowden containing sensitive information regarding American NSA and British GCHQ surveillance programs. Threatened by the British authorities with "either an injunction or a visit by the police,"

[1] Alan Rusbridger, "The Snowden Leaks and the Public," *The New York Review of Books*, November 21, 2013, accessed November 24, 2013, http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2013/nov/21/snowden-leaks-and-public/?pagination=false.

Rusbridger had the laptop containing the classified documents obliterated with a power drill and an angle grinder.[2]

From what Rusbridger and others have learned from the leaked documents, the NSA and GCHQ have been indiscriminately collecting reams of data on all American and British citizens. Apparently, both agencies have been operating under a shroud of secrecy—hence, the alarming attempt by British authorities to silence *The Guardian*—and their activities have been virtually unregulated.[3]

As Rusbridger observes, the NSA and GCHQ maintain that what American and British citizens gain in security from this massive data collection outweighs what they lose in privacy, so the practice is justified.[4] Although neither organization claims to subscribe to a certain ethical theory *per se*, this paper will show that—intentionally or not—this particular argument is a distinct appeal to consequentialism. In fact, it will be shown that the NSA and GCHQ appeal specifically to J.S. Mill's consequentialist ethical principle of utility. This paper will therefore critique these claims in terms of Mill's utilitarian framework in order to demonstrate that they are not a legitimate appeal to utilitarianism. Finally, it will be shown that Mill's principle of utility actually dictates that the massive, unregulated data collection being conducted by the NSA and GCHQ is unethical and ought to be terminated.

"Going Dark"

According to Rusbridger, the NSA and GCHQ argue that without both the pervasiveness and secrecy of their current programs, the world would "go dark."[5] This phrase, however, needs clarification. As Rusbridger and others have learned, the NSA and GCHQ have been secretly collecting staggering amounts of so-called metadata from phone calls, text messages, emails, and internet searches made by British and American citizens. Although metadata only includes "information about who sent a communication to whom, from where to where," Stewart Baker, the former general counsel of the NSA,

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

has commented that "metadata absolutely tells you everything about somebody's life."[6]

These organizations claim that this secretive omnipresence illuminates their purview to "help the good guys keep track of the bad guys and perhaps stop another terrorist outrage" like, for instance, 9/11.[7] This mass surveillance, then, supposedly makes the world "go light." The NSA and GCHQ therefore claim that revealing their organizational secrets and limiting the data that they can collect would cause the world to "go dark," rendering them blind to the activities of the "bad guys," which would in turn leave Britain and America susceptible to devastating attacks. As a result, the agencies argue that their activities should be unregulated and kept out of the public forum, and journalists like Rusbridger are told: "Write about it and you could have blood on your hands."[8] The NSA and GCHQ maintain that, if they lose their spying abilities and cloak of secrecy, then the "bad guys" will be able to run amok unchecked and the result could be another 9/11.

"Going Dark" as a Utilitarian Argument

Clearly, the NSA and GCHQ claim that the positive consequences of their surveillance practices outweigh the negative ones, so they are justified. This claim, by definition, is an appeal to consequentialism. Indeed, Mill writes that "all action is for the sake of some end, and rules of action, it seems natural to suppose, must take their whole character and color from the end to which they are subservient."[9]

Rusbridger rightly observes that these organizations face the "problem of balancing surveillance with civil liberties."[10] The NSA and GCHQ maintain that they have balanced the scales favorably so that what the British and American people gain in security from their spying activities outweighs what they lose in personal privacy and freedoms. This is an invocation of Mill's ethical calculus, which Mill

---

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

[9] John S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*, ed. George Sher, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2001), 2.

[10] Rusbridger, "The Snowden Leaks and the Public."

refers to as utility or the greatest happiness principle.[11] This utilitarian calculus dictates that "actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness; wrong as they tend to promote the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain and the privation of pleasure."[12] In utilitarian terms, the intelligence programs of the NSA and GCHQ supposedly produce happiness in the form of security because they protect the American and British people from tragic attacks, while they produce unhappiness insofar as they rob them of personal privacy and freedoms.

Indeed, the maximization of happiness and minimization of unhappiness for everyone involved is the paradigm of utilitarian ethical theory. However, the NSA and GCHQ's argument also hinges on the distinction that all pleasures do not bear equal moral weight. This is again an appeal to Mill, who maintains that there is a pivotal distinction between higher and lower pleasures. Mill contends, "It is quite compatible with the principle of utility to recognize the fact that some kinds of pleasure are more desirable and more valuable than others. It would be absurd that, while in estimating all other things quality is considered as well as quantity, the estimation of pleasure should be supposed to depend on quantity alone."[13] Higher pleasures are not only more sophisticated for Mill but also more essential for happiness.

As such, the NSA and GCHQ justify their practices by assigning greater moral weight to security than to privacy and freedoms. Indeed, next to physical needs such as food and water, Mill also holds that security is the most indispensable pleasure. "On it," he asserts, "we depend for all our immunity from evil and for the whole value of all and every good, beyond the passing moment, since nothing but the gratification of the instant could be of any worth to us if we could be deprived of everything the next instant by whoever was momentarily stronger than ourselves."[14] Therefore, the NSA and GCHQ certainly invoke Mill in their argument that, without security, no other pleasures are guaranteed since attackers would be able to strip them away at any moment. Despite the pervasiveness of the invasions of privacy

---

[11] Mill, *Utilitarianism*, 7.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid., 8.

[14] Ibid., 54.

and freedom incurred by their intelligence programs, the NSA and GCHQ claim that this pain is offset by the comparatively higher moral worth of the pleasure (specifically, the security) that they supposedly provide. Without these security measures, they posit that American and British citizens would be in danger of losing pleasures including, but not limited to, personal privacy and freedom at the hands of attackers (perhaps even to a greater degree).

Ignorance of American and British Officials

Although the NSA and GCHQ invoke Mill's utilitarianism by maintaining that their practices are justified since they maximize the happiness (especially the security) of everyone involved, Mill emphasizes that utility is not determined arbitrarily. Conversely, it is dictated by the "preference felt by those who, in their opportunities and experience, to which must be added their habits of self-consciousness and self-observation, are best furnished with the means of comparison."[15] Mill imposes high standards on how pleasures and pains are to be weighed in the utilitarian calculus. The determination is made according to how an agent intimately familiar with the distinction between higher and lower pleasures would make it.

Rusbridger correctly observes that, although the NSA and GCHQ invoke the dictates of utility in their justification of their practices, they did not do so with a full understanding of the pains and pleasures involved, and he underscores this irony through a clever reversal of the image of "going dark." He observes that the British and American officials supposedly responsible for overseeing the surveillance practices are "kept in the dark" about them.[16]

As Snowden has pointed out, those government officials who are charged with overseeing the NSA and GCHQ practices only have "partial information and poor technical understanding."[17] The technologies employed by the NSA and GCHQ are extraordinarily complex, and Rusbridger rightly observes that those with no technical background in them cannot appreciate their implications and far-reaching consequences. One senior member of the British cabinet admitted that "most of us don't really understand the

[15] Ibid., 12.

[16] Rusbridger, "The Snowden Leaks and the Public."

[17] Ibid.

internet"—hence, they do not understand the capabilities of GCHQ practices.[18] Government officials who ostensibly oversee intelligence practices are also kept "in the dark" by being misled. On one recent occasion, the U.S. Congress was told a flat-out lie by James Clapper, the U.S. Director of National Intelligence. He falsely reported that the NSA was not collecting any data on Americans. In another reversal of the image of "going dark," Rusbridger aptly calls the NSA and GCHQ "spooks" because they act "in the dark."[19] As a result, the activities of both intelligence organizations are virtually unregulated and out of control.

As a result of their ignorance, American and British officials in charge of these security practices have not made legitimate determinations of the dictates of utility. Since they are misled and lack technical understanding, they cannot fully understand the pleasures and pains at issue, and their utilitarian calculus is skewed and wayward. Although they judge the positive consequences to outweigh the negatives ones, they cannot legitimately make this claim within the utilitarian framework to which they appeal since Mill argues that only an agent intimately familiar with the pleasures and pains involved can determine the dictates of utility.

Overestimation of the Benefits of Spying

Rusbridger also correctly observes that, despite the utilitarian appeal made by the NSA and GCHQ, the benefits of the secretive, pervasive spying practices do not actually outweigh the drawbacks. The NSA and GCHQ assign more moral weight to the security derived from their surveillance activities than is due. In a recent NPR segment, Senator Ron Wyden, a senior member of the Senate intelligence committee, commented, "At one point, we were told the bulk phone record collections program produced in . . . over 50 instances, information that was absolutely fundamental to dealing with the terrorist threat. And when asked in more detail, that number kept going down and down and down. And now, it's essentially been

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

in the vicinity of two."[20] The NSA and GCHQ claim that their mass surveillance programs are absolutely vital for security. Senator Wyden's claim indicates, however, that the NSA and GCHQ have over-exaggerated how much security is actually produced by their mass surveillance practices. The positive consequences of these actions are actually quite paltry.

Underestimation of the Negative Consequences of Spying

The NSA and GCHQ also downplay the seriousness of the losses of privacy and freedoms—the negative consequences—caused by their surveillance practices. Rusbridger once again employs a clever reversal of the image of "going dark" in order to emphasize the irony that, despite claims made by these organizations to the contrary, their actions have done more to decrease American and British security than to increase it. Whereas the NSA and GCHQ maintain that the world will "go dark" if their surveillance activities are curtailed, Rusbridger holds that their "all-seeing technologies could lead societies into very dark places."[21] Upon closer analysis, it becomes clear that the drawbacks outweigh the benefits of these spying activities, and, hence, utility does not justify them.

First of all, the NSA and GCHQ are undermining internet security. Their actions not only make it easier for them—the supposed "good guys"—to access private information, but they likewise make it easier for the "bad guys" to hack into it. Although the NSA and GCHQ claim to be protecting American and British citizens from potential threats, they have actually made citizens more vulnerable. Rusbridger poignantly observes, "If you're anxious about your bank details or medical records sitting online, you're probably right to be."[22]

Secondly, Rusbridger notes that, as Snowden has pointed out, the massive stores of data maintained by the NSA and GCHQ are not benign. They allow any American or British citizen to have his or her private information arbitrarily scrutinized at any time. All it

---

[20] Ron Wyden, interview by Arun Rath, "Edward Snowden's NSA Revelations Keep Coming," *All Things Considered*, National Public Radio, *NPR.org*, November 11, 2013, accessed November 24, 2013, http://www.npr.org/2013/11/09/244204131/edward-snowdens-nsa-revelations-keep-coming.

[21] Rusbridger, "The Snowden Leaks and the Public."

[22] Ibid.

takes, Snowden posits, is a "wrong [phone] call" and "they [the NSA or GCHQ] can use this system to go back in time and scrutinize every decision you've ever made."[23] The collection of metadata therefore revokes from the American and British people the pleasures of personal privacy and freedoms. Although the revocation of pleasures can be justifiable within a utilitarian framework, Mill places strict limits on the circumstances in which this ought to occur.

What sort of claim do people have to such pleasures within the utilitarian framework? Mill explains this in terms of security, the most foundational of all pleasures. Mill argues, "The feelings concerned are so powerful, and we count so positively on finding a responsive feeling in others (all being alike interested) that *ought* and *should* grow into *must*, and recognized indispensability becomes moral necessity."[24] Therefore, it is in everybody's interest to protect everyone else's security, since this makes it more likely that everyone's own security will, in turn, be respected.

For Mill, it therefore follows that, "When we call anything a person's right, we mean that he has a valid claim on society to protect him in the possession of it."[25] It is something considered so crucial that everyone feels that they must respect it in others in order to ensure that it will be respected in themselves by others. Security, it has been demonstrated, is the most indispensable moral right. Legitimate claims can also be made to moral rights to privacy and freedoms within the utilitarian framework since they, too, concern everyone alike, and, as has been shown, it is therefore in each person's interest to respect them in everybody else.

For Mill, such rights cannot be upheld without mutual recognition by all. This mutual recognition is what "preserves peace among human beings" and therefore allows society to function in the utilitarian framework.[26] As such, Mill argues that "it is by a person's observance of these [rights] that his fitness to exist as one of the fellowship of human beings is tested and decided."[27]

Mill further explains that, since these moral rights—especially security—are recognized as indispensable, all members of society have

---

[23] Ibid.

[24] Mill, *Utilitarianism*, 54.

[25] Ibid., 53.

[26] Ibid., 59.

[27] Ibid., 60.

tight emotional ties to them. Mill argues that humans have the unique capacity to perceive a crime against one or a few as a crime against the whole and, therefore, themselves.[28] As a result, "The same powerful motives which command the observance of these primary moralities enjoin the punishment of those who violate them; and as the impulses of self-defense, of defense of others, and of vengeance are called forth against such persons, retribution, or evil for evil, becomes closely connected with the sentiment of justice."[29]

Therefore, the instinct towards self-defense and emotionally charged desire for retribution is an expression of utility. Punishing criminals revokes certain rights from them, but Mill argues that they receive "what they deserve."[30] Insofar as they violate the moral rights that allow society to function, criminals disconnect themselves from society. Criminals pose a threat to everyone's rights, and punishing them is therefore justified because it suppresses this threat and preserves these rights for society as a whole.

For Mill, these are the only circumstances under which moral rights such as security, privacy, and freedoms may be revoked. Utility therefore does not dictate that it is permissible to arbitrarily revoke these rights, as the NSA and GCHQ are doing. That each ought to receive what he or she justly deserves does not only apply when giving "evil for evil" in cases of retribution, Mill clarifies, but also when giving "good for good."[31] Therefore, to arbitrarily revoke the rights of innocent British and American citizens to privacy and freedoms when they have not breached the moral rights of others is not ethically justified according to the utilitarian calculus. It is instead, in Mill's words, "simply expedient."[32] Indeed, Mill writes that, "society should treat all equally well who have deserved equally well of *it*."[33]

Innocent citizens do not deserve to lose their rights to privacy and freedoms at the hands of the NSA and GCHQ since they have done nothing to violate the rights of others. The practices of the NSA and GCHQ therefore threaten the moral rights that allow society to function within the utilitarian framework rather than protect them.

---

[28] Ibid., 51.

[29] Ibid., 60.

[30] Ibid., 61.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid., 61-62.

Moreover, the recent revelation of these practices has generated much public outcry—Rusbridger's article is an example of this. As previously described, violations of security within the utilitarian framework generate a strong emotional response. Therefore, this public outcry can be understood as a symptom indicating that security has actually been damaged rather than bolstered in America and Britain.

As mentioned previously, Snowden is concerned that innocent individuals will be susceptible to being arbitrarily criminalized by the NSA and GCHQ.[34] However, the unregulated spying activities of the NSA and GCHQ can be understood as a violation of security on an even more basic level. Even if they are not a violation of security *per se*—like the arbitrary criminalization Snowden warns about—the outcry generated by the program at least indicates that the public feels less secure. The sentiment of security itself is very important for the functioning of society in the utilitarian framework. If moral rights—especially security—are not respected, Mill argues that "everyone would see in everyone else an enemy against whom he would be perpetually guarding himself."[35] As previously discussed, the mutual recognition of moral rights is crucial to the peaceful functioning of society in the utilitarian framework. However, the recent public distress indicates that the surveillance activities conducted by the NSA and GCHQ break down this mutual recognition rather than promote it. Therefore, although the NSA and GCHQ claim that their activities bolster the security of American and British citizens (and protect their rights), utility dictates that they are doing more to damage security (and to take away these rights).

Conclusion

What the British and American people gain in security from the surveillance activities of the NSA and GCHQ is modest in comparison to what they lose in security. These practices also strip away their moral rights to privacy and freedoms. The utilitarian appeal put forth by the British and American officials who support these practices has been shown to be unsustainable in a utilitarian framework—largely because they determine the dictates of utility with a fundamental lack of understanding of the pleasures and pains involved.

---

[34] Rusbridger, "The Snowden Leaks and the Public."

[35] Mill, *Utilitarianism*, 59.

Therefore, according to Mill's theory of utility, these surveillance programs are expedient rather than ethical. Indeed, Mill writes, there have been many institutions throughout history which have been justified by supposed appeals to utility, only to be condemned later as blatantly unethical. One example which Mill cites is slavery: at one point in the history of the United States, slavery was argued to be a "necessity of social existence" because the social benefits outweighed the drawbacks.[36] It has since been clarified, however, that the institution is a violation of the utilitarian paradigm that each ought to receive what he or she justly deserves. Mill writes, "The entire history of social improvement has been a series of transitions by which one custom or institution after another, from being a supposed primary necessity of social existence, has passed into the rank of a universally stigmatized injustice and tyranny."[37]

Indeed, history will show that the mass surveillance programs of the NSA and GCHQ followed the dictates of expedience rather than ethics. This fact is evident in a remark by the head of a British intelligence agency: "There's nothing in it for us in being more open about what we do."[38] This official is clearly more concerned about the efficiency of his organization than the good of British citizens. Indeed, although the NSA and GCHQ appeal to utilitarianism in attempting to justify their practices, when these practices (i.e., their consequences) are critiqued according to the utilitarian framework, it becomes clear that these practices are consistent with efficiency rather than utility. The negative consequences of these activities clearly outweigh the positive ones: the NSA and GCHQ are compromising rather than bolstering security in the United States and Britain, and they are threatening the moral rights promoted in the utilitarian framework rather than protecting them, so they are detracting from the peaceful functioning of society rather than facilitating it.

Government officials who approve of the indiscriminate, large-scale spying on American and British citizens by the NSA and GCHQ claim that, if their practices are limited, the world will "go dark" and chaos will ensue. Although the utility behind this argument initially seems compelling, it does not hold. Those who oversee the intelligence organizations are not fully informed as to the pleasures

---

[36] Ibid., 63.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Rusbridger, "The Snowden Leaks and the Public."

and pains involved, and, hence, their ethical calculus is skewed. In actuality, the negative consequences of these programs outweigh the positive ones. As a result, these programs can be said to be expedient rather than ethical, and they ought to be terminated.

Resolving the Paradox of Fiction: A Defense of Irrationalism

Anna Brinkerhoff

Abstract: In this paper, I examine the Paradox of Fiction: (1) in order for us to have genuine and rational emotional responses to a character or situation, we must believe that the character or situation is not purely fictional, (2) we believe that fictional characters and situations are purely fictional, and (3) we have genuine and rational emotional responses to fictional characters and situations. After defending (1) and (2) against formidable objections and considering the plausibility of ~(3) in isolation of (1) and (2), I conclude that we should resolve the Paradox of Fiction by rejecting (3).

The so-called Paradox of Fiction is an inconsistent triad of propositions regarding our emotional responses to fiction: (1) in order for us to have genuine and rational emotional responses to a character or situation, we must believe that the character or situation is not purely fictional, (2) we believe that fictional characters and situations are purely fictional, and (3) we have genuine and rational emotional responses to fictional characters and situations. At first blush, all three propositions seem true. But, since they cannot all be true, resolving the paradox requires that we figure out which proposition to reject.

The thesis of this paper is that (3) is false in that our emotional responses to fictional characters and situations are not rational. In what follows, I will expound on the paradox itself, clarify what it means to have emotional responses, and lay out conditions for rational emotional responses. With this is mind, I will then consider what I take to be the most daunting objections to (1) and (2). Next, I will defend each proposition in light of its respective challenges. Finally, I will advocate the plausibility of ~(3) independently of the other two propositions that entail it.

The Paradox

Emotional engagement with fictional narrative, presented in novels, plays, or movies, is a familiar phenomenon: we pity the tragic hero upon his downfall, fear the malevolent monster as it lurks behind the bushes, and rejoice with the bride as she kisses her prince. The question arises: how is it rational to respond emotionally to characters or situations that we believe not to exist and to never have existed? Perhaps it is not rational; in other words, it may be that propositions (1) and (2) of the paradox are premises in an argument whose conclusion is the negation of (3):

> F1. If we have genuine and rational emotional responses to a character or situation, then we must believe that the character or situation is not purely fictional.
>
> F2. We believe that fictional characters and situations are purely fictional.
>
> F3. Therefore, we do not have genuine and rational emotional responses to fictional characters and situations.[1]

This is the argument I seek to defend. Before proceeding, it is important to note what, in my view, makes (3) false. Supporters of F3 can negate (3) by claiming that we do not have emotional responses to fiction; that we have emotional responses to fiction, but they are neither genuine nor rational; that we have genuine emotional responses to fiction, but they are irrational; or that we have rational emotional responses to fiction, but they are ingenuine. My claim is that (3) is false because we have genuine but irrational emotional responses to fiction. This view is called Irrationalism. More specifically, Irrationalism is the idea that it is irrational to have fictional characters and situations as the objects of our emotions.[2] The argument above in favor of

[1] F1 is (1), F2 is (2), and F3 is ~(3). For the remainder of the paper, F1 will be used interchangeably with (1), F2 with (2), and F3 with (~3).

[2] Throughout the remainder of the paper, when I refer to our emotional responses to fiction, I am referring to our emotional responses that have a fictional character or situation as their object.

Irrationalism is indisputably valid, but both premises are debatable. Before evaluating them, I will clarify pivotal terms in the section below.

