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ABOUT THE COVER



Stance 15's cover pictures smoke converging in the center, as the title fades away into the background. People dot the cover as well—sitting, jumping, and contemplating. We hope to show that philosophy encompasses all aspects of life and that as one moves throughout their daily routine, and existence, that the act of questioning, discovering, and diving into deep understanding can happen anywhere and anytime; most importantly, it can be fun. The smoke is to represent the expansion of thought as one furthers their philosophy journey, no matter how new they may be to it.

The figures shown are to be representative of all people and especially of you, the reader. As you walk to class, bike to your job, work on projects, and enjoy your days as an undergrad, don't forget to challenge everything—especially your STANCE.

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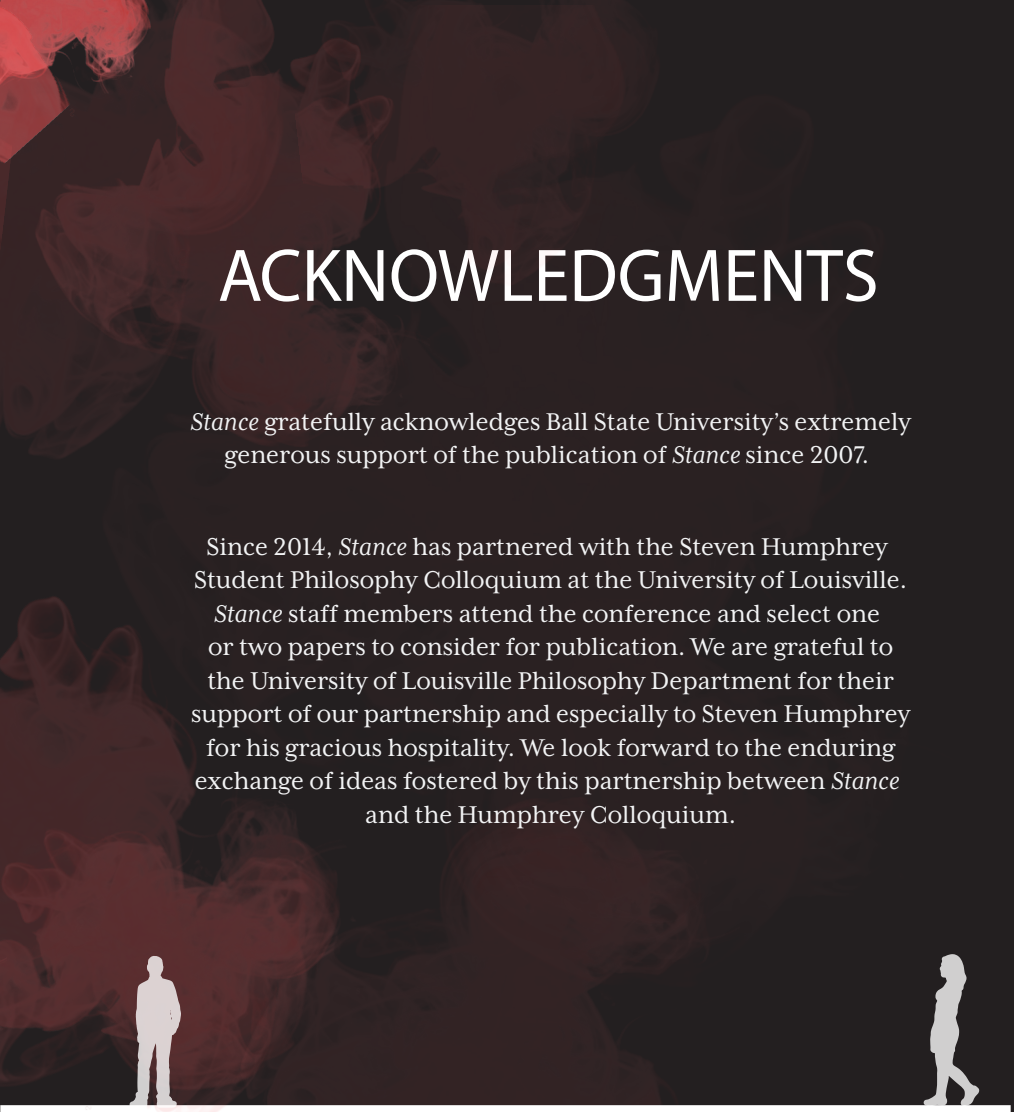
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TABLE OF CONTENTS



WHY DOES GOD NEED FREEDOM?

Klayton Silverpen

12



72



BRINGING THE MARGINALIZED INTO EPISTEMOLOGY

Kelly Oduro

THE WISDOM OF WIZARDS

The Cognitive Value of Fantasy Literature

Greyson Gold

22



82



THINKING AND SPEAKING

Vaibhav Gaddam

THE CASE AGAINST SPECIESISM AND SEXISM

An Interactionist Approach to Singer and Adams

Kelsey Gaylord

34



92



PUTNAM'S PROBLEM OF THE ROBOT AND
EXTENDED MINDS

Jacob Berk

IS J.S. MILL'S ACCOUNT OF FREE SPEECH SUSTAINABLE
IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA?

Nevin Chellappah

46



104



HOW A BUDDHA ACTS
Laying Bricks for a Buddhist Theory of Action

Mukund Maithani

ON THE STRUCTURE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Experiential Swaths within Holism

Shir Bloch

60



116



KANTIAN DISREGARD FOR NON-RATIONAL HUMANS
Immanuel Kant's Haunting Impact on Contemporary Bioethics

Jay Six

128

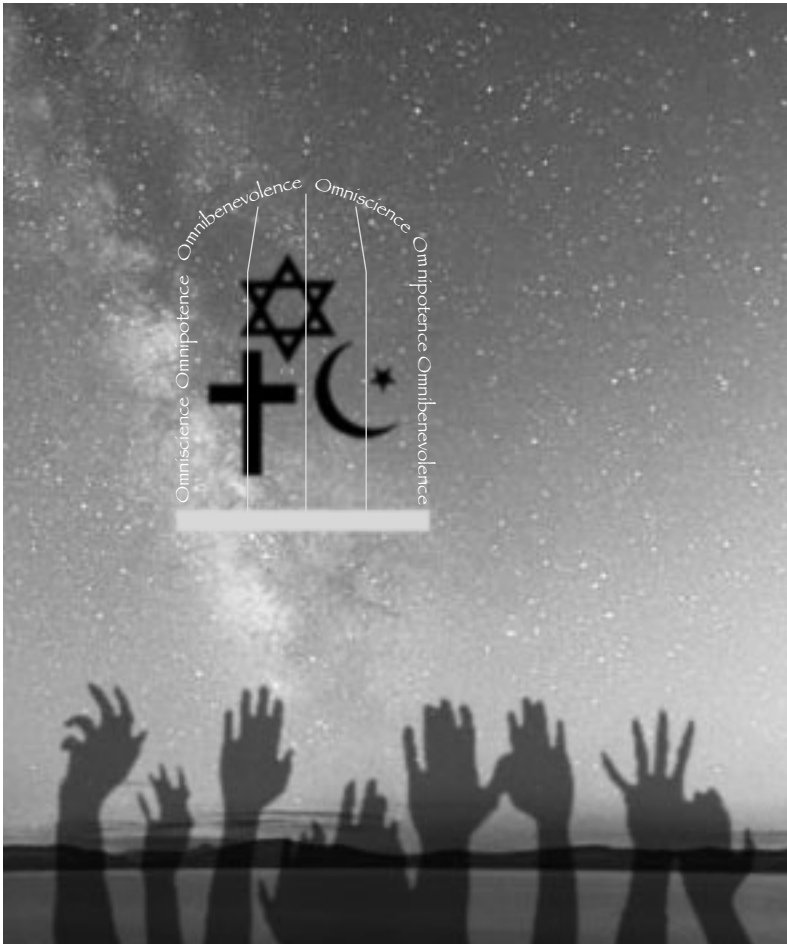


MUSIC, CAGE'S SILENCE, AND ART

An Interview with Stephen Davies, PhD

Grace Georgi

WHY DOES GOD NEED FREEDOM?



KLAYTON SILVERPEN

ABSTRACT

God is often portrayed as being omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent. Many worry that these traits make it so that God cannot possess free will. However, very little is said about why a God without freedom would be an issue. I argue that God does not need the kind of freedom we usually care about. I make a case that free will is important to us because it allows us to assign blame and praise to others. From here, I argue that being able to blame God is unimportant, and that God can still be praised even without free will.



The classical conception of God (as he is portrayed in much of Christian, Jewish, and Islamic theology and philosophy) is that he is a maximally perfect being.¹ This means that every good quality a being can possess, he possesses it to the maximum. From this, we can deduce that he must be all-powerful (omnipotent), all-knowing (omniscient), and all-good (omnibenevolent), among other things. But this leads to a problem. For any choice God could make, he wants to pick the best option (because he is omnibenevolent), he knows what the best option is (because he is omniscient), and he is able to perform whatever action the best choice requires (because he is omnipotent). If this is true, then it seems that God does not have free will in deciding to perform that action.

This is a problem that many philosophers of religion have discussed.² However, there has not been much discussion about whether this is a problem. We generally view free will as important because freedom is a factor in whether someone is blameworthy or praiseworthy for their actions. If someone freely commits a crime, they are blameworthy, but if they are forced to commit a crime (through coercion, mind control, physical force, etc.), they are not blameworthy. Any threat to free will is a threat to accountability. But does this threat apply equally to God?

In this essay, I will explore the question of whether God needs free will. First, I will review why God might not have free will (according to a libertarian conception of free will) based on his attributes. Second, I will review the reasons why freedom is important for our conception of blame and praise. Third, I will examine whether these reasons need to be applied to God. I will ultimately conclude that, while freedom is very important for us, it is not important for God.

According to the libertarian conception of free will, an action is free if the agent performing the action could have instead done otherwise. For example, my choice to stay at a house party is only free if I could have instead not stayed at the house party. If I could have decided to leave and successfully walked out of the house, then my choice to stay was completely free. If for some reason I was unable to leave, by physical force or otherwise, then my choice to stay would not be free.

1 The classical conception of God also genders God as male, although this is sometimes regarded as problematic. The gendering of God is an interesting issue, but it is not relevant to this discussion and so I will not be getting into it here. I will be using male pronouns for God, but only for the sake of convenience.

2 For discussions on this topic, see William Rowe, "Can God Be Free?," *Faith and Philosophy* 19, no. 4 (2002): 405-24, 10.5840/faithphil200219446; and Edward Wierenga, "The Freedom of God," *Faith and Philosophy* 19, no. 4 (2002): 425-36, 10.5840/faithphil200219447.

In God's case, it seems that if he is truly omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent, he cannot do otherwise, no matter what choice he is making. How could he? Let us compare God, with all his perfections, to a regular human person, with all their imperfections. Why might a normal person not make the best possible choice in any scenario? First, a person may not want to choose the best possible choice. Maybe they would rather be evil, or simply ambivalent. Second, a person might be unsure about what the best choice is. In this case, they would have to make a judgment call and choose between two or more "could-be-best" options. Third, a person may not be able to make the best choice, whether they are physically unable to accomplish the required tasks or emotionally or mentally unable to follow through with what they know is best.

None of these is a problem for a maximally perfect God, however. First, God could never choose to do anything other than the best possible action, because he is omnibenevolent. Second, God could never be mistaken or unsure about what the best option is because he is omniscient. Third, God could never fail to follow through with performing the best action, because he is omnipotent. Adding these all together, it seems that God is unable to make any choice other than the best possible one since he would always desire to perform it, have knowledge of what it is, and possess the ability to do it. If free will requires being able to do otherwise, then this would imply that God does not have free will.

While there may be other reasons for valuing free will, arguably the most important reason is praise and blame. To quote Robert Kane, "Free will is also intimately related to notions of accountability, blameworthiness, and praiseworthiness..."³ This notion is fairly intuitive. If I rob a bank, I can rightfully be held responsible for my wrongdoing. But if I am being blackmailed, held at gunpoint, or implanted with a brain-controlling device, and thereby forced to rob a bank, I could not be held responsible for the robbery since it was not a free action. Since a free action is one in which the agent could have done otherwise, we could say that an agent cannot be blameworthy for their actions unless another course of action was available to them.

Of course, there are other factors that might affect one's blameworthiness. For example, ignorance is often assumed to absolve someone of blame. Carl Ginet gives the example:

Simon enters the hotel room he has just checked into and flips what appears to be, and he takes to be, an ordinary light switch, but, to his surprise and consternation, the flipping of the switch sets off a loud fire alarm. It seems that, because he did

3 Robert Kane, *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 4.



not know that flipping the switch would have this unfortunate consequence, it would be wrong to feel indignant with him for bringing about that consequence.⁴

This is an example of a case where the agent (Simon) could have done otherwise but is not blameworthy. Being able to do otherwise seems to be a necessary, but not sufficient, reason for being blameworthy for an action. We might add a principle outlining that the agent must also be sufficiently aware of the consequences of their actions in addition to being able to do otherwise, but this, while technically true, is somewhat clumsy of an approach. Rather than add a new condition for each counterexample we encounter (for who knows how many more counterexamples could be conceived), I suggest we modify our first condition to be more specific. I propose that an agent is not blameworthy unless they could have done better.

To illustrate this, let us imagine a rather contrived example where I am held at gunpoint and coerced into robbing a bank. However, the captors are feeling generous and allow me to choose which bank I rob, giving me two choices. Let us call them Bank A and Bank B. Out of these two banks, I cannot see any reasons to rob one bank over the other (and let us grant that I am correct about this—there are no moral advantages to robbing Bank A rather than Bank B, and vice versa). Having no criteria on which to decide, I pick Bank A at random. After the crime is done, I am put on trial. After explaining to the court in detail how I was held at gunpoint and told to rob one of two banks, the prosecution objects. They argue that my robbing Bank A was a free action, which I voluntarily chose to do because I could have done otherwise—namely, I could have robbed Bank B instead. To the prosecutor's dismay, however, the judge, the jury, and the defense are unanimously unconvinced. The judge explains that because my choices were restricted to either robbing Bank A or robbing Bank B, and that these two choices are of equal moral value, I did not make a choice bearing any moral significance and should not be blamed. More specifically, my actions are not blameworthy because, although I could have done otherwise, I could not have done better.

This is key to what is valued about freedom. It is not merely the ability to do otherwise, but the ability to do better or worse. In order for someone to be blameworthy for an action, they have to have been able to do better than they did, and they must fail to do so. In other words, the freedom to do better or worse than we actually do is the freedom we care about.

Now that we have an understanding of the kind of freedom we care about—being able to do better or worse—we can investigate whether or not this kind of freedom is an important quality for God to have. I argue that God would not be any better off by having this freedom; I would go as far as to argue he would be worse off if he possessed the kind of freedom we care about.

If God is truly a maximally perfect being—omniscient, omnipotent, and omnibenevolent—then what does freedom add? In order to be free, he would need to be able to do otherwise. However, as discussed earlier, this seems to be incompatible with God's maximal perfection. There have been attempts to get around this, however. For example, Richard Swinburne argues while God's perfection does limit him, it does not limit him completely.⁵ In a choice between two equally good options, Swinburne gives the example of creating one of two equally good possible worlds. In this scenario, God could still choose between the equally good options, thus maintaining his freedom. However, this freedom does not amount to all that much. Edward Wierenga, in response to Swinburne and others who hold Swinburne's view, says:

It amounts to saying that God is free only when it does not matter what he does. In any situation in which there is a best action open to God, Swinburne and Flint agree that his nature compels him to do it. They only find room for God's freedom in circumstances in which any choice he makes is on a par with any other, where he might as well choose blindly or randomly, and that is not a significant amount of freedom.⁶

I am inclined to agree with Wierenga. The scenario Swinburne describes is analogous to the bank-robbing example I gave earlier; God choosing between perfect world A and perfect world B is the same as my choosing between bank A and bank B. This is to say, while we each could have done differently, neither of us could have done better or worse. The actions are technically free, but they lack the freedom we care about.

In order to have the freedom we care about, God would need to be able to do better or worse. This is, however, not only impossible but undesirable. First, God cannot do better, because every action God takes is the best action, on account of his maximal perfection. Similarly, God could not have ever done worse—nor would we want him to. To grant God the freedom we care about would be to allow God to do worse than he actually does; this is an undesirable outcome. In the end, it seems better that God lacks the freedom to do worse.

4 Carl Ginet, "The Epistemic Requirements for Moral Responsibility," *Philosophical Perspectives* 14 (2000): 267-77, 10.1111/0029-4624.34.s14.14.

5 Richard Swinburne, *The Christian God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 134-35.

6 Wierenga, "Freedom of God," 433.



This does have the consequence of God being exempt from blame for all his actions. Since he cannot perform any actions of which he could have done better, he cannot perform any actions that are blameworthy. This consequence is a non-issue, however. Since God always performs the best possible action, he would never perform an action for which he could be blamed, even if he had the freedom necessary. In the end, exempting God from blame changes nothing about God.

But what about praise? After all, if he could not have done worse, can he really be praised for his actions? Given that praise and worship are important parts of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, God's lack of freedom could be devastating to their theology if it implies that God is not praiseworthy. Luckily, there are compelling reasons to believe that praise is not subject to the same considerations as blame. While blame requires that we could have done better, praise does not require that we could have done worse. Susan Wolf argues for such a position in her essay "Asymmetrical Freedom," in which she points out, "If an agent does the right thing for just the right reason, it seems absurd to ask whether he could have done the wrong. 'I cannot tell a lie,' 'He couldn't hurt a fly' are not exemptions from praiseworthiness but testimonies to it."⁷ Following this logic, God's inability to do worse does not prevent people from praising God; rather, this is precisely the reason God should be praised. God's lack of freedom in no way implies a lack of praiseworthiness, but rather inadvertently implies the opposite.

God's lack of freedom seems to be of no consequence. We cannot blame God for his actions, but that was already the case since he would never perform any bad action for which we could blame him. We can still praise God for his good actions, since his inability to do worse than he actually does only adds to his praiseworthiness. While freedom is an important feature for us humans to have, who are imperfect, it is not important that God share the same freedom.

It is worth noting that when I say God does not need free will, I mean the libertarian conception of free will, which is the version I have been working with through this analysis and argument. This does not rule out the option of adopting a compatibilist theory of free will (one that denies that freedom requires being able to do otherwise) instead.⁸ I am in favor of compatibilism; however, my goal in the article was to show that if you adopt the libertarian theory of free will (namely, that free actions are ones where the agent could have done otherwise), then there is no reason to think that God has any use for free will. I contend that God is better off without libertarian free will, and maximal perfection is a fine alternative.

⁷ Susan Wolf, "Asymmetrical Freedom," *The Journal of Philosophy* 77, no. 3 (1980): 156, 10.2307/2025667.

⁸ An approach suggested in Wierenga, "Freedom of God," 434.



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THE WISDOM OF WIZARDS: The Cognitive Value of Fantasy Literature



GREYSON GOLD

ABSTRACT

In this paper, I explore the cognitive value of fantasy literature. Using Immanuel Kant's and Jean-Paul Sartre's discussions of the imagination, and J.R.R. Tolkien's "On Fairy Stories," I argue that fantasy literature is cognitively valuable when it confers phenomenal knowledge. I move on to demonstrate what a work of fantasy literature requires to confer this phenomenal knowledge. Fantasy literature has the potential to reveal true insights into this world when it brings the reader into a state of "secondary belief" and confers phenomenal knowledge through the union of world and story.



I. INTRODUCTION

In an article on the science fiction literature of his day, English author and academic C.S. Lewis wrote, “If good novels are comments on life, then good stories of this sort...are actual additions to life; they give, like certain rare dreams, sensations we never had before, and enlarge our conception of the range of possible experience.”¹ Lewis believed that fantasy literature is not simply aesthetics or escapism, but that it can offer something truly meaningful. He takes a stand in the debate over the cognitive value of literature dating back to Ancient Greece. Plato called this the “old quarrel between poetry and philosophy.”² In the *Republic*, Plato argues that poets should be dismissed from the well-ordered city-state for, as Melvin Chen summarizes, “poetry is an imitative art that presents scenes that are far removed from reality.”³ Plato makes this strong claim but acknowledges that he is willing to readmit the poets into his well-ordered society if one could present a case in their defense.⁴ Fantasy literature is not equivalent to poetry, but Plato’s critiques of poetry apply *mutatis mutandis* to fiction and to fantasy literature especially. If fantasy literature does not deal with reality, what can one gain from it that is true or cognitively valuable?

In this paper, I argue that fantasy literature is valuable when it confers phenomenal knowledge. Additionally, I demonstrate what a work of fantasy literature requires to achieve this end. Importantly, the author must build a world that effectively engages the imagination, bringing the reader into a state of “secondary belief.” Another key criteria to give way to phenomenal knowledge is the crucial union of world and story. Fantasy literature, as Lewis recognized, need not quarrel with philosophers.

II. THE QUESTION OF COGNITIVE VALUE IN FANTASY LITERATURE

Plato’s ancient quarrel continues today in debates between cognitive and anti-cognitive interpretations of fiction. Erik Schmidt, in an article on the value of fiction, defines the cognitivist position well:

Cognitivists endorse two basic claims about fiction: (1) Fiction can have cognitive value by revealing or supporting insights into the world that properly count as true. (2) The cognitive

value of a work of fiction contributes directly to that work’s literary value.⁵

This paper intends to argue that fantasy literature specifically can reveal or support insights into the world that properly count as true. It will also outline what a work of fantasy literature requires to be considered cognitively valuable.

Many have argued that fictional literature has something of value to offer, but fantasy is easily cast by the wayside as escapism or aesthetics. After all, fantasy literature is not based in fact, is entirely fictional, and is set in a different world. It is, in reference to Plato’s critique, “far removed from reality.” This presents a challenge to the case for the value of fantasy literature. However, fantasy literature can be valuable, and this value is most clearly displayed in the phenomenal knowledge one can gain.

Phenomenal knowledge, as defined by literary cognitivists, is not propositional knowledge—knowledge that can be clearly stated through propositions. It is rather, in the words of Wolfgang Huemer, “a knowledge of *what-it-is-like* to have a certain experience or be a certain character.”⁶ This kind of phenomenal knowledge applies more immediately to a fictional story set in the world as we know it. For example, one could read a story about a kid who grows up in poverty on the streets of New York and gain phenomenal knowledge through an imaginative experience, helping one to understand the suffering of homeless and impoverished people. However, since fantasy literature is farther removed from reality, this phenomenal knowledge is not manifested so immediately; yet it can certainly still be realized in this medium.

The phenomenal knowledge possible in fantasy literature is not literally experiencing what it is like to go into battle against a wizard with an elf by one’s side but rather being drawn into an imaginative experiential understanding of ideas that are difficult to articulate outside of the context of the story—ideas of death, mortality, evil, etc. Because the story is set in a separate world with different rules governing reality, fantasy literature has the potential to actualize and “enlarge” abstract ideas in the imagination that fictional stories set in our world struggle to demonstrate.⁷ Fantasy literature can be valuable because it is able—by the imagination immersing the reader in the story and world—to confer something very difficult to portray in analytic terms or primary-world fictional literature.

1 C.S. Lewis, *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories*, ed. Walter Hooper (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), 70.

2 Plato, *Republic*, trans. C.D.C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2004), 311.

3 Melvin Chen, “Philosophy and Literature: Problems of a Philosophical Subdiscipline,” *Philosophy and Literature* 41, no. 2 (2017): 476, 10.1353/phl.2017.0052.

4 Chen, “Problems,” 477.

5 Erik Schmidt, “Knowing Fictions: Metalepsis and the Cognitive Value of Fiction,” *Res Philosophica* 93, no. 2 (2016): 484, 10.11612/resphil.2016.93.2.9.

6 Wolfgang Huemer, “Engaging with Works of Fiction,” *Rivista di Estetica* 70, no. 1 (2019): 14, 10.4000/estetica.5170.

7 Lewis, *Other Worlds*, 70.



Fantasy is a difficult word to define with precision. To answer the question “what is fantasy?” the essay “On Fairy-Stories” by fantasy author J.R.R. Tolkien can be applied. Tolkien writes, a “fairy-story is one which touches on or uses Faërie...Faërie itself may perhaps most nearly be translated by Magic—but it is a magic of a peculiar mood and power.”⁸ Tolkien’s language is vivid, fantastical, and somewhat ambiguous, but his definition brings insight for outlining what fantasy literature is at its core. Fantasy literature is not just stories about elves, dwarves, and wizards in a distant, medieval land—although stories of that kind are included in this definition. Fantasy literature is literature in which the author creates an imagined world, where a kind of magic permeates its existence. Yet in that imagined world, the magic is not strange and foreign—although it may be uncommon—but rather a familiar part of that universe.

Additionally, a fantasy world could resemble our world in most every aspect, or it could be almost entirely different. Fantasy is lost when the imagined world has no magic, or when it is totally removed from reality—when it resembles the primary world too closely, or not at all. Furthermore, fantasy literature ought to present its imagined world as if it were true and existent. Thus, stories that end up being an illusion or dream of sorts, like Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*, are excluded.⁹ Although this definition of fantasy may not be as precise as the philosopher may prefer, it is sufficient for the argument of this paper. However, for fantasy literature to confer phenomenal knowledge, it must do more than simply fit into these categories; it must engage the imagination.

III. IMAGINATION

In a simple sense, imagination is at the heart of fantasy. It is through the faculty of the imagination that one is able to perceive the cognitive value of fantasy. To convey how fantasy literature engages the imagination, one must first define the imagination and how it functions.

The imagination does not just recall images from the memory to direct itself to absent objects, but rather has the ability to produce something new. Immanuel Kant makes an important distinction:

Now insofar as the imagination is spontaneity, I also occasionally call it the productive imagination, and thereby distinguish it from the reproductive imagination, whose synthesis is subject solely to empirical laws, namely those of association.¹⁰

8 J.R.R. Tolkien, “On Fairy-Stories,” in *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*, ed. Christopher Tolkien (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 114.

9 Tolkien, “On Fairy-Stories,” 117.

10 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. P. Guyer and A.W. Wood (New York: Cambridge, 1998), 256-57.

One can use their imagination to mentally reproduce something—like recalling an image to memory—but one can also use the imagination to produce something new out of familiar materials of perception.¹¹ When engaging the productive imagination, one does not create a new color or sensation in their mind; rather, they create new forms out of the colors, shapes, and dimensions already known.

