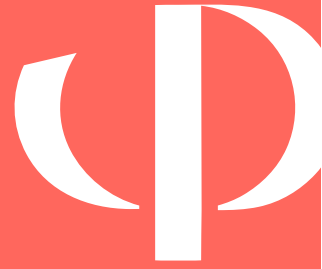


# APA Newsletters



FALL 2018

VOLUME 18 | NUMBER 1

ASIAN AND ASIAN-AMERICAN PHILOSOPHERS AND PHILOSOPHIES

FEMINISM AND PHILOSOPHY

HISPANIC/LATINO ISSUES IN PHILOSOPHY

LGBTQ ISSUES IN PHILOSOPHY

NATIVE AMERICAN AND INDIGENOUS PHILOSOPHY

PHILOSOPHY AND COMPUTERS

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APA NEWSLETTER ON

# Asian and Asian-American Philosophy and Philosophers

PRASANTA BANDYOPADHYAY, EDITOR

VOLUME 18 | NUMBER 1 | FALL 2018

## FROM THE EDITOR

Prasanta S. Bandyopadhyay  
MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY

The fall 2018 issue of the newsletter is animated by the goal of reaching a wider audience. Papers deal with issues mostly from classical Indian philosophy, with the exception of a report on the 2018 APA Eastern Division meeting panel on "Diversity in Philosophy" and a review of a book about the Indian philosophy that flourished during the period from 1857 to 1947. I will divide the contents of this issue under five major categories: (i) Buddhism; (ii) ontology, logic, and epistemology; (iii) philosophy of language and grammar; (iv) a panel on "Diversity in Philosophy"; and, finally, (v) a book review.

### SECTION 1: BUDDHISM

In her paper, "Locating Early Buddhist Logic in Pāli Literature," Madhuhumita Chattopadhyay discusses how some of the significant characteristics of reasoned discourse can be traced back to the early Buddhist literature. Although most Buddhist literature in Pāli contains Buddha's words and sermons, she argues that the latter are not devoid of reasoned discourse concerning how to lead one's life. Excavating a large chunk of early Buddhist literature in Pāli, she reconstructs the Buddhist's way of how to correctly argue and counter-argue among Buddhists and beyond where the rational spirit of Buddha could be clearly felt. The purpose of her paper is to show that this critical attitude to justify every assertion, whether religious or otherwise, paves the way for the Buddhist's development of certain rules of logic core to defending one's thesis and contesting the views of the opponent.

Rafal Stepień's paper, "Do Good Philosophers Argue? A Buddhist Approach to Philosophy and Philosophy Prizes," begins with the news of a recently inaugurated Berggruen Prize awarded every year to someone whose work has a broad significance in terms of the advancement of humanity, broadly construed. The paper mentions two recent recipients of these awards who are well-known philosophers. Stepień observes that the current climate of contemporary philosophy is very much argumentative and combative. Unlike this argument-for-argument's-sake attitude in analytic philosophy, he considers Buddhism as another respectable school of thought where a very different attitude of fellow-feelings and understanding for the other prevails. In Buddhism, he argues, arguments and critiques are employed only when they are regarded as contributing to the well-being of both proponent and

opponent equally. He pleads for the need for this sort of role of humanism to be incorporated into Western analytic philosophy. This incorporation, he contends, has a far-reaching impact on both private and public lives of human beings where the love of wisdom should go together with care and love for fellow human beings.

### SECTION 2: ONTOLOGY, LOGIC, AND EPISTEMOLOGY

This is the longest part of this issue. Here, I will discuss briefly four papers addressing issues overlapping with ontology, logic, and epistemology. In his paper, "Iśvaravāda: A Critique," Pradeep Gokhale distinguishes arguments for the existence of God in the classical Indian tradition in two ways: (i) God as material cause and (ii) God as efficient cause. He thinks that the problem of evil issue arises only for the former and not for the latter. He also considers six types of argument for the existence of God in the Nyaya-Vaisesika tradition, which is one key school in the classical tradition. The author also evaluates arguments against the Nyaya-Vaisesika school as advanced by Buddhists and Carvakas.

Palash Sarkar's paper, "Cārvākism Redivivus" reconstructs the Cārvākā critique of inductive inference. The Cārvākā philosophy, which was a revolt against any kind of supernaturalism, thrived in the sixth century BCE. It does not endorse any form of valid knowledge, including inductive inference, other than perception. Criticisms are made against the Cārvākā view by almost all well-known schools of classical philosophy. However, Sarkar thinks that there is a way to make sense of the Cārvākā view if we take the liberty of making use of the tools of the probability theory to quantify uncertainty essential to understanding inductive inference. Although some previous attempt (Ghokale, 2015) has been made to connect the Cārvākā account of induction and probability theory, Sarkar thinks that his account is more adequate as it is able to reconstruct this rebel philosophy aptly by his more sophisticated use of the probability theory.

Kisor K. Chakrabarti wrote a book in 2010 to address how Nyāyā philosophy, which provides the logical framework for most discussions of classical philosophy, is able to address the well-known problem of induction. The latter arises when we make inferences about an unobserved body of data based on an observed body of data. But there is no justification for this inductive leap. In their paper, Prasanta S. Bandyopadhyay and Ventaka Raghavan, however, disagree with Chakrabarti and argue that his argument does not pan out in the final analysis. This means that Chakrabarti's

account based on exploiting Nyāya philosophy fails to address the problem of induction. In his rebuttal, Chakrabarti thinks that Bandyopadhyay and Raghavan's arguments are flawed and there is a way to reinstate his argument for why he thinks that Nyaya philosophers can handle the problem of induction satisfactorily.

### SECTION 3: PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE AND GRAMMAR

The role of a word is crucial in any language as it is a primary constituent of a sentence through which people converse and understand the meaning of the others. Sanjit Chakraborty's paper on "Remnants of Words in Indian Grammar" addresses the debate on some aspects of Indian philosophy of grammar and its connection to Indian philosophy of language revolving around two questions: What sort of entity meanings should be identified with? And how does a linguistic expression, say a sentence, express a meaning? Two schools regarding this debate are *vyakti-śakti-vāda* (meaning particularism) and *jāti-śakti-vāda* (meaning generalism). The former theory claims that the meaning relatum of a nominal is a particular object. In contrast, the latter theory claims that the meaning relatum of a nominal is a general feature or property. The paper explores different ramifications of holding each theory in classical Indian philosophy of language and defends the grammarian's *Sphoṭa* theory as a word-meaning liaison.

### SECTION 4: APA PANEL ON DIVERSITY

One purpose of this newsletter is to report from time to time about various meetings and issues we discuss as Asian American philosophers and what we think we can contribute to the American Philosophical Association (APA). Diversity is one of the central issues currently in the US. So as a diverse group of the APA, we take this challenge seriously. To this end, the Committee on Asian and Asian-American Philosophers and Philosophies sponsored a panel entitled "Diversity in Philosophy" at the 2018 Eastern Division Meeting of the APA in Savannah, Georgia. The panel featured B. Tamsin Kimoto (Emory University), Amy Donahue (Kennesaw State University), Monika Kirloskar-Steinbach (University of Konstanz), and Denise Meda Calderon (Texas A&M University). Brian Bruya (Eastern Michigan University) and Julianne Chung (University of Louisville) were unable to attend due to weather. Ethan Mills, one of the members of this committee who attended this meeting, has prepared a report for this issue on the panel.

### SECTION 5: BOOK REVIEW

Nalini Bhushan and Jay Garfield recently published a book from Oxford University Press with the title, *Minds without Fear*. Brian A. Hatcher has reviewed their book for the newsletter.

Without the help of several people, it is almost impossible to produce a newsletter of such a quality regularly. I am thankful to our referees including Kisor Chakrabarti, Marco Ferranto, Pradeep Gokhlae, Shi Huifeng, Ethan Mills, and Ventaka Raghavan for their valuable inputs to the revision of various papers. My special thanks are to Rafal Stepin for kindly responding to my desperate call to find a referee for

me to review a paper within a short notice. As always, I also thank Erin Shepherd profusely for her advice concerning different logistics regarding the newsletters, especially this time providing me with additional time to include some of the late papers for this issue. I very much appreciate Brian Bruya, the chair of this committee, for his advice, encouragement, and generosity with his time whenever I needed help on some matters regarding the newsletter. I am also thankful to JeeLoo Lie for her advice whenever I needed it. Zee loo ....

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## SUBMISSION GUIDELINES AND INFORMATION

### GOAL OF THE NEWSLETTER ON ASIAN AND ASIAN-AMERICAN PHILOSOPHERS

The *APA Newsletter on Asian and Asian-American Philosophers and Philosophies* is sponsored by the APA Committee on Asian and Asian-American Philosophers and Philosophies to report on the philosophical work of Asian and Asian-American philosophy, to report on new work in Asian philosophy, and to provide a forum for the discussion of topics of importance to Asian and Asian-American philosophers and those engaged with Asian and Asian-American philosophy. We encourage a diversity of views and topics within this broad rubric. None of the varied philosophical views provided by authors of newsletter articles necessarily represents the views of any or all the members of the Committee on Asian and Asian-American Philosophers and Philosophies, including the editor(s) of the newsletter. The committee and the newsletter are committed to advancing Asian and Asian-American philosophical scholarships and bringing this work and this community to the attention of the larger philosophical community; we do not endorse any particular approach to Asian or Asian-American philosophy.

### SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

1) **Purpose:** The purpose of the newsletter is to publish information about the status of Asians and Asian Americans and their philosophy and to make the resources of Asians and Asian-American philosophy available to a larger philosophical community. The newsletter presents discussions of recent developments in Asians and Asian-American philosophy (including, for example, both modern and classical East-Asian philosophy, both modern and classical South Asian philosophy, and Asians and Asian Americans doing philosophy in its various forms), related work in other disciplines, literature overviews, reviews of the discipline as a whole, timely book reviews, and suggestions for both spreading and improving the teaching of Asian philosophy in the current curriculum. It also informs the profession about the work of the APA Committee on Asian and Asian-American Philosophers and Philosophies. One way the dissemination of knowledge of the relevant areas occurs is by holding highly visible, interactive sessions on Asian philosophy at the American Philosophical Association's three

annual divisional meetings. Potential authors should follow the submission guidelines below:

- i) Please submit essays electronically to the editor(s). Articles submitted to the newsletter should be limited to ten double-spaced pages and must follow the APA submission guidelines.
  - ii) All manuscripts should be prepared for anonymous review. Each submission shall be sent to two referees. Reports will be shared with authors. References should follow *The Chicago Manual Style*.
  - iii) If the paper is accepted, each author is required to sign a copyright transfer form, available on the APA website, prior to publication.
- 2) **Book reviews and reviewers:** If you have published a book that you consider appropriate for review in the newsletter, please ask your publisher to send the editor(s) a copy of your book. Each call for papers may also include a list of books for possible review. To volunteer to review books (or some specific book), kindly send the editor(s) a CV and letter of interest mentioning your areas of research and teaching.
  - 3) **Where to send papers/reviews:** Please send all articles, comments, reviews, suggestions, books, and other communications to the editor: Prasanta Bandyopadhyay ([psb@montana.edu](mailto:psb@montana.edu)).
  - 4) **Submission deadlines:** Submissions for spring issues are due by the preceding November 1, and submissions for fall issues are due by the preceding February 1.
  - 5) **Guest editorship:** It is possible that one or more members of the Committee on Asian and Asian American Philosophers and Philosophies could act as guest editors for one of the issues of the newsletter depending on their expertise in the field. To produce a high-quality newsletter, one of the co-editors could even come from outside the members of the committee depending on his/her area of research interest.

an unperceived object. To explain how such knowledge is possible and also how such knowledge can be intimated to others, it became necessary to formulate them in the form of arguments. It is in the context of such argument formulation and also for testing its validity that Indian logic was developed. But this was a later development; initially, logic was mainly for the purpose of debate. In the Vedic period, the sole purpose of all discourse was to obtain from the preceptor—the *guru*—the truth that was revealed to him. So the tradition was an oral one, and the knowledge was transmitted from the preceptor to the student; this process continued without being challenged by opponents.<sup>1</sup> Later on, from third century BCE and thereafter, different theories originated in the arena of philosophical thinking, each of which provided a new way of looking at reality. This led to various conflicts of opinions among different groups. Such situations gave rise to the necessity to develop tools of debate so that the opponent's position could be refuted and one's own position could be established. Consequently, in the initial stage of Indian tradition, logic was developed as a tool for debate.

In the early forms of Buddhist literature, which were mainly in Pāli language and were believed to be the records of Buddha's own words, not a single treatise could be found solely devoted to logic or containing a clear statement of any logical principle. From this, however, it cannot be assumed that what were discussed there were totally devoid of any rationalization and expressed only dogmatic attitude. On the contrary, in Pāli literature Buddha is represented as "a reasoned whose interlocutors are not his match; his weapons against them, beside his authority are analogy, simile, parable and an occasional trace of induction by simple enumeration of cases."<sup>2</sup> In order to emphasize such rational spirit of Lord Buddha, two facts may be cited: first, Buddha himself called his teachings *anitiha*,<sup>3</sup> meaning that they were not based on tradition (*na + iti + āha = anitiha*), but were justified ones. Secondly, as opposed to the dogmatic attitude popular in the age of Upanisads where everything was validated with reference to scriptures (*āgama*), Buddha admonished his followers on one occasion with the words: "Do not accept, Oh Bhikṣus, my words out of any respect for me, but accept them for what they are worth after proper scrutiny, just as a piece of gold is accepted by an expert after it is put to fire, cut or tested on the touchstone."<sup>4</sup> As such in the Pāli Tipiṭaka-s also, the question "what is the reason for that?" (*Tan kissa hetu*) precedes almost every sentence. This attitude of the early Buddhists to justify every assertion with adequate reason(s) and argument(s) led to the development of science of ratiocination or logic, with the objective of establishing one's own thesis and challenging the views of one's opponents.

Though Buddha felt the need to use reason(s) to establish any point, in course of teaching he could understand that all people, especially the people in the street and the learners, were not intelligent enough to follow the arguments trying to justify a particular theory. For them he had taken recourse to analogy, simile, parable, and sometimes induction by simple enumeration. A parable or a simile is not a logical argument, but it can exert a great impact on the mind and even on the intellect of the hearer. Even those who fail to grasp a point through argument

## BUDDHISM

### *Locating Early Buddhist Logic in Pāli Literature*

Madhumita Chattopadhyay  
JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY

In the Indian tradition, the discussion on Logic may be viewed from two different perspectives viz. one of epistemology and the other of debate or *vāda*. Except for one school, almost all schools of thinkers accepted inference as a means of cognition. Inference is that form of knowledge where on the basis of known fact(s) one can derive knowledge of

may be convinced of the same through similes. As such, in the early days of Pāli literature there is no systematic study of logical principles. However, titles of logical topics like *anumāna* or *vāda* can be found in the *Nikāya* texts. For example, in the *Majjhima Nikāya* of the *Sutta Pitaka*, there is a chapter entitled the *Anumāna Sutta*, where the term *anumāna* is used in the sense of inference or guess;<sup>5</sup> and the title of another chapter is *Upālivāda Sutta*,<sup>6</sup> where the word *vāda* is used in the sense of discussion.

The necessity of discussing logic as the art of conducting a debate was felt as early as the third century BCE when the Buddhist followers started facing opposing ideas from opponents of different religious and ethical issues, e.g., “Is there a self over and above the body?” “Does this physical world exist?” “Is there a life after death?” As a consequence of such necessity, in the Buddhist literature from those days, discussions were found regarding several pertinent questions as “Are all discussions of the same nature?” “Can one argue with a king (or a person of higher authority) in the same manner as one argues with a friend or a like-minded person?” “What is the suitable place for discussion?” The noncanonical literature *Milindapañho* contains much discussion on these points. The canonical literature *Kathāvatthu* provides us with the analysis of the argumentation involved at the time of discussion/debate/dialogue. Another important text, *Ñettipakaraṇa*, which dates back to the First Buddhist Council, according to Western thinkers, also contains an elaborate analysis of the terms and expressions so that in course of dialogues and debates no kind of misconception can arise through such terms. These texts thus deal with the logic involved in debate. The main point that is highlighted in all of these texts is that opponents are to be handled not by force (*bala*) or other means but through valid argumentation. This necessitated that all parties involved in a debate should have their arguments properly constructed and justified.

## II

A dialogue which is properly formulated following the prescribed method of the *Kathāvatthu* is called a *vādayutti*.<sup>7</sup> The goal of a *vādayutti* is thorough examination (*yutti*; Skt. *yukti*) of a controversial point presented in the form of a dialogue (*vāda*) between two parties. The dialogue is highly structured and is to be conducted in accordance with a prescribed format of argumentation. There, a given point or a position is at issue, for example, whether “a person is known in the sense of a real and ultimate fact” (i.e., whether persons are conceived of as metaphysically irreducible), whether there are such things as ethically good and bad actions, etc. In general, such issue may be stated to be of the form “Is A B?”

A dialogue by itself consists of sub-dialogues or “openings” (*atthamukha*). These correspond to eight attitudes which are possible to adopt with regard to the point at issue. For any position the eight openings are:

- [1] Is A B?
- [2] Is A not B?
- [3] Is A B everywhere?

- [4] Is A B always?
- [5] Is A B in everything?
- [6] Is A not B everywhere?
- [7] Is A not B always?
- [8] Is A not B in everything?<sup>8</sup>

Each such “opening” proceeds as an independent dialogue, and each is divided into five stages: the way forward (*anuloma*), the way back (*paṭikamma*), the refutation (*niggaha*), the application (*upanayana*), and the conclusion (*niggamana*).<sup>9</sup> In the way forward, the proponent solicits from the respondent the endorsement of a thesis and then tries to argue against it. In the way back, the respondent turns the table, soliciting from the proponent the endorsement of the counter-thesis, and then trying to argue against it. In the refutation, the respondent, continuing, seeks to refute the argument that the proponent had advanced against the thesis. The application and conclusion repeat and reaffirm that the proponent’s argument against the respondent’s thesis is unsound, while the respondent’s argument against the proponent’s counter-thesis is sound.

In the text *Kathāvatthu* there is discussion of nearly two hundred issues relating to various topics, mostly on metaphysical and moral matters. Of them, we will select one to demonstrate how the Buddhist thinkers thought of the different steps involved in the process of debate to refute the views of the opponents. The issue chosen here is the first controversial topic regarding the existence of the soul. This is a controversy between the Theravādins and the Puggalavādins. The Theravādins do not admit the existence of any self/soul as a real and ultimate fact, which is, however, admitted by the Puggalavādins.

In the first step<sup>10</sup> of the five-step debate, the proponent, the Theravādin, asks the respondent, namely, the Puggalavādin, to state his position, and the proponent offers arguments to show the inconsistency in the respondent’s view.

Proponent [Theravādin]: Is the soul known as a real and ultimate fact?

Respondent [Puggalavādin]: Yes.

Theravādin: Is the soul known in the same way as a real and ultimate fact is known?

Puggalavādin: No, that cannot be said.

Theravādin: Your view stands refuted.

This argument may be explicitly reconstructed in the following way:

6. The soul is known as a real and ultimate fact.
7. If the soul is known as a real and ultimate fact, then the soul is known in the same way as other real and ultimate facts are known.



8. (The Puggalavādins assert that) the soul is known as a real and ultimate fact, but it is not the case that the soul is known in the same way as other real and ultimate facts are known.
9. If the latter statement cannot be accepted (that is, if it is not the case that the soul is known in the same way as other real and ultimate facts are known) then the former (that is, the soul is not known as a real and ultimate fact) should not be admitted either.
10. In affirming the former but denying the latter, the Theravādin's view cannot be accepted.

If "the soul" is taken as "A," "known as real and ultimate fact" as "B," "known in the same way as other real and ultimate facts are known" as "C," then the structure of the argument becomes evident:

1. A is B.
2. If (A is B) then (A is C).
3. (A is B) but not (A is C).
4. If not (A is C) then not (A is B).
5. Not (A is B).

In the second step of the five-part argument, the positions of the proponent and the respondent are interchanged—that is, the respondent or the Puggalavādin becomes the proponent and the Theravādin the respondent. The argument runs thus:

1. Puggalavādin: Is the soul not known as a real and ultimate fact?
2. Theravādin: No, it is not known.
3. Puggalavādin: If the soul is not known as a real and ultimate fact, then you should also say that the soul is not known in the same way as other real and ultimate facts are known.
4. If the latter statement cannot be admitted, that is, if it cannot be said that the soul is known in the same way as other real and ultimate facts are known, then it cannot be said that the soul is known as a real and ultimate fact.
5. Therefore, in affirming the former while denying the latter, the Theravādin's view is wrong.

To present the argument formally, the Theravādin holds that

1. (A is not B) but it is not the case that (A is not C).
2. Now, if (A is not B) then (A is not C).
3. A is not C.

4. Therefore, it is not the case that ((A is not B) and not (A is not C)).

In the third step, which is known as the refutation, the respondent reasserts the refutation (*niggaha*), and the respondent reasserts the refutation used in step 2:

1. Puggalavādin: If it is assumed that we should affirm that the soul is not known as a real and ultimate fact, but should not affirm the fact that the soul is not known in the same way as other real and ultimate facts are known, then you who have asserted the very proposition contained in the negative question must be refuted in the following manner.
2. If the soul is not known as a real and ultimate fact, then you should have said that the soul is not known in the same way as other real and ultimate facts are known.
3. What you affirm is false, namely, that the former statement can be affirmed but that the latter should not be affirmed.
4. If the latter statement is not affirmed, then neither can the former be affirmed truly.
5. So what you say is wrong.

In the fourth step, known as the *upanayana*, the respondent rejects the proponent's counter-argument found in step 1:

1. Puggalavādin: If this refutation is faulty, then look at the parallel procedure in your own argument against us. Thus, according to us, "A is B" was true but "A is C" was not true. We, who have admitted these propositions, do not consider ourselves to be refuted, although you thought you have refuted us.
2. According to you, if we affirmed that "A is B," we have to affirm that "A is C."
3. Our position is that "A is B," but it is not the case that "A is C" (which is contrary to your point).
4. According to you, if we do not admit the truth of "A is C," neither could we admit the truth of "A is B."
5. Hence, according to you, we were wrong in admitting "A is B" while denying "A is C."

In the fifth step, the respondent claims that the counterargument of the proponent has failed and his own counter-argument is successful.

Puggalavādin: No, we cannot be refuted thus:

1. Namely, that our proposition "A is B" compels us to accept the proposition "A is C."

2. It also is not correct to say that my proposition "A is B" is coupled with the rejection of "A is C."
3. It also is not correct to hold that if one rejects "A is C," then one must also reject "A is B."
4. One can affirm both or neither.
5. Hence, the refutation made by the Theravādins against us is not proper.

This completes the five steps of the first opening (*aṭṭamukha*) in the primary debate. To sum up, the five steps involved are as follows:

1. The way forward: the *anuloma*, where the respondent states his own position and the proponent presents a counter-argument.
2. The way back: the *paṭikamma*, where the proponent states his own position and the respondent presents the counter-argument.
3. The refutation: the *niggaha*, where the respondent asserts the refutation of the proponent's position.
4. The application: the *upanayana*, where the respondent rejects the counter-argument of the proponent.
5. The conclusion: the *niggamana*, where the respondent claims that the proponent's counter-argument has failed and the refutation has been successful.

The same five steps are used in each of the eight openings of a primary debate. In addition to the primary debate, there are also secondary debates, which are formulated to examine the terms used in the primary debate. For example, as part of the primary debate between the Puggalavādins and the Theravādin on knowledge of the soul, the secondary debate centers around issues like whether or not the soul is the same as the body, feelings, perception, etc. Both the primary and secondary debates logically follow the five-step argument discussed above. The structure of the argument generally followed may be presented in the following form:

If (A is B), then (C is D).

But it is not the case that (C is D).

Therefore, it is not the case that (A is B).

It is significant to note that there is here no *pro-argumentation*, either by the respondent for the thesis or by the proponent for the counter-thesis. There is only *contra-argumentation*, and that in two varieties. The respondent, in the "way back," supplies an argument against the proponent's counter-thesis, and in the refutation stage, against the proponent's alleged argument against the thesis. So we see here a sharp distinction between three types of argumentation—*pro* argumentation, argumentation

that adduces reasons in support of one's thesis, and *counter* argumentation—argumentation that adduces reasons against counter-arguments directed against one's thesis. The respondent, having been "attacked" in the first phase, "counter-attacks" in the second phase, "defends" against the initial attack in the third, and "consolidates" the counter-attack and the defense in the fourth and fifth. The whole pattern of argumentation, it would seem, is best thought of as an attempt to switch a burden of proof that is initially evenly distributed between the two parties. The respondent tries to put the burden of proof firmly onto the proponent by arguing against the proponent and at the same time countering any argument against himself. Thus, a counter-argument has three components: the initial thesis or *ṭhapanā* (Skt. *sthāpanā*), the derived implication or *pāpanā*, and the demonstration of inconsistency or *ropanā*.

The method as exhibited above is called the *anuloma*, or the direct method, where the refutation of the opponent's position is shown to follow directly from his assertion. In addition to this direct method, the indirect method, known as *paṭiloma*, is also applied in a debate situation. The structure of such *paṭiloma* or indirect form of argumentation may be stated thus:

If D is denied of C, then B should be denied of A.

But, in the first step, B is affirmed of A.

Therefore, it is wrong that B can be affirmed of A, but not D of C.

In both the *anuloma* and *paṭiloma* varieties, the logical rules that are applied are actually the Modus Ponens, the Modus Tollens, the Transposition, and the definition of implication, namely, that  $(P \rightarrow Q) \equiv \sim (P \& \sim Q)$ . However, the worth of the *Kathāvatthu* does not lie in the matter as to how many rules of propositional logic are applied here but on the fact as to how an argument should properly proceed in the context of a debate. In the example of the five-step debate between the Theravādin and the Puggalavādin as to whether the self can be regarded as real and ultimate, it is interesting to note that the debate starts with the Theravādin's argument but ends with the Puggalavādin's refutation. The debate as presented in the *Kathāvatthu* shows that what is important is the pattern of the debate rather than the content of the debate. Professor Jonardon Ganeri has rightly observed that "In setting out the reasoning in this way, the intention of the author of the *Kathāvatthu* is not to imply that precisely this sequence of arguments is sound. What is being shown is the form that any counterargument should take. It is a description, in generic terms, of the strategic resources open to the proponent and serves rather as a blue-print for any actual *vādayutti* dialogue."<sup>11</sup>

### III

The text *Milindapañho*, belonging to a later period, is a very good example of a Pāli text where seeds of logical reasoning can be found in a clearer form along with discussion on debate. The text is presented in the form of a dialogue between the Greek king Menander, who ruled over the Punjab in 150 BCE, and the Buddhist monk

Nāgasena. As such, it is quite natural that here we have some clear idea about the methodology, place (where), and the (whom) persons with whom discussion or dialogue can be made. In the introductory part of the text, Nāgasena makes a clear distinction between two types of discussion/dialogue—one with a king (that is, one which is done under pressure or with some tension in mind) and the other with the learned (that is, where one is free to express one’s own opinion). Nāgasena points out that in the context of the first type of discussion, the king starts with a particular thesis or presupposition in mind. And anyone who says anything that goes against that thesis, and as such is contrary to the belief or understanding of the king, has to face penalty. As such, in anticipation of such penalty, one cannot expect to have free and proper discussion. On the other hand, when there is discussion with the wise, there is found unrolling and rolling up, convincing and conceding; agreements and disagreements are reached. And in all that, the wise suffer no disturbance.<sup>12</sup> The moral of this statement of Nāgasena is that proper dialogue can take place only when one is not under any pressure of facing unwanted consequence. With an undisturbed mind, one can freely be involved in expressing one’s own opinion or refuting others.

Nāgasena also pointed out that all places are not proper for having discussion. He recommends that the following eight places are to be avoided for having any academic discussion: “uneven ground, spots unsafe by fear of men, windy places, hiding spots, sacred places, high roads, light bamboo bridges and public bathing places.”<sup>13</sup> These places should be avoided because it will not be possible to have proper concentration, which, naturally, will create problems in discussion. For example, on uneven ground the matter discussed becomes jerky and diffuse and so often concentration gets broken. In unsafe places the mind is disturbed, and being disturbed cannot follow the point raised by the opponent. In hiding places there are eavesdroppers. In sacred places the question discussed gets diverted because of the seriousness in the surroundings. On a high road, because of the presence of lots of traffic, discussion often gets interrupted. On light bamboo bridges and public bathing places, because of other people’s presence, serious discussion cannot take place. These places are such that they are either very congested or they are insecure, and as such, there are chances of distraction or disturbance in the course of discussion.

Nāgasena thinks that not only place but also persons participating in discussion are important for the success of discussion. He suggests that eight types of persons are to be avoided; one should not be involved in discussion with such persons. These persons are (1) one whose mind is filled with lust, (2) one whose mind is filled with hatred, (3) one who is in delusion, (4) one who is proud, (5) one who is greedy, (6) one who is idle, (7) one who has a one-track mind and (8) one who is a fool.<sup>14</sup> These people, because of their defilements like attachment, greed, hatred, delusion, ignorance, etc., cannot think in a broad-minded way. Their mind follows one direction only, and they are not amenable to changes. Since such persons cannot accept the opinion of others, one cannot have a fruitful discussion or dialogue with such a person. Hence, discussion with such a person is to be avoided.

In the *Milindapañho* Nāgasena not only dealt with the nature of dialogue and its different aspects, he also actually was involved in dialogue with the king. In course of such dialogue he relied solely on that type of argument which is known in modern Western logic as argument by logical analogy. The general structure of the analogical argument is as follows:

a, b, c, d all have the attributes P and Q.

a, b, c all have attribute R

Therefore, d probably has the attribute R.

Arguments having such form are scattered throughout the text. Let us consider one such argument. The proposition under consideration is “Individuals differ from each other in respect of difference of their past *karmas*.” To establish this point, Nāgasena argues that trees differ from each other—some produce sweet fruits, some sour, some bitter, etc.<sup>15</sup> Their differences are due to the differences in seed which give rise to the trees. Individuals also are born because of their past *karmas*. So the differences of individuals can be accounted for by the difference of their past *karma*.<sup>16</sup>

1. Trees and individuals are similar because both of them are born out of some cause and both of them are of different types.
2. The difference of trees can be explained in terms of the difference of their causes.

Therefore, the difference of individuals can be explained in terms of the difference of their causes, namely, the past actions of the individuals.

Another important topic of logical discussion—namely, dilemma—is dealt with in the *Milindapañho*. Examples of dilemma can be found in the *Mendakaprasāna* section. Let us first note what a dilemma is in modern logic. We say, somewhat loosely, that a person is “in” dilemma (or “put on the horns of a dilemma”) when that person has to choose between two alternatives, both of which are bad or unpleasant. The dilemma is a form of argument intended to put one’s opponent in just that kind of position. In debate, one uses a dilemma to offer alternative positions to one’s adversary, from which a choice has to be made, and then to prove that no matter which choice is made, the adversary is committed to an unacceptable conclusion.<sup>17</sup> Let us deal with one such dilemma mentioned in the *Milindapañho*. The proposition at issue there is whether worship of Buddha is futile.<sup>18</sup> All the Buddhists consider Buddha to be an object of worship. However, this belief gives rise to a dilemma. The presupposition here is that when one worships and offers something to any Being, then that Being accepts it. From that acceptance, it is considered that the worship has been successful. Now, with such a background assumption, it is shown that worshipping Buddha by the Buddhists is futile. The argument proceeds thus:

1. If Buddha accepts the offerings given to him at the time of worship, then he has not been able to attain *parinirvāṇa*, since he must be present somewhere in this world to accept the offerings.

2. If he is present somewhere in this world and has not attained *parinirvāṇa*, he is like other ordinary human beings.
3. If he is like other human beings, then there is no sense in worshipping him, for we do not worship ordinary human beings.

So the consequence is that the worship of Buddha is futile.

On the other hand,

4. If Buddha has attained *parinirvāṇa*, he is not in any way related to this world, and he cannot accept anything.
5. To offer something to a being who does not accept anything is useless.
6. So if Buddha does not accept the offerings given to him at the time of worship, it is useless to worship Buddha.
7. Hence, it is futile to worship Buddha.

This argument is a clear example of a constructive dilemma, which places the opponent in between two horns. Each horn ultimately leads him to a situation that is opposed to his basic assumption. If we try to provide a logical structure of this argument, it will be of this form.

Hypothesis: A

1. If P, then ~ A, and if ~ P, then ~ A.
2. P or ~ P.

Therefore, ~ A.

That is, the hypothesis gets disconfirmed.

#### IV

Generally, in any debate situation, the whole process of argumentation and counter-argumentation starts with a question. In the case of the Buddhists, the questions generally are like *Is the self real? Does the Tathāgata exist after parinirvāṇa?* etc. The content of the question as well as its formulation play significant roles in proceeding with the debate. For in any rational dialogue, there is a natural expectation among the participants that a direct answer will be given if one knows the answer and the question is an appropriate one. If one does not know the direct answer or cannot give it for some reason, one is obliged to be as informative as possible. Because of such expectation, the question that is addressed in a debate or in a rational dialogue has as its basic objective collection of information in the mode of replies. Hence, if the question is found to be insignificant or not to be appropriate in that situation, there will be no reason for answering it or for providing any argument against it. Thus, formulation of question is an important factor. In the early Buddhist literature, discussion on the nature of questions and their formulation has also been considered to be very important. In the *Anguttara*

*Nikāya*, Buddha himself tells the monks that there are four ways of answering questions. These are "(1) There is a question to be answered categorically; (2) there is a question to be answered after making a distinction; (3) there is a question to be answered with a counter question and (4) there is a question to be set aside. These are the four ways of answering questions

One kind is given a categorical answer,  
Another is answered after making a distinction;  
To the third, one should raise a counter-question  
But the fourth should be set aside.<sup>19</sup>

In the *Sangīti Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*,<sup>20</sup> four types of questions are also distinguished:

1. *pañhā ekamsavyākaraṇīya*, i.e., questions which can be answered categorically.<sup>21</sup> For example, *Is the eye impermanent?* This question can be answered categorically with an affirmative answer, namely, *yes, the eye is impermanent.*
2. *pañhā vibhajjavvyākaraṇīya*, i.e., questions which ought to be explained analytically and then answered. For example, *Is the impermanent the eye?* This question cannot be answered in terms of *yes* or *no* but can be answered by saying "Not only the eye, the ear, nose, etc. are all impermanent."
3. *pañhā paṭipuchavyākaraṇīya*, i.e., questions which ought to be answered by a counter-question. For example, if someone asks, "Does the eye have the same nature as the ear?" it can be answered by first asking in what respect is this "sameness" talked about? If it is said that this sameness is in respect of seeing, the answer is *no*; but if it is replied that the sameness is thought of in respect of impermanence, the answer will be *yes*. This indicates that this third variety of question can be answered only when the counter-question is answered properly.
4. *pañhā thapaṇīyo*, i.e., questions which should be set aside. For example, *Will the Tathāgata live after death or not?* Buddhaghosa, in his commentary on the *Anguttara Nikāya (Anguttara Nikāya Aṭṭhakathā)*, regards a *thāpaṇīyo pañha* to be one which ought not to be explained and which ought to be set aside on the grounds that it was not explained by the Exalted One (*avyākatam etam Bhagavatā ti thapetabbo, eso pañho na vattabbo*).

A look at these four varieties of questions indicates they can be broadly classified under two heads—those which can be answered categorically in the form of true or false statements, and those which cannot be so answered and hence need to be set aside. The other two—namely, the second and the third varieties—can also be answered affirmatively or negatively as the case may be, though such answer may require some prior clarification and analysis. The fourth variety of question—namely, the *thapaṇīya* variety—has interested scholars, for everyone is curious to know the criteria by which such questions are to be set

aside. One possible answer is given by Buddhaghosa when he holds that these questions are to be set aside for the Exalted One has set them aside. Such answer, that since Buddha himself had not dealt with these questions they are not to be discussed, implies accepting Buddha as an authority and to follow his actions without any reason, which would go against the rationalistic spirit of Buddha himself. Accordingly, modern scholars like V. K. Bharadwaja have identified two different criteria—one pragmatic and the other logical—for the *thapaniya* variety of questions. The pragmatic criterion was discussed by Jayatilleke also when he pointed out that such questions are to be set aside on the pragmatic grounds that any answer to them is irrelevant and does not serve any purpose. To justify his point, he mentions the famous parable of the arrow. The moral that the Buddhists want to point out with the parable of the arrow is that when an individual is stuck by an arrow, what is urgent at that moment is to give medical treatment and not to ponder over the question of who shot the arrow. This question is not such that it cannot be asked or answered. It can well be asked in situations like a shooting competition where one of the participants hit the center but he could not be identified. There, if the question is asked, “who shot the arrow?” it is very much relevant. But in the situation when medical treatment is of prime importance, the question is irrelevant and needs to be set aside. Bharadwaja thinks that the other criterion—namely, the logical one—is much more important. For with this criterion the meaningfulness of these questions can be shown in two ways—either by showing that they do not satisfy the logic of meaningful syntax, or it can be shown alternatively by pointing out that “it is conceptually impossible for us within a given conceptual framework to assign truth values, true or false, to any answer given to it.”<sup>22</sup> Let us try to illustrate this point. For example, if it is asked, “In which direction does the fire in front of you go when it is blown out?” it cannot be answered meaningfully because it is based on a conceptual confusion between two categories: “the fire in front of you” and the physical act of going. The physical act of going is appropriate (i.e., can meaningfully be applied) to an animate conscious agent and not to any inanimate object like fire. So, though the question has a structure similar to “where does an individual go when he is ill?” the latter is meaningful, but not the first one. The meaningfulness of the first question is not due to its being unable to satisfy any grammatical/syntactical form but because of its violation of the rules of mapping different concepts. Let us consider another question: Does the Tathāgata exist after death? This question falls within the list of those which Buddha himself did not answer and, as such, is regarded as an *avyakata* or question to be set aside. This question is not like the one mentioned earlier, for it is grammatically well formulated, satisfying the criterion of syntax. It also does not commit any category mistake as does the question “Is Tajmahal kind to all the visitors?” Still, it is regarded to be a *thapaniya* question—a question to be set aside—because it involves logical and conceptual confusion. This question might be answered in any of four possible ways: 1) The Tathāgata both exists after death, 2) the Tathāgata does not exist after death, 3) the Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death, 4) the Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death. But as Tathāgata has been conceived in Buddhist philosophy,

it is not possible to accept any of these answers as true, since none of them “fits the case” (*upeti*).<sup>23</sup>

In addition to the four varieties of questions, the Buddhists admit a fifth variety, which they regard as “inappropriate” (*na kalla*). Like the *thapaniya* variety, these questions are also to be set aside, but here the reason for such rejection is that they are literally meaningless. For example, questions like “What is death and decay?” “To whom does this decay and death belong?” and “Who feeds on the food of consciousness?”<sup>24</sup> are examples of the inappropriate (*na kalla pañha*) variety of questions. The first question assumes that death and decay is one thing, while the second question assumes that they are the attributes of someone. Thus, they imply that there is a difference between the two—the subject possessing the attributes and the attributes themselves, which is not a representation of what is really the case. Accordingly, these questions are regarded to be inappropriate. Similarly, in the case of the third question, the existence of an agent (a person who is taking the food) over and above the act of eating (*āhāra*) is assumed, which also is contrary to the fact, according to the Buddhist conceptual scheme.<sup>25</sup>

It may be argued that if the inappropriate questions (*na kalla pañhā*) and the queries that are set aside (*thapaniyo*) are both unanswerable, then why do we not include them under one head and consider the variety of questions to be four only? In reply, it may be said that in the context of improper questions, answers can be categorically given, though it may be that all the possible four logical alternatives are false, whereas in the case of the inappropriate variety, no categorical answer is possible. In the Nikāya texts the two varieties of questions are distinguished by pointing out that in the *thapaniya* variety, the answer is given by saying *mā h’ evam* (do not say so) while in the *na kalla* variety, the answer is straightforward in the form *na h’ idam* (the case is not so) with regard to all the four logical alternatives.<sup>26</sup> Since where the case is not so, it can be said that “do not say so,” all varieties of *na kalla* questions can be included within or can be a subset of the class of *thapaniyo* questions, but to show that they are to be set aside on the grounds of being misleading, the two varieties are distinguished.

In brief, the early Buddhist thinkers realized that it is very important to conduct debate using a proper formulation of questioning. If the question itself is such that it is inappropriate, improper, and does not admit of any logically possible answer, it is futile to argue with it. Only if the question is such that it can be categorically answered is it possible to deal with it. So the proper formulation of the question itself is essential in the arena of logic. In the Buddhist analysis of questions, we can have a shadow of what thinkers like Strawson, Carnap, and others had noticed in Western logic in the twentieth century. Strawson has noted that questions like “Are all John’s children asleep?” cannot be answered categorically in terms of truth or falsity in a situation where John has no children. The Logical Positivists also rejected metaphysics on the ground that the questions that are dealt with in metaphysics are inappropriate or meaningless. Thus the rational inquiry on questions done by the early Buddhist thinkers may be said to be very modern in the development of logic.

V

Another important logical concept—namely, that of distribution of terms—can be found in Pāli Buddhist texts. In the text *Yamaka* (translated as “A Book of Pairs”), which forms the sixth book of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*, there is an investigation into the ultimate *dhamma*-s. In course of analysis of such *dhamma*-s, it has been pointed out that there are many pairs of expressions, A and B, where though it can be truly said that A is B, the terms cannot be interchanged to make the other statement, B is A, also true. For example, in course of discussion on the aggregates (*skandhas*, *kkhandhas* in Pāli), it has been shown that *rūpa* (form) and *rūpaskandha* (the aggregate of form) are not interchangeable, though *vedanā* (feeling) and *vedanāskandha* (the aggregate of feeling) are interchangeable. As reason for that it has been stated that there are many forms (*rūpas*), like my favorite one (*piya rūpam*), or attractive form (*sātā rūpam*), etc., which are forms, but they are not regarded as *rūpaskandha*, though it is no doubt true that the *rūpaskandha* belongs to the class of *rūpa* and the aggregate of form.<sup>27</sup> Though not explicitly stated in terms of set-subset relationship, this passage may be interpreted in that light—the class of *rūpa-skandha* is included in the class of *rūpa/form*, and in that sense the *rūpaskandha* can be regarded to be a proper subset of *rūpa*. It is because of this relation of “being a proper subset of” that we cannot have correct interchange of terms leading to improper conversion. On the other hand, there are terms that have the same sort of extension and, hence, one cannot be the subset of another, but rather becomes identical with the other. In the context of such terms, it is possible to interchange the subject and the predicate terms in one proposition into another and get a new one which is identical to the other. For example, in the case of “feeling” (*vedanā*) and the aggregate of feeling (*vedanā skandha*), it can be seen that there is no feeling apart from what is stated in the aggregate of feeling, nor can there be any aggregate of feeling over and above the feeling. In the terminology of set theory, it can be said that the class of feeling and the class corresponding to the aggregate of feeling are one and the same, and so it is possible to say that “All feelings are aggregate of feeling” and “All aggregate of feelings are feelings.”<sup>28</sup> That is, in such cases the interchange does not involve any problem. So discussion of questions containing such pairs of terms and their replies indicates that in Pāli Buddhist literature the idea as to whether a term covers all the members of the class it denotes or some of them or none<sup>29</sup> was present.

It may be noted here that in the *Kathāvatthu*, there is a section called *vacanasodhana*, which Aung has translated as “To clear the Meaning of the terms.” In this section such questions are discussed like “Is the self known?” (*puggalo upalabbhati, upalabbhati puggaleti*) “Is the self a reality?” (*puggalo saccikattho*), “Is the self existent?” (*puggalo vijjamāno*) “Is the person something that exists?” (*puggalo samvijjamāno*). The answer to each of the questions is given in the form “A is B.” In the context of each of them, it has been shown that though “A is B” is true, it cannot be said conversely that “B is A” is always true, for it is the case that some B is A, though there are some B which are not A. This is because of the fact that extension of B is much wider than A. So all members of A are included in B, but

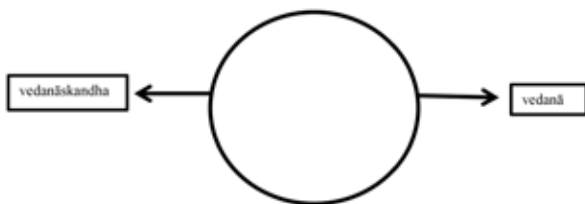
not all members of B are members of A. For example, in the context of the first question, when it is asked, “Is the self known?” the reply would be “The self is known”; but it cannot be said that whatever is known is the self. Among those which are known, some are the self, but some are not the self (*puggalo upalabbhati, upalabbhati kehici puggalo kehici na puggaloti*).

On the basis of the discussions found in the *Yamaka* and in the *Kathāvatthu* regarding interchangeability of two terms in some cases and not in all, there has been a controversy among the Buddhist scholars on the issue as to whether the notion of conversion was well known in the early days of Buddhism. Mrs. Rhys Davids upheld the idea that “the world probably contains no other such study in the applied logic of conversion as the *Yamaka*” (p. xvi).<sup>30</sup> This position was supported by Keith, who argued that “in the *Yamaka* . . . the distribution of terms is known and the process of conversion is elaborately illustrated, but without a trace of appreciation of logical theory.” This position of Rhys Davids and Keith has been opposed by Jaytilleke on the grounds that conversion as is used in traditional Western Logic is the process that permits to obtain a particular affirmative proposition (I) from a universal affirmative proposition A, and not a universal affirmative proposition or A from its corresponding A proposition. In the *Yamaka* in some cases (as has been shown above in the example of *vedanā* and *vedanāskandha*), it has been shown that in the case of a universal affirmative proposition it is possible to interchange the subject and predicate terms and obtain another equivalent universal affirmative proposition. This fact is a gross violation of the logical law of conversion. Hence, it cannot be held that the text *Yamaka* becomes evidence of the law of conversion.

This controversy as to whether the notion of conversion was prevalent in the early days of Buddhism may not be very important. But what is most important in the analysis of *Yamaka* and *Kathāvatthu* is that here the extension of terms has been taken into account. Each term refers to objects which actually define the scope of the term, thus making the term meaningful. For example, the term *rūpa* stands for all physical properties—like color, shape, size, etc.—the term “feeling” or *vedanā* refers to different feelings—feelings of pleasure, pain, indifference, fear, grief, etc. The scope actually defines the applicability of the term—one term may have wider scope than another. For example, the scope of the term “living being” is wider than the scope of the term “human being,” since living beings include not only humans but also nonhumans like animals, birds, trees, fishes, etc. Looked at from the standpoint of scope, it is easier to realize the questions and answers that are put forward in the *Kathāvatthu* that *puggalo atthi, atthi na sabbo puggaleti* or *puggalo samvijjamāno, samvijjamāno puggaleti*, etc. (“self exists, but whatever exists is not self,” “being is real, but is anything real a being?”). We can easily express the idea contained here with a Venn diagram:



Once the scope of each term is clearly spelled out, the argument of the *Kathāvatthu* that “all *puḍgala*-s are *saṃvijjamāna*” but not all “*saṃvijjamānas* are *puḍgala*-s” becomes evident without bringing in the notion of conversion. The same argument is applicable in the case of the *Yamaka* when it is pointed out that the aggregate of form (*rūpakkhandha*) is a *rūpa* (in the sense that it has a form), but there are many *rūpas* (forms) like attractive color (*piyarūpam*), or favorable form (*sātarūpam*), etc., that are not any aggregate. This indicates that the scope of *rūpa* is much wider than the *rūpaskandha*. On the other hand, there can be no feeling that does not fall within the scope of the aggregate of feeling, nor does the aggregate of feeling have any scope other than that of feeling. Hence, the two terms “feeling” and “aggregate of feeling” have the same scope, and that is the reason for their being interchangeable. This can be understood clearly from the following figure:



This way of looking at the passages of *Kathāvatthu* and the *Yamaka* has another advantage. Let us once again look at the passage of the *Kathāvatthu*: *puggalo vijjamāno, vijjamāno puggaleti? Puggalo vijjamāno, vijjamāno kehici puggalo kehici na puggaloti/ puggalo kehici vijjamāno kehici na vijjamānoti? Na hevaṃ vattabbe . . . pe* (*Kathāvatthu*, §57). “Is matter<sup>31</sup> existent, is anything existent matter? Matter is existent, of the existent entities some are matter and some are not matter. (Is it also the case that) some matter is existent and some are not? No, that cannot be said.”

This passage clearly indicates that the scope of matter is lower than the scope of existent entities, for it is said that all matters are existent entities, but there can be existent entities which are not matter. That is, here, three alternative possibilities are admitted:

- i) All matters are existent
- ii) Some existent entities are matter
- iii) Some existent entities are not matter

These correspond respectively to the A, I, and O propositions of traditional Aristotelian logic. But since in the passage the possibility is not admitted that no matter is existent, E proposition is not admitted in the systems of *Kathāvatthu* and *Yamaka*. Although the alternative that “all matters are existent” is admitted, this passage denies the possibility that “some matters are existent.” For the latter possibility presupposes that some matters are not existent, which the Buddhists will not accept. This means that the conversion of I proposition is not admitted here. So from what has been said in the *Kathāvatthu* and in the *Yamaka*, the conclusions that can be drawn from

- 1. All matters are existent.  
Therefore, some existent entities are matter  
is valid.
- 2. Where A and B have the same scope,  
All A-s are B  
Therefore, all B-s are A  
is valid.
- 3. Some existent entities are matter  
Therefore, some matters are existent entities

are not accepted as valid. Hence, it will not be justified to claim that the rule of conversion was well known during the early stages of Buddhist logic.

## VI

While wrapping up our discussion, it may be noted that after the great demise (*mahāparinirvāṇa*) of Lord Buddha, different conflicts occurred among his followers. To settle such conflicts, different councils had to be organized—the first one immediately after the Buddha’s demise, the second one a hundred years after that, the third one during the time of Ashoka, and the fourth one at the time of Kaniṣka. During the second Buddhist council, there arose the two schools of Buddhism—the *Sthaviravādins* and the *Mahāsāṃghikas*. Though both schools agreed in respect to metaphysical issues, they differed in respect to whether the monastic rules should be followed strictly or liberally. However, in the gap between the second and third Buddhist Councils, which was more than two hundred years, the Buddhists were split into several schools and sub-schools, and the issue among them was not only in terms of rule following but also in respect to metaphysics and ontology. The difference of views held by these schools was so great that it became difficult to regard any one of them as “the” Buddhist view. As such, during the reign of King Ashoka, the third Buddhist council was organized under his patronage and under the leadership of Moggaliputta Tissa to settle which among them depicted the true spirit of Buddha. It was at the time of this third Buddhist council that the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* was compiled, and the story goes that Moggaliputta Tissa himself, during the period of this council, composed the text *Kathāvatthu*, within a few weeks’ time. From this historical fact, it can be said that it is from the third century BCE, that need was felt by the orthodox Buddhist thinkers (the Theravādins) to defend the original teachings of the Buddha against the theories proposed not only by the non-Buddhist thinkers but also by other schools of Buddhism. For this purpose, they had to formulate rules for debate. So it is from the time of the third Buddhist council that we find the rise and development of the debate or *Vāda* tradition. Earlier, during the time of the Buddha, what was required was to make ordinary people aware of the truths of life, namely, that the world was full of suffering, everything is momentary, objects in the world do not have any essence of their own etc. To this end, the teachers used analogies

or similes and parables. Thus, in the early stage of Buddhist philosophy, two different objectives were visible—one to convince people, and the other to establish their own views against others. Accordingly, two different approaches to philosophy had been adopted, and they constituted the basics of Buddhist Logic, which later flourished in a full-fledged discourse in the hands of thinkers like Nāgārjuna, Vasubandhu, Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, and others. Though in a very germicidal form, the logical elements in the Pāli literature provide us glimpses of some very important issues, like significance of questions, extension of terms, dilemma, notion of implication, notion of contradiction, etc., with respect of rational discussion, and the ways these issues have been addressed are comparable to modern-day logical approaches. Herein lies the importance of the logical elements found in Pāli literature.

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#### NOTES

1. In the Upanisads the method that has been followed is in the form of dialogue where as an answer to a particular question some discussion is made. This dialogue used to take place in order to explain a point or for the purpose of clarification. As such *vāda* or a theory of debate is normally not found in the Upanisadic texts.
2. Keith, *Buddhist Philosophy*, 303, quoted by Durgacharan Chatopadhyaya, in "Buddhist Logic: An Introductory Survey," An Analytic View of Buddhist Logic (Baudha –nyāya – vikṣā), compiled by Suniti Kumar Pathak, p.16
3. Sutta Nipāta, 1053.
4. *Tāpāccedācca nikaṣāt suvarṇam ivapanditāh | Parīkṣyā bhiksava grāhyam madvaco na tu gauravat || Tatvāṣaṃgraha Kārikā*, 3588.
5. "A person with evil wishes and dominated by evil wishes is displeasing and disagreeable to me. If I were to have evil wishes and be dominated by evil wishes, I would be displeasing and disagreeable to others. Therefore, I shall not have evil wishes and be dominated by evil wishes" (*Majjhima Nikāya, Anumāna Sutta*, 15). This example from which the Sutta gets its name shows that here the Bhikkhu takes the determination of not having evil wishes or be dominated by evil wishes on the assumption that "If . . . so and so, then . . . so and so." He also furnishes a universally quantified premise, namely, "A person with evil wishes . . ." and then finds that his case would be included within the scope of the antecedent and then he will have to face the consequence which is not quite favourable to him. So, though not properly formulated, this passage gives us a very rough idea as to how one thought can proceed on the basis of another.
6. "Householder, if you will *debate* on the basis of truth, we might have some conversation" (*Majjhima Nikāya, Upāli Sutta*, 56). Here Upāli is not trying to infer something but wants to have some discussion or debate in order to show the householder the Four Noble truths which Buddha had realized. Whatever may be the content, this passage clearly indicates that even in the early stage, the Buddhists felt that the modes of debate, discussion are important for convincing someone rather than giving instructions.
7. Jonardon Ganeri, "Argumentation, Dialogue and the Kathāvatthu," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 29 (2001): 486.
8. The alternatives 3–8, actually display quantification over 1 and 2 in respect of time, place and object. Explicit statement of such possibilities highlight the minute observations of the Buddhist thinkers regarding the fact that something B may be partially true of a thing A, but may not be true of A always or everywhere. This observation becomes clearer in the *vacanasodhana* section of the same text *Kathāvatthu*.

9. The names of the last two steps—namely, *upanayana* and *niggamana*—sound very similar to the last two steps of the five-stepped inference admitted by the Naiyāyikas, the five steps being *pratijñā*, *hetu*, *udāharaṇa*, *upanaya*, and *nigamana*. However, this similarity is only apparent existing in the verbal level merely and there is no substantial similarity between them. The *upanaya* of the Naiyāyikas is the application of the universal statement to the case under consideration and *nigamana* is the repetition of the thesis to show that what was initially accepted as an assumption gets now established. However, in the Theravāda Buddhist literature, when there is mention of *upanayana* and *niggamana* in the context of a *vāda*, no such role is assigned.

10. For the details of the different steps, we have followed the analysis of G. V. Aston, *Early Indian Logic and the Question of Greek Influence*, an unpublished dissertation submitted for the Ph.D. degree at University of Canterbury, 2004, chapter 3, especially section 3.2.

11. Jonardon Ganeri, "Argumentation, Dialogue, and the Kathāvatthu," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 29 (2001): 490.

12. *The Questions of King Milinda*, II.1.4.

13. *The Questions of King Milinda, Mendakapañho*, IV.1.4.

14. *Ibid.*, IV.1.5.

15. "The Elder replied: 'Why is it that all vegetables are not alike, but some sour, and some salt, and some pungent, and some acid, and some astringent, and some sweet?'

'I fancy, Sir, it is because they come from different kinds of seeds.'

'And just so, great king, are the differences you have mentioned among men to be explained. For it has been said by the Blessed One: 'Beings, O Brahmin, have each their own Karma, are inheritors of karma, belong to the tribe of their karma, . . . It is karma that divides them up into low and high and the like divisions'" (*Milindapañho*, III.4.2).

16. *Vimaticchedana Praśna*, section 1.

17. Copi, *Introduction to Logic*, 213.

18. "Bhante Nāgasena, ime *titthiyā evam bhaṇanti* : 'Yadi *Buddho pūjam sādiyati, na parinibbhuto Buddho, samyutto lokena, antobhaviko lokasmim, lokasādhāraṇo, tasmā tassā kato adhikāro vañho bhavati aphaḷo; yadi parinibbhuto, visamyutto lokena, nissato sabbabhavehi, tassa pūjā na uppajati, parinibbuto na kiñci sādiyati, asādiyantassa kato adhikāro vañho bhavati aphaḷo* -ti. *Ubhatokotiiko eso pañho. N' eso visayo appattamānasānaṃ, mahantānaṃ yev' eso visayo. Bhand' etaṃ ditthijālaṃ, ekamṣe ṭhapaya*" (*Milindapañho*, IV.1.10).

19. *Anguttara Nikāya*, ii, 46-47, pp. 432–33, ed. by Bhikkhu Bodhi.

20. *Dīgha Nikāya Sutta*, 33, iii, 230.

21. It may be regarded as a "yes-no-question" in Walton's language (cf. D. N. Walton, *Informal Logic*, 27).

22. Bharadwaja, "Rationality, Argumentation and Embarrassment: A Study of Four Logical Alternatives (*catuṣkoṭi*) in Buddhist Logic," 305.

23. *Ibid.*

24. *Ko nu kho ... viññāṇāhāraṃ āhāreti ...* Saṃyutta Nikāya, II.13.

25. *Katamaṃ jarāmaranaṃ kassa ca panidaṃ jarāmaranaṃ ti iti vā...yo vadeyya aññaṃ jarāmaranaṃ aññassa ca panidaṃ jarāmaranaṃ ti vā ... yo vadeyya, ubhayam etaṃ ekattaṃ vyañjanaṃ eva nānaṃ*, Saṃyutta Nikāya II, 60, 61.

26. Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, 293.

27. *Rūpaṃ rūpakkhando ti? Piyaṃ sātāraṃ, na rūpakkhando; rūpakkhando rūpaṃ ca' eva rūpakkhando ca ... Rūpakkhando rūpaṃ ti? Āmantā*. Yamaka, quoted by Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, 306.

In the commentary on this passage it is clearly said, *Tattha rūpaṃ rūpakkhando ti yaṃ kiñci rūpaṃ ti vuccati sabbān tan rūpakkhando ti vacanaṃ sodhanatthaṃ pucchati. Piyaṃ sātāraṃ na rūpakkhando ti yaṃ piyaṃ sātāraṃ ti ettha rūpaṃ ti vuttān tan rūpaṃ eva, na rūpakkhando ti atthol*. C. A. F. Rhys Davids, ed., "Yamakappakaranatthakathā" from the *Pañcappakaranatthakathā*, *Journal of the Pāli Text Society* (1910–1912): 59.



28. *Vedanā vedanākkhandho ti? Āmantā. Vedanā vedanākkhandho ti? Āmantā/ Yamaka*, quoted by Jaytilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, 306.
29. Cf. Karen C. Long, *Encyclopaedia of Indian Philosophy*, vol. xi.
30. Quoted by Jaytilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, 306.
31. Though the term *puggala* is generally translated as “self,” but in the present context the term “matter” seems to be more appropriate to understand. That is why the term “matter” is used here.

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## Do Good Philosophers Argue? A Buddhist Approach to Philosophy and Philosophy Prizes

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*As the Berggruen Prize for Philosophy and Culture is inaugurated, it is worth asking what this and other prizes in philosophy honor—and what it is that philosophy actually does.*

The recently inaugurated Berggruen Prize is now awarded annually “to a thinker whose ideas are of broad significance for shaping human self-understanding and the advancement of humanity.”<sup>1</sup> Its inaugural recipient was the philosopher Charles Taylor, whose long career has encompassed substantial contributions to such understanding and advancement in fields as diverse as politics, ethics, hermeneutics, philosophy of religion, and philosophy of language. Throughout these interwoven threads of his thought, Taylor has proposed that the predominant view of selfhood in Western philosophy as a singular, independent, inner entity should be nuanced with an understanding of ourselves that does greater justice to the multiplicit and intersubjective nature of what, for him, can only ever be a socially constructed, historically determined self.

The prize’s second recipient was Onora O’Neill, who has likewise made substantial contributions to an impressively wide range of philosophical fields. For although O’Neill’s work overall may broadly be located within ethics, under this overarching rubric she has written, from a broadly Kantian perspective, on a swathe of issues in bioethics, children’s rights, environmental values, international justice, moral cosmopolitanism, normativity, and hope, among others. As such, Nicholas Berggruen, the Berggruen Institute Founder and Chairman, has implicitly drawn on Plato’s conception of the philosopher’s mandate in calling her a “citizen philosopher,”<sup>2</sup> while the Institute’s President Craig Calhoun underlines her dual role as “a wonderful leader in both theoretical reason and putting ideas into action.”<sup>3</sup>

The Berggruen Prize is but the latest of many honors presented to Taylor and O’Neill over the years. Taylor’s other major awards include the Templeton Prize, which honors “entrepreneurs of the spirit” who have “made an exceptional contribution to affirming life’s spiritual dimension”;<sup>4</sup> the Kyoto Prize, which is given to “those who have contributed significantly to the scientific, cultural, and spiritual betterment of mankind”;<sup>5</sup> and the John W. Kluge Prize for Achievement in the Study of Humanity administered by the Library of Congress, for which the main criterion of selection is “deep intellectual accomplishment in the study of humanity.”<sup>6</sup> O’Neill, meanwhile, is a past winner of the Holberg Prize, whose stated objective is “to increase awareness of the value of academic scholarship in the arts, humanities, social sciences, law and theology,”<sup>7</sup> and recipient of the Knight Commander’s Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany, which is designed “to draw public attention to achievements that

. . . are of particular value to society generally.”<sup>8</sup> She has been chair, moreover, of the UK Equality and Human Rights Commission and the Nuffield Council on Bioethics and a member of the Human Genetics Advisory Commission—in which roles she strove to implement “just public policies to better the human condition.”<sup>9</sup>

I cite the wording of these prizes and about these public roles because I want to make a point about the relationship between what they uphold to be philosophical merit on the one hand and the practice of academic philosophy on the other. Put briefly, I do not think the one has much to do with the other, and this primarily because what counts toward career success in philosophy today has precious little to do with such ideals as the “advancement of humanity,” “affirming life’s spiritual dimension,” the “spiritual betterment of mankind,” or implementing “just public policies to better the human condition.” Prominence and prestige in university philosophy departments is gauged not so much by one’s “deep intellectual accomplishment” or “value to society” as by the trenchancy and force with which one manages to cut down an opponent. Given this, it should come as no surprise that even within the lamentably cutthroat context of contemporary academia, philosophy departments have a distinct reputation for being especially competitive and combative. In other words, even while philosophy prizes reward rich reflection upon human identity and purpose, the ordinary practice of professional philosophers has shifted from “philosophy as a way of life” (to use Pierre Hadot’s memorable phrase) to philosophy as contention and critique.

It goes without saying that philosophers have always argued with one another. Western philosophy begins with Socrates’s attack on the Sophists as morally bankrupt swindlers seeking not wisdom but renown, and the tendency of philosophers to deny others the garlanded title of “Philosopher” (“Lover of Wisdom”) has proven inveterate ever since. (For a recent instance, we need only note the virulent objections of philosophers around the world to the University of Cambridge awarding an honorary degree to Jacques Derrida in 1992). This argumentative nature of philosophical discourse is of course not confined to the West, as evinced by Zhuangzi’s caricaturing of Confucius’s social uprightness in China, Ratnakīrti’s refutation of the Naiyāyikas’ theism in India, or Averroes’s rejection of Avicenna’s Neoplatonism in Islamdom, to give but a handful from almost infinite possible examples.

As for Charles Taylor and Onora O’Neill, they too have *argued*—sometimes vehemently—with certain philosophical predecessors and peers. Taylor’s communitarian social theory, for instance, is a direct critical reaction to the libertarianism of John Rawls and Robert Nozick, while his seminal work on the persistence and transformation of religion in the modern world systematically dismantles the mainstream narratives of secularization theory. And O’Neill’s seminal espousal of cosmopolitan rather than civic justice (to limit our discussion here to but one of her fields of influence), while developing from the broadly “accepted empiricist views of reason, action, freedom and motivation, not to mention knowledge” of Rawlsian Kantianism, nevertheless seeks to “explore some of the paths not generally taken”<sup>10</sup> in the

relevant debates, and thereby effectively (also) acts as a meta-critique of the discipline itself. Indeed, it should go without saying that Taylor and O’Neill regularly draw on, refine, and/or rebut points raised by thinkers spanning the entire reach of the Western philosophical canon, from Aristotle and Plato, through Augustine, Descartes, and Adam Smith, and on to Kant, Hegel, Heidegger, and the formative voices of our own century.

The combative aspect of philosophy is readily apparent even in the word most commonly used by philosophers to describe the fruits of their endeavors. “Argument” is what a philosopher seeks: He (and the percentage of “hes” as opposed to “shes” among faculty in philosophy departments is much higher than in any other humanities field)<sup>11</sup> gains in status precisely to the extent he succeeds in criticizing the arguments of his opponent and establishing his own. This argumentative mentality is so pervasive that Graham Priest (as prominent a contemporary philosopher as any) has, in a recent essay entitled “What Is Philosophy?” defined philosophy precisely as “critique.” Priest goes on to state that “Criticism is the lifeblood of the discipline,” such that “if philosophers ever ceased disagreeing with one another our profession would be done for.”<sup>12</sup> He is echoed by G. E. R. Lloyd, whose chapter on “What Is Philosophy?” begins unequivocally with the claim that “What counts as ‘philosophy’ is contentious in the extreme, including, indeed especially, among those who call themselves ‘philosophers.’”<sup>13</sup> In the remainder of this piece, I want to propose that not only is this not the only way of doing philosophy, but that it systematically impedes precisely the kind of intellectual depth, breadth, and generosity recognized by major awards such as the Berggruen, Templeton, Kyoto, Kluge, and Holberg Prizes.

I will take my cue from my own field of specialization: Buddhist philosophy. Although there is no shortage of occasions in which the Buddha engaged his interlocutors in argument, it is crucial to keep in mind that on all such occasions his professed aim was not to “win” a given debate as it was to aid his fellow humans alleviate suffering. This compassionate will to forego the peace of secluded silence for the interactive and unending work of helping others see through ignorance is, according to the earliest sources, precisely what led the newly enlightened Buddha to return to the world and engage with its myriad problems. Perhaps the most famous instance of the Buddha’s principled refusal to engage in futile argument occurs in the *Shorter Discourse to Mālunkya-putta*, one of the *Middle Length Suttas* detailing the Buddha’s own instruction. There, the monk Mālunkya-putta takes umbrage with the Buddha for not speculating on metaphysical questions regarding the eternity and infinity of the world, identity of the soul, and life after death. The Buddha responds firstly by pointing out that he never promised answers to any such questions. He then proposes an analogy between one fixated on matters like these and a man struck by a poisoned arrow who, rather than letting a surgeon pull it out, insists on getting answers as to who exactly shot it (including his name, family, height, skin color, provenance, etc.) and what exactly constitutes it (including the bow’s length, bow’s string’s composition, bow’s string’s feather’s provenance, etc.). The Buddha concludes that he has left

certain matters undeclared because to engage in them “is unbeneficial . . . does not lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nirvana.”<sup>14</sup>

This passage needs to be read in the light of numerous others in which the Buddha (and the Buddhist philosophical traditions stemming from his insights) advises us to remain detached from our views—even, indeed especially, if they are right. For while certain views or philosophical positions are, for Buddhists, just plain wrong (e.g., that we are fundamentally unchanging, independent selves) and others are concomitantly right (e.g., that all there is to us is a network of relations), all views—right or wrong—are potentially harmful insofar as they can lead to partiality and egoism. On this basis, philosophers in major centers of learning throughout the Buddhist world would, over the course of many centuries, invent and adopt innumerable techniques with which to undermine their own philosophical positions. This was not done because they conceived of their own teachings as somehow paradoxical or untenable, nor was it the result of faulty reasoning or some kind of “Oriental” inability to argue rationally. Rather, the Buddha and his philosophical heirs endeavored to remain detached from philosophical views, including their own, because they remained keenly aware of the suffocating grip conceited confidence in one’s own intellectual prowess could have.

If I have described it clearly, the Buddhist disavowal of argument for argument’s sake (or argument for the sake of winning it) should contrast sharply with my characterization of professional philosophy as inveterately argumentative. Just as importantly, however, the Buddhist approach to philosophy—according to which argument and critique are employed only insofar as they are deemed beneficial to both proponent and opponent—appears to share much in common with the mandate of philosophy prizes such as those mentioned above. The Berggruen Prize, after all, is awarded not for arguments that beat other arguments, but “for ideas that shape the world,” on the understanding that—in the Berggruen Philosophy and Culture Center’s own words—“philosophy is vital not just as an academic discipline but as a source of intellectual and moral orientation in the world.”<sup>15</sup> It thus makes perfect sense that the inaugural Berggruen Prize should go to a philosopher whose lifework is stamped with a profound appreciation for the diverse and relational nature of self and world, and who has consequently argued forcefully for mutual recognition and peaceful coexistence, and that its second installment should go to a “citizen philosopher” who holds a long and distinguished record of applying her theoretical acumen on resolutely “political” topics (in the Aristotelian sense) to far-reaching public service. Such ideals, while incompatible with an attitude of ideological hostility, accord perfectly with the aims of the Buddhist philosophical enterprise, in which ideas that are not helpful are shunned as sophistry, and true love of wisdom must go hand-in-hand with care for one’s fellow feeling beings.

**NOTES**

1. “The Berggruen Prize,” Berggruen Institute, <http://philosophyandculture.berggruen.org/councils/berggruen-prize>.

2. “\$1 Million Annual Berggruen Prize for Philosophy and Culture Awarded to Citizen Philosopher Onora O’Neill,” Berggruen Institute, <http://philosophyandculture.berggruen.org/activities/1116>.
3. Ibid.
4. Templeton Prize, <http://www.templetonprize.org/abouttheprize.html>.
5. “About Kyoto Prize,” Kyoto Prize, <http://www.kyotoprize.org/en/about/>.
6. “The John W. Kluge Center at the Library of Congress,” Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/loc/kluge/prize/>.
7. “About the Holberg Prize,” Holberg Prize, <http://www.holbergprize.no/en/about-holberg-prize>.
8. “The Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany,” Der Bundespräsident, <http://www.bundespraesident.de/EN/Role-and-Functions/HonoursAndDecorations/TheOrderOfMerit/theorderofmerit-node.html>.
9. “\$1 Million Annual Berggruen Prize for Philosophy and Culture Awarded to Citizen Philosopher Onora O’Neill,” Berggruen Institute, <http://philosophyandculture.berggruen.org/activities/1116>.
10. O’Neill, Onora. *Bounds of Justice*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 2.
11. American Philosophical Association Pacific Division Executive Committee, “Program Review Report [Gender Composition], 2004–2011,” [https://www.apaonline.org/resource/group/bf785b0d-eb59-41f8-9436-1c9c26f50f8e/program\\_review\\_report.2004-1.pdf](https://www.apaonline.org/resource/group/bf785b0d-eb59-41f8-9436-1c9c26f50f8e/program_review_report.2004-1.pdf).
12. Graham Priest, “What Is Philosophy?” *Philosophy (Issue 2)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, April 2006), 203 fn9 and 189.
13. G. E. R. Lloyd, “What Is Philosophy?” *Disciplines in the Making: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Elites, Learning, and Innovation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 5.
14. *Cūlamālukya Sutta* (63:8) in Bhikku Nānamoli and Bhikku Bodhi. (trans.) *Majjhima Nikāya: The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995), 536.
15. “The Berggruen Prize,” Berggruen Institute, <http://philosophyandculture.berggruen.org/councils/berggruen-prize>.

## ONTOLOGY, LOGIC, AND EPISTEMOLOGY

### Īśvaravāda: A Critique

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Who created the world? What is the purpose behind human life? What is the cause of the world appearance? Believers raise these questions and claim that the world must have a creator; He must have some purpose behind creation of the human world and the world’s appearance as a whole. They also claim that the Creator must be omniscient, omnipotent, and must respond to our prayer and worship. Here the question arises whether their claims are justified.

From the other side the non-believers claim that there cannot be any omniscient, omnipotent creator God. The discourse on theism and atheism is not only ontological, it is very much concerned with human life. Theists and atheists correlate their ontological claims with the meaning they attach to human life, the values to be cherished or not to be cherished in life.

Believers generally believe that one cannot be moral without being religious and one cannot be religious without believing in God. But the diverse Indian philosophical tradition does not support this view. The Lokāyata School can be said to advocate a hedonist or utilitarian morality. But it can hardly be called a religious school. Schools like Sāṅkhya-Yoga, Pūrvamīmāṃsā, Jainism, and Buddhism can be called not only moral, but also “religious” because they have their concepts of sacred—which are related to other worlds and life after death, and also ritualistic or sacred practices. But these schools do not accept the concept of creator God.

Which are the schools that accept the existence of God, then?

Even schools like Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika, which later on became strong advocates of theism, were not theistic in their early form. And though Vedānta literature presents different forms of theism—non-dualistic, qualified-dualistic dualistic, and so on—all forms of Vedānta do not acknowledge themselves as theistic. For example, the absolute non-dualism of Śaṅkara distinguishes the Brahman from Īśvara and regards only the former as the ultimate reality.

But in later development of the system of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Vedānta and the school like Kashmir Śāivism, we find the growth of theism and we find today that belief in God in some form or another is regarded as a defining feature of Vedic culture or Hindu culture. Now they say only that there is diversity of the conceptions of God in Hinduism. God can be a part of our life in the form of any deity—visible or invisible, personal or impersonal, with qualities or without qualities (saguṇa or nirguṇa). I will not go into the diversity of the conception of God. In this paper I will deal with two most basic conceptions of God. I will call one the *upādāna* concept of God and the other the *nimitta* concept of God. That is, God as the material cause of the world and God as the efficient cause of the world.

### UPĀDĀNA CONCEPT OF GOD

According to this concept, God is the foundation of everything. Either one may say that God creates the world from himself (for the sake of brevity I am calling God “He”; it could be She also, or it could be a union of He and She) or that God creates the world from nothing. Here, one is not saying that there is already some preeminent material, which God only assembles. So one who follows the Upādāna type of theism would say that there is no matter or souls existing over and above God. He may either say that they are manifestations of God himself or that the so-called matter and souls are just superimpositions or illusions, *adhyāsa* or *māyā*.

As far as I understand, Kevalādvaita Vedānta propagated by Śaṅkara follows the Upādāna concept of God. Of course, some Kevalādvaita-Vedāntins may not agree with this view. They would say that according to them, the ultimate reality is Brahman and not Īśvara. With due apologies, I claim that Kevalādvaitins are playing with words.

Śaṅkarācārya accepts the definition of Brahman, namely, *janmādy asya yataḥ* (Brahman is that from which all this

originates, due to which it is sustained and in which everything merges at the end).<sup>1</sup> He also asserts that Brahman is omniscient and omnipotent.<sup>2</sup> He also accepts the description of Brahman as full of bliss *ānandamaya*.<sup>3</sup>

It is true that Īśvara in the Kevalādvaita-Vedānta is described as Brahman conditioned by māya. But māya is *anirvacanīya*, which means that it is neither real nor unreal, that it is neither identical with Brahman, nor different from Brahman.<sup>4</sup> This is confusing. One of the implications of this description is that Brahman can be identified as Īśvara from a conventional or practical point of view, though it cannot be so identified from the ultimate point of view. But to say that they are not identical is not to say that they are absolutely different. For me, what Vedāntins accept at a practical level is more important than what they accept as “ultimate truth.”

Advaitin’s position that Brahman creates the universe from itself, like a spider creates a web from its own body,<sup>5</sup> and the Christian view that God creates universe from “nothing” or from mere word<sup>6</sup> are on par. According to both views, God is the sole cause of the universe. Hence, He can be regarded as wholly responsible for the universe.

In the context of this type of theism, the difference between real and illusory, between real and imaginary, between real and verbal get blurred. What is just a play of imagination for God is real for us. God is like a magician who creates an illusory world, but it becomes a reality for us. What is just a word for God is the world for us. But who are we before whom God creates this magical world? For Christians, we are ourselves his creations, his creatures. For Advaitins, the answer can oscillate between two extremes: We are either illusory appearances of Brahman, or we are ultimately identical with Brahman. But one can ask at this stage: Does God take full responsibility for his creation?

The God of Christianity is not only omniscient and omnipotent but is omni-good. He is full of love and compassion. The Brahman of Vedāntins is also omniscient and omnipotent and it is full of bliss (*ānanda*).

This leads to a serious problem, famously called the problem of evil.

If God is omniscient, omnipotent, and full of all goodness, why is there suffering in this world? The responsibility of the evil which manifests through cruelty and suffering cannot be assigned to human beings, as they themselves are either divine creations or identical with Brahman/God. Since we have to accept the existence of evil in the world, there must be something wrong about the nature of God/Brahman we presupposed. God must be deficient in some way or the other. He must be deficient either in knowledge and power or deficient in his goodness—his love and compassion—or he must be deficient in more factors than one. God cannot shun his responsibility by saying that he has given free will to human beings, and if they suffer, they suffer because of their imperfections. The question would be, why does the perfect God create imperfect beings at all?

Can Advaitin be excused for saying that after all suffering is due to ignorance or misconception, because they are not clear on the question whether ignorance or misconception is real or unreal? If ignorance and misconception are real and the suffering arising from them is equally real (which I can grant, in a sense), then this implies a deficiency in God who has to allow such a rival force to exist.

Vedāntins cannot escape by saying that ultimately both ignorance and suffering are unreal. Suffering is a matter of our true experience and it cannot be said to be illusory. Advaita-Vedāntin's claim that the world and the suffering in it are illusory on the basis that they get sublated (*bādhita*), that they are transitory.

I think the major mistake Advaita-Vedāntins commit is the confusion between *bādhā* (sublation) and *nāśā* (cessation). They use illusion as the model for explaining world experience. One has an illusion of silver in place of a conch shell. When one has the veridical perception of the conch shell, the silver-experience is sublated; one does not experience silver there. Advaitins claim that Brahman experience sublates the world experience in a similar way. But this does not follow. We could grant that the world experience, which has subject-object-duality, ceases (temporarily?) at the time of Brahman-experience, which lacks such a duality. This is just a case of stoppage or cessation (*nāśā*) of one experience and arising of a new experience. It does not follow from this that the world-experience gets sublated or falsified (*bādhita*) by the Brahman experience. Similarly, though one grants that suffering ceases due to Brahman-experience, it does not follow from this that the reality of sufferings which one experienced before gets falsified by the so-called Brahman-experience.

Hence, I am suggesting that the problem of evil becomes a serious problem in the context of the *upādāna* conception of God. Hence it became a problem for the conceptions of God in Semitic religions and Kevalāvaita Vedānta in India.

The scholars of Indian philosophy many times claim that the religious schools of Indian philosophy answer the problem of evil on the basis of the doctrine of karma. The pleasures and sufferings of human beings are governed by their past karma and not by God. This answer to the problem of evil is not suitable for Advaita-Vedānta. That is because since the individual *jīva* cannot be ultimately differenced from Brahman, the individual karma, too, cannot be isolated from Brahman.

It could be stated here that at least in the case of a dualistic conception of God when individual souls differ from God and God is supposed to be an efficient cause (*nimittakāraṇa*) of the world rather than a material cause (*upādānakāraṇa*), God can be detached, to a certain extent, from the individual actions, merit, and demerit generated by them and their fruition. As Krishna of the *Gītā* says, "God does not take away demerit or merit of anyone. Knowledge is covered by ignorance. Living beings get deluded due to that."<sup>7</sup> This takes us to the *nimittakāraṇa* conception of God.

## NIMITTAKĀRAṆA CONCEPT OF GOD

The system which forcefully presented and defended the *nimittakāraṇa* concept of God is the joint system of Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika in its later stage (starting from Udyotakara). Of course, between the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika systems, it is the Naiyāyikas who took lead in presenting arguments for the existence of God. But the arguments of Naiyāyikas were largely based on Vaiśeṣika metaphysics. Hence, I am calling them Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika arguments or Nyāya arguments interchangeably.

The God of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika system is *nimittakāraṇa* of the world, like a potter is of a pot or a sculptor is of a sculpture. He rearranges the basic material that is already present. God in this sense is a maker rather than "creator." That is because, according to Vaiśeṣika, metaphysics there are many eternal substances and hence they cannot be created by anyone. For instance, the atoms of four gross elements, ether (*ākāśa*), space, time, souls (*ātman*), and minds (*manas*) are all eternal. God cannot create them; He cannot destroy them either.

God can combine atoms to produce molecules, or he can produce qualities in some substances. For example, he can produce pleasures and pains in souls according to their merit and demerit produced by the past karma. By doing so he implements the law of karma. But God is not supposed to change the essential nature (*svabhāva*) of things. The essential characters or defining characters of all the nine substances which the Vaiśeṣika system accepts are not supposed to be determined by God. Nor can God interfere with the essential natures. Hence the God of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika system is supposed to be omniscient and omnigood also, but he is not omnipotent in the absolute sense of the term.

Though the God is not the creator of the basic substances or of their essential natures, when any changes take place in these substances, when two substances join or are separated or when any new quality or motion arises in the substances, God is one of the general causes due to which it happens. Naiyāyikas accept a series of general causes (*sādhāraṇa-kāraṇa*).<sup>8</sup> They include God, his knowledge, desire, and effort.

Why are God and his above qualities regarded as general causes? What role they play in the causal process is not made clear by the Naiyāyikas. For example, when a potter makes a pot by joining two halves of the pot, by placing them on the wheel, and by rotating it, the Naiyāyikas will regard the two halves as the inherent cause (or material cause, *samvāyikāraṇa*), the conjunction of the two halves of the pot as the non-inherent cause (*asamvāyikāraṇa*), and the potter, his knowledge, desire, efforts, and the instruments he uses, as the efficient causes or instrumental causes (*nimittakāraṇa*). All these causal factors operate according to their essential natures, and God does not seem to have any role in their operation.

I think we can make sense of God's role as *sādhāraṇa-kāraṇa* by considering it in connection with *dharma* and *adharma*, that is, merit and demerit. According to the Naiyāyikas, any event takes place for someone's pleasure or pain, and any

living being (*jīva*) experiences pleasure due to *dharma* and he or she experiences pain due to *adharma*. In this sense, *dharma* and *adharma*, which are the essential factors in the operation of karma doctrine, are the general causes common to all events.

As we saw, the implementation of karma doctrine is done by God. In this sense, God can be regarded as the general cause of all events through the operation of karma doctrine. This role of God presupposes moral argument for the existence of God, which we will consider later. Before we examine the Nyāya arguments for the existence of God, let us consider some other features of God accepted by Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika.

God of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika is a special kind of soul (*ātman*) called *paramātman*. An ordinary soul (*jīvātman*) has eight special qualities—cognition, desire, aversion, effort, pleasure, pain, unseen disposition (merit-demerit), and impression.<sup>9</sup> Of these, God has only three—cognition, desire, and effort. The special qualities that God has are permanent. Ordinary souls produce or destroy things with the help of body, with the help of limbs. God, however, creates and destroys the world without using body, because he has no body.

God creates and destroys the world not once but innumerable times. This is in accordance with past *karma* of souls and *dharma* and *adharma* produced by them. Since the cycle of *karma* and its fruition has no beginning, the cycle of creation and destruction of the world has no beginning. Hence there is no absolute creation (or the first creation) or absolute destruction (once for all) of the world.

Creation of the world involves creation of molecules and compounds from material atoms, from which animal bodies, including human bodies, are created and are associated with *jīvātman*s according to the merit and demerit accumulated by the latter. It also involves creation of the four *varṇas*.<sup>10</sup> God, having created the world, also creates Vedas and Sanskrit language. Destruction of the world involves suspension of life of the *jīvas* and disintegration of matter into atoms. God does this in order to give a long rest to *jīvas*,<sup>11</sup> though he cannot liberate them on his own.

## NYĀYA ARGUMENTS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD: CLASSIFICATION

After this brief descriptive account of God and his sport, let us discuss in brief the argumentative account. The Nyāya arguments for the existence of God are first found in the fifth- to sixth-century work, *Nyāyavārtika* of Udyotakara. They are found in many later Nyāya works such as those of ninth- and tenth-century Nyāya philosophers Jayantabhaṭṭa, Bhāsarvajña, and Vācaspatiśrī. Udayana's (eleventh century) *Nyāyakusumanjali* is regarded as a classic on this theme. After Udayana, Gaṅgopādhyāya (fourteenth century) devotes a section of his *Tattvacintāmaṇi* to *Isvarānumāna*.

It is not possible to discuss all different arguments advanced by the Naiyāyikas in different texts in a short span. But we can deal with the major arguments. Karl Potter, in his introduction to the second volume of the *Encyclopedia of*

*Indian Philosophies*, classifies the Nyāya arguments into three groups which he calls

- 1) Cosmo-teleological arguments,
- 2) Arguments from existence of language and the authorship of the Vedas, and
- 3) Negative-ontological arguments.<sup>12</sup>

I will follow here his method of classifying arguments into groups, though I may differ in my mode of grouping.

For example, I would distinguish between cosmological and teleological argument (or argument from design) and state them separately.

Secondly, the Naiyāyikas also advance an argument from diversity (*vaicitrya*) caused by karma,<sup>13</sup> which I feel can be called a kind of moral argument for the existence of God.

Hence, I would like to divide Nyāya argument for the existence of God into six types as follows:

- A) Negative Ontological Argument
- B) Cosmological Argument
- C) Teleological Argument (Argument from design)
- D) Moral Argument
- E) Argument from authorship of the Vedas
- F) Argument from the creation of (Sanskrit) language

Let us consider these arguments one by one.

### A) NEGATIVE ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

Udayana, in the third chapter of *Nyāyakusumanjali*, has suggested an ontological argument for the existence of God. It is different from the famous ontological argument which derives the existence of God from the conception of God as a perfect being. But still it is an ontological argument because it is based on the concept of existence. Potter calls it negative ontological argument because here Naiyāyikas are not proving that God must be existent, but they are arguing that nonexistence of God cannot be proved.

Atheists claim that God is not found anywhere; hence, we can say that God does not exist. God is similar to horn of a hare about which we can say that they do not exist. This can be called an argument from nonapprehension (*anupalabhi*). The argument will run as follows: "If horn of a hare would have existed, it would have been seen. But it is not seen anywhere. Therefore, it must be nonexistent. Similarly, if God would have existed, he would have been perceived. But he is not perceived anywhere. Hence God must be nonexistent."

Naiyāyikas argue against this that nonapprehension (which is reducible to perception, according to them) can be a means to the knowledge of nonexistence of an

object if the object is capable of being perceived (*yogya*). But God is an object which cannot be perceived. Hence, nonapprehension of the entity called God cannot be the means to the proof of its nonexistence.

Moreover, we cannot genuinely say that God does not exist, because any nonexistence, that is, *abhāva*, is nonexistence of “something” that exists sometime, somewhere. Hence, who asserts nonexistence of God in fact asserts the existence of God sometime, somewhere, in some way or the other. In this context, Udayana treats the logical status of the concepts of God (*īśvara*), Omniscient (*sarvajña*) and maker of the earth and other things (*kṣityādikartā*), as on par. Just as claiming that God does not exist is fallacious, according to him, to claim that “No souls are omniscient” or “No soul is a maker of the world” is fallacious because we cannot deny the existence of such a being without presupposing it.<sup>14</sup>

Here, Udayana seems to distinguish the statement “God does not exist” from the statement, “A horn of a hare does not exist.” Udayana restates the statement, “A horn of a hare does not exist” as “There is no horn which belongs to a hare.”<sup>15</sup> But he is not inclined to analyze the statement “God does not exist” in a similar fashion. He seems to treat “horn of a hare” as an analyzable complex concept, but God as an unanalyzable simple concept. On this assumption, the Nyāya argument would appear as obvious.<sup>16</sup>

Here, a question can be asked: Is the concept of God an indivisible simple concept, like the concept of “yellow” or the concept of “good” which G. E. Moore described to be indefinable and simple?<sup>17</sup> Or is it a complex concept?

What is the meaning of the word “God”? A Vedāntin might claim that he conceives of God as “pure consciousness” and hence it is a simple concept for him. Of course, even such a claim of the Vedāntin would be dubious. It would be open to question whether the simple consciousness he conceives of is an arbitrary consciousness or an all-pervasive cosmic consciousness. In other words, the Vedāntin will have to qualify pure consciousness, make the concept complex in order to give it the status of God.

Whatever Vedāntin’s case may be, Naiyāyika cannot understand God as a pure and simple concept. God for him is the supreme self (*paramātmān*), which is efficient cause (*nimittakāraṇa*) of the world. The most minimalistic concept of God or *īśvara* is that of the maker of the world. So the question whether God exists is not a question like whether “yellow” exists or whether “good” exists. But it is a question whether the maker of the world exists. In other words, it is a question whether the world has a maker. One who denies the existence of God is simply saying that the world has no maker. The grammar of this statement is similar to that of “a hare does not have a horn.” So denial of the existence of God is similar to the denial of horn of a hare.

Of course, the Naiyāyikas must have been aware of this fact and hence they do not insist on the negative ontological argument as their major argument for the existence of God. Their major arguments are cosmological or teleological, which simply try to prove that the world must have a maker. So let us turn to these arguments.

## B) COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

Naiyāyikas try to prove that the world has a maker by giving different cosmological and teleological arguments. Even their teleological arguments have a basic cosmological structure. So one can say that their teleological argument is not an independent argument, but it is a strengthened or complicated form of the cosmological argument. Hence, Karl Potter has clubbed the two types of the Nyāya arguments together and called it cosmo-teleological argument. I feel, however, that for the purpose of clearer understanding of the Nyāya argument, one should first understand the basic structure of their cosmological argument and then understand the teleological argument as a special case of it.

## C) STRUCTURE OF THE COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

Stated in a rough or crude form, the Nyāya cosmological argument states that the world must have a maker like a pot has a potter. Popularly, the argument is presented in the form of a verse:

If the world has no maker,  
then a pot without a potter,  
and a painting without a painter  
will come about by itself.<sup>18</sup>

But the argument does not remain as simple as that on the background of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika ontology. The ontological structure of the world which is at the background of this argument has the following features:

According to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika ontology, the universe can be divided into three kinds of objects or *padārthas*:

1. *Nitya-padārthas* or eternal objects.
2. Non-eternal objects which are “made” by someone. This would include artefacts like pots, cloths, pictures, sculptures, and houses.
3. Non-eternal objects which are not humanmade which we may generally call natural or nature-made objects, such as animal-bodies, trees, mountains, and rivers.

On the background of this ontological structure, the Naiyāyikas are trying to argue that the third group of objects, which includes animal-bodies, trees, and so on, must be like the second group—that is, that of the objects made by humans. Now, the natural objects are not made by humans. So they must be made by some non-human or super-human agent. That super-human agent is nothing but God.

Though this is a kind of analogical inference, the Naiyāyikas give it the form of a valid argument by supporting it with a universal statement (the statement of pervasion) that whatever is a product (*kārya*) has a maker.

Different Naiyāyikas have formulated the cosmological argument in different ways. Ratnakīrti states a simple

formula in the form of a five-step inferential statement (*pañcāvayavi-vākya*) as follows:

- (i) The object under discussion [that is, our world/the earth or anything like it] has been constructed by an intelligent agent
- (ii) On account of being an effect
- (iii) Each and every effect has been constructed by an intelligent agent, just like a pot.
- (iv) And the [world/earth] is an effect.
- (v) Therefore, it has been constructed by an intelligent agent.<sup>19</sup>

Naiyāyikas, however, do not always state their inference in the form of a five-step argument. For the sake of brevity, they state it as having three factors: Declaration (*pratijñā*), Reason (*hetu*), and Instance (*dīṣṭānta*). For instance, Naiyāyikas would state the above argument as follows:

The object under discussion has been constructed by an intelligent agent,

On account of being an effect,

Like a pot.

In order to understand and examine the Nyāya inference, it is important to note some of the technical terms. To start with, there are three basic terms: *pakṣa*, *hetu*, and *sadhya*. *Pakṣa* is the locus or the property-bearer where the existence of *sadhyadharmā* (target-property) is to be established. This is done on the basis of the *hetudharma* (reason-property), which is supposed to be existent in the locus.

According to Nyāya theory of inference, a reason-property, in order to be sound, has to fulfill five conditions:

- 1) It should exist in the locus (*pakṣe sattvam*).
- 2) It should exist in at least some of the similar cases (*sapakṣe sattvam*).
- 3) It should be nonexistent in all the dissimilar cases (*vipakṣe asattvam*).
- 4) The existence of the target-property should not be sublated by a stronger *pramāṇa* (*abādhitaviśayatvam*).
- 5) An equally strong counter-inference should not be available (*asatpratipakṣatvam*).

Here, the terms *sapakṣa* (similar cases) and *vipakṣa* (dissimilar cases) need to be defined. *Sapakṣa* means the set of all those cases where the target-property definitely exists, and *vipakṣa* means a set of all those cases where the target-property is definitely nonexistent. *Pakṣa* is the locus where the existence of the target-property is yet to be decided.

Now let us see how the Naiyāyikas skillfully construct their cosmological argument so that the reason-property appears to fulfill all the five conditions. Take a simple formation of the argument:

The things like human bodies, mountains, and the earth have an intelligent maker because they are products, like a pot.

Here

- i) The property of having an intelligent maker (that is, being made by an intelligent being) is the target-property.
- ii) Being a product is the reason-property and
- iii) All the things, which are products but are not human-made, constitute the locus (*pakṣa*).
- iv) *Sapakṣa* consists of the things which definitely have a maker—whether a human maker or a non-human one.
- v) *Vipakṣa* consists of the things which are definitely devoid of a maker. Here, the eternal substances constitute *vipakṣa*.

Naiyāyikas in this way, by skillfully arranging *pakṣa*, *sapakṣa* and *vipakṣa*, try to show that the reason property (“being a product”) exists in the locus, namely, the natural products; it exists in similar cases (*sapakṣa*), that is, in the things which have a maker (for example, it does exist in the human-made things); and that it does not exist in dissimilar cases (*vipakṣa*), that is, in the things which have no maker (that is, the eternal things such as atoms, souls, time, and space are not products at all and hence the possibility of the reason-property, namely, product-hood existing there is ruled out.). Naiyāyikas also point out that the target-property—namely, the existence of a maker—is not sublated by other means and that there is no equally strong counter-inference.

The tricky part of the Nyāya argument is that though the inference contains a universal statement which covers all the cases, the locus, similar cases, and dissimilar cases, the truth of it is tested on the basis of existence and nonexistence of the reason-property in similar and dissimilar cases, respectively. All the problematic cases where the existence of a maker can be doubted are made a part of the locus, and a Naiyāyika has an excuse for not trying to show in advance that a maker exists in such problematic cases.

Naiyāyikas derive omniscience of God as a corollary of the above inference. In the case of a pot, one can say that its maker—namely, potter—has the knowledge of the relevant causal factors necessary for producing a pot. Similarly, God, the maker of the world, must have knowledge of all the causal factors that are needed for the production of the world, such as atoms, souls, and the merit and demerit accumulated by them, time, space, and so on. This point is sometimes made explicit in the target-property itself.



Vācaspatimiśra's argument, for instance, runs as follows:

The objects under discussion namely body, tree, mountain, ocean and others are made by the one who knows the material cause and other things.

Because they are products.

Whatever is a product, is made by someone who knows its material cause and other things, for instance, a palace and other things are such products.

The objects under discussion such as body are like that.

Therefore, they are like that.<sup>20</sup>

Sometimes the argument is made more specific by referring to the situation at the time of the origination of the world. According to the Vaiśeṣika story of the genesis of the world, the world in the state of dissolution consists of atoms (*paramāṇu*) separated and scattered. When God decides to create the world, the first step is to join the atoms and construct the dyads (*dvaṇuka*), then join three dyads each and make triads (*tryaṇuka*), and so on and so forth. Naiyāyikas claim that there must be an intelligent agent existing prior to the origination of the world who joins the atoms, and he is God. Udayana argues,

The atoms, dyads etc. become active only by being impelled by some sentient agent as they are insentient or inert like the pickaxe and other instruments of movement. If this were not so, then the rule that 'no effect without a cause' cannot hold.<sup>21</sup>

### EXAMINING THE ARGUMENT

Whether this kind of cosmological argument for the existence of God is strong enough can be doubted. Three objections can be considered here, two of which come from Buddhists like Dharmakīrti, Śāntarakṣita, and Ratnakīrti, and one that comes from a group of Carvākas.

- a) **The question of vyāpti-relation:** With the development of the theory of inference, a statement of universal concomitance was accepted as a necessary component of an inference. But the question was, how can the relation of universal concomitance be ascertained? Naiyāyikas maintained that such a relation between reason-property and target-property can be ascertained on the basis of observation of co-existence (*sahacāradarśana*) and nonobservation of deviation (*vyabhicāra-adarśana*). Dharmakīrti did not accept this. According to him, universal concomitance can be ascertained if it is based on necessary relation. And a necessary relation between reason-property and target-property can be obtained in only two ways: there should be either identity (*tādātmya*) or casual relation (*tadutpatti*) between the two.<sup>22</sup> No such necessary relation is obtained between "being a product" and "being made by an

intelligent being." It is perfectly possible that a thing may be a product but is not made by anyone. Hence the Nyāya argument suffers from the fallacy of *Anaikāntika* (inconclusive), according to the Buddhists.<sup>23</sup>

It might be argued here that God, according to Nyāya, is a cause of the world and since Buddhists accept *tadutpatti* as a determiner of *vyāpti*, they should not have any problem with the causal argument for God advanced by Nyāya. The answer is that the Buddhists do not have any problem with the law of causation in general, which means that everything that happens has a cause. Buddhists develop their theory of causation, which includes fourfold classification of causal conditions (*pratyaya*),<sup>24</sup> just as Naiyāyikas develop their theory of causation, which includes threefold classification of causes.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, both Buddhists and Naiyāyikas regard cause as a necessary condition of the effect. But the main question here is not about cause in general but "intelligent agent" as the cause. Naiyāyikas believe that an intelligent agent is a necessary condition of every effect. Naiyāyikas generalize the case of human product and apply it to every effect. The Buddhists are not ready to do that. They are ready to accept the products such as pots, cloths, mansions, and staircases as caused by intelligent agents but not natural products such as bodies, earth, and mountains. Even with regard to combinations (*saṃghāta*) of atoms, the realist school of Buddhism would accept that they are causally conditioned, but they would question the view that an atomic combination must be made by an intelligent agent.<sup>26</sup>

- b) **"Iṣṭavighātakṛt-virudha":** The other fallacy in the cosmological argument that the Buddhists point out is *"Iṣṭavighātakṛt-virudha"* (The contrary reason which violates the intended target). This is as follows. What the Naiyāyikas intend to prove through the cosmological argument is the maker of the world, who is omniscient, omnipotent, the one who operates without body or organs. But the evidence for that which the Naiyāyikas provide is that of the "makers" (such as a potter, a sculptor, and so on) who are essentially embodied and possess limited knowledge and power. The force of the evidence implies that the maker of the world also must be embodied and imperfect. Hence, the force of the reason property proves something contrary to the intended target.<sup>27</sup>

We have seen that the Naiyāyikas try to derive omniscience of God as a corollary from the cosmological argument itself. Just as a potter knows all the causal factors related to the production of a pot, God must be the knower of production of the world.

There are some loopholes in the argument. It is not necessary that every potter is an expert in making pots. He could have inadequate knowledge, and

every pot produced by him may not be a good pot. If God is also like that, then he may not have perfect knowledge of all the relevant factors, and the world he has created may not be an ideal world.

Buddhists raise a different objection against the Nyāya claim for God's omniscience. Naiyāyikas claim that God is one.<sup>28</sup> But this does not follow from the nature of human-made products which cosmological argument uses as evidence. On the contrary, there are many human products which are produced collectively by many imperfect agents. As Śāntarākṣita argues,

This is as follows. The things such as a mansion, staircase, gateway of a temple and watchtower are determinately preceded by many persons who have impermanent knowledge. For the same reason, your reason-property violates the intended target because it proves that the world is preceded by many makers who have impermanent knowledge.<sup>29</sup>

- c) **Īśvara as nonempirical object:** A different criticism of the Nyāya theism comes from a group of Cārvākas called "more learned Cārvākas" (Suśikṣitatara-cārvāka). Popularly, Cārvākas are known for rejection of inference as *pramāṇa*. But the more learned Cārvākas classified inference into two kinds: *utpanna-pratīti* (the object of which is experienced) and *utpādya-pratīti* (the object of which is yet to be experienced); in other words, inference of an empirical object and that of a nonempirical object. For example, inference of fire from smoke is *utpanna-pratīti* because the object of that inference—namely, fire—is empirical. The inference of *Īśvara* is *utpādya-pratīti* because it is about a nonempirical object.<sup>30</sup> This second type of inference is not acceptable to these Cārvākas. We can explain the Cārvāka criticism as follows: in the inference of *Īśvara*, Naiyāyikas are using the evidence of the empirical objects and their empirical makers, for example, pot and the potter, sculpture and the sculptor, and so on. But they are using these empirical evidences for proving God, who is essentially nonempirical. And this is not permissible.<sup>31</sup>

These are some of the major objections coming from Buddhists and Cārvākas against the Nyāya cosmological argument. One can notice here that in any theological theorization on God, one has to face the tension between the personal and the impersonal, the embodied and disembodied, the imperfect and the perfect. The God's concept is modelled on an ordinary situation of creation or construction. But simultaneously, it has to be given a universal, all-encompassing, transcendent character, and hence it deviates from the basic characteristics of creation or construction. And because of that, many paradoxes arise. We find this in Nyāya as well.

An ordinary creator or maker is an embodied being, and in fact the use of the body is an essential part of the act of producing anything. But though we create many things through our body, we do not create our own body. Can we apply this model to God? If God is supposed to be the maker of every product, and if he has a body, then he should create his body also. But for producing or constructing anything, we need a body. So for producing or constructing his body, God will need another body; for producing this second body, he will need a third body, and this will go on ad infinitum. To avoid this infinite regress, we imagine that it should be possible for God to produce anything without using body.

This seems to lead Naiyāyikas to think that God produces the universe without using body or organs, and that God has no body, and no organs. This makes God a mystical being.

A similar question arises about other properties of God, namely, cognition, desire, and effort. In the ordinary case of productive act, the producer's cognition, desire, and effort are operative, which, according to Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika metaphysics, are the qualities of *ātman*. But in an ordinary production situation the effort, which is mental in nature, does not directly give rise to the physical product. The mental effort (*prayatna*) gives rise to physical action (*ceṣṭā*), which in its turn brings about the physical product. In the case of God, since God is *ātman* without a physical body, he can perhaps have cognition, desire, and effort (*jñāna*, *icchā*, and *prayatna*). But after *prayatna* no *ceṣṭā* is possible. Without a physical action, God brings about the physical product directly. This is a leap from ordinary production situation to an extraordinary situation.<sup>32</sup>

These are not the only leaps. Many other leaps are involved. The ordinary producer's cognition, desire, and effort are all impermanent; they arise due to awakening of past impressions (*saṃskāra*) and maturation of merit and demerit (*dharma* and *adharma*). When they arise in a sequence, they cause physical action (*ceṣṭā*) and through it, they cause actual production. Now, the Naiyāyikas had to accept cognition, desire, and effort in the case of God also. Otherwise, how can God produce or destroy anything without having the knowledge of all the causal factors, without desire to produce, or to destroy and without effort towards production or destruction? But if God's knowledge, desire, and effort are impermanent like those of human beings, and if they are also governed by *saṃskāra*, *dharma*, and *adharma*, then God will be like an ordinary being, an imperfect being who is in bondage. To avoid this difficulty, the Naiyāyikas imagine that though God has cognition, desire, and effort, they are eternal in their nature. They also imagine that God knows everything directly, without the use of sense organs, memory, and so on.<sup>33</sup>

It is doubtful whether this can help the Naiyāyikas. On the contrary, the ideas of eternal knowledge of everything, eternal desire, and eternal effort give rise to many paradoxes. Take the case of God's knowledge. According to the Naiyāyikas, God can have only direct knowledge (*pratyakṣa-jñāna*); he cannot have indirect knowledge (*parokṣa-jñāna*) because indirect knowledge is based on

memory and memory is based on *saṃskāras*. God does not have *saṃskāras*. This implies that God sees everything, but he cannot recollect anything; he cannot think or imagine or infer anything.

But in that case God will have the knowledge only of the present, neither of the past nor of the future. How does he know past? Does he know past as past or as present? If he knows past as past, he has to know it through recollection, which is not possible. If he knows past as present (because he knows it “directly”), then he has a false cognition (because he does not know the thing as it is).

There is a problem about the so-called eternal knowledge also. A potter while producing a pot does not have a constant knowledge, but he undergoes a cognitive process. Only through a process, which involves change, can the potter’s knowledge participate in the production of the pot. How can God’s knowledge, which is supposed to be constant, nonchanging, participate in the process of creation or destruction of the world? Such a constant knowledge will be rather stubborn and will be a hindrance in the natural process of creation or destruction.<sup>34</sup>

God’s desire will give rise to paradoxes in a similar way. “God has a permanent desire.” What does this mean? In fact, it makes no sense. God has permanent desire to do what? To create the world? In that case he will permanently create the universe and never sustain or destroy it. If it is to destroy the universe, then he will always destroy and never produce anything. If he has permanent desire to produce as well as to destroy, then the two conflicting desires will cancel each other and nothing will result from it. The same type of paradoxes will arise in the case of God’s effort also if it is taken to be permanent.

The general form of the paradox of the cognitive and psychological characters of God can be stated as follows. If God’s cognitive and psychological faculties are similar to those of other agents, then God will be an ordinary, imperfect being, a being in bondage. But if God’s faculties are extraordinary and eternal in nature, then they will be unable to perform their productive function.

### C) TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT (ARGUMENT FROM DESIGN)

Cosmological Argument for the existence of God, as Naiyāyikas present it, is based on broad similarities between the human products and products in general. While presenting the argument from design, the Naiyāyikas try to go further. They draw our attention to the order (*racanā*, *saṃsthāna*, *sanniveśa*, or *vyavasthā*) that we find in the universe. They say that the order or regularity or arrangement that we see in the universe is not possible without an extraordinarily intelligent maker. Ordinary architects cannot bring about such an order. So the maker of this well-ordered universe must be a supremely intelligent and powerful being. He must be omniscient and omnipotent. We find this argument in Nyāya and also in Śaṅkara’s commentary on Brahmasūtra 2.2.1, namely, “*racanānupapatteś ca nānumānam*,” where Śaṅkara tries to refute the Sāṅkhya position that the insentient *Prakṛti*

creates the universe without the support of any intelligent being.

### CRITICISM

Buddhists have tried to show that this argument from design is untenable. Dharmakīrti in *Pramāṇavārtika* argues:

It would be proper to infer the conscious support of a thing having a specific pattern (i.e., arrangement of elements) if there is invariable concomitance of that kind of pattern with that kind of support.

But if the similarity between two things that they have specific pattern is only verbal or superficial the inference of conscious support will not be proper; it will be like inferring fire from “some white substance” which has only superficial similarity with smoke.

Otherwise, just as a pot, because it has a specific pattern, is inferred to be produced by a conscious being, viz. potter, an ant-hill will also be so inferred, because it too has a specific pattern.<sup>35</sup>

### D) MORAL ARGUMENT

The moral argument for the existence of God, in Indian context can be understood as an argument from the kārmic-moral order. The kārmic-moral order in a very general sense is accepted by all the Indian schools except Cārvāka. The non-Cārvāka schools believe in the rule that there is a correlation between good actions and pleasure and between bad actions and suffering. They believe that the diversity in the world of living beings is governed by their karma. This law of karma is accepted by many schools such as Pūramimāmsa, Sāṅkhya, Buddhism, and Jainism without accepting God. But theists believe that this cosmic moral order governing actions and their fruition is not mechanical, but it is regulated by a moral governor, and that moral governor is God. As Udyotakara argues in *Nyāya-Vārtika*, merits and demerits accumulated by the living beings cannot by themselves yield pleasures and pains as their fruits. It is God who turns merits and demerits of living beings into their fruits viz. pleasures and pains.

Buddhists record Udyotakara’s argument as follows:

Merit, demerit and atoms, all of them produce their effects only when supported by a conscious agent, because they are stable and are active (*sthitivā pravṛtti*), like the weaver’s stick and threads.<sup>36</sup>

According to the Naiyāyikas, just as a weaver unites the threads by using an instrument such as stick, God unites atoms by using merits and demerits of beings. Atoms, merits, and demerits that are stable can be functional only due to the conscious agent, namely, God.

### CRITICISM

The argument is not acceptable to the Buddhist philosopher Śāntarakṣita because, according to him, the same rule can be applied to God himself, who, according to the Naiyāyikas, is stable and functional. Hence, by applying the reason property—namely, “stability qualified by

functionality”—to God, we will have to say that God must be preceded by another conscious being, say, God-2 and so on ad infinitum.

Two more objections are possible against the moral argument. One objection pertains to the relation between God and goodness. The second possible objection is about the question of moral order itself.

- (i) **The relation between God and goodness:** Theists believe that how good actions lead to happiness and bad actions to pain is determined by God. Brahmanical theist thinkers such as the Naiyāyikas claim that the sacrificial actions enjoined in the Vedas lead to *svarga*, and this is determined by God through Vedas. Atheist moralists, on the other hand, would say that what is a good action or a bad action is determined by the autonomous norms of morality such as truthfulness and nonviolence and not by the consideration as to whether the action is enjoined by God or prohibited by God. Hence, goodness or badness of actions is independent of God.
- (ii) **Is the moral order real or ideal?** The second objection would come from materialists or rationalists who would question the claim that there is moral order in the universe. They argue that a moral order or the just order could be an ideal order, but not an actually existent order. It may be legitimate or desirable to establish such an order in the universe. Theists believe that such an order already exists, though in reality we see many examples of disorder and injustice. The present inequalities and hierarchies in the human world are due to past karmas of those souls in their previous births or if they are wrong, they will be counterbalanced in the future births. Hence, behind this seeming disorder there is a grand, divine order. Such a theistic explanation of moral order and disorder becomes problematic from a social point of view because it promotes inactivism and fatalism. The moral argument for the existence of God, therefore, gives a misleading picture of morality and moral order. It is more appropriate, according to these critics, to accept the moral disorder in society as an undesirable actuality and try to transform it through collective efforts.

#### E) ARGUMENT FROM THE AUTHORITY OF VEDAS

There are two important ways of accepting Vedas as *pramāṇa*: 1) to regard Vedas as *apauruṣeya*: as not created by anyone, but eternal, and 2) to regard Vedas as God's creation. Pūrvamīmāsā accepts Vedas as *apauruṣeya*. Nyāya accepts Vedas as created by God. Even Advaita-Vedānta accepts Vedas as creation of God in the sense that it is an expression of Brahman.

For Naiyāyikas and Vedāntins, there is a two-way relation between God and the Vedas. The relation is expressed by the *Brahmasūtra* 1.3: “Śāstrayonitvāt.” Śaṅkara interprets the expression Śāstra-yoni in two ways—as *taṭpuruṣasamāsa* and as *bahuvrīhisamāsa*. According to the *taṭpuruṣa*

interpretation, “Brahman is the cause (*yoni*) of the Vedas.”<sup>37</sup> And according to the *bahuvrīhi* interpretation, “Brahman has Vedas as *pramāṇa* (*yoni*-source (of knowledge)).”<sup>38</sup> The idea is that the Vedas give authentic knowledge of a high order which an ordinary text cannot give. Hence, the author of the Vedas cannot be an ordinary person; he has to be omniscient. And that omniscient author of the Vedas is God. The other argument is that Vedas are an authentic source of knowledge (*pramāṇa*), and they themselves describe God as the cause of the world. Hence, there must be God.

#### CRITICISM

This argument appears to be circular. The authenticity of Vedas depends on the authorship of God, and the existence of God depends on the authenticity of Vedas. The argument proves neither the existence of God nor the authenticity of Vedas. Naturally, one who already believes in the authenticity of Vedas may be convinced by such an argument. But Buddhists, Jains, and Cārvākas, who do not regard Vedas as authentic, cannot be convinced about the existence of God on the basis of this argument.

#### F) ARGUMENT FROM CREATION OF (SANSKRIT) LANGUAGE

But how did Īśvara produce Vedas? Vedas are in Sanskrit language. Who created Sanskrit language? Mīmāṃsakas believe that just as Vedas are eternal, the words of Sanskrit language are also eternal. The conventional relation between words and their meanings is also eternal. Naiyāyikas, on the other hand, believe that it is not only Vedas that were created by God, the Sanskrit language, including the conventional relation between words and meanings, was also created by God. God desired, “let this word have this meaning,” and that became the convention. And accordingly, the Sanskrit words had their respective meanings.<sup>39</sup>

In fact, the Naiyāyikas presented this as an argument for the existence of God. Śāntarākṣita states the argument of this type made by Praśastamati.<sup>40</sup> The question was, how did the first human beings who were created in the beginning of the universe learn language? When a child learns language, it is because elderly persons such as a mother instruct the child about the use of words. Similarly, there must have been someone who instructed the first-born human beings about the use of Sanskrit words. And that someone is God.

#### CRITICISM

Śāntarākṣita ridicules the argument. According to him, for teaching a language by giving instructions about linguistic conventions, one needs a mouth. But God, according to you, is devoid of merit and demerit and hence he has no body and therefore no mouth for giving instructions.<sup>41</sup>

#### TO SUM UP

I have presented a brief survey of the major arguments for the existence of God in Indian context. I have suggested that there are two major orientations to God: one is “God as *upādāna-kāraṇa*” and the other is “God as *nimitta-kāraṇa*.” The problem of evil as the counter-argument to the existence of God becomes more serious in the case of the *upādāna*-

oriented concept of God because it holds that God is the sole cause of everything in the world, including evil.

The *Nimitta-kāraṇa*-oriented concept of God escapes the problem of evil by attributing the origin of evil to karma of the *jīvas* and by regarding God as detached from it. Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika thinkers are the chief advocates of the *nimitta-kāraṇa*-oriented concept of God. The arguments they advance can be classified into six kinds: cosmological, teleological, moral, one from the authenticity of Vedas, and one from creation of language. I have noted the major problems these arguments have to face in the light of the counter-arguments advanced by atheists such as Cārvākas and Buddhists.

I have felt while working on the theme that arguments against *Īśvaravāda* are stronger than the arguments for it. I leave it to the readers to form their own impressions and make judgments.

#### NOTES

1. BS, 1.1.2. This definition follows the formula of the nature of Brahman given in *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, 3.1: *yaṅ vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante yena jātāni jīvanti, yaṅ prayanty abhisamviśanti*. ("[Brahman is that] from which all these beings are born, due to which, the born ones live and that in which beings enter and merge.")
2. "sarvajñm sarvaśakti mahāmāyaṁ ca brahama," BSB, 2.1.37 (Brahman is omniscient, omnipotent and endowed with māyā").
3. BSB, 1.1.12-19 (*ānandamaya adhikaraṇa*).
4. "avyaktā hi māyā tattvānyatvanirūpanasyāśakyatvāt," BSB, 1.4.3 (Māyā is non-manifest, because it is impossible to determine it to be identical with or different from it (=Brahman)).
5. As Warrior translates a statement from *Brhadāranyakopaniṣad* (2.1.20), "As a spider may come out with his thread, as small sparks come forth from the fire, even so from the Self come forth all the vital energies" (*God in Advaita*, 20).
6. According to the Biblical story of creation, God created light in the beginning and it was created by God merely through his word: "God said, let there be light and there was light," Bible, Genesis, 1:3.
7. "nādatte kasyacit pāpaṁ na caiva sukṛtaṁ vibhuḥ/ ajñānenāvṛtaṁ jñānaṁ tena muhyanti jantavaḥ//," BĠ, 5.15.
8. Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika system introduces the notion called *sādhanakāraṇa* which means the cause of everything produced. It acknowledges a list of nine such causes: (1) *Īśvara* (God) (2) *tajjñāna* (his knowledge) (3) *tadicchā* (his desire) (4) *tatkr̥ti* (his effort) (5) *kāla* (time) (6) *dik* (space) (7) *adr̥ṣṭa* (unseen factor: merit and demerit) (8) *prāgabhāva* (prior non-existence of the produced thing) (9) *pratibandhakābhāva* (absence of obstacles), Mehendale, *The Tarkasaṅgraha with the Dīpikā by Annambhaṭṭa*, 49.
9. "buddhyādiṣatkaṁ sparśāntāḥ snehaḥ samsiddhiko dravaḥ/ adr̥ṣṭabhāvanāśabdā amī vaiśeṣikā guṇāḥ//," NSM, 90cd-91ab. The verse gives the list of 15 qualities called *viśeṣagaṇa*.
10. According to *Prāśastapāda*, the first Vaiśeṣika commentator God creates the lord Brahmā and appoints him to create beings according to their past karma. PB, 19.
11. "saṁsāre khinnānāṁ prānināṁ niśi viśrāmārtham," PB, p. 18. Here *Prāśastapāda* says that God destroys the universe "for giving rest at night to the beings tired in the process of transmigration."
12. Potter, *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies*, 101–102.
13. Udayana suggests this argument in NK, Chapter II.
14. Udayana's argument in NK (Chapter 3: p. 231) implies this.
15. "kas tarhi śaśāśrīgam nāsti ity asya arthaḥ? śaśe adhikaraṇe viśāṅabhāvaḥ asti iti," NK, 230.
16. Karl Potter, while referring to the negative ontological argument of Udayana, says, "It would seem that this line of argument, if it proves anything, proves too much, for by recourse to it we can refute any inference or *tarka* argument which purports to prove the non-existence of something" (*Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies*, 109).
17. Moore, *Principia Ethica*, Chapter 1.
18. "jagatām yadi no kartā, kulālena vinā gataḥ/ citrakāraṁ vinā citraṁ svata eva bhavet sadā//," quoted by Mehendale, *The Tarkasaṅgraha with the Dīpikā by Annambhaṭṭa*, 30 (source unknown).
19. Translated by Patil, *Against a Hindu God: Buddhist Philosophy of Religion in India*, 59, from ISD.
20. "vivādādhyāsitanugirisāgarādayaḥ upādānādyabhijñākartṛkāḥ; kāryatvāt; yad yat kāryaṁ tat tad upādānādyabhijñākartṛkaṁ yathā prāsādādi; tathā ca vivādādhyāsītās tanvādayaḥ; tasmāt tathā iti," ISD, 40.
21. "paramānvādayaḥ hi cetanādhiṣṭhitāḥ pravartante, acetanatvād vāsyādivat. anyathā kāraṇaṁ vinā kāryānutpattiḥ prasaṅgaḥ," NK, 401 (Translation by David, see NK, 404). This argument seems to be a cosmological version of Udyotakara's argument which will be discussed under "Moral Argument."
22. For my discussion of Dharmakīrti's concept of necessary relation, see Gokhale ("Three Necessities in Dharmakīrti's Theory of Inference"). Extreme empiricist Cārvākas would reject both Nyāya and Buddhist explanations of universal concomitance. For my discussion, see Gokhale, *Lokāyