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A Critical Discussion of Sartre on Love

ABSTRACT: Pessimism about the stability of intra-personal relationships runs deeply in the philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre. I begin by examining how this pessimism arises from Sartre's ontology, particularly considering the attitude of love towards the Other. I then suggest that there may be space within Sartre's philosophy for a defense of love as a positive relation to the Other which need not be destined to cycle into attitudes toward the Other such as hate or masochism.



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In this essay I will begin by briefly outlining Sartre's ontology (theory of being or existence), particularly in relation to the existence of others as presented in his *Being and Nothingness*.¹ The focus will then move to his account of love, and Sartre's explanation of why we seek love as arising from his ontology. For Sartre the original mode of being-for-others is conflict,² with any concrete relationships always destined to fail and cycle into some other self-defeating attitude towards the Other. I intend to analyze what he means by this, particularly with regard to love, which we would pre-philosophically consider a positive form of relationship that is not always destined to fail. Using Sartrean terminology, I will attempt to show the nature of love as a positive relation with the Other, perhaps far from its optimistic ideal, but nevertheless providing some temporary relief from existential nausea.

For Sartre there are two irreducible ontological modes of being: the in-itself and the for-itself. The category of in-itself covers the material entities and bodies in the world that are non-conscious, and have absolute self-identity. The for-itself is the opposite, basically consciousness, lacking in any definite nature, able to adopt an attitude towards itself by being separated from itself by a nothingness, and thus is never identical to itself. The for-itself lacks self-identity as it can never encounter its own subjectivity as an object with a definite nature that can then independently identify itself with. As humans we combine both of these kinds of being; we are radically free consciousnesses combined with a material body. It is the lack of the self-identity of the for-itself, a lack of anything to ground our being that makes us feel existential anguish; the feeling of incompleteness or pointlessness of human life. The fundamental project of the for-itself is to be identical to itself, to become an in-itself-for-itself, and rid itself of anguish by becoming both subject and object. Sartre's analysis of love is intimately tied to this fundamental project of the for-

1. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* (London: Routledge Classics, 2003).

2. Sartre, 386.

itself with many of the distinctive phenomenological features of love being analyzed within the structure of his ontology.

Sartre, in his discussion of the quasi-ontological state of "being-for-others," observes that we cannot ordinarily treat others as mere objects in the world; we recognize them not as beings-in-themselves, but observe their body as realizing their own projects and freedom. We encounter the Other as a subject of sorts, but we cannot observe their being-for-themselves as this is a fundamentally reflexive mode of being. Further, we recognize that there are other free consciousnesses, that objectify and make judgements about us through the Look. It is our awareness of being looked at (the awareness of the presence of others) that Sartre identifies as the source of our self or personal identity as it is the realization of our being-for-others. Without the Other we are a pure transcendence, but when we become aware of the Other as a subject through the Look,³ we recognize that we can be an object for their consciousness; the Other can be "the foundation of my being-in-itself." Sartre talks about this grounding of personal identity in negative terms (the fall, shame etc.), but the Look is not hostility on the part of the Other. Rather, it is a fact that we cannot treat Others as pure subjects anymore than we can pure objects and must necessarily partly objectify them, and they us. This is what Sartre means when he talks of being-for-others being defined by conflict; we are always in a cycle of subject-object relation with the Other in which we each try to out-transcend the other.

Although Sartre talks of being-for-others in negative terms, there is a sense in which we desire the Other's existence and seek the objectification it provides. As noted above, as a for-itself we cannot bring about our self-identity and this is fundamentally unsatisfying, but the existence of the Other does provide us in some way with a grounding for our own identity. The Other "causes there to be a being which is my being,"⁴ but we recognize that at the same time that this being does not strictly belong to us, we are responsible for the conception the Other has of us but not the foundation of it. Thus, Our being-for-others becomes "a natural extension... of one's attempt to be oneself."⁵ We can try to use our relationships with others to gain the self-identity that we lack and are unable to provide ourselves. The existence of the Other provides the foundation of our being, but we must recover this being from the Other for we recognize it is their conception not our own, and "thus my project of recovering myself is fundamentally a project of absorbing the Other."⁶

In this project of self recovery we try to absorb the Other's freedom, which sees us as an object (and so retain our own freedom) while maintaining the Other's freedom as the ground for our being. Sartre conceives of love as being a part of this "attempt to make the Other who is the source of my self-identity subservient to me."⁷ However, I must not "cease to assert the Other;"⁸ that is, I must not deprive the Other of the quality of being something other than me as to do so would result in the disappearance of my being-for-others and any

3. Sartre, 385.

4. Sartre, 386.

5. Hazel E. Barnes, *Sartre* (London: Quartet Book Limited, 1973): 57.

6. Sartre, 387.

7. Joseph P. Fell, *Emotion in the Thought of Sartre* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965): 212.

8. Sartre, 387.

concrete conception of my identity that I seek to attain. Furthermore, it is not the Other as object that I wish to absorb as it is precisely not the other-as-object that is capable of looking at me and providing my essence; I must absorb the Other as a freedom.

Sartre's analysis of love is of "eros" or romantic love. Sartre conceives that this form of love has as its ideal an absolute unity between lovers; a merging together of two free consciousnesses in which each grounds the other's being to form one consciousness. Through love we seek to attain the totality of being that is ontologically denied to the in-itself, through the use of the Other, whom we love. In love we seek to possess the freedom of the Other as the ground of my identity by becoming the same as that freedom. Thus we maintain "its character as a freedom,"⁹ and also find a ground for our own being-for-itself that that freedom has given us. It is important to note that this is something that both consciousnesses try to do through love; "the relations involved in being-for-others are reciprocal"¹⁰ precisely because it is two free consciousnesses trying to encounter each other as such.

Common-sense should tell us that such an ideal is unattainable, and indeed Sartre's analysis reflects this; two consciousnesses can never encounter each other qua free consciousnesses. The unity with the Other as a ground of my being as the ultimate aim of love is an unattainable end, an impossible project. Such a unity would involve overcoming the individuation of our consciousnesses in a sharing of a body, but it would also erase the quality of otherness, which is the ground of our being. A unity is in fact unrealizable as we are each individuated by our bodies, and could not become combined, but more importantly the unity contains a contradiction. If we were to become a single transcendence this would necessarily involve the destruction of the characteristic of otherness in the Other. As noted above, if we are to succeed in our project of gaining self-identity through the Other, we cannot erase this character of otherness. Thus it seems that even if the unity of two transcendences were attainable, it would destroy what was really aimed at by each of them. If two consciousnesses did become unified then that unified consciousness would not provide its own grounds for existing or self-identity for it would lack any quality of otherness to provide such a ground. However, Sartre recognizes that this ideal is not to be strictly identified with love; it is "its motivation, and its end, its unique value,"¹¹ but it is not the only aspect of love. The ideal of unity is what we aim at through the project of love so it is always in the background of our love, and Sartre analyzes some of the common psychological aspects of what we call "being-in-love" in light of this.

The Other's freedom is the foundation of my being, and it is precisely this freedom that brings some conflict into the project of love. In love we wish to possess the freedom of the Other as a freedom; we want to be loved by a freedom and yet we cannot be satisfied by this. As Sartre notes "who would be satisfied with the words 'I love you because I have freely engaged myself to love you,'"¹² the freedom of the Other is a poisoned chalice as it frustrates us by forcing us to consider the love as a mere contingency. If we conceive of the love as another contingency, then it is conceivable for the Other to revoke their love at any time and to deny our subjectivity through their Look (this would be Sartrean indifference or hate). Sartre thinks that this is the origin of the tendency of people in love to try to view their love

as necessary ("It was meant to be," "We were made for each other," etc.). This attempt is a form of bad faith, a self-deception aimed at protecting oneself from the danger of existing "by means of the Other's freedom."¹³ If we manage to deceive ourselves into believing that our love is somehow necessary, then the lover can provide a non-contingent foundation for our being, and so we escape our existential anguish. Inasmuch as we can achieve this self-deception, Sartre thinks that this is the origin of the joy we experience of being in love as "we feel that our existence is justified."¹⁴ This is a welcome island of comfort in Sartre's pessimistic view of love, and helps to explain the phenomenological reality that, for much of the time, being-in-love is a deeply satisfying experience.

However, this desire for necessity provides a further problem, for the Other who we love seeks to make us the foundation of their subjective world also in loving us back; Sartre identifies love as "the project of making oneself be loved."¹⁵ In love we do not wish to be an object for our beloved (this would be Sartrean masochism). What we wish is that the loved will provide us with an objectivity for ourselves; to "serve as the foundation of my being by objectifying [my] subjective world."¹⁶ If the loved through their freedom makes me the absolute end of their world, and I then identify my freedom with theirs, then I succeed in my project of becoming my own foundation. However, this demand of the lover that the loved is not themselves engaged in a project to be loved, but is freely choosing to affirm our identity is an impossible one, given the reciprocal nature of being-for-others and love. Love, as the desire to be loved, indicates an infinite regress for Sartre, and it is our pre-ontological conception of this that is part of his explanation of the "perpetual dissatisfaction of the lover,"¹⁷ that even in the greatest love affairs there is some awareness of incompleteness and an unceasing desire for ever more.

Another psychological aspect of love that can be seen as ontologically revealing is the lover's desire for solitude. There is, in seeking a unity with the Other, also the problem of the existence of a third person or persons. If in love we are trying to attain a unity with another free consciousness, there is always the risk that another person will come along and objectify both of us through their own Look. The existence of a third person will reveal to us the object side of the loved, and so the loved is no longer the transcendence that founds our being, but a "transcendence transcended, not by me but by another."¹⁸ This Sartre identifies as the true reason why lovers seek solitude; to prevent this obvious barrier to the possibility of a unity from being immediately present to them, and in doing so destroy the joy which being-in-love can temporarily provide.

We have seen that Sartre's ontology can explain why we seek love; the dissatisfaction with the lack of identity of the in-itself leads it to seek out another for assistance in its fundamental project of grounding its being. In love this project becomes the aim of a unity with the Other, a unity with the Otherness that is a ground of my being. The impossibility of a unity is clear, and it is plausibly the continued pretense that such a unity is possible that leads to conflict and ultimate breakdown of love. I have also discussed the way Sartre brings out the triple destructibility of love through some of its common psychological aspects. First, there

13. Sartre, 388.

14. Sartre, 393.

15. Sartre, 397.

16. Barnes, 59.

17. Sartre, 399.

9. Sartre, 385.

10. A. Stern, *Sartre: His Philosophy and Existential Psychoanalysis* (London: Vision Press Limited 1967): 151.

11. Sartre, 388.

12. Sartre, 389.

is the contingency of the love; we are always at risk of the beloved removing their love and objectifying us without recognising us as a subject. Second, if love is the desire to be loved then there is an infinite reflection between myself and the beloved where each is continually reminded of their own subjectivity. Lastly, there is the presence, or even the awareness possibility of the presence, of a third person who will objectify both partners and reveal once again the impossibility of a unity that love aims at. Sartre thus analyzes and explains key emotional aspects of love through his ontology, and concludes that ultimately love is a failure, as it always results in my being “referred...to my own unjustifiable subjectivity –either by [the loved] or through others.”¹⁹ Love as an attempt to escape from our own contingency is thus unrealizable, and shows the impossibility of the realization of our fundamental project.

Ultimately, Sartre believes love is a failure as it contains “the seed of its own destruction”²⁰ in its pretense that the ideal of unity is attainable, and it is merely part of a cycle which will eventually slip into masochism, indifference, sadism or hate. It is human nature that we seek love, but Sartre thinks that it is also of our nature that this love will fail because we continually wish for it to be more than it can possibly be. Certainly if we think of love only as the ideal, then it must be a failure; it is obvious that no unity can occur factually, and there is a clear conceptual contradiction in aiming at unity as to do so would erase the necessary quality of otherness, but I think it would be disingenuous to conclude that all love will eventually slip into masochism or hate.

The question is whether we can accept the ultimate impossibility of the unity, yet still be satisfied that love as a project is a worthwhile endeavour. Working within Sartre’s philosophy, the answer to this question is not clearly affirmative, but neither is it a resounding denial. Perhaps we can accept that a unity of love is only possible in the clichéd metaphors of poets and songwriters; the recognition and respect of the lover as a subject and an (perhaps unspoken) agreement not to exploit their object-side is perhaps the most we can hope for from love. This may be far from the original aim and ideal of love, but perhaps we can accept that uniting self with self is a futile project, and leave the desire for a concrete identity from the Other behind us, to “merely” seek the joy that can be obtained through love despite the ontological contradictions of its ideal. Sartre himself seems to suggest such a thing is possible when he writes that in love “the Other experiences him as subjectivity and wishes to experience him only as such.”²¹ It may be that this smaller conception of love will suffer by invidious comparison to the ideal that will remain in our thoughts, but it seems to me that this could form a sustainable project of love; I can find nothing in Sartre’s thought to rule it out in principle.

So maybe we can accept that the for-itself’s fundamental project is always in vain; but also recognize that in love it comes the closest it ever will to an experience of the subjectivity of the Other, and the closest we can come to overcoming the subject-object conflict seemingly inherent in all human relations. When we are in a state of being-in-love we recognize that there is a free consciousness who gives us a positive evaluation; we can be proud of our being-for-others and they of theirs. We may wish for more from love; that it entirely grounds our being and provides us with a true identity, but this is too much to ask. Perhaps once we

recognize this we can be more satisfied with the escape from existential anguish that love can provide; the Look of the beloved can be a temporary relief from our own subjectivity. Such a project may ultimately be in bad faith, but the joy and relief from the isolation of being a free consciousness that Sartre recognizes love provides, however fleeting and elusive, may be enough to make the whole project worthwhile. ■

18. Sartre, 399.

19. Sartre, 399.

20. Sartre, 399.

21. Sartre, 398.

Descriptions of God: A Critique of Anselm's Ontological Argument

ABSTRACT: This paper uses the lessons gathered from a brief consideration of the workings of substantive descriptive phrases to develop two objections to Anselm's ontological proof of God's existence. First, one's understanding of the definition of God does not, as Anselm claims, guarantee that God exists in one's understanding. Second, the proof depends on a flawed interpretation of the denial of God's existence. The paper concludes by discussing the broader significance of this second objection.



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St. Anselm is most famous for originating what is known as the ontological proof of God's existence.¹ The proof, as Anselm presents it, stipulates a definition of God and then purports to show that, given that definition, the denial of God's existence entails a contradiction. This argument strikes many people as unconvincing, but difficult to refute. In this paper I attempt to show that Anselm's proof fails by elucidating the workings of substantive descriptive phrases, and showing how these linguistic considerations are fatal to it. I begin, in section I, by explicating the proof in more detail and indicating where two problems lie. In section II, I introduce the linguistic issues relevant to these problems. Thereafter, in sections III and IV, I engage Anselm's proof directly, examining in each of these sections one of the problems introduced in section I. Finally, in section V, I show how the problem discussed in section IV may have more general philosophical significance.

I.

I will set forth the interpretation of the proof that will be used throughout this discussion and indicate where in the argument the problems are found. Anselm's argument begins with the assertions that "the fool" wants to deny God's existence and that God is "something than which nothing greater can be thought." The rest of Anselm's argument, as he presents it, goes as follows:

But when this same fool hears me which a greater cannot be thought cannot exist only in the understanding. For if it exists only in the understanding, it can be thought to exist in reality as well, which is greater. So if that than which a greater cannot be thought exists only in the understanding, then that than which a greater cannot be thought is that than which a greater

can be thought. But that is clearly impossible. Therefore, there is no doubt that something than which a greater cannot be thought exists both in the understanding and in reality.²

I will lay out the argument in a different form. Anselm attributes to the fool the following proposition:

(1) Something than which nothing greater can be thought does not exist in reality.

To this Anselm conjoins another proposition, which, he claims, the fool must admit if he understands the expression "something than which nothing greater can be thought":

(2) Something than which nothing greater can be thought exists in the understanding.

From this proposition, Anselm thinks, follows another:

(3) Something than which nothing greater can be thought can be thought to exist both in the understanding and in reality.

Finally, Anselm adds another proposition he believes to be undeniable:

(4) It is greater to exist both in the understanding and in reality than to exist only in the understanding.

Proposition (1) denies the property of existence in reality to an object described as something than which nothing greater can be thought. But it follows from (2)–(4) that this description entails that property: if that object does not exist in reality, then something can be thought to be greater than it. So the conjunction of (1)–(4) entails the following contradiction:

(5) Something can be thought to be greater than something than which nothing greater can be thought.

Anselm believes that (2), (3), and (4) are so certain that the fool can escape this contradiction only by withdrawing (1) and admitting that something than which nothing greater can be thought—God—exists in reality.