But the imagination is not limited to images in the mind; it is rather, as Paul Ricoeur calls it, “both a thinking and a seeing.”¹² This idea applies especially to the role of the reader’s imagination. When one reads literature, they are constantly creating images in their mind as well as incorporating the story, thinking through how the plot might continue. One is constructing an entire world in their imagination. Jean-Paul Sartre argues that the act of imagining through reading is less abstract than thinking. Reading can bring the reader into the presence of “concrete beings.”¹³ Lior Levy summarizes Sartre’s argument in this way, “‘Anna Karenina’ and ‘Sherlock Holmes’ are not abstract concepts that one forms after reading, nor are they names given to objects that were already encountered in experience...Instead, they are unreal entities that become concrete as reading advances.”¹⁴ Imagining specifically through the process of reading allows one to create something concrete, albeit unreal, but still solid and knowable. Therefore, reading fantasy literature should not just be, as Samuel Taylor Coleridge called it, a “willing suspension of disbelief,”¹⁵ but rather, as Tolkien calls it, an enchanted state of “secondary belief.”¹⁶ The reader enters a “secondary world” inside of which one experiences the events and features of that world as true as concrete.¹⁷

One can only imagine the concrete world of a fantasy story after the author first creates a concrete world through their own imagination. In his work *What is Literature*, Sartre writes “the literary object though realized through language, is never given in language.”¹⁸ Although Sartre is referring to how fiction conveys the narrative as a whole to the reader, this thought clarifies how fantasy can confer phenomenal knowledge. In this example, “literary object” could be replaced with “phenomenal knowledge.” Phenomenal knowledge is not knowledge received through the propositions of a text or the individual words but rather through

11 Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, ed. P. Guyer, trans. P. Guyer and E. Matthews (New York: Cambridge, 2000), 192.

12 Lior Levy, “Sartre and Ricoeur on Productive Imagination,” *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 52, no. 1 (2014): 48, 10.1111/sjp.12049.

13 Levy, “Productive Imagination,” 47.

14 Levy, “Productive Imagination,” 47.

15 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “Chapter XIV,” in *Biographia Literaria* (New York: Leavitt, Lord & Co., 1834), 174.

16 Tolkien, “On Fairy-Stories,” 140.

17 Tolkien, “On Fairy-Stories,” 140.

18 Levy, “Productive Imagination,” 52.



the creation of the world of the text in conjunction with the story. So, the language of a fantasy story that confers phenomenal knowledge must “realize” said knowledge in its secondary world as opposed to delivering it in the form of propositions. The two essential aspects of a work of fantasy literature that realizes phenomenal knowledge are sub-creation and story.

IV. SUB-CREATION

“Sub-creation”—to borrow Tolkien’s designation—is taking a world from one’s own imagination and delivering it to the reader through literature; it is the process of creating a secondary world.¹⁹ Effective sub-creation brings the reader into a state of secondary belief. So how does one create a work of fantasy literature that effectively encapsulates the many aspects of the above-mentioned discussion? How does one effectively sub-create?

Mark J.P. Wolf outlines effective sub-creation in his book, *Building Imaginary Worlds*.²⁰ His criteria do not explicitly refer to how a text can confer phenomenal knowledge but rather what makes an imaginary world believable and effective. His work is worth mentioning, however, because the first thing a fantasy story requires to confer phenomenal knowledge is an effective world—the reader must be brought into a state of secondary belief. Wolf’s three criteria for creating this ideal imaginary world are invention, completeness, and consistency.

A successful secondary world requires invention. Wolf defines invention as “the degree to which the default assumptions based on the primary world have been changed.”²¹ Too much invention could totally disconnect a work of fantasy fiction from the primary world, and if that work loses all connection to the primary world, then the reader has nothing to relate to. Yet the divergent aspects of a secondary world make a cognitively valuable fantasy work possible; a balance is required. Invention can be broken down into four primary categories: the nominal, the cultural, the natural, and the ontological.²² The nominal deals with names of things in the universe. The cultural invents new customs, institutions, countries, cultures, religions, etc. The natural creates new continents, planets, species, and races of creatures. The ontological invents new laws for the world’s existence.²³ A balanced

19 Tolkien, “On Fairy-Stories,” 139.

20 Mark J.P. Wolf, *Building Imaginary Worlds: The Theory and History of Subcreation* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

21 Wolf, *Imaginary Worlds*, 34.

22 Wolf, *Imaginary Worlds*, 35-36.

23 The ontological realm has the potential to go beyond the scope of fantasy literature by creating a world that is not wholly conceivable by the human mind, i.e., a world that transcends or entirely alters space and time.

level of invention changes enough in these four realms that the reader enters a separate world that can still be related to and clearly imagined.

Additionally, completeness and consistency are necessary features of a story that produces secondary belief. Completeness refers to the level to which the world contains descriptions and explanations pertaining to background details and characters’ experiences which together create a feasible world.²⁴ Ultimately, no fantasy story creates a wholly complete world, yet authors strive to make their fantasy worlds as complete as they can, for the more complete a fantasy world, the deeper the reader is immersed. Additionally, an effective fantasy story must have consistency—consistency in its plot and world. As mentioned earlier, the fantasy story presents its imagined world as true, so the laws of the world—even if they are strange or invented—must remain consistent. Fantasy author and successful sub-creator George Macdonald wrote on the issue saying:

His world once invented, the highest law that comes next into play is, that there shall be harmony between the laws by which the new world has begun to exist...To be able to live a moment in an imagined world, we must see the laws of its existence obeyed. Those broken, we fall out of it.²⁵

Even if the laws of the fantasy world are far different from our own, the laws must be upheld. Invention, completeness, and consistency are necessary aspects of successful sub-creation, and successful sub-creation is one of the necessary aspects of fantasy literature that confers phenomenal knowledge.

V. STORY

A fantasy story cannot confer phenomenal knowledge through the secondary world alone. Another aspect is required: story. Story is very simply the series of imagined events in the work of literature, and it is through these events that an imaginary world is brought to life. However, the story and the world of a fantasy novel are not separable. Rather, they must work in conjunction to convey phenomenal knowledge. The story must also be complete, consistent, and sufficiently invented for many of the same reasons. Importantly, as mentioned earlier, phenomenal knowledge emerges from an experience of the imagination. So, one may look for phenomenal knowledge in allegory or symbolism, but in the fantasy story, phenomenal knowledge is not contained there. Rather, phenomenal knowledge is contained in the union of the secondary world and story—in this conjunction itself. The literature must be written in

24 Wolf, *Imaginary Worlds*, 38.

25 George MacDonald, *The Light Princess and Other Fairy Stories* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), iv-v.



a way that the fantasy object in itself presents something cognitively valuable. Tolkien demonstrates this idea well in a letter to Herbert Schiro on *The Lord of the Rings*:

There is no “symbolism” or conscious allegory in my story...To ask if the Orcs “are” Communists is to me as sensible as asking if Communists are Orcs. That there is no allegory does not, of course, say there is no applicability. There always is....But I should say, if asked, the tale is not really about Power and Dominion: that only sets the wheels going; it is about Death and the desire for deathlessness.²⁶

Tolkien’s “about” in his text is not displayed through any kind of allegory, symbolism, or direct propositions. Rather, using imagination and story, Tolkien explores aspects of death and humanity’s desire for deathlessness. He can bring the reader into a deeper understanding—he is able to “enlarge our conception”—of death and deathlessness because of divergent aspects of his secondary world.²⁷

In *The Lord of the Rings*, this idea is most directly explored in the dichotomy between men in the knowledge that they will die, and elves in the knowledge that they will live forever. When the reader is brought into the world of Middle-Earth in a state of secondary belief, they can go deeper than a simple, primary-world, hypothetical discussion on mortality and immortality. A reader constructs real characters in their mind who wrestle with what it is like and what it means to be mortal. When one sees death for what it is in this secondary world, Tolkien can show something about death in the primary world—something that is not easily articulated in propositional, primary-world terms.

As one reads *The Lord of the Rings*, they are brought into a state of secondary belief. This is not simply an escape from this world; the book can reveal insights into reality. But whatever conclusions Tolkien ultimately reaches, even if one rejects these ideas on death or other cognitive aspects in his fantasy epic, Tolkien manages to confer phenomenal knowledge in his work. He brings the reader to secondary belief and manages to “reveal insights into the world that properly count as true.”²⁸

Lewis’s Space Trilogy is another, non-Tolkien example of phenomenal-knowledge-conferring fantasy literature. In the first story, *Out of the Silent Planet*, an English academic, Elwin Ransom, is flown on a spaceship to Mars (Malacandra), an ecologically diverse planet that is not tainted by human evil and is inhabited by natural, mortal, intelligent

beings. Ransom befriends an inhabitant of this planet and comes to recognize that these creatures live in total harmony with one another and have no conception of evil.

Lewis creates a world that allows for an exploration of many human ideas not tainted by human selfishness, greed, or other vices. For example, at one point in the story, Ransom is having difficulty explaining the concept of war to his *hross* friend, Hyoui. To help explain human motivation for war, Ransom turns to pleasure—something the *hross* should understand. Ransom asks, “is the begetting of young not a pleasure among the *hrossa*?” Hyoui tells him it is. Ransom explains that if something is pleasurable, a human wants it extremely, even to the extent it hurts himself or others. However, this is incomprehensible for Hyoui as he has an entirely different understanding of pleasure. After describing the lifelong process of finding a mate, he explains that *hrossa* only “beget young” for one or two years of their life and are content in this, for, as Hyoui says, “a pleasure is full grown only when it is remembered.”²⁹ This example in Lewis’s *Out of the Silent Planet* explores what may be a right understanding of pleasure when it is not defiled and abused by humans, and what it is like to live in a world that understands this. But even if one disagrees with Lewis’s conclusions, this book offers a cognitively valuable exploration of pleasure and human nature—an exploration of pleasure that is not tied to human nature; this exploration no other kind of literature can achieve. By bringing the reader into the world of Malacandra, Lewis indeed manages to “reveal insights into the world that properly count as true.”³⁰

VI. THE QUESTION OF SUBJECTIVITY

One who reads a work of fantasy literature will certainly not imagine the secondary world in the exact way that the author imagined it. The question then arises, since a secondary world has subjective aspects, how could one create a work of fantasy that effectively confers objective phenomenal knowledge? Phenomenal knowledge is a kind of imaginative experiential understanding, not clear propositions. Phenomenal knowledge has subjective aspects, but this knowledge—as well as the imaginary world of a fantasy story—is not entirely subjective; it has objective boundaries. For example, two people will imagine the features of an elf differently, but they have a shared understanding of those creations of the imagination as “elves.” Language has its limits, yet its referential aspect is not entirely subjective. So, although many aspects of a secondary world are subjective—a character’s face, the design of buildings, etc.—the core aspects that hold the world and story together are

26 J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, ed. H. Carpenter (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981), 262.

27 Lewis, *Other Worlds*, 70.

28 Schmidt, “Knowing Fictions,” 2.

29 C.S. Lewis, *Out of the Silent Planet* (New York: Scribner, 2003), 76.

30 Schmidt, “Knowing Fictions,” 2.



not entirely subjective. Additionally, if the author writes with cognitive intention, this subjectivity can be further avoided. The fantasy author can intend an objective core of the literature, allowing one to gain something objective from the work. As mentioned earlier, Tolkien wrote with intention to convey something “applicable” to objective reality.

VII. CONCLUSION

The imagination is a powerful tool that can take one into another world. While some fantasy is only an escape, cognitively valuable fantasy literature can reveal insights into our own world. In this paper, I demonstrated that fantasy literature is valuable when it confers phenomenal knowledge. I also outlined the necessary criteria for a work of fantasy fiction to give way to this knowledge. Once the reader has been brought into a state of secondary belief, fantasy literature can confer phenomenal knowledge through the cohesive whole of a secondary world and a story. Although set in other worlds, fantasy literature does have real insight to offer. It is not totally disconnected from reality but can rather “enlarge our conception of the range of possible experience.”³¹ So pick up a fantasy story, go to battle against the orcs, witness a wizard’s magic, or write a poem with a *hross*. You may be surprised and delighted at what you gain.³²

³¹ Lewis, *Other Worlds*, 70.

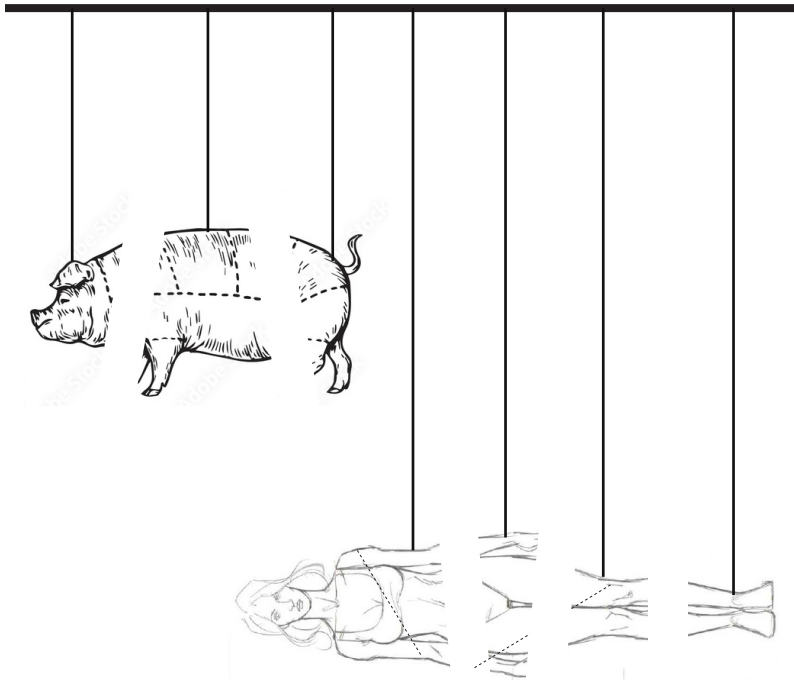
³² Many thanks to Dr. Edward Glowienka and the *Stance* reviewers whose insights and suggestions helped to greatly improve this paper.



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THE CASE AGAINST SPECIESISM AND SEXISM: An Interactionist Approach to Singer and Adams



ABSTRACT

Using the interactionist approach of comparative philosophy, I evaluate the intersecting points made in *Animal Liberation* by Peter Singer and *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* by Carol Adams. The purpose of this paper is to examine how a combination of the utilitarian and feminist perspectives helps us adopt a new philosophy accounting for all systems of oppression involved in eating animals. I conclude that by removing unnecessary harm to animals and unlearning phrases with an absent reference to oppressed groups, society can progress toward an anti-oppressive system of liberation.

KELSEY GAYLORD



I. INTRODUCTION

In *Animal Liberation*, Peter Singer confronts a history of animal experimentation, factory farms, and the human domination of nonhuman animals.¹ Singer notes in his preface to the 1990 edition that many have referred to his book as “the bible of the animal liberation movement,” despite Singer’s disbelief in bibles and discomfort with the claim.² For Singer, animal liberation requires a revision of how humans consider animals, a shift which he believes begins with personal strides toward vegetarianism. Like Singer, Adams has also been credited with writing a “bible” of a social movement with *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*.³ In the preface of the 20th-anniversary edition, Adams recalls reviews that label the book “a bible of the vegan community,” a dedication she views as portraying a community guided by a future of equality and liberation.⁴

In comparing Singer’s philosophy of equal consideration of interests with Adams’s feminist philosophy of the absent referent, I employ the interactionist method of comparative philosophy. The interactionist model exchanges ideas between different cultural traditions to recognize the future possibilities in philosophical thought.⁵ Appealing to the strengths of both texts, I argue that a new philosophy, one defined by viewing speciesism and sexism as systemic prejudices hidden behind the absent referent, fills in the gaps of both and progresses according to shifting societies, norms, and available information. When philosophers apply this framework to discussions of vegetarianism, differences between *Animal Liberation* and *The Sexual Politics of Meat* evolve into complements of each other rather than stagnant disparities.

Both philosophers view vegetarianism as a priority initiative in addressing animal rights. Be that as it may, the activists’ perspectives derive from separate moral traditions and have different reasons supporting their defense of vegetarianism. It will become clear how Singer and Adams might gain support for their arguments from incorporating each other’s framework into their own. Section Two consists of a summary of Singer’s objection to speciesism as a form of discrimination and discusses the principle of equal consideration of interests as a defeating norm against speciesism. Further in Section Three, Adams’s feminist theory will be evaluated, which views animals and women as allied victims in

1 Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation*, 2nd ed. (New York: Random House, 1990).

2 Singer, *Animal Liberation*, viii.

3 Carol Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat – 25th Anniversary Edition: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

4 Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, 17.

5 Tim Connolly, *Doing Philosophy Comparatively* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 193–94.

a patriarchal culture. Lastly, I conclude with a discourse on how each philosopher, brought together, can shape our thinking about systems of oppression.

II. A UTILITARIAN (OR NON-MALEFICENCE?) PERSPECTIVE ON SPECIESISM AND THE ANIMAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT

Singer begins by describing the basis for understanding nonhuman animals (or simply animals) as deserving of equal consideration just as we regard humans. In other words, just as we consider all races to be equal and all sexes to be equal, we must share the same conclusion that animals are to be regarded as equal to humans. This is not to say that the basic principle of equality “require[s] equal or identical treatment,” but rather that we should not view our species above other species nor should we assume that animals have less intelligence, morals, or interests in being happy than humans.⁶ Singer uses the term “speciesism” to define the bias of one’s species over another.⁷ Building on the thought of Jeremy Bentham, a utilitarian moral philosopher, Singer forms his reasoning on why equality must be passed down to animals. He maintains that insofar as a being can suffer or, oppositely, be happy, we owe a moral obligation to take that being’s interests in not suffering into account.⁸

Shelly Kagan in “What’s Wrong with Speciesism?” deconstructs speciesism as merely a prejudice like racism or sexism, similar to Singer’s claims. Kagan begins by pointing out particular issues with the lack of clarity regarding what features of pain, besides intensity and duration, are morally relevant. For one, Kagan suggests that whether pain or suffering is deserved should be a morally relevant consideration through a hypothetical scenario in which he (a guilty person) and you (the reader, an innocent person) both suffer in jail with equal intensity of pain and duration. He asks, “Can’t the fact that I deserve to be punished, while you do not, give us reason to think that the pain you are suffering should be given more weight than the pain that I am suffering?”⁹ Kagan’s inspection of desert—the nature of deserving something, good or bad—as a philosophical conundrum undermines Singer’s argument that speciesism is as unjust as racism or sexism. Singer offers no basis for desert, potentially partly because the subjects of his text (animals) are undeserving of and bred purposefully for their suffering, but mainly due to his belief that

6 Singer, *Animal Liberation*, 2.

7 Singer, *Animal Liberation*, 6.

8 Singer, *Animal Liberation*, 8.

9 Shelly Kagan, “What’s Wrong with Speciesism?,” *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 33, no. 1 (2016): 6, 10.1111/japp.12164.



“pain is pain.”¹⁰ The principle of equal consideration of interests does not distinguish between innocence and guilt when everyone has a concern in avoiding suffering and thus suffering remains wrong in both states.

Furthermore, Singer sheds light on the cruel experimental practices performed on animals by scientists and researchers, which are primarily paid for through citizen taxes. He establishes critiques of the logic of the two points of view often used to justify the experimentation of animals. The first argument states that because nonhuman animals are so similar to humans, their experimentation is crucial in developing our understanding of humans. However, Singer refutes, if animals are like humans, thus suffer like humans, we would not be inclined to induce physical pain and psychological distress onto them where we would not humans.¹¹ The second point professes that nonhuman animals are not like humans and therefore do not deserve equal consideration. Nonetheless, Singer replies, if such a statement were true, researchers would be without reason to test against animals as a means to learn about humans.¹² Speciesism remains the only true explanation for allowing the scientific community to take advantage of animals and perceive them as less than human beings under either logic. After citing dozens of experiments, Singer declares that insofar as a hypothetical experiment sees justification in the use of a brain-damaged human to save the human lives of many, the use of an animal would also be justified.¹³ Without this principle, experimentation relies on the rationalization of speciesism.

Emphasizing the life of an animal bred and confined for the purpose of food on our dinner table, Singer maintains that “animals lead miserable lives from birth to slaughter.”¹⁴ Singer contends that regardless of the conditions of animals’ slaughter, the exploitation that occurs during their short lives is morally wrong. Factory farms, he affirms, do not take any initiative to reduce suffering. Detailing the impact of individual action, in response to the harmful actions of factory farms, Singer holds vegetarianism to the highest esteem. Vegetarianism, he states, involves the absence of the consumption of foods derived from the death of animals as well as the use of products tested on or made from animals.¹⁵

Singer sums up the justifications posed in opposition to the animal liberation movement and support of speciesism. Ultimately, he defends the rights of animals and believes that “the case for Animal Liberation

is logically cogent, and cannot be refuted” regardless of its objections.¹⁶ Many people view Singer’s framework as utilitarian, whereas some may offer that he roots his perspective in non-maleficence, or the principle that one must avoid doing harm.¹⁷ Renzo Llorente finds that in labeling *Animal Liberation* as a non-maleficent text, most misconceptions or disagreements fade away. Though Singer has not formally accepted either tradition as his guiding principle, he certainly advocates for the effort of abolishing the suffering of animals and to do no harm due through experimentation or factory farming. He concludes, “Animal Liberation will require greater altruism on the part of human beings than any other liberation movement” because the victims (animals) cannot represent themselves and thus humans as a species all bear the responsibility of defending animal rights.¹⁸

III. A FEMINIST-VEGETARIAN ACCOUNT OF THE ABSENT REFERENT AND OPPRESSIONS UNDER PATRIARCHY

Adams defines the sexual politics of meat as “an attitude and action that animalizes women and sexualizes and feminizes animals.”¹⁹ She furthers this explanation by identifying that the sexual politics of meat is “also the assumption that *men need meat*, have the right to eat meat, and that meat eating is a male activity associated with virility.”²⁰ Adams affirms, moreover, that the masculinization of meat-eating and the feminization of vegetarianism illustrates the interrelations between sexism and the killing of animals for food. The theory of the absent referent lays the foundation for critically conceptualizing the similarities between the treatment and discussion of animals and women.

An “absent referent” is a word, action, or condition with an absence or an abandonment of the original meaning. For example, the life of an animal, the death of an animal, or the body of the animal develops into the absent referent when eating meat or when meat becomes a metaphor for women’s bodies. Adams highlights the language used when referring to women and animals. “Meat” rather than “animal flesh” and “beef” rather than “cow meat” are instances in our language that display how we construct a gap between the animal and what is eaten.²¹ Furthermore, metaphors of women as being “butchered” or treated as “pieces of meat” allow for the absent referent of animals, too, by comparing women to

10 Singer, *Animal Liberation*, 20.

11 Singer, *Animal Liberation*, 52.

12 Singer, *Animal Liberation*, 52.

13 Singer, *Animal Liberation*, 82.

14 Singer, *Animal Liberation*, 97.

15 Singer, *Animal Liberation*, 162.

16 Singer, *Animal Liberation*, 244.

17 Renzo Llorente, “The Moral Framework of Peter Singer’s *Animal Liberation*: An alternative to utilitarianism,” *Ethical Perspectives* 16, no. 1 (2009): 62, 10.2143/EP.16.1.2036278.

18 Singer, *Animal Liberation*, 247.

19 Adams, *Sexual Politics of Meat*, 17.

20 Adams, *Sexual Politics of Meat*, 17.

21 Adams, *Sexual Politics of Meat*, 24; 78.



inert objects after the death of an animal.²² Women become the absent referent when terms such as “rape” are used metaphorically outside of the context of the rape of a human, and that usage buries the significance of the word in topics about violence against women. In Adams’s words, “The structure of the absent referent in patriarchal culture strengthens individual oppressions by always recalling other oppressed groups.”²³ By using metaphors and language that infer the poor treatment of other marginalized groups, one’s oppression becomes more entangled and reinforced. In patriarchal culture, the exclusion and muting of women’s and animals’ experiences from the language we use distances us from the reality of the status of animals versus humans as well as the relationship among different social groups of people.

Adams also examines the context of vegetarianism in literature to explain why many women and feminists find a connection with vegetarianism. In the same way meat-eating reinscribes male dominance into daily, otherwise inconspicuous, rituals (i.e., meals), women step back from it as it is bound to the objectification that women so often face. Adams examines a method of suppressing vegetarian expression in texts called critical dismemberment. Dismemberment occurs when vegetarianism is completely bypassed in literary analyses, like how themes of feminism, too, are often ignored by the dominant understanding of popular books.²⁴ She uses the example of *Frankenstein*, in which the creature is a vegetarian whose dismemberment reflects the dismemberment of women and the isolation of women’s issues from many narratives. For instance, Adams says, “By including animals within its moral circle the Creature provides an emblem for what it hoped for and needed—but failed to receive—from human society.”²⁵ It can be presumed that Adams is comparing women to the creature, referring to how women incorporate vegetarianism into literature and their moral circle because society has failed to respect the existence of women in the same way it has to animals. In this way, Adams reveals the significance of literature’s role in bearing witness to a patriarchal system that hides the truth of women’s and animals’ lives. Dismemberment, like the absent referent, is a tool used to maintain practices of meat-eating and the marginalization of women’s voices. This section reaffirms the importance of uncovering implications in our speech, which supports Adams’s overall theory of the unjust nature of the absent referent of meat.

Adams asserts that vegetarianism requires more than abstinence from meat, but also a comprehension of the cultural contexts in which

people relate to or, oppositely, dismiss vegetarianism. She incorporates how the historical upholding of white supremacy also plays a role in meat-eating, and maintains that women of color find empowerment in vegetarianism despite traditional meals in various cultures surrounding meat.²⁶ Notwithstanding misinterpretations and sexist stereotypes of women’s choice in not eating meat, Adams believes that the patriarchal abuse of women’s and animals’ bodies serve as the most significant force barricading women’s vegetarian bodies. Likewise, Rebekah Sinclair points out that recently popularized meat substitutes and plant-based meats resume the detachment of meat from the flesh of animals and contribute to the same patriarchal abandonment of animals’ bodies through the absent referent. She insists that “[plant-based meats] seem to depend upon the framework of recognition that makes particular speciesed others always already edible, killable even before they are killed.”²⁷ Even without the body of the animal, meatless meat products exist only as long as there remains animal meat to counteract it. Adams rules that to be feminist, one must be vegetarian; otherwise, the feminist reinstates the same system of oppression responsible for their abuse.

IV. AN INTERACTION BETWEEN UTILITARIAN AND FEMINIST PHILOSOPHIES OF VEGETARIANISM

As mentioned previously, both texts succeed in creating public discourse and a manual for readers to follow through their journey in vegetarianism. Singer’s guide for the animal liberation movement and Adams’s for veganism carry unique reasons behind the advocacy for plant-based diets. On one hand, Singer’s argument, grounded in the opposition of speciesism, proclaims that humans have a moral obligation to consider the suffering of all beings—regardless of the potential advancement of human knowledge or produced human happiness through animal exploitation. He draws in similarities to racism and sexism without anticipating exactly how speciesism may depend on other forms of oppression and vice versa.²⁸ On the other hand, Adams often draws comparisons between the oppression of animals and women, establishing a theory that patriarchy and sexism reveal and rely on animals’ mistreatment.²⁹ It may be hypothesized that Singer’s criticism of speciesism intersects with Adams’s uncovering of the sexual politics of meat. With this in mind, these traditions can be adapted to allow for

26 Adams, *Sexual Politics of Meat*, 8; 140.

27 Rebekah Sinclair, “The Sexual Politics of Meatless Meats: (in)Edible Others and the Myth of Flesh without Sacrifice,” in *The Future of Meat Without Animals*, ed. Brianne Donaldson and Christopher Carter (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 274.

28 Singer, *Animal Liberation*, 6.

29 Adams, *Sexual Politics of Meat*, xliii.

22 Adams, *Sexual Politics of Meat*, 71.

23 Adams, *Sexual Politics of Meat*, 73.

24 Adams, *Sexual Politics of Meat*, 84.

25 Adams, *Sexual Politics of Meat*, 144.



both the equal consideration of animals and the women treated as such. The utilitarian method becomes a bit more feminist, and the feminist method becomes a bit more utilitarian.

Of course, some may challenge these views on the grounds that Singer and Adams derive from two different philosophical traditions, arguing that utilitarianism and feminism are distinct for a reason. Utilitarian philosophers believe that suffering should be minimized and happiness maximized, consistent with Singer's call for equal consideration of interests. Feminist philosophers, like Adams, believe that inequalities, such as gender inequality, are a result of patriarchy, viewed as a system of rules, norms, and institutions. Adams adds in the afterword to the twenty-fifth anniversary edition that many animal liberation activists push for attempts to humanize the animal, possibly referring to Singer. It seems that this does not just apply to animals, however, as Adams clearly favors the humanization of women, too.³⁰ Critics may form the debate that utilitarianism and feminism contradict each other because they have different end goals. Whereas utilitarians seek to establish rules for benefiting the majority, feminists want to deconstruct the current system entirely to end injustices. While I agree with critiques that Singer and Adams have separate objectives, even while advocating for the same practice (i.e., vegetarianism), I disagree with the notion that this makes them incompatible. These philosophies complement each other, for their combined interest in animal welfare leads us to critically consider how speciesism and sexism interact.

Singer and Adams both conceive vegetarianism as a form of protest against institutions of oppression. In Singer's words,

Until we boycott meat, and all other products of animal factories, we are, each one of us, contributing to the continued existence, prosperity, and growth of factory farming and all the other cruel practices used in rearing animals for food.³¹

The refusal of buying animal products, and therefore the support for termination of cruel methods of using animals for human consumption, is the largest, most essential individual action that can make a difference. Because he determines that equal consideration can lead to an eradication of speciesist practices, Singer finds that vegetarianism truly places the interests of animals at the forefront of the animal liberation movement. Adams, in her effort to unveil the often concealed vegetarian strides in literature, discovers that "vegetarian writings occur within a self-conscious protest tradition."³² When texts demonstrate themes of

vegetarianism, whether implied or explicit, they challenge historical structures of the food industry that work to suppress vegetarian works as legitimate. Take Adams's literary examples into consideration once more, but with the applied equal consideration principle. In *Frankenstein*, the neglect of equal animal consideration drives the creature to turn to vegetarianism, much like the explanations for why women find comfort with vegetarian diets. Since both activists regard vegetarianism as the solution to oppression, the unification of their philosophies strengthens the rational, theoretical framework in the deconstruction of the value of meat.

Anthony J. Nocella II et al. introduce Critical Animal Studies (CAS) as an intersectional approach to the animal liberation movement, underlining the overlapping struggles various kinds of social justice movements face. The CAS scholars in 2007 list "The Ten Principles of Critical Animal Studies." Principle #4 states that CAS "advances a holistic understanding of the commonality of oppressions, such that...hierarchical ideologies and institutions are viewed as parts of a larger, interlocking, global system of domination."³³ In other words, oppressions are intertwined with each other and to view them separately may neglect the larger system of which they are a part. Using this model, the importance of building speciesism and sexism are depicted as fighting for the same cause: justice for animals. Therefore, concepts and philosophies of animal liberation should include implications for other forms of oppression.

Where Singer's argument lacks, Adams' excels, and vice versa. On one side of the discourse, Singer neglects the significance of language in perpetuating speciesism, as well as sexism, being more concerned with values of suffering than systems. On the other side, Adams does not detail in great length how animal liberation offers worth outside of its role in expanding women's rights, with a focus on offering theory-based solutions to sexism. Both can build from one another to take a broader stance on intersecting institutions of exploitation. A synthesis of the two works helps us develop a theory in which the cancelation of unnecessary harm to animals (via the principle of equal consideration of interests) supports the creation of equality across human genders (under a feminist-vegetarian framework) and the production of an anti-oppressive system of liberation. Singer, too, writes briefly about the language used to describe animals and meat. He mentions that speciesism is a form of discrimination much comparable to women's rights, though he primarily uses this comparison to explain how

30 Adams, *Sexual Politics of Meat*, 204.

31 Singer, *Animal Liberation*, 162.

32 Adams, *Sexual Politics of Meat*, 36.

33 Anthony J. Nocella II et al., "Introduction: The Emergence of Critical Animal Studies: The Rise of Intersectional Animal Liberation," *Counterpoints* 448 (2014): xxvii, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42982374>.



irrational speciesist arguments are.³⁴ When we gather Adams's examples of the absent referent, including Singer's language of speciesism, we notice how hidden behind the absent referent is the "global system of domination." The absent referent of meat is not only the body, death, and life of the animal; the absent referent is also the suffering endured on behalf of a system that is speciesist and oppressive. Exploring the usage of phrases like "the rape of an animal" or "the rape of the earth," the absent referent is not just women, but institutionalized misogyny that pushes back against the freedom of women.³⁵ Moreover, Singer asserts, "Ignorance, then, is the speciesist's first line of defense. Yet it is easily breached by anyone with the time and determination to find out the truth."³⁶ The protection of ignorance lies behind every case of the absent referent. Without the intersectionality of speciesism and sexism, the animal liberation movement becomes immersed in ignorance, too.

V. CONCLUSION

In this essay, I have considered the issues of vegetarianism and animal liberation through the philosophies of Singer and Adams. Employing the interactionist method, I have argued that the engagement of these philosophies generates a broader systemic process for approaching the intersectionality of speciesism and sexism. Singer, in *Animal Liberation*, talks about moral equal consideration as a means to abolishing speciesism in a consumption-driven society. Adams, in *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, discusses the aspect of eating animals, killing animals, and the absent referent as a reflection of a patriarchal society. Taking the strengths of each tradition—equal consideration of interests and the absent referent—the new philosophy adapts to nullify their limitations. Singer's account is limited because he does not explain speciesism as linked to other prejudices, whereas Adams's is limited because she does not stress the harm of speciesism outside of the harm it contributes to women. The compelling arguments of both texts establish vegetarian means to take on oppressive systems and, in turn, promote a safer, more equal society. The utilitarian-feminist hybrid philosophy seeks to provide a theoretical grounding for this aim that qualifies constant growth and intersectional awareness.



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³⁴ Singer, *Animal Liberation*, 9.

³⁵ Adams, *Sexual Politics of Meat*, 72.

³⁶ Singer, *Animal Liberation*, 217.



IS J.S. MILL'S ACCOUNT OF FREE SPEECH SUSTAINABLE IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA?



NEVIN CHELLAPPAH

ABSTRACT

In this paper, I examine whether John Stuart Mill's account of free speech can survive three main challenges posed by social media. First, I consider the problem of social media failing to distinguish between emotive and factual language. Second, I look at the problem of algorithms creating moralism. I then turn to a potential objection to my first two challenges. The objection elucidates the benefits of social media's emotional and algorithmic character, amplifying arguments and increasing public engagement. However, I take issue with this objection on consequentialist terms. I finally return to the third challenge, where I focus on how anonymity removes the consequences to our words; I contend that this final failure is the ultimate reason why Mill's account cannot persist in the modern age. In conclusion, I argue that Mill's account cannot withstand the problems posed by social media.



I. INTRODUCTION

Free speech is arguably the foundational value in liberal democracies. Contemporary liberals' endorsement of free speech traces back to John Stuart Mill's reasoning found in "Chapter II" of *On Liberty*.¹ Mill advocates for free speech due to its epistemic and social benefits of intellectual development. Social media provides a platform founded upon Mill's account, with minimal restrictions on free speech. Yet, the benefits that Mill said would come from free speech do not materialize in the context of online discourse. Hence, this essay argues that the classical liberal definition of free speech, as espoused by Mill, is no longer compatible with the digital age.

Social media presents three major challenges to Mill's account. First, social media allows for emotive discussion to take precedence over an exchange of ideas without distinguishing the two. Mill's inability to adequately categorize emotional propositions means that his account fails. The second is that moralism on social media, derived from algorithms, creates a false sense of objectivity. Mill's faith in different opinions being voiced in a civil manner means that his conception collapses. However, an objection can be waged against the first two challenges. Given that Mill's account is based on consequentialism, if the net impact of free speech on social media is more beneficial than harmful, then Mill's account may be preserved. This objection notes that both the emotional and algorithmic character of social media dialogue leads to more productive conversation, through amplifying arguments with truth-values and increasing engagement in civic discourse. However, this objection can be rendered ineffective. On the emotional character of online dialogue, the objection presupposes that only Mill's account creates the benefits that social media generates. In reality, an account that allows for censorship provides the same positive consequences, whilst limiting the harm caused. On the algorithmic character of online dialogue, the objection fails to recognize that algorithms do not lead to public engagement in discussion in the way Mill intended because algorithms are more compatible with profit than educational or democratic aims. Finally, the third challenge, that online anonymity removes the consequences of language, cannot be resolved by Mill, leaving his account inapplicable. Thus, given that Mill's account cannot withstand these three challenges, social media has seemingly eroded his conception of free speech.

II. MILL'S ACCOUNT OF FREE SPEECH

To further support the analysis of his framework in the social media age, it is important to outline Mill's account of free speech. Mill's primary concern is with the suppression of opinions by an authority. For him, the "evil of silencing...an opinion is that it is robbing the human race... [because] if the opinion is right, they are deprived...the opportunity of exchanging error for truth."² In response to censorship being presented as a trusted system to filter out true expressions from false ones, Mill posits that there is no perfect censor. The presumption of a perfect censor is proven false by history, with past authorities suppressing ideas that are currently accepted to be true—the Roman Catholic Church's censorship of Galileo's ideas comes to mind. Even if the opinion is wrong, Mill believes humanity loses "what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception...of truth produced by its collision with error."³ Emphasizing that "facts and arguments, to produce any effect on the mind, must be brought before it"⁴ illustrates Mill's central belief of the importance of viewpoint diversity and the value of individual thought.

Mill's argument for free speech can be formally presented as follows:

Premise 1: The truth is valuable, and people should be allowed to arrive at true beliefs.

Premise 2: Freedom of speech enables people to arrive at true beliefs.

Conclusion: Therefore, freedom of speech is valuable and ought to be promoted and protected.

Mill's argument narrows its focus on one specific aspect of free speech: free discussion. Free speech, according to Mill, means the freedom to express an opinion—further simplified to the assertion of the truth-value of a proposition. Mill does not consider speech as any utterance; rather, he understands speech as an action to seek knowledge. While appreciating speech as a means of doing is important, Mill cannot sidestep the sizable objections that social media highlights in cases where speech performs a different action. As the popularity of social media increases, platforms do not primarily aim to strive for knowledge. With social media no longer reflecting Mill's vision of a "marketplace of ideas," it bears asking whether a Millian definition of free speech still stands in this digital space.

1 John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty, Utilitarianism and Other Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 18-54.

2 Mill, *On Liberty*, 19.

3 Mill, *On Liberty*, 19.

4 Mill, *On Liberty*, 22.



III. THE FIRST CHALLENGE

A significant challenge posed by social media is that it does not differentiate between an exchange of ideas and an exchange of emotions. This is because social media does not attract attention through the truth-value of its propositions; instead, content is rewarded based on its popularity. Emotional content, which is easier to understand and connect with, leads to a snowball effect by which such content dominates on digital platforms. The fact that social media is often used as a form of entertainment means that non-propositional truth-value statements are more appealing. Such non-propositional statements online range from “I like most Tarantino movies I just think he should...die,”⁵ to “I would like to throw a jellyfish at your forehead,”⁶ to “Joe Biden, if I [do not] get stimulated, your son is getting eliminated.”⁷

The issue of discourse on social media is therefore an emotivist problem. Value judgements are associated as truth-value propositions rather than statements formed by sentiments. Generating an emotional reaction results in debate being marginalized. In its place, emotional claims become perceived as factual propositions. As Adam D. Moore identifies, “The gatekeep[ing mechanisms] of quality...are irrelevant,” if legitimacy takes form based on the number of likes or shares.⁸ This differs significantly from Mill’s advocated framework. This disparity illustrates that Mill’s conception of free speech is incoherent in the digital age, but understandably such incoherence derives from Mill’s idealism. Envisaging a Darwinian educational battle, Mill presupposes that free expression leads to intellectual discussion. For Mill, speech was purely an act to seek knowledge and develop this knowledge into action. Mill’s defense of free speech begins to look rather like, as Piers Norris Turner notes, “A defense of *not restricting viewpoints in frank and fair-minded public discussion*.”⁹ Hence, this idealistic belief that speech is only used in the context of academia or politics limits the applicability of Mill’s account.

The underlying issue that this challenge stems from is the sheer size of social media’s “marketplace of ideas.” A global platform is too large for productive discussion because it is affected by what Moore terms “content

pollution.”¹⁰ The overabundance of content to consume forces speech on a platform to prioritize emotional engagement over intellectual curiosity, as audiences prefer more “bingeable” content. The Darwinian battle no longer seeks the truth but instead attention. Since Mill’s argument was primarily epistemic in nature—attempting to establish the connection between free discussion and human flourishing—the same reasoning can now be used to suggest that such a connection has been digitally severed. Much of digital speech has little to no positive Millian value and yet such speech is deemed valuable on social media. This indicates that Mill’s account of speech as an act of seeking knowledge has been damaged in this context. Thus, Mill’s account is unable to survive the first challenge due to its failure to separate factual and emotional online discussion.

IV. THE SECOND CHALLENGE

Another challenge to Mill’s account posed by social media is that it does not facilitate a true “marketplace of ideas.” Viewpoint diversity and individuality are not applauded but are instead suppressed. This is because social media is funded through trading personal data to advertisers. Algorithms seek to categorize opinions and that personal data is then used, as Richard Sorabji explicates, “To target [users] with information, or disinformation, tailored as persuasive to [their] different personalities,” which is centered on information that they already agree with.¹¹ Ideas are reaffirmed rather than challenged, and subsequently online groups develop a perceived superiority of their own ideas, believing them to have objective truth. This leads to increased moralism and hostility when such groups are exposed to those who do not share their view.

Such a problem is further exacerbated by reasoned debate being substituted with emotional rhetoric online. This is indicative in the dilution of moral terms, most prominently seen in the frequent use of words like “Nazi”—a manifestation of Godwin’s law (i.e., as an online argument progresses, the chances of the Nazis being mentioned increases exponentially). Again, the problem of emotivism affects free speech on social media to a great extent because moral values lose their real meaning, instead turning into hostile attitudes towards anyone with a different opinion. Consequently, social media collapses into a marketplace of intellectual thuggery rather than ideas. This further suggests how Mill’s account is unsustainable in the digital age.

5 @Pyschofilmcritic, “I like most Tarantino...,” Instagram photo, April 19, 2021, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CN0zHM4ly0-/>.

6 @Trashcanpaul, “I would like to throw...,” Instagram photo, August 11, 2021, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CVvktKCPzpW/>.

7 @Sidetalknyc, “Joe Biden, if I...,” Instagram photo, March 26, 2021, https://www.instagram.com/p/CM495p_DnBP/.

8 Adam D. Moore, “Free Speech, Privacy, and Autonomy,” *Social Philosophy & Policy* 37, no. 2 (2020): 36, 10.1017/S0265052521000030.

9 Piers Norris Turner, “Introduction: Updating Mill on Free Speech,” *Utilitas* 33, no. 2 (2021): 126, 10.1017/s0953820821000029.

10 Moore, “Free Speech,” 49.

11 Richard Sorabji, “Free Speech on Social Media: How to protect our freedoms from social media that are funded by trade in our personal data,” *Social Philosophy & Policy* 37, no. 2 (2020): 209, 10.1017/s0265052521000121.



V. TWO OBJECTIONS

Before moving on to the third challenge, it is worth considering a potential objection to the first two challenges. This objection mitigates the two challenges by recontextualizing them, viewing the emotional and algorithmic character of social media not as problems, but as features that have net positive consequences for free speech. Given that Mill's argument for free speech is consequentialist, if this objection demonstrates social media's net positive influence on public discourse, then Mill's account may still be sustainable in the age of social media.

On the emotional character of online dialogue, this objection attacks the first challenge, suggesting that the lack of distinction between emotion and fact does not cause social media to drift away from Mill's account. Instead, emotional content can be used to amplify arguments with a truth-value—so it is compatible with Mill's principles. This is because the popularity contest of social media allows for emotional content to come into the mainstream. Accordingly, truth-value propositions are amplified by the emotional nature of their dialogue and find a public audience. Using emotional content to engage with people has a net benefit, as more ideas and information enter the public conversation. Given that Mill's argument for free speech is consequentialist, social media's clear benefit in promoting discussion suggests that Mill's account may still be vindicated.

A central tenet of Mill's argument is that free speech ensures that minority voices enter the public domain. The recent work of Jack Monroe is indicative of social media's ability to achieve this outcome. In a series of tweets, Monroe highlighted the rapid increase of the price of basic goods in UK supermarkets and how this disproportionately affects the poorest members of society. For example, Monroe tweeted that the price of canned spaghetti was once "13p, then 35p,...a price increase of 169%."¹² This is a factual statement, yet, in previous eras, it may not have been heard because it reflects the experiences of a minority group. Yet on social media, the emotional nature of her argument, that supermarkets contribute to the UK's cost-of-living crisis, meant that it became amplified. The positive effect of this amplification is demonstrated by the consequences of her tweets, with major supermarket Asda reducing the prices of their basic items in response. Under Mill's account, this consequence is beneficial because truth-value propositions from minority and marginalized backgrounds, that would previously not enter the public consciousness, can now do so through social media. Thus, if emotional content amplifies what Mill would consider valuable content in a way

that would not be possible without social media, then Mill's account remains sustainable in the digital age.

On the algorithmic character of social media, the objection rejects the second challenge, arguing that algorithms increase civic engagement and discourse. If there is such an increase, then Mill's account may remain sustainable. Such an objection is centered on social media's ability to provide targeted information, through algorithms, that users find appealing. All content is being seen more, yet emotional content is far more accessible than factual content. This is because emotional content is framed in an approachable manner that allows for a basic understanding of an issue. In short, emotional content creates interest.

Emotional connection, used as a marketing tool, can better lead someone to engage with public discourse. At least in this way, people are engaging with the emotional aspect of discourse, rather than not engaging at all. For example, climate change activists often share shocking images, from wildfires to meat production, which generally promotes increased dialogue. Mill's consequentialist reasoning exemplifies a collective duty to engage in constructive dialogue. Algorithms play a crucial role in this call to duty with their ability to categorize opinions and target advertising, offering new opinions and building upon ones that are beginning to form. Algorithms, being compatible with Mill's consequentialist principles, may ensure that social media has an educative benefit and support the classical liberal conception of free speech by reaffirming the emphasis of intellectual development.

This objection suggests that social media's emotional and algorithmic character results in more truth-value propositions entering public discourse and an increase in civic engagement with debate. From a consequentialist perspective, the objection might indicate that the positive effects of free speech on social media outweigh the negatives. Thus, Mill's account of free speech appears justified in the modern age.

VI. COUNTERARGUMENT TO THE OBJECTION

However, there are counterarguments that diffuse this objection. Even if the emotional character of free speech on social media leads to positive consequences for public discourse, this does not necessarily mean that these consequences could not be maintained if more restrictions were placed on speech. If social media is censored and its merits, of championing minority voices and increasing engagement, remain but its drawbacks are reduced, then a censored account of speech is preferable on consequentialist terms. This would reinforce the point that Mill's account is unnecessary in the digital age and that a new conception of free speech would be more favorable. There is no reason to

¹² Jack Monroe, @BootstrapCook, "Canned spaghetti," Twitter post, January 19, 2022. <https://twitter.com/BootstrapCook/status/1483778782964166662>.



accept the negative effects that come with free speech. For every Jack Monroe there are hundreds of people producing emotional content without truth-value, distracting people from the factual. If social media were to distinguish emotional truth-value statements from emotional non-truth-value statements allowing the former to take precedence and reducing the impact of the latter, then this suggests that a form of censorship, which Mill would not approve of, is beneficial.

A similar counterargument can be raised to the consequences of social media's algorithmic nature. While it is true that algorithms can increase engagement, which is valuable, this engagement is rarely at the level to which Mill aims. Algorithms create fevered debate, which conflicts with Mill's request for calm discussion. For Mill, tranquility within conversation is a necessary means of achieving the educative and democratic aims of public discourse; hence, he supports "giving merited honour to everyone...who has calmness."¹³ Yet, this concern for calmness and constructive dialogue is given much less significance by social media algorithms. The ease by which abuse slips into online dialogue highlights how algorithms utilize emotion not to engage people into new debates, but to segment audiences and pit them against each other. With arguments on social media turning into outbursts of emotion and insults, it is clear to see how digital conversation has been distanced from the Darwinian test Mill hoped for. Accordingly, Mill's belief that calmness leads to a positive outcome in discourse is severely challenged by social media's algorithmic character.

The reason why algorithms create frenzied discourse is that their intended consequences are fundamentally different from Mill's. Social media uses algorithms not for the purpose of engaging people with a wide spectrum of views, but to segment audiences for the purpose of profit. This leads to social media selling the data of individuals to companies and political organizations in order to maximize their revenue.¹⁴ If monetization is prioritized over balance, this demonstrates how the algorithmic character of social media uses speech to produce different consequences than Mill's educative aims. This poses an insurmountable challenge to Mill's account. If algorithms were to prioritize exposing different perspectives of debate to audiences, and limit the perspectives that are so often reinforced, this would prevent the negative impact of segmentation that comes in the form of moralistic conflict between opposing groups. This would create a "marketplace of ideas" more in Mill's image but would involve some element of censorship. Therefore, Mill's account remains unsustainable.

¹³ Mill, *On Liberty*, 54

¹⁴ Sorabji, "Free Speech Social Media," 237.

VII. THE THIRD CHALLENGE

Not only do these first two challenges show that Mill's account fails, but the third and final challenge posed by social media is perhaps the most damaging. This problem is that social media promotes anonymity as a surrogate for autonomy. Autonomy is central to Mill's argument for free speech. Mill argues that people only flourish when their actions are not mandated. Mill justifies this through utilitarianism, whereby actions are judged by the extent to which they maximize happiness or flourishing. His account of autonomy is based on the premise that freedom results in enriched flourishing. Mill uses this to justify his harm principle that, "the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member...against [their] will is to prevent harm to others."¹⁵ This principle, and the central role that autonomy plays within it, is critical to Mill's defense of free speech.

Following the development of online platforms, anonymity is now seen as a necessary factor in ensuring autonomy. This was deemed a more democratic account because it meant that only opinions were being judged, not the person. To put it simply, such reasoning believes anonymity to be a precondition for autonomy. The ability to be anonymous exists as a selling point for social media. As Robert C. Post further illustrates, "The possibility that your digital character has more truth than your reality" suggests that social media allows for greater self-knowledge.¹⁶ These considerations mirror Joel Feinberg's four concepts of autonomy, one of them being the "the sovereign authority to govern oneself...within one's own moral 'boundaries.'"¹⁷ Maintaining that self-actualization must be an independent process falls nicely under the autonomy-building aspect of free speech and expression on social media. Instead of being displaced from government authorities, individuals are displaced from themselves and are given instead a new identity to discover ideas. On the surface, this seems to reinforce Mill's account. For Mill, free speech enables the flourishing of ideas which in turn leads to the flourishing of individuals' sense of self. As such, it is tempting to view anonymity as reinforcing Mill's consequentialist belief that speech has eudaimonic ends in terms of increasing self-fulfillment.

However, autonomy arguments lack significance in light of content pollution. This is because quality and relevance have no meaning when jeopardized by trivial and false personas. While most speech serves a

¹⁵ Mill, *On Liberty*, 13.

¹⁶ Robert C. Post, "Privacy, Speech, and the Digital Imagination," in *Free Speech in the Digital Age*, ed. Susan J. Brissson and Katharine Gelber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 108, 10.1093/oso/9780190883591.001.0001.

¹⁷ Joel Feinberg, "Autonomy, Sovereignty, and Privacy: Moral Ideals in the Constitution," *The Notre Dame Law Review* 58, no. 3 (1983): 447, <https://scholarship.law.nd.edu/ndlr/vol58/iss3/1>.



function of either autonomy-building or autonomy-protecting, it is also true that many expressions are almost entirely fungible, destructive, or pointless. Stanley Fish maintains that “speech, in short, is never a value in and of itself but is always produced within the precincts of some assumed conception of the good.”¹⁸ Thus, speech is doing something with words; it is an action with purpose. The fact that anonymized content on social media is not end-seeking seems incompatible with Mill’s account of free speech.

This leads to the fundamental problem that Mill’s account cannot address in the digital age. Free speech does not mean consequence-free speech. Mill did not directly speak of consequences because for him the real consequence was whether an opinion survived the test of the marketplace. So, Mill’s argument of autonomy cannot withstand this problem. Speech seems inherently connected to an individual, but the ability to distance an individual from what they say to the point that it has no effect on them poses a grave challenge to free speech. In essence, anonymity neglects the act of speech, instead offering merely trivial words. Social media removes the good that speech should tend towards and accordingly changes the value of speech. Therefore, Mill’s definition of free speech cannot endure this problem and is unsustainable in the digital age.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The technological effects on communication are echoed in the Phaedrus, in which Socrates cites the story of ancient Egyptian king Thamus’s reaction to Theuth’s invention of letters. Thamus fears that written communications will have a negative impact. Neil Postman urges us to take to heart the cautionary tale in this legend but offers a corrective to Thamus’s judgment. Postman observes that “technology is both a burden and a blessing, not either-or, but this-and-that.”¹⁹ It is clear that the medium of social media has influenced speech, allowing emotive discussion to take precedence over an exchange of ideas and allowing moralism, derived from algorithms, to create a false sense of objectivity. Mill’s classical liberal model cannot endure these challenges. However, it is the final challenge of anonymity that poses the greatest problem because it changes the fundamental nature of speech, and Mill’s account cannot withstand that issue. Speech has always been an act tending towards an end, so it cannot be helped but to believe that the possible demise of classical, liberal free speech is not a fatal flaw of the digital age. Instead, it is an unintended consequence of technological development that will have to be overcome just as any other.

18 Stanley Fish, *There’s No Such Thing as Free Speech...and it’s a good thing too* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 104.

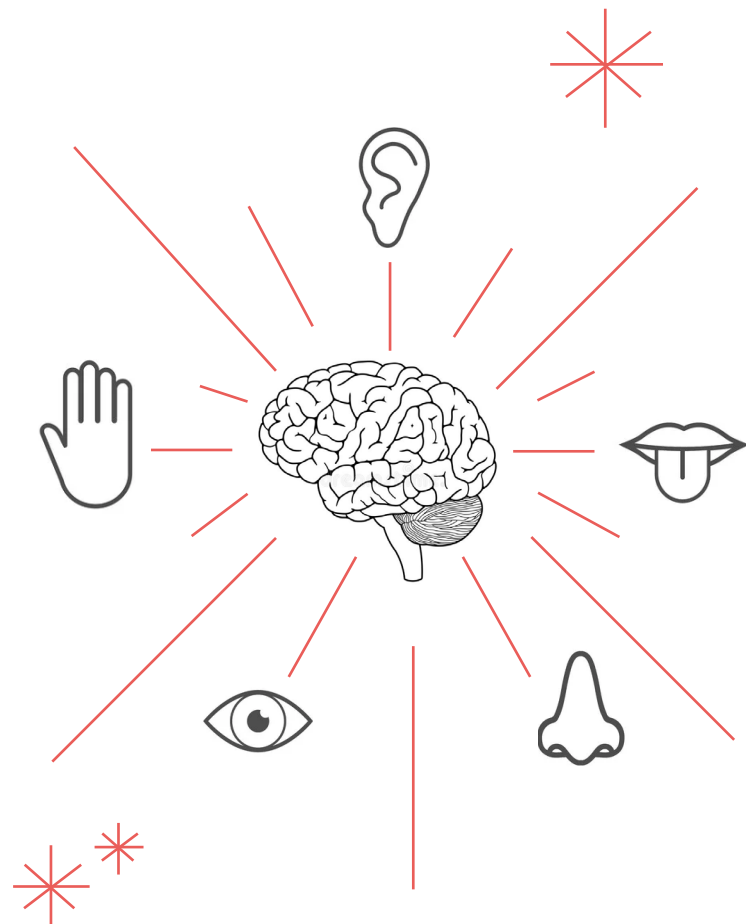
19 Neil Postman, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* (New York: Vintage Books, 2010), 4-5.



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ON THE STRUCTURE OF CONSCIOUSNESS: Experiential Swaths within Holism



SHIR BLOCH

ABSTRACT

Some views of holism fail to fully encapsulate the structure and independence of consciousness while others are reductionist in their insistence on a strict structure. After examining holism and mental state consciousness, I move to my own proposal for the structure of consciousness: experiential swaths. By highlighting the phenomenal interdependence of some aspects of consciousness without conceding that all aspects are so strongly intertwined, experiential swaths allow for further conceptual structurization within consciousness.



I. INTRODUCTION

It is the night before an important exam, and you awake to get a glass of water. The sliver of moonlight shining through the window is sufficient light for grabbing a glass from the cabinet. After you start drinking, something feels wrong. There is something in your mouth besides water, something wriggling, and you spit it out. Turning on the light, you observe that a centipede had crawled into your glass. Your experience throughout this perhaps traumatizing event included stress for the exam, distress over the centipede, and general fatigue. Can your conscious experience be reduced to the sum of these individual experiential components?

In this paper, phenomenal holism and an argument against a reductive view of consciousness will be discussed. The idea that the structure of consciousness is a framework of experiential swaths will be proposed as well. Fully compatible with existing forms of holism, such swaths allow for the categorization of aspects of conscious experience within interdependent frameworks. The conceptualization of swaths accomplishes this without leaving out relational phenomenology, which arises between aspects of conscious experience.

II. PHENOMENAL HOLISM À LA DAINTON

According to Timothy Sprigge's phenomenal interdependence (PI), consciousness is holistic. To Sprigge, "A holistic relation is strong if the kind of whole its terms unite in forming has a character which so suffuses its every element that no element with some difference from it in character could be found without a whole of just that sort."¹ In other words, Sprigge believes that holism implies that the unique character of the whole is so strong that it imprints on every element within it; without the whole, each aspect would not be the same. Such strong forms of holism, or complete PI, propose that all aspects of the whole are therefore connected, whereas weaker forms, or partial PI, propose that only some aspects are so intertwined.²

Discussing Sprigge's view, Barry Dainton considers several examples and their implications for PI. The first depicts a shape with several shaded regions, each labeled. He asks the reader to consider the picture as a whole, and then to consider region A and region B, separated by some short distance. If B were to vanish (if one were to cover it with a piece of paper, for example), the reader's experience of A would not

change, according to Dainton. While this example is limited to the visual field, the perception of A would still remain unchanged if one were to add some background sound (unless the noise was so loud it caused a shift in attention). Thus, Dainton argues, PI cannot be true in a strong sense because, if it were, one's experience of A would change upon B vanishing. Dainton's next example is comprised of two images of the same dog. In one, the entire dog is visible while in the other, only the eye is shown, the rest of the animal having been cropped out. The dog seems to be friendly in the first and aggressive in the second. The "context-induced changes" demonstrate "that there are some localised phenomenal interdependencies."³ Take the Müller-Lyer illusion—two lines of identical length which appear to be of different lengths due to the direction of arrows at their tips—as another example of localized intramodal interdependencies.

Dainton argues that these phenomena could be contingent rather than necessary examples of interdependence.⁴ That is, it could be plausible that someone possessing no previous experience with dogs or their eyes would not notice a difference in the eye between the two pictures, while the Müller-Lyer illusion "is certainly due to the idiosyncrasies of the human visual system."⁵ Therefore, interdependence would be a result of some identifiable cause rather than a necessary property. Additionally, interdependence of some of the whole of experience, even if necessary, does not entail interdependence of all aspects of experience. Dainton places even less stock in intermodal interdependencies, such as the effect on one's vision due to a change in auditory perception.

Dainton grants that empirical phenomena, such as a ventriloquist illusion, make the claim that the senses are completely independent implausible. However, this does not vindicate Sprigge, since some interdependence does not necessitate total interdependence. Dainton differentiates between Deep Interdependence (DI), such as Sprigge favors, and Shallow Interdependence (SI), whereby phenomenal unity exists yet total interdependence is not necessarily implied. Dainton maintains that SI is most compatible with the empirical evidence.

One way to conceptualize phenomenal unity, which may lead to complete PI, is to begin by examining co-consciousness. This is a seemingly primitive property that arises when two aspects are experienced together, such as hearing a bell ring while seeing a tree, or when two aspects simply coexist within the wholeness of one's consciousness. Co-consciousness relates all aspects of an experiential field, regardless of structure; this is termed phenomenal unity. Take two token experiences,

1 Timothy L. S. Sprigge, *The Vindication of Absolute Idealism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1983), 218-19.

2 Barry Dainton, "Phenomenal Holism," *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplements* 67 (2010): 113-39, 10.1017/S135824611000007X.

3 Dainton, "Phenomenal Holism," 118.

4 Dainton, "Phenomenal Holism," 113-39.

5 Dainton, "Phenomenal Holism," 119.



A and V, one auditory and the other visual, taken from the example above. If someone is attempting to achieve a clear and complete picture of A, they must take into account its local phenomenal properties and its relational/global phenomenal properties—those adopted by being co-conscious with V, since hearing the bell at that instance is necessarily accompanied by seeing the tree. Leaving out global phenomenal properties would be to fail to fully capture what it is like to have an individual experience. Thus, Dainton argues for the possibility of a specific variety of phenomenal holism which allows for relationality without entailing interdependence to the point of causation.

According to gestalt theorists, “‘structured’ or ‘organized’ experiential wholes exert an influence on the character of their component parts.”⁶ Thus, by virtue of being part of a whole, individual aspects are affected. Sprigge believes experiential components are, by definition, affected as such. Take, for example, the famous duck/rabbit image. Dainton writes that holists may argue that meaning, or representational content, can cause the change in the viewer’s perception of the two animals, thus suggesting DI. A question then arises: can concepts (such as “duck” or “rabbit”) find a home within sensory experience? That is, is “duck”—the concept—a part of one’s sensory experience? And the answer can plausibly be either yes or no, according to Dainton. Gestalts do certainly exist in everyday life—a familiar street (the cars, trees, road, and so on, organized by their familiarity and physical closeness) is one such example. However, Dainton would argue that “diverse experiential elements do not form a pattern of any recognisable kind; taken together, they lack anything which could plausibly be called organization or structure.”⁷ The next section will argue against this attack on the structure of consciousness by introducing experiential swaths.

III. EXPERIENTIAL SWATHS

Anthony Peressini offers a different account of holism.⁸ He argues, rather than ascribing consciousness to individual mental states, one should ascribe it to the being as a whole. Accepting the summation of individual mental states as equivalent to the whole is what Peressini terms “qualia reductionism.”⁹ A key characteristic of consciousness is lost if it is reduced to the summation of a series of states and disregards the whole of the entity. According to Peressini, mental states should be viewed as “qualitative aspect of the whole of the subject’s” something-

it-is-like (SIL).¹⁰ SIL is a view of holism that understands that there is something it is like to be a creature that is more than simply the sum of the mental states of the creature. There is something it is like to be the creature by virtue of it being conscious. Rather than understanding consciousness as a property of individual mental states, Peressini takes consciousness as a property of the entire organism which cannot be pre-theoretically decomposed into the former, for doing so fails to encompass the organism’s entirety of experience.¹¹ For example, one’s sight of a blue pencil is part of their entire subjective experience at that moment in time. The aspect of the whole of conscious experience that is lost to qualia reductionism is consistent with the global phenomenal properties for which Dainton advocates. This further reveals the necessity of the whole in order to fully encapsulate what it is like to be an experiencing experienter.

Peressini is entirely justified in doing away with mental states. However, viewing consciousness as only a whole entity does not do justice to the apparent structure that exists within it. Intuition favors the existence of strong connections between various aspects of one’s experience. Dainton lists several empirical phenomena that demonstrate these interconnections:

the sound-induced flash: when a single flash of light is accompanied by several auditory “beeps,” subjects tend to perceive several flashes of light, rather than just one

the touch-induced flash: if subjects are shown a single flash accompanied by two taps on the skin, they tend to see two flashes

the parchment skin illusion: when subjects are asked to rub their hands together while listening to high frequency sounds delivered via headphones, they report that their skin feels unusually smooth and dry (like parchment); if the high frequencies are dampened, subjects report that their hands feel unusually smooth and moist.¹²

Such empirical evidence shows strong support in favor of some inter-modal interdependence.

Upon intake of any sensory information, our brains automatically place such input within our structural frameworks. The infamous dress

¹⁰ Peressini, “Nothing It is Like,” 4656.

¹¹ “Pre-theoretically” is key here as Peressini’s view is compatible with empirical study. According to his view, current evidence cannot justify *a priori* decomposition of an organism’s consciousness to the sum of individual elements of the organism’s experience, though further empirical evidence may later support this approach.

¹² Dainton, “Phenomenal Holism,” 122.

⁶ Dainton, “Phenomenal Holism,” 127.

⁷ Dainton, “Phenomenal Holism,” 132.

⁸ Anthony F. Peressini, “There is Nothing It is Like to See Red: Holism and Subjective Experience,” *Synthese* 195, no. 10 (2018): 4637-66, 10.1007/s11229-017-1425-9.

⁹ Peressini, “Nothing It is Like,” 4645.



debate of 2015 is one such example; is it blue and black or white and gold? The difference in perception of the dress's color comes down to one's implicit assumptions about the lighting in the photograph.¹³ I stand by my perception of the dress as white and gold; the dress is clearly in the shadows, though my brain makes that judgment without explicit voluntary input. As I look at the photograph, I place it within my own frameworks and my brain takes over, filling in information as it pleases. This "filling in" occurs beyond the dress phenomenon. As I take in my surroundings, whether actively or passively, I have no choice but to categorize my perceptions; it is an inescapable biological necessity that our brains implicitly do so, assigning context and attention to sensory inputs. For example, my computer screen, though at a low brightness setting, seems awfully radiant to my tired eyes. With my eyes fixed on the screen and the many tabs I have open, the photos on the desk, along with most of my physical surroundings, remain in the background of my perceptual field. One would be hard-pressed to argue that all aspects of my experience receive equal amounts of my attention.

While I agree with Dainton's phenomenal unity, as well as the co-consciousness of all aspects of my experience, I think there is structure to consciousness beyond its identity as a unified whole. I propose conceptualizing experiences as fitting into more complex causally related frameworks. Certain aspects of my experience are more interdependent than others. My sight of the screen, the feel of the keyboard, and the hardness of my chair are certainly at the forefront of my attention in the moment. These sensory experiences are tied to my non-sensory experiences, such as my thoughts about the paper or my dread of having to submit this paper for review. These experiences, along with several others, are significantly more phenomenologically interdependent than other portions of my experience. For instance, if the pictures on the desk were to disappear, it would likely take me a while to notice, and even then, I would be unlikely to lose concentration.

To accommodate the phenomena outlined by Dainton, as well as the structure that I believe exists within consciousness, I propose that we replace "mental states" with "experiential swath." I have chosen the word "swath" because of its vague boundaries, meant to contrast with the connotation of clear boundaries invoked by the term "state." I borrow the term from Peressini, who uses it as a middle ground between mental states and the whole of the subject's experience.¹⁴ In this paper,

though, the word refers to a grouping of co-conscious aspects of one's holistic phenomenal experience over time that are strongly phenomenologically interdependent. To demonstrate this point, let us return to the centipede example.

As soon as you awoke, you immediately felt thirsty. The physical sensations of getting out of bed are part of your experience. Your stress for the upcoming exam rises in your awareness shortly after opening your eyes. There are many aspects to your experience. However, upon feeling the first wriggle of the countless legs in your mouth, before you even identified what the sensation was, your experience changed. Your physical sensations, confusion, and subsequent fear all rose to the forefront of your experience. Each one of these components is strongly phenomenologically interdependent. Remove the physical sensation and all the rest fall away, for it is unlikely you would experience fear of a centipede in your mouth when it is not there. These are all part of a single, strongly phenomenologically interdependent swath. The light on the microwave, changing to indicate the passing of another minute, does not significantly alter your experience of the centipede; yet, as Dainton argues, it must be considered as part of your experience for a complete and holistic account. Your stress about the test tomorrow, though pushed to the back of your mind because of the wriggling creature you have just spat into the sink, still exists, not integrally connected to your fright from the centipede yet part of your whole conscious experience nonetheless. It is important to note that these interdependencies, though potentially causal (e.g., the sensation of the centipede causes the fear and unease of the "centipede swath"), are not necessarily causal. This allows for aspects of experience to be co-conscious without being causally linked.

One of the issues with mental states is that they require delineation where there is none. For example, certain experiences are clearly associated with the supposed mental state of "fear," such as the clenching of one's stomach. However, can the qualitative experience of fear be identified and attributed to a mental state? How does it change over time? How does it behave in relation to other mental states or aspects of experience? With experiential swaths, however, these questions are resolved, since, by definition, swaths are relational and cross-temporal.

Therefore, swaths are groupings of co-conscious aspects of one's holistic phenomenal experience over time that are strongly phenomenologically interdependent. However, the question of the nature and structure of these swaths then arises. To begin this discussion, I must touch on the topic of time. Both Peressini and Dainton approach conscious holism by considering the aspects of an experience of subject *S* at a certain time *t*. I have not constrained swaths to specific instants

¹³ Pascal Wallisch, "Illumination assumptions account for individual differences in the perceptual interpretation of a profoundly ambiguous stimulus in the color domain: 'The dress,'" *Journal of Vision* 17, no. 4 (2017): 5, 10.1167/17.4.5.

¹⁴ Peressini, "Nothing It is Like," 4549.



in time in order to allow for the gradual entrance and exit of different aspects of experience. For example, your stress about the exam, in the above example, is not present at the immediate moment of your awakening. However, it slowly enters your awareness as you shake off the grogginess of sleep. Perceiving experience by slices of time forces an answer to the question: at what exact moment does the stress enter conscious awareness? It implies a threshold that something must reach in order to enter awareness, but setting such a number seems needlessly arbitrary.

Experiential swaths are multi-dimensional such that they stretch over time. Take the “centipede swath,” which includes, among other things, the physical sensations of the bug in your mouth, your confusion, and your fear. The moment of inception of the physical sensations is fairly straightforward. Your neurons fire at a biologically dictated rate. The moment the centipede touches your mouth, the starting moment of your physical sensation can be readily determined. However, other aspects of your swath cannot be so easily demarcated. For example, confusion swiftly accompanies the physical sensations of the bug in your mouth, and once comprehension dawns, fear presumably sets in. Fear might even arise before as you consider the unknown yet wriggling element in your mouth. One would be faced with a hard task in trying to identify the exact moment at which each of these emotions arise, an apparent necessity for the time-slice t approach.

Similar to their blurring across the dimension of time, experiential swaths blur at their “edges” and can even overlap with other swaths. In the centipede example, the “exam swath” encompasses your emotions about the upcoming assessment, any physical symptoms of your stress, and your desire to go back to sleep. Your “fatigue swath” may encompass the physical feeling of your eyes wanting to close as you walk down the stairs to the kitchen, your mild headache, and your goal to return to sleep. These are by no means complete accounts of the swaths, yet they are sufficient to explain my point. Your desire to go back to sleep, motivated by your fatigue, is also part of your exam swath as you hope to get a good night’s worth of sleep to better prepare you for the exam. This desire to go back to sleep is a part of both swaths because it is strongly phenomenologically interdependent with both. For example, if you did not have an exam the following day and could sleep in, you might not be as motivated to return to your bed. Similarly, if your eyes did not droop quite so heavily and you did not feel the physical symptoms of fatigue quite as strongly, your desire to return to sleep would be diminished. The light on the microwave, blink though it may, has little to no direct effect on either of these swaths, so it is not included in them. If, however, after calming down from the shock of the centipede, you were to glance at

the time on the microwave and see that it was very late, your motivation to go to sleep might change, whether due to renewed or strengthened stress about the exam or conditioning that you should be asleep at that time. In this modification of the original scenario, the light on the clock would become a part of your experiential swaths.

IV. CONCLUSION

The concept of experiential swaths allows for and even embraces the limitations of awareness and attempts to create structure within it. As such, experiential swaths, by definition, have magnitude. In the centipede example, the “centipede swath,” at the apex of its experience, is certainly of a greater magnitude than the “fatigue swath,” especially as the rush of adrenaline caused by the sudden confusion and fear aided in the diminishing of your fatigue (another example of overlapping swaths).

While experiential swaths are not easily differentiated, further empirical study may allow us to more clearly pinpoint boundaries of different aspects of experience, both sensory and otherwise. At least for now, experiential swaths are better used to concede that some aspects of experience are more strongly phenomenologically interdependent than Dainton allows but less so than Sprigge claims.

Experiential swaths do not challenge holism. They encompass physical sensations, moods, and emotions—all of which are part of the whole conscious experience of an experiencer. Every aspect of consciousness—that is to say, the local phenomenal properties in addition to the relational or global ones—is accounted for within this view, revealing a level of wholeness that mental states fail to include. A swath’s magnitude may change such that it shifts into and out of focus, or the aspects within it may shift in magnitude relative to one another, such that in the centipede example the fear may overtake the physical. Consequently, the physical may even cease altogether after you spit out the creature despite the continuation of the swath (through fear, confusion, or reflections about the experience).

By highlighting the phenomenal interdependence of some aspects of consciousness without conceding that all aspects are so strongly intertwined, experiential swaths allow for further conceptual structuration within consciousness that has not been previously admitted by Dainton to the appropriate extent. Moreover, this proposal allows for and even invites further empirical study on the boundaries and thresholds of perception, and perhaps inadvertently motivates you to check your glass the next time you get water in the middle of the night.





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BRINGING THE MARGINALIZED INTO EPISTEMOLOGY



KELLY ODURO

ABSTRACT

In this paper, I discuss the epistemological injustices that Black women face in academia. I review Patricia Hill Collins's work, "Learning from the Outsider Within: Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought," which details the unique knowledge standpoint that Black women possess. I build upon the ideas set forth by Collins and other scholars to understand how the traditional knowledge validation process is tainted with political implications and harms Black women. I then offer recommendations rooted in alternative epistemology principles to combat the injustices inherent in academia.



I. INTRODUCTION

Philosopher Linda Martin Alcoff asserts that epistemology can be political in various ways.¹ The production of knowledge, the identities of researchers, and the way epistemology dictates discourse all are affected by political implications that can leave out or discredit knowledgeable voices. This issue has been particularly true for Black women, as they have consistently faced epistemic injustice and harm. Patricia Hill Collins, a Black feminist scholar, explores the ways that Black women have been denied epistemic value. The denial of epistemic value for Black women exists, even though Black women have, as Collins describes, an important and unique understanding of the world due to their position in society. This paper aims to understand how the political implications of epistemology are actualized, using the subjugation of Black women as its focus. The first section will review “Learning from the Outsider Within: Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought,” by Collins, which depicts the unique knowledge attained by Black women.² This section will be followed by an analysis that attempts to provide solutions and recommendations for the academy to combat the injustices inherent in the study.

II. THE OUTSIDER WITHIN

In “The Outsider Within,” Collins details the unique collection of knowledge Black women possess due to their position within society. Starting with the social location of Black women in pre-World War II domestic work, Collins finds that this position allowed Black women to “see White elites, both actual and aspiring, from perspectives largely obscured from black men and from these groups themselves.”³ Despite being exploited by their white employers, Black women also gained an untouched insight into the inner workings of their oppressors with their proximity to whiteness. Collins coined the “outsider within” phrase to refer to the fact that as Black women were relegated to a lesser outsider position, these women also gained insight on the insider group that was oppressing them.

The outsider within status that defines the experiences of Black women provides them with a distinctive standpoint on society. Black domestic workers attained a sense of self-affirmation at seeing white power as purely the result of the advantages of racism and not personal

merit, whether that be intellect, talent, or humanity.⁴ However, these workers also understood that they would never be a part of the white families that they worked for. Such a realization equipped Black women to contextualize and produce analyses regarding race, class, and gender as they compared their own lived experiences to the white power they experienced through proximity.

Collins identifies key themes in Black feminist thought that surround the outsider within status of Black women. One theme is the importance of conveying authentic depictions of Black women that challenge the political knowledge validation process which creates stereotypical images instead.⁵ Another theme is the interlocking nature of multiple oppressions, namely race, gender, and class. As Black women have “been assigned the inferior half” of several status markers, including the named ones above, the domination over Black women is continual.⁶ As a result, Black women often favor more holistic approaches in research and academia to understand the interaction among multiple systems of oppression. In this, Black women adopt intersectionality, a term coined by feminist scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, that stresses the idea that different political identities overlap and aggregate the type of oppression or prejudice people experience.⁷ Several studies found that the vast majority of Black women refused to privilege gender over race and vice versa. These studies also found connections between inequalities of race, class, and gender in their lives.⁸ Prioritizing an intersectional scope as an object of study, Black women seek to develop new theoretical interpretations of such connected interactions between forms of oppression, instead of adding existing theories together.⁹

While there is no monolithic culture for Black women, what exists are various socially constructed cultures that collectively form Black women’s culture. This culture exists with the marginalization that Black women face as their race and gender, together and separately, are never centered within society.¹⁰ With efforts to redefine and explain the importance of Black women’s culture, Black female intellectuals seek to create analytical models to study the interlocking relationship of oppression, consciousness, and activism.

4 Collins, “Learning from the Outsider Within,” S15.

5 Collins, “Learning from the Outsider Within,” S16.

6 Collins, “Learning from the Outsider Within,” S20.

7 Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color,” *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1243, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1229039>.

8 Catherine E. Harnois, “Race, Gender, and The Black Women’s Standpoint,” *Sociological Forum* 25, no. 1 (2010): 82, 10.1111/j.1573-7861.2009.01157.x.

9 Collins, “Learning from the Outsider Within,” S20.

10 Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins,” 1245.

1 Linda Martin Alcoff, “How is Epistemology Political?,” in *The Feminist Philosophy Reader* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2007), 705-18.

2 Patricia Hill Collins, “Learning from the Outsider Within: Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought,” *Social Problems* 33, no. 6 (1986): S14-S32, 10.1525/sp.1986.33.6.03a00020.

3 Collins, “Learning from the Outsider Within,” S14.



III. BLACK WOMEN AND THE TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE VALIDATION PROCESS

There are critical dimensions that contribute to the knowledge validation process across all disciplines in academia. The first element is thought itself and the idea that systems of knowledge are never complete. Traditionally, systems of knowledge are recognized to be guidelines for what usual thinking entails. Facts are important and serve to validate theories, meaning that theories must also correspond with pre-established facts. Secondly, the community of producers and practitioners also affects the validation process of knowledge. Group insiders generally have similar worldviews or ideologies, which are cultivated with similar educational and professional training. The conditions, like access to education, needed to be able to produce scholarly knowledge claims require political privilege that is not afforded to marginalized communities like Black women. Additionally, Collins points out that to become an insider, one translates “a theory or worldview into one’s own language until, one day, the individual converts to thinking and acting according to that worldview.”¹¹ Insider scholars must prioritize the advancement and facilitation of existing facts and theories or, if needed, dedicate themselves to resolving existing ambiguities.

While these dimensions have remained fixtures in the traditional knowledge validation process, they have worked to discredit the intellect of marginalized communities like Black women. Many of the insights that Black women possess are at odds with the validation process’s demand for empirical facts, as lived experience and collective wisdom are utilized as sources of knowledge. To become insiders, Black women must assimilate to a standpoint that is not their own but instead the standpoint of the dominant group—white men. In academic spaces, white male subjectivity is the center of analysis, leaving Black women either on the margins or completely ignored. As a result, Black women are forced to accept certain fundamental and self-devaluing assumptions that reflect the way that society understands Black women.

The difficulties that Black women immersed in the insider status face allow them to point out anomalies in research. As outsiders within, Black women are privy to the areas and various power structures at play that enforce their exclusion. Black female scholars typically are the ones to report the omission of facts or observations about Black women relevant to a study. Academia and scholarship largely erase the contributions of Black women to society and research, likely due to their subjugated position and lack of influence in their disciplines.¹²

11 Collins, “Learning from the Outsider Within,” S26.

12 Collins, “Learning from the Outsider Within,” S26.

If the facts and observations about or asserted by Black women are not erased, then they are distorted. This distortion works to serve the existing white male insider standpoint and the facts that this standpoint has already established. Both approaches to facts and observations are harmful to Black women, in academia and at large, in that they devalue and disregard the contributions of Black women.

While their outsider within status allows for the identification of anomalies, Black women do not benefit from their discoveries due to their perceived lack of legitimate professional authority to challenge the errors. Traditional academic insiders are unable to recognize the anomalies they are working in. The inherent flaw in knowledge validation in academia is that it lacks structural intersectionality, as it caters to only a particular identity group (i.e., white men). Black women’s knowledge is frequently invalidated by the traditional validation process, not necessarily out of malice but out of negligence. Crenshaw explains that “intersectional subordination need not to be intentionally produced; in fact it is frequently the consequence of the imposition of one burden that interacts with preexisting vulnerabilities to create yet another dimension of disempowerment.”¹³ The negligence that academia has for Black women as students, faculty, and intellectuals ends up producing an environment in which anomalies are created and facilitated. Thus, the erasure and harm done unto Black women and their knowledge claims continue to persist.

IV. ANALYSIS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR EPISTEMOLOGY AND ACADEMIA

To fully utilize the knowledge claims of Black women in academia, I rely on Collins’s alternative epistemology described in her work, “Black Feminist Epistemology,” released in 2000.¹⁴ Instead of forcing Black women to choose to identify with insider status or remain inferior to their white counterparts, I urge academia to embrace elements of alternative epistemology. This new approach to epistemology produces and validates knowledge claims that are consistent with the sources that Black women utilize. The alternative epistemology Collins proposes requires acknowledging and actively incorporating the distinction between knowledge and wisdom. Collins posits that “living life as Black women requires wisdom because knowledge about the dynamics of intersecting oppressions has been essential to U.S. Black women’s survival.”¹⁵ The

13 Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins,” 1249.

14 Patricia Hill Collins, “Black Feminist Epistemology,” in *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

15 Collins, “Black Feminist Epistemology,” 257.



difference between knowledge and wisdom is that wisdom is accompanied by lived experiences. Black lived experiences particularly possess a level of credibility because the experiences are passed on. Black feminist and Marxist activist, Angela Davis, explains that “the most powerful way to acknowledge and carry on in a tradition that will move us [Black women] forward is simultaneously to affirm historical continuity and effect some conscious historical ruptures.”¹⁶ Therefore, the shared experiences form to provide a basis of collective wisdom for Black women.

Collins also calls for the use of narrative description and dialogue in assessing knowledge claims. Dialogue refers to the talk or discussion between subjects as equals, as opposed to the subject and object distinction demanded in positivist methodology upheld by the traditional validation.¹⁷ The dialogue that Collins suggests resists domination in communication, which in turn creates a more welcoming and inviting atmosphere for Black women to share their stories. Just as wisdom is passed down through generations of Black women in the form of lived experiences, they are also told through a narrative form that involves emotions. Here, harmony is emphasized rather than debate to humanize and validate the knower. In emphasizing harmony, Collins's dialogue requires the participation of all individuals to engage in the discussion, placing increased importance on the role of the “hearer,” which in this case would be non-Black women or non-marginalized scholars in general.

Such harmonious debate directly counters that of traditional positivism which is evident in the traditional knowledge validation process and debate. Allowing a personal mode of discussion and interaction to occur counters the political influences that identity and the rules of discourse have on knowledge validation. Instead, marginalized scholars are given the space to develop their knowledge in a manner that is natural to them to prove the concern for their claims. Harmonious debate also permits the hearer's contextual values and positions to be fully actualized in discussion with their colleague or peer. This discussion thus halts the traditional process's means of perpetuating negligence. Additionally, insiders are able to be confronted for their potentially harmful actions and outsiders within are given a safe platform to be seen.

Instead of distancing the researcher and its object in a form of domination, Collins's alternative epistemology brings the two closer together as equal subjects. The discussion that occurs is not meant to be hostile but instead allows Black women to convey their knowledge claims in a form that is natural—narrative telling. The researcher under

16 Angela Davis, “Black Women and the Academy,” *Callaloo* 17, no. 2 (1994): 426, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/2931740.pdf>.

17 Collins, “Black Feminist Epistemology,” 262.

this model is also elevated to a more active role in the research process with the discussion, which allows contextual values or potential biases to be made apparent. In their attempt to reach objectivity, traditional positivism fails to realize, as Collins points out, that connectedness rather than separation is an essential component of the knowledge validation process. All of these qualities allow Collins's alternative epistemology to have a higher standard of accountability and, therefore, objectivity.

If academia were to adopt the approach to epistemology that Collins advocates, Black women would be able to effectively employ their outsider within status in their work. Above all, there needs to be an increase in the number of Black women and other marginalized scholars in academia. In translating the elements of Collins's alternative epistemology into directives for academia, I implore academic departments to value the wisdom that arises from non-empirical or quantifiable experiences. Permitting the use of personal collective wisdom as valid sources of knowledge can provide an avenue for marginalized scholars to convey their unique knowledge claims. Additionally, the distance between faculty in the traditional academic hierarchy should be decreased or limited. This can be implemented through mentorships, faculty pairings, or frequent collaborative departmental meetings. Each grouping can allow stronger relationships to be developed across the academic staff, creating a space for insiders and outsiders within to regularly interact with each other harmoniously without domination.

An environment following aspects of alternative epistemology would allow Black women to strike a balance between the strengths offered by both their institutional training as well as personal and/or cultural experiences. The lived experiences of these Black scholars would not have to be compromised or made to fit the facts of the dominant paradigm. Instead, the knowledge and wisdom Black women possess would be considered a valid and legitimate source, offering new ways to understand the world that we live in.

V. CONCLUSION

The politics of traditional epistemology have harmed Black women by discrediting and invalidating their expressed knowledge claims. This is to the detriment of academia, as Black women hold a unique perspective into understanding the world due to their outsider within status. As oppressed people who have had proximity to the inner workings of white power, Black women are privy to the links between systems of power that are likely not apparent for those operating from the dominant white male standpoint. While this paper has focused on Black women, it is important to note that the findings and analysis drawn apply to other marginalized communities as well. To reconcile the injustices



that traditional epistemology enables, alternative epistemologies that reflect and are welcoming of the lived experiences of marginalized groups must be embraced. This paper recommends that spaces in the academy value knowledge claims that are derived out of lived experiences as well as encourage interactions between insiders and outsiders within scholars. This paper also advocates for further research into methods that can combat the epistemic injustice that marginalized scholars face in academia.



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THINKING AND SPEAKING



VAIBHAV GADDAM

ABSTRACT

Based on Eli Alshanetsky's work *Articulating a Thought*, in this paper, I present a reconstructed puzzle involving complex thoughts and a method for how to tackle articulating them. Then, I reconstruct and provide objections to Alshanetsky's favored view with rationality. I expound on an initially overlooked deflationary view that is arguably much more viable, while also adding a layer of nuance and granularity to the view that affirms its place in solving the puzzle. I reach the conclusion that if articulation is simply a medium for us to express our complex unfinished thoughts, then perhaps it isn't necessary for us to clarify the thought.



I. INTRODUCTION

In *Articulating a Thought*, Eli Alshanetsky examines the process of clarifying our thoughts through speech.¹ He attempts to find a solution to the paradox of trying to articulate an idea when it is not yet fully formed. This paper reconstructs the puzzle, discusses a solution that Alshanetsky finds the most compelling, and makes a case for the “thinking-project file” deflationary account that is potentially stronger than Alshanetsky’s.

II. THE PUZZLE

Alshanetsky poses an epistemic puzzle as follows:

- A. I can articulate a particular thought that I have—for example, my thought that *p*.
- B. Successfully articulating the thought requires knowing that the meaning of my articulation matches my thought; I come to this knowledge (partly) on the basis of my knowledge of what I am thinking.
- C. Knowing what I am thinking requires having an articulation and drawing on my knowledge that the meaning of the articulation matches my thought.

In cases where one is thinking complex thoughts, it seems that some level of articulation is needed to clearly establish one’s own thoughts. We might have a vague idea as to what we are thinking, but after articulation, our thought is certainly more explicit. To establish the paradox in the puzzle, Alshanetsky states a principle known as Begging-the-Question: “If I come to know that *p* (partly) on the basis of my knowledge that *q*, then having that knowledge that *q* cannot require drawing on my knowledge that *p*.”² With this principle, we can see that the puzzle or statements A-C above are inconsistent. To further illustrate the paradox, consider Meno’s puzzle of investigation:

M[eno]: How will you look for it, Socrates, when you do not know at all what it is? How will you aim to search for something you do not know at all? If you should meet with it, how will you know that this is the thing that you do not know?³

How can articulating a thought help you clarify it considering you don’t have a solid thought to articulate? The puzzle alleges that to start forming words to articulate a thought we must already know exactly

1 Eli Alshanetsky, *Articulating a Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 36.

2 Alshanetsky, *Articulating a Thought*, 36.

3 Plato, *Meno*, trans. G. M. A. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1976), 80d-e.

the nuances of our thought. However, in these cases, it seems that for us to clarify our thought, we must articulate it. Even if it is the case that somebody else verbally speaks my thought correctly before I say anything, how do I recognize that it is the right expression of my thought, without even fully being able to explain what I was thinking? It seems extraordinary that one can recognize when their thought is correctly formulated without figuring out how to articulate it correctly themselves.

III. THE RATIONAL VIEW

Alshanetsky defines implicit knowledge as “a placeholder for whatever it is that allows us to recognize the correct formulations of our thought” and explicit knowledge as a way “to know that we are thinking that *p*.”⁴ By reframing articulation to encompass the transition from implicit to explicit knowledge rather than partial to complete knowledge, he rejects proposition B in the puzzle.

Alshanetsky posits that inside our minds we have multiple representational forms for thoughts, such as kinesthetic, visual, and even a purely conceptual format. He explains that many times our ideas are encoded in multiple different forms. In complex thoughts, these representational forms must be reconstructed and converted into a “verbally interpretable’ format” at the time of articulation.⁵ He explains how many times the simplicity of just changing formats cannot be enough to explain our difficulty in articulation, and so he describes a psychological model for verbal communication:

On Levelt’s model, we monitor the articulation process through three distinct channels, or feedback loops. The “outer loop” receives inputs from audition and allows us to detect errors by attending to our overt speech. The “inner loop” enables us to monitor our inner speech—the stream of phonetic plans for overt articulation. And the (innermost) “conceptual loop” allows us to monitor the pre-verbal message directly, in the process of its construction, to check whether it is appropriate for expression and whether the timing for expressing it is right.⁶

This systematic model accounts for the idea that as we are articulating one thought, we are simultaneously formulating a second thought that will align with the first and make sure that our words are truly fitting for the idea.

There are some challenges that Alshanetsky poses for this encoding account before refining the potential solutions. The first problem is a

4 Alshanetsky, *Articulating a Thought*, 90.

5 Alshanetsky, *Articulating a Thought*, 92.

6 Alshanetsky, *Articulating a Thought*, 93.



lag in recognition. Under the current encoding-difference account, it seems that there would need to be some amount of time to process what someone else is saying when trying to express the formulation of a thought. However, recognition of formulation should be instant, given that the thought is in your mind. How is this possible if you have not even come up with a verbally interpretable representation for the thought? The second problem has to do with the organization of our thought fragments. The framework a person has at a given moment does not account for how that person can speak about their thought holistically when first articulating it. The third problem concerns completion. If we truly do have a verbally interpretable representation before articulating our thought externally, then there does not seem to be a compelling reason to start and finish verbally expressing our thought. Since our thought is clarified at the verbally interpretable level, it seems that the actual articulation is optional. This view, then, is highly problematic as it brings us back to the puzzle. The final problem that Alshanetsky describes as a “deeper challenge” has to do with how at certain points in this process it seems that we can directly control the progress as opposed to it being completely unconscious (as it is in the present account).⁷

Alshanetsky argues that a second iteration of the encoding-difference theory can solve all the above problems. On this account, an articulation is split into two processes running in parallel:

- a. the *sub-personal* thought process that constructs the verbally interpretable representation and renders our initial thought suitable for expression;
- b. the *personal-level* process of setting out and arranging the information in the representation on the page—i.e., of putting the representation’s content into English.⁸

Alshanetsky explains that there are two main steps in articulating a thought. The first is when you are sparked with the thought and can think internally, which will lead to the creation of your signature. The second is when you find a satisfactory formulation for the thought and can express it verbally. Regarding recognition, Alshanetsky claims that we simply recognize the correct formulation from someone else’s speech when their words match our thought’s signature. As he puts it, “Our detection of a match is as cognitively basic as a direct comparison between two colors or simple shapes.”⁹

It can be argued that Alshanetsky’s second account does not escape all the concerns he poses. Perhaps the most pressing is the problem of

completion. If the verbally interpretable representation is at some level present before articulation, is there a need for articulation? Beyond this, recognition by the means of signatures seems to be a weak framework if the basis for it is simply implicit knowledge. Perhaps there is a better deflationary view.

IV. DEFLATIONISM

Alshanetsky gives an example of a philosophy student who is struggling to enunciate their thought. Sometimes in such cases, a teacher may attempt to enunciate what the student was thinking. In some such cases, the teacher’s enunciation might be close enough to what the student was vaguely thinking such that the student agrees that what the teacher said was what they were thinking. As Alshanetsky notes, “The student is likely to recognize that the teacher has captured the objection he was *after*, rather than any thought that he *had* when he raised his hand.”¹⁰ However, we might want to say that the student’s original thought was not actually formulated adequately by the teacher. Rather, the student’s thought was incomplete and it became more complete as the student continues thinking.

A deflationist might argue that the philosophy student might have a near epiphany about an objection or solution to a problem. The feeling is somewhat like when someone understands a joke they have been thinking about for a while. At the moment of the epiphany, a person may have some way of expressing this feeling or thought, even if they may not have an exact grasp or capability to express the inner “something” right away. Right after we articulate, Alshanetsky explains how our acknowledgement:

- immediately follows our understanding of the formulation, without our having to engage in any (overt) inference or reconstruction, and
- facilitates our transition to (what appears to us as) a “clearer” or “better-informed” state, relative to the initial shift.¹¹

Using this we can establish a basis for instances in which the puzzle manifests in the way above. Now, we have reached the true disagreement between the deflationist and inflationist. The deflationist believes that no definite thought is formed before articulation (only a thought that resembles the essence is formed), whereas the inflationist believes that a definite thought is formed before articulation.

⁷ Alshanetsky, *Articulating a Thought*, 100.

⁸ Alshanetsky, *Articulating a Thought*, 103.

⁹ Alshanetsky, *Articulating a Thought*, 119.

¹⁰ Alshanetsky, *Articulating a Thought*, 44.

¹¹ Alshanetsky, *Articulating a Thought*, 46.



Now we can examine the radical “thinking-project” deflationist view, which denies that we follow any pre-supposed condition when trying to approve or disapprove a formulation for our puzzling thoughts. Similar to starting an MSWord file on your desktop, I start a thinking-project file in my mind when I first begin to think of how to go about finding an efficient solution to a problem. Just as one changes the name for an MSWord file and chooses where to locate it, I subconsciously add tags and labels for this thinking-project file. Since this file poses interesting questions and involves a complex problem, I become very invested in it. There is no real way to just ignore the file unless its importance naturally fades away. Even if I am not actively working on it while I work on other activities, such as doing the dishes, my mind finds itself coming back to this thinking-project file. In common language, I may claim that it is “in the back of my mind,” but it is never gone, and until it is complete I will have no true or false value that is assigned to it. Thinking about it “in the back of my mind” is akin to adding partial content to the file only to perhaps come back and remove it. Therefore, any time someone asks me to explain the solution to this problem, I will give an incomplete formulation of my thoughts because it is representative of the incomplete nature of my thinking-project file.¹²

Alshanetsky claims that under this view, correct recognition is based on our thinking having reached an equilibrium. This is paradoxical because it is the recognition itself that brings our thinking to rest. However, rather than saying a correct formulation is recognized when our thinking has reached an equilibrium, a more fitting way to look at it is as a checkpoint. This checkpoint system is akin to a coding file that is saved after some progress is made. At any point, we can look back in this file’s revision history to trace the changes made. As partial progress is made on the problem, our mind occasionally saves this thinking-project file. Whenever someone asks me what the solution to the coding problem is, I give an incomplete answer that perhaps most closely resembles the last checkpoint. With regard to recognition, I take a formulation as correct when it is in line with my thinking-project file. I recognize formulations as finished states that could line up with the direction my thinking-project file is going. With this small modification of the deflationist thinking-project file view, we can account for the problem mentioned earlier because our file never reaches a stable equilibrium.

One might object to this checkpoint system by arguing that a person may temporarily agree with an outside explanation of their thought but might ultimately find it unsatisfactory. However, this worry can be accounted for with a multidimensional checkpoint system. It

might be that the professor speaks a formulation that the student correctly recognizes as representing their thought because, at the time the professor speaks, it seems that the formulation is in line with the student’s thinking-project file. However, as the student makes progress on their thinking-project file for this objection, new checkpoints are reached. These checkpoints could be in a slightly different direction than what was originally planned. As a result, the student could realize that in fact, the professor did not actually capture the student’s thoughts. Comparing this to Alshanetsky’s original thinking-project view, the student under the original view would be unable to tell if their thought was being conveyed accurately because their project was not at equilibrium. As such, the thinking-project file view with the checkpoint system modification can refute premise A in our puzzle stated near the beginning of the paper while being more straightforward than Alshanetsky’s solution.

V. CONCLUSION

Thinking about the process of articulating our thoughts, especially in these puzzling cases where we struggle to accurately create a formulation of our thoughts, while also aiming to clarify our thoughts can be a confusing matter. While Alshanetsky sheds light on this issue by considering various accounts and reaching a nuanced theory of his own, I believe there is still room to be explored further with the deflationary theories. This paper has examined and offered modifications to one extension of one deflationary account discussed by Alshanetsky.

¹² Alshanetsky, *Articulating a Thought*, 58.





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PUTNAM'S PROBLEM OF THE ROBOT AND EXTENDED MINDS



JACOB BERK

ABSTRACT

In this paper, I consider Hilary Putnam's argument for the *prima facie* acceptance of robotic consciousness as deserving the status of mind. I argue that such an extension of consciousness renders the category fundamentally unintelligible, and we should instead understand robots as integral products of an extended human consciousness. To this end, I propose a test from conceptual object permanence, which can be applied not just to robots, but to the innumerable artifacts of consciousness that texture our existences.



I. INTRODUCTION

In his 1973 paper “Robots: Machines or Artificially Created Life?” Hilary Putnam argues that there is no definitive answer as to whether robots are conscious, but that we must instead choose whether to extend this category to them.¹ This framework, at first glance, is a convincing analysis and effective response, but it fails to consider the triviality such an extension assigns to the notion of consciousness. Even if we cannot know that a robot has experiences isomorphic to those of a human, we cannot technically know this about humans, and a great deal of us choose in any case to extend consciousness to people. However, if we default to extending consciousness to anything, we cannot have certainty over a *prima facie* account. This would ultimately render the category of consciousness meaningless.

There is, however, a view that does not directly engage in the back-and-forth concerning individual minds. Consciousness, under the doctrine of extended mind theory, is considered a partially external series of phenomena. We understand ourselves and our mental processes in relation to other minds and even non-mental objects. This is no groundbreaking statement. Putnam himself proposed the doctrine of “semantic” or “natural kind” externalism in response to this dilemma, claiming that “meanings just ain’t in the head!”²

Putnam believes that when we interact with the rest of the world, or the “natural kind,” those terms are assigned meaning via interaction with the physical structures of the world around us.³ We could not have such terms without physical inputs, and they are therefore part of the mind in some way. Elaborating on and departing from this, Andrew Clark and David Chalmers have more recently claimed that a mechanism of “active externalism” allows us to better explain how external objects function as part of the mind.⁴ Via this interpretation, robots and artificial intelligence, to the extent that they are integrated into an extended consciousness, will be at the very least viewed as conscious by its other member(s). Our perception of robots as conscious does not, however, entail they are actually conscious, but perhaps that they are beings of consciousness—a physical or informational extension of human consciousness. Under this reading, consciousness cannot be something that simply is or is not.

1 Hilary Putnam, “Robots: Machines or Artificially Created Life?,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 61, no. 21 (1964): 673, 10.2307/2023045.

2 Hilary Putnam, “The Meaning of ‘Meaning,’” *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science* 7 (1975): 144.

3 Putnam, “Meaning of ‘Meaning,’” 147.

4 Andy Clark and David Chalmers, “The Extended Mind,” *Analysis* 58, no. 1 (1998): 7, 10.1093/analys/58.1.7.

Where we can see the consciousness (or lack thereof) of a robot is in the degree to which its mental existence is contingent upon the internal conscious processes of human beings and other members in a social framework. I will take the rest of this paper to explain and respond to Putnam’s arguments, their intersection with Clark and Chalmers’s extended mind, and put forth a small contribution of a philosophical litmus test regarding this discussion. Ultimately, I conclude that if consciousness is not internal, evidence of its existence in other minds may not be either.

I propose that we are better able to delineate the boundaries of consciousness—and therefore distinguish between the conscious and nonconscious—via a test from conceptual object permanence. This test asks whether human consciousness is necessary for the continued existence of some class of object. If the answer is yes, it can be considered an extension of said consciousness, and therefore is classified as of consciousness. I also propose that this test can be reversed, and that evidence of other human (and indeed animal) consciousnesses can be found in the offloading of cognitive burdens through external mechanical processes.

Both versions of this test can better show us the limits of our consciousness as it is represented—and as it imposes itself—in the world. If we are able to establish that our cognitive processes are extended in some manner, then we do not need access to the qualia (i.e., internal sensations) of others or direct access to definitionally inaccessible mental structures to find reason to abandon solipsism. We do not have to choose to extend the assignation of full human consciousness to robots to say that they do have conscious properties and should be treated accordingly.

II. PUTNAM’S DILEMMA

Putnam examines various functionalist arguments for the existence of robot consciousness, including a line of argumentation by Gilbert Ryle which claims that robots can know anything a human can and therefore participate in knowledge-discussions of a substantive sort, revealing evidence of consciousness. To quote Putnam, “If knowing that *p* is having a ‘multi-tracked disposition’ to appropriate sayings and question-answerings and behavings...then a robot can know anything a person can.”⁵

Another argument given in defense (however qualified) of artificial consciousness is the functionalist argument that “it is part of the ‘logic’ of psychological theories that (physically) different structures may obey

5 Putnam, “Robots,” 673.



(or be ‘models’ of) the same psychological theory.”⁶ In short, something that obeys psychological principles has, at least in theory, the functional components to constitute consciousness in a human.

Offering pushback to this perhaps overly simplistic isomorphic argument, Putnam gives the example of a robot’s perception of the color red. He offers the argument that “the connection between my visual sensation of red and my utterance ‘it looks as if there is something red in front of me’ (or whatever) is not merely a causal one.”⁷ Rather, it is a *quale*, or perceived property, of the classical variety, a purely internal phenomenon that is not necessarily sensual. This is followed by another argument that qualia have certain intrinsic properties; we could program a robot to have the opposite response to a “sensation,” whereas this is basically impossible for a human—a burning stove just hurts.⁸ This is, via Putnam’s view, an effective argument that does not only deny the ability of humans to establish robotic consciousness but equally so the consciousness of other people through functionalism.

He concludes that this back-and-forth is largely counterproductive, and since a *quale* is by definition entirely internalized, it cannot be the subject of independent or objective analysis. Yet if consciousness is entirely internalized, what method do we have to know that other human beings have consciousness, much less robots? Generally for something to determine itself to be in a certain state it needs some sort of reference, one which we have for humans—namely ourselves. We do not possess however, this point of reference for a robotic consciousness. Putnam summarizes this dichotomy by stating that “the decision, at bottom, is this: Do I treat ROBOTS as fellow members of my linguistic community, or as machines?”⁹ Considering that this seems to be a question of degree in some sense, it is not surprising that the solution rests in our own choosing.

To say that we should choose to extend consciousness to an automaton is, at first glance, not an unreasonable response to this back-and-forth. However, it has somewhat confusing consequences. It makes assignation virtually impossible. If we choose to say that presumably non-sentient robots are conscious, we do not leave any room for the nuance necessary to keep this position from becoming absurd.

This pitfall in Putnam’s line of argumentation stems not from the structure of the dilemma he paints, but in the conclusions he draws from it. After establishing the choice we must make, he says that we

6 Putnam, “Robots,” 675.

7 Putnam, “Robots,” 672.

8 Putnam, “Robots,” 672.

9 Putnam, “Robots,” 690.

should choose to extend consciousness to robots when in doubt, as to avoid discrimination based upon “the ‘softness’ or ‘hardness’ of the body parts of a synthetic ‘organism.’”¹⁰ This argument of discrimination makes the category of the conscious very broad—too broad, I argue, to be meaningful.

For example, if we can choose to extend consciousness to a relatively sophisticated robot, what is to stop us from assigning some degree of internally generated consciousness to a simple machine or even a sculpted piece of stone if the determinant criterion is subjective. After all, both of those are involved in human consciousness, even if they are merely artifacts of it. A direct product of consciousness seems to bear its imprint. If we follow Putnam’s logic that we should *prima facie* grant consciousness to robots, we should probably also grant consciousness to any machine that can manipulate its environment. If a fork or pulley, two clearly inanimate objects, can be considered conscious, what do we truly mean by conscious?

For Putnam—who would later hold that the external structures have bearing upon the internal functioning of mental processes—as the world and human technology change, so too can the psyche. It is therefore possible to say that Putnam’s answer may have been satisfactory at the time, but the advent of new mind-extending (or perhaps supplanting) technology renders the answer of personal choice obsolete. However, even on Putnam’s own terms, in his own time, this conclusion is ambiguous and has seemingly untenable implications. His argument would strongly benefit from some means of clarification.

All of this is not to say Putnam is incorrect in his conclusion, but the methodology he uses to establish it is open to relatively unsophisticated critique and in need of further development. Luckily, it is not necessarily the case that consciousness is entirely internalized, and the work of Putnam, Clark, and Chalmers taken together helps us to outline a more clearly exteriorized model of the mind.

III. THE EXTENDED MIND: AN ANSWER?

To illustrate the structured fluidity that allows a notion of mental extension to provide a suitable answer, Clark and Chalmers give an example wherein three subjects are asked to rotate a shape on a screen.¹¹ One is asked to perform it mentally and visualize it. One may choose whether to do it themselves or press a button to have it turned on the screen. Another may do it themselves or have a robotic brain implant do it for them. There is not any fundamental difference in the way that

10 Putnam, “Robots,” 691.

11 Clark and Chalmers, “Extended Mind,” 7.



one would use the button or the implant, and this is given as evidence that the physical barrier of the brain cannot be equivalent with mental constructs, leaving room for the possibility of mental externality.

Furthermore, a process of coupling is laid out in which objects, particularly ones designed to aid mental processes, become inextricably linked to basic aspects of consciousness. They lay out their position fully here, writing, "Our thesis is that this sort of coupled process counts equally well as a cognitive process, whether or not it is wholly in the head."¹² Indeed, examples of this abound in our everyday lives, from eyeglasses to emails. Instead of one's qualia informing the choice to communicate or not, to respond to external stimuli or not, we can offload fairly elementary mental processes, demonstrating external coupling.

Eyeglasses are a clear example of this. Sight is one of the basic senses through which consciousness receives the inputs that allow it to maintain a homeostatic character. Without glasses a severely visually impaired person would suffer greatly—certainly they would be unable to perform many basic functions of daily life. This object, two pieces of glass and a metal frame, are included as part of the mental processes of perception at a very basic structural level.

They also give the example of Scrabble, a game in which the letter tiles being rearranged cannot be arranged in the precise physical state necessary to complete a word without including the physical tiles as part of one's thought processor—perhaps, as part of the thought. "One can," they elaborate, "explain my choice of words in Scrabble, for example, as the outcome of an extended cognitive process involving the rearrangement of tiles on my tray."¹³ While they admit this could be chalked up to a series of inputs and outcomes in a mental Turing machine, they respond that "if an isomorphic process were going on in the head, we would feel no urge to characterize it in this cumbersome way. In a very real sense, the re-arrangement of tiles on the tray is not part of action; it is part of thought."¹⁴

However, does this exterior model hold up to the objections I have brought towards Putnam's claims? In some ways it does not. Saying that an object can be part of the mind does not represent a break from Putnam's position—it essentially is his position. While this may be true, claiming that a cognitive process can be external does represent a radical break in the discussion. However, under Clark and Chalmers's reading, consciousness could be viewed as vaguely defined unless we impose criteria that can help us sort out what is part of an extended mind's

consciousness, and to what degree we should consider that system's components to be conscious or part of the process of consciousness—functionally or otherwise.

Clark and Chalmers, therefore, do provide some sort of framework through which we can interpret different consciousnesses within a diffuse system. This is made clear in their concepts of the socially extended consciousness and even self. These are categories with some inbuilt definitionality. There are boundaries to the self that, even if we seek to extend beyond our own flesh and blood, prevent us from assigning anything to it. A rock or old-growth forest, for example, has existed and will exist independently of me. Furthermore, my broader cognitive processing and sense of integrity are not impinged on by them. But how exactly do we determine what external objects can and cannot be part of a cognitive process?

IV. CONCEPTUAL OBJECT PERMANENCE

This leads me to a main issue around which much of this paper has been building: how do we determine what is and is not part of the extended mind, and how can that help alleviate the objections I raised to Putnam? I propose the use of a test based upon "conceptual object permanence," a phrase that needs unpacking. Object permanence is, simply put, the ability to recognize the continued existence of objects even if you cannot verify their immediate presence (i.e., sense them). This is an important development in early childhood and is often used as a test of intelligence in humans and animals.

Conceptual object permanence applies more broadly—concepts being the means of this test, not the subject. It is best to illustrate with an example. A Fitbit is something I know exists. I know it will continue to exist if I leave it in my bedside drawer or lend it to a friend (assuming they are not overly clumsy). However, if humans were to disappear, would my Fitbit continue to retain its purpose? Could Fitbits, as a kind, continue to hold meaning? One can conclude they would not, and this means they are at the very least a physical extension of consciousness.

We can also flip this test and ask about things we consider to be parts of an extended consciousness disappearing. If the multiple species of crops we have genetically modified to suit our agricultural needs were to disappear, could humans as a kind continue to exist? The answer, in this case, is that we probably could, but not very many of us. Human civilization most certainly would collapse, and we would likely revert to hunter-gatherer status, leaving behind very little that would be recognizable to you or me. This demonstrates the integral nature of something we would consider unconscious to most humans' processes

¹² Clark and Chalmers, "Extended Mind," 9.

¹³ Clark and Chalmers, "Extended Mind," 9.

¹⁴ Clark and Chalmers, "Extended Mind," 10.



of consciousness. It seems that if a class of objects or processes are both impossible without consciousness, and that our current collective state of consciousness is impossible without said class, they are extensions of consciousness.

And what of the statues I claimed to show Putnam's position's absurdity? They do not pass this test. If all statues disappeared, this would not disrupt the functioning of anybody's consciousness as a whole. Human civilization as it currently exists would probably go on just about the same. While statues are an artifact or even arguably an extension of human consciousness, they are not integral to its functioning in a way that would make them a fundamental part of an extended cognitive process. This is the line Clark and Chalmers draw, between active and passive externality; we can see that this test distinguishes these categories accurately.

These examples may seem strange because they do not involve what appear to be immediate cognitive processes, at least not conscious ones. A Fitbit is not something I consciously manipulate through concentrated cognitive effort like a Scrabble set, and the amount of times the average person manipulates cereal crops with their mind a day is probably very close to zero. Why do these function as part of cognitive processes, then? Simply put, they alleviate the burden of consciousness. What were formerly natural cognitive processes have been offloaded onto artificial solutions. These object classes, both strictly and biologically mechanical, could not exist without us, nor we without them—indicating a process of cognitively directed mutual dependence.

V. THE OBJECTIONS OF A SEMANTIC EXTERNALIST

Putnam might respond to this extension of his ideas by rejecting it on the grounds of the nonlinguistic nature of the test proposed. In his conclusions on the dichotomy he presents over robotic consciousness, Putnam proposes that “the decision, at bottom, is this: Do I treat ROBOTS as fellow members of my linguistic community, or as machines?”¹⁵ This extension of linguistic credence to other minds, specifically robots, is obviously one that would seem to exclude the possibility of the extended models of cognition which I have examined and proposed.

Indeed, it may not make sense per Putnam's logic to treat any non-linguistic actor as a fellow consciousness, or strictly of consciousness in any way. For example, clearly a Fitbit is not indicative of any original, internal consciousness in the manner that he indicated. This can even be said for his isometric robot—although he clearly does not seem to agree on this point. Pointing to the biological essentiality of consciousness (as

many philosophers, linguists, and scientists might), we could say that even if a robot can be treated as part of a linguistic community or an extended mind network, this is not evidence of some idealized, purely human form of consciousness per se.

These are both fair objections, yet they miss the distinction I seek to make. When we talk about a distributed mind and the artifacts of consciousness, we eliminate the need to talk about the fundamentally decentralized process of consciousness in strictly binary terms. One could respond to these objections by claiming that linguistic thought is simply one aspect of conscious life—there are plenty of demonstrably conscious organisms that exist without it—and that what we might want to ask is whether an aspect of an extended consciousness could reasonably be thought to have its central nucleus in some linguistic form.

However, this opens another debate that cannot be resolved within the frame of this discussion. Upon accepting an extended cognitive model, one could simply consider Putnam's linguistic demand through the lens that many examples of mind extension that do not appear linguistic are, in fact, formulated in the mind as such. This can be seen in the example of a Fitbit—we do not necessarily formulate our hunger or tiredness in linguistic, informational terms. However, the Fitbit always does this, substituting purely phenomenological experiences for explicitly textualized, and therefore linguistic, data. This could even be termed a “linguistic takeover” of thought, in which previously unarticulated, purely phenomenological, experiences are perceived in the mind in a propositional and formalized manner. Clearly, whether we can speak with some aspect of mind cannot be the only criterion for its consideration as such.

VI. IMPLICATIONS

What implications does the theory of extended mind have upon the discussion of robotic consciousness outside of the inclusion of a robot in one's consciousness? An obvious answer is not particularly forthcoming at first. A robotic consciousness outside of our own extended mental framework is not something humans are prepared to intuit. Extended mind theory provides a middle ground upon which further research and application can be based.

Furthermore, the test of conceptual object permanence proposed here may be of some interest to those seeking an answer to the choice Putnam has laid out. While by no means complete, the general outline of a litmus test for such a model of consciousness may be useful to further research in envisioning the boundaries such a category demands.

15 Putnam, “Robots,” 690.



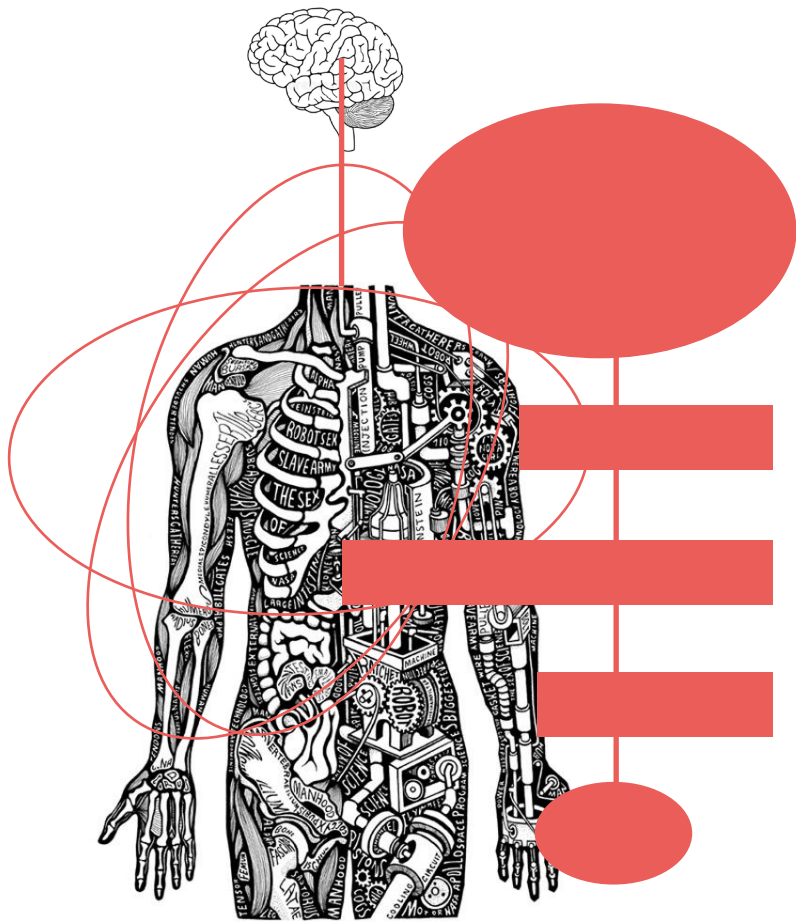
Most consequentially, I have shown that functionalist models of the mind that focus only on the biologically internal components of human consciousness should seek to readjust upon acceptance of Clark and Chalmers's theory. Functionalists might aim to focus not just on brain states but upon how those brain states are distributed along behavioral and technological axes. If we accept that human consciousness shapes and is profoundly shaped by the world around it, perhaps the best evidence of consciousness is not something intrinsically inaccessible, but has been right in front of us this whole time.



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HOW A BUDDHA ACTS: Laying Bricks for a Buddhist Theory of Action



MUKUND MAITHANI

ABSTRACT

Buddhist philosophers generally hold that concepts like “I” and “me,” while useful in everyday life, are ultimately meaningless. Under this view, there would be no “agents” because it is meaningless to say “I did so and so....” How do we explain the occurrence of actions without referring to agents? I argue that Cappelen and Dever’s Action Inventory Model (AIM) is a useful resource for developing a Buddhist theory of action. In response to an objection that AIM cannot explain a buddha’s action, I show that a slightly tweaked version of AIM succeeds in explaining how a buddha acts.



I. THE PUZZLE: A THEORY OF ACTION WITHOUT AN AGENT

The phrase “agentless action” might sound absurd. We usually think that an action is done by someone: namely, the agent. Suppose that you are eating a burger and I am eating an egg roll. Both of us are acting but I am the agent of the egg-roll-eating action while you are the agent of the burger-eating action. It seems that agents are related to actions in some special way; they can call an action exclusively their own.

Some Buddhists, however, would question this conceptual relation between an agent and action. No action is ultimately mine or yours, according to some Buddhists. Ultimately, as for how things actually are, the self, the “I,” is an illusion. We are psychological and physical entities that change and grow over time. Our hair greys, eyes get weaker, neurons die, and beliefs shift. One mistakenly takes our complex psychophysical parts as one enduring whole or person that holds a permanent identity across time.¹ There is actually nothing that the concept “I” refers to. Hence, while there is action there is ultimately no agent.

Conventionally, however, the concept “I” is a useful fiction or designator for practical purposes in the world. If we did not communicate or think about certain things in the first-person, ordinary living and language would become extremely difficult.

For the Buddhist, there is action but no agent, such that it is simply conventional to say “I did this.” The puzzle is: how do we explain one’s action, or why one acted a particular way, in Buddhist terms without referring to an agent?

The Buddhists did not explicitly concern themselves with creating a philosophical theory of action.² Moreover, the very idea of building a Buddhist theory of action based on our broad understanding of Western theories of action is questionable—like trying to fit Buddhist ethical views in terms of theories of virtue ethics or consequentialism.³ Under this understanding, charges of misappropriation from a Western-traditional lens can fall into one’s hand easily.

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- 1 E.g., Jonardon Ganeri and Peter Adamson, *Classical Indian Philosophy: A History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 285; Mark Siderits, *Buddhism as Philosophy: An Introduction* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007), 32-68.
 - 2 Mark Siderits, “Buddhist Reductionist Action Theory,” in *A Mirror is for Reflection: Understanding Buddhist Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 276.
 - 3 Christopher Gowans, “Buddhist Moral Thought and Western Moral Philosophy,” in *A Mirror is for Reflection: Understanding Buddhist Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 53.

I agree with the charge when it is due, but I would like to avoid the charge at present. My engagement with the concerned puzzle is a harmless philosophical and comparative exercise. I do not mean to claim that we have to interpret Buddhist ideas of action through a Western theory of action. I simply offer an example of a possibly fruitful philosophical conversation between different philosophical traditions. Some Buddhist philosophers may find in Cappelen and Dever’s theory a tempting model to support their idea that there are actions but no agents.⁴ On the other hand, philosophers in the Western tradition, such as Cappelen and Dever, might find the Buddhist’s rejection of indexicality in actions illuminating, through its conceptual richness and disagreement with the orthodox view.⁵ Lastly, if the aforementioned reasons fail to convince, as Siderits puts it, an action theory that omits agents altogether might be of some interest in its own right.⁶

In this paper, I suggest that it is possible to construct a Buddhist theory of action using Cappelen and Dever’s Action Inventory Model (AIM).⁷ I argue that a revised version, AIM-2, is a helpful model for a Buddhist theory of action. I begin Section Two by explaining AIM and arguing that it is a strong candidate for helping us construct a Buddhist theory of action. In Section Three, I consider two objections to my suggestion concerning whether AIM can explain the actions of a buddha. I respond to these objections in Section Four. I conclude that AIM-2, a modified but compatible version of AIM, succeeds in explaining a buddha’s action.

II. CAPPELEN AND DEVER’S ACTION INVENTORY MODEL

Cappelen and Dever ask whether there exists a necessary connection between agency and indexicality. By indexicality, they refer to the self-locating attitudes which reference the first-person point of view—for example, words such as I, mine, there, and now. They argue that indexicality does not play an essential role in explaining and rationalizing actions. Their view runs contrary to the orthodox view, which maintains that indexical concepts are essential to explain actions.⁸

The orthodox view holds an intuitive appeal. Consider an example: Suhesh is sitting at a park. He sees that people are frantically running around and clearing out of the area. Someone screams at him, “A hungry leopard in the park!” Suhesh has multiple third-person beliefs about

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- 4 Herman Cappelen and Josh Dever, *The Inessential Indexical: On the Philosophical Insignificance of Perspective and the First Person* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 49-56.
 - 5 Cappelen and Dever, *Inessential Indexical*, 30-37.
 - 6 Siderits, “Buddhist Reductionist Action Theory,” 277.
 - 7 Cappelen and Dever, *Inessential Indexical*, 50.
 - 8 Cappelen and Dever, *Inessential Indexical*, 31.



the situation. He believes “a hungry leopard can eat a human,” “Suhesh is a human,” and “Suhesh would never prefer to be eaten by a hungry leopard.” However, unless Suhesh believes that “I am Suhesh,” it seems unclear what would prompt him to leave the park for his safety. According to the orthodox view then, indexicality is a key concept to reveal what motivates someone to act in a certain way.⁹

Without using indexical concepts, Cappelen and Dever face a similar burden as the Buddhist to explain why a person acts in a certain way.¹⁰ Here, they propose that AIM helps them explain action and, as I will conclude, helps the Buddhist.

Cappelen and Dever's AIM responds to the “Selection Problem,” which is that everyone has many third-person beliefs and desires about the world—not all of these prompt or result in an action. The question is: which ones produce action and which ones do not? For a theory of action, we need a “filtering mechanism” to pick out which thing or things are relevant to the explanation for why an action occurred.¹¹

For holders of the orthodox view—that indexicality is essential to explaining agency—the self-locating, ego-centric attitudes are the filtering mechanisms. In other words, our first-person beliefs and desires, like “I want cake” and “I can get the cake by opening the fridge,” give us reasons to act in a certain way. According to the orthodox view, third-person data like “it is a chocolate cake” or “the cake is in the fridge” by themselves do not move us to act if we do not locate ourselves within the given situations.

Cappelen and Dever, however, disagree with the orthodox view and argue that indexical expressions are not necessary to explain why one acts the way one does. According to AIM, every agent has an “action inventory,” which is the range of actions they can practically perform in a given situation. An agent looks to match their intention to act with an action available from this inventory. For example, I take a penalty kick in a football game, with the intention to score a goal past the keeper. The available actions are plenty—I can kick the ball to the left-bottom corner, to the right-top corner, to the middle of the goal, and so on. I could also choose to start dancing on the spot instead. According to AIM, when my intention to score a goal matches one of the available and appropriate actions, I act.

Cappelen and Dever anticipate an objection at this point. One could argue that in this case, it still seems like we have to refer to a first-person view to explain actions. In the penalty kick example, I have to consider

swinging my leg, having the correct posture, and other factors that may reference my position in space. Using indexical concepts, therefore, seems unavoidable in explaining how one acted the way one did.

Cappelen and Dever would respond as follows. We do not really go through any process of deliberation—or consider conceptual thoughts like “it is me who is kicking this ball”—before acting in a certain way.¹² They claim that “available actions have already been thought about” by the time agents make their move. They say that we are “embedded agents” who are capable of directly engaging with things in our physical environment. That is, while we have the ability to engage with our own thoughts, we are not bound by a step-by-step thought process—with either self-locating attitudes or third-person beliefs—before we act. Therefore, indexical concepts are not necessary in our explanation of how actions occur. Certainly, however, we think that there are attitudes that motivate actions. So, how do our beliefs or third-person concepts lead to actions that are available and appropriate in a given situation?

Recall the Selection Problem: which beliefs or desires prompt action and which ones do not? According to AIM, the “filtering mechanism” includes the physical and psychological constraints of the agent. Certain actions are produced because the agent's intention to act matches the respective available and appropriate action—the action is appropriate when it helps the agent achieve the intended goal. On the other hand, the intention to act might not translate to action because the agent is physically and/or psychologically unable to find an available action. For example, Mansi intends to perform a back-flip but her knees are weak, and she has never done a back-flip before. In such a case, the intention to act and the available action would not match, and the action would not occur.¹³

Given that AIM does not require reference to ego-centric and self-locating attitudes to explain action, I suggest that AIM is a fitting model for developing a Buddhist theory of action. Unlike some Buddhists, however, Cappelen and Dever do not say that an agent does not exist. Rather, Cappelen and Dever are concerned with explaining action without referring to the agent's indexicality.

Nonetheless, when a Buddhist says that ultimately there is no agent, they are not saying that there is no psychophysical entity that can move around or pick stuff up. For example, what Buddhaghosa specifically rejects is a “controller self.” Jonardon Ganeri and Peter Adamson suggest the following way to look at Buddhaghosa's view: our bodies operate in the way a self-driving car operates through the complex mechanisms

9 Cappelen and Dever, *Inessential Indexical*, 38.

10 Cappelen and Dever, *Inessential Indexical*, 30–31.

11 Cappelen and Dever, *Inessential Indexical*, 50.

12 Cappelen and Dever, *Inessential Indexical*, 51.

13 Cappelen and Dever, *Inessential Indexical*, 50.



and interactions of its parts—there is no need for a driver as a locus of the car’s action. In a human, as in a mechanical doll, there is nothing isolated inside of us that controls or coordinates all the other parts.¹⁴

We could understand Buddhaghosa’s claim that there is action, but no agent as follows. What we call an “agent” is a complex and ever-changing psychophysical entity. For such a complex and ever-changing entity, it ultimately does not make sense to say “I am doing so and so” because the “I” does not really exist. Therefore, a Buddhist theory of action would require that we exclude indexical concepts like “I,” “me,” or “mine” in explaining one’s action.

III. TWO OBJECTIONS TO AIM’S SUITABILITY AS A BUDDHIST THEORY OF ACTION

Before I explain why AIM can be suitable for a Buddhist theory of action, I will consider two early objections. I will advance my argument for AIM’s suitability as a Buddhist theory of action by addressing them.

The first objection is as follows: because AIM avoids reference to first-person beliefs and desires, it needs to reference to third-person beliefs and desires. An enlightened being, a buddha, is not supposed to have conceptual mental content like beliefs or desires.¹⁵ A buddha has realized the ultimate reality—how the world exists independently of our conventions and concepts—and experiences the world accordingly. Therefore, a buddha’s action cannot be prompted or rationalized by their beliefs and desires—be they first-person or third-person.

Adding on to the first objection, the second objection states: a buddha cannot have intention like non-enlightened beings because the latter’s kind of intention is conceptual in content.¹⁶ Jay Garfield adds that intention intervenes between perception and action for non-enlightened beings, while a buddha’s action is spontaneous and direct—a buddha does not intend before acting.¹⁷ As per AIM, an action occurs when the intention to act and available action match; if there is no intention, an available action apparently has nothing to match with. Hence, a buddha can never act on AIM’s account; this conclusion is unacceptable.

One may argue that a theory of action acceptable to the Buddhist must at least accommodate an explanation of a buddha’s action—as a buddha is supposed to be the major upholder of certain Buddhist

principles. Since AIM is unable to explain a buddha’s action, the objector concludes that AIM is not a fitting model for a Buddhist theory of action.

IV. RESPONSES TO THE OBJECTIONS AND ARGUMENT FOR AIM-2

I reply to the first objection: AIM can explain a buddha’s action even if the buddha does not have conceptual mental content. A buddha is a psychophysical entity operating in the world. The lack of conceptual mental content need not be a problem because AIM takes into consideration the physical and psychological constraints of the agent. If a buddha is constrained by the lack of conceptual content, this constraint should not by itself rule out the possibility of AIM explaining a buddha’s action.

But is it possible to be able to act without conceptual content in one’s mental activity? In Paul Griffiths’s view, a buddha does act physically, verbally, and mentally in the world.¹⁸ By “mentally,” he refers to the working of a buddha’s *citta*—roughly translated as mind. A buddha’s mind is also referred to as *bodhicitta*, an awakened mind.¹⁹ So, it is not that a buddha has no mental activity whatsoever. The buddha’s mental activity, however, has a radically different nature from that of a non-awakened being. Therefore, the fact that a buddha’s mental activity excludes conceptual content, unlike non-awakened beings, does not mean that a buddha cannot act in the world as non-awakened beings do.

While there are available actions for a buddha and the lack of conceptual mental content is unproblematic, there is still no intention to act, which is required for AIM’s explanation of how actions occur. How then do we respond to the second objection?

I suggest a minimalist reading of the concept “intention” here. I borrow this understanding from Donald Davidson’s concept of a “pro-attitude.”²⁰ For Davidson, a pro-attitude broadly refers to an inclination to act. This inclination to act is not what we typically consider as desire. For instance, desire is often associated with an active urge towards doing something, an ego-centric attachment to or for something, or a want of an object. Davidson says that pro-attitude broadly includes desires, wants, and urges—insofar as they are understood as attitudes of an agent directed towards doing an action. He adds that even the most “passing

14 Ganeri and Adamson, *Classical Indian Philosophy*, 280–81.

15 E.g., Jay Garfield, “Hey, Buddha! Don’t Think! Just Act!—A Response to Bronwyn Finnigan,” *Philosophy East and West* 61, no. 1 (2011): 179, 10.1353/pew.2011.0002; Paul Griffiths, *On Being Buddha: The Classical Doctrine of Buddhahood* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), 103.

16 E.g. Garfield, “Hey, Buddha!,” 179; Griffiths, *Being Buddha*, 103.

17 Garfield, “Hey, Buddha!,” 179.

18 Griffiths, *Being Buddha*, 102.

19 Jay Garfield, “What is it like to be a bodhisattva? Moral phenomenology in Śāntideva’s Bodhicaryāvatāra,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 33, no. 2 (2010): 334, <https://journals.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/index.php/jiabs/article/view/9285>.

20 Donald Davidson, *Essays on Actions and Events* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), 3.



fancy that prompts a unique action” counts as pro-attitude.²¹ For example, a pro-attitude could count as love for one’s child as well as a sudden wish to smoke. Pro-attitude is therefore a broad and accommodative concept, in the sense that any sort of inclinations or attitudes that are directed towards acting can qualify as pro-attitudes.

I suggest that a buddha experiences pro-attitudes. A pro-attitude need not be conceptual like desires, beliefs, or intentions, as we commonly understand these terms. A pro-attitude could still be responsible in a way for producing an action. For example, a spontaneous inclination towards saving my infant child drowning in a bathtub or mindlessly opening Facebook on my phone to scroll down its feed could be counted as pro-attitudes. It seems that certain actions do not really require deliberate consideration to occur.

If we agree that a buddha has pro-attitudes to act in a certain way, and these attitudes are non-conceptual, we may try to replace the “intention to act” in the AIM with a “pro-attitude to act.” I call this tweaked Action Inventory Model AIM-2. In that case, as per AIM-2, a buddha’s action must occur when an available action and a pro-attitude to act accordingly matches. But it remains to be seen what sort of attitudes, unlike third-person beliefs, desires, and intention to act, might prompt a buddha’s action. What sort of pro-attitudes could a buddha have?

Griffiths provides an example of a possible pro-attitude; he writes that a buddha’s awareness of what needs to be done results eventually in a respective action. What needs to be done in this case is whatever benefits the other living beings in the world by reducing their suffering.²² This benevolent inspiration to act is also compatible with the required cultivation of the four divine attitudes in strands of Theravada Buddhism. These states, considered as the good roots for conduct and action, are *karuṇa* (care or compassion), *mudita* (sympathetic joy), *upekṣā* (equanimity), and *mettā* (loving-kindness).²³ Garfield chooses to translate *karuṇa* as care rather than compassion because, upon his reading, *karuṇa* refers not only to an emotive response to others and their suffering but a commitment to act and relieve said suffering.²⁴

So, one of the pro-attitudes to act for a buddha would be to care for one’s fellow beings. I am not claiming, by suggesting this particular pro-attitude for a buddha, that a buddha will always—24 hours a day, 7 days a week—be caring for or benefiting someone through their actions.

As AIM-2 suggests based on the principles of AIM, one acts when the pro-attitude, an available action and an appropriate situation join together.

If a buddha sees a person injured on the side of the road, their pro-attitude to act compassionately would match their ability in this appropriate situation to tend to the person. On the other hand, it would of course not make sense if a buddha reaches out to every single person on the road to look for a potential way to help—assuming that everything is going well for the present people. Neither would we want to say that a buddha will always have the capacity to help someone who is in need. AIM-2 considers the physical and psychological constraints of the agent in any situation in their ability to act. If a buddha has caught the flu and is bed-ridden for a week, although the pro-attitude to act compassionately and care for others remains, those pro-attitudes will not result in actions.

Therefore, according to AIM-2, a buddha’s action would occur when their pro-attitude to act matches with an available action. AIM-2 is able to explain a buddha’s action and does not require references to self-centric attitudes to explain it, regardless of whether one is a buddha or a non-awakened being. A non-awakened being too has pro-attitudes, although many of these pro-attitudes might be of a different kind compared to a buddha’s. So, AIM-2 might be helpful in developing a potentially more detailed Buddhist theory of action.

V. CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have suggested a modified version of Cappelen and Dever’s Action Inventory Model to work as a fitting model for developing a Buddhist theory of action. My modification of AIM was motivated by the goal of explaining a buddha’s action. AIM requires the agent to eventually act on their intentions, whereas a buddha is not supposed to have intentions like non-awakened beings do. I proposed that we think of a buddha as having “pro-attitudes” to act in a certain way when the pro-attitude matches the available action and the situation. One of the possible pro-attitudes that I suggested in this paper is a pro-attitude to actively care for and tend to the suffering of other beings.

I claimed earlier that my proposal for AIM-2 in this paper is an attempt to bring a non-Western philosophical theory of action in conversation with a Buddhist view of action. It would be interesting to develop AIM-2 further and explore its compatibility with various strands of Buddhist thought and views on action. Cappelen and Dever themselves claim to take AIM “pretty loosely”—they say they are interested in the possibility of the model rather than, let us say, how accurate the model

21 Davidson, *Essays on Actions*, 4.

22 Griffiths, *Being Buddha*, 101.

23 Jay Garfield, *Engaging Buddhism: Why It Matters to Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 289.

24 Garfield, *Engaging Buddhism*, 289; Garfield, “Bodhisattva,” 339.



really is.²⁵ This might come across as a surprising admission. However, given the Buddhist suggestion that our concept of an “agent” might not exactly be a reliable one—recall the analogy that we are like self-driving cars with our complex psycho-physical parts and functioning—we could certainly entertain the inspiration to look for a theory of action that does not need any self-centric agents.



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25 Cappelen and Dever, *Inessential Indexical*, 50.



KANTIAN DISREGARD FOR NON-RATIONAL HUMANS: Immanuel Kant's Haunting Impact on Contemporary Bioethics



JAY SIX

ABSTRACT

I seek to emphasize Immanuel Kant's lingering and unsavory impact on medical ethics by emphasizing Kantian ethics' disregard for non-rational humans. We must be considerate when discussing individuals who have some form of dementia, conditions that irreversibly diminish the ability to use rational thought, sometimes to a degree of severity that hinders essential daily functions. I argue that to consider ourselves proponents of human equality we must treat humans with dementia as members of the kingdom of ends.



I. THE REFORMATION OF ETHICS

Immanuel Kant went to great lengths to reform the philosophical canon of morality, doing away with recognized ethical theories posited by his predecessors. He thought that humankind is too easily influenced and affected by non-moral inclinations.¹ Kant considered teleology and empiricist ethics as applied anthropology.² Kant's deontology was a new method for determining morality, basing an action's permissibility upon the action itself.³

For Kant, only rational beings possess the capability to identify moral laws.⁴ Kant wrote that the only good thing without qualification is the good will, and a good will is the will that acts in accordance with moral duty—not out of a begrudging sense of obligation but rather from the will to be good.⁵ If an individual tells the truth for the sole reason that they ought to tell the truth despite benefits or detriments, the act is good without qualification. For example, if someone tells the truth because they know that truth-telling is praiseworthy, the action is not good in and of itself.

II. HOW RATIONAL BEINGS IDENTIFY MORAL LAWS

For Kant, a law is an imperative, a declaration of an action as necessary and good. An imperative is categorical when it is absolute and universal, when all rational beings must obey it under every circumstance without condition, exception, or modification.⁶ Kant provides three formulations of the categorical imperative:

Formula One: Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.⁷

Formula Two: Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end and never simply as a means.⁸

Formula Three: From this there now follows the third practical principle of the will as the supreme condition of the will's conformity with universal practical reason...the idea of the will of every rational being as a will that legislates universal law.⁹

1 Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* (with "On a Supposed Right to Lie because of Philanthropic Concerns"), trans. James W. Ellington (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1993), 3.

2 Kant, *Grounding Metaphysics Morals*, 2.

3 Kant, *Grounding Metaphysics Morals*, 7.

4 Kant, *Grounding Metaphysics Morals*, 24.

5 Kant, *Grounding Metaphysics Morals*, 7.

6 Kant, *Grounding Metaphysics Morals*, 25.

7 Kant, *Grounding Metaphysics Morals*, 30.

8 Kant, *Grounding Metaphysics Morals*, 36.

9 Kant, *Grounding Metaphysics Morals*, 38.

It is crucial to note that Kant's use of the word "humanity" is not to be understood as humankind in its entirety. "Humanity" refers only to rational beings, for only rational beings are ends in themselves. Kant often uses the phrase "kingdom of ends," which is a fictional kingdom where rational beings are legislative members that not only create universal laws but subject themselves to and consequently obey said laws.¹⁰ The good will, duties, freedom, autonomy, and moral behavior are properties of rational beings. Non-rational beings, including non-rational homo sapiens, do not have a place in this kingdom, and may be treated merely as means.

Consider this summary of what has been covered thus far:

- (a) The categorical imperative is an a priori moral law that binds all rational beings and must be obeyed in every circumstance without exception.
- (b) Rational beings identify the categorical imperative and will themselves to obey, not out of obligation but out of moral duty, thus becoming legislators of the kingdom of ends.
- (c) Rational beings are autonomous, and choose to act from duty despite having desires and urges that may conflict with the categorical imperative.

III. A KINGDOM OF ENDS AND ITS FIEFDOM OF NON-RATIONAL MEANS

Kant claims that all rational beings in the kingdom of ends have intrinsic worth. To be an end is to be a possessor of dignity, and dignified beings have no replacement or equivalent. However, there are non-human things that are valuable. Kant elaborates on the matter:

Whatever has reference to general human inclinations and needs has a market price; whatever, without presupposing any needs, accords with a certain taste, i.e., a delight in the mere unpurposeful play of our mental powers, has an affective price ...an end in itself has not merely a relative worth, i.e., a price, but has an intrinsic worth, i.e., dignity.¹¹

If a non-rational thing is not an end in itself, then the affective price (value) of said thing comes from the want of the rational being. An insulin shot is not an end in itself and has no intrinsic worth. But, to a rational being with diabetes, the insulin shot is tremendously valuable as a means to an end. The non-rational thing possessed no value until the rational being prescribed value to the thing.

10 Kant, *Grounding Metaphysics Morals*, 40.

11 Kant, *Grounding Metaphysics Morals*, 40.



For Kant, Labrador retrievers are, like insulin shots, not rational beings and may be used merely as a means to an end. The dog has no intrinsic worth and the instrumental value it has is a function of how well it suits the inclinations of the rational beings that own it. Perhaps a family thinks \$7,000 is too much to pay for a dog's cancer treatment. As the dog is a replaceable non-rational thing, the dog is not owed moral consideration and does not constitute worth—only a market price. Perhaps the family decides to discard the old dog in favor of a new non-rational thing that is more valuable to the rational beings' inclinations, like a new puppy or retaining the sum of money.

What if we switch from dogs to non-rational humans? Consider a person who has lost the ability to live independently, and indeed has lost the ability to utilize rational thought. According to Kant, such a person, who cannot formulate and act from the categorical imperative (who cannot treat other rational beings as ends), is not a member of the kingdom of ends. Such a person does not have autonomy and may be treated merely as a means.

A human without Kantian dignity, an amoral and heteronomous human, is not a person according to Kant. Humans with significant dementia are sub-human, similar to the category Kant thinks fitting of a Labrador. In the kingdom of ends there is a fiefdom where all the non-rational beings are kept, used by the rational beings as a means to an end until they lose their prescribed value and are discarded.

IV. CONTEMPORARY BIOETHICS DERIVED FROM KANTIAN AUTONOMY

For Kant, a being has autonomy when it chooses to obey moral laws out of duty. In clinical settings, to respect autonomy is to acknowledge “the moral right of every competent individual to choose and follow his or her own plan of life and actions.”¹² Whether an individual is deemed competent to make decisions is decided by a clinician after conducting behavioral assessments. Unusual “decisions may prompt suspicion about mental incapacity; for example, a patient refuses a low-risk, high-benefit treatment without which they face serious injury.”¹³ The “capacity to decide” is assessed by testing the patient's ability to hold simple conversations, noting the patient's level of confusion or incoherence, and conversing with the patient's friends and family.¹⁴

12 Albert R. Jonsen, Mark Siegler, and William J. Winslade, *Clinical Ethics: A Practical Approach to Ethical Decisions in Clinical Medicine* (New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2015), 62.

13 Jonsen, Siegler, and Winslade, *Clinical Ethics*, 86.

14 Jonsen, Siegler, and Winslade, *Clinical Ethics*, 62.

I argue that when determining whether a human being is entitled to having their moral rights “acknowledged,” cognitive and neurological assessments are rudimentary and subjective. Even considering the development of medical technology and advanced diagnostic methods—such as brain scans, genetic tests, and blood tests—no bodily assessment or laboratory apparatus will ever possess the capacity to prescribe or revoke moral worthiness from a human being. Kant posited a metaphysics that interlaced moral rights and the rational mind, and his discriminatory separation has seeped into the clinical setting and perverted one of the essential pillars of contemporary bioethics: the concept of autonomy.¹⁵

Let's return to the example of a person deemed mentally incapacitated. Such a person would likely fall under the authority of a conservator or a power of attorney (PoA). People under a PoA have limited control over their financial and medical affairs, and limited legal standing. Under Kantian theory, such a person has no inherent worth. Such a person is a non-rational thing that rational beings may use as they wish. Despite their ability to feel happiness, fear, pain, pleasure, and her ability to react to her environment, Kant does not recognize her as a dignified human capable of moral action or possessing intrinsic worth.

In the eyes of contemporary law, such a person's rights to liberty, security, and privacy are severely limited. Nor does such a person have much of a right to bodily integrity since their PoA controls the medications she takes, the surgeries she undergoes, and so on. While such a person technically owns things, her finances and physical possessions are no longer hers alone. In essence, such a person is no longer an agent, and may be subject to mental and physical suffering some of which is legal. I consider the treatment of many such people as inhumane.

One cannot deny that to be a caretaker of a person with dementia is taxing, and to expect that a rational being will be an exemplar of unwavering consideration, compassion, and toleration is unrealistic. To remedy the effects of providing continued care, families often send their ailing loved ones to assisted living facilities. While utilizing these facilities may be the best option for all parties involved, sending non-rational humans away because the emotional, physical, or financial burden becomes too much to bear does resemble Kant's “kingdom of ends” and my vision of its fiefdom.

People with dementia are stripped of their humanity, rights, and recognition as agents. In both Kantian ethics and contemporary bioethics, people with dementia are subject to the will of a rational being that is not themselves. How much time must pass before prescribed value runs out and loved ones with dementia become perceived burdens and

15 Jonsen, Siegler, and Winslade, *Clinical Ethics*, 12.



non-rational things? The answer to this question is decided by rational others, for people with dementia are no longer allowed the intrinsic invaluableness that they deserve as humans.

One may object that rational humans must hold autonomy over non-rational humans to promote the safety and security of the non-rational. But I refuse to accept that an individual's moral worth must be sacrificed in the pursuit of preventing harm and promoting security. Human life is tragically fragile, and if, as a society, we are to renege or dismiss an individual's intrinsic worth once they violate the standards of safety and security, we would have a society of worthless things.

V. CONCLUDING KANT'S PLACE IN CONTEMPORARY BIOETHICS

While I hold reverence for Kant, his notion of autonomy is discriminatory. The rational are not superior to the non-rational. The ability to utilize pure reason does not determine a life's value. Moreover, there ought not be any threshold or requirements when considering a human's moral worth. Merely considering characteristics and abilities to rank the value of a human life is a flagrant violation of equality and the sanctity of life. As the discipline of medical ethics continues to develop, it is critical that it not be shrouded by the Kantian shadow.

In practice, people with dementia are sectioned off from society and removed from the public eye, somewhat reminiscent of the disgraceful "ugly laws" that plagued various cities in the United States for over a century.¹⁶ If we are to consider ourselves advocates of human equality, we must champion a reformation of the treatment of those who have dementia. Contemporary bioethicists and clinicians must reassess the Kantian roots of autonomy and conclude that moral worth is not absent from the non-rational mind. Non-rational is not equivalent to amoral; non-rationality ought not bear any influence on an individual's worth, for the worth of human life is indivisible.

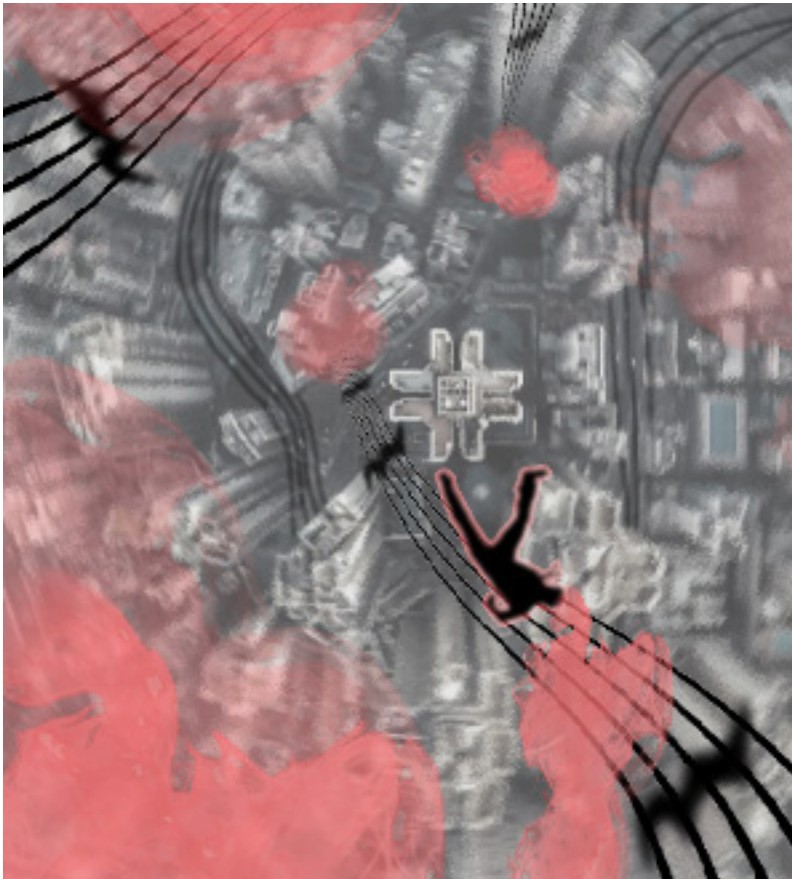


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¹⁶ Adrienne Phelps Coco, "Diseased, maimed, mutilated: categorizations of disability and an ugly law in late nineteenth-century Chicago," *Journal of Social History* 44, no.1 (2010): 23-37, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40802107>.



MUSIC, CAGE'S SILENCE, AND ART: An Interview with Stephen Davies, PhD



ABOUT STEPHEN DAVIES, PhD



Stephen Davies taught philosophy at the University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand. His research specialty is the philosophy of art. He is a former President of the American Society for Aesthetics. His books include *Definitions of Art* (Cornell UP, 1991), *Musical Meaning and Expression* (Cornell UP, 1994), *Musical Works and Performances* (Clarendon, 2001), *Themes in the Philosophy of Music* (OUP, 2003), *Philosophical Perspectives on Art* (OUP, 2007), *Musical Understandings and Other Essays on the Philosophy of Music* (OUP, 2011), *The Artful Species: Aesthetics, Art, and Evolution* (OUP, 2012), *The Philosophy of Art* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2016 second ed.), and *Adornment: What Self-decorations Tells Us about Who We Are*, (Bloomsbury Academic, 2020).



STANCE: We want to start by hearing more about your background. How did you get started in philosophy?

ONE THING
I REALIZED IN
THE END WAS
PHILOSOPHY
WOULD HELP
ME ANSWER
THE QUESTIONS
ABOUT MUSIC
THAT I WANTED
TO ASK.

DAVIES: I got into philosophy by accident. I was always going to study music theory, history, and analysis at university. I chose philosophy, expecting to drop it at the end of the first year, but it turned out I enjoyed it so much that I continued. One thing I realized in the end was philosophy would help me answer the questions about music that I wanted to ask. The musicians couldn't, but the philosophers could equip me to deal with those kinds of questions.

STANCE: What type of questions were you trying to answer? Were there any specific ones that really stuck with you?

DAVIES: Well, the first one was about the expression of emotion in music. You've got this non-sentient bit of noise—what sense could be made of the idea that it could express sadness or happiness? That was the first question that came up, and that was pretty much the subject of my Ph.D.

STANCE: To go off that into some more specific questions about your corpus, we were really interested in John Cage's 4'33". We watched a performance of it. In a lot of your work, you talk about thick versus thin performances. We were wondering if you would consider Cage's 4'33" to be a thin performance because there is no specified way to perform it?

DAVIES: I make a distinction between thick and thin musical works. The thick ones have quite a lot of detail that works constitutively, such as music specified by a score. Thin ones tend to leave more up to the performer. However thick the work is, the performer has got quite a lot of interpretation to do. But if it's thin, there's even more scope. If all you get is a tune and some chords, which is a lot of popular music, that's thin. There are many ways you could realize that specification and each of them would be an accurate realization, but they'd be very different. So, is 4'33" thick or thin? It's difficult to accommodate because it doesn't leave the performer to do anything. In that sense, the performer has very little musical freedom, which sounds like it's a thick work, but then it's got no content, except the sounds that happen at the time. In that sense, since all sorts of sounds could be happening at the time, it's thin.

STANCE: If someone's performing a work, is there a point in which it's performed so inauthentically or so off the mark that it becomes a different work rather than a version of the original?

DAVIES: It wouldn't become a different work. It would become a failed performance of a given work. What is inauthenticity in performance? Not everyone agrees with this, but on my account, it's failing to follow the work's determined instructions that you're given. An inauthentic performance of 4'33" might involve the musician picking up an instrument and playing something, anything, on it. Because the instruction for 4'33" is "be silent," any musical noise-making would render a performance of 4'33" inauthentic.

STANCE: Is there a reason to think that Cage intended the ambient sounds to be the music as opposed to a composition including nothing but rests? Why think of the ambient noise as the composed sound? Why isn't it just composed silence?

DAVIES: The fact is, Cage, I think, was confused about the work itself, even though he created it, because there are two possibilities. One is that it really is silent, and ambient sound is ambient; you shouldn't be paying attention to it. The other possibility is the piece takes ambient sound and makes it the noisy content. Cage described it in both terms. He wasn't clear enough about which of the two works it was. He says things like, "There is no such thing as silence." He says that because he went into an anechoic room which absorbs all sound. It turns out that if you put yourself in that situation, you start hearing all your bodily functions as sound. That led him to the conclusion there was no such thing as silence, so I prefer to talk about it as a work that takes noise that otherwise would be ambient as its content. I'd have to say different things about it if I thought it was the purely silent piece.

STANCE: What would those different things be if it was a purely silent piece?

DAVIES: I'm not exactly sure. I find the noisy work more interesting. The conclusion that I draw about this is that it's not music, but I'm not saying that in order to criticize it or to say it's not art. I think instead of being music, it's a piece of theater about the performance of music. I doubt I could say exactly the same in describing the purely silent work. That would be more like a musical work because in attending to it, you'd have to be putting out of your mind the sounds that were actually taking place and disregarding them, so you would approach that more like music than people actually approach 4'33".



STANCE: We do wonder if it is music, or at least some form of art that isn't music. What about silent films, where people created their own dialogue in some way? Do you see a different type of authenticity with that? Some people would look at a silent movie and say that it's not really a true movie, in the sense of what is a movie today.

DAVIES: I think we just adjust to the times with these things. I think black and white movies are still movies, even though they're not color. I think silent movies are still movies, even though there's no speech. Typically, they're not silent because there's usually something performing along with them.

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I'm going to change your question a little bit. A question might be, "Can we understand stuff from the past when people were thinking differently about it at the time?" The quick answer to that is yes, we can. We're actually very good at putting ourselves in other people's shoes or reimagining the past. If we couldn't do that, we couldn't understand a lot of historical literature. This brings up some interesting questions. Consider that today we might be morally sensitive about sexism and racism in ways people weren't in the past. How, then, are you going to read *Huckleberry Finn*? Are you going to be able to understand it? I think we keep our values, but at the same time, we should withhold the judgment of the past and see things as much as possible through their eyes in trying to understand what was happening.

Music is an interesting case of this. We have many kinds of music. We have many different sets of rules and expectations, and these change over time. The music of the eighteenth century doesn't sound like the music of the twenty-first century. What we do is adjust our expectations to what's appropriate so we can listen to eighteenth-century music and still understand and appreciate it. Equally, we can go from jazz to hip hop or any kind of music you want to name, which are stylistically very different kinds of music, and adjust our expectations accordingly. When I go to a folk concert, I don't expect things to go the way they would in a classical performance or in a rock concert, but I can go to all three.

STANCE: We wanted to ask a little bit more about the intentions of a creator. Your work mentions a relationship between the artist and the audience and how this influences a piece's ability to be perceived as art. Does the audience benefit from entering into their experience with some expectation of a relationship with the creator or artist?

DAVIES: If it's art, you are often as the audience trying to work out what's going on and why it's going on. That often means trying to understand what the maker or the artist was trying to do, so you'll be interested in their intentions, for sure.

As to the question of what makes it art—in general, I don't have very high standards. I would separate out popular and mass art from fine art, for example, but I think *The Sopranos* is art. I'm quite happy to talk about folk art, mass art, or popular art and use the term, meaning pretty much the same kind of thing. If all those things were as easy to create as people often seem to think, then maybe it wouldn't be art. In fact, there's a lot that goes into making something popular and accessible, and still having something to say in that medium. I've talked about the definition of art, but mostly I take it that we agree in very broad terms about what we're talking about with these things. Not a lot is going to hang on whether you call it art in the end. It's just that you've got something in front of you, and you're trying to understand it.

The other thing I should mention is sometimes people talk about art not only as a purely Western concept but as something that originated in the eighteenth century. So, if there wasn't art before that, then Shakespeare and Michelangelo wouldn't be art either in that view. People think that because, in earlier terms, the various arts were not always grouped together in the way that we now group them. The Greeks put music with mathematics and astronomy, for example, rather than with drama. In the eighteenth century, they all were put together in the configuration that we think of as the arts, but I think that view is mistaken. I think that Shakespeare did create art, and Michelangelo did create art. Even the cave painters in the Upper Paleolithic in Europe created art. I think art is found in all cultures, so it's not anything confined to the West. It's a very common human activity shared from society to society. This isn't to say we're going to be able to understand the art of other societies, or even recognize it. I'm sure if you came from some societies, you wouldn't be in a position to recognize 4'33" as art. You would just think, "What the hell are these people doing?"



STANCE: Something we noticed about your work is that you are adamant about non-Western definitions of art and how those works should still be considered art. There seem to be a lot of people who say that non-Western “art” shouldn’t even be considered art, but you disagree. Is this still a big debate being held today?

DAVIES: Well, people talk about what they know, and most people don’t know that much about the art of other cultures. It can be difficult to learn about the art of other cultures because their art is as rich as ours, and ours takes a lifetime to learn about, typically. Among philosophers, there’s a much broader view of what art is now than there was maybe forty or fifty years ago. I should add, in terms of my background, I did as much ethnomusicology as musicology. I was exposed to non-Western music in detail and had to analyze it, so it never occurred to me to think that other cultures didn’t have music.

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What got philosophers interested in the definition of art in the twentieth century was all these avant-garde works that started appearing. Marcel Duchamp was presenting the urinal as artwork, Andy Warhol was doing Campbell soup cans, and Cage was doing 4’33”. That really pushed people to say, “Gee, what is art? What makes it art?” They approached it primarily as a question of “should we be counting this avant-garde stuff as art, or shouldn’t we?” Whereas I don’t have any problem with all that stuff being art. Should we be counting the paintings from twenty thousand years ago on the walls of the caves as art? The answer to that for me is yes, we should. One thing’s for sure, if I could do that, I’d be an artist.

STANCE: Do you have any speculations about why people want to exclude what they do? You have a very inclusive sense of what counts as art. We have a suspicion that there’s something nefarious behind the “boundary police” or desire to exclude. Is that a well-founded suspicion? Are there innocent reasons for thinking that something should be excluded? What’s going on there politically?

DAVIES: I’m inclined to agree with you. I think all the way up to the end of the nineteenth century, people were racist and sexist and the rest of it. They dehumanized people of other cultures and women. I’m guessing that this was a matter of, in some cases at least, ignorance. I mean, you can’t justify the mistreatment of women as ignorance because men and women lived together. But certainly when it comes to other cultures, people were more interested in converting others than in understanding them. It’s a good thing that we changed, but along with that, respect for people of other cultures is the need for respect for their culture itself. I’m no anthropologist, but I don’t think there’s a culture in the world with primitive music. However, if you go back not that far, you’ll find descriptions of the arts of other cultures as primitive. What did they mean by that? Is it supposed to be naive like children’s stuff? In fact, when you look into the music of other cultures, they have not just music, but they also have music theory, technical terminologies, and all these kinds of things. I remember being impressed by an ethnomusicologist called Hugo Zemp, who years ago did the musicology of the Are’are, a small tribe of only a few thousand people. It took him three volumes to write this down, so there’s no such thing as primitive art, I think. There are lots of clever people out there, and they do very exciting things.

STANCE: We’d like to follow up on what you were saying about dehumanizing certain cultures and their artworks. Do you think that the change from dehumanizing to humanizing other cultures has gone far enough or that it could still go further?

DAVIES: I think it’s a long struggle. It’s long just because people are so complicated. Cultures can be so far from yours that it’s hard to get into them at all, to work out what’s going on with them. I tend to be impressed by the universals rather than the things that separate us. People in all cultures talk about birth, family, death, war, competition, trade, and more because there are certain aspects of human life that we think we share across the species. What gets built on gets more and more complicated, arcane, and exotic, and so it becomes harder and harder to understand. I’ve tried to do this; I’ve written about Balinese music and dance, for example, where what I’m doing is more ethnography than philosophy. But think about what you’ve got to do to try to understand another culture. You’ve got to start by trying to learn the language. Then you’ve got to talk to a lot of people, and it just takes a long time. Suppose you do all that. Well, now you’ve got two cultures you can move in. How many more are left? So, it becomes very difficult to get anything but the tiniest understanding of what’s going on in other cultures.



STANCE: Since you've been talking about similarities between different cultures, are there certain pan-cultural qualities of music that you found in your research?

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DAVIES: Well, I don't think there's a culture without music, and I don't think there's one without storytelling and forms of drama. Depiction, pictures of some kind, I think, is also universal. Those forms tend to be common across cultures, but then others are specific to cultures. Asia has a very spectacular history of shadow puppet plays that aren't part of our culture at all. In some cultures, flower decorating is an art, while in others it is not.

STANCE: Let's talk a bit deeper about the recognition of music as music, even across cultures. We wondered about improvised music and where that stands with you. We are curious if it contains more emotion, even if it isn't true to the original recording of a song. For example, I go to a lot of Ben Folds concerts, and it means more to me when he plays different riffs on the piano or adds to a piece using different vocal techniques. Does this go against what you suggest in your work because the performance loses a lot of the tokens from the original studio recordings?

DAVIES: There's a lot in that question. To start, you're running together two things that I would keep apart. One is what's expressed by the music, and the other is what's felt by the listener. The discussion about tokens gets into different questions of ontology such as: "What is the work?" "How does the performance stand in relation to the work?" Or even, "How does the recording stand in relation to the work?" I think there are a bunch of different correct answers to these questions, depending on the kind of music being talked about.

We often think about music as performance, and sometimes that music gets recorded, but when they make a recording, they make a recording as if it were a live performance. If you play a Beethoven sonata in the recording studio, even if you do it with more than one take, it's generally assumed you could play it live in real-time. In popular music, that's often not the case. I often describe this as music for studio performance, where they deliberately use the technology of the studio to do things that you can't do live, or at least you couldn't until there were things like Auto-Tune, and the studio got so compact that you could take it with you along to the concert. These musicians exploited the resources of the studio to produce sounds that you couldn't really do live. They issued these as vinyl records, tapes, CDs, or eventually, in digital forms. Those are not works for performance,

in my view, they're for playback. They're more like films than like what you normally get with music, which is a set of instructions telling people how to make the music live.

People can mix up the ontological types, so there's the question, "What is the primary work?" Some people think that in rock, it's the track or the record, rather than the live performance. They think because there's all this effort put in to create something special in the studio, so what the hell is going on when all these musicians do their live gigs? Some of the time they're just trying to emulate the recording as well as they can, but other times they say, "Oh, it's a live gig, the rules are different now," and they do something different. I don't have any prescriptions about this as long as we've got a way of describing the differences that are going on. If someone records and they present their recorded works as their songs, and then at the live gig they do something different than actually try to emulate the recordings, there's nothing wrong with that. I wouldn't be talking about tokens here, I'd just be saying that in the context of live performance, rather than trying to emulate the recording, they're doing something more free. It'll be a version of the song that's on the recording.

STANCE: Do you think that certain types of recordings are more authentic to what was produced in the studio? From a frequency standpoint, vinyl records get the full extent of a wavelength, whereas digital compresses sounds into smaller and smaller files. Is there a hierarchy of sorts to the way that music can be recorded and then played back?

DAVIES: If you talk about music that can be played live, we can hear a full range of pitches and volumes from 120 decibels to 20; it's a logarithmic scale. Because of limitations in the studio or limitations in transmission, studio productions often can't capture all of that. If the work was written for live performance, then there will be a hierarchy. The best equipment that can capture the widest span will be better than limited equipment that chops it down because the work is written for the full expanse. On the other hand, once you've got conventions of studio recording, and things are issued on disc, then the compression might not matter, though it's very striking to people who listen to it.

The volume on pop recordings hardly varies, whereas the volume in the performance "The Rite of Spring" goes from 120 decibels to 20. If

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you can't hear that in the recording, you're losing something. You don't lose anything in the Beach Boys, where there is absolutely no variation in volume, for instance. There, the compression isn't going to hurt it, so there is a hierarchy. Some equipment will be better than other equipment in what it captures, and some playback devices will be better than others. However good the recording is, if you play it on a little tin can, it's not going to reproduce all that's available. For some music, it matters, for some it doesn't.

STANCE: Is there a distinction between musical genres at a higher level?

DAVIES: I think there's a distinction between musical genres at a very small level, especially between closely related genres. Are country and western two kinds of music or one kind of music? That's a genre question. It might be that country and western should be treated as one slightly complicated genre. If it turned out you should treat them as two, it would be because you find differences between country and western that matter.

I think in music, the small differences matter a lot. I would be interested not only in genres but in subgenres. I mean, techno-dance music is listed within some encyclopedias as having twenty subgenres. It could be that they're just listing stuff from different musicians or provinces, but actually I think they're listing things with significant musical differences as well. To put this in a different way, I'm not good at lots of music because I'm not familiar with it nor immersed in it, but then you meet someone who is an expert, who can tell you all of the differences between bands that matter, and why that one is good and this other one isn't. There are musical experts who will be able to tell you what the differences are and what counts.

STANCE: Do you think that those small differences, as discussed within music and subgenres, can be applied to other forms of art such as literature or pictorial art?

DAVIES: Yes, all the arts are extremely rich and subtle. I do talk about all of them in my work, but I certainly specialize in music because I know more about it.

STANCE: Going back to philosophy of music, you tend to talk about profundity in terms of instrumental music. How does profundity translate to music with words, such as Pink Floyd's "Another Brick in the Wall?" Would music with words have to consider an important topic? Or is this type of music able to be profound because of its insight into a brilliant human mind, much like how instrumental music's profundity is measured?

DAVIES: There's a background to this topic. The first philosopher to write on musical profundity in recent decades was Peter Kivy. He argued that in order to be profound, you need a profound subject, and because instrumental music didn't have a subject at all, instrumental music couldn't be profound. Then various people who disagreed tried to produce arguments about how music could be profound without being about anything. I argued that it could be profound by displaying the cleverness of people, that they could make this stuff up. I write about instrumental music because that's where Kivy started. The moment you add words, since we all know that poetry and literature can be about profound subjects, you're halfway there. But if you wanted to find out what music was doing, you'd leave the words out. They would just be a complication.

So, is music with words profound? Here's the worry—maybe $E=MC^2$ is a profound observation in physics, and I set it to music. Have I done anything to make it more profound by setting it to music? The quick answer is, "Gee, it's very unlikely." It's hard to see how the music could contribute to the profundity. Maybe if I'm Beethoven or Mozart I could be adding to its profundity, but it looks like the words are doing most of the work.

STANCE: Is there a type or amount of cleverness that has to be displayed? I'm thinking of twelve-tone composition techniques or Grateful Dead drum solos, as opposed to just one more Haydn string quartet imitator. What's the content of the cleverness?

DAVIES: That's not going to be an easy question to answer. Twelve-tone technique is not clever in itself. You can program a computer to produce that in no time at all, and computers aren't necessarily clever; they're good at doing algorithms. Twelve-tone technique is just like an algorithm, so it's what you do with it when you use it that would make the music profound.

I don't think all music is profound or that it has to be; that's not necessarily what makes it great. There are some pieces of music that make you feel awe, and you think, "How is it possible to do that?" Or, "What an amazing thing that someone could think that up." That's the kind of cleverness that I've got in mind.

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I compare music to chess because chess isn't about anything important. I mean, you could treat it as a metaphor for war, but it's a game. Yet the people who play it at a certain level reveal minds that are extraordinary in their calculative abilities and intuitions. The same thing happens in music. People bring ideas together that you just couldn't have imagined would work, or they produce something that is so difficult to play and yet they can play it. There are all sorts of ways in which people can display their cleverness, but it's meant to have a certain awe-inspiring depth when it leads to profundity.

STANCE: I'm hung up on the twelve-tone idea. I love that you were quick to say that it's not profound. However, what are we going to do with poor Anton Webern who did it pre-algorithm, and possibly did it beautifully?

DAVIES: Yes, Webern is a great composer. He was a miniaturist, so nothing he wrote is longer than twelve minutes, and most of it is less than about four. He was shot by an American soldier when he went out for a smoke in 1945. There was a curfew, and he went out for a smoke and didn't come back, so that's what happened to him.

I don't know how much technical detail to get into. Webern doesn't just write twelve-tone. He designs a row in which the last six notes are the same intervals, but backwards and inverted to the first six, so it's like a mirror of itself. He does this kind of thing all the time. He uses very special rows, and the result is that most of his rows can be thought of as four notes instead of twelve, or six notes instead of twelve. Then he does some very clever stuff with instrumentation.

To understand what Webern is doing, consider that the letters of Bach's name in German are equivalent to B-flat, A, C, and B-natural. Bach wrote fugues based on those four notes, based on his name, so there's a tradition of doing this kind of thing, and Webern is working in exactly that same tradition. It's a way of producing very complicated structures from very small elements where everything is very tightly related, so that's why Webern might be profound.

When talking about Webern, we're talking about the 1930s and 1940s. This came from Arnold Schoenberg, who in 1923 used all twelve semitones in the scale in a certain order. The idea was to prevent privileging one note as the tonic above any other notes, and there were musical precedents for this that he could point to. At a certain point in the 1970s and 1980s, people were saying, "Well, if we serialized pitch, why don't we serialize everything else?" They just put it into a computer and pushed a button and let it run. You set up the parameters, and then everything that happens next is determined by the algorithm that you've set up. Other composers

of the time were saying, "Oh, we don't like this kind of determinism. What we want is freedom," so they used chance procedures to generate their music. All of these were various forms of avant-garde music of the day. The interesting thing was that people couldn't tell the difference between the sounds of the music that was composed entirely by chance and the music that was entirely determined. The composers thought they were doing completely different things, but the audiences could not discriminate between them. Draw your own moral of this story.

STANCE: You mentioned very briefly the difference between making something by chance and having something be determined. Can you go into more detail about that?

DAVIES: If you're doing it by chance, you might use a computer or a number generator, or you might roll dice. Cage was keen on taking the ego of the composer out of the composition process. He used the I Ching, which is a "throw things in the air and see what sticks," random method to remove himself from his own music. That's what I mean by chance. By determinism, I mean, you pick a series of notes and rhythms and volumes and whatever—and these don't have to coincide, they can overlap in different ways—then you just push a button, and each series runs through and then it repeats, and you've got all these layers. You might specify that the repeats are not exact. Maybe you repeat upside down the first time and backwards the next time, and once you've specified the series, then it determines all the notes that come out.

Sorry, this has turned into a music lesson. One of the interesting things is in the fourteenth century, composers made these isorhythmic motets where they were doing exactly this technique. They would have a series of pitches, a different series of rhythms, a different series of volumes, and they would let it run out until at some point way down the track, everything would end at the same point, and that would be the end of the piece. These are so complicated that you can't hear the sequences within them, but the idea was that God could hear them. So you wrote those things for God, who would admire their perfection, even though human listeners couldn't deal with the parts. I think the composers of the 1980s thought they might have been doing something similar because no one could follow the movement of the algorithms as they listened and it just ended up sounding like it was made up at random.



STANCE: So, is there more—not profundity—but substance to someone in the fourteenth century doing this all by hand, than a computer-generated algorithm doing it?

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DAVIES: Maybe, but if there's praise that goes with this, it goes to the composer rather than the piece. If we replace profundity with simplicity, it's not necessarily that there's a loss of value. You might think that "Greensleeves," an old English folk song, is a beautiful tune and perfectly good, even though it's not long or complicated enough to be profound. Folk songs are trying to do something simple, so you're not going to get many profound folk songs, unless it's in the lyrics, but that's not to say anything bad about folk songs.

STANCE: To return to authenticity, can the same idea of instances of a musical performance be applied to movies that are made from classical literature? In class, we were talking about *Gnomeo and Juliet*, and whether it would be considered an authentic instance of a Shakespeare play.

DAVIES: My view is that these are adaptations of the work, they're not instances, because they have to be changed in ways that would normally be work-identifying in order to accommodate them to the new medium. I say the same about musical transcriptions. For instance, there might be a symphony written for an orchestra, and it is transcribed so it can be played on a piano. In my view, the transcription is a different work from the original, but it clearly derives from the symphonic work that it is based on. It becomes a different work because it has to be filtered through a new medium. The same applies when you turn a novel into a play or into a movie. The screen adaptations are distinct but derivative works.

STANCE: Keeping on the same idea, in your article, "The Hypothetical Intentionalist's Dilemma," are we correct in understanding that you object to the argument that what the author intended does not give the work the most artistic interpretation?

DAVIES: I wouldn't put what I say into those terms. Put the question this way: do the artist's intentions determine the content of the work so that when we understand the work, we're always understanding what the artist intended? My answer to that question is no. There's also a different question: is there any value in consulting artists' intentions? My answer to that is yes, of course. They're

doing something extremely difficult, they're usually good at what they do, and they know what they're trying to do. The place you might start is by asking the artist their intentions if you have access to that. A lot of the time, we don't, but not because intentions and mental life are inscrutable; that's not what I think. It's just they're dead and didn't leave a record. If you have their intentions, then you should consult them.

Now, do the intentions determine the best interpretation or the proper interpretation? It seems to me not always. In talking about literature, for example, there can be things that happened that the author certainly didn't have in mind consciously, and I wouldn't immediately leap to saying that they had them in mind unconsciously. Things that were beyond their control happened that are worth taking into account in the interpretation. I'm not anti-intentionalist in the sense that I think you should leave the intentions alone, but I don't think the quest to understand and interpret the artwork is always solely an attempt to understand what the artist was trying to do. Intentionalists think the meaning of the work is determined by intentions. There are actual intentionalists, and there are modest actual intentionalists. This comes in various philosophical flavors.

The hypothetical intentionalist is someone who thinks intentions matter, but we're talking about the intentions of a hypothesized author. I'm inclined to think if the author is hypothesized, then they don't have intent. Hypothesized intentions aren't intentions in my view. Hypothetical intentionalists come in two varieties at least. One of them says you can make up any author. You imagine that a text you're reading was authored by a person you make up, and this person doesn't have to be at all like the actual author. If you do that, and if different people make up different imagined authors, then they're going to get different interpretations. The most important version of hypothetical intentionalism says that the author you hypothesize has the public persona of the actual author. They're like the actual author, apart from all the private things that audiences aren't expected to know about the actual author.

Hypothetical intentionalism comes apart from actual intentionalism and in very specific circumstances; namely, the circumstance in which we know that what was intended by the actual author is inferior to what we get when we hypothesize about the actual author. For example, there's a book called *Watership Down*, which is about these rabbits that are forced to move out of their warren and go and find somewhere else to live. People read this as a sort of allegory about human life, or uncertainty, or something like that.



When the author was asked if that was what it was about, he said, “No, it’s a rabbit story.” There we’ve got a rich interpretation of it as an allegory, and we might hypothesize that it’s the most reasonable thing to think the author wanted, so there’s your hypothetical intentionalism. It turns out if you’re an actual intentionalist and the author says, “No, I didn’t mean that,” then that’s just the end of it, whereas if you’re a hypothetical intentionalist, you say, “Oh, well, I don’t care about the actual intention here; it’s reasonable to think that this was an allegory.”

STANCE: So, then, what is the distinction between an intention by an author and a truth to a work? Is there a known truth that we can get to within a work? Or is it all interpretation?

DAVIES: Interpretation can have different goals, so it might be that I interpret the work in order to bring out the sexism of the time. That won’t have anything to do with what the author intended, it’s simply that the author was sexist in line with the times. They weren’t trying to illustrate their sexism in the work. That’s a perfectly legitimate goal of interpretation, but it’s not uncovering a truth that the author intended the work to possess.

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If the goal is to understand the work while respecting its identity as the work that was produced by that artist, then what you produce can be assessed for truth. There can be multiple interpretations, but that doesn’t mean that there are multiple truths. What you have is one very big, complicated truth with lots of disjunctions in it. Often, talking about the truth won’t be helpful because each interpretation will be a partial account of some much bigger truth, which is what you get when you put all the valid interpretations together.

One intention authors can have is that their works be ambiguous and multilayered, so uncovering what was intended might not give you a straightforward story—which might be quite deliberate on the part of the artist. There are also artists who specifically refuse to answer questions about their intentions, implying that the audience shouldn’t be asking or shouldn’t need those things.

Here’s a nice story about this. Harold Pinter, the playwright, produced a play, *The Birthday Party*, in which it’s very hard to work out what’s going on, but basically two guys bully and mess up a third guy, named

Stanley. A woman wrote to Pinter saying, “I can’t understand your play without knowing the answers to three questions: ‘Who are the two men? Where did Stanley come from? Were they all supposed to be normal?’” Pinter wrote back saying, “Madam, I’m sorry, I can’t understand your letter without knowing the answer to these three questions: ‘Who are you? Where did you come from? Are you supposed to be normal?’” He just turned the questions that she’d asked of him back onto her.

STANCE: Should the artist get credit for creating a piece with multiple meaningful interpretations? Or does the existence of these several distinct interpretations create confusion and detract from the piece?

DAVIES: They should get credit if they intended to do it, and if they succeeded. Could they overcomplicate the piece? That’s certainly possible. Sometimes the complications will produce richness and subtlety, and sometimes they’ll produce confusion. The same work performed for different audiences could be like that. Then what you would do is try and work out which audience was better qualified to understand what was going on.

STANCE: Changing the subject again, we noticed what looked like a discrepancy to us, and we want to get a little clarification. In “Music, Fire, and Evolution”, you have a discussion on how music is not a technology but is instead a product of human evolution. On the other hand, in “Art and Science: A Philosophical Sketch of their Historical Complexity and Codependency,” there’s a discussion on how art and science are codependent on one another, with scientific innovation referring to the technological advancements such as cellos and cameras, which are then used to create art. Can you explain a little bit more about both of those ideas and how they correlate or don’t correlate?

DAVIES: Aniruddh Patel argued that music is a transformative technology. If you’re looking at things from an evolutionary perspective, they could either be adaptations, in which case they help things reproduce and survive, or they can be spandrels, which are accidental byproducts of adaptations. An example of a spandrel is an armpit, a navel, or male nipples. They are useless because they are not good for feeding babies. If that carves up the whole space, then the question becomes: is music an adaptation in which it helps us survive, or is it a spandrel, which means it’s useless? There’s a third option: that it’s purely cultural. On the one hand, when we’re talking about technology, this is all we’re talking about. By “technology” we just mean a product of human culture that can’t be tied directly to evolution. That was what Patel was trying to argue. The important point here is that the thing we’re talking about, transformative technology, is a product of culture, not biology, but it’s one that can



change us completely. It can be that important. It's a change brought on by culture, not by biology; that was what he was arguing. I've got nothing against having the third category.

WHAT I DID WAS CHALLENGE PATEL'S ARGUMENT THAT MUSIC IS BEST DESCRIBED AS A TRANSFORMATIVE TECHNOLOGY, THAT MUSIC IS PURELY A CULTURAL MATTER WITH NO BIOLOGICAL BASIS.

What I did was challenge Patel's argument that music is best described as a transformative technology, that music is purely a cultural matter with no biological basis. I didn't try to settle the question of whether music is an adaptation or spandrel because both are connected to biology. What I was arguing against in "Music, Fire, and Evolution" is that music is best considered a transformative technology similar to fire. There's no gene for making fire. Nevertheless, once you've got fire in your culture, life changes for everybody. There are so many good things you can do with fire once you control it. Indeed, it has probably shortened our guts and increased the size of our brain as a species. This is a case in which culture actually changed biology, rather than the other way around.

In "Art and Science: A Philosophical Sketch of their Historical Complexity and Codependency," I can excuse myself by saying I was only one of the three authors in that case, so it was probably someone else who wrote the passage you're drawing attention to. Rather than doing that, what I would say is in that article, the talk about technology is about the sense of technology that you mean—actual bits of apparatus that you can do things with. The word "technology" is being used in slightly different senses in each of these papers. In the first, I'm just following Patel's usage. In the second, we are using the term more in the way that you're proposing. His term fits that very general description, but we tend to think of technology in terms of machines, and that's not what Patel had in mind.

STANCE: We find ourselves agreeing with you over and over again, and we're suspicious of feeling so convinced, so help us see a view where we might disagree with you? Is there a debate in which you are in the minority? Could you describe the nature of whatever that debate might be?

DAVIES: I'm definitely in the minority in my interpretation of literature. I argue for a position I call "value maximizing," where the purpose of interpreting literature is to get the interpretation that makes the work as good as it can be. Now there might be more than one interpretation that will be equally maximizing. It still allows for multiple interpretations. In the case of literature, conventions of language are sufficient to fix the meaning of the word. You don't need to appeal to the intentions, though they can be a good guide. Most people who talk about literature are intentionalists, so I'm definitely in the minority there.

I'M DEFINITELY IN THE MINORITY IN MY INTERPRETATION OF LITERATURE. I ARGUE FOR A POSITION I CALL "VALUE MAXIMIZING," WHERE THE PURPOSE OF INTERPRETING LITERATURE IS TO GET THE INTERPRETATION THAT MAKES THE WORK AS GOOD AS IT CAN BE.

I should add that there are certain things in literature that seem to require intentions: metaphor, allusion, reference, and quotation. I'm an intentionalist with some things. In particular, I think artists' intentions determine the genres of their works. If an artist tells you they're writing a tragedy, and you think it's a comedy, then you just have to take their word for it.

A few people are anti-intentionalists and think you shouldn't ever consult artist intentions. Most are intentionalists. I'm a value maximizer. Further, I think that hypothetical intentionalists are value maximizers who are pretending to be intentionalists. According to Jerrold Levinson, if you can hypothesize two interpretations, both consistent with the author that you proposed, how do you settle between them? You go for the one that makes the work better. What breaks the tie for the hypothetical intentionalist is value, which is something like the value maximizer. That is a place where I'm out of kilter with most other people.

I'm also not convinced that my theory of musical expressiveness is right. People have convinced me that it's wrong, or at least they've certainly argued against it.

I'm not even sure that I'm doing philosophy anymore. My last book I don't think is philosophy, though it was good fun to write; it's on human adornment. I became interested in it by thinking about



human evolution. Having written a book about whether art-making is a biological behavior, *The Artful Species*, it struck me that if you were really looking for a thing that we are all obsessed with, something true for all cultures and all times, it turns out to be bodily adornment. So, I wrote a book about beads, tattoos, make-up, and all that kind of stuff. I'm sure it would have been different if I hadn't been a philosopher, but I don't know how much philosophy there is in it.

STANCE: What are some of the biggest issues or conversations currently within the world of aesthetics that you think undergraduate students should know about?

I THINK THAT THE BIGGEST DEVELOPMENTS OF THE LAST TWENTY YEARS ARE IN "EVERYDAY AESTHETICS," SUCH AS DRINKING A CUP OF COFFEE OR SCRATCHING AN ITCH.

DAVIES: I think that the biggest developments of the last twenty years are in "everyday aesthetics," such as drinking a cup of coffee or scratching an itch. Environmentalist aesthetics has become a big area. I think the stuff about the connection between aesthetic and ethical value is also a growth area. I don't work in these areas myself particularly, but they have all become important. I think work on art and evolution has a bit of a following. As I said, the problem for philosophers with the avant-garde twentieth-century art, not with the origins of art, has also come up a fair bit. There is also work about negative experiences. There didn't use to be books on disgust, and now people are writing them. There's also more on aesthetics of senses beyond those of sight and hearing, on touch and smell, for example.

STANCE: When I think of disgust, I think of it as a moral reaction, not an aesthetic reaction.

DAVIES: There's a set of paradoxes. Why do we feel sorry for Anna Karenina when she is a fictional character that we know doesn't exist? Why do we go along to see tragedies when we know they're going to be about dreadful events befalling important people? The paradox of disgust is the question of why we are attracted to artworks that are disgusting when we know in advance what we're going to get. Much of art, instead of being about beauty, is pretty disgusting. Francis Bacon's paintings, for example, would be offered here. Why are people interested in such artworks and why do they value

them? The paradox of disgust follows the same connection. There is art that normally would be negative, but nevertheless, we're still interested in it and even attracted to it.

STANCE: This might take us too much into details, but I'm trying to go through my conceptual categories. I think of "grotesque" as an aesthetic response, but I don't think of any art as disgust-engendering.

DAVIES: If we take the cheap view of that, look at *American Psycho* and all those slasher, horror movies. The paradox of horror is in the same camp here. It's a horror movie and you know there is going to be blood and guts and frightening, yet still, you go along? What's wrong with you? "What can there be to enjoy about that?" is the question.

STANCE: I'm thinking of Ivan Albright's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. When I look at it and experience disgust, I think it's because of the moral component that the picture is supposed to embody, but I could potentially see the work as grotesque independent of the moral experience. Therefore, I'm not really thinking about the paradoxes. I'm thinking about my experiences with a piece of art.

DAVIES: I don't know what I think about the category of the grotesque. The books I've got in mind all have "disgust" in their titles. One way to think about what's going on in these books is that people are expanding the notion of the aesthetic and going beyond the boundaries of art itself. Aesthetics and art overlap. Traditionally a lot of art has been about beauty, but they're not the same. There's an aesthetic of nature, of animals, and of people that's not the same as the aesthetics of art. There are also forms of art appreciation that don't involve the aesthetic at all. They are much more technical or formal. I see these as separate categories.

When I teach, I teach the philosophy of art. I don't actually teach aesthetics because my course doesn't have anything about environmental aesthetics. If you ask me about philosophy of art in general, it tends to be neglected in contemporary Anglo-American analytic philosophy. This is unfairly so, in my opinion, because philosophy of art is just an applied area of philosophy, and an extremely interesting one that deals with questions that have to do with

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meaning, interpretation, the nature of emotion, questions of ontology, questions in metaphysics, and questions of value. Philosophy of art ranges over almost all main topics in philosophy, but they come up in a very special form when you ask them about art. The value of the philosophy of art is that it's a great way to get into all sorts of areas and questions of philosophy. At least some philosophers thought that. The major philosophers in history who talked about art were Hume, Kant, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Hegel, and Heidegger, but when you go back to Aristotle, he wrote about tragedy, the sublime, and comedy, which is not a subject that gets tacked on to aesthetics. Unfortunately, we've lost Aristotle's work on comedy.

STANCE: Thank you for talking with us. This was very interesting, especially for someone who has never really thought about the philosophy of aesthetics before.

DAVIES: Of course. As I pointed out at the beginning, musicians weren't the people who could answer my questions about this, it was the philosophers. Thank you very much.



ARTWORK INDEX



WHY DOES GOD NEED FREEDOM?

The image of people praising a God who is imprisoned is a striking one. Upon closer look the viewer discovers that the cage is made up of omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence. Does this detract or add to God's ability to be praised?

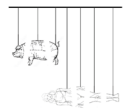
ART BY ISAAC REINOEHL



THE WISDOM OF WIZARDS

In keeping with the idea of a parallel universe as described in the essay, this artwork illustrates the visual differences between reality and the imaginative or fantasy world. The use of color and texture conveys how these environments can lead us to a state of enlightenment.

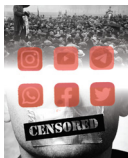
ART BY ALLISON LOTH



THE CASE AGAINST SPECIESISM AND SEXISM

This piece displays both a hog and female figure hung in a butcher shop, ready to be sold. The piece is inspired by the concept that both women and animals are viewed as objects for consumption and are often on the receiving end of extreme violence and oppression.

ART BY ASHLEIGH TOTTEN



J.S. MILL'S ACCOUNT ON FREE SPEECH

As described in the essay, this piece recognizes how social media has created an unforeseen condition where our speech is neither explicitly censored nor granted freely.

ART BY ALLISON LOTH



ON THE STRUCTURE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

This piece is representative of the concept that our senses directly affect and can alter our conscious state of being. Through a simple diagram, the intertwining of all five senses, one's mind and perception are understood as being intrinsically linked.

ART BY ASHLEIGH TOTTEN



BRINGING THE MARGINALIZED INTO EPISTEMOLOGY

This artwork reflects the battles that Black women in the United States have had to overcome throughout history to gain respect or attention. The art represents an idealistic state in which these women are fully able to find peace and embody strength, respect, perseverance, and wholeness.

ART BY ALLISON LOTH



THINKING AND SPEAKING

The art of sharing ideas and concepts is a difficult one to master, especially when they are uncompleted. This piece emphasizes the process, as it may be just as important as the result or completed idea.

ART BY ISAAC REINOEHL



PUTNAM'S PROBLEM OF THE ROBOT AND EXTENDED MINDS

It is obvious that robots are a product of the human intellect. Technology is more intuitive than ever before and that is not likely to slow down. This image illustrates how human consciousness is being permeated into our technology with every new advance that we make.

ART BY ISAAC REINOEHL



HOW A BUDDHA ACTS

This piece is representative of the idea that in an enlightened state, one has no free will, as all actionable steps must align with the most desirable goal. This is shown via depictions of consciousness, flow-charting methodology, and the visual representation of the human body as a machine.

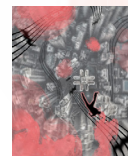
ART BY ASHLEIGH TOTTEN



KANTIAN DISREGARD FOR NON-RATIONAL HUMANS

It is easy to disregard those who society defines as having little to contribute, especially within large systems. The health care world is no different. This piece represents the alienation that a person with dementia faces and how our culture and systems contribute to it.

ART BY ISAAC REINOEHL



MUSIC, CAGE'S SILENCE, AND ART

The arts offer a world of expression, passion, conviction, and wonder. What is accepted as "good art" always changes. Beautiful representations of the world's realities are easy to accept, while certain levels of abstraction can be harder to understand. Philosophy can help move us through this complex world.

ART BY ISAAC REINOEHL





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