Emotional Responses to Fiction and Conditions for Rational Responses

It is beyond the scope of this paper to offer or recommend an analysis of emotion; however, in order to eschew ambiguity, I will flesh out what it means to respond emotionally to fiction. For the purposes of this paper, I am using the strict sense of "emotion." This excludes moods, attitudes, and dispositions. A consequence of this is that the emotions to which I am referring must have an object. Thus, on this account, mental states such as regret, irritation, and fear count as emotions; but depression, apathy, and euphoria do not. With this in mind, suppose that Person S reads a fictional narrative in which one of the characters, Character A, is an innocent victim of domestic abuse. The narrative causes a mental state in S that seems to her like pity and which she readily identifies as pity. This emotional response of pity is genuine insofar as the way in which it seems to S is identical to the way in which the same emotion would seem to her were Character A a real person in the situation stipulated. Hereafter, I assume that the emotional responses we have to fictional narratives are genuine; this is a safe assumption given that the emotions we experience when consuming fiction tend to be phenomenologically indistinguishable from those when we hear about or witness real-life narratives.

What, then, does it mean for any genuine emotional response to be rational? I adopt (and slightly revise) the conditions that Derek Matravers, who endorses Irrationalism, proposes, where E is an instance of emotion: (a) S is justified in being in the cognitive state (e.g., believing that P, understanding that P, entertaining the thought that p, etc.) that elicits E, (b) E is a reasonable response given the cognitive state, and (c) E is of an appropriate intensity.[3] If an emotional response meets all three of these conditions, then it is rational. To clarify by example, if I peer through my window and see a swirling funnel cloud descend to the earth and swell with debris, I am justified in forming the belief that there is a tornado in the vicinity. Thus, I am justified in being in the cognitive state—believing—that elicits my emotional

[3] Derek Matravers, "The Challenge of Irrationalism, and How Not To Meet It," in *Contemporary Debates in Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art*, ed. Matthew Kieran (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2005), 254-64.

response—fear (condition a). Fear is a reasonable response given my belief that there is potentially devastating weather nearby (condition b). Gratefulness, however, is not. Also, depending on the particulars of the circumstance I am in, fear of a wide range of intensity is appropriate (condition c). So, in the situation postulated, my emotional response is rational.

Applying these conditions to S's emotional response to the narrative about Character A, S is justified in imagining that Character A is in unfortunate circumstances, as this is what the author prompts her to imagine. *Prima facie*, the misfortune and suffering that Character A undergoes render S reasonable in directing pity at A, and deep pity is of an appropriate intensity given the despondency of A's circumstances. Matravers argues, however, that responding emotionally to fiction is irrational because, in doing so, condition (b) is violated; in his words, pity of any intensity is not a reasonable response to "a proposition imagined rather than a proposition believed."[4] Before assenting to Matravers's view that emotional responses to propositions imagined are irrational, I want to examine other purported solutions to the paradox. It is by virtue of considering premises F1 and F2 that the irrationality of emotional responses to fictional characters and situations is illuminated. I will begin by addressing F1.

Objection to Premise F1

In an attempt to solve the Paradox of Fiction, some philosophers have denied premise F1. Their claim is that it is possible for S to have genuine, rational emotional responses to characters and situations that she believes do not exist and to never have existed. Noël Carroll defends this position. His view is that the mere thought of the vindictive masked killer is what inspires fear in person S when she watches a horror film or that the thought of Character A in vastly unfortunate situations is what motivates S to feel pity. Moreover, these thoughts are the objects of the emotion; borrowing his terminology, S fears and pities, respectively, the content of her thought. In articulating his view, Carroll writes that "with respect to fictions, the author of such works presents us with conceptions of things to think about . . . . And in entertaining and reflecting upon the contents of these representations, which supply us with the contents of our thoughts, we can be moved

[4] Ibid., 257.

to pity, grief, joy, indignation, and so on."[5] Contra Matravers, Carroll argues that actual pity, grief, joy, and indignation can be rational responses to a proposition entertained in thought, or imagined, rather than a proposition believed. Emotional responses to fiction are not irrational, he argues, because the thought contents are not based on psychotic or neurotic fantasies; the thought theory does not compel the consumer of fiction to embrace a contradiction; responding to fiction emotionally is normal and a natural component of our emotional and cognitive structure; and, when consumed as intended, such emotional responses do not interfere with practical pursuits.

I agree with Carroll that we can have emotional responses to things that we do not think exist. Furthermore, I am also inclined to accept his view that, when responding emotionally to fiction, the objects of our emotions are mental representations of content prompted by engaging with the fiction at hand. Yet, Carroll's reasons for thinking that these emotional responses are rational are inadequate. I will address this in the next section.

Defense of Premise F1

Carroll argues that it is possible to have genuine, rational emotional responses to characters and situations that we believe do not exist because, when consuming fiction, we entertain in thought these characters and situations. These thoughts are the objects of our emotions. Because it is rational to emotionally respond to the thought of something, it is rational to respond to the thought of fictional characters and situations. It is important to emphasize here that the question is not whether the mere thought of something can generate an emotional response; rather, it is whether such emotional responses are rational, specifically when fictional characters and situations generate them. Despite cataloging a plethora of ways in which responding emotionally to the thought of fictional characters and situations is not irrational, Carroll neglects the one that underlies his theory: Matravers's condition (b) of rationality. The question remains: is the emotion in question a reasonable response given the cognitive state at hand?

---

[5] Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror or Paradoxes of the Heart* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 88.

In order to get a better grasp on condition (b), I need to explain what it means for an emotional response to be reasonable for S. In order for S to be reasonable in responding with pity to something or someone, that something or someone must warrant S's pity. If S responds with pity to something or someone that does not warrant it, S's response is unreasonable. For something or someone to warrant S's pity, he/she/it must undergo, have undergone, or will undergo misfortunate and suffer, have suffered, or will suffer accordingly. Similarly, in order for S to be reasonable in responding with anger to something or someone, he/she/it must have wronged or offended S. Likewise, in order for S to be reasonable in responding with fear to something or someone, he/she/it must threaten to harm S. There are parallel standards for regret, indignation, grief, joy, and a host of other emotions. Again, the issue is whether the emotion in question is a reasonable response given the cognitive state at hand. On Carroll's account, the relevant cognitive state is entertaining in thought, or imagining. Whereas the object of emotion when believing that P is the thing in the world that [S thinks] corresponds to the object of emotion when entertaining in thought that P is the thought itself; there is nothing in the world to which S thinks the content of entertaining in thought that P corresponds. Because the thought itself does not undergo misfortune, wrong or offend S, or threaten to harm S, it is not reasonable, and, by extension, irrational, for S to respond with pity, anger, or fear. In light of this, Carroll is wrong in claiming that it is possible to have rational emotional responses to situations or characters that we know not to exist. What is more, it seems that E is a reasonable response for S only if S's cognitive state is belief that P. When S believes that Pm only then is the object of her emotion something she takes to be in the world, and only some things in the world can endure suffering and misfortune, wrong, offend, or harm.

Objection to Premise F2

Another approach to resolving the paradox is to deny F2. The claim of philosophers who pursue this strategy is that S believes that the fictional characters and situations are real. As David Suits, a thoughtful supporter of this position, puts it, "[S] believes that the persons in the story are there, that [she is] in the places described in the story, and that the events of the story are occurring exactly as

described."[6] On Suits's account, S believes that Character A is real and that A is a victim of domestic abuse. Suits attends to the predictable objection: it is not the case that S believes that they are real because, if she did, she would react differently than she does upon encountering them. For example, if S thought that the malevolent monster on the big screen were real, she would flee. Since she does not flee, it is not the case that she thinks the monster is real.

Suits argues that those who make this inference are ignoring the context of belief. He claims that, when S is engrossed in the horror movie featuring the monster, she peripheralizes her physical situation. Before and after engaging with the narrative, S believes that the characters and situations are fictional; however, during her engagement, she forgets this, or perhaps intentionally suspends this belief. Suits's argument for why S does not flee even though she thinks the monster is real is this: in situations where S is actually confronted by a monster, it is not clear that she would flee because her reaction is contingent upon her other beliefs. In the scenario in which she is sitting at the cinema, S holds beliefs that counteract her impulse to flee.

Defense of Premise F2

This argument misrepresents what is actually going on. It seems right that, when caught up in a narrative, S is not attending to the fact that the characters and situations are purely fictional; however, this does not entail that she assents to the proposition that the situations and characters are real, as Suits implies. To be charitable, though, let us suppose with Suits that, when captivated by the narrative, S does believe the monster is real. Before going further, here it is helpful to introduce Matravers's idea of instrumental belief. According to Matravers, an instrumental belief allows us to act toward the object of our emotion.[7] Suppose that we pity the malnourished homeless man begging for money. The belief that gifting him a ten-dollar bill would ameliorate his suffering is an instrumental belief. Returning to Suits, his account is problematic because it seems that the following conditional is true: if S has the emotional response of fear and has an

[6] David Suits, "Really Believing in Fiction," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly 87*, no. 3 (2006): 371.

[7] Matravers, "The Challenge of Irrationalism, and How Not To Meet It," 255.

instrumental belief that, if acted upon, she thinks will decrease her risk of harm, then, assuming that she is physically and psychologically able and that she has no overriding reason to do otherwise, she will act on the instrumental belief. When confronted with this conditional, Suits would claim that S does not flee because she has an overriding reason, namely that she believes that she is in a cinema and that the monster cannot breach the screen.

To understand the glitches in this rejoinder, it is beneficial to specify the supposed process of S's switching between believing that the monster is real and believing that it is fictional that Suits's account demands. Engrossed in the movie, S believes that the monster is real. This belief occasions fear and, naturally, she poises to flee. Preparing to flee distracts her from the film, and so she does not flee because the fact that the monster is fictional is remembered. As it is unreasonable to assume that S would conscientiously hold two propositions that are blatantly inconsistent with each other simultaneously, it can be concluded that S no longer believes that the monster is real. If this pattern holds, then, when S believes that the monster is real, she fears that the monster will harm her. In response to that fear, she prepares to flee, but, on the brink of fleeing, she is tempered by, and thereby reminded of, the fact that the monster is not real. By virtue of this, she is distracted from the film. No longer captivated, she recalls that it is purely fictional and so stays seated. Granting that it is the case that S believes at moments that the monster is real, this belief is so stunted by fear and urge to flee that it is insignificant. Rather than assenting to Suit's analysis, it is simpler and more plausible to say that, although she experiences genuine fear when watching the horror movie, she does not flee because she knows throughout that it is fictional. Either way, F2 is not undermined. Now that F1 and F2 have been defended, I will consider Irrationalism on its own.

The Plausibility and Palatability of Irrationalism

The potency of the paradox is derived from the fact that, when considered in isolation, (1), (2), and (3) all seem plausible. Even though I have argued that (1) and (2) are true, and that implies that (3) is false, it will be helpful to consider the plausibility of Irrationalism in isolation. Irrationalism is the view that S's emotional responses to fictional characters and situations are irrational; specifically, I have argued that such emotional responses are irrational insofar as the

object of the emotion is not something S takes to be in the world. It is not the view that we do not have genuine emotional responses to fiction, nor is it that no good can arise from engaging emotionally with fictional narratives. Perhaps it is by dint of this irrational element of our cognitive and emotional structure that we gain experiential knowledge or expand our understanding of the human condition.

Furthermore, the Irrationalism I endorse does not condemn all emotional responses prompted by fiction as irrational. To see this, consider the Counterpart Theory that Gregory Currie recommends, which accounts for what happens when S emotionally engages with fiction. He claims that "we experience genuine emotions when we encounter fiction, but their relation to the story is causal rather than intentional; the story provokes thoughts about real people and situations, and these are the intentional objects of our emotions."[8] On Currie's view, when S consumes fiction, the fictional characters and situations cause her pity, but what she really pities are situations and people she believes exist. Admittedly, Currie's interpretation of what happens when we read fiction is not true of most cases. When I read *Pride and Prejudice*, I am not happy for my cousin who defied societal norms to marry her beloved; nor do I consider Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth tokens of a type of which there are real-life tokens that are the objects of my happiness. Rather, Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth and their unlikely love (or, more precisely, the mental representations of these prompted by the text) are the objects of my happiness, even though I know they are fictional. From what I can tell, most consumers respond in the same way I do, with fictional characters and situations as the object of their happiness. Perhaps, though, Currie's interpretation is true of some cases; indeed, it is possible for fictional characters and situations to cause an emotion that has a real-life counterpart as its object. When this does happen, emotional responses caused by fiction are rational. It is important to emphasize that this does not undermine Irrationalism. When the object of our emotions is a counterpart of a fictional character or situation, the emotion is merely triggered by the fiction, but the fictional character or situation is not the object of our emotion. In other words, in these rare cases, our emotional response is rational because it was caused by but not to fiction. My thesis remains formidable.

---

[8] Gregory Currie, *The Nature of Fiction*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 188.

The last thing I want to note about Irrationalism's plausibility is that it is not necessary to prove F1 and F2 to maintain Irrationalism; all one has to do is show Matravers's conditions of rationality are sensible to accept and that emotional responses to fictional characters and situations do not meet all three. In light of all this, it seems that the stripe of Irrationalism that I support is plausible in isolation and, additionally, is quite palatable.

Conclusion

The most plausible and palatable way to resolve the Paradox of Fiction is to embrace Irrationalism. Propositions (1) and (2) emerge unscathed from formidable objections; thus, the two premises of the argument that entail the negation of (3), F1 and F2, respectively, seem true. Moreover, when evaluated in isolation of the other two propositions, the negation of (3) seems plausible and, ultimately, a relatively soft bullet to bite to resolve the Paradox of Fiction.[9]

[9] I would like to dedicate this paper to my dad (1957 - 2013): my biggest supporter, fellow wonderer, and funder of my library. I love you and miss you lots!

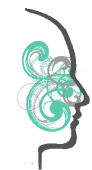
The Productive Citizen: Marx, Cultural Time, and Disability

Lauren Pass

Abstract: This paper argues for analyzing the systematic invisibility of persons living with disabilities by temporalizing their oppression within a framework of "productive time," which I posit as a normative sense of time by which cultural products and practices appear within capitalist economies. I argue that productive time is employed in cultural evaluations of actions that render persons with disabilities as "non-productive agents" who cannot partake in historical processes. My hope is that a theory of productive time will assist social justice efforts in analyzing the oppression of particular minority groups by identifying and combating harmful social values.

When political philosophy considers historical progress, it tends to make central to its theories a conception of a historical subject with a particular kind of agency. Regardless of whether an agent's autonomy is thought of as liberated or constrained within historical contexts, these theories usually posit a universalized subject that possesses traits constitutive of all historical agents. These accounts of personal subjectivity within history are positive ones; seldom is historical progress considered in relation to the absence of particular subjects—the ones history leaves behind. In this paper, I want to explore one such negative account of historical development. Underlying my approach is the assumption that, if historical progress is driven by the activities of politically enfranchised agents, then historical progress is likewise coupled with the oppression and invisibility of disenfranchised agents. This relationship points to the exclusion of particular identities and reveals expectations for corresponding modes of behavior that distinguish some kinds of social identities as not politically viable.

While Marx's political economy is not explicitly a negative account of historical processes, it provides a theoretical starting point for this type of investigation when we consider what it means



to be a subject that does *not* partake in the history-driving economic relationships. What distinguishes one as a "non-productive" agent, and how do certain economic structures create the invisibility of such subjects within a state's history? This paper employs a Marxist critique of capitalist economies by describing a normative infrastructure utilized in capitalist economies that I call "productive time" and its normative reach on the cultural capital of disenfranchised group identities. Through this conception of cultural time and historical development, I wish to illuminate some of the theoretical mechanisms involved in the systematic invisibility of persons with bodily disabilities.

Marx rejected the idea that historical processes could be explained in terms of the mental lives of historical figures.[1] Instead, they can be observed empirically through changes in productive practices.[2] Human thought processes are subsumed by a preoccupation with securing the means of one's own subsistence. The distinctive quality of human beings is their ability to satisfy their material needs in highly organized and creative ways. Since economies are structured to facilitate the acquisition of material needs, the most fundamental human relationships are economic ones: cultural and intellectual activity result from the ways material productions are created, organized, and sustained.[3]

The means by which material needs are satisfied engender both the material and social forces that become embedded in the conduct of daily life. The political consequences that arise are shaped by the nature of material production and the ideals of those with the greatest stake in its implementation.[4] The creative and productive capacities afforded to a worker by the economy are tied inextricably with the kind of life the worker may lead. As such, the relationship a worker has to his or her work depends on the level of autonomy and ownership the worker has over the product. The natural relationship between humans and their labor is when workers are connected to their products through their labor and thus to their material and social environments.

---

[1] Karl Marx, "The German Ideology," in *Theories of History*, ed. Patrick L. Gardiner (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1956), 126.

[2] Ibid., 129.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

Marx argues that this kind of relationship is corrupted by the development of economic practices that alienate the workers from the product of their labor.[5] The means of production become monopolized by a ruling class whose ideology functions as the infrastructure of society. Because ideology itself is the "production of ideas, of concepts, of consciousness,"[6] the ruling class has normative control over the ideological and cultural capital of society. In this way, the ideals of the ruling class became imposed within the public sphere (falsely, but nevertheless persuasively) as normative ideals. The prevailing ideas and culture of a state are, in fact, testaments to the dominance of the ruling class.[7]

In modern capitalist economies, material economy is primarily an economy of time: the material resources needed to satisfy biological needs are procured by the institutional conversion of worked-time into currency. The concept of income in the form of a salary or wage presupposes an economy of time.[8] Time serves as both the primary object of economic activity and the social good of material commerce. The concepts of a "work day," "full-time," and "part-time" employment are institutional manifestations of time-spending as the means by which one secures personal livelihood. The amount of capital received through time-informed labor acts as a social gauge of both the legitimacy of a citizen's productive efforts and his or her degree of self-sufficiency. The implication is that those who meet the economic demands put on them are valued as sufficiently productive citizens. In a time-informed economy, the ability to work and produce is not just an economic demand but a normative one, given over to moralized social discourses of what constitutes sufficient labor and who is a "good" citizen "pulling their own weight" in the economy. Labor is moralized at even an existential level as the means to justifying one's consumption, to earning the right to one's existence,

---

[5] Karl Marx, "Communist Manifesto" in *Theories of History*, ed. Patrick L. Gardiner (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1956), 134.

[6] Marx, "The German Ideology," 128.

[7] Ibid., 131.

[8] One could reasonably argue that the legacy of capitalist industrialization includes the prevalence of jobs that require workers to spend time on labor for the sake of spending time on labor, as opposed to time spent on developing the craftsmanship of a product, as many industrialized jobs have eliminated the need for skilled or specialized labor.

and to actualizing the good in oneself, among other things. But none of this is achieved without the prior commodification of time that demands "time well spent" during the pursuit of these things.

By prioritizing time this way, capitalist systems employ a cultural sense of "productive time" by which citizens are evaluated by the extent to which they support themselves through labor and their productive practices conform to the ideals of the dominant class. Things happening within productive time are perceived by the dominant class as bearing contribution and social significance, as earning the right to existence, and as being useful or worthwhile. They are activities that generate the "right kinds" of production. Activity appears within productive time if it is congruent with socioeconomic expectations set forth by the dominant class that perceives it as pertaining to practices that facilitate economic development. Productive time shows what is relevant to the progression of material life and, in doing so, privileges some actions and agents over others. It is the culture of the dominant class (and the reproductions of that culture from subjugated groups) that happens within productive time; the material and ideological products of other cultures show up in the prevailing culture only by their approximate conformity to the ideals of the dominant class.

Productive time is more easily ascertained through absences—through the things it renders covert or implicit. If minority material and cultural productions occur outside of the culture legitimized by the dominant class, they are generally absent from the prevailing cultural consciousness. The dominant class thinks of what is absent from productive time only when they must contend with the existence of what may challenge the normative assumptions that facilitate their dominance. When this happens, the cultural products originating outside the dominant class are judged, to a greater or lesser extent, as destructive, degenerate, under-developed, unfulfilling, unprofitable, behind-the-times, irrelevant, or, when very removed from the prevailing cultural conscious, as ahistorical. These cultural products are perceived as hindering society, usually as an economic drain or as generating unnecessary expenditure of resources or capital.

Productive time creates a simultaneous revealing and covering-up of certain social realities within the prevailing cultural consciousness. In this way, particular practices and social agents either become a part of productive citizenship or are ousted from it. However, because economic relationships between classes are fundamentally unavoidable, one's inclusion in productive time may not be wholly or

seamlessly present or absent at all times. Thus, non-dominant classes bear a complicated relationship to productive time, as they generate the confrontations that challenge the normative control of the dominant class in their day-to-day participation in economic relationships. This tension between the dominant class and non-dominant classes points to the capacity for any group's potential wholesale integration into productive time if they came to occupy the positions that were once exclusive to members of the dominant class. It makes sense that minority-rights activism often calls for, among other things, the right for inclusion and protection within an unaccommodating or hostile workforce; this maneuver demands the emergence and proliferation of possibilities for inclusion within productive time and, thus, possibilities associated with the values productive citizenship bestows. Human rights include economic rights to the privileges that productive time bestows on those who participate easily within it: (i) to be generally perceived as a productive citizen rather than mere unproductive denizen, (ii) to be perceived as in-step with the material and cultural demands of daily life rather than irrelevant and powerless, (iii) to obtain cultural capital through material and ideological production, and (iv) to have one's culture secure from erasure by the dominant class.

A theory of productive time is helpful in elucidating why some minority groups have persistently received less political visibility than others. Limiting a minority's participation in labor also denies the minority's presence in productive time. Because physical disability often impacts an individual's ability to work, persons with disabilities are especially vulnerable to exclusion from productive time. Thus, disabled culture is largely invisible within the prevailing culture.

Disability is an interesting minority perspective because it intersects all other minorities; it exists within and across all ethnic, gender, sexual, and religious identities and within all age groups in all parts of the world. Perhaps due to its ubiquity, the unfortunate normative assumption surrounding differently-abled persons is that they do not actually constitute a cultural identity of their own; that is, "disabled culture" is not a real or valid cultural identity. Sunny Taylor, a full-time artist and a person with disabilities, describes the discrimination unique to persons living with disabilities, which points to their invisibility relative to not just mainstream culture but also many cultural minorities:

> Disabled people are far from enjoying the advantages of social or economic equality, but the point is that they are far from even being seen as a deserving identity group. […] The disabled are viewed with sympathy as victims of "bad luck" who will simply have to accept disadvantage as their lot in life, not as an identity group that is systematically discriminated against. Unlike sexism and racism, which are perceived to be significant social problems, disability falls under the social radar and disablism is not recognized as a damaging or even particularly serious form of prejudice.[9]

Taylor points out that the social injustice directed at persons with disabilities is due, in large part, to the bodily nature of disability, which is used as grounds for naturalizing their discrimination. Taylor argues that this is achieved by society failing to make the critical distinction between *impairment* and *disability*. She defines impairment as the biological condition for which one makes accommodations and disability as the "political and social repression of impaired people" that is caused by the widespread lack of accommodations in the material world that forces differently-abled persons out of social spaces.[10] Impairment is created by biological circumstances, but disability is imposed through the denial of access within the physical and cultural environment. Part of the challenge facing disabled activists is to have this distinction made *socially*. However, the prevailing understanding of disability is one that reduces it primarily to its biological aspect. As long as the distinction between impairment and disability is collapsed under one conceptual framework, disability's necessary relationship to the environment will remain obscured.

Some Marxist theorists of disability argue that disability is created by the social and economic imperatives set in place by capitalism. They point to capitalist business models that demand unconditional maximal efficiency from workers. In these models, maximum efficiency is also the minimal efficiency tolerated from

---

[9] Sunny Taylor, "The Right Not to Work: Power and Disability," *The Monthly Review* 10 (March 2004), accessed April 15, 2013, http://monthlyreview.org/2004/03/01/the-right-not-to-work-power-and-disability.

[10] Ibid.

the standpoint of the max-profit employer. Those who cannot offer maximal output at the same rate as their peers are seen as incurring unnecessary cost. Capitalist ideals have set forth a pace of daily activity that demands elastic adaptation from its citizens. However, this expectation denigrates the efforts of those who require more time than others to fulfill the same tasks. They violate the ideal of maximized efficiency and, for the sake of preventing cost, are ousted from full participation within the workforce. Consequently, they fall out of the visibility of productive time.

One of the most helpful aspects of Marx's historical materialism is that it allows the material environment to be indicative of social change. Once the productive means have been changed sufficiently, through the joint effort of legislation and practice, we can expect change in material reality to occur. Part of the advancements made in response to the efforts of disabled activists has been legislation that mandated changes to material culture that facilitate access to public places, and these changes have engendered greater prevalence of disabled subjects in politics, culture, and the workforce. By acknowledging that the social environment and the material environment are meaningful expressions of each other, Marx provides us with a theoretical means that, once extrapolated, allows us to affirm disability as a product of one's social situation.[11] To effectively theorize disability in Marxist terms, it cannot undermine the inextricability of material reality and the manifestations thereof from the disenfranchisement of persons with disabilities, because to do so may result in the failure to recognize the material conditions that both create disabled subjects and promote their invisibility.

If we return to the question of what it means to be a viable historical agent, the considerations I have given throughout this essay conceptualize historical agents as persons who have a substantial presence within productive time, have some measure of influential

[11] This concept is extrapolated from Marx's work; Marx was not a theorist of disability and did not write for subjects of social justice beyond the framework of class struggle. Recently Marx's philosophy has been the subject of feminist and anti-ableist criticism that argues the subject of Marx's revolutionary proletariat is clearly portrayed as an able-bodied man, which problematically reproduces the concept of able-bodied persons as the only active agents of social change. Here, I do not conceptualize historical agents this way, but I deem it important to acknowledge these criticisms for locating biases in Marx's philosophy.

cultural capital, and are able to participate significantly within the processes that facilitate or engender new material production in ways congruent with the ideals of the dominant class. Because the dominant class controls the majority of material, cultural, and economic capital, gaining even partial access into these areas is difficult or impossible for many minority individuals. It is important to acknowledge that not all minority individuals have experienced or will experience the same kinds or degrees of disenfranchisement in all times and places, and individual experiences of oppression can vary widely by circumstance. The concept of productive time is meant to serve as a theoretical framework for understanding the ways dominant culture evaluates the role of minority identities as a perceived threat to their development. An analysis of a state's productive time can aid social activists' ability to improve the status of disenfranchised groups.[12]

[12] I am grateful to Abraham Graber for his help in revising this essay.

Mathematical Infinity and the Presocratic Apeiron

Austin Heath

Abstract: The Presocratic notion of *apeiron*, often translated as "unbounded," has been the subject of interest in classical philosophy. Despite apparent similarities between *apeiron* and infinity, classicists have typically been reluctant to equate the two, citing the mathematically precise nature of infinity. This paper aims to demonstrate that the properties that Anaximander, Zeno, and Anaxagoras attach to *apeiron* are not fundamentally different from the characteristics that constitute mathematical infinity. Because the sufficient explanatory mathematical tools had not yet been developed, however, their quantitative reasoning remains implicit. Consequentially, the relationship between infinity and apeiron is much closer than classical scholarship commonly suggests.

The ἄπειρον[1] or *apeiron*, a recurring theme in the history of Greek philosophy, is first mentioned in fragments of Anaximander, whose abstract characterization of the word has been the source of some contention in Presocratic scholarship. Ostensibly, the word is taken to mean "unbounded," "unlimited," or "unfinished," and, in accordance with the variety of translations, the word is put to a variety of uses within the interpretation of its function in Presocratic philosophy. In its earliest observable form, the word appears in context of cosmogony, but it is clear that since its historical origin, the Unbounded has played many philosophic roles—as a divine progenitor, fundamental substance, or quantitative entity, to name a few—for many different philosophers in the progression of Greek thought. As such, this paper will focus on an examination of several

[1] *Perseus Digital Library*, s.v. "ἄπειρον," ed. Gregory R. Crane, Tufts University, accessed January 15, 2014, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=a%29/peiros&la=greek&prior=pe/ras&d=Perseus:text:1999.04.0057:entry=a%29pei/rwn2&i=1#lexicon.

different uses of the Unbounded in Presocratic philosophy, albeit through the unusual lens of the modern mathematical infinite, as described within set theory.

In order to understand any of the similarities or differences the two concepts might hold, a brief sketch of the current notion of infinity will first be necessary. Currently, the exploration of infinity is now largely contained within the field of set theory, which in turn studies the properties of collections comprised of objects in an encompassing organizational entity, called a set. For example, the set {2, 4, 6} contains 3 distinct elements: 2, 4, and 6. In this mathematical structure, it is possible to exhibit a variety of sets with interesting mathematical concepts. Most relevant to the discussion at hand are sets which seem to contain an inexhaustible number of entities, such as the set of all positive integers {1, 2, 3, ...}, or the set of all prime numbers {2, 3, 5, ...}. It is when we examine sets such as these that a picture of infinity begins to emerge. If we were asked to determine which of those two sets (the set of all positive integers and the set of all positive prime numbers) is larger, the answer would not be obvious. On the one hand, the former set necessarily contains all the members of the latter set, as well as divisible numbers not contained in the latter set. But on the other, if we were to line up one entity from the set of positive integers with one entity from the set of all positive even numbers in such a way that the first entity in both sets were paired, then the second entity in both sets, then the third, then the fourth, and so on, we would find that both sets appear to have an equal number of members. This process of bijection or one-to-one correspondence, put to use most notably in Galileo's *Two New Sciences,* demonstrates the odd properties of sets that have a seemingly endless number of members and was ultimately developed into the definition of infinity used today.[2] If a set can be placed into this one-to-one correspondence with one of its proper subsets (meaning simply that all the members of the subset are contained within the superset, as well as other entities not found in the subset), then that set is said to contain an infinite number of members.[3] This definition, first laid out in the twentieth century by the

[2] Galileo Galilei, *Two New Sciences* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), 39-42.

[3] Richard Courant and Herbert Robbins, *What Is Mathematics? An Elementary Approach to Ideas and Methods* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941), 77-81.

German mathematician Georg Cantor, would serve as the basis from which infinity could be studied as a mathematical concept, marking a paradigmatic change in the way discourse about the infinite would take place.[4] The inception of this discourse, however, is owed to the Greek *apeiron*, and we shall spend the remainder of our time examining both its characterizations and their similarities to the modern infinite.

Despite the multitude of descriptions of *apeiron* from philosophers both ancient and contemporary, there has been hesitation from both philosophers and historians when attempting to critically analyze the concept in conjunction with its modernized equivalent. Philip Wheelwright cautiously warns the reader that "the most nearly accurate translation would be 'the Qualitatively Unlimited,'" shying away from any quantitative associations because "the word 'infinite' has technical associations . . . which may render it misleading for so early a mode of thought."[5] Wheelwright's intention may seem, on its face, like a simple clarificatory remark, but he has nonetheless drawn a firm distinction between the qualitative *apeiron* and the quantitative infinite. Wheelwright is not alone in drawing attention to this distinction. James Wilbur goes so far as to state, "It is generally agreed upon that to call it [*apeiron*] 'infinite' . . . is a mistake," since "the idea of the infinite with its mathematical implications is much too complicated to be used here."[6] The concerns are well-founded. While the morphological similarities between the two words might seem to suggest an obvious equivalence (both derive from the negation of the root word, "finite" in English and "*peirar*" or "limit" in Ancient Greek), [7] there are certainly reasons to hesitate before offering a direct comparison. As we have seen, the word "infinite" has taken on a precise mathematical definition and, as such, has gradually ceased be a topic of solely philosophical investigation. Interestingly, almost the opposite story can be seen emerging from the Greek picture of *apeiron*. From its relatively clear origin as a divine force of creation, it gradually became a trait synonymous with the

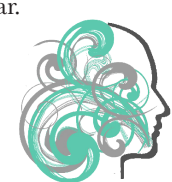
---

[4] Ibid.

[5] Philip Wheelwright, *The Presocratics* (New York: Odyssey Press Inc., 1966), 53-54.

[6] James Wilbur, *The Worlds of the Early Greek Philosophers* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1979), 37-38.

[7] *Perseus Digital Library*, s.v. "πεῖραρ," ed. Gregory R. Crane, Tufts University, accessed January 15, 2014, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0057%3Aentry%3Dpei%3Drar.



indeterminate, undefined, or imperfect, losing the explicit function it previously served. However, it may be the case that upon a close and careful reading of some of the texts discussing the Unbounded, some quantitative comparisons between the *apeiron* and the infinite may be drawn.

In the first accounts of the *apeiron* by Anaximander, it is clearly represented as a divine figure, transcending the material world through its unbounded nature in space or time.[8] In essence, these two traits, divinity and temporal endlessness, were synonymous. Diogenes Laërtius ascribes a number of sayings to Thales of Miletus, among them an allusion to the eternal nature of the divine: "What is divine? That which has neither beginning nor end."[9] As a student of Thales, Anaximander himself likely had a similar picture of the divine and represents the *apeiron* as the original entity which creates and guides the world. The process of creation achieved through the *apeiron* varies according to the commentator, however. Aristotle and Aëtius describe a process whereby the form is spun out of the formless, establishing elemental opposites such as hot and cold which then combine in different concentrations to form material objects.[10,11] Later, some philologists and philosophers have interpreted Anaximander's Unbounded as a formless, endless mass, out of which the material objects emerge, only to gradually return to the shapeless whole,[12] while others have identified it as the vessel in which the material world or worlds reside: an ever-present, temporally unbounded background.[13] Still others have argued that the *apeiron* was intended to be the endless cyclical process of creation and destruction itself.[14] Regardless of

---

[8] Theo Gerard Sinnige, *Matter and Infinity in the Presocratic Schools and Plato* (Assen: Koninklijke Van Gorcum & Company, 1968), 5-7.

[9] Diogenes Laërtius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, ed. Tiziano Dorandi (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 37.

[10] Aristotle. Phys. I.4, 187a20, trans. Hardie and Gayle.

[11] Arthur Fairbanks, *The First Philosophers of Greece* (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1898), 15.

[12] John Burnet, *Greek Philosophy* (London: Macmillan and Company, 1914), 23.

[13] W.K.C Guthrie, *The Greek Philosophers: From Thales to Aristotle (*Abingdon: Methuen & Co. 2012), 25-26.

[14] Elizabeth Asmis, "What is Anaximander's *Apeiron*?" *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 19 (1981): 279-297.

the specific nature of Anaximander's *apeiron*, however, there is one particular characteristic common to all analyses which will prove to be a unifying aspect of the many different conceptions of the *apeiron*. In essence, the use of the term "*apeiron*" always consists of more than negation of the finite, which is generated from it. It is the relationship between the Bounded and the Boundless which will prove to be the most dynamic and variable aspect of Presocratic theories about the *apeiron*. Aëtius claims in *Placita Philosophorum* that Anaximander posited the *apeiron* as a generative force that is necessarily unending, claiming, "For what other reason is there of an Infinite but this, that there may be nothing deficient as to the generation or subsistence of what is in Nature?"[15] Aristotle himself gives the very similar reasoning in Book 3 of the *Physics* in explaining the metaphysical appeal of the *apeiron* for past philosophers.[16] These arguments entail a contrast between the finite and the infinite, which, when understood in conjunction with the unbounded principles by which the *apeiron* generates the finite, appears mathematical in nature.

If we temporarily assume that Anaximander intended his cosmic system of separation and re-amalgamation to entail an endless number of co-existing, spatially finite worlds in the embrace of the Boundless, the argument of the necessity of the Unlimited is grounded in quantitative reasoning. It implies that Anaximander understood that an endless number of temporary worlds, regardless of size, could only be generated from a similarly endless quantity of matter. Mathematically represented, this is surprisingly close to the definition of infinity in modern set theory. Taking each world-order as an entity in the endless collection of world-orders, Anaximander is claiming that the set of world-orders is a subset of the entities which are generatable by the *apeiron*. Provided we accept the premise that matter is conserved between objects and their generative source, it is only a small intellectual jump (albeit one not made explicitly by Anaximander or Aristotle) to place the set of world-orders and the set of entities generatable by the *apeiron* in one-to-one correspondence, demonstrating the quantitatively infinite nature of Anaximander's *apeiron*.

While it is certainly far-fetched to claim Anaximander had an intuitive understanding of set theory, it is not so unbelievable that he could recognize some of the quantitative characteristics inherent to his

[15] Diogenes Laërtius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers,* 37.

[16] Aristotle. Phys. III.4, 203b7, trans. Hardie and Gayle.

apeiron without possessing the vocabulary to explicate its mathematical nature. Nor is this interpretation limited to the spatially-coexistent interpretation of Anaximander's cosmology. If anything, it is more apparent in the case where we compare the infinite series of finite cycles of generation and destruction undergone by a single material world with the eternal nature of *apeiron*. In describing an infinite number of temporary generative cycles, only an immutable *apeiron*, undergoing no changes, could serve as an equivalent source which will never fail to exist throughout time. Rather than spatial or material sources, we can speak in terms of an endless set of world-cycles and its temporally eternal source.[17]

Over time, the view of *apeiron* as a creative and destructive divine figure gave way to the Pythagorean view of a central dichotomy in which the bounded and the boundless were set in opposition. The material world, composed of limits and boundaries, continually suppresses and binds the unlimited into physical reality. In the Pythagorean view, the world is composed of finite things, which can be rationally understood through mathematics, set in warring opposition with the Unlimited, which cannot be understood or examined.[18] Accordingly, the nature and properties of *apeiron* became its lack of definition and apparent irrationality, properties to be avoided by the rationally minded Pythagoreans and their successors. As we shall see, however, the conversation about the quantitative nature of the Boundless did not end with the Pythagoreans but can be seen in fundamental mathematical problems highlighted by Zeno's paradoxes.

Typically interpreted as a defense of Parmenidean monism, Zeno's paradoxes are a variety of *reductio ad absurdum* arguments targeted primarily at revealing the untenable consequences of a discontinuous reality and the motion of objects. Correspondingly, there are only "paradoxes" insofar as they appear to contradict obvious empirical evidence—for Zeno, they are arguments for the existence of Parmenides's Being.[19] While all four of the paradoxes (as outlined in

[17] It should be noted, however, that this argument does not work with regards to Elizabeth Asmis's interpretation of Anaximander's *apeiron* as equivalent to the very cyclical process the world undergoes, since no contrast between the cycle and a second entity is ever established.

[18] Aristotle. Met. I.5, 987a9-27, trans. Ross.

[19] Nick Huggett, "Zeno's Paradoxes," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2010), accessed March 12, 2014, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2010/entries/paradox-zeno/.

Aristotle's *Physics*) vary in their potency and coherence, the classicist Theo Sinnige identifies two presuppositions on which the *reductio* arguments are conducted: "(1) that reality is discontinuous, (2) that there is no limit to this discontinuity, i.e. that the theoretically infinite divisibility of a mathematical magnitude is also applicable to spatial magnitudes."[20] It is from these two suppositions that the rest of the paradoxes (at least, those concerning spatial reasoning) are built.

The simplest construction is seen in the Stadium, or Dichotomy argument, in which an athlete begins running from a specific point, p_0, in hopes of reaching the finish line at point P_1.[21] Before reaching p_1, however, the runner must first pass $P_{1/2}$, a point stationed between the starting line and the finish line, and then $P_{3/4}$, then $P_{7/8}$ and so on, until it is clear that he must pass through an infinite number of closer and closer points before reaching P_1. It is not possible, Zeno concludes, to pass through an infinite number of points in a finite period of time, and so the runner will never reach the finish line, or move at all for that matter; regardless of how small the space is between p_0 and p_1, there will always be an infinite number of intermediary points which are impossible to cross in a finite span of time.

In order to appreciate the significance of the Dichotomy paradox in regards to a geometric or mathematical notion of infinity, it is important to keep in mind the original definition of *apeiron* was that of an entity without limits. The spatial paradoxes of Zeno are not simply mathematical representations of a variety of infinitely divisible processes. They also form an implicit criticism of the simple view of *apeiron* as any process repeated without end. In these paradoxes, Zeno is concerned with the cardinal number of points within any line, which he properly identifies as being limitless via division. Zeno is presenting the existence of the boundless number of points within any description of bounded space, a notion which defied the traditional irreconcilable dichotomy of *apeiron* and *peiras*. By bringing the two features of Pythagorean philosophy in conflict, Zeno is pointing out the limitations implicit in the previously-held description of the *apeiron* as simply a thing without bounds. In this sense, the paradoxes are a challenge to either abandon the notion of mathematical, discontinuous

---

[20] Theo Gerard Sinnige, *Matter and Infinity in the Presocratic Schools and Plato* (Assen: Koninklijke Van Gorcum & Company, 1968), 89.

[21] Aristotle, *Physics*, trans. R. Hardie and R. Gayle, *Internet Classics Archive*, http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/physics.html.

space or to revise the notion of *apeiron* to something that can be used and manipulated mathematically. Both Anaxagoras and Aristotle would take the latter route, although they would arrive at very different notions of a mathematical revision of *apeiron*.

As a contemporary of Zeno, Anaxagoras was most likely familiar with the paradoxes as well as the works of the Eleatic School preceding him. Nonetheless, his portrayal of the origins of the world is noticeably different from either Anaximander or a Parmenidian monism, best summarized in a brief fragment recorded by Simplicitius: "All things were together, infinite both in number and in smallness; for the small also was infinite [ἁπειρου]. And when they were all together, nothing was clear and distinct because of their smallness."[22] Anaxagoras immediately sets a chaotic picture of this primordial entity as consisting of infinitesimal parts which then undergo a process of homogenizing or "separating out," not unlike the process undergone by *apeiron* in the theories of Anaximander. Unlike Anaximander, however, Anaxagoras has included a curious statement identifying *apeiron* with "smallness," which, as we will see, retains and demonstrates an understanding of the abstract complexity of the infinitely divisible.

In the fragments of Anaxagoras, an understanding is present of the concept of a group possessing some number of elements within it, an idea that would later develop into the mathematical set. As we have already seen, Zeno's paradoxes establish the idea of infinite multiplicities contained in finite lengths. While this idea of a multiplicity may hint at the future development of a more rigorous conception of mathematical sets, Zeno stops short of examining the concept of a multiplicity itself and the quantitative properties it holds. Anaxagoras, however, takes up this challenge. In the fifth remaining fragment, he writes, "The sum total of all things is not a bit smaller nor greater, for it is not practicable that there should be more than all, but the sum total is always equal to itself."[23] Like many other preceding notions about sets and multiplicities, the mathematical role that this fragment plays in the reasoning of Anaxagoras about infinitely divisible multiplicities must be teased out. The "sum total of all things" in regards to the Achilles paradox are undeniably finite and yet contain a notion of infinite divisibility that could, in a more mathematical setting, be understood

---

[22] Arthur Fairbanks, *The First Philosophers of Greece* (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1898), 238.

[23] Sinnige, *Matter and Infinity,* 129.

as the infinite set of rational numbers contained between the numbers 0 and 1 on a number line. Zeno's original paradoxes questioned the possibility of Achilles to overtake the tortoise through the infinite division of a finite length by assuming the necessary incompleteness of reasoning with infinite series, but Anaxagoras demonstrates in the fifth fragment that the totality of all things (in this case, an infinite series), can in fact be taken as a whole and completed quantity or, as would be later developed by Bolzano and Cantor, as a completed infinite set.[24, 25] The finished picture is a complete mathematical revision of the concept of *apeiron* into a concept resembling the modern notion of the infinite. In addition to the older sense of a quantitative *apeiron* without an upper limit, there is now a notion of a completed infinite multiplicity of parts, which can be referred to and manipulated as a mathematical entity. The two senses of *apeiron* are combined in another fragment of Anaxagoras in which he talks specifically about parts in a whole: "There are just as many parts in the great as in the small taken as a multitude."[26] Mathematically, then, Anaxagoras has placed the two quantitative uses of *apeiron* (entities in an infinitely divisible length and entities within an infinite magnitude) in one-to-one correspondence with each other: another step towards a mathematically rigorous definition of the infinite.

Despite their ingenuity and subtlety, Anaxagoras's perspective on *apeiron* and the quantitative problems of Greek philosophy was not developed beyond the philosopher's original thought, owing to a variety of potential factors. While the fragments of Anaxagoras have substantial mathematical implications, it is clear that their intended purpose was to describe a naturalist cosmogony. The ultimate importance of the principles of mathematical divisibility and notions of equality between the large and the small were to explain how physical objects could aggregate from elemental chaos and still contain minuscule portions of all other things. This in turn was made to support theories regarding how many natural objects (bodies and plants, for example) grow over time. As such, the mathematical reasoning used to support Anaxagoras's physical theories was not the focus of his own inquiry.

---

[24] Fairbanks, *The First Philosophers of Greece*, 237.

[25] Aristotle. *Met.* IX.6, 1048b1-20, trans. Ross.

[26] Ibid., 129.

The *apeiron* certainly deserves a spot on the genealogy of infinity, but its place is unclear. Its ambiguous origins and fluid definition compound the problem of interpreting its use in a variety of philosophical contexts. However, its watermark can be seen in a variety of Presocratic theories, even in cases where the theorists themselves avoid its explicit use. Whenever the *apeiron* is given an ontological role to play, when the endless is made physical, these thinkers had no choice but to confront the quantitative implications of such an entity and wrestle with the same problems which would later engage mathematicians (albeit in a more semantically precise field). To claim that Anaximander preempted Galileo's bijection or that Bolzano's sets were first developed by Anaxagoras would be an overstatement of the evidence at hand, but the manner in which these Presocratic thinkers handle the *apeiron* suggests a struggle to grasp the peculiar mathematical characteristics of infinity without access to a mathematical structure that would arrive more than a thousand years later.[27, 28]

[27] Edgar, Morscher, "Bernard Bolzano -11.2: Preparatory Writings in Set Theory", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), accessed March 19, 2014, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2013/entries/bolzano/.

[28] José, Ferreirós, "The Early Development of Set Theory", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2012 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), accessed March 19, 2014, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2012/entries/settheory-early/.

An Existentialist Critique of Punishment

Nicholas Logan

> "We're all going to die, all of us, what a circus! That alone should make us love each other but it doesn't. We are terrorized and flattened by trivialities, we are eaten up by nothing."[1]
>
> —Charles Bukowski

Abstract: In this paper, I provide an account of the way in which practices of punitive justice in the United States permanently foreclose the possibility of an open future for the punished. I argue that participation in a system where those forms of punishment are utilized is an act of bad faith because it involves the denial of the existential freedom of others as well as our own. Using Hannah Arendt's account of Adolf Eichmann, I show how such acts of bad faith are both natural modes of thought as well as inherently dangerous. Finally, I demonstrate that existentialism provides us with the ability to recreate our relationship to others and resist acts of bad faith, especially when it comes to crime and punishment.

In what sense does punishment in the United States foreclose an open future for the punished? In her work *Social Death*, Lisa Cacho demonstrates how criminality becomes an ontological attribute for those who commit crimes. In her discussion of illegal aliens in the United States, she writes:

> A person does not need to *do* anything to commit a status crime because the person's status is the offense in and of itself. In the United States, criminal laws that make status in and of itself a crime have been

[1] Charles Bukowski, *The Captain is Out to Lunch and the Sailors Have Taken Over the Ship* (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1998), 10."

> ruled unconstitutional, yet both criminal law and immigration legislation inherit broader meanings and tangled histories of status and conduct have made it difficult (if not impossible) to regulate and reprimand conduct without status-based consequences. The term *de facto status crime* also captures the ways in which criminalized conduct has been intimately linked to the use of "status" to refer to identity categories, such as race, gender, sexuality, and class … it refers to others' perception that a person of a certain status is certain to commit future crimes and may well have already committed crimes unwitnessed.[2]

In this way, criminality becomes associated with someone's identity or essence. Cacho goes on to elaborate that "*de facto* status crimes can be defined as specific activities that are only transparently recognized as 'criminal' when they are attached to statuses that invoke race (gang member), ethnicity (illegal alien), and/or national origin (suspected terrorist)."[3] The actions of these people are assumed to be criminal based merely on identity attributes: we are assured that there is a criminal type. Thus, mere existence (as perceived illegal alien, gang member, etc.), regardless of their actual actions, is made ontologically criminal. Given drastic disparities between racial groups in terms of incarceration rates and sentence lengths,[4] Cacho's theory of *de facto* crimes suggests that existing as a person of color in the United States is to exist in a criminalized context.

This type of ontological attribution is an example of Sartrean bad faith. In existentialist terms, existence always precedes essence, meaning, "If man, as the existentialist conceives him is indefinable, it is because at first he is nothing. Only afterward he will be something, and he himself will have made what he will be. Thus, there is no human

---

[2] Lisa Cacho, *Social Death: Racialized Rightlessness and the Criminalization of the Unprotected* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 43.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Marc Mauer and Ryan S. King, "Uneven Justice: State Rates of Incarceration by Race and Ethnicity," *The Sentencing Project* (2007), accessed December 5, 2012, http://www.sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/rd_stateratesofincbyraceandethnicity.pdf

nature . . . ."[5] For Sartre, bad faith involves the denial of one's ability to be self-defining and, further, the refusal to recognize the complexity and ambiguity of the Other. It is a denial of the freedom that each person has to do or be otherwise.

In this light, there are many ways the practices of the United States' justice system involve bad faith. Forms of punitive justice that deny the possibility of an open future to someone who has committed a crime denies one's existential freedom to change. As Lewis Gordon outlines in his work *Bad Faith and Antiblack Racism,* if humankind is constantly "in the making,"[6] we act in bad faith whenever we attribute an essence or nature to someone because it denies one's existential freedom. *De facto* status crimes, as well as punishments like the death penalty and life-without-parole sentences, attribute an essence to the offenders: that they are permanently unworthy of being a part of our collective society. If a human person is "the being who hurls himself toward a future and who is conscious of imagining himself as being in the future,"[7] then forms of punishment like permanent incarceration and state-sanctioned death, which deny such future-oriented freedom, are not adequate responses to crime, no matter the seriousness of the crime. Incarceration involves entrusting the state and its representatives with dominion over the body and freedom of the prisoner. The death penalty denies a convicted criminal an opportunity to change or to make amends for what he or she has done.[8] Many other practices that revolve around the justice system lend themselves to making certain attributions about the nature of criminals. Disclosure of felony conviction is often a legal requirement in applying for a job or higher education.[9] Convicted felons often have their right to vote taken away

---

[5] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Human Emotions* (New York: Citadel Press, 2010), 15.

[6] Lewis R. Gordon, *Bad Faith and Racism* (New Jersey: Humanity Books, 1995), 50..

[7] Sartre, *Existentialism and Human Emotions*, 15.

[8] Jennifer L. Culbert, *Dead Certainty* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 157.

[9] Suzy Khimm, "States push to provide some ex-felons a second chance," *MSNBC*, accessed December 10, 2013, http://www.msnbc.com/all-in/states-push-provide-some-ex-felons-secon.

from them, giving them no legal representation or political power.[10] There is a social stigma around having spent time in prison: we are assured that those in prison are bad, evil, and undeserving of our help. They become perceived criminals by nature. These types of judgments are a form of bad faith, insofar as "judgment is an act that brings a new interpretation of the world into being and, in so doing, reorients the world more or less violently excluding other possibilities for beginning."[11] Making judgments about the inherent nature of others prevents us from "meeting the Other in the flesh"[12] and recognizing them as complex, existentially free human beings with the capacity to change. This is not to say that we should not take crimes seriously (in many cases, criminal actions themselves might involve an act of bad faith) but rather that we have a responsibility to respond to them in a way that does not deny the existential freedom of the Other. While there are cases of serious crime, such as premeditated murder or rape, that often require us to respond to them by restraining or incapacitating the offender for a certain amount of time, if we take existentialism seriously, we must ensure that such a response does not permanently deny the offender an opportunity to change or atone for the offense. To allow criminality to become an ontological structure is to allow other ontological attributions of ourselves: if I believe it is okay to permanently brand someone a criminal (you are a felon and unworthy of rights if you stole a car), then I validate the idea that someone can make a permanent attribution in the same way (I am forever a liar and should not be trusted if I lied once). Such attributions deny the possibility of an open and free future for everyone.

This system of justice is also one in which we deny our own existential freedom. Whenever one allows the laws of the state to determine right and wrong for oneself without individual reflection, one acts in bad faith. In this way, to serve on a jury and to hold the attitude, "I do not think what the accused has done is wrong, but they are guilty under the law," is to act in bad faith, as it removes the individual from taking responsibility for his or her own evaluation of morality and appropriate action. This is the same type of bad faith that

---

[10] "Felon Voting Rights," *National Conference of State Legislatures*, accessed December 10, 2013, http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/felon-voting-rights.aspx.

[11] Culbert, *Dead Certainty*, 158.

[12] Gordon, *Bad Faith and Antiblack Racism*, 136.

one acts in whenever someone involved in the justice system is "just doing his or her job," from the prison guard involved in cavity searches that deny a prisoner dominion over the body, to the administrators who work to ensure certain incarceration quotas are met for economic purposes. They deny their own freedom to do otherwise and choose a world in which they fail to recognize the existential freedom of others. When we wordlessly live under a legal system that sanctions the death penalty and life-without-parole jail sentences, we will a world in which it is okay to deny an open future to others and ourselves. Further, we allow ourselves to live under a type of power relationship in which we can deny our responsibility not only to determine what is ethical but also how to respond to that which is said to be unethical.

To be clear, to act in this type of bad faith seems to be a sort of default setting for most people. It is easy for the juror to make the distinction between innocent and guilty merely based on the fact that he or she gets to go home after the trial while the accused does not: "I am free, and there is a reason that the accused is not." Although this is an easy mode of thought for most people to slip into, it is also a dangerous one. Hannah Arendt's account of Adolf Eichmann in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* demonstrates the danger of these forms of bad faith.[13] Eichmann, the Nazi party member ultimately tasked with the implementation of the Final Solution during World War II, is not portrayed as someone purely evil, but rather as someone who believed himself to be bound to duty toward his country. Described as overwhelmingly normal, Eichmann's justification for his actions in court was derived from a twisting of Kantian ethics that was something along the lines of "act as if the principle of your actions were the same as that of the legislator or of the law of the land."[14] Eichmann was not himself particularly anti-Semitic, insisting that he personally had nothing against Jewish people.[15] We see that even unquestioning, default participation in political structures can lead to exploitation and subjugation done in the name of duty.

Eichmann's actions involve a similar denial of existential freedom—both of his own and that of others—as those structures outlined above. Even though he recognized that the Third Reich

[13] Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin Books, 1964), 26.

[14] Ibid., 136.

[15] Ibid., 26.

had created a "period of crimes legalized by the state,"[16] Eichmann nonetheless espoused the virtues of blind obedience. This was a denial of his own freedom to do otherwise. Since Sartrean freedom involves not only choosing for oneself but also for all humankind,[17] Eichmann had thus chosen a world in which it was perfectly moral for anyone to act the way he had, even if that included someone else denying Eichmann's existential freedom. These actions involve a denial of others' existential freedom (i.e., those people whom I am oppressing deserve to be oppressed because they are ontologically criminal), and a denial of one's own existential freedom (I could not have done otherwise because of the totalitarian state). While this type of bad faith is quite obviously problematic, part of Arendt's point in her work is that such acts are not necessarily borne from maliciousness, but they are rather a default mode of being—hence, the "banality of evil."

How can an existentialist viewpoint help us in resisting these forms of bad faith? For Simone de Beauvoir, the oppressed have no choice but to revolt against their oppressors. She writes:

> The oppressed has only one solution: to deny the harmony of that mankind from which an attempt is made to exclude him, to prove that he is a man and that he is free by revolting against the tyrants. In order to prevent this revolt, one of the ruses of oppression is to camouflage itself behind a natural situation since, after all, one cannot revolt against nature.[18]

There is an implied violence[19] in this revolt that seems problematic, largely because one of the problems with punitive justice is that it seeks to justify the idea that two wrongs make a right. Treating violence with more violence seems only to further the problem. However, Beauvoir touches on something important with her discussion of nature. For my

---

[16] Ibid., 136.

[17] Sartre, *Existentialism and Human Emotions*, 17.

[18] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (Secaucus, NJ: Citadel Press, 1948), http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/ethics/de-beauvoir/ambiguity/.

[19] This is a similar message to Sartre's evaluation of Franz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* (Grove Press, 1963).

own part, I find that one of the most valuable aspects of existential freedom comes not in our freedom to do as we wish but rather the freedom to think of our relationship with the Other in whatever manner we choose. Whenever we are told that human nature is such that people are generally cruel to one another, that people cannot be changed or reformed, we have the power to think otherwise. When we are victims of a crime, we can choose the way we think about what has happened to us. In other words, we have the ability to resist the ontological attributions of what constitutes criminal and victim. This does not mean we ignore the harm that someone has done, but it does mean we can choose the way that we react to it. David Foster Wallace in his speech "This Is Water" talks about the ways we can get out of our default mindset in our everyday life:

> If you're aware enough to give yourself a choice, you can choose to look differently at this fat, dead-eyed, over-made-up lady who just screamed at her kid in the checkout line. Maybe she's not usually like this. Maybe she's been up three straight nights holding the hand of a husband who is dying of bone cancer. Or maybe this very lady is the low-wage clerk at the motor vehicle department, who just yesterday helped your spouse resolve a horrific, infuriating, red-tape problem through some small act of bureaucratic kindness. Of course, none of this is likely, but it's also not impossible . . . If you're automatically sure that you know what reality is, and you are operating on your default setting, then you, like me, probably won't consider possibilities that aren't annoying and miserable. But . . . the only thing that's capital-T True is that you get to decide how you're gonna try to see it.[20]

So, too, do we have the power to reconsider and rethink our relationship with those who have committed crimes. Even in situations where someone has committed a violent crime, we have the freedom to choose the manner in which we think of our relationship to this person. Instead

[20] David Foster Wallace, "This is Water" (New York: Hachette Book Group, 2009), 89-94.

of thinking of the perpetrator as someone diametrically opposed to us, as a bad person who is evil, we might think of him or her as someone who is deeply troubled and needs help to reaffirm shared values. This is not to suggest that this task is simple or easy to do, nor is it to suggest that such a person might be at heart agreeable and kind instead of stubborn, angry, and vicious. It is not to say that such a person would not require some form of punishment or incapacitation. But we do ultimately have the freedom of choosing how to think of and react to such a person.

Ultimately, Arendt believes Eichmann deserving of his death sentence, stating that because he did not want to share the world with Jewish people, no one should have to share the world with him.[21] In some ways, condemning Eichmann to death might make us guilty of the similar type of judgment Eichmann levied on the Jewish people. It is easy to consider such people monsters, but it is clear that we do not have to think of them in such a way. The recognition of how easy it is to follow the default mindset of "following orders" allows us to recognize how easily we might have behaved as he had. It is infinitely easier to allow our responsibility for making ethical evaluations and judgments to be assumed by the larger structure of our justice system. However, when we who are responsible for responding to a crime surrender that power which might allow us to reframe the way we think about our relationship to others—not as opposed to us, but connected—we act in bad faith.

Currently in the United States, there are 3,200 people serving life sentences without the possibility of parole for nonviolent sentences, sixty-five percent of whom are African-American. We live in a country that forecloses an open future on people who initially committed crimes like possessing a crack pipe and stealing gas from a truck.[22] It seems clear that the justice system in the United States functions in a way that attributes an ontologically criminal nature to those who commit crimes, which denies the possibility of an open future for those convicted. If we will a world in which freedom is not possible for everyone, then our own capacity for freedom is diminished.

---

[21] Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 256.

[22] "Jailed for Life for Stealing a $159 Jacket? 3,200 Serving Life Without Parole for Nonviolent Crimes," *Democracy Now!,* accessed December 3, 2013, http://www.democracynow.org/2013/11/15/jailed_for_life_for_stealing_a.

In rethinking this justice system to respect the existential freedom of all involved, what might change? The elimination of life without parole sentences and the death penalty is one clear step toward respecting the complexity of all human beings, even those who commit violent crimes. Mandatory minimum sentences prove similarly problematic since they eliminate space to make meaning and recognize complexity in criminal acts. Automatic punishments such as this minimize spaces for the type of interpretive work that can allow for growth and change, rather than permanent harm done to all parties involved in a crime.

Further, we might find valuable alternative forms of justice, such as restorative justice, which tend to focus on the reaffirmation of shared values rather than establishing the guilt of the criminal. Focusing on the guilt of a criminal often brands him a criminal for life, ruining the possibility of meaningful reintegration into society. As George Bernard Shaw writes in *The Crime of Imprisonment*, such systems "torment the swindler for years, and then throw him back upon society, a worse man in every respect, with no other employment open to him except that of fresh swindling."[23] It is possible that we can view these people not as undeserving of our help but as those who need it the most. We have the freedom to take responsibility for the reintegration of the other. If we want the world to be a place in which we are recognized as complex and free human beings, then we must take responsibility for recognizing others as such. It is easy to deny our responsibility for others, to think, "I did not commit the crime, I am not the one responsible for making things better." This kind of thinking is the hallmark of the actions of Adolf Eichmann, of bad faith, of default modes of being. We are, in these cases, responsible for reaching out to those who have been deemed ontologically criminal and creating the possibility of an open future, not just for those convicted of crimes, but for the whole of society.

[23] George Bernard Shaw, *The Crime of Imprisonment* (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1946), 39.

The Insubstantial and Exclusionary Nature of Plato's Aesthetic Theory

Nicholas James Alcock

Abstract: In this paper, I argue that Plato's conversance with art is insubstantial and exclusionary. Art warrants not only subjects in virtue of utility, morality, and pleasure, but also subjects in virtue of feeling, impression, spirituality, and art itself. I will begin by providing Plato's view and then provide my threefold objection, utilizing examples from art history and the history of aesthetic theory.

Plato's Doctrine of the Role of Art

Plato's view of art begins and ends with this single tenet: art of any kind is an imitation, and the creator of this imitation, or the artist, is an imitator. This view is central to Plato's further discussions on art and poetry; thus, I will begin by transmitting Plato's doctrine of forms in respect to the spectacle of art and its artist as he expresses in Book Ten of *The Republic*.[1] This will be beneficial not only to gain an understanding of Plato's forms in respect to art but also to provide a framework for the rest of the discussion.

In Book Ten of *The Republic*, Plato's view of imitation can be thought of in two ways. In one way, it can be thought of as a reduction toward imitation based on the quality of the object itself. In a second way, it can be thought of as a reduction toward imitation based on the validity, or truth-value, of the object; the work of art resting at third remove from truth. Here is the first method of thinking about the view of imitation as it relates to the practice of painting:

1. The form (of an object) is made by god.
2. The individual thing (the object itself) is made by humans.
3. Paintings (of objects) are made by imitators.

[1] Plato, *The Republic*, trans. H.D.P. Lee (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974).

Here is the second method as it relates to the practice of music:

> 1. The user of an instrument is one who knows or has knowledge of Beauty.
> 2. The maker of an instrument is one who has correct belief of the form of Beauty.
> 3. The imitator (a painter, sculptor, or poet) of an instrument is ignorant of Beauty.

In this light, it is clear that Plato asserts that art, without utility, is quite pointless due to its incapability of serving a dialectical purpose. In this regard, the reproductive painting of a physical object can tell us nothing noteworthy or new about that particular object; the object being represented is sufficient in itself to accomplish these things. Secondly, the artist is only capable of providing ephemera of truth about a physical object. The artist is ignorant and thus a corrupting agent, repudiating the value of the physical object by copying it unsatisfactorily. The artist's ignorance of reality is thus capable of infringing upon the beliefs, or even the morality, of other people. Therefore, in Plato's view, artists and their art, in all its facets, are disreputable. In Plato's terms, it is easy to see that once art is "stripped of its poetic coloring" it amounts to little.[2]

The only instance in which Plato speaks of art or the artist as something good and acceptable is during the instantiation of their pleasurable faculties. Plato states, "If drama and poetry written for pleasure can prove to us that they have a place in a well-run society, we will gladly admit them,"[3] and that "we shall gain much if we find [poetry] a source of profit as well as pleasure."[4] It seems here that Plato dismisses art on account of its lack of necessary utility and denounces the idea that it can make any claim about truth or morality. However, Plato claims that art possesses the function of being pleasurable; that is, someone is capable of finding pleasure in some sort of art.

---

[2] Ibid., X 601a.

[3] Ibid., X 607c.

[4] Ibid., X 607e.

Arts of Feeling or Impression

In this section, I will begin my argument against Plato's judgment of art; that is, there is more to art, or the artesque, than just the objective functions of utility, morality, and pleasure. The first objection lies in the idea that art has the quality of producing feelings and impressions apart from Plato's triad of functions.

Plato's notion in Book Ten of *The Republic* is insubstantial. It fails to realize art's possibilities beyond the simple event of copy making. To support his view, Plato appeals to examples such as the painting of an instrument. Here, Plato's painter is caught up in the act of copying that which already exists as a physical thing. Plato's painter visualizes the instrument at hand and recreates an imperfect semblance of the instrument. However, is it possible for a painter to paint that which does not already exist in reality, or further, to paint something that is truly demiurgic? Plato makes no mention of this possibility. It is clear, throughout the history of art, examples have arisen wherein an artist has produced a piece of art that does not intend to replicate that which exists physically. To demonstrate this point, I will reference the twentieth century movement known as Abstract Expressionism, specifically the work of Mark Rothko, an American painter of this period. Abstract Expressionist art, as defined by the Encyclopedia Britannica, depicts form not drawn from the visible world, emphasizing free, spontaneous, and personal emotional expression.[5] It is a practice of art that intends to elicit responses as opposed to pronouncing ideals. It invites the viewer to observe and respond, but it does not make any claim on its own of what that view or response should be. Mark Rothko produced a series of paintings during this period called "multiforms." These paintings employed various blocks or rectangles of color on broad canvases, producing an experiential sense of intimacy, awe, and transcendence.[6] An example of one of these works is *No.3/No. 13*, produced by Rothko in 1949. The work is indeed no representation of some physical object, though it utilizes lines and shapes that are evident in reality.

One could say that such art simply did not exist in Plato's day, that it is irrelevant to produce an objection to Plato's view using an example of art that postdates the period in which Plato is writing.

---

[5] *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. "Abstract Expressionism," accessed October 24, 2013, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1963/Abstract-Expressionism.

[6] Jeffrey Weiss, *Mark Rothko* (Yale UP, 1998), 262.

Or one could say that Plato only excluded art that produced bad or wicked impressions and feelings. I will respond to the first objection by saying that whether or not the possibility of abstract art was obvious to Plato, it is made obvious in *The Republic* that there is no room in Plato's aesthetic theory for anything of the kind, for he strictly speaks of art in terms of imitation.[7] Joseph P. Maguire, in a discourse on Plato's aesthetics, proposes that the extent of our inquiry is to elicit from Plato's works "an implicit theory of aesthetics"; that is, what Plato "*would*, perhaps, have said, did he agree that art and the beauty of art could be studied in isolation from other things."[8] However, I do not believe this is a sound objection to my claim. Even if we were to grant Plato the benefit of the doubt, proposing that if this type of art (of which the chief aim is not in the replication of physical things but concepts over and above the physical) were known to Plato, he would grant it passage based on its upwards trajectory (toward the truth, or the non-physical, or the Good), we would be guilty of extrapolation. To respond to the second objection, it is made clear in Book Ten of *The Republic* that whether good naturedly or bad naturedly, *all* works of art "have a low degree of truth" and encourage only "the unreasoning part of the mind of the individual."[9] Thus, all such works are proposed to produce bad effects on their audiences, no matter the content or context of the work.

Arts of Spirituality

A second objection to Plato's view is that it excludes some spiritual arts that are foundational to religions and cultures and it in turn unreasonably denounces divine inspiration as a means of interaction between truth and art. Whether one is a theist or not, it can still be reasonably thought that, if god or some divine agent were to exist, this agent could express its truth by means of interpolation. As it is in the case of works of Hesiod and Homer, various poets have claimed that their works are inspired by the Muses, or more generally, the divine, providing a sense of an epistemic foundation for the poet's

[7] Plato also speaks briefly about the possibility of divine inspiration in art, specifically in the *Meno* and the *Laws*, and this will be expounded on later.

[8] Joseph P. Maguire, "The Differentiation of Art in Plato's Aesthetics," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 68 (Harvard University Department of the Classics, 1964): 390.

[9] Plato, *The Republic*, X 605b-c.

work.[10] Whether or not the truths the poets suppose were introduced to them by the divine are actual truths themselves is not my subject of inquiry in debating this point. What is unsettling is that Plato refutes this as a possible form of art because his artist or poet is fastened exclusively to the practice of imitation. Before the poet can make any epistemological claim, Plato simply renounces him as an ignorant imitator. Plato uses this tactic in his work, the *Laws*:

> When the poet sits on the Muse's tripod he is not in his right mind but ready to flow like a fountain; and because his profession is that of imitation, then in creating people who are set against one another he is compelled to contradict himself frequently, and he does not know whether these or the other thing of what he says are true.[11]

In this instance, the poet is incapacitated to speak truthfully or nearly accurately on the subject of his inquiry. However, in Plato's dialogue the *Meno*, something quite different is said. In the *Meno*, though one is capable of speaking truthfully through divine inspiration, it is proposed that the speaker is not disposed to a suitable comprehension of his truth speaking:

> As regards knowledge, [statesmen] are no different from soothsayers and prophets. They too say many true things when inspired, but they have no knowledge of what they are saying…We should be right to call divine also those soothsayers and prophets whom we just mentioned, and all the poets, and we should call no less divine and inspired those public men who are no less under the gods'

[10] William W. Minton, "Homer's Invocations of the Muses: Traditional Patterns," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 91 (1960), 292

[11] Plato, *The Laws*, trans. Trevor J. Saunders (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), 719c.

> influence and possession, as their speeches lead to success in many important matters, though they have no knowledge of what they are saying.[12]

In the first quotation, Plato purports that the poet is always in contradiction, for there is always the possibility that he is misinterpreting the divine. In the second quotation, it is said that the poet, though he or she may not have correct or full understanding of the truth, is capable of accurately reiterating divine truth without contradiction. Thus, in virtue of what seems to be a contradiction in Plato's examination of divine inspiration, Plato does not satisfactorily explain the capability of divine validation within his schema of art. It seems that Plato at once denounces and allows the poet's potential to make truth claims, qualifying both statements by saying, truthful or not, poets have no understanding anyway of what they are saying.

At this point I would like to put this instance of discrepancy aside and focus more directly on praxiological correlations between spirituality and the aesthetic. As opposed to Plato's view, art is capable not only of depiction and description but of union. In some cases, art possesses the ability to reach over and above physical particulars and reach toward universals and thus come into correlation, or union, with the divine, god, the Good, etc. An example of this lies in the lasting tradition of Indian aesthetics, specifically within an early Vedic text known as the *Nātyasāstra*.[13]

The *Nātyasāstra* was composed by Bharata Muni sometime between the years of 200 BCE and 200 CE.[14] The title of this ancient Hindu text may be translated from the Sanskrit as "A Manual of Dramatic Arts." At the apex of this work, which provides instruction on proper methods concerning the religious performing arts of dance,

---

[12] Plato, *Protagoras and Meno,* trans. Adam Beresford (Penguin, 2005), 99c-d.

[13] Manomohan Ghosh, *The Natyasastra: A Treatise on Ancient Indian [Hindu] Dramaturgy and Histrionics Ascribed to Bharata-muni* (Calcutta: The Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1967).

[14] The exact date of composition of this work is debated, as are the exact dates of the life of Bharata Muni. Varying theories conclude that either the work was singly composed by Muni during the noted 400-year period or that numerous Indian scholars composed it. However, the exact authorship and dating of the work are not necessarily important here, apart from previous dates placing the work closer to the period of Plato and his contemporaries.

music, and theatre, are the Indian aesthetic principles of *bhava* and *rasa*. *Bhava* is the principle of the excitement of divine truth or emotion in the dancer, musician, and actor. *Rasa* is the divine, essential mental state, or the correct knowledge of a certain Hindu deity, achieved through the act of viewing *bhava*. Here, there is a unique correlation between art realized through dance, music, and theatre and the divine agent who bestows the notion of the emotive truth being performed. This tradition can be thought of as a close relation, or even a precursor, to more modern traditions of art rooted in feeling, impression, or emotion, such as Abstract Expressionism described above. However, what is important to note is that this is an exemplary tradition of art that embeds itself in spirituality in an attempt to achieve harmony with the divine or truth about the divine.

By example, the *Nātyasāstra* and this heritage of Indian aesthetics illumines the possibility, if not the validity, of a case in which art is used to exhibit the divine and, further, a case in which art strives to commune with the divine.

Art for Art's Sake; Art as Complete in Itself

The third and final objection I will make to Plato's view of imitation is this: art is capable of existing in its own right as a particular thing and also capable of dialoguing plainly with Beauty for the sake of art itself; that is, it is capable of existing for the sake of its beauty alone. The two forms of art referenced thus far, the abstract movement and the art of ancient Indian performance, both shared this unique quality: the expression of art over and above the form of physical particulars through certain emotions, non-physical states like transcendence, and attributes of the divine. Art that exists for the sake of itself, if such is said to exist, takes this a step further. This manner of describing the work of art, as we will see, has less to do with the subject of the work itself and more to do with its direct relation to Beauty as a universal. Therefore, my objection here to Plato's schema implies that, whether or not a work of art is a direct copy of a physical particular, the work is nevertheless validated by the universal of Beauty and can thus proceed to exist autonomously, apart from any utilitarian, moral, didactic, or pleasurable purposes. A similar objection was made by the nineteenth century European movement known as Aestheticism. To explain this objection further, I will reference one of the movement's philosophical precursors, Karl Philipp Moritz.

Karl Philipp Moritz, a German eighteenth-century essayist, is one of the first among a variety of writers and philosophers who questioned imitation and pleasure as being the chief purposes of art. In an essay titled "An Attempt to Unify All the Arts and Sciences under the Concept of That Which Is Complete in Itself," published in 1785, he purports that the work of art does not signify anything outside itself and that it is emphatically non-instrumental; that is, it does not serve any purpose outside itself:

> While the beautiful draws our consideration entirely to itself, it draws us for a while away from our self, it is the highest degree of pure and unselfish gratification that the beautiful affords us. In the moment we sacrifice our individual, limited existence to a sort of higher existence.[15]

This new view projected by Moritz (and a similar view transmitted later by his contemporary, Immanuel Kant) influenced a number of art movements; one of these was Aestheticism. Aestheticism, or, as its proponents were called, The Aesthetes, worked under this notion that art was to be done for the sake of art, for the sake of Beauty. As Moritz proposed, these artists did not then simply paint Beauty as a thing but believed this principle was fundamental to producing good and true works of art that existed to reflect Beauty as a sole purpose. The movement was exemplified by artists such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti and by writers such as Oscar Wilde and Walter Pater.[16] Therefore, there lies the potential case that the work of art is capable of existing without external purpose besides its aim at reflecting Beauty. The work as such exists independently from the so-called beautiful, physical particulars of nature in so far as the work is completed for the sake of itself—for the sake of art. Where Plato assumed that Beauty is a universal ideal, untouched by any such particular of nature, let alone a work of art, Moritz and the Aesthetes believed such a notion could become particular in the event that it represents said Beauty for its own sake. Similarly, Hegel was not satisfied with the Platonic notion of

---

[15] Karl Philipp Moritz, "An Attempt to Unify All the Sciences under the Concept of That Which Is Complete in Itself," *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association [PMLA]*, 127, no. 1, trans. Elliot Schreiber (2012): 98.

[16] Richard Altick, *Victorian People and Ideas* (New York: Norton, 1977), 291-97.

Beauty as an abstract Metaphysic. Though Hegel does accept Plato as a "foundation and guide"[17] for any inquiry into the aesthetic (a claim I am wont to dismiss), he believed that the discussion must become more concrete and tangible and, further, that "the emptiness of content which characterizes the Platonic idea is no longer satisfactory to the fuller philosophical wants of the mind today."[18]

A Misunderstanding Of Plato's Epistemological Argumentation?

Modern scholars have pronounced a new interpretation of Plato's critique of art and poetry in Book Ten of *The Republic*, in reference to certain Platonic dialogues such as the *Ion,* the *Meno*, and the *Phaedrus.* Placing itself above the surface of a so-called cursory reading, this argument states that Plato's intention in Book Ten of *The Republic* is anything but pedagogical. Rather, his position is aimed at dividing domains of knowledge, and thus his critique is of a purely epistemological basis. Hermann Wiegmann writes that Plato's critique of the artists and poets "is not formulated in terms of any ethical, political, or pedagogical intent—indeed not in terms of any psychological intent at all,"[19] and, further, that the orientation of *The Republic* leads not to a critique of the artists and poets necessarily. Rather, it leads to "a critique of an unsophisticated mixture of noetic criteria with those of *doxa*."[20] However, Wiegmann affirms the previously stated Platonic axiom, that the true role of art consists in *mimesis*, or imitation, and also states that "we cannot demonstrate that art is true in a rationally grounded way."[21] Though Wiegmann's epistemological reappraisal of Plato's intent stands as a viable possibility in our discussion, I fear this approach is an idealized one, an extrapolation. Is it possible to say that Plato's direct critique of the artists and poets based on their mimetic and tantalizing qualities was instead directed at an overall tainting

---

[17] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics* (Penguin Classics, 2004), 25.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Hermann Wiegmann and Henry W. Johnstone Jr., "Plato's Critique of the Poets and a Misunderstanding of His Epistemological Argument," *Philosophy & Rhetoric,* 23, no. 2 (1990): 119.

[20] Ibid. Common belief or popular opinion.

[21] Ibid., 120.

of dialectical knowledge? I do not believe so, based on the evidence found in Book Ten of *The Republic* and Plato's firm assertion that art consistently stands at third remove from truth. I do not find it adequate to alleviate Plato's assertion this way, for it still remains, according to Plato and Wiegmann, that art is reduced to a form of imitation, reduced to a form far from the truth. Further, even if we were to grant that Plato's critique is of a benignant nature, it still remains, again, that art is placed at an epistemically lower place than that of physicals and absolutes of Truth or Beauty, a claim notably refuted throughout these previous three objections. My stance on this argument is best stated by means of Gadamer, in that Plato's critique does not "follow conclusively from its basic ontological presuppositions," and thus it is a consequence of Plato's system, disallowing him "a fairer evaluation of poetical truth."[22]

Conclusion

As it has been demonstrated, Plato's view of art is insubstantial, exclusionary, and even, in the case of divine inspiration, self-contradictory. In order to encompass the entirety of art across all ages, cultures, and religions accurately and conclusively, Plato's theory would require some revision, specifically in the domains of impression, spiritual inspiration, and the ability of art to exist in and for itself. In closing, without such a revision, I believe the proponent of Plato's Forms inadvertently risks the acceptance of these controversial, aesthetical claims:

> 1. The artist is incapacitated to produce a work of art that is not something existent in nature.
> 2. Every work of art is a convoluted copy of something already existing in the form of physical particulars.
> 3. There is no instance wherein the divine undoubtedly inspires epistemologically sound works of art or poetry.
> 4. Beauty, as a form, is incapable of revealing itself accurately in anything besides what is already existent in nature.

[22] H.G. Gadamer, *Platon und die Dichter* (Hamburg, 1934).

Feminist Critique of Joseph Stiglitz's Approach to the Problems of Global Capitalism

Jenna Blake

Abstract: In his book *Making Globalization Work*, Joseph Stiglitz proposes reforms to address problems arising from the global spread of capitalism, problems that he asserts are not inherent to globalization or capitalism but are due to the way those systems have been "managed." Conversely, postcolonial feminist theorist Chanda Talpade Mohanty's analysis of those same systems demonstrates that capitalism is not compatible with global justice. In this essay I use Mohanty's analysis to argue that Stiglitz's proposed reforms would not achieve his stated goals and that the global capitalist system must be dismantled if global justice is to be achieved.

Introduction

In his book *Making Globalization Work,* renowned economist Joseph Stiglitz focuses on issues surrounding economic globalization, a process characterized mainly by a rise in the flow of capital, goods, and labor between countries of the world, increased integration of countries' economies, and the spread of capitalism.[1] Stiglitz sets out to establish two arguments: first, that globalization has failed, and second, that this is not because globalization is inherently bad; rather, it is because it has not been managed well. Stiglitz believes that the problems of globalization can be solved while working within the economic system of capitalism. Critiques of capitalism and globalization are widespread in philosophy and other disciplines, and Stiglitz thereby opens himself up to criticism from a variety of angles by taking for granted these two systems from the outset. Feminism, which is a

[1] Joseph E. Stiglitz, *Making Globalization Work* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007), 44.

diverse collection of ideologies that have historically been very critical of existing dominant systems and structures, represents one possible angle (or set of angles) from which to approach and critique Stiglitz.

In this essay, I will first demonstrate how Stiglitz neglects to defend his choice to remain within a capitalist system when proposing solutions to the problems of economic globalization. I will then use what I see as Stiglitz's shortcomings as a springboard to pursue an exploration of feminist critiques of capitalism. I will focus my investigation on a piece by postcolonial and transnational feminist theorist Chanda Talpade Mohanty entitled "Women Workers and Capitalist Scripts."[2] I will approach Mohanty's piece in the context of Stiglitz's book and will ultimately use Mohanty's arguments to critique Stiglitz and argue that, while Stiglitz's proposals would undeniably do much to improve the current global order, they ultimately are not radical enough to attain his stated goals. In particular, equity—a concept that must include equity between economic classes and nations, as Stiglitz addresses, but also gender and racial equity—will not be achievable without dismantling the global capitalist system.

Making Globalization Work and Stiglitz's Lack of Justification for Remaining within a Capitalist System

In *Making Globalization Work*, Stiglitz analyzes current international practices involving issues of trade, patents, natural resources, global warming, multinational corporations, national debt, and international democratic institutions. He exposes the problems with the current way these matters are being managed, which result in unjust and devastating consequences for many people around the world. He puts forth a variety of reforms that are necessary to alter these negative consequences and achieve "success," which he defines primarily as "sustainable, equitable and democratic development that focuses on increasing living standards, not just on measured GDP."[3] It is my opinion that Stiglitz is successful in showing how changes to the current way that globalization is being managed would result in substantial strides towards the success he defines. However, I also think

---

[2] Chanda Talpade Mohanty, "Women Workers and Capitalist Scripts," in *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, and Democratic Futures*, eds. Chanda Talpade Mohanty and M. Jacqui Alexander (New York: Routledge, 1997), 3-29.

[3] Stiglitz, *Making Globalization Work*, 44.

that Stiglitz's argument is missing some key components. Throughout the course of his book, Stiglitz states and implies time and again that certain systems and processes have failed and that this has happened not because they are inherently bad but because they have been managed poorly. In general, the systems and processes he refers to are capitalism and economic globalization. Yet, in my view, Stiglitz never adequately defends these as free of inherent problems. He simply shows how they could be managed much better than they are currently being managed and how his suggested changes would result in improvements in the lives of many individuals in all countries of the world. I do not think, however, that showing potential improvement is enough. Just because a system could be managed better than it is currently being managed and then result in positive outcomes does not prove that there are not also problems with the system itself.

In short, Stiglitz never defends his implicit stance that spreading capitalist systems around the globe is the best way to achieve his definition of success. This recognition leads us to Chanda Talpade Mohanty's piece, which represents a position from which to press Stiglitz on this issue.

Mohanty's "Women Workers and Capitalist Scripts"

Mohanty's piece is best introduced by first examining her background and perspective in opposition to that of Stiglitz, as well as the context within feminist discourse in which she writes. Both are academics and authors, but Stiglitz's position as a white American male economist gives him a very different approach than Mohanty. Mohanty describes herself as a "South Asian anticapitalist feminist in the U.S." and "a Third-World feminist teacher and activist."[4] Her form of feminism is "transnational," meaning it is intersectional: she analyzes systems of oppression from the perspectives of race, class, nationality, ethnicity, ability, religion, and so on, as well as from the perspectives of gender and sexuality. She also works within the academic discipline of postcolonial theory, which focuses on examining the lasting impacts that colonialism and imperialism have on our world today.

In these two works, Mohanty and Stiglitz approach the same subject matter: globalization and capitalism. Although both view the current effects of the global spread of capitalism as generally quite

[4] Mohanty, "Women Workers," 4-5.

negative and problematic, in "Women Workers and Capitalist Scripts," Mohanty offers a fundamental critique of capitalism that directly undermines Stiglitz's assumptions. In this piece, Mohanty is primarily interested in developing a theory about the potential common interests of what she calls "Third-World women workers" across the globe and in examining potentials for collective organizing as a strategy to achieve justice. As part of her method of arriving at these theories, Mohanty conducts an analysis of historical transformations of gender, capital, and work across the globe. It is this part of her piece that I will focus on, as it represents a perspective from which to approach Stiglitz's book.

It is important to place Mohanty's analysis of capitalism in this piece within a particular strand of feminist discourse and theory. Many Marxist, socialist, radical, and other feminists have linked gender and class inequality in order to criticize capitalism by identifying the devaluation of women's reproductive labor (giving birth, raising children, and performing housework) that is unpaid and yields extra surplus value in a capitalist system. These feminists view this sort of "private" labor as a form of exploitation.[5] Mohanty is clearly of this same perspective; she writes of the "capitalist script of subordination and exploitation" which "structures the nature of the work women are allowed to perform or precludes women from being 'workers' altogether."[6] She also writes of the "hidden costs of women's labor" and the "*systematic* invisibility of [women's] form of work" that are inherent in a capitalist system.[7] In other words, Mohanty argues that women's labor, which is essential to the workings of a capitalist system, is undervalued, underpaid, and, in the case of domestic labor, unpaid. This is a gross inefficiency ("hidden cost" as Mohanty puts it) in the system. Women's domestic labor both reproduces the next generation of laborers and relieves their male laborer partners from necessary household work like cooking and cleaning so that the men have more time and energy to devote to their paid labor in the capitalist system. Women also serve as a flexible workforce that can take on seasonal

---

[5] Ann Ferguson and Rosemary Hennessy, "Feminist Perspectives on Class and Work," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2010 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2010/entries/feminism-class/.

[6] Mohanty, "Women Workers," 6-7.

[7] Ibid., 13, 21.

and part-time work, which are typically undercompensated. Mohanty sees these aspects of the capitalist system as fundamental ways that the system exploits women.

Mohanty primarily approaches the issue from a historical perspective, writing that "women's labor has always been central to the development, consolidation, and reproduction of capitalism in the U.S.A. and elsewhere."[8] Mohanty's perspective is also a global one, as she is especially interested in the effects of globalization and the worldwide spread of capitalism. She argues that the effects of these processes, which are being carried out in an excessively exploitative and dominating way, are devastating to a great majority of the world's population. Furthermore, she claims that women workers in the Third-World (the term she prefers over "developing world") are disproportionately harmed.[9] Mohanty views these women as occupying a position that "*illuminates* and *explains* crucial features of the capitalist processes of exploitation and domination."[10] Mohanty argues that these "crucial features" ultimately prove that the problems with capitalism run so deep as to make a capitalist system incompatible with gender equality.

One of the "crucial features" Mohanty writes about is a process by which capitalist systems build upon the historical ideologies, exploitative systems, and social hierarchies of specific locations and then simultaneously transform and consolidate those circumstances into "new modes of colonization."[11] Thus capitalism across the globe is built upon, benefits from, utilizes, enforces, codifies, and is inextricably linked to various systems of oppression that have existed in localities for generations upon generations. Mohanty uses three case studies of women workers to illustrate the various forms this process takes in different locations around the world. For example, in a case of immigrant women in Silicon Valley, Mohanty shows how historical gender, race, and ethnic hierarchies in the United States have interacted with a capitalist system to enforce exploitation of the workers. One specific instance is industry leaders seeking cheap labor from Asian immigrant women by defining jobs as unskilled, "requiring tolerance for tedious work," and supplementary. These industrialists

[8] Ibid., 9.

[9] Ibid., 10.

[10] Ibid., 7.

[11] Ibid., 6, 11.

view Asian women as "more suited" to tedious work (because of a stereotype of docility) and in need of activity to "supplement" their primary activity as homemakers.[12] In this way, the capitalist system in the U.S. works together with structures of gender and race-based oppression in a manner that intertwines the systems into a hierarchy of domination. Mohanty believes that gender and racial oppression cannot be eliminated without overhauling the entire "system," which includes a capitalist economy.

Applying Mohanty's Analysis to Stiglitz's *Making Globalization Work*

When read in light of Stiglitz's book, Mohanty's condemnation of global capitalism draws attention to some critical issues. In his book, Stiglitz demonstrates the many ways that market systems absolutely fail in real-world application, and he elaborates on the ways in which they therefore need to be regulated. Drawing attention to these many failings begs the question: why is it useful to stay within a market system in the first place? Why is a market system better than any other? Because he does not ever explicitly defend his reasons for offering a solution to global problems that stays within the existing economic system, one can only assume that Stiglitz takes it as a given—and believes his readers take it as a given—that capitalism is the best way of achieving "success" as he defines it: "sustainable, equitable and democratic development that focuses on increasing living standards, not just on measured GDP."[13] However, Mohanty's analysis—which is situated within an established tradition of feminist, Marxist, and socialist works that similarly critique capitalism—shows that capitalism is not accepted as a given by many of a significant strain of thought. Given this, Stiglitz needs to find a way to defend his position that the problems that exist in the world do not stem from capitalism itself and his implicit stance that the best way to achieve his aforementioned view of success is to remain within a capitalist system.

Does Stiglitz have the tools to do this? Could he adequately defend a capitalist system against feminist critiques like Mohanty's? In order to be fair to Stiglitz, we must consider what sort of response he might have to such critiques, because he clearly believes that capitalism is the best option, even if he does not explicitly state why in this piece.

---

[12] Ibid., 14-18.

[13] Stiglitz, *Making Globalization Work,* 44.

It is likely that in defense, Stiglitz would point out the benefits of a capitalist system, such as the freedom it gives individuals to live out their own conception of the good life and to make choices, the ways in which it rewards hard work and productivity, and how it advances innovation and growth. He might also point to the way in which it generates wealth, including in many of the countries he is most concerned with. Even though he views the people of those countries as mostly being exploited, he recognizes the overall improvements in quality of life over time that they have experienced in part as a result of the spread of capitalism. For instance, he discusses at length the benefits that the global spread of capitalism brought to East Asia, primarily in helping to lift many countries out of poverty. He also argues that this was not achievable without extensive government regulation of the markets, but he is clear that "export-led growth" (globalization and capitalism) is what helped bring those regions to where they are today.[14]

Nevertheless, I think that even given these considerations, Mohanty and many other feminist and postcolonial theorists would not accept Stiglitz's favorable view of capitalism. Mohanty shows that equity—one of Stiglitz's stated goals—cannot be achieved unless the global capitalist system is undermined. She emphasizes the ways that capitalism necessarily devalues women's work and the way it has interacted with existing systems of oppression to enforce subjugating structures. In this context, she might also point out that viewing Western influences and interventions as the keys to "improving" non-Western nations plays into common imperialist narratives. Such a view ignores the devastating impact that centuries of colonialism has had on non-Western societies and then gives credit to the West for "saving" those countries from the poverty that the West played a role in creating in the first place. It presents Western cultures as progressive and enlightened and non-Western cultures as backwards and primitive. It also overlooks the context in which "progress" was made; it disregards the other possible downsides that come along with the spread of market systems and uses a Western value system to define "progress" and "development" by highlighting qualities like individual freedom, growth, and innovation.

Stiglitz is not totally unaware of these issues. He heavily criticizes the Western fixation on GDP (gross domestic product) as a measurement of success. He emphasizes the need to ensure

[14] Ibid., 30-35.

economic equity between members of a nation and not just strive for overall increases in a country's total wealth. Stiglitz also discusses the importance of improvements in life expectancy, infant mortality rates, levels of education, and quality of life, all generally neutral and widely-accepted measurements of a population's well-being.[15] However, even these measurements reveal Stiglitz's bias as an economist. He is very focused on inequality between the poor and the rich; he also concentrates on inequalities between nations. He recognizes the adverse effects of globalization that members of non-Western nations and the global poor experience, but he fails to recognize the adverse effects globalization and capitalism have on other oppressed groups such as women, persons of color, and ethnic minorities. In his discussion of measurements of a country's well-being, gender- and race-based equality are not mentioned, even though worldwide, levels of poverty, health, quality of life, and education (the issues he is most concerned with) are directly correlated with gender and race. A variety of other issues are as well: freedom to work, susceptibility to violence, and representation in the public sphere, to name a few. Mohanty makes it clear that inequalities such as these are linked to the capitalist system so strongly that the system is incompatible with global justice and must be dismantled.

Conclusion

In this essay, I have analyzed two works that approach the problems of globalization and the spread of global capitalism from very different angles. Chanda Talpade Mohanty views capitalism as detrimental to those most affected by intersections of oppression, such as non-Western women. Her arguments undermine Joseph Stiglitz's acceptance of capitalism as a system within which to enact reforms. Mohanty would no doubt welcome many of the changes that Stiglitz recommends; however, she would also no doubt believe that his reforms would ultimately not be enough to reach true global equity. Theorizing about such a goal requires critically examining systems of oppression on the basis of gender, race, nationality, class, and other intersections of identity, and ultimately it requires working to overhaul the capitalist system itself.

---

[15] Ibid., 43-46.

An Examination of Disgust and Its Relation to Morality

Jessa Wood

Abstract: In his book *Yuck!: The Nature and Moral Significance of Disgust*, Daniel Kelly synthesizes a growing body of research on disgust and briefly explores the philosophical role of the emotion. This paper presents arguments for the position that disgust should not be considered a source of moral knowledge, a position that Kelly suggests but fails to illustrate. The paper also explores implications of this view, specifically concerning the ways we should seek to manipulate our disgust reactions in order to improve moral reasoning.

Developing an Understanding of Disgust

The role of disgust in moral reasoning is a controversial one. Can our experience of disgust ever justify moral condemnation of a person or action? This is a complex question, which I will attempt to answer here by developing a working definition of disgust and then examining potential connections between disgust and morality. Ultimately, I hope to demonstrate that disgust should not only not influence our moral decision-making but should be severely limited in its scope in order to prevent its unintentional intrusion into these decision-making processes.

Before I begin to argue this, it is important to precisely define the somewhat ambiguous concept of disgust. Disgust reactions, which are characterized by feelings of revulsion and nausea accompanied by a specific facial expression, have a variety of triggers. Daniel Kelly, in his book *Yuck!: The Nature and Moral Significance of Disgust*, places our most basic disgust reactions into two groups: those related to the avoidance of contaminated food and those related to "disease and parasite avoidance."[1] Triggers of disgust can be things that actually

[1] Daniel R. Kelly, *Yuck!: The Nature and Moral Significance of Disgust* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011), 46-48.

cause harm, such as fecal material, or something resembling those triggers. The disgust response is prone to false positives, i.e. disgust at something that is harmless but resembles a common disgust trigger, such as fudge shaped like feces. False negatives, i.e. failing to find something disgusting that would disgust most people, are far less common.[2] Though Kelly does not make this observation, both of these reactions are united in their common relationship to the potential of physical harm to ourselves or others, an understanding that does much to simplify discussions of disgust reactions. One might object to this simplification on the basis that not all harms cause disgust. A murderer approaching us, for example, does not disgust us. However, potential physical harms only fail to disgust us in cases where fear motivates action and a disgust response is not necessary. In other words, in cases where the potential for physical harm does not repulse us, it is because our innate fight-or-flight response causes a response more appropriate to those specific dangers.

Disgust has several important characteristics that are relevant to Kelly's and my arguments. First, although core disgust (the type of disgust triggered by physical harms that was previously discussed) is most common, disgust can take another form. *Ideas* can trigger disgust independent of the suggestion of any negative physical consequences; this non-core disgust often relates to ideas of something being morally impure or spiritually harmful. The second significant characteristic of disgust is its transferability; as Kelly explains it, "infected substances . . . can be contagious and thus pass on their infection." This transfer is often physical. When one disgusting thing comes into physical contact with another object, that object becomes disgusting.[3] However, this relationship is not necessarily physical. Throughout evolutionary history, disgust motivated by a lack of physical cleanliness morphed into disgust at a lack of moral or spiritual cleanliness.[4]

Connections between Disgust and Moral Decision-Making

Kelly does not explain the importance of his examination. However, the implications of disgust-motivated moral reasoning are profound. When disgust precedes or follows moral decision-making,

---

[2] Ibid., 51.

[3] Ibid., 50.

[4] Ibid., 121.

moral condemnation and even hostility towards the source of that disgust often result. One easy example of this is disgust at homosexuality. Many people find themselves disgusted by the idea of a homosexual relationship, label such relationships morally wrong as a result, and subsequently find homosexuality even more disgusting because they believe it is immoral. A great deal of hostility towards homosexual individuals results from such disgust. However, if this disgust is unfounded, so, too, is this accompanying hostility. Therefore, we must examine the relationship between disgust and moral decision-making and question whether this connection is well-founded.

I hope to question these relationships in light of the following categories into which they might be placed:

1. Pre-disgust: A person finds a practice disgusting and, on that basis, labels it morally wrong.
2. Post-disgust: A person believes something is morally wrong and, therefore, finds it disgusting.

Again, the validity of these connections must be questioned because of their powerful consequences. For clarity, we will begin by examining pre-disgust, then move to post-disgust.

Near the end of *Yuck!*, Kelly criticizes what I label pre-disgust by presenting and then criticizing the "Deep Wisdom Argument," which states that disgust is an indicator of what is "natural" and thereby conveys moral knowledge.[5] Kelly rebuts this view by stating that disgust is evolved and has varied triggers; it is fundamentally about avoiding contaminants, not revealing "unnaturalness." Thus, he concludes at the end of his book that we should maintain skepticism about disgust's ability to indicate moral truths.[6]

This conclusion is certainly reasonable, but it is insufficient. Ultimately, it is important to move beyond Kelly's singular argument. We should prove not just that pre-disgust should be regarded with some suspicion but that we should reject pre-disgust entirely. A defense of this position can be achieved by considering the three ways in which pre-disgust can be realized. Disgust reactions and reasoned moral decisions can fall in opposition, concur but be made for different reasons, or concur and be made for the same reasons. Ultimately, we

[5] Ibid., 138.

[6] Ibid., 147.

will realize that disgust reactions should be entirely separated from moral decision-making.

First, there are many cases wherein reasoned moral judgments directly contradict our disgust reactions. One example is presented in psychologist Jonathan Haidt's book *The Righteous Mind* as he describes his dissertation research, which involved asking people about the violation of social norms in "disgust[ing] or disrespect[ful]" ways.[7] One story employed in Haidt's study was that of a man who, unbeknownst to anyone else, "has sexual intercourse with [a dead chicken]. . . . Then he cooks it and eats it." Though most subjects agreed that the man did not hurt anyone with his actions, many could not move past their initial disgust reactions and proceeded to morally condemn the man. When questioned by the interviewer about the validity of their judgments, these people maintained that, even though they did not know why, the man's actions were morally wrong.[8] These are cases wherein disgust reactions are inconsistent with the reasoned moral positions that could be reached via a utilitarian (maximizing happiness) or rights-based approach, outside of concerns about the violation of animals rights/harm to animals inherent in purchasing a presumably factory-farmed chicken. Given the consequences of unreasonable moral condemnation, we should seek to avoid faulty moral decision-making whenever possible. In scenarios such as this one where disgust-motivated judgments directly contradict moral reasoning, disgust circumvents that aim.

In contrast, there are some cases wherein disgust reactions are consistent with reasoned moral judgments condemning an action. However, even in many of those cases, those moral judgments are not made for the same reason we are disgusted. One example was presented by Brian Besong in his talk "Being Appropriately Disgusted," where he presented a thought experiment wherein a man throws a urine-filled water balloon at his wife.[9] Although this scenario is obviously disgusting and the man's actions are clearly wrong from a rights-

---

[7] Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2012), 19.

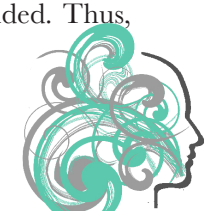
[8] Ibid., 4.

[9] Brian Besong, "Being Appropriately Disgusted" (presentation, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Daniel N. Boone Speaker Series, Indiana, PA, October 24, 2013).

based perspective, the disgust response and moral judgment concur. However, the reasons we label the man's actions morally wrong are different from the reason we feel repulsed. We feel repulsed because urine is a contaminant and therefore disgusts us; we judge the man's actions morally wrong because his act violates the woman's rights. Tellingly, even if the woman consented to have the urine-filled balloon thrown at her (something the rights-based perspective would maintain she has a right to do, even if it harms her), we would still be disgusted by this scenario but would not label it morally wrong. This example demonstrates the greater point that, in many cases, disgust-induced moral leanings run contrary to reasoned moral positions.

The only clear examples of cases in which disgust is really consistent with reasoned moral positions are cases where the fact that something is harmful both causes us disgust and motivates us to label it morally wrong. We can use the example of the urine-filled balloon presented above to provide an example of this phenomenon. From a utilitarian perspective, we both view the man's actions as disgusting and label the man's actions morally wrong because they might cause the woman harm and because they disgust her. Although this concurrence of our disgust reactions and one potential moral position might provide a somewhat compelling case for at least some insertion of core disgust into moral reasoning—in other words, for pre-disgust—the conclusions we would reach if the disgust response were absent would be the same as the conclusion we reach via the disgust reaction. Thus, in no case is the pre-disgust reaction necessary or even significantly helpful in reaching appropriate conclusions about the morality of an action.

What about post-disgust, which follows a moral decision? Obviously, it is unwarranted to be disgusted after making an unfounded decision that something is immoral. But what about disgust at people who behave immorally or things that truly are immoral, such as child abuse? This form of disgust may be more justified than disgust at things that are not immoral, like homosexuality, but all post-disgust reactions are nevertheless dangerous. Even this kind of disgust clouds our thinking, preventing a process of continual moral questioning. Additionally, as we've seen, disgust is incredibly transferrable. This makes any insertion of disgust into moral decision-making processes somewhat dangerous because it simply moves that disgust closer to the beginning of moral reasoning—in other words, closer to motivating someone to make a moral judgment that may be unfounded. Thus,



as this examination has demonstrated, we should strive to separate disgust from processes of moral reasoning.

There are some easy ways to begin to achieve this goal. One is to take more time to make moral decisions, an act which mitigates the effects of disgust. One study in support of this conclusion involved telling participants the story of two incestuous siblings who use contraception. Some of the participants were then given a good reason not to harshly judge the siblings and made to wait two minutes before they could report their moral judgments. Participants who spent several minutes considering a compelling reason before judging the siblings were far less likely to label the siblings' actions morally wrong than groups not made to wait and/or shown a faulty reason. The participants still initially experienced revulsion. However, this revulsion experience did not affect the judgment of the group that waited as much as it affected those who did not wait.[10]

Examining the Disgust Itself

Although the argument against the Deep Wisdom Argument presented by Kelly and the defense of his position I presented above should motivate us to separate our disgust reactions from our processes of moral reasoning, such a separation is still insufficient. This is because there is a third type of disgust:

> 3. Simul-disgust: A person experiences disgust, even if it is only subconscious, and simultaneously makes a moral judgment on the basis of what he or she believe is solid moral reasoning.

This type of disgust was illustrated in another study wherein researchers sprayed fart spray into an empty trash can on a street corner before asking passers-by to fill out questionnaires about moral transgressions. They found that the moral judgments people made were harsher when they were disgusted. This phenomenon emerged even though the

[10] Joseph M. Paxton, Leo Ungar, and Joshua D. Greene, "Reflection and Reasoning in Moral Judgment," *Cognitive Science* 36, 1 (2012): 170-171.

disgust participants experienced was unrelated to the vignettes they were judging.[11]

This study demonstrates why Kelly did not extend his conclusion far enough. Refusing to use disgust as a justification for our moral decisions is certainly a significant and important step. However, if we focus solely on changing the influence of disgust rather than on influencing the disgust itself, we miss what is perhaps our best opportunity to prevent disgust from influencing moral decision-making: fundamentally changing what disgusts us and subsequent generations.

Changes in the influence of disgust on moral reasoning are entirely possible for a few reasons. First, it is a misconception that disgust, including disgust relating to moral issues, is natural and unavoidable. In actuality, disgust and the causes of disgust are learned responses not observed in children under age five. Children must learn what to find disgusting from their culture.[12] Disgust reactions also vary widely. Consider differences in disgust responses to homosexuality, which differ widely worldwide and even among various groups in the U.S. This variability indicates the flexibility of disgust reactions and shows that we can purposefully and intentionally manipulate what causes disgust in order to separate it from moral reasoning as much as possible.

We can harness the manipulability of disgust triggers in discouraging disgust-motivated moral reasoning in young children who have not yet learned disgust reactions. In effect, we can change the disgust reactions of young children (ultimately greatly limiting or even eliminating disgust-motivated moral reasoning) by manipulating the process of disgust socialization that will influence them. Though no such change will happen immediately, small changes such as the elimination of disgust language from discussions of morality will significantly decrease the extent to which future generations will connect disgust and morality. Over time, the connection will be completely eliminated. In other words, fairly simple changes in our own behavior will have a profound effect on the continuation of disgust's entanglement in morality.

One objection to my position is that I do not advocate eliminating core disgust, which might seem inconsistent with my

---

[11] Simone Schnall et. al., "Disgust as Embodied Moral Judgment," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 34 (2008): 1098-99.

[12] Haidt et. al., "Body, Psyche, and Culture: The Relationship Between Disgust and Morality," *Psychology and Developing Societies* 9, 1 (1997): 111.

seeming demonization of disgust. However, core disgust, unlike all other types of disgust, serves the important purpose of providing an easy way to help people avoid harmful substances. Yes, even core disgust reactions cloud our judgment about the severity of harms, as in the fart spray example presented above. However, core disgust signals a real harm in almost all cases. The influence of core disgust is also much less detrimental to good moral judgments than other kinds of disgust because judgments of the harms to which core disgust responds—somewhat exaggerated though they may inevitably be—generally factor only into relatively simple moral decisions, like the decision to avoid contaminated food. Since these decisions are uncontroversial, in most cases they are notably different from disgust triggers that do not cause physical harm, such as homosexuality.

Ultimately, Kelly is correct. Disgust should not affect moral reasoning. However, he provides only minimal evidence for his position, something I attempted to rectify by providing a more comprehensive argument in his defense. Additionally, Kelly does not extend his argument far enough. Because disgust has such a profound effect on our moral reasoning, in order to successfully prevent disgust's undesirable effects we must work to manipulate the causes of disgust themselves. Yes, disgust will inappropriately appear at times because of its transferability, but we should not let the fact that any solution will be imperfect prevent meaningful improvements. Fundamentally, the effort to limit disgust is both a noble and ultimately achievable goal.

Ideological Domination: Deconstructing the Paradox of the American Dream and the Working Class Promise

Betty Stoneman

Abstract: The "American Dream" and "Working Class Promise" ideologies are ubiquitously dispersed in American society. These ideologies posit values of equality and opportunity. In this paper, I deconstruct these two ideologies in order to examine the effects these ideologies have on income inequality, social inequality, and social immobility. I argue these ideologies create a paradox in society whereby the more these ideologies are believed, the more the ideologies exacerbate income inequality, social inequality, and social immobility.

Introduction

The American Dream and the Working Class Promise are ubiquitous ideologies in American culture.[1] I argue these ideologies are social constructs that contribute to the discrimination against and, as a necessary consequence, the domination of the working class. In order to make this argument, I deconstruct the two ideologies, utilizing the work of communication professor Kristen Lucas, psychologists Shannon K. McCoy and Brenda Major, sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, and social philosopher Louis Althusser. Ultimately, I argue the ideologies create a paradox in society where, by believing in the ideologies, society reproduces gross income inequality, social inequality, and social immobility. Therefore, I argue the American Dream and the Working Class Promise ideologies ought to be rejected in order to promote the very values these ideologies posit.

[1] I am using the term "American" purely for fluidity and esthetics to refer to residents of the United States.

Defining Key Concepts

Ideology is a set of overarching, unified assertions about the way social conditions are or ought to be. Discrimination, as philosopher Andrew Altman defines it, is constituted by "acts, practices or policies" that "a) wrongfully impose a relative disadvantage or deprivation on persons based on their membership in some salient social group, and b) the wrongfulness rests (in part) on the fact that the imposition of the disadvantage is on account of the group membership of the victims."[2] Discrimination can be assigning values and/or distinctions to one group that places the group members at a disadvantage through exclusions. Stereotyping is the actual process of assigning values and/or distinctions to a group. Domination is treating others as if they are inferior to oneself in such a way that serves to manipulate or influence their actions.

Lucas, the Working Class Promise, and the American Dream

The ideologies in question are the American Dream (hereafter AD) and the Working Class Promise (hereafter WCP). Lucas quotes American businessman James T. Adams's definition of the AD as "that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for every man [sic], with opportunity for each according to his ability or achievement."[3] The quotation continues that the AD is "a dream of a social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstance of birth or position."[4] Lucas points out how Adams separates the AD into both "a materialistic myth" and "the moralistic myth."[5] The AD is both the dream of becoming monetarily successful and also the dream of equality of opportunity.

---

[2] Andrew Altman, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, s.v. "discrimination," (Spring 2011): accessed October 10, 2012, http://plato.stanford.edu/cgi-bin/encyclopedia/archinfo.cgi?entry=discrimination.

[3] Kristen Lucas, "The Working Class Promise: A Communicative Account of Mobility-Based Ambivalences," *Communication Monographs* 78, no. 3 (2011): 347-369, accessed October 12, 2012.

[4] Ibid., 350.

[5] Ibid.

After interviewing sixty-two working class individuals, Lucas describes the "WCP" as "four core values: (a) work ethic, (b) provider orientation, (c) the dignity of all work and workers, and (d) humility."[6] Lucas asserts that the "social construction of [the] working class is accomplished through communicating" these values, and these values give the working class "much pride and [are those] around which they rally their identities."[7] The working class passes down values, shapes their identities, and makes social value judgments based on the WCP.

As per Lucas, the working class criticizes the privileged class because the privileged value the opposite of the WCP.[8] In the hierarchy of values, the working class place themselves at the top of the hierarchy with the privileged at the bottom.[9] According to the AD, the working class faces a paradoxical problem when trying to move up in society because, in doing so, they are moving down according to the WCP.[10]

Lucas's WCP, the AD, and McCoy and Major's Evidence Regarding Positive Stereotyping and Self Discrimination

McCoy and Major's research demonstrates how the AD and WCP ideologies as described by Lucas psychologically shape members of society. McCoy and Major found when women were asked to unscramble sentences that gave affirmations such as, "Effort leads to prosperity," and were then asked to read an article on sexism, the women practiced more "self-stereotyping" behaviors by rating themselves higher in factors such as "warmth" and lower in factors such as "competence."[11] When the women read studies providing evidence of discrimination against women at universities, they were "more likely to justify [the] disadvantage by minimizing sexism, by endorsing stereotypes that justify women's subordinate status relative to men and by self-stereotyping" when compared to women who

---

[6] Ibid., 353.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid., 359.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Shannon K. McCoy and Brenda Major, "Priming Meritocracy and the Psychological Justification of Inequality," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 43 (2007): 341-351, accessed October 19, 2012, http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0022103106000904.

were not given the sentence unscramble task.[12] According to McCoy and Major, the practice of assigning positive values to a lower status group, or positive stereotyping, "reinforces the belief" that some lower status groups "are best suited for subordinate roles and justifies the over representation of" members of high status groups in high status positions.[13] Such a practice "allows low status group members to feel good about their group identity while simultaneously keeping them from attempting to advance in the status hierarchy."[14]

McCoy and Major's Evidence and Bourdieu's Habitus

McCoy and Major's research combines positive stereotyping with the ideology of the AD to show how positive, negative, and self-imposed stereotyping leads to discrimination, which then leads to domination. They found members of lower status groups use positive stereotyping to classify and structure their identities socially based on the objectively structured social construct of the AD, which in turn then structures society.[15] The interplay between the structured and structuring forces of society is Bourdieu's "habitus." Bourdieu states, the "habitus is not only a structuring structure, which organizes practices and the perception of practices, but also a structured structure, the principle of division into logical classes which organizes the perception of the social world is itself the product of internalization of the division into social classes."[16] Bourdieu continues, "[t]his means that inevitably inscribed within the dispositions of the habitus is the whole structure of the system of conditions, as it presents itself in the experience of a life-condition occupying a particular position within that structure."[17] Habitus is both a social objective structure of institutional judgments and practices that classifies people within society and also an individual subjective internalization of the classifications of society and one's own place within society. Society is at once both an independently

---

[12] Ibid., 349.

[13] Ibid., 347.

[14] Ibid.

[15] "Objective" is taken to mean a bird's eye, unbiased, independent, generalized perception.

[16] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 170.

[17] Ibid., 172.

structured entity of classifications and also an entity being structured by individual perceptions and judgments of the classifications.

McCoy and Major's research demonstrates how lower status individuals act in "system-justifying" ways by assigning characteristics to themselves that society would assign to them or by justifying their lower status positions as being what they deserve.[18] Bourdieu states "through the differentiated and differentiating conditionings associated with the different conditions of existence, through the exclusions and inclusions . . . which govern the social structure and the structuring force" of society, "social divisions become principles of division, organizing the image of the social world."[19] These social divisions act as "objective limits" on individuals and give individuals a "'sense of one's place' which leads one to exclude oneself from the goods, persons, places and so forth from which one is excluded."[20] Therefore, the dominated "tend to attribute to themselves what the distribution attributes to them, refusing what they are refused" by "adjusting their expectations to their chances, defining themselves as the established order defines them, reproducing in their verdict on themselves the verdict the economy pronounces on them, in a word, condemning themselves to what is in any case their lot."[21]

Bourdieu's Habitus and Althusser's Work on Ideology

Bourdieu argues differences in each status group's conditions of existence create exclusions between individuals in different status groups, which inculcates into individuals their place in society. When individuals recognize their socially defined place in society, they will act according to the definition assigned for that place. Althusser offers insight into how ideology can reproduce actions in accordance with the ideology when the individuals committing the actions believe they freely and consciously believe in the ideology. As per Althusser, ideology is the social construct that teaches individuals their role and place in society. Althusser asserts that a dominant ideology is dispersed through society by way of media, politics, education, family, and other

[18] McCoy and Major, "Priming Meritocracy," 346.

[19] Bourdieu, *Distinction,* 471.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

social institutions.[22] Ideology is a "necessarily imaginary distortion" of individuals' relations to each other in society and social institutions.[23] Althusser states, "What is represented in ideology is therefore not the system of the real relations which govern the existence of individuals, but the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations in which they live."[24]

Ideology distorts the relationship between individuals within society. Ideology shows individuals where they fit into society, but it distorts the relationship by making individuals think their place and role in society is natural and chosen. An individual who believes he has "in all consciousness freely chosen" to believe in an ideology will act, voluntarily and with conviction, in certain ways in accordance with the ideology.[25]

Althusser and McCoy and Major's Evidence Regarding Ideology

Althusser argues ideology is dispersed through society via many venues. He argues belief in an ideology will cause individuals of lower status groups to justify and act in accordance with their roles as promulgated by the ideology. McCoy and Major's research demonstrates how giving individuals "subtle cues" in favor of an ideology can "influence thoughts and behaviors."[26] McCoy and Major discovered that if individuals are given a simple sentence unscramble task, with statements affirming the AD ideology, then the individuals are more likely to have "increased personal endorsement of meritocratic beliefs" when compared to those who were not given the task.[27] When both women and men were primed with statements affirming the AD, then placed in a situation where they were rejected for a job, women and men behaved in "system-justifying" ways.[28] Women, who are

---

[22] Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes Toward an Investigation," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (Monthly Review Press: 1971).

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid.

[26] McCoy and Major, "Priming Meritocracy," 343.

[27] Ibid., 344.

[28] Ibid., 346.

traditionally seen as having a lower status, justified the rejection by the male interviewer as being their own fault. Men, who are traditionally seen as having a higher status, claimed the rejection by the female interviewer was discrimination.[29]

Combining the Research and the Ideologies: An Outline of Domination

The AD and WCP ideologies are being dispersed in America through media, politicians, families, schools, and certain religions. Althusser, McCoy, and Major's arguments demonstrate how such ideologies, as subtle cues, can reinforce the belief in the ideologies, and when individuals believe in the ideologies, they will justify their positions in society based on, and act in accordance with, the ideologies.

Lucas, McCoy, and Major's arguments demonstrate how the working class has embraced a value system opposed to the privileged class, placing themselves at the moral end of the value system and the privileged at the immoral end. The admirable values allow the working class to feel good about themselves while at the same time keeping them from advancing by positively justifying their place in the social hierarchy.

In line with Bourdieu, the WCP creates conditions for the exclusion of the working class. Individuals in the working class structure their perceptions of society, thus their place in society, based on these values but are also structured by these values. The values serve as distinctions between the working class and the privileged which gives the working class a sense of their place in American society. Once the identities of working class individuals are determined and their place in society is defined, each individual's values reflect in their mannerisms and tastes, which then act as a filter, either through self-exclusion or exclusion by the privileged, keeping the working class in their place.

Bourdieu argues that people perpetuate inequalities in society by structuring themselves based on structured class distinctions. The AD is structuring in that individuals' identities and relation to society are structured based on their perceptions of how they fit into the ideology, which then structures society. It is structured in that it objectively creates a hierarchy in society by classifying people. Such internalized external classifications contribute to the discrimination,

[29] Ibid.

and thus the domination, of the working class.

The ideology of the WCP, in line with Althusser, reproduces working class roles in American society. The four core values passed down to working class children act as rules, teaching them not only their place in society but how to fulfill their predetermined roles in the hierarchy. Employers love hardworking, humble employees who do not step outside of their roles and who find dignity in their lower level, lower pay jobs. Companies love consumers with a sense of provider orientation, who will spend more and go into debt in order to be good providers for their families.

The AD, as McCoy and Major note, implies society has given the working class opportunities to succeed but they failed to work hard enough.[30] For members of the privileged class, the AD implies they deserve success based on their own merit.[31] In line with Althusser, social institutions, by promulgating the AD, are teaching individuals their failings or successes are not the work of society, but of their own. The AD reproduces domination because individuals adopting the ideology act in ways to support the ideology. Belief in the AD disguises and transforms the inequalities in the conditions of existence, using stereotyping and discrimination, into natural consequences of personal failing or success.

Self-Defeating Ideologies, Income Inequality, Social Inequality, and Social Immobility

Numerous scholars and professionals, including economics professor Joseph Stiglitz, are showing how gross inequality and immobility are facts of American life.[32] Taken together, Lucas, Bourdieu, Althusser, McCoy, and Major have shown how domination arises when inequality and immobility are legitimized via ideology. The AD and WCP ideologies together in combination with income inequality, social inequality, and social immobility create the social conditions for gross inequality and immobility to thrive by reinforcing domination. The problem is these ideologies necessarily exist within

---

[30] Ibid., 341.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Joseph Stiglitz, "The 'American Dream' is Now a Myth," *Business Insider*, accessed October 10, 2012, http://www.businessinsider.com/the-american-dream-is-now-a-myth-2012-6.

a hierarchal system and are immensely effective at encouraging social-psychological acquiescence to this hierarchy, which allows for conditions of inequality and immobility to exist and thrive.

Together the AD and WCP communicate that individuals, through their own efforts, ought to be able to advance their socio-economic standing and all individuals ought to be respected as ends in themselves, despite their place in the hierarchy. The discrimination and domination that arises from the belief in these ideologies in a society where gross inequality and immobility are facts of life directly conflicts with these assertions. The ideologies themselves are self-defeating in a society where inequality and immobility exist and thus ought to be rejected in order to promote the very values the ideologies seek to advance.

Put another way, these ideologies necessarily exist within and reproduce a socio-economic hierarchy. Lucas, Bourdieu, Althusser, McCoy, and Major provide evidence that demonstrates these ideologies reproduce a hierarchy of inequality and immobility. Where the hierarchy of inequality and immobility exists, these ideologies necessarily reproduce inequality and immobility. Where inequality and immobility do not exist, these ideologies provide fertile ground for inequality and immobility to take root and grow. In a hierarchy of inequality and immobility, such as exists in America, these ideologies dominate people by justifying the inequality and immobility. The paradox is that by believing in these ideologies, individuals are manipulated into reproducing the inequality and immobility they ideologically are against. The more these ideologies are believed, the less likely these ideologies are going to be realized. Therefore, even if one were to assume the climbable hierarchy implied by these ideologies is acceptable, achievable, and sustainable, these ideologies must be rejected in order to abolish inequality and immobility and thus to promote the valued hierarchy the ideologies posit.

Summary and Conclusion

Gross income inequality, social inequality, and social immobility are facts of American life. Inequality of conditions of existence leads to members of different status groups assigning values and/or distinctions to themselves and other groups based on those conditions of existence. The WCP and the AD are socially constructed ideologies that assign values and/or distinctions to people based on conditions of existence. Discrimination arises when the values and/

or distinctions assigned create exclusions resulting in disadvantages, such as inequality and immobility, as well as when these disadvantages create further exclusions. Discrimination treats some people as inferior to others, and social constructs are dominating when they treat people as inferior, in a way that serves to manipulate or influence their actions. The WCP and AD are social constructs that have created exclusions resulting in disadvantages and which treat people as inferior, in a way that serves to manipulate and influence their actions. Therefore, the WCP and AD are socially constructed ideologies that discriminate against and dominate people. Such discrimination and domination allows inequality and immobility to thrive and directly conflicts with the very values the AD and the WCP posit. Therefore, Americans ought to reject the AD and WCP ideologies. By delegitimizing income inequality, social inequality, and social immobility, society can move toward creating an America closer to what America ought to be.[33]

[33] I would like to thank Shannon Atkinson, Alexander Izrailevsky, David R. Keller, Michael Minch, and the editors of this journal for their immensely helpful and encouraging comments and criticisms on various drafts of this paper.

Bodies of Philosophy: An Interview with Elizabeth Grosz

***Stance* (Esther Wolfe): How did you become interested in philosophy? What do you find sustains that interest, and what do you most enjoy about your career?**

Elizabeth Grosz: I think I was probably a little philosopher, even at twelve, but I didn't know what it was called. Big questions about the meaning of life—is there God, causation—were things that, unlike other twelve-year-olds, I thought about quite deeply. So, I was very happy to find a subject at university called Philosophy. And I didn't actually intend to do it. I intended to do psychology, and, to this day I'm actually not sure why I did philosophy. [laughter] But the moment I started doing it, it was really fascinating. It provided me with a framework for thinking—a rigor in thinking about the world. So, I found my place. I was very lucky. It wasn't quite as an undergraduate, but by the time I was doing graduate work, I just thought, "This is a place that's good for me."

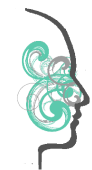
***Stance* (EW): We're all smiling because I think, for everyone here, that resonated very deeply.**

EG: Yeah, what I enjoy most about it is the opportunity to think about things and to read really smart people.

***Stance* (EW): [laughter] We like that, too… The field of philosophy is often criticized for being unwelcoming or hostile toward women philosophers and feminist philosophy; what have been your experiences as a woman in philosophy, and can you talk about the state of feminism in the field of philosophy today?**

EG: Very good question—the most pertinent question of the present, as far as I'm concerned. My own history in philosophy was complicated by the fact that I began philosophy just before the first wave of feminism hit theory (this is in Australia). When I began, there was only one woman teaching, and she had an untenured position. Philosophy was absolutely hostile to women when I began, and I have to say that, as we know, the field of philosophy is very much divided into two quite different orientations, at least in the Anglo-American world.

I think Anglo-American philosophy is also quite hostile to the question of women in philosophy and feminist philosophy even today. I know that if I hadn't found continental philosophy I wouldn't have been able to continue



this project. I've noticed that continental philosophy has certainly, in the last thirty years, been relatively open—and far more than other disciplines—to feminist questions, to women philosophers, to meetings about the status of women in philosophy, to accepting that there is a problem with the status of women in philosophy, and trying to do something about it.

So, I have a sense that probably the bulk of young women studying philosophy today probably experience something similiar to what I did in the 1970s, and that is not many women teachers and not much encouragement for their particular kinds of questions. But I also know that there are departments now that have continental philosophy or at least some continental philosophy who are now not only very open to women but actively supportive. So, things have changed a lot in one part of philosophy, but really not in another.

***Stance* (Ben Rogers): I'm really curious also about other groups that have been excluded from the philosophical enterprise. The whiteliness of philosophy is a problem. The straightness of philosophy is a problem as well. Could you speak at all about the particulars of those problems and how they relate to feminist concerns in philosophy today?**

EG: Well, I think you're absolutely correct in suggesting that these are equally kinds of unconscious exclusions whose unconsciousness has made them somewhat invisible in philosophy, the realm of so-called reason itself, a reason unmarked by the body's distinctive features. I don't think there's particularly malice on the part of analytic philosophy as opposed to any other academic discipline, but I do think that the idea that knowledge is untouched by the particularities of the person who knows is a fantasy.

[More recently,] there's been a lot of resistance to the whiteness of philosophy, the straightness of philosophy, the Europeanness of philosophy, as well as the masculinity of philosophy. In other words, it's only because there's been resistance among minoritized groups that these questions can be raised as something other than just a regional question in a way that, for example, the abortion debate has been framed within philosophy or within ethics, as just a particular example of a broader more general and question, rather than as a question that holds different value for different kinds of philosophers.

***Stance* (EW): I was thinking as you were talking about regional concerns and about how western philosophy specifically has dominated a lot of discourse. It would be really interesting to get your perspective on things like post-colonial feminisms, especially as a native Australian who has been exposed to a lot of criticism of Australia's own colonial**

HISTORY. I'M CURIOUS ABOUT YOUR OWN PHILOSOPHICAL INTERSECTIONS WITH POST-COLONIAL FEMINISMS.

EG: Well, I think obviously post-colonial feminism is a huge and growing area, but within philosophy, again, it's a minority of a minority. There are certainly conferences and networks for post-colonial and post-colonial feminist philosophy. I suspect that they're growing stronger and stronger. But I think it's only because there's been a resistance to the kind of unconscious whiteness and unconscious lack of awareness of colonialism and its impact that philosophy has had the history it has had.

Now, let me say that, of course, feminist philosophy is not without criticism, and there have been powerful criticisms developed by a number of subjects within the feminist movement, for example, who would have wanted to claim that certain strands of feminism, perhaps my own included, were too wide or not acknowledged enough as wide? I think that's probably true of every position, that it represents a specificity that can't necessarily be assumed to be globally true.

"oppression... necessitates sideways thinking. It produces new thought...so I feel very optimistic"

Philosophy is made up of perspectives, which is something that I think many people are resistant to. There are many points of view from which we can ask philosophical questions, and they're not just relative. They are kind of absolute and linked to one's position, one's geographical and historical position. All philosophy is specific and all philosophy is neither particularly colonial nor post-colonial but is engaged in the global movement that makes up both of those orders. I do feel optimistic. I do see lots of possibilities, and they're possibilities that I don't see really being very readily erased.

***STANCE* (EW): OUR STAFF WAS ESPECIALLY INTERESTED IN YOUR ARGUMENTS THAT FEMINISTS SHIFT THEIR CRITICAL FOCUS FROM LIBERATING WOMEN AND CONSIDERING WOMEN MERELY THE SUBJECTS IN FEMINISM. CAN YOU EXPAND ON WHY THIS SHIFT OF A FEMINIST CRITICAL FRAMEWORK IS IMPORTANT?**

EG: I think partly because making women and women alone—women in their classed and raced and sexed specificity—the subject of feminism tends to make women victims. It tends to see patriarchy as an order that does little more than oppress women or subject them to faults, and, while I don't want to deny that that's true, I think if we focus alone on women as subjects and not on the world within which subjects are produced and act, we tend to focus

on the bad things that oppression does instead of on the creative possibilities that oppression opens up.

That's the simple answer to that, but what oppression does is invent ingenuity. It necessitates sideways thinking. It produces new thought sooner or later, so I feel very optimistic that *possibility* is always there in philosophy, however oppressed one's position. But the more one looks inward the darker it looks, so I actually think that feminism has had a couple of decades of self-analysis. I think it's probably really healthy now to have a look at the world in relation to one's self. I think that might be a really productive next step in feminist theory.

***Stance* (EW): That answer got a very quiet round of applause from several of our staff.**

EG: [laughter]. I love that acknowledgement of the transformative and generative potential embedded in liberation struggles and within oppressive systems, and I think it's amazing. We wouldn't be around to talk about it if oppression just pressed us out of existence. And those of us who end up surviving have a resilience or something that's other than or a little bit outside of the system that's oppressing us.

***Stance* (EW): You've discussed using ideas that seem anti-feminist, such as Darwinism and looking past sexist tendencies to find concepts within these ideas that are helpful to feminism. I think Lacan would also be on that list, too. What limit, if any, is there to using ideas from thinkers who have been counterproductive to the feminist movement? Do you think a feminist must simply look past sexist ideas and find truth and meaning in those works that are related to sexist ideas? How does one mediate and navigate that?**

EG: Well, this is one of the particular tragedies of those studying philosophy. If you look at anything before, let's say, 1950, you're not going to find a text that doesn't have something sexist in it. There isn't going to be a text before the 1950s, and probably long after that, which considers women as equal. I can't think of a text that doesn't have some snide comment about women, about mothers, about femininity, about sex, about passion or emotion. It's very difficult to be a philosopher who has the right to not look at texts that say sexist things. It wouldn't be doing philosophy. Basically, we'd have to do another discipline. So, we have no choice but to address texts that have sexist tendencies. That's what it is to be in a patriarchal world.

These aren't necessarily sources of contamination. I think that some feminists have thought of them in this way. These are resources that feminists can use: seeing the sexism in someone and not just dismissing them because of it but

finding the place of sexism in their work and finding something that may be in their work beyond that sexism is the feminist philosophical enterprise. That's what our discipline entails. Whatever the texts are prior to, say, the 1980s when feminist philosophy erupts as a field, we're not going to find texts that are in the slightest bit sensitive to sexism or even racism or class. So, it's all right to get our hands dirty. That's our profession.

Even though we may not like it, we work with all sorts of ideas we really disagree with. I have a lot of problems with Plato, just to take an obvious example, but he's still immensely important: same with Darwin, same with psychoanalysis. Darwin's good compared to most people. His best friend was John Stuart Mill, so he was somewhat more inclined to feminism than a good many others. It's like saying, "Can we have non-sexist fashion?" and the answer is, "No, not really," but that doesn't mean we can't enjoy it.

***Stance* (EW): You've been critical of the use of "queer" as a self-identifying term, and also of the work of queer theory. Since queer theory as a movement and as a methodology has really developed since some of that scholarship, we were wondering if some of your opinions have changed.**

EG: I don't think my opinions have changed, but I think I've been misunderstood. I think the word "queer" is a politically useful term, but I'm not sure it's a conceptually useful term. So, if people self-identify as queer, I have no problem with that. The concept "queer," if we unpack what we generally tend to mean by it, is non-heteronormative practices. Am I right? But that's a problem, I think, for many, because that's a definition that's utterly reactive. To say you're non-heteronormative is almost by definition saying, "Well, heteronormative is the norm, and I'm against it." To me, that is the unifying quality of the generic term "queer" as opposed to the term LGBT.

So, queer is a useful label, but in fact what holds together a theory is people who identify as queer, some who also identify as gay, others who also identify as lesbian, some who identify as trans, and some who simply identify as queer. What allows them to be identified together is this stance against the heteronormative, copulative, family-oriented norm that we all know so well.

I'm not sure that I want to base a positive identity on a reaction to something that I think sucks. So, I've been taken as someone who's anti-queer. I don't think that's correct. The label worries me more than the practice. Is that enigmatic enough? [Laughter]. I mean, I wonder, who isn't queer? I have a whole bunch of heterosexual friends who are now queer. Close up, in fact, given psychoanalysis, everyone's utterly queer. But if that's true, if we're all

queer, then the political sharpness of that concept is somewhat muted. Now, remember, I'm talking about a label and not a movement.

***Stance* (EW): In a similar vein: how do intersex and transsexual individuals fit within your theory of sexual selection?**

EG: Oh, that's a very complicated question. I think they're part of the range of sexual selection. I don't think there's anything abnormal or weird about it. There is no doubt that in Darwin's studies there are a whole range of, as it were, queer animals and animals where males identified as females and so on. So, I don't think there's any mutual problem with Darwinism and transexualism or what we would now call intersexed bodies.

But I know that my work, especially in *Volatile Bodies,* has been quite heavily criticized in certain trans circles, and I'm not sure the criticism is fair. Of course, I'm biased. But the point I made in *Volatile Bodies* is something that I still believe. I'll say this nervously: we're born into a body, like it or not. The body is not made by us but given to us: partly through nature, partly through environment.

I'm not denying there's a social and psychical dimension, but I'm also not denying there's a biological dimension to this. Short, tall, blond, dark-haired, black, white—these are givens of your body, just as being male or female or intersex is a given of your body. I have no problem with the surgical transformation of your body or the chemical transformation of your body. I've no problem at all with it. But I think it's a category mistake to believe that by transforming the body you have you acquire the body of the opposite sex.

***Stance* (EW): I think that's a point of contention within trans communities as well. I see trans people who identify as trans in terms of a more absolute actualization into what they will become, and other people identify as trans as a transient state, where the identification is the between or beyondness sense of the term.**

EG: Look, I think that what identifications are is an absolutely interesting and open possibility. If we identify as women, if we identify as men, if we identify as neither, that's a very interesting question of the art of how to live one's life. But, honestly—I'll say it again, and I'll get into trouble again—I think many people are making a category mistake when they think that by altering their body chemically or surgically they're getting the body of another sex. That's just an intellectual mistake. They can appear like the other sex, they can feel like the other sex, but how do you know what the other sex feels like from inside? You can't ever know it. I have no antipathy to the impulse to do so or the action of doing so. But I know that, if you're born with a female body,

you're always going to have some variation of the female body, whatever you do to it.

I think it is very complicated, and I think in many ways it's a personal decision that I wouldn't ever want to interfere with. But, when you want to understand conceptually what it entails, you need to think very clearly about the distinction between identification, feeling as if you're in the wrong body, and trying to change that body. I mean, it's just about the only thing you can't change. You can alter things, but it's still the same body you're changing. It's the body that you are. It's not the body you are given because that relies on a fantasy of you being different than your body.

"It's not as if our body is a fixed thing. But it is a fixed perspective from which we see things. It's that through which I am"

***Stance* (EW): How do you mediate your criticisms and your conceptualizations of trans as a category? How do you negotiate that with the very real potential to participate in the institutional erasure of trans persons?**

EG: Well, I don't think I do. I've had many trans students. I personally feel very supportive of them. I think, on the contrary, I'm not undertaking a critique of trans. I'm undertaking a kind of philosophical investigation of what a body is. That's what my work is about. And one of the things about a body is that you can do all sorts of things to change it, but there's still something of its substance that remains, that abides. And, of course, our bodies change every seven years, every cell is replaced. It's not as if our body is a fixed thing. But it is a fixed perspective from which we see things. It's that through which I am, whatever it is I am. And I don't care about how it's categorized.

That's a political question, a personal question, perhaps. But I'm very interested in how it is that this body-mind interacts. And, when people feel there's a dissonance, I don't want to disagree with them, but I want to flesh out: what does it mean to feel like you've got the body of another sex? What does the other sex's body feel like? I can't conceptualize it. Can you? It's impossible to imagine. One can fantasize. I'm not suggesting one can't. But one can't really imagine.

***Stance* (EW): Do you experience intersections of activism in academic work in your own life as a philosopher? And do you have any advice for philosophy students who are grappling with the sometimes conflicting realms of academia and activism or theory in practice?**

EG: When I was younger, activism and academic work were two orientations that I had that were not entirely separate. I still believe that activism has a logic of its own. Since I've come to the U.S., about fifteen years ago, I haven't done much activism. Partly, honestly, because coming to work in state universities, I felt that my activism was actually involved in teaching. That teaching has two realms: one is the transmission of information, and the other is the radicalization of the classroom experience. I didn't have enough energy to do anything more than that. Maybe this is a problem of middle age.

Do I have advice for philosophy students who are grappling with these conflicting areas? I do. Keep them separate. [laughter] Then there's no conflict. They function in two different arenas. It's like asking the question, "Should I do sport and do philosophy?" And the answer is, "Yes." They are two different kinds of activities. It's not that you can't use philosophy in activism, but it's also true that philosophy isn't all that helpful in activism. Being there, showing up, doing things is more important in activism. And in philosophy our activism is reading books, writing things, grading, and talking to people. It shouldn't be diminished. It's what's called theoretical practice.

***Stance* (EW): I like that. I was about to ask you if you you think writing theory is ever a form of activism?**

EG: Well, I think it is, but, let's be frank: it's a form of elitist activism. In *Volatile Bodies,* I wrote. Do activists read it? Maybe. But if you want to be an activist, I wouldn't suggest it. If you want to be an activist, figure out a cause, and figure out the best way to direct yourself to it. Activism is partly about publicity, about making something visible and gaining support for it. Philosophy can help you to logically work out how best to do that without problematizing. So, my advice to people who want to do both is keep them separate. And use a bit of philosophy when it's useful in activism, and use a bit of activism when it's useful in philosophy. But don't assume they're the same thing.

***Stance* (EW): Recently, post-colonial theory has seen the development of decolonial aesthetics, which seems to share a similarity with your proposal for a non-aesthetic philosophy of art. Do you think a non-aesthetic philosophy of art is also decolonial?**

EG: Well, I've got to say that I'm really not an expert on global art in any way, so I have no doubt that there are huge and interesting projects going on globally. The only art I know really anything about is Aboriginal art from Australia. And I would be very reluctant to call that either decolonial or postcolonial; I think it's firmly still colonial.

I think that a position of indigenous subjects is different from a position of colonies. Indigeneities are on the verge of a kind of extinction, and the post-colonial has the potential for enormous resurgence, enormous transformation. I know that there's been a lot of work done on indigenous art, and that's really interesting because indigenous art is always on the cusp between the colonial, the pre-colonial, and the post-colonial . . . Maybe I should ask the question in return. What links do you find in post-colonial aesthetics?

***Stance* (EW): The idea is that aesthetics, as a methodology, is entrenched in colonialism, in western dominance. Decolonial aesthetics has been an exploration, an unlearning and restructuring of those hierarchies. I saw some connections between that and your non-aesthetic philosophy of art.**

EG: I think you're right because art has this very special place that's different from commerce and the commodity. There's something about art that occurs in even the most oppressive of situations, such as the concentration camp. Art is always the glimmering of the possibility of another future. If art's read as other than an artistic expression, it is always about the summoning up of a new future, and as such it's always a kind of political gesture. So, yeah, I would think there is an affinity. This is partly because I was just reading about a show on Aboriginal art that was about to close at the Tate. Art is always in the process of becoming commodity, so like wild business, it's the expression of the hope of an oppressed people and the expression of a history.

> ***"[Art is] about the summoning up of a new future, and as such it's always a kind of political gesture"***

There's another moment at which, to the extent that this is successful, it becomes nothing but another commodity in the circuit of world art prices and the global economy more generally. There's a position between simply speaking for one's people and being consumed in the world of economics where no one or nothing in particular counts. And that, I think, is the plight of the post-colonial artist or even a colonized artist: how can one summon something up that isn't simply consumable?

***Stance* (EW): I wanted to ask about this definition of art that you posit in *Chaos, Territory, Art*. You talk about art being like a framed fragment of chaos, an extracted fragment of chaos. You claim that art doesn't produce concepts, rather it's just extracted frames. And to me, thinking about what you were just saying about the commodification of art, it seems that it's difficult to imagine how art**

DOESN'T PRODUCE CONCEPTS. IT'S DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE HOW ART DOESN'T CONSTANTLY REASSERT MEANING AND SIGNIFICATION.

EG: It's not that art doesn't produce concepts. I think this is a common misreading of Deleuze. Certainly art critics produce concepts about art. So, it might well have conceptual content, but it's not captured by a concept in a way that a philosophy is captured. Cartesianism is capturable by a dozen concepts, just as the work of Jackson Pollock is capturable by a certain style. But the style isn't about ideas, even though my ideas may flow about it. It's about paint. It's about movement. It's about orientation: horizontal, vertical. So, art might well generate ideas; philosophy might well generate percepts and affects, but by chance—not inherently.

***STANCE* (EW): *SEXUAL SUBVERSIONS* WAS DESIGNED AS A TEACHING TOOL TO INTRODUCE UNDERGRADUATES TO FRENCH FEMINISMS. IF DONE TODAY, WOULD YOU FOCUS ON THE SAME THREE PHILOSOPHERS? ARE THERE NEW WORKS YOU WOULD WANT TO INCLUDE?**

EG: Well, that's a very, very tricky and political question. [laughter] The question really is, "Would I choose the same people now, and did they turn out to be as important as they seemed back then?" I'll be honest with you, if I had to do a book on three French feminists now, I would only choose Irigaray. At the time I wrote it, people assumed that the three would be Irigaray, Kristeva, and Cixous, who were the most well-known of the French feminists at that time. But at the time I didn't want to work on Cixous, largely because her work wasn't as philosophical as the work of Michèle Le Doeuff. I don't regret writing about Michèle Le Doeuff in any way, but I think if I had to do a similar version now I wouldn't include her. I would probably include a couple of the younger-generation French-speaking feminists. Perhaps Isabelle Stengers or Catherine Malabou. But definitely Irigaray still; she's still essential to me.

***STANCE* (EW): YOU SAY FEMINISM REQUIRES A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE REAL TO DEVELOP ITS OWN ONTOLOGIES, EPISTEMOLOGIES, AND COSMOLOGIES. WE'RE UNDERGRADUATES DOING FEMINISM: WHAT DO YOU THINK WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND OF THE REAL?**

EG: For undergraduates doing philosophy, and maybe feminist philosophy, I think we need to understand how the real is constructed. But I think for graduate students we need to ask the question, "What's it constructed out of?" I think that heuristically, for students, it's really important not to take the apparent givenness of the real as given. It needs to be subjected to a kind of critical reflection so that everyday opinions, advertizing images, silly beliefs that you get from school and from your friends are allowed to be filtered through some kind of critical reflection.

For undergraduate students, I think it's really important to understand that nature isn't given, that science is a way of us gathering together certain concepts that allow nature to be organized in a particular way. It would be really good to give undergraduate students a critical self-awareness of the construction of knowledge. At the graduate level, though, I think there are all sorts of popular positions, and it's about time we subject them to certain kinds of scrutiny. One of the things that I find problematic is the whole linguistic turn: where all of nature was in fact language, all of the real was symbolic, nature was historicized, history was the overcoming of nature.

***Stance* (EW): How have you seen feminism contribute to new modes of thinking, philosophizing, theorizing, and conceptualizing? This is a broad question, but, in that vein, what more do you think needs to be done?**

EG: I think feminism has contributed a lot in the last twenty years to the questioning of the whiteness, Euro-centrism, heteronormativity of the philosophical subject. I think that this is what it's developed in the last twenty years. Its future entails moving from an understanding of those limits to producing questions that are now not just reactive questions, but questions that are actively interesting in their own terms to women as philosophers: questions about the future, materiality, the universe; questions not only about epistemology, but also about ontology.

The question of the real is a question we didn't ask ten years ago. It seems a little weird now, because we're so naturalized, that one would even describe one's work as metaphysical. Ten years ago doing so would have been shocking and the kiss of death. It'd have been like saying, "I'm an essentialist and I'm proud of it." But the debates have changed. Certain debates have been lost, like the essentialism debate, or essentialism versus constructionism.

So, feminist philosophy has a whole potential, not just to talk about women and their minoritized position, but to talk about the world from the perspective of women. And, as Irigaray has made clear, half of knowledge is yet to be created. We have physics, we have mathematics, we have philosophy—but so far, for 5,000 years, they've been done by men. What would such a project look like—not just about ourselves but about the world—if it's done by both sexes and by all races?

***Stance* (EW): I think we've actually arrived at our last question, which is: what advice do you have for students who are interested in pursuing philosophy?**

EG: That's an excellent question in view of the current crisis in the humanities and the prognosis that none of us in the humanities will have a future at work or anywhere else. So, my advice for those students who want to go on in philosophy is make sure that you really love it. Make sure it's one of those things you really have to do because there's no joy in doing philosophy unless you have that feeling. But if you have that feeling, never compromise. Do it, and figure out a way to make a living later. Accept the reality that, if you have a PhD in philosophy, you may not be the most desirable person in an economic position. [laughter] But also understand that, by doing something like a PhD in philosophy, you're doing a labor of love that you wouldn't do for any other reason than that you have to. That's the only reason anyone ever does philosophy now. That's the best reason for doing philosophy—because you really want to think about this thing.

"there's no joy in doing philosophy unless you [really love it]. But if you have that feeling, never compromise"

So, if you do it, don't look back. [laughter] Don't regret all the money you didn't make. Just enjoy all the concepts that you will get to savor. That's my advice to would-be philosophy students. Do it if you are madly in love with it. Otherwise, don't.

What I enjoy the most is having really excited students. That's the greatest thrill that a philosopher ever gets: not writing alone in a dark room but exciting people, especially young people, with a fire for ideas that doesn't come very easily. So, the fact that I'm talking to a bunch of undergraduates right now makes me totally thrilled.

***Stance* (EW): Thank you so much. I think we're at the end of our time. But I want to thank you again for speaking with us today. Your answers were wonderful, and you gave us a lot to think about, and we're very excited to include your interview in our journal.**

EG: And thanks so much for asking me. I really enjoyed it, scared as I was to begin with.

Author *Biographies*

Nicholas James Alcock is currently a student of Philosophy at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. His primary interests include aesthetics and Hellenistic philosophy. Apart from philosophy, Nicholas also studies Classics and is a writer of poetry. He is pleased to have his first philosophical essay published with *Stance*.

Jenna Blake is a senior at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh with a self-defined major in arts, communications, and cultural studies. Her philosophical interests include feminist theory, postcolonial theory, and theories of justice. She particularly likes applying those modes of thought to popular culture and her favorite television shows.

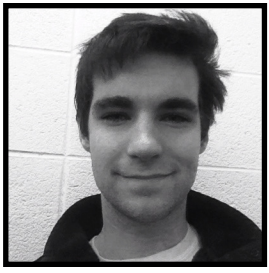
Anna Brinkerhoff is an Alabama native and is currently a junior at Pepperdine University in Malibu, California. Her main interests in philosophy are epistemology, philosophy of religion, and ethics. When she's not doing philosophy, she enjoys watching college football, baking cupcakes, and drinking good coffee.

Nicholas Brown is currently completing his fourth year of study at St. Mary's College. He is majoring in both English and Philosophy, and he is working on a cross-disciplinary senior project entitled "The Storied Life: Art as the Practice of Liberation."

Austin Heath is a junior at Hamilton College in Clinton, New York. He is pursuing a Philosophy major and a Psychology minor and enjoys studying philosophy of mathematics, ancient philosophy, philosophy of mind, and epistemology.

Casey Hladik is a junior Biology major and Philosophy minor in the Science, Humanities, and Medicine Program at Siena College in Loudonville, New York. He will continue in the program at Albany Medical College in 2015. Casey is interested in existentialism, bioethics, and what it means to heal and be a healer.

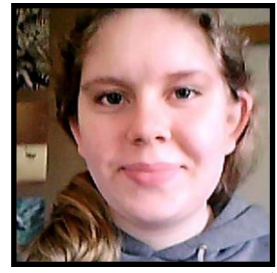
Liz Jackson is a senior at Kansas State University, and she also has a degree in Bible from a local Christian college. Her most-loved areas of Philosophy are epistemology, metaphysics, and philosophy of religion. She will begin pursing a PhD in Philosophy this fall. In her free time, she loves to play and watch sports (especially basketball), travel, read, and drink coffee.



Nicholas Logan is originally from Kansas City and is a senior at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. He will graduate with a double major in Philosophy and Psychology and a minor in English. Aside from his interest in existentialist and post-modern philosophy, Nicholas also enjoys reading and writing short fiction.

Lauren Pass is a junior Philosophy and Medical Anthropology student at the University of Iowa. Her philosophical interests include feminist theories of embodiment, queer theory, and illness narratives. Her life ambitions include going to graduate school for feminist philosophy and raising a small fleet of Welsh corgi puppies.

Betty Stoneman is a Philosophy major and Peace and Justice Studies minor at Utah Valley University. Her main philosophical interests are social and political philosophy, philosophy of religion, philosophy of law, ethics, and feminism. Specifically, she is interested in how ideology shapes social relations and the political ramifications of such. On the side, she is immensely curious about the possibility of finding a Wittgensteinian approach to philosophical pluralism. She enjoys traveling, philosophical debates, reading poetry, watching documentaries, and attending an eclectic array of music events ranging from the symphony to local punk shows.



Jessa Wood is a first-year student at Bloomsburg University in Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania. She is a Philosophy major with minors in Political Science and Spanish. Her philosophical interests include logic, ethics, and political and social philosophy.