Two difficulties plague this argument. First, Anselm does not offer sufficient support for (2). He claims in the passage above that if the fool admits to understanding the expression "something than which nothing greater can be thought," (2) follows necessarily. As we will see, this claim is incorrect. Second, (1) is ambiguous. Above, I gave an interpretation congenial to Anselm's purposes, according to which (1) describes an object in a certain way and denies that a certain property belongs to this object. But there is another possible interpretation of (1), and this alternative interpretation will prove to be debilitating to Anselm's argument.

1. Anselm, *Proslogion: with the Replies of Gaunilo and Anselm*, trans. Thomas Williams (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2001).

2. Anselm, 7.

II.

To develop these objections, it will first be necessary to consider the workings of descriptions. A description, as I will use the word, is a substantive phrase that refers to some object, if any, by picking out some of its properties. A description specifies some set of properties and refers to whichever object, if any, has that set of properties. For example, the description "the tallest boy in the classroom" specifies the properties of being a boy, being in the classroom, and being taller than any other boy in that classroom, and refers to whichever object has these properties. I will speak of any object that is referred to by a description in virtue of having the set of properties it specifies as an object that satisfies that description.

At this point, three remarks that will be useful to this discussion of Anselm's ontological proof may be made. First, an indicative sentence with a description as its subject typically assumes that some object satisfies that description and asserts something about that object. For example, the sentence "The tallest boy in the classroom has brown hair" is true if, and only if, some object is a boy, is in the classroom, and is taller than any other boy in the classroom, and this object has brown hair.³

Second, understanding a description does not necessarily involve the knowing of an object that satisfies it.⁴ This claim is confirmed by the observation that I may understand the description "the tallest boy in the classroom" even before I have compared the boys in the classroom to determine who is tallest. This observation is explained by the fact that understanding a description is a matter of understanding the properties it specifies. Understanding what it would mean to be a boy, to be in the classroom, and to be taller than any other boy in the classroom is sufficient for understanding the description "the tallest boy in the classroom," but it does not guarantee knowledge of an object that has these properties: it does not guarantee knowledge of the tallest boy in the classroom. To put the point in Anselm's terminology, my understanding of the expression "the tallest boy in the classroom" does not ensure that the tallest boy in the classroom exists in my understanding.

From the reasoning supporting the second remark follows a third: a description does not have to refer to any object to have a meaning capable of being understood. This claim is confirmed by the observation that the description "the tallest boy in the classroom" would be significant and comprehensible even if there were no boys in the classroom. This observation is explained by the fact that understanding a description is a matter of understanding the properties it specifies, along with the fact that the possibility of enumerating a set of properties does not depend on whether any object has all of those properties. It is intelligible to speak of being a boy, being in the classroom, and being taller than any other boy in the classroom even if no object has all three of these properties; therefore the description "the tallest boy in the classroom" is intelligible even if it is not satisfied.

III.

These remarks about descriptions shed light on Anselm's proof. The expression "something than which nothing greater can be thought" is a description: if it refers to an object, it does so by picking out the property of being as great as anything that can be thought. So the

remarks of the previous section may illuminate its function in the argument. Consider proposition (2). Applying the first remark, we see that (2) may be analyzed into the following:

(2a) There is an object that satisfies the description "something than which nothing greater can be thought."

(2b) This object exists in the understanding.

Proposition (2) is true if, and only if, the conjunction of (2a) and (2b) is true.

Applying the second and third remarks, we see that the reasons Anselm offers for accepting (2) are insufficient. Consider the second remark. Anselm maintains that something than which nothing greater can be thought must exist in the fool's understanding because "when this same fool hears me say 'something than which nothing greater can be thought,' he surely understands what he hears," and because "what he understands exists in his understanding."⁵ But we saw in discussion of the second remark that understanding a description is a matter of understanding the properties it specifies and that understanding a set of properties does not guarantee knowledge of an object that has those properties. So, it would be more appropriate to say that the property of being as great as anything that can be thought exists in the fool's understanding; it does not follow from Anselm's remarks that any object with this property exists in the fool's understanding. So, the fool's understanding of the expression "something than which nothing greater can be thought" is not a reason to accept (2b).

Now consider the third remark. The description "something than which nothing greater can be thought" can be comprehensible to the fool without there being any object that satisfies that description. The possibility of understanding the property of being as great as anything that can be thought does not depend on there being an object that has that property. So, the fool's understanding of the expression "something than which nothing greater can be thought" is not a reason to accept (2a) either.

So, (2) is not established by anything Anselm says on the subject. Furthermore, since (3) seems to depend on (2) for support,⁶ there is no reason to hold onto it if (2) is rejected. Proposition (1), the fool's denial of God's existence, is no longer the only one in doubt. There are now two options open to the fool if he wants to avoid contradiction. Since the conjunction of (2)–(4) does not entail a contradiction, he may accept those propositions and, as Anselm suggests, withdraw (1) and admit the existence of God. But since Anselm's argument does not establish (2) and (3), he may instead withdraw those propositions. In that case, he may hold onto to (1) and continue to deny the existence of God, since the conjunction of (1) and (4) does not entail a contradiction. Propositions (2) and (3) are necessary, in Anselm's proof, to show that the fool's denial of God's existence entails a contradiction. Because Anselm's argument fails to establish these propositions, it fails to prove the existence of God.

3. Compare with Bertrand Russell's interpretation of "[T]he author of Waverley was a man" as "One and only one entity wrote Waverley, and that one was a man" in Bertrand Russell, "On Denoting," in *Mind* 14, no. 56 (1905): 488.

4. Russell makes a similar point when he says that "we do not necessarily have acquaintance with the objects denoted by phrases composed of words with whose meanings we are acquainted," Russell, 479-80. One can know the meaning of a description, he suggests, without knowing anything about what it refers to, as long as one knows the meanings of its constituent terms.

5. Anselm, 7.

6. Anselm's argument for (3) makes use of the claim that "if it exists only in the understanding, it can be thought to exist in reality as well," *ibid.* The thought seems to be that an object's existence in the understanding is what makes it possible to imagine its existence in reality.

IV.

Another problem with the proof remains to be addressed. I mentioned in section I that (1), the proof's expression of the denial of God's existence, poses an interpretive problem. I remarked in section II that an indicative sentence with a description as its subject typically assumes that some object satisfies that description and asserts something about that object. If we interpret (1) according to this rule of thumb, it affirms this proposition:

(1a) There is an object that satisfies the description "something than which nothing greater can be thought."

And it denies this one:

(1b) This object exists in reality.

On this interpretation, (1) is true if, and only if, the conjunction of (1a) and the denial of (1b) is true. On this interpretation, the conjunction of (1)–(4) entails a contradiction. The contradiction arises because if (1) is taken to affirm (1a) and to deny (1b), then it denies to an object a property which, according to (2)–(4), is entailed by the description it gives to that same object.

This construal of (1) may be a natural one. But it should be rejected because, on this interpretation, showing that (1), when conjoined with (2)–(4), entails a contradiction is not sufficient to establish the proof's intended conclusion. The goal of the proof is to demonstrate that something than which nothing greater can be thought exists in reality by showing that the denial of this proposition entails a contradiction. So, if showing that (1), when conjoined with (2)–(4), entails a contradiction is to establish the intended conclusion that something than which nothing greater can be thought exists in reality, (1) must express a strict denial of this proposition.

But consider what the denial of this proposition would mean. According to the rule of thumb given by the first remark of section II, the proposition that something than which nothing greater can be thought exists in reality assumes that some object satisfies the description "something than which nothing greater can be thought" and asserts that this object exists in reality: it is true if, and only if, the conjunction of (1a) and (1b) is true. So, the proof must show that the denial of the conjunction of (1a) and (1b) entails a contradiction. Consequently, (1) must be construed not as the conjunction of (1a) and the denial of (1b) but as the denial of the conjunction of (1a) and (1b).

But on this interpretation, the conjunction of (1)–(4) does not entail a contradiction in the same way. On the first interpretation, a contradiction arose because (1) denied to an object a property, which according to (2)–(4), is entailed by the description it gave to that same object. But on this interpretation, (1) does not imply that any object satisfies the description "something than which nothing greater can be thought": (1) is true if an object satisfies that description but does not exist in reality or if nothing satisfies that description. Consequently, it is not open to the charge that it gives that description to an object but denies to that object a property entailed by that description. Nothing (2)–(4) might assert about what that description entails could produce any contradiction between those propositions and (1). So proper interpretation of (1) thwarts the proof's strategy of demonstrating that the denial of

God's existence entails a contradiction by setting forth propositions (2)–(4) to show that the definition of God entails existence in reality.⁷

V.

There is a more general lesson to be learned. My analysis in section III frees the fool to deny God's existence without contradiction by showing that nothing Anselm says gives sufficient reason to accept (2) and (3). But (1) and (4), the propositions left untouched by that analysis, can easily be reformulated, without being unfaithful to the spirit of Anselm's argument, so that their conjunction entails a contradiction. Someone who wanted to resuscitate the proof might begin by redefining God as the being with all perfections. Proposition (1), the denial of God's existence, could then be recast as the following:

(1') The being with all perfections does not exist.

The defender of the proof might then replace (4) with the following principle:

(4') Existence is a perfection.

From (1') and (4') a contradiction something like (5) appears to follow:

(5') The being with all perfections lacks at least one perfection.

We seem to be forced to withdraw (1').⁸ A proof much like Anselm's can circumvent the problems raised by my analysis of (2) and (3) in section III. This sort of circumvention is possible because that analysis leaves open the general strategy of demonstrating that the denial of God's existence entails a contradiction by showing that some definition of God entails existence. It only shows the failure of a particular attempt to show that a particular definition of God entails existence.

But the objection developed in section IV is as decisive against this new version of the proof as it is against the original version. Proposition (1'), just as much as (1), poses an interpretive problem. On the interpretation dictated by the first remark of section II, (1') affirms this proposition:

(1'a) There is an object that satisfies the description "the being with all perfections."

7. As we saw in section III, Anselm's proof requires the assumption that an object satisfies the description "something than which nothing greater can be thought" for the truth of (2) as well as for the more serviceable interpretation of (1). Consequently, the fool would have to reject (2) to avoid applying that description to any object in order to hold onto the construal of (1) that I have said thwarts the proof. (And he may, since Anselm does not give sufficient reason to accept (2), as we saw in section III). In spite of this connection, I have chosen to deal with (1) and (2) separately because the problem of the interpretation of (1) has a more general philosophical significance that is explored on its own in section V.

8. Descartes formulates a version of the proof essentially the same as this one when he argues that "it is no less contradictory to think of God (that is, a supremely perfect being) lacking existence (that is, lacking some perfection) than it is to think of a mountain without a valley," in René Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. Donald A. Cress, 4th ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998): 89.

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And it denies this one:

(1'b) This object exists.

On this construal, (1') denies to an object a property, which according to (4'), is entailed by the description it gives to that same object. This construal of (1'), when conjoined with (4'), entails a contradiction.

But this interpretation, like the first interpretation given of (1), is inadequate. The goal of this new proof is to demonstrate that the being with all perfections exists by showing that the denial of that proposition entails a contradiction. The proposition that the being with all perfections exists is true if and only if the conjunction of (1'a) and (1'b) is true. So, (1'), the denial of the existence of the being with all perfections, must be construed as the denial of the conjunction of (1'a) and (1'b). But because (1'), on this interpretation, does not give the description "the being with all perfections" to any object, it cannot be claimed that it gives that description to an object and then denies to that object a property entailed by that description. So, the new version of the proof fails because the proper construal of (1') does not entail a contradiction when conjoined with (4').

An important lesson can be drawn from this discussion of this new version of the proof. Both versions of the proof attempt to demonstrate that the denial of God's existence entails a contradiction by showing that some definition of God entails existence. The lesson is that the problem of the interpretation of the denial of God's existence is equally fatal to any proof that employs this strategy.

Let me explain why in general terms. As the discussion of this and the previous section illustrates, this strategy requires an interpretation of the denial of God's existence according to which some object satisfies the definition of God and this object does not exist: propositions showing that anything that satisfies the definition must exist contradict the denial of God's existence if, and only if, the denial of God's existence is given this sort of interpretation. But this sort of interpretation is not correct. Since the proposition that God exists is true if, and only if, some object satisfies the definition of God and this object exists, the denial of God's existence is true if, and only if, it is false that some object satisfies the definition of God and this object exists. So, the denial of God's existence does not assume that any object satisfies the definition of God. And if the denial of God's existence does not make this assumption, then it is not inconsistent with any proposition asserting that existence is required by the definition of God. So, any attempt to demonstrate that the denial of God's existence entails a contradiction by showing that some definition of God entails existence is bound to fail.

By paying careful attention to the workings of descriptions, we have learned a great deal about the weaknesses in Anselm's ontological proof of God's existence. We understand now that Anselm fails to support his claim that something than which nothing greater can be thought exists in the understanding. We also understand that the proof depends on a flawed interpretation of the denial that something than which nothing greater can be thought exists in reality. Most importantly, we understand that this second type of problem is fatal to any proof that purports to demonstrate that the denial of God's existence entails a contradiction by showing that the definition of God entails existence. ■

Where Claxton Falls Short: The Illusions of Consumption Addiction

ABSTRACT: Guy Claxton suggests that post-Industrial Revolution westerners are consumption addicts and argues that we must embrace a more frugal and environmentally considerate lifestyle. However, I argue that Claxton's analysis and solution to consumption addiction does not penetrate far enough. Through Warren's ecofeminist reasoning and Heidegger's notion of technology, I show that the anthropocentric assumption inherent in western consumption engenders a destructive and oppressive worldview by creating the illusion that we are justified in subordinating non-human entities.



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In the essay "Involuntary Simplicity: Changing Dysfunctional Habits of Consumption," Guy Claxton suggests that post-Industrial Revolution westerners are consumption addicts, whose identity and sense of self-worth have come to depend on possession so that excessive consumption is "no longer experienced as a fortunate option, but a matter of absolute necessity."¹ Claxton claims that technological innovation and eco-political reorganization are not satisfactory solutions to the environmental effects of dysfunctional consumption habits, and instead calls for the liberation of millions of individuals from an unconsciously self-destructive worldview.² For Claxton, this liberation consists of first understanding the "nest of assumptions that link identity, security and consumption," and once this is done, an individual is likely to become more environmentally considerate and embrace a frugal lifestyle.³

In what follows, I will argue that Claxton's analysis and solution to consumption addiction does not penetrate far enough, as it merely focuses on correcting an addict's misappropriated need to consume. Instead, this paper takes issue with a misappropriated way of seeing the world: merely as a thing to be used and consumed by humans. I will follow Karen Warren's ecofeminist reasoning and Martin Heidegger's notion of technological thought to justify my position that the anthropocentric assumption inherent in consumption addiction is a phenomenon not to be simply curtailed, but to be eradicated all together, giving way to a less destructive and less oppressive worldview.⁴

1. Guy Claxton. "Involuntary Simplicity: Changing Dysfunctional Habits of Consumption." Reprinted in *The Environmental Ethics & Policy Book*. Eds. Donald VanDeVeer and Christine Pierce. (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing, 2003): 282-648.

2. Claxton, 643.

3. Claxton, 647.

4. Karen J. Warren, "The Power and the Promise of Ecological Feminism." Reprinted in *The Environmental Ethics & Policy Book*. Eds. Donald VanDeVeer and Christine Pierce (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing, 2003): 282-293. Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology" in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1977)

Claxton argues that our rampant consumption is the result of a self-enforcing psychological trap, a situation where, within one way of seeing the world, it is impossible to conceive of or act upon certain beliefs.⁵ Our situation is not unlike that of a drug addict who knows she should not be using the drug because it is ruining her body and may eventually kill her, but her immediate need is so pressing she continues use. When the addict is drugged, her short-term need to feel good is satiated and she is then able to consider her long-term interests, such as the benefits of quitting; however, when the decision to quit is enacted and she returns to a non-drugged state, her deprivation of what is needed becomes so painful that quitting seems unbearable. Thus, either the addict abandons the decision as unreasonable or feels it necessary to return to the state from which she initially made the decision "in order to make the decision seem valid again."⁶ In either case, the addict is likely to continue drug use in order to return to a normal mindset, inhibiting her from fully enacting crucial moral decisions.

Claxton's main focus is that this psychological trap will likely inhibit an addict from acting on any concern she might have for how she is affecting the world around her. However, Claxton fails to show that how one sees oneself in relation to the world affects how one values and treats the world. Claxton's solution of frugal living may help to limit the destructive effects consumption has on the environment, but it does not ensure the elimination of the attitude many westerners have about consumption that engenders their addiction.

Heidegger refers to this pivotal attitude as being technological in nature. The primary feature of technological thinking is its insistent aggressiveness, an attribute that "depends upon the anthropocentric assumption that [humans are] the hupokeimenon, the fundamental subjects who determines the nature of Being."⁷ Heidegger's concept of technology refers the Greek word *techne*, a phenomenon of revealing or manifesting. Heidegger posits a contrary meta-physical account, holding that "the ultimate responsibility for being lies within Being itself; Being is the ultimate 'cause' of beings."⁸ However, in western thought, humans as makers have come to hold authority over causality, and misappropriate the idea of causality as instrumentality; "technology as a mode of uncovering does not let beings manifest themselves as what they are, but instead, involves a production (i.e. a domination) of beings by [humans]."⁹ In effect, the environment is reduced to the status of mere raw material, stock on hand for immediate use by humans.¹⁰

A confounding danger of technological thinking is that it perpetuates itself. In western culture where Claxton sees consumption addiction at its most extreme, consumers pressure producers to meet the demands of their addiction. Driven by profit or the need to satiate one's own addiction, a producer will seek to harvest and allocate resources in the most efficient way possible. This frames the way the producer will see the world. For example, a profit-motivated mine operator will see a mountain merely as an untapped deposit of ore; the mountain is only seen for its instrumental economic use. In order to show how technological thinking works to justify consumption addiction on an individual level which in turn perpetuates further technological thinking in society, I will place the issue in the conlogical

5. Claxton, 644.

6. Claxton, 643.

7. Harold Alderman, "Heidegger: Technology as Phenomenon," in *The Personalist*, Vol. 51 (Fall 1970): 535.

8. Alderman, 538.

9. Alderman, 539.

10. Catherine Frances Botha. "Heidegger, technology and ecology." in *South African Journal of Philosophy*. 22 No. 2. (2003): 160.

thinking works to justify consumption addiction on an individual level which in turn perpetuates further technological thinking in society, I will place the issue in the context of an ecofeminist standpoint.

Karen Warren's "The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism" sheds light on the oppressive nature of consumption addiction by calling us to examine our conceptual frameworks, the sets of "basic beliefs, values, attitudes and assumptions which shape and reflect how one views oneself and one's world."¹¹ When a conceptual framework explains, justifies and maintains relationships of domination and subordination, it is oppressive. Warren claims that there are three fundamental aspects of oppressive frameworks: (1) value-dualisms arise when one's perception is based on oppositional disjunctive and exclusive pairs (e.g. male vs. female); (2) value-hierarchical thinking places prestige or higher value on only one side of the value dualism (e.g. male over female); and (3) a logic of domination is a structure of reasoning that allows one to justify to oneself that entities in the non-prestigious class of the value-dualism may be subordinated due to possession or lack of a relevant trait.¹² If we examine the anthropocentric assumption inherent in technological thinking and consumption addiction, we find a value-dualism between humans and non-human entities; a value-hierarchy that places prestige on humans; and hence, a justification of the subordination of non-human entities, such as the environment.

Ecofeminism is distinct from other ethical systems insofar as it aims to show how a moral agent is in relationship to other entities, as these relationships act in defining who one is.¹³ Ecofeminism does not separate moral agents from other entities through organization and ranking, because such separation lends itself to a logic of domination. Thus, when an individual sees herself as distinct from, and superior to, other entities, she can then justify subordinating them in service to her own ends. This is precisely how technological thinking's anthropocentric assumption gives way to the illusion that the addict is justified consuming or dominating the world around her. When an addict feels justified in her consumption, her way of seeing the world lends itself to others, as producers adopt a similar logic in order to meet the ends of the consumer.

Claxton is correct in claiming that the liberation of consumption addiction is an issue of identity. However, the fundamental issue of consumption is not that westerners have come to identify themselves by what and how much they possess, but that humans identify themselves as separate from and superior to the world around them, which then justifies humanity's domination and consumption of the world. Technologically thinking humans treat the existence of other beings as a phenomenon contingent upon a particular thing's use to humanity. Instead, Marilyn Frye's loving perception makes the correct assumption: "the object of the seeing is another being whose existence and character are logically independent of the seer and who may be practically or empirically independent in any particular respect at any particular time."¹⁴ This way of seeing does not inhibit other (non-humanist) modes of manifesting; rather it respects and treats beings as beings, not as things to merely be used.

David Rooney asserts that "culture can be defined as a shared pattern of beliefs that leads

to relatively stable patterns of behaviors and attitudes in groups that are held together by taken for granted assumptions about such things as value, necessity and power."¹⁵ In western culture, where consumption addiction reigns, it is urgent that we recognize the "taken for granted assumptions" that characterize our anthropocentric logic of domination. The oppressiveness of a consumption addict's logic of domination is amplified due to its nature as a social or cultural process. A consumption addict's need to service her own ends enables her to become an über-technological thinker as she begins to calculate and possibly regard other human beings merely as instrumental entities that can be used at will in order to efficiently aid her addiction (i.e. the need to feel normal). Heidegger feared that this calculative way of seeing would eventually replace all modes of thinking: "philosophic thought would be replaced with utilitarian cognition; artistic creativity would atrophy as a result of endless innovative production, and political action would be obviated by social engineering."¹⁶ The behaviors and interests that many of us identify as uniquely human may expand and further give way to the behavior and interests that characterize technology, which is a process that is concerned with efficiency, not oppression. Thus, Heidegger's concern with technology is ultimately a concern about human dignity.¹⁷

Claxton's call for the liberation of an unknowingly self-destructive worldview opens the door for discussion of what truly engenders consumption addiction. However, he fails to reveal western thought's most essential assumption which lays at the heart of consumption. Through paralleling Warren's logic of domination with Heidegger's conception of technological thinking, I have shown that the traditionally western anthropocentric assumption not only engenders consumption addiction but also justifies and maintains it. Ridding ourselves of consumption addiction necessitates ridding ourselves of the arrogant assumptions of technological thought and the logic of domination that characterizes an addict's domination of the world. ■

11. Warren, 283.

12. Warren, 283.

13. Warren, 290.

14. Marilyn Frye, "In and Out of Harm's Way: Arrogance and Love" in *The Politics of Reality: essays in feminist philosophy* (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 1983): 77.

15. David Rooney, "Knowledge, economy, technology and society: The politics of discourse." *Telematics and Informatics*. Vol 22. 2005: 408.

16. Botha, 163.

17. Botha, 160.

The Foundations of Knowledge in Aristotle and Epicurus: A Comparative Analysis

ABSTRACT: As early proponents of foundationalism, Aristotle and Epicurus share the view that all knowledge rests on indubitable foundations. For Aristotle, these foundations are intellectual first principles. But for Epicurus, sense perception is basic. If certainty is the criterion of knowledge, then, despite their different approaches, neither philosopher succeeds in providing a mechanism sufficient to certify knowledge claims. For the foundationalist wishing to avoid nihilism, therefore, Aristotle's and Epicurus' failures are instructive.



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Both Aristotle and Epicurus developed a theory of knowledge based on the premise that knowledge must rest on indubitable foundations.¹ Yet, they have different ideas about what constitutes an indubitable foundation for knowledge. Because foundationalism remains a popular theory of knowledge, a comparative analysis between Aristotle's and Epicurus' theories is of more than historical interest.

I will begin by outlining each philosopher's account of the foundations of knowledge. I will then perform a comparative analysis of the two accounts. While I argue that Epicurus' empiricist account of foundational knowledge is superior to Aristotle's deductive rationalism, in the end I conclude that both Epicurus and Aristotle ultimately fail to offer a mechanism for attaining certain knowledge. Their failures, I suggest, provide insights regarding how to approach a workable foundationalist account of knowledge.

Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* begins, "All instruction given or received by way of argument proceeds from pre-existent knowledge."² By this he means that knowledge acquisition is a cumulative process. Aristotle takes it as a historical fact that new knowledge is always based upon something already known.³ He observes that all fields of learning progress by building upon existing knowledge.⁴ If we possess knowledge of something, we should be able to explain it from something prior, which is better known than what follows from it. Aristotle claims that we can do this through a process he calls demonstration.⁵ Demonstration proceeds by deducing a proposition from other propositions that are logically prior to it.

Aristotle observes, however, that demonstration must lead to either (1)

1. Julia Annas, ed., *Voices of Ancient Philosophy: An Introductory Reader*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001): 200, 205.

2. Aristotle, "Posterior Analytics," in *Introduction to Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon, 2nd ed., (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1973): 11.

3. Aristotle, 11.

4. Aristotle, 11.

5. Aristotle, 13.

an infinite regress, where each new bit of knowledge must be proved from prior knowledge, which itself must be proved from prior knowledge, and so on ad infinitum; (2) circular reasoning, whereby any proposition ultimately would have to be proved from itself; or (3) a foundation that does not require further proof.⁶ On Aristotle's view, neither (1) nor (2) can possibly lead to knowledge.⁷ An infinite regress cannot lead to knowledge because, in that case, the truth-value of any proposition would always hang on some further proposition whose truth-value had yet to be determined. And (2) cannot lead to genuine knowledge since anything—even obviously false propositions—could be "proved" by reasoning in a circle, which is absurd.⁸ Aristotle concludes that knowledge must have foundations that do not require proof themselves.⁹ Hence, for Aristotle, the structure of knowledge is hierarchical. We get back to the foundations of knowledge when we find those propositions that are prior to everything that follows from them, and to which no other proposition is prior.

Because demonstration proceeds by moving toward what is most prior, the foundations of knowledge are reached only at the end of the demonstration process. This fact raises a problem for Aristotle. If what is known is known in reference to something prior—as Aristotle believes—and nothing is prior to the foundations, how do we come to know the foundations? At the end of Book II of the *Posterior Analytics*, Aristotle responds to this problem with a story about how we come to comprehend the foundations of knowledge.¹⁰ He says that we come to know the foundations of knowledge, or "first principles,"¹¹ differently than we come to know other propositions. They do not require demonstrative proof; rather, we arrive at first principles through a process that begins with perception.¹² We perceive particular things and form memories of them.¹³ Particulars, on Aristotle's view, are not objects of knowledge *per se*. Nevertheless, when we form enough memories about particulars of a certain type, we thereby attain experience.¹⁴ Through experience we finally arrive at universals, which, for Aristotle, are the first principles.¹⁵

Aristotle intends for this argument to explain how the foundations of knowledge can be comprehended without having to be proved from something more basic. It does nothing, though, to establish that knowledge acquired in this fashion is by any means indubitable. Aristotle's first principles depend on the faculties of perception and memory. However, our senses can deceive us, and memory is not always reliable. It follows that first principles are subject to doubt. Thus, first principles are not indubitable.

Despite the fact that our senses can deceive us, Aristotle and Epicurus each believe that perception plays an important role in the acquisition of knowledge. Whereas Aristotle thinks that perception is merely a starting point toward attaining comprehension of first

6. Aristotle, 16-18.

7. Aristotle, 16-17.

8. Proponents of a coherence theory of epistemic justification deny the linear, hierarchical structure of knowledge argued for by Aristotle, and insist that knowledge is structured in a "web of mutually supporting beliefs." See Noah Lemos, *An Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 68.

9. Aristotle, 16.

10. Aristotle, 108-111.

11. Annas, 200.

12. Aristotle, 109.

13. Aristotle, 109.

14. Aristotle, 109.

15. Aristotle, 110.

principles, Epicurus identifies perception itself as the foundation of knowledge.¹⁶ In contrast to Aristotle, who must offer a separate theory to explain how first principles come to be known otherwise than from logical deduction, Epicurus conceives of perception as both the foundation and starting point of all knowledge.¹⁷ Thus Epicurus is able to offer one, unified, empirical account of knowledge acquisition.

According to Epicurus, it is clear from the ostensive nature of language that perception is both the starting point and the foundation of knowledge. He writes, “It is necessary that the first concept corresponding to each utterance be seen, and not require demonstration, if we are to have something to which to refer the object of inquiry or puzzlement or belief.”¹⁸ In other words, in order for a statement to be either true or false, it must have a meaning, and—to the extent that our words refer to the physical world—meaning is a function of the correspondence between word and perceptible object.

The ostensive character of language shows that our concepts are derived from perceptual experience. Perception is therefore preconceptual. In fact, Epicurus claims that perception is irrational—in the sense that perception itself is without rational content.¹⁹ Epicurus understands perception as the effect of impressions that physical objects make on our sense organs. Thus, if I perceive a red spherical shape, I may form a belief, e.g., “there is a red ball in front of me.” Although my belief is about the content of my perceptual experience, it is not itself a part of my perceptual experience.²⁰ Whereas I argued above that the fallibility of sense perception is problematic in the context of Aristotle’s theory of first principles, Epicurus argues that perceptions—qua perceptions—are always true.²¹ However, the use of the word “true” is misleading in light of Epicurus’ claim that perceptions are irrational, and so—properly speaking—are neither true nor false. The important point for Epicurus is that only when we form beliefs about our perceptions do we become vulnerable to error. Hence, “true” as applied to perceptions is perhaps better understood as “not false.”

An illustration of what Epicurus has in mind will be instructive. In his exposition of Epicurus’ theory of knowledge from *Adversus Mathematicos*, Sextus Empiricus writes,

I would not say that sight is mistaken because from a distance it sees the tower as small and round, but larger and square from close to. Rather it is telling the truth, because when the perceived object appears to it small and of such a shape, it really is small and of such a shape, as the edges of the images are rubbed off by their passing through the air, and when it appears big and of another, again likewise it is big and of another shape. However, it is not the same thing which is both these.²²

Perceptions, according to Epicurus, cannot contradict one another; the two perceptions discussed in the above quotation, though different, are both “true” because the different perspectives on the tower impart different sense-data²³ to the perceiver. Hence, a person can only go wrong when she forms a belief, such as “the tower itself is small and round,” or “the tower itself is large and square.” Epicurus thereby secures the certainty of the truth of his foundations of knowledge, but the price he pays is that such truths lack rational content (and are thus not true in the robust sense of the word).

Because beliefs may be either true or false, Epicurus devises a twofold system by which one may evaluate experiential beliefs on one hand, and theoretical beliefs on the other hand. Apropos, an experiential belief is confirmed when further experience directly supports it.²⁴ Sextus Empiricus provides this example of confirmation:

[W]hen Plato is approaching from a distance, I guess and believe, given the distance, that it is Plato. When he has come nearer, there is further testimony that it is Plato, the distance having been removed, and it is confirmed through what is evident itself.²⁵

Confirmation, then, is the criterion of an experiential belief’s being true. On the other hand, nonconfirmation is the criterion of an experiential belief’s being false.²⁶ An experiential belief is nonconfirmed when further experience contradicts it. If, for example, the man whom I believe from a distance to be Plato turns out to be someone else when he comes nearer, then my belief will have been nonconfirmed.

Alternatively, a theoretical belief is nondisconfirmed when a relevant, though necessarily indirect, experience fails to prove it false.²⁷ Nondisconfirmation is the criterion for a theoretical belief’s being true. For example, Sextus Empiricus writes:

Epicurus says that void, which is an unclear item, exists, and justifies this through something evident, motion. For if there were no void there ought not to be motion either, since the moving body would have no place into which to shift, everything being full and solid. So that, since motion does exist, what is apparent does not disconfirm the unclear object of belief.²⁸

A theoretical belief, however, is disconfirmed when a relevant, though indirect, experience gives it negative support.²⁹ Thus, the experience of total motionlessness would disconfirm the existence of void. Disconfirmation, then, is the criterion for a theoretical belief’s being false.

16. Epicurus, “Letter to Herodotus,” in *Voices of Ancient Philosophy: An Introductory Reader*, Julia Annas, ed., (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001): 201.

17. Epicurus, 201.

18. Epicurus, 201.

19. Diogenes Laertius, “The Lives of the Philosophers X,” in *Voices of Ancient Philosophy: An Introductory Reader*, Julia Annas, ed., (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001): 201-202.

20. Sextus Empiricus, “Adversus Mathematicos,” in *Voices of Ancient Philosophy: An Introductory Reader*, Julia Annas, ed., (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001): 202.

21. Sextus Empiricus, 202.

22. Sextus Empiricus, 202.

23. “Subjective entities (allegedly) having the properties the perceived external object (if there is one) appears to have. In seeing a white circle under a red light and at an oblique angle, the sense-datum would be red and elliptical (the way the white circle looks).” See Fred Dretske, “sense-data,” in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, Ted Honderich, ed., (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995): 822.

24. Sextus Empiricus, 202.

25. Sextus Empiricus, 202-203.

26. Sextus Empiricus, 203.

27. Sextus Empiricus, 203.

28. Sextus Empiricus, 203.

29. Sextus Empiricus, 203.

According to Epicurus, if we follow his criteria for confirmation or nonconfirmation on the one hand, and nondisconfirmation or disconfirmation on the other hand, we can slowly and cautiously build up a stable system of knowledge.³⁰ The real strength of this method lies in its capacity to falsify (i.e., nonconfirm) beliefs when experiences contradict them. It is important to note, however, that Epicurus' method cannot firmly establish the truth of any given belief. At best, Epicurus' method for testing beliefs can lend positive support for a belief, since confirmation simply means that a belief about a subsequent experience conforms with a previously held belief.

As we have seen, both Aristotle and Epicurus offer robust foundationalist theories of knowledge. Although Aristotle draws on empiricism in order to account for knowledge of first principle, his foundationalism is largely a product of rationalism. In contrast, Epicurus' foundationalism is a thoroughly empirical theory. Thus, together their theories represent early attempts to provide a foundationalist account of the structure of knowledge from either side of the epistemological divide.

Recall that, for Aristotle, we know something when it can be deduced from first principles. Because deduction is a truth-preserving operation, as long as the first principles are true, whatever is deduced from them will also be true. Despite Aristotle's commitment to rationalism, in order to avoid an infinite regress, he is forced to account for the acquisition of first principles via empirical processes, viz., sense perception and memory. This suggests a limit to rationalism's capacity to explain how we acquire knowledge (especially knowledge of the external world). Yet, I have argued that the truth of Aristotle's first principles may be called into question precisely because the perceptual processes that are used in forming them are not wholly reliable, which suggests that empiricism, too, has its limits (specifically with respect to the fallibility of perceptual processes). But beyond that, Aristotle's account of first principles is obscure. First principles are somehow encoded within, but not directly apprehensible through perception of what Aristotle terms particulars. We only come to comprehend Aristotle's first principles at the end of an intellectual process.³¹ And only then, for Aristotle, do first principles function as foundational constituents of knowledge.

If structural unity is a desideratum of a theory of knowledge, Epicurus' theory has the advantage. In opposition to Aristotle's hybrid theory, Epicurus offers a comparatively straightforward empirical account of the structure of knowledge. For Epicurus, sense perception is the foundation of all knowledge. Unlike Aristotle's first principles, sense perception is a direct and immediate foundation for knowledge, but it engenders a different problem, viz., sense perceptions lack rational content. In order to give meaning to our sense experiences, it seems that we have to form beliefs about them. Yet, Epicurus makes it clear that beliefs are fallible. In response to the problem of how to justify our beliefs, Epicurus offers a system for testing them that involves constant reference back to experience. Epicurus' system works best as a mechanism for falsifying beliefs (when experience contradicts a belief), but it can offer only varying degrees of assurance that our beliefs are true, since mere sense experiences, which are void of meaning in themselves, are the only indubitable "truths."

Both Aristotle and Epicurus assume that infallibility is a criterion of knowledge, yet neither

one sufficiently explains how their respective concepts of the foundations of knowledge justify more extensive claims to certain knowledge. If the basic claim of foundationalism is right—viz., that knowledge must be built up from a solid foundation—Aristotle's and Epicurus' failures (and, indeed, the failures of foundationalism to the present day) suggest either that infallibility is too strong a criterion for knowledge, or that knowledge is an unattainable goal. ■

30. Note that nonconfirmation is not the negation of confirmation (although the two are mutually exclusive), nor is nondisconfirmation the negation of disconfirmation (although they too are mutually exclusive).

31. Aristotle, 108-111.

Motion and Rest from a Chinese Buddhist Perspective

ABSTRACT: This paper focuses on Seng-Chao's conception of motion and rest as two different ways to see the same phenomenon and the effect that this has on his understanding of ideas such as impermanence. I point out the parallels that can be made between motion and rest and samsara and nirvana and I argue that a strong Taoist background helps Seng-Chao clarify Indian ideas and make even deeper claims about the true nature of reality.



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Seng-Chao's writing as a Chinese Buddhist signified the start to a new development in Buddhist philosophy in China.¹ He was one of the first writers to draw on a tradition called the Three-Treatise (or Middle Doctrine) School, which had come over from India in the form of three significant texts, namely Nāgārjuna's² *Treatise on the Middle way*, and *Treatise on the Twelve Gates* and Āryadeva's³ *One-Hundred-Verse Treatise*, which were translated into Chinese.⁴ Seng-Chao was one of the earliest Chinese philosophers interested in making a place for Buddhism within a traditionally Taoist and Confucian society. While his work is grounded in distinctly Buddhist ideas, there are definite Taoist influences to his perspective.

In this paper I will outline Seng-Chao's discussion of motion and rest, drawing on connections this argument has with Nāgārjuna's account of motion and Śāntaraksita's⁵ account of consciousness and memory in relation to the perception of images. Next I will examine Seng-Chao's discussion of time and the relationship between past, present and future. I will make connections to Candrakīrti's⁶ account of memory and its implications on

1. Chinese religious and philosophical thought was almost entirely Confucian and Taoist until the transmission of Buddhism began via the Silk Road from India to China. Seng-Chao was one of the first Chinese scholars to engage seriously with the Buddhist philosophical texts being brought from India.

2. Nāgārjuna was an extremely influential Indian philosopher whose writing marks the start of the Mādhyamika (Middle Way) School of Mahāyāna Buddhism. The most famous of his works, *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (Treatise on the Middle Way), laid the foundation for Mādhyamika thought in India, China and Tibet.

3. Āryadeva was a disciple of Nāgārjuna whose work in Mādhyamika philosophy was influential in both China and Tibet.

4. These three texts were purportedly authored by Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva and were transmitted to China by a monk named Kumārajīva, whose father has been Indian and mother had been Chinese. Kumārajīva and his disciples (including Seng-Chao) translated these texts creating what is referred to as the Three-Treatise School of Chinese Buddhism.

5. Śāntaraksita was an Indian philosopher, labeled in Tibetan doxography as a Yogācāra-Śvātantrika-Mādhyamika. His account of conventional truth follows that of the Yogācāra (Mind-Only) idealist school which holds that only the mind exists and all images which appear to it arise within the mind and are cognized by it in a non-dual reflexive manner. His method of logical argument and reasoning follows that of the Śvātantrika style of autonomous inference. And his account of ultimate truth classifies him a Mādhyamika because he believes that ultimately, everything (including mind) is empty of inherent existence.

6. Candrakīrti was a disciple of Nāgārjuna and wrote commentaries on many of his texts. He follows the Prāsangika style of logic which means that he does not believe that statements or accounts of the ultimate truth can be maintained because for him, verbally expressing an idea indicates that it is grounded in the conventional world of concepts and is therefore not true about ultimate reality.

what constitutes the past versus the present. I will argue that an analogy can be made between Seng-Chao's observations about motion and rest and the relationship between samsāra⁷ and nirvāna⁸. Finally I will argue that even though Seng-Chao deviates from his Indian and Tibetan counterparts on a number of points, his philosophical perspective serves to augment and clarify the Buddhist tradition and shed new light on a number of important Buddhist doctrines.

Seng-Chao begins his treatise *The Immutability of Things* by explaining that he disagrees with the commonly accepted idea that time flows like a current along which all things move, changing with it. While Seng-Chao does not outline his specific objections to this analogy, there are many problems with it. The image of a current or river of time suggests properties that cannot be possessed by time or motion. First of all, seeing time as a river would imply that past, present, and future all exist somewhere at all times and to locate any moment (past, present or future) would require nothing more than figuring out where that moment was positioned in a long string of moments. It would imply that, in some way, it might be possible to locate and return to a past moment, which, despite what H.G. Wells might suggest, is impossible. Using the river as an analogy suggests that there is no determined present, but that it is relative to the rest of time. One person may locate a spot on the river that is the present in relation to her, but someone else sitting downstream would have a different conception of what the present moment looked like. Finally, if time is represented by the river, then what is the solid, stable thing past which time is flowing? What is it that is standing still while the rest of existence floats by? If the being experiencing time is standing on this solid structure, then doesn't that give the impression that this being is permanent and immortal? For these reasons, Seng-Chao sees the need for a clearer conception of what time and motion really are and how they behave in relation to each other.

He begins with an examination of the relationship between motion and rest. Instead of thinking of them as two separate phenomena and polar opposites, he believes that one must look for rest in motion, and conversely, for motion in rest. "As rest must be sought right in motion, therefore there is eternal rest in spite of motion, and as motion is not to be cast aside in order to seek rest, therefore although there is rest, it is never separated from motion."⁹ Motion cannot be other than multiple instances of rest. While he is not arguing that motion does not exist, he is making a claim about the role that rest plays within movement. He would like to say that there is perpetual rest and that motion must grow out of it. At the same time, he is not arguing against the Buddhist idea that everything is constantly changing. Within rest, there is also constant motion. According to Seng-Chao, motion and rest are the same phenomenon seen from different perspectives.

These ideas are grounded in Nāgārjuna's discussion of motion in his *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (Treatise on the Middle Way). "What has been moved is not moving. What has not been moved is not moving. Apart from what has been moved and what has not been moved, movement cannot be conceived."¹⁰ Nāgārjuna identifies three pieces to the conventional

7. Samsāra is the Sanskrit word for cyclic existence which is the cycle of death and rebirth in which all sentient beings are trapped because of their ignorance and grasping. This is a term which describes the very world we live in.

8. Nirvāna is the Sanskrit word for release from cyclic existence. An individual who has reached nirvāna has complete and perfect understanding of reality and therefore no longer grasps at what is empty. It is said that this individual's mind is at peace or at rest. It is important to note that this is also an account of the very world in which we live and does not describe some other realm of existence.

9. Wing-Tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969): 345.

10. Jay L. Garfield, *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995): 125. (Chapter II, verse 1).

understanding of motion: (1) the subject (the mover); (2) the action (the movement); and (3) the object (the moved). However, motion itself cannot be located in any of these three things. Moreover, there are three tenses in which motion is understood: (1) the past (what was moved); (2) the present (what is moving); and (3) the future (what has not yet been moved). What was moved is no longer moving so motion cannot be found in it. What has not yet been moved is not moving either, and therefore does not contain motion. Movement implies that something has changed. What has moved has started in one place and ended up in another. Motion therefore can only be understood in relation to time. At any one moment nothing is moving because there is no conception of something having changed location or position. In a sense, it is frozen at that instant in place in whatever location it rests. For this reason, nothing in the present can actually be seen as moving. Seng-Chao would like to suggest, then, that rest is “eternal” and that motion is made up of rest.

Even as Seng-Chao explains motion as multiple instances of rest, he maintains that there is also motion within those very instances of rest. An instant, after all, is just a miniscule duration of time and all things are in a constant state of change. Even if there is no change that can be observed by human senses within that instant, everything in existence during the passing of that instant has aged by a tiny bit which is an indication of change. Since motion is by definition the occurrence of change, motion has taken place in that instant of rest.

In his treatise, Seng-Chao is making metaphysical claims about the way motion and rest function and work in tandem with each other. Nāgārjuna is also using metaphysical arguments in his discussion, though he is concerned with more than the way that motion works. Nāgārjuna is deconstructing the words we use to talk about motion and is trying to show that we cannot locate our concept of that action within the words we use to describe it. In doing this, he is also arguing that all things are empty of inherent existence, and that motion itself is also empty. The biggest difference between Seng-Chao and Nāgārjuna is that Seng-Chao is not concerned with the same argument about the ultimate emptiness of everything. In the end, however, their metaphysical claims remain remarkably similar.

Seng-Chao’s account of multiple instances of rest making up motion can be compared to Śāntaraksita’s explanation of the way that images are perceived in his *Madhyamakālamkāra* (Ornament of the Middle Way). Śāntaraksita believes that images are perceived in multiple, distinct pieces rather than as a fluid continuum. Every instant the object appears to the eye, and the eye perceives the image of that object. The mind then stores that image in memory. It is memory and not the eye, Śāntaraksita thinks, that blurs images together so that the observer gets the sense that she is perceiving a continual occurrence of an object, when in reality, she is only seeing a series of still images. The “joining of the boundaries is done by the memory [of the mental consciousness], not by the seeing [of an eye consciousness], because that [eye consciousness] cannot apprehend past objects.”¹¹

Śāntaraksita uses the example of a swinging firebrand to demonstrate his idea. When a person observes a firebrand being swung in a circle, the impression that the viewer gets is that of a continuous circle of fire. The observer knows that the firebrand is not actually becoming a circle, but instead that a spot of fire is being moved from location to location in a circular motion fast enough that it is being seen as such. Śāntaraksita would like to suggest that a person’s eyes take in individual images of the spot of fire at distinct locations in its

circular path, and that the mind uses memory to blur the boundaries between those images, giving the viewer the impression of a continuous circle.

There are obviously many similarities between Śāntaraksita’s account of memory and perception and Seng-Chao’s ideas about motion. They are both suggesting that it is necessary to break down what seems like something continuous into instants of time in order to fully understand the nature of motion and memory. Śāntaraksita is providing an epistemological explanation for the way perceptions are acquired, which explains the relationship between mind and external objects and the differences between the two. Seng-Chao, however, is making a metaphysical claim about the nature of all of existence and the very way in which that existence exists. This claim is much deeper than that of Śāntaraksita’s because it is relevant to every part of life and is not confined to an account of how our mind interacts with the external world. It leads to conclusions about the way time functions, and helps clarify the relationship between past, present and future.

Following his discussion of motion and rest, for instance, Seng-Chao engages in an examination of time and common (mis)conceptions about the relationship between past, present and future. According to him, because there is constant rest, everything occurs and ceases, and there can be no notion of the past coming into the present or the present moving into the past.

If the present passes on to the past, then there should be the present in the past. If the past reaches to the present, then there should be the past in the present. Since there is no past in the present, we know it does not come, and since there is no present in the past, we know it does not go... every thing, according to its nature, remains for only one period of time.¹²

The past comprises everything that already occurred in the present and is no longer found there, and the future is made up of everything that has yet to occur in the present and so cannot yet be found there. Those who say the present moves into the past are wrong because there is no instance of the present in the past. The present has not gone anywhere. The present does not move into the past, just as the past cannot move into the present. Therefore, memories of past experiences are not the experiences themselves, but present impressions of things that remain in the past.

Candrakīrti makes similar conclusions in his discussion of memory in the *Madhyamakāvātāra* (Introduction to the Middle Way). It would be “illogical to assert that a memory constitutes remembrance [of an actual experience]. In fact, it would be entirely different from [that previous experience], just as much as if it had been produced in a continuum that did not include any cognition [of that earlier experience].”¹³ He is refuting the Yogācārin understanding of memory, which claims that memory is based on an awareness of oneself performing an action or going through an experience. On the Yogācārin account, it seems that memory is a kind of reliving of the past. A person recalls what it was like to be aware of going through an experience, and therefore is able to experience it all over again using memory. Candrakīrti wants to emphasize the fact that the experience remains in the past and cannot be relived. Instead, a memory is a present impression of a past experience. He

12. Wing-Tsit Chan, 349.

13. C.W. Huntington, Jr., *The Emptiness of Emptiness: An Introduction to Early Indian Madhyamika* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1989): 166. (Verse 74).

11. James Blumenthal, *The Ornament of the Middle Way: A Study of the Madhyamaka Thought of Śāntaraksita* (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 2004): 238. (Verse 29).

argues that it is possible to have experienced something in the past of which there was no cognition or awareness at the time. A memory of this experience can then be triggered by something later on. In this case, one cannot claim that this memory is a remembrance of the actual experience since the person was not aware of the experience at the time.

Candrakīrti's idea of awareness being produced in a continuum is very much like Seng-Chao's argument about time. Candrakīrti sees cognition as arising sequentially instead of looping back to the past or jumping ahead to the future. Memory must be independent of actual experience because the two do not ever exist in the same moment. Similarly, the past and present, for Seng-Chao, must be distinct and separate things because they do not ever co-exist in the same instant of time. Here again, it is Seng-Chao's focus on a metaphysical account of the nature of existence that sets him apart from Candrakīrti's epistemological approach to explaining memory. While Candrakīrti is concerned with the way the mind processes experiences and the way people think about the past, Seng-Chao is involved in a debate about how time functions, which is a phenomenon affecting all of existence. The impermanence of all phenomena is deeply implied in his understanding of time and his account of the subsequent occurring and ceasing of each present moment.

It is clear that Seng-Chao is using his discussion of motion and time to demonstrate the impermanence and constantly changing nature of all things. He is also connecting the idea of perpetual rest to this conception of the way things exist. Neither motion nor rest can be fully understood without the other, and both exist within each other in a way that makes them co-dependent. I would like to suggest that this is an analogy for the relationship between *samsāra* and *nirvāna*. Like motion, *samsāra* is that which can be seen all around us all the time. Its effects are tangible and it affects all beings throughout the duration of their existence. *Samsāra*, a cycle of rebirth and karmic retribution, is often described as flowing or circling, which again aligns it with motion. Similar to rest, *nirvāna* is the less visible force underlying all of existence. It is always present whether or not it is recognized as being so and it is described as being a state of rest and cessation of all afflictions.

In a sense, *nirvāna* is just *samsāra* seen from a different perspective. Every being is already enlightened, but most tend to distort this and bring suffering upon themselves because they do not understand the true nature of their existence. In the same way, Seng-Chao believes that there is perpetual rest and that our minds distort reality and see everything as motion.

Ultimately, *samsāra* and *nirvāna* are contained within each other and are the same thing. They are two different ways of viewing reality and each has a certain degree of truth on its own. However, each needs to be understood in relation to the other in order to fully understand the nature of the relationship and the way they function together in reality. Returning to Śāntaraksita's account of the swinging firebrand, it appears that the only thing actually being perceived is the rest (or *nirvāna*), and that it is the mind that creates the image of a circle and the impression that there is continuous motion (or *samsāra*). Upon examination, however, it is clear that there is nothing outside the multiple instances of rest. Therefore motion, while appearing to capture the nature of the perceived phenomena, is revealed as an imposition of the mind onto the perception of rest.

In the same way, *samsāra* is a distortion of what is actually being experienced, which is *nirvāna*. Because the two are closely linked, it is necessary to discover the nature of *samsāra* before one can fully understand *nirvāna*, and likewise it is impossible to fully grasp the nature of *nirvāna* without having knowledge about *samsāra*. Seng-Chao's conclusion that

motion and rest exist simultaneously together, and must be understood in conjunction, is therefore very similar to the relationship between the concepts of *samsāra* and *nirvāna*.

Seng-Chao's discussion of motion, rest and the role that time plays in the conception of both of these, takes Buddhist ideas (as seen in the overlaps with Nāgārjuna, Śāntaraksita and Candrakīrti) and brings a new slant to them. Seng-Chao, being located in a Chinese tradition, is very much influenced by the Taoist culture in which he is immersed, and these influences can be seen in his work. Taoism is a tradition that stresses the interrelatedness, co-dependence and ultimate sameness of what appear to be opposites. "Partial means whole, crooked means straight, hollow means full, worn-out means new... thus the sage holds onto the one."¹⁴ Seng-Chao has adopted a very similar argument in relating rest and motion with each other, and finding each within the other. Taoism is not concerned with refuting inherent existence, unlike Indian and Tibetan Buddhists. While Nāgārjuna's account of motion and rest accomplishes many of the same goals as Seng-Chao's treatise (the only major difference being Nāgārjuna's additional claims about emptiness), many Indian and Tibetan philosophers fail to make claims this deep. In sticking to a purely epistemological account, many of them are only able to explain the mind and its relationship to perceived external objects which it recognizes as moving.

By using a metaphysical approach, Seng-Chao is able to make deeper claims about impermanence and the nature of time because he has actual objects and phenomena with which to work. It is hard to assert the permanence or impermanence of something that never had inherent existence in the first place. In addition, Seng-Chao is able to explore themes as complex as the relationship between *samsāra* and *nirvāna* simply by explaining the way existence actually exists, and comparing this to the way we perceive it to exist around us all the time.

It is Seng-Chao's ability to clarify important Buddhist ideas while coming from a different perspective that makes his philosophy augmentative to the Buddhist tradition. His more Taoist lens allows him to make connections that scholars immersed within the Indian and Tibetan traditions failed to see. By abandoning something as central to Mādhyamika Buddhism¹⁵ as the lack of inherent existence and the ultimate emptiness of everything, some might claim that Seng-Chao's philosophy is a gross distortion of Buddhism. Instead, I would like to suggest that he is reframing Buddhist ideas in a way that makes other very central themes (such as impermanence) crystal clear to a degree that Mādhyamika was not able to accomplish. ■

14. Lao-Tzu, *Taoteching*, Trans. Red Pine (San Francisco: Mercury House, 1996): 44 (Verse 22).

15. The Mādhyamika school of Buddhism was founded by Nāgārjuna and is based on the idea that all phenomena are dependently arisen and empty of inherent existence. Even the concept of emptiness itself is empty of true essence.

Heidegger and Social Ecology

ABSTRACT: In this essay I defend Heidegger's critique of technology against possible criticisms that he may be an anti-humanist and a mystic. This essay will show that Heidegger's critique of technology is helpful in thinking about ecological questions; and his contributions to such questions is relevant and not radically separated from some of the work of other philosophers today including Karen Warren and Marilyn Frye.

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Peter Staudenmaier criticizes deep ecologists in his essay, "Fascist Ideology: The 'Green Wing' of the Nazi Party and its Historical Antecedents."¹ He argues that deep ecologists recommend a total eschewing of technology in favor of having a feeling of "oneness" with nature.² This attitude of oneness with nature is one that has been used by Nazis to commit great harms to a part of society for the good of the whole. As a social ecologist, or one who believes that solving social problems will then put humans in the right relationship with nature, Staudenmaier criticizes Heidegger on the grounds that Heidegger puts nature first, and as such his critique of technology³ lends itself to Nazi ideology and should be rejected.⁴

In this paper, I will defend Heidegger from Staudenmaier's critique, and will show parallels in Heidegger's philosophy to Karen Warren, who is also an ecofeminist.⁵ The first task will be to address Staudenmaier's charge that Heidegger suggests rejecting reason and embracing mysticism. The second task will be to respond to Staudenmaier's charge that Heidegger was an anti-humanist by looking at Heidegger's explication of causality and evaluating it in terms of Warren's ecological theory and Marilyn Frye's "loving perception."⁶ What we will see is that Heidegger contributes to

1. Peter Staudenmaier, "Fascist Ideology: The 'Green Wing' of the Nazi Party and its Historical Antecedents," in Janet Biehl and Peter Staudenmaier, *Ecofascism: Lessons from the German Experience* (San Francisco: AK Press 1995).

2. Deep ecology ethics focus on 'oneness' with the land and the unity of humans with nature and only considering the whole Self which we are all a part of. For an example, see Bill Devall and George Sessions, "Deep Ecology" in *The Environmental Ethics and Policy Book*, Eds. VanDerVeer and Pierce (Belmont: Thomson and Wadsworth, 2003).

3. Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc. 1977).

4. Staudenmaier, 12-13.

5. Ecofeminists critique ecological thinking from a feminist perspective and social ecologists tend to do so from a Marxist perspective. Because Karen Warren, as we will see, focuses on the logic of domination in general and because the two perspectives are already friendly to each other, I will not be strict in maintaining the difference throughout this essay. Karen Warren, "The Power and the Promise of Ecological Feminism," in *The Environmental Ethics and Policy Book*, Eds. VanDerVeer and Pierce (Belmont: Thomson and Wadsworth, 2003): 283.

6. Marilyn Frye, "In and Out of Harm's Way: Arrogance and Love," in *The Politics of Reality* (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 1983). Although I can not go into detail in this essay, there is a connection between Warren's critique of the logic of domination and Marilyn Frye's critique of arrogant perception. In fact, Warren cites Frye at length on Warren, 263.

how we should frame our thinking of ecological ethics.

The first charge Staudenmaier brings against Heidegger is that he is mystic who rejects reason.⁷ This charge may originate by reading Heidegger as advocating the shedding of technological devices and having an experience of oneness with an absolute or infinite, which all things would be a part of. In response, Heidegger does not advocate an experience of oneness with anything, because, for him, beings are finite, and saying the relationship between beings dissolves into one Self would be reductive.⁸ Furthermore, Heidegger does not recommend abandoning technological devices; "What is dangerous is not technology. There is no demonry of technology, but rather there is the mystery of its essence."⁹

For Heidegger, the critique of technology goes deeper than a problem with any object that is called technological. The problem of technology lies in its essence, which is not a mere means to an end but rather a way of revealing.¹⁰ Technological thinking, which is the way most of us in the western world reveal nature much of the time, provokes humans to unlock nature's energy for use.¹¹ In other words, it is a way of thinking in which entities in nature are understood and understood to exist insofar as humans can put them to use. Technological thinking makes the anthropological assumption that humans are the fundamental subjects who determine the nature of Being, then organizes all things that are thusly revealed in terms of serving human ends. To build on this, when we think of the technological devices used to fabricate or manufacture products that process natural resources into products for our use, we can see that the assumptions in technological thinking become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Conceptual assumptions in technological thinking are similar to ones in other oppressive conceptual schemes. To show how, I will explain Warren's notion of the logic of domination, which will find parallels in Heidegger's technological thinking. For Warren, an oppressive conceptual framework, which is "a set of basic beliefs, values, attitudes, and assumptions" that explains and justifies the subordination and domination of one group over another, relies on three main features.¹² The first is value-hierarchical thinking, which places higher value on one thing *over* another.¹³ The second is value dualisms, which creates oppositional disjunctive pairs of things and places value on one over another, e.g. Man over Woman in patriarchal societies.¹⁴ Finally, there is the logic of domination which is the active justification of the subordination of the group on the lower end of the value hierarchy by the group on top.¹⁵ It is important to remember that it is the logic of domination that justifies the subordination of one group by another and not simply thinking that one group is better than another.

7. Staudenmaier, 12-13. Staudenmaier contextualizes his claims about Heidegger's mysticism by referring to "[Heidegger's] mystical panegyrics to Heimat (homeland);" but there is a broader claim about Heidegger being a mystic that is addressed in the introduction by William Lovitt to *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, xii.

8. Staudenmaier, 12-13.

9. Heidegger, 28.

10. Heidegger, 12.

11. Harold Alderman, "Heidegger: Technology as Phenomenon," in *The Personalist*, Vol. 51 (Fall 1970): 544. The term "technological thinking" corresponds to what Alderman calls, "technicity." He writes "Technicity is itself the manner of thought which provokes [humans] to be the being[s] who [make] nature yield its resources to [them]."

12. Warren, 258.

13. Warren, 258.

14. Warren, 258.

15. Warren, 258.

In Warren, as with Heidegger, we see that oppressive conceptual schemes rely on assumptions that are not only hierarchical, but also allow the perpetuation of the hierarchy. For Heidegger, humans assume that they are the fundamental determiners of the nature of Being, and then change the beings they find into what they thought it was in the first place. Things are made into the kinds of beings that are fitted to suit humans' ends.¹⁶ In Warren's broader critique of the logic of domination, we find that dominant groups in an oppressive structure separate themselves from subordinate groups and take that separation to be justification of oppression.¹⁷

Heidegger also contends that technological thinking perpetuates itself, and in those societies where it is the dominant form of thought, other ways of revealing beings are denied and considered illegitimate.¹⁸ This is at least in part because the technological thinking is not a mere activity in which humans engage, but rather drives and challenges people to think about the world in a certain way. Heidegger uses the example of a forester who goes into the forest to acquire lumber and is under the economic constraints of the lumber industry.¹⁹ The forester must allocate his time and energy in the most efficient manner in order to meet standards and goals that exist outside of him; he is a professional forester to the extent that he is driven by profit. Technological thinking, like the logic of domination, is a social phenomenon. Organizing beings and making them into useful objects is part of the societal norms in places where technological thinking has become dominant. That technological thinking works to exclude other ways of revealing leads into Staudenmaier's charge of Heidegger as an anti-humanist.

For Staudenmaier, rejecting anthropological means-ends organizing is a rejection of humanist concerns. "Letting things be" and giving up technology in favor of experiencing oneness with nature is problematic for Staudenmaier; not only can this lead to the justification of genocide, but it is a renunciation of human ends.²⁰ As mentioned earlier, Heidegger does not encourage a flight from machinery, nor does he believe in a Self or oneness of all beings. Here, I shall argue that he does not even set ecological ends higher than human ends to show that he is not an anti-humanist. In order to do this, I will turn to Heidegger's explication of causality and how technological thinking is reductive. It is not that thinking about how to achieve one's ends and utilizing things to achieve those ends should be entirely rejected; rather, for Heidegger, we should think of nature as being more than just something to use and existent only for human use.

Heidegger's critique of technological thinking runs into a discussion of how we conceptualize causality; this is because technological thinking is so focused on instrumentality and "wherever instrumentality reigns, there reigns causality."²¹ Heidegger traces the doctrine of causality back to Aristotle's four causes that we have treated as though it "had fallen from heaven as a truth as clear as daylight," at least insofar as philosophy's teaching goes.²²

16. Frye, 57-58. Here, she talks about a tree being felled and made into a log—which is an ontologically different entity—which is then more readily exploited as a resource and can be turned into even further-processed forms that humans can utilize. As we will see later, Frye takes exploitation and the transformation resultant from human making to be linked.

17. Warren, 258-259.

18. Alderman, 544.

19. Heidegger, 18.

20. Staudenmaier, 12. In reading Staudenmaier, it is important to remember that he does not reject all non-human ends; his critique is of thinking that oneness with nature is the only kind of end, rendering strictly human ends illegitimate. Historically, this has been associated with anti-Semitism, ethnocentrism, and either fervent nationalism or a rejection of politics in favor of individualism. 6-7, 10.

21. Heidegger, 6.

As we will see, Heidegger not only thinks the four causes are themselves reductive, but that technocrats—those think technologically and work to keep its reign in place—only pay attention to one of the four. For Heidegger, the four causes are co-responsible for a thing's existence and the thing is indebted to all of these four causes for its existence.²³ But, uniting the four causes for a being's existence is the cause of Being itself.²⁴

Those four causes that are responsible for something being revealed are: (1) the *causa materialis*, the material from which the thing is made; (2) the *causa formalis*, which is the shape the material is put in; (3) the *causa finalis* is tied to Greek concept of *telos*, which Heidegger translates as that which circumscribes and gives bounds to the thing;²⁵ and (4) the *causa efficiens* which is the being which brings about the change that transforms the material into the final thing (usually understood to be the craftsman who makes the thing).²⁶ Heidegger, though, disagrees with the traditional characterization of the *causa efficiens*. He believes that it is the making itself that is responsible.²⁷ I will now explain in greater detail these four causes and how in technological thinking the understanding of responsibility is reduced by looking at his example of a sacrificial silver chalice.

In Aristotle's doctrine of four causes, the *causa materialis* is thought to be co-responsible with the other causes for a thing's existence. Heidegger's example of a silver chalice explains that the silver from which it is made is partly responsible for its lying there ready for use.²⁸ Silver makes possible its existence, for without it, it would not exist at all. If the chalice were made of something else, it would be a different chalice. In technological thinking, raw materials are not responsible for a thing's existence, they are simply unrefined matter to be manipulated.

The *causa materialis* alone is not responsible for a thing's existence, for it must combine with the idea or form of something else in order to be what it is. "But the sacrificial vessel is indebted not only to the silver. As a chalice, that which is indebted to the silver appears in the aspect of a chalice and not in that of a brooch or a ring."²⁹ In order for the chalice to be the thing it is, then, it requires an idea or form of chalice-ness to which it is then shaped. As with the *causa materialis*, technological thinking does not consider the form responsible for a thing's existence.

Third, and "above all responsible for the sacrificial vessel," is the *causa finalis*.³⁰ This cause is the thing that, in advance, confines the silver chalice to the realm of consecration and bestowal; this is what separates a *sacrificial* silver chalice from a fancy silver drinking cup.³¹ The conception of this cause has, in the tradition of western thought, been reduced to a thing's aim or purpose and ceases to be responsible for a thing's existence. The aim or purpose of a thing would be something that is not only entirely made up by humans, and therefore has very little to do with natural objects, but also no longer has any sense of

22. Heidegger, 6.

23. Heidegger, 6-7.

24. Alderman, 538.

25. *Telos*, he writes, is generally understood in the reductive sense of being merely an aim or purpose to which a thing is put (8).

26. This explication of causality comes from Heidegger, 6.

27. Heidegger, 8.

28. Heidegger, 8.

29. Heidegger, 7.

30. Heidegger, 8.

31. Heidegger, 8.

durability. An aim or purpose can change on a whim, and therefore cannot grant part of a thing's existence; it is a mere part of utilization.³²

The fourth cause in Aristotle's doctrine is the *causa efficiens*, which is the making which brings something about. As Heidegger explains, the maker of the silver chalice carefully considered and gathered together the previous ways of being responsible for a thing's existence and became co-responsible with them in order to reveal the sacrificial silver chalice.³³ In technological thinking, only the making is considered to be responsible for the existence of a thing. A commentator on Heidegger writes, "Metaphysics up to now preserved for itself a certain innocence through its conviction that it was pure theory free of interest and domination. Heidegger as well as other critics of ideology seeks to show up this conviction as a lack of self-knowledge. Its self-forgetfulness is, according to Heidegger, forgetfulness of Being."³⁴ Humans, as beings that are indebted to Being itself for their existence, have forgotten that they drive the revealing process and themselves are reveal-able beings.

We can draw out a similar self-forgetfulness in Marilyn Frye's account of arrogant perception. Arrogant perceivers, on her account, believe that everything exists and happens for some purpose, with the perceiver as an orienting point to which all things animate.³⁵ The arrogant perceiver holds an expectation of how things should be, and makes things behave in accordance with these assumptions.³⁶ The forester, who walks into the forest thinking that trees are yet-to-be-actualized lumber, which gives him profits, manufactures those trees into lumber, and sells that lumber for profit. He makes nature into what he wants it to be. And in the case of the arrogant perceiver, as with the forester, they forget that they are a part of the environment which makes other beings into what the perceiver and forester want those other beings to be. In another writing, Frye refers to this as "rigging the data" where she is explaining how "phallists" naively observe women acting as though they are inferior to men.³⁷

Heidegger's critique of technology is not only not opposed to social ecology, as it may be if it were a deep ecology and Staudenmaier is right; it coheres with some social ecology quite well. By juxtaposing Heidegger's account of technological thinking and its "aggressive spirit,"³⁸ with Warren's account of the logic of domination, I have highlighted connections that can be made in their critiques of oppression. The aspects of turning the subordinate group in an oppressive social structure into what the dominant group wants, justifying this making-into, and then accepting the appearance of the altered group at face value are the features of oppression that these two thinkers draw our attention to.

To close the paper, I will address a possible objection to this paper that would claim that

32. Frye, 58 on telos. She writes, "The parts and properties of the thing or stuff were not initially organized with reference to a certain purpose or telos; they altered and rearranged so that they are organized with reference to that telos." This is evidence that the *causa finalis* is conceptually reduced to the *causa efficiens*, i.e. making, in technological thinking. Later, she writes that arrogant perceivers are teleologists. 67

33. Heidegger, 8.

34. Reinhart Maurer, "From Heidegger to Practical Philosophy," from *Idealistic Studies* Vol. 3 (May 1973): 138.

35. Frye, 57.

36. Frye, 57-59.

37. Marilyn Frye, "The Problem That Has No Name," in *The Politics of Reality: essays in feminist theory* (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 1983): 46. In this article, Frye strongly hints that we treat non-human species and "defective" persons the same way phallists treat women (starting on 43 and referred to throughout the article).

38. A phrase from Alderman, 545, where he writes: the "burden of technology lies not in its calculative style but rather in its insistent and aggressive spirit. It is, I think, part of Heidegger's point that the same trait would be pernicious in any style of thought."

Heidegger's *prescription* to technological thinking is somehow mystical. I will do this by drawing connections between the ending of "The Question Concerning Technology" and Frye's "loving perception." As we have seen, Heidegger's critiques are not misanthropic or mystical; and in this final section, by showing some parallels to Frye's work, we will see that his prescription for ecological thinking is neither misanthropic nor mystical and can help frame how we think about environmental ethics.

For Heidegger, overcoming the dangers of technological thinking lies somewhat paradoxically in resisting the drive to master the technological, which itself would be thinking technologically.³⁹ It requires, on one hand, an openness and safekeeping of "the-coming-to-pass of truth."⁴⁰ It should be noted, however, that Heidegger does not want us to flee from technology and never affect it, but rather not to reduce nature solely into what we want. Technological objects can take nature into its responsibility without changing it, e.g., a windmill can harness the energy without overcoming the wind and changing it into a mere resource.⁴¹ This helps to emphasize that his critique is of an extreme and, he thinks, ever widely practiced technological thinking and not technological objects. His recommendation to wait and accept the emergence of truth finds a parallel attitude in Marilyn Frye's work.

She writes that "the loving eye is contrary to the arrogant eye," which acknowledges the independence of the other.⁴² She prescribes that if we want to see women, we should gaze lovingly at them and wait.⁴³ It is not by mastering them or by manipulating them in such a way that they reveal something about themselves that we already want to see; rather it is by a non-reductive acceptance of their being.

The critiques of Heidegger of technological thinking, Warren of the logic of domination, and Frye of arrogant perception, as well as their recommendations to end oppression, show that Heidegger's philosophy is better suited to social ecology and not deep ecology. For those who find Staudenmaier's argument against the historical use of deep ecology persuasive, this changes how one ought to appraise Heidegger's philosophy. ■

39. Heidegger, 5, 32.

40. Heidegger, 32. This idea of safekeeping and letting things be is echoed in a deep ecologists appraisal of Heidegger, cited in Staudenmaier, 12. It should be noted, however, that Heidegger does not want us to flee from technology and never affect it; but rather not to reduce nature solely into what we want.

41. This example is used in Alderman, 543.

42. Frye, 75.

43. Frye, 82.

Wittgenstein's Account of Rule-Following and Its Implications

ABSTRACT: In this paper I present an interpretation of Wittgenstein's account of rule-following, including what implications he suggests this account has for philosophy. The account suggests that neither one's interpretation nor the rule itself are criteria by which we may conclude a rule was followed correctly or not. Rather it is through training, regularity, habit and social expectation—in short, by the consequences of action—that an action is considered in accord with a rule. I argue that even if we accept Wittgenstein's account of rule-following, certain philosophically important implications follow.



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In *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein argues that an interpretation of a rule can not justify the claim that one is correctly following that rule, and that correctly following of a rule does not imply that the intended rule is being followed.¹ Rather, to follow a rule is to act or make a decision in accordance with communal practice and is established as such by training and regularity of use. Wittgenstein wants to argue that rule-following is customary. He also argues that this has implications for the nature of meaning in language, for language is a rule-governed behavior. In what follows, I will present Wittgenstein's view of the nature of rule-following and explain how he thinks this changes the way that we should view linguistic meaning. Wittgenstein argues that this change of view ultimately results in a therapeutic dissolution of philosophical problems that rest upon an incorrect understanding of the nature of meaning. In contrast, I will argue that even if we accept Wittgenstein's claims regarding rule-following, we are still left with the traditional, albeit modified, problems of philosophy.

I would like to begin by presenting most of section 185 of the *Philosophical Investigations*:

Judged by the usual criteria—the pupil has mastered the series of natural numbers. Next we teach him to write down other series of cardinal numbers and get him to the point of writing down series of the form

$0, n, 2n, 3n, \text{ etc.}$

at an order of the form “+n”; so at the order “+1” he writes down the series of natural numbers.—Let us suppose we have done exercises and given him tests up to 1000. Now we get the pupil to continue the series (say +2) beyond 1000—and he writes 1000, 1004, 1008, 1012.

We say to him: “look what you've done!”—he doesn't understand. We say: “You were meant to add two: look how you

began the series!”—He answers: “Yes, isn't it right? I thought that was how I was meant to do it.”—Or suppose he pointed to the series and said: “But I went on in the same way.”—It would now be no use to say: “But can't you see...?”—and repeat the old examples and explanations.—In such a case we might say, perhaps: It comes natural to this person to understand our order with our explanations as we should understand the order: “Add 2 up to 1000, 4 up to 2000, 6 up to 3000 and so on.”

Such a case would present similarities with one in which a person naturally reacted to the gesture of pointing with the hand by looking in the direction of the line from finger-tip to wrist, not from wrist to finger-tip.

This section shows that rules themselves do not determine how they are to be followed. There is nothing, for example, inherent in an arrow that shows us which way it is pointing or directing us to go.² Similarly, as the above quote shows, there is no means by which it can be known with complete certainty that, in following the arithmetical sequence $0, n, 2n, 3n, 4n, \dots$ in line with the order “+1,” a person is following the intended rule, for he or she may be following an alternative rule that is compatible with the intended rule up to a certain point. There must be something in addition to the rule that directs us in a particular manner and indicates to us that we proceed accordingly.

The argument Wittgenstein is making in Section 185 is dependent upon the fact that a rule, in order to be a rule, must be able to be broken. There must be correct and incorrect applications of a rule. The question that arises here is: What determines correct and incorrect application of a rule? Or, what justifies following a rule correctly?

If a rule in itself does not show us how we are to follow it, then our interpretation of a rule must also not determine correct use. If interpretation was what determined correct use, there would be no incorrect application of a rule. This is the case because any interpretation can be seen to be in accordance with a rule. As section 185 points out, if there is nothing inherent in a rule that determines a correct interpretation of that rule then, for example, my interpretation of a pointing hand as pointing in the direction of finger-tip to wrist is perfectly compatible with the gesture of the pointing hand. There is nothing in the hand that says it is pointing in one direction rather than another. Therefore, solely in relation to the rule, any interpretation can be justified.

Wittgenstein argues that in addition to interpretation not determining correct application of a rule, the idea of correct application is itself problematic.³ The problem with using correct application as the criteria by which we determine if someone is following a particular rule or not is that there may be any number of rules that produce actions that give evidence of correct application. Crispin Wright presents the problem most concisely: “Any rule which we set someone to follow may be applied by him at some stage in a manner both consistent with his past application of it and other than that which we intended.”⁴ This is similar to the problem with interpretation. But whereas with interpretation the problem lies in the fact that any interpretation can be seen to be in accordance with the rule, with correct application as criteria an indefinite number of rules can be followed and still produce the intended action or result. This problem has been famously introduced by Kripke's “quus” example in his book, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*.⁵ In

2. This example is very similar to Wittgenstein's example of a signpost (Wittgenstein, §85).

3. Wittgenstein, see in particular §145 where Wittgenstein shows there is no finite number of applications that present sufficient proof that one has “mastered the system.”

4. Crispin Wright, *Rails to Infinity*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001): 11.

5. Saul A. Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

1. Ludwig Wittgenstein. *Philosophical Investigations*. (New York: MacMillan Company 1953).

this example, Kripke shows that in the act of completing addition problems there is no evidence to support the claim that someone is following the “plus” rule and not the “quus” rule up to a certain point (where “quus” is defined as $x \text{ quus } y = x + y$, if $x, y < 57$; otherwise, $x \text{ quus } y = 5$). Countless other examples could be posited to apply this same idea to any rule-governed activity.

In section 186 Wittgenstein says, “It would almost be more correct to say, not that an intuition was needed at every stage, but that a new decision was needed at every stage.” This is to say that it is not that a person intuitively grasps a rule and can then proceed indefinitely. Rather, what matters in rule-following is that we make a decision that produces an expected result, but this result does not necessitate that we are following a particular rule. Wittgenstein does not deny the existence of an active mental faculty, of interpretation or intuition.⁶ He only denies mental states as having any explanatory role in determining correct rule-following.⁷

One further question of importance concerning rule-following is how it is possible that a rule, which is finite, is seemingly able to yield an infinite variety of applications. What is it that enables the indefinite application of a finite rule? This question applies to many circumstances, which may seem completely different from each other, where it can be said that we are following a rule. I will give two examples that are from complete opposite ends of the spectrum of rule-following activities: driving on the right side of the road and doing arithmetic. Wittgenstein wants to say that in both these activities what enables the apparent infinite application is the same. He addresses this issue in sections 189-190 of *Philosophical Investigations*. In these paragraphs, he shows that to ask if the steps taken in following a rule are determined by the rule is a mistake. It is not the rule itself, or any grasping thereof, but rather the repetition of an expected action and the education (by either example or authority) that induces such action that creates the apparent infinite application of a rule.⁸ A particular application or use of a rule is correct only in so far as it is used continually in the same way.⁹ Wittgenstein argues that it is habit or custom that produces the appearance that a rule can be continued indefinitely.¹⁰ In doing so, he is arguing against the idea of rules having an objective nature. The rules of arithmetic, just as the rule for driving on the right side of the road, are contingently dependent upon our continuing to act in a certain way that is in agreement within a given community, i.e. a habit or custom—a norm. This is obvious in the case of driving on the right side of the road but much more controversial in regards to doing arithmetic. The reason for this is a difference in degree, not in kind. It is by this fact that the rules of mathematics are much more rigorously defined in formal structure. But, Wittgenstein wants to say, the numeric signs manipulated by mathematicians are of the same nature as the custom of driving on the right side of the road. In both cases, what justifies correct application is agreement with established expectations.

To aid in clarifying what Wittgenstein is saying, I will present a few short quotations from the *Philosophical Investigations* in conjunction with elaborations of my own. These quotations are aiming at an account of how it is that we follow rules, as this applies to language, and what constitutes meaning and understanding.

“A person goes by a sign-post only in so far as there exists a regular use of sign-posts, a custom.”¹¹ We learn to act in certain ways by training and regularity of use. What is important is that we act in

accordance with how we are trained and we learn to do so by habit, by regular use. What creates a habit is the repetition of action in accordance with the expectation of a community. “And hence also ‘obeying a rule’ is a practice. And to think one is obeying a rule is not to obey a rule.”¹² Over time and in the context of a society, repetition of action becomes a custom, instituted as communal regularity. Rules and rule-following are only possible in the context of a community because what constitutes correct application is determined by agreement. “The word ‘agreement’ and the word ‘rule’ are *related* to one another, they are cousins.”¹³ The justification for correctly following a rule is found in agreement and practice, by acting in such a way that appears in accordance with what is expected (and such agreement may be reached by either consensus, force or authority). What mental processes occur in an act have no explanatory value in justifying correct rule-following.

It was shown in Wittgenstein’s critique of what constitutes correct rule-following that it is possible to follow any number of rules and still act in accordance with expectation, and this may be exactly what we do.¹⁴ In this sense: “I (we) obey the rule *blindly*,” for it is never known, beyond the recognition of agreement and acceptance of action, whether or not we adhere to some strict, set-in-stone, definitive rule; for there is no such thing.¹⁵ Rules are placeholders for an expected path of action. We “catch on” to what is expected because by continued approval of a specific action given a specific rule, we reach the belief that such an action is right or correct.

Language is a practice with correct and incorrect usage. Therefore, it is a rule-governed behavior. Prior to Wittgenstein, most philosophers believed that meaning is what justifies correct language use and that it is something which stands outside of actual practice as arbiter of that practice. For example, Platonists argue that the meaning of words such as “justice,” “good,” and “truth” are defined by some standard independent of experience, by some form “projected,” as it were, into the world of experience. The philosopher need only discover the form of justice, good or truth in order to determine whether use of these terms is correct or not. But Wittgenstein argues language is a tool, an instrument (like a hammer or money), which enables us to get things done.¹⁶ And it is only in what we do with words, how they are used as tools, that we can get a sense of what they mean. The rules that allow effective use of language have been shown to consist of the customary and habitual nature of practice itself. If meaning is said to be what justifies correct language use, then meaning is grounded in practice.

Wittgenstein calls attempts to locate meaning in some antecedent, prescriptive formulation “entanglement[s] in our rules.”¹⁷ Such attempts mistake the nature of meaning. Wittgenstein wants to show that philosophical problems rest on this mistaken assumption of the nature of meaning. The error of philosophers, says Wittgenstein, is in their belief that some words such as “truth,” “reality,” “justice” and the “good” have a meaning beyond their use in practice.¹⁸ By pointing out this mistake, Wittgenstein wants to cure philosophers of the belief that there are purely philosophical problems. Traditional philosophic questions such as “What is the nature of truth?” or “What is

6. Wittgenstein, § 306-07

7. Wittgenstein, § 209-213

8. Wittgenstein, § 190 “What is the criterion for the way the formula is meant? It is, for example, the kind of way we always use it, the way we are taught to use it.”

9. Wittgenstein, § 189

10. Wittgenstein, § 190, see also §99-100

11. Wittgenstein, § 198.

12. Wittgenstein, § 202.

13. Wittgenstein, § 224.

14. Wittgenstein, § 85, § 185

15. Wittgenstein, § 219.

16. Wittgenstein, § 23, “If you were unable to say the word ‘till’ could be both a verb and a conjunction...you would not be able to manage simple schoolroom exercises.”

17. Wittgenstein, § 125.

18. Wittgenstein, § 81

the good?" etc., cannot be given an answer resting on anything outside of the practices in which these words are used. There is nothing outside of use that can justify correct use. The task of philosophy, says Wittgenstein, should turn to investigating how language is used in everyday life, and in this investigation it should be descriptive, not prescriptive.¹⁹ Philosophers have hitherto been entangled in a misunderstanding of the nature of rules by looking for some prescriptive theory with which to compare the use of language in practice—but there is nothing beyond the practice. If philosophers wish to locate the meaning of language, says Wittgenstein, they can only describe the variety of practices in which language is used.²⁰ "If I have exhausted the justifications I have reached bedrock, and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say: 'This is simply what I do.'"²¹

Although, if we accept Wittgenstein's argument, philosophical questions cannot be grounded on the assumption that language acts as a mirror reflecting something outside of experience, it does not follow that philosophy necessarily lacks a ground with which to articulate philosophical problems. What I would like to argue is that Wittgenstein's conclusion regarding the nature of rule-following does not imply an end to philosophical problems, but rather a relocation of their origins. It changes the questions that articulate what constitutes a philosophical problem from pertaining to eternal principles to that of human interaction in the world. It follows from Wittgenstein's account of meaning that philosophy should look at the application and results of language in experience to understand the nature of meaning. It suggests an approach akin to what William James says of pragmatism in calling for an "attitude of looking away from first things, principles, 'categories,' supposed necessities; and of looking towards last things, fruits, consequences, facts."²² What is meant, for example, by "truth" is simply the various results or consequences the use of the word "truth" has in the discourse of life. Again, this suggests that language acts as a tool for getting along in the world.

In viewing the nature of language in such a manner, I see two direct implications for the nature of philosophy. The first implication is derived by conjoining the fact that language functions like a tool and that the role of philosophy is to be descriptive. It follows that philosophy should use language as a descriptive tool to discuss other language uses and practices. But there are many ways a particular practice can be described, and different descriptions will yield different ways of understanding that which is being described. Therefore, philosophy becomes a comparative analysis of different ways of looking at and describing the world. Although these comparative analyses could not seek justification in some antecedent, transcendent principle, they can be justified by what they do, namely, by their ability to offer new ways of looking at the practices of humanity. Here we see a change from asking questions such as what is justice or truth, etc., to asking questions concerning the variety of ways such words are used and in what manner we should describe such uses—resting both kinds of questions on the more fundamental question of "And to what end?" This question, the question of why it is that we would want to compare various uses and consequences of language and seek some descriptive comparisons rather than others, leads to the second implication for philosophy I see in Wittgenstein's conclusions regarding rule-following.

The second implication is based on the fact that the consequences of language use are deciding factors of the social relations between individuals in a society. And some forms of use may hinder

rather than help materialize the ideals of humanity (just as some purported ideals may, in fact, obstruct genuine ideals). As Jurgen Habermas has extensively noted, communication can be distorted. This distortion can occur either haphazardly, which results in confusion, or systematically, with an intention to manipulate.²³ One example of systematic distortion is the use of the word "freedom" as a justification for implementing political policies having nothing to do with freedom. Distorted forms of communication are composed of rules which establish agreements having a different purpose than those made explicit in the agreement. In the description of language use, philosophy has not only the corrective role of clarifying linguistic confusions, but also the normative task of exposing systematically produced distortions of communications. We must ask why certain rules, in both linguistic and other practices, are implemented rather than others. This involves asking what power relations are produced out of the implemented rules. This is less an issue concerning, say, the rules of arithmetic or driving, and more an issue of, for example, what the consequences of particular beliefs do for the individual and society as a whole. This implies an ethical role for the philosopher—to expose the use of language as a means of domination and freedom.

What these two implications suggest is that the problems of philosophy will take the form of questions concerning the empirical consequences of certain linguistic practices and of evaluating in what way language uses serve as functions of society. In doing so, the philosopher will have to make normative claims regarding what uses of language help and hinder humanity's strive towards emancipation from forms of domination, be it by nature or humanity itself. This requires continued philosophical debate regarding the nature of self, freedom, power and how language relates to each of these issues in terms of human nature. We may be unable to compare beliefs and actions to some ideal form outside of experience, but we may look at the actual use of belief and action in practice. And in so doing we can ascertain what interests are being represented and the extent to which these interests represent the interests of all members of a community. Wittgenstein's account of rule-following leads to a humanistic philosophy whose questions must center around the consequences of individual and social action rather than abstract principles. The problems of philosophy are not dissolved, but rather recognized as the problems of humankind. ■

19. Wittgenstein, § 124-28

20. Wittgenstein, § 124

21. Wittgenstein, § 217

22. William James, *Pragmatism*. (New York: Meridian Books, 1955): 47.

23. See, for example, Jurgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis* (USA: Beacon Press, 1975)

To What Extent is Experience Like Belief?

ABSTRACT: In this paper, I argue that the connection between experience and belief is far closer than we might first suppose. In defending a broadly representationalist theory of perception, I argue that purportedly irreducible, non-physical entities such as qualia do not pose an intractable problem for physicalist or functionalist accounts of mind.



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The extent to which experience is like belief might seem quite a perplexing question to pose. It might appear as intuitively obvious that the two notions are distinct: we apprehend various things in experience, and thereby infer our beliefs concerning the external world. Of course, it would be hard to deny the inextricable union between our beliefs and our experience of the world, but few would confidently assert a strict identity between them. But an answer to the question is an immensely important one, for if the connection between experience and belief is far more profound than our untutored intuitions might suppose, then we might be afforded critical insights into the nature of experience and phenomenology. I argue that such a claim is made by the intentional or representational theory of perception and that with this theory, if its claims can be vindicated with the appropriate support, physicalist and functionalist theories of mind can account for certain properties of experience otherwise considered philosophically problematic.

Qualia theorists maintain that, in experience, we are directly aware of something other than the physical objects that we commonly take to lie therein. To clarify, the term “qualia” is used here to denote that supposedly peculiar, irreducible phenomenal property of our conscious experience. With it, we refer to the seeing of colors, the smelling of odors and the experience of pain. We can lean on Thomas Nagel’s discussion of the problem and say that qualia are simply *what it is like* to have perceptual experiences.¹ The existence of such properties has been considered a problem for most, if not all, physicalist or functionalist theories of the mind. For instance, it has been suggested, although not unanimously amongst dissenters, that qualia are non-physical properties of experience and, hence, cannot be accounted for in a physicalist model of the mind or reality. Furthermore, some have propounded the theory that two near-identical subjects who differed only in their phenomenal properties

would nonetheless accord in the functional description attributed to them, thereby to announce the failure of functionalism to account for the existence of qualia.

As mentioned above, I propose that the representational theory of perception can account for the ostensible appearance of qualia in our conscious experience. The distinction between conscious and non-conscious experience is highly important, as it appears in some sense undeniable that the *what it is like* phenomenal property of experience can arise only in conscious perception. I cannot mentally pick out such a property in order for me to be struck by it in experience unless I am consciously aware of my experience. The act of referring to an object or property in or of my experience can only occur as an act of conscious awareness. With this in mind, we might consider a leading exponent of the representational theory of perception, John Searle. He discusses how “the content of the visual experience, like the content of the belief, is always equivalent to a whole proposition.”² This leads us to a more general tenet of representationalist theory, that in experience we are met with some sort of propositional content: *that* the world is in some sort of arrangement or state. In walking through my garden, any attentive remark I make on aspects of, say, the trees therein, involves some sentential expression with propositional content: “The trees look lovely;” “The leaves appear browner;” or even “A tree!” Construed in this manner, we might even go so far as to state that experience simply appears to actually *be* the uptake of belief. Again, as I consciously and attentively walk through the garden mentally remarking on my environment, beliefs regarding it are registered simply as perceptions. The perception, “the grass is green,” appears to be no other than a belief regarding the grass and its purported color.

We can now see how one might relate this theory to an explanation of qualia. Experience affords us beliefs directly, as explicated above, where we apprehend propositional, representational content from our environment simply *as* various beliefs, such as “that car is yellow.” Searle argues that we do not have experience *of* certain things such as qualia, for experience does not present its contents to us in that bare, unadulterated way. He deems it “a category mistake to suppose that when I see a yellow station wagon the visual experience itself is also yellow and in the shape of a station wagon. Just as when I believe that it is raining I do not literally have a wet belief, so when I see something yellow I do not literally have a yellow visual experience.”³ The encroachment of qualia into theories of experience and perception seems upon Searle’s account to have occurred due to a fundamental misconstruction of the way that we secure information from our surroundings. Any comment on the *what it is like* aspect of experience is simply a remark on the apprehension of propositional content from the experience of our environment and not an indication of the existence of phenomenal properties thereof. As Gilbert Harman also observes, “When you attend to...your experience of the redness of an apple, you are attending to...a quality of the apple. Perhaps this quality is presented to you...as an intrinsic quality of the surface of the apple. But it is not at all presented as an intrinsic quality of your experience.”⁴ He suggests that in our fixation on the qualities found in our experience we find nothing but those of the objects fou-

1. Thomas Nagel, “What is it like to be a Bat?” in *Philosophy of Mind: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, ed. David J. Chalmers (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002): 219-26.

2. John Searle, *Intentionality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983): 40.

3. Searle, 43.

4. Gilbert Harman, “The Intrinsic Quality of Experience” in *Philosophical Perspectives*, 4 (1990): 41.

To What Extent is Experience Like Belief?

nd therein, not of the experience itself. What it is like to experience them is simply the act of representational perception.

An opponent might rejoin with the observation that experience cannot be anything like belief, due to the existence and persistence of perceptual illusion. He might highlight how the experience of depth qualifies as a distinct and continuous type of illusion, whereby the actual sizes of objects become confused due to the different points from which I can view them. It could be argued that my experience will most directly present the objects held therein to have peculiar sizes or shapes owing to their comparative distances, but will seem spread across my visual field equally: a tree viewed from fifty meters away might appear smaller in my visual field than a car of ten meters distance from me. Hence, it appears that we have a counterexample to the representational theory: we know that the tree is of a certain size compared with the car, irrespective of the way that they might appear to figure in our visual fields. On the representational theory, experience has suggested a certain propositional content, that the tree is smaller than the car, but here we feel inclined to disregard it and believe differently. Therefore, experience cannot be a form of belief.

A representationalist response to the above counterexample would be that spatial location and comparative size are all presented to us as integral parts of the propositional content apprehended in such cases. It is not the case that we were once met with such a phenomenon and, unable to differentiate between the proximities of the car and the tree, saw them as comparatively larger or smaller. In order to understand such situations at all, to glean any kind of content from them so as to constitute conscious experience, we must already comprehend basic concepts such as the discrepancy between visual depth and comparative size. Harman observes that “to be presented as the same in size from here is not to be presented as the same in size, period,”⁵ for if it were, our experience would be a perceptual chaos from which no content could be derived, and with which no action could be competently committed. Such is plainly not the case. If there were ever a case where it was, before we correlated perceptual depth with our direct visual experience, it could only have been before we were fully conscious subjects, at the foundation of our cognitive development in infancy. In order for any successful purposive action to take place, spatial location must be immediately represented to us in perception. It would be plausible to state that this has been phylogenetically fixed through natural selection.

A remark made by J. J. Valberg on a related issue summates our response to the objection, as involving a dichotomy between two approaches to experience: “We can reason about experience, or we can be *open* to it – that is, to how things are within our experience [...] if we are open to our experience, all we find is in the world.”⁶ The suggestion of apparent spatial illusion appears only to arise from some sort of additional philosophical reasoning concerning our experience. Philosophical scrutiny might reveal peculiar aspects of our visual experience, but such scrutiny is utterly divorced from our more ordinary experience, which would otherwise regularly carry with it the representational content required for complete spatial understanding.

From a discussion of perceptual illusion we can move to an important part of the representational

theory of perception: that of accuracy conditions. In the apprehension of propositional content from our environment, the propositions given to us, like, “the grass is green,” have accuracy conditions. As Searle puts it, they have “conditions of satisfaction in exactly the same sense in which beliefs and desires have conditions of satisfaction.”⁷ Hereby we can form our clearest conception of the link between experience and belief: experience affords us propositional content, which we consequently take certain attitudes towards, such as belief. Presumably in order that we efficiently act within the world, our default attitude towards the propositional content given to us is one of belief. On encountering a car coming towards us rapidly, it is certainly optimal that our foremost attitude belief towards the proposition “there is a car coming towards me rapidly.”

However, as mentioned above, many experiences are illusory or hallucinatory in nature. Most commonly, we cannot deny the visual experience of colored after-images upon glancing at the midday sun. This appears to be a counterexample to our discussion of all visual experiences having propositional content and, it is something an opponent might highlight as seriously debilitating to our hitherto confidently propounded theory. However, for one, it is not that we observe such after-images without any corresponding content: we can remark that they are reddish in color or are of a particular recognizable shape. We can isolate the admittedly very simple content given by such experiences. We are able to form beliefs regarding them, or describe them at all, in virtue of their being similar in colour or shape to the objects that we *veridically* perceive. We can explain their having content as analogous to the content of the real objects that we regularly encounter in perceptual experience.

It is now worth reminding ourselves of the question regarding to what extent experience is like belief. As cases of hallucination and illusion demonstrate, the relation between the two cannot be one of strict identity. This is because we do not believe that after-images appearing on the retina are veridical. Nor do we believe, upon taking a generous dose of hallucinogenic drugs, that the grass is purple, despite the relevant propositional content presenting the world to us in that way. Our default position of belief can be subverted due to various countermanding considerations, deliberations that lead one to believe illusion or hallucination to be taking place. This is where we must employ the notion of accuracy conditions. In the same manner that sentences have truth-conditions, they must satisfy or fail to satisfy in order that they be regarded as true or false, respectively, so too does the propositional content given by our environment. The proposition, “the grass is purple,” presented to me in my experience, can be shown to be non-veridical via the testimony of the majority of all other normal perceivers or, if necessary, further scientific inquiry. Propositional content has accuracy conditions, specifications that may or may not be satisfied by the way the world *really* is. Therefore, I know that the content “the grass is purple,” as it figures in beliefs and the other propositional attitudes that I may take towards it, is false.

Following the remarks made above, the discussion of accuracy conditions enables us to finally expose the connection between experience and belief. Following the representational theory of perception, we have discussed how experience affords us propositional or representational content, in how we consciously perceive our surroundings as states of affairs attended to in conscious experience as whole propositions. These propositions are then taken as the content around which

5. Gilbert Harman, 38.

6. J. J. Valberg, “The Puzzle of Experience” in *The Contents of Experience: Essays on Perception*, ed. T. Crane (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992): 18.

7. Searle, 39.

one forms propositional attitudes such as beliefs. As above, it cannot be the case that such experience simply *is* belief, for in many cases the propositional content that we might haphazardly take as veridical can be false, which we therefore disbelieve. Hence, I argue that the connection between experience and belief is the same bond that holds between propositions and propositional attitudes: experience provides us with the propositional content around which we form our beliefs. In experience, I see *that* the grass is green, and thereby I *believe that* the grass is green. As previously asserted, we appear to be in a default position of belief, whereby it is our most natural inclination to take the majority of such propositional contents to be veridical and as directly apt for belief. But this default position can nonetheless be subverted by illusion and hallucination, and hence we must be circumspect as and when our suspicions abound.

I believe the representational theory can be given some sort of conceptual upholstery by the arguments of Wittgenstein against the possibility of a private language. A brief outline might construe it as stating first what appears to be a truth concerning the nature of language: that it is, in essence, a normative and public affair. Sentences used in expressing propositions that concern publicly accessible states of affairs function in language by their rules of use, and this includes that contexts are applicable and what they can mean therein. These stipulations govern all spheres of language, including discussion of the alleged properties of private experience, qualia. Therefore, we must assess in what way we can normatively, publicly express propositions concerning them. Wittgenstein gives the now famous example of the diary:⁸ if a man were to attempt to formulate a language with which to express his private properties of introspective awareness, then the only criterion of correctness by which he can judge the proper use of the sign “S,” the rules by which we all meaningfully employ expressions, is what *seems right* to him thereafter. This is entirely irreconcilable with the normativity of language, whereby we publicly describe and assess various states of affairs represented in propositions. It is, Wittgenstein remarks, as pointless as “someone [who bought] several copies of the morning paper to assure himself that what it said was true.”⁹ The normativity of languages requires that we have the public assessment of all language use, and of which such a private diary of introspection is entirely bereft.

Robinson criticizes a decisive claim of Wittgenstein’s argument. He states that owing to the determinate and recognizable character of the private features of introspection we *can* remember and reuse signs for them successfully.¹⁰ This, however, is merely to gloss over an important aspect of Wittgenstein’s argument, that the memory cannot be an infallible guide for publicly estimable objective truth. Robinson remarks that we simply do scrutinize our memories to find true judgments, which occurs, presumably, regardless of a necessity for external corroboration. But the memory is a mere probabilistic tool: I am liable to trust my memory if I take myself to frequently make true judgements from whatever stock of memorised perceptions and concurrent beliefs I hold. Such a tool, lacking in the requisite certainty regarding the proper or improper application of words, cannot be used for the confirmation needed to form language. In assessing one’s memory and the truth of judgements held therein one *must* look to external, public confirmation. As Wittgenstein remarks,

I cannot simply peruse my memory in search of an infallible or objective confirmation of the time of my train: in trusting my memory, all I have to go on is some prior perceptual experience, which must be tested against the objective certification of a train timetable if it is to provide certainty. This lends support to a suggestion made earlier: that we can discuss our experiences in terms of qualia in virtue of our ability to discuss the physical objects external to us. Indeed, it now appears plausible to assert that the language of physical objects is ontologically prior to whatever language we use in attempting to discuss qualia, and that this might be *necessarily* so.

It is therefore plausible to suggest that experience cannot be said to directly involve qualia as properties of experience, but to concern external world and the way it is represented to us as holding propositional content. For I have interpreted Wittgenstein’s argument in its weak form, and it must be stressed that we need not commit ourselves to its stronger interpretation, to the effect that we rule out all kinds of introspection. To return to qualia, one would state that really there is no such thing as *what it is like* to be bat, for a bat, and indeed any animal exhibiting similarly impoverished linguistic and conceptual competence, cannot apprehend propositional content from his environment. Such an assertion might be condemned as epistemically chauvinistic, as it regards to the cognitive potential of animals other than us, but it does seem at least requiring strong argument to ascribe propositional attitudes, as *real* mental events, to such animals. If it appears that we cannot regard non-linguistic animals as having the same kind of conscious experience as we have, one intrinsically involving the apprehension of propositional content, then it does not seem so easy to ascribe to their experience any phenomenal property regarding *what it is like* to have that experience. Without sufficient language, whatever experience non-linguistic animals have of the world cannot bear any phenomenal properties, as such properties appear only to arise due to the apprehension of propositional content.

It has not been denied that there is *something* being discussed by Nagel and others where they argue so virulently for the existence of phenomenal properties. However, the purported *what it is like* character of an experience appears to be more plausibly ascribed to the experience of objects themselves. The representational theory of perception shows that such properties appear only in virtue of the uptake of propositional content from the perceived environment, and hence should be considered as what it is like simply to experience objects and not what it is like to have an experience. It appears that the *what it is like* property of experience is entirely contingent on the ability of linguistically proficient animals such as humans to take in propositional content, which constitutes the very act of perception itself. In perception, various propositional contents are represented to us around which we form beliefs, unless this disposition is subverted by evidence against the purported veridicality of our perceptions. Therefore, there is no question as to the ontology or explanation of qualia: it remains to be shown by qualia theorists that qualia are properties of *experience*, rather than the way in which the representational theory of perception can now dispense with them as being. ■

8. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001): 78.

9. Wittgenstein, 79.

10. Howard Robinson, *Perception*, (London: Routledge, 1994): 98.

The Politics of Epistemology

ABSTRACT: This paper focuses on the metaphysical and conceptual structures of reality organization that exist currently in western culture. Taking a feminist perspective, this paper analyzes how some disfavored social groups actively have their identities manipulated and sometimes conceptually erased from the dominant conceptual scheme. Utilizing this analysis, it is concluded that this conceptual scheme perpetuates oppression; therefore, maintained loyalty to it is incompatible with the belief that all people should be treated as full persons.



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In “To Be and Be Seen,” an excerpt from the book *The Politics of Reality*, Marilyn Frye analyzes the metaphysics of the dominant conceptual scheme in order to show that some people, for Frye the example is lesbians, are erased from the structure.¹ In what follows, I intend to explain how this erasure puts disfavored groups in a position relative to the structure where some critiques of the system are available to them more easily than they may be for people in favorable social positions relative to the dominant conceptual scheme.² By describing the oppressive nature of the system, one can start to make sense of people’s experiences, especially those in marginalized or minority groups whose ideas often contradict traditional epistemological thought. I will investigate the connection between who has cognitive authority, what we can or tend to see given our cognitive position and the nature of this new empiricism.

To begin, it is necessary to understand both how a person can be erased from reality and why certain people are in this position while others are not. Lesbians are one of these groups that have their identities erased from the conceptual framework in which society exists because their identification as lesbians defies the common practice of defining women through their relation to men. This is a practice that typically benefits men, who have historically been the bearers and lenders of cognitive authority within the scope of western culture to which both Frye and I are members. Cognitive authority is possessed by a person when their opinions, beliefs and the products of their reasoning are taken as conceptually plausible. For this reason, any objections raised by that person, such as a concern about the organization of the society in which one lives, ought to be acknowledged as real, relevant and local concerns. This becomes important when I attempt to describe what theory of epistemic justification Marilyn Frye assumes in making her claims.

Lesbians, Frye says, are a class that could be called woman-identified-woman,

which is inexpressible using the language of the dominant conceptual scheme—a phallographic conceptual scheme that sees and organizes reality according to “masculine” beliefs and desires.³ “If a conceptual scheme excludes something, the standard vocabulary of those whose scheme it is will not be adequate to the defining of a term which denotes it.”⁴ This gives lesbians a peculiar position as they exist within a space controlled by discourse that claims they do not exist, at least not in terms that would satisfy a lesbian’s idea of her own identity.

According to a contextualist theory of justification, a person is justified in holding a belief when she can satisfy, in the manner appropriate to the issue context, real, relevant, and local doubts posed by other potential believers whose shared goals are assumed to be truth and the avoidance of error.⁵ As described by David B. Annis, contextualism represents an alternative to the two traditional theories of justification—foundationalism and coherentism.⁶ To clarify, Foundationalism’s most central idea is that all beliefs or claims are at least partially justified by a particular sort of basic belief, which has the feature of being able to stop the process of justification. The reason for this stopping point could be that the claim is either unjustified, it justifies itself, it is neither justified nor unjustified, or the claim is justified by some other appropriate criteria that is not actually a claim, such as a observation or experience.⁷ Coherence, on the other hand, is also interested in basic beliefs in the sense that basic beliefs are those that are linked to the justification of numerous other individual beliefs. However, justifying individual beliefs is no longer the main goal; a coherence theory of justification primarily justifies whole sets of beliefs by seeking a maximally coherent belief set with the features of “consistency, connectedness, and comprehensiveness.”⁸

Both of these theories have undergone much scrutiny and many objections that could be considered sexist. For example, an objection to foundationalism could claim that basic statements of the kind described do not exist or would not be capable of doing the job of justifying everything one would want to justify. Similarly, one could object to the coherence theory by claiming that even a maximally coherent set of statements is not adequate for justification because there could potentially be a maximally coherent, yet false, set of beliefs.⁹

Yet, Annis objects most forcefully to both of these theories on the grounds that they do not appropriately include the role of social information. “Perhaps the most neglected component in justification theory is the *actual* social practices and norms of justification of a culture or community of people.”¹⁰ Annis calls for theories of justification to describe how justification is done by people in the world, within epistemic communities, groups of people that share social norms and practices. Including the social information of potential knowers and believers as relevant to the processes of belief formation and justification separates this theory from those that I have previously referred to as part of traditional epistemological thought.

Similarly, Frye’s account of reality can be seen as a critique of traditional empiricism, which

1. Marilyn Frye, “To Be and Be Seen” in *The Politics of Reality: essays in feminist theory* (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 1983): 152-174.

2. Frye, 152-174.

3. Frye, 152-153.

4. Frye, 154.

5. David B. Annis, “A Contextualist Theory of Justification,” in *Empirical Knowledge: Readings in Contemporary Epistemology*, ed. Paul K. Moser (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1986): 204-209.

6. Annis, 203-213.

7. Roderick Chisholm, “The Problem of Criterion,” in *Reason and Responsibility: Readings in Some Basic Problems of Philosophy*, eds. Joel Feinberg and Russ Shafer-Landau (Belmont: Wadsworth, 2005): 108.

8. Annis, 203.

9. Annis, 203.

10. Annis, 206-207.

claims that a value-neutral viewpoint, or an “objective” stance from which the subject makes no value judgments of “good” or “bad,” is most appropriate to extract data from sense experience and observation of the world.¹¹ When knowledge is seen as being acquired in the empiricist fashion, it seems incompatible with Frye’s suggestion that what a person can know is reflective of their position in society, relative to the dominant conceptual scheme.

For traditional empiricists, knowledge is a justified, true belief; it exists without regard for the politicization of language and reality, capable of being found by any rational being independent of their social position within reality. It is on these grounds that many who self-identify as empiricists might be at odds with Frye’s depiction of the nature of knowledge if she is understood as claiming that only certain people are capable of “knowing” certain bits of knowledge.

After all, individuals can be found in the world whom do not fit into the cognitive roles that Frye describes. A person could easily claim to know a lesbian who has never expressed any concern about the organization of society; or, a person could know a white male, which is often seen as the most favorable social group available, who speaks voraciously against the structure of the government and other social institutions. However, it does not seem that Frye is making a claim to knowledge about the lives of any specific person other than herself. Frye says, “Any theorist would be a fool to think she could tell another woman exactly how the particularities of that other woman’s life reflect, or to what extent they do not reflect, the patterns the theorist has discerned.”¹² Instead, she is describing a mode of thought prevalent in her society and the mechanisms supported by that society through which data is received, referenced and understood.

Yet, these mechanisms are not set up to be universally beneficial. What Frye describes is a process through which those with political and cognitive authority use these mechanisms to interpret data in a manner that perpetuates the values of those loyal to the conceptual scheme while simultaneously denying cognitive authority to those whose perspectives are not easily co-opted by that same scheme. She describes this act of manipulation of data as “a mode according to which one begins with a firmly held view, composed from fabulous images of oneself, and adopts as one’s project the alteration of the world to bring it into accord with that view.”¹³ In other words, those people within society whose life experiences might bring them to raise concerns about the structure of society itself are told they are not the kind of people who can properly raise those concerns; therefore, cognitive authority is denied and reality as it is presently structured continues functioning.

However, when lesbians are described as being some of the people that can see aspects of this scheme that those countenanced by it cannot, this “can” is not representative of a logical impossibility; what it speaks to is a cognitive and linguistic improbability that those who remain at a given time firmly loyal to the scheme will see the cognitive gaps created by its erasures. The mechanisms of erasure are interwoven in such a way that it is fitting for it to be referred to as a structure, which obscures the view of other possible worlds from those inside. Yet, those who are on the edges and are not fully countenanced by the scheme, lesbians for example, can see it as a finite reality.

Still, it seems problematic to forget that the practicalities of life call for any single person to exist

within many different situations over the course of a lifetime. A person may spend several years in one place, perhaps attending college or working at a particular job, and then they may move to change jobs or start graduate school. In each location, the same person has interactions with friends, coworkers, mentors, and other people one might meet at the gas station, laundry mat, or in line at the grocery store. This makes it logically possible for someone, perhaps even by accident, to catch a glimpse of what someone else has been able to see all along.

So, through development anyone could see the things that lesbians see; however, this would mean a radical cognitive transformation for some. For example, a once loyalist who believed that homosexuality was in some sense unnatural through interaction with someone who self-identifies with that title, may begin to discover a maintained structure within the conceptual scheme that at one time was perceived as not a constructed reality, but rather an objective reality that encompasses all logical possibilities. I imagine this as an intense experience, which most likely forces the individual to undergo a certain degree of conceptual violence, or a forced break with the belief structures and patterns of thought common to the dominant conceptual scheme.¹⁴

“Where there is manipulation there is motivation... the meaning of this erasure and of the totality and conclusiveness of it has to do... with the maintenance of phallographic reality as a whole, and with the situation of women generally *a propos* that reality.”¹⁵ Hence, it seems that enjoying the social inclusion, which accompanies being countenanced by the system, can often enough be adequate incentive for a person to ignore the discrepancies among different groups’ experiences of the world and the concerns that they raise.

Therefore, the reality in which people move and interact with is constructed and reconstructed through conceptual schemes, or mechanisms of reality organization.¹⁶ The situation of women, generally, is to find themselves among currently dominant mechanisms of reality organization, which has been found to be the same ones that perpetuate existing systems of oppression. These systems restrict the autonomy of women, minorities and other marginalized groups. In order to more easily erase the evidence of oppression, one of the mechanisms has been to demean the emotions and the arguments posed by those disfavored groups that may intuitively feel tension in their lives when trying to create an identity within a conceptual reality that disfavors them. As people who are disfavored, whose identities are actively erased, do actually exist, their existence becomes paradoxical due to contradicting treatment. Frye says, “Women’s existence is both absolutely necessary to and irresolvably problematic for the dominant reality, but it is not and cannot be encompassed by or countenanced by that reality. Women’s existence is a background against which phallographic reality is a foreground.”¹⁷

The recognition of the value of intuition and emotional knowledge are present in understanding how lesbians might come to understand their own important vantage point and begin to use it to deconstruct reality. As Frye points out, the inability for the dominant conceptual scheme to countenance lesbians leads one to an understanding of lesbians as unnatural or unreal. ‘Being a lesbian’ is understood as something which could be nobody’s natural configuration but must be a configuration one is twisted into by some sort of force which is in some basic sense external. “‘Being a lesbian’ is understood here as certain people understand ‘being a delinquent’ or ‘being an alcoholic.’”¹⁸ This understanding of the

11. D.W. Hamlyn, “A Priori and A Posteriori,” in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 1, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company & The Free Press): 140-44.

12. Frye, xiii.

13. Frye, 163-164.

14. Frye, 163-164.

15. Frye, 162.

16. Frye, 162.

17. Frye, 167.

18. Frye, 159.

way lesbianism is viewed by the dominant conceptual scheme can shed light on the intuitive tension that exists within the lives of lesbians, which can drive a person in such a position to raise concerns about the paradoxical nature of their existence. Still, the particular intuition and knowledge of disfavored groups are relative to their perception of constructed reality. The same is true of loyalists to the conceptual scheme who might object to what they see as their knowledge being implicitly devalued through this emphasis on what may be seen by disfavored groups. However, the intent here is not to devalue anyone's particular perspective; instead, it is a recognition that some individual experiences are not counted as authentic as others. The recognition of these ignored experiences would not necessarily deny anyone else's unique perspective, even the unique perspectives among those who are mostly countenanced by the system.

The tone of this work may strike some as uncomfortably vague, especially to those who self-identify with a more traditional theory of justification and judge the success of epistemic dialogue according to how well that dialogue argues for that theory and then justifies specific claims according to its guidelines. Alternatively, as Frye states, "the point of the undertaking is not to find and present 'facts' (new or used), but to generate new ways of conceiving and interpreting which illuminate the meanings of things already in some way known and to stimulate the invention of more new ways of thinking."¹⁹

Even though it is not Frye's purpose to clarify her method of justification, features of a contextualist theory of justification underlie Frye's discourse. She speaks nothing of truth, except to describe the actuality of women's experience from the data gathered from women's lives, which again does not claim to apply to any particular woman's life. Still, this inability to create objective universal facts does not remove merit from the conclusions rendered regarding the nature of oppression and the nature of reality. "From the fact that justification is relative to the social practices and norms of a group, it does not follow that they cannot be criticized nor that justification is somehow subjective."²⁰ This is because, as Annis points out, practices and norms that are epistemic in nature share as their goal truth and the avoidance of error, so they can be criticized if they fail to reach these goals.

Furthermore, it is important to consider that people do the work of justifying beliefs in groups by raising questions challenging the truth-value of stated claims.²¹ It is possible to object to a claim in two ways: (1) by saying that the person that made the claim is not in a position to know it; or (2) by saying that the claim is false. So, what it means to say that women have not historically been given cognitive authority is that they have consistently been told they are not the kinds of beings in a position to know anything, effectively removing a loyalist's need to listen to their critiques of the conceptual system. If women are viewed as persons, then the real, relevant and local concerns they raise should not be ignored.

What Frye is ultimately describing is a mode of relating belief and action, which I think is characteristic of phallogocentric reality. She says that this mode is "an insane reversal of the reasonable procedure of adjusting one's views so that they accord with reality as actively discovered."²² In other words, if a person's beliefs seem to contradict the data received from the world and relevant doubts cannot be appropriately relieved by believers, then the proper response in most situations would be to alter the belief, not alter our environments to better reflect the doubted belief.

19. Frye, xi.

20. Annis, 206-207.

21. Annis, 204-207.

22. Frye, 163-164.

However, one can imagine beliefs that have contents that might urge the believer to attempt to alter one's environment. For example, if a person holds a belief regarding the nature of their environment, such as the belief that oppression exists while a world without oppression is more ethically desirable, then they would likely begin to experience doubt about the appropriateness of their environment. To clarify, doubt can be described as "an uneasy and dissatisfied state" arising from jarring phenomena that surprises or disturbs a person's expectations.²³ A state of doubt is one that a person would actively try to free themselves from, which is why the expression of real, relevant and local concerns would follow.

This example can help explain why a person, even one once loyal to the conceptual scheme, after glimpsing the oppressive background necessary to the maintenance of society as it is, may decide to accept the radical transformation of their cognitive persona. Yet, the examples chosen are not arbitrary. Frye charges that these are examples of what the concerns that people, mostly those who belong to disfavored groups, raise in reality and these concerns are currently and actively being ignored. I agree; and I believe it follows that because of this anyone who refuses to be loyal to the dominant conceptual scheme opens up a world of possibilities that can potentially lead to the development of a non-oppressive society. According to Tiles and Tiles in *Idols of the Cave*:

Here we get the full impact of the conception of man as self-creating. Individuals are constrained by the society in which they live to act and think in certain ways; there is a framework of customs, laws, and language which set the bounds of what is possible for them to do or think. To this extent all individuals are 'made' by others, or are a product of their culture. But as participants in society they can deliberately, by discovering new ways to do things which are picked up by others, change aspects of their culture. With these changes come changes in conceptions of what is and what is not humanly possible.²⁴

Still all of this is written with cognitive assumptions that can be critiqued by non-cognitivists, or those who do not believe there is any set of "justified beliefs" because beliefs are not the kind of thing that the notion of justification applies to. If there is no such set, then it is harder to critique people for holding beliefs that we have shown to benefit their positions even if they are harmful to others. That is why Frye's epistemology is irrevocably linked to her ethics, which present oppression as harmful and therefore a wrong that should not be perpetuated. Everything is contingent upon the belief that women are people.

In conclusion, I have articulated how cognitive authority is used as a mechanism to perpetuate the values of certain favored groups in society, and how the very existence of disfavored groups are often ignored in order to more successfully favor those who possess cognitive authority; furthermore, the knowledge that can be gained by the peculiar situation embodied by these disfavored groups, lesbians being the example used in this paper, can be a valuable asset for better understanding the system as it exists and as it tends to be oppressive. This can be helpful in the further process of societal transformation if deemed ethically necessary, which I believe it will. ■

23. Annis, 204-205.

24. Mary Tiles and Jim Tiles, "Idols of the Cave," in *Epistemology: The Big Questions*, ed. Linda Martin Alcoff (Boston: Blackwell Publishing, 1998): 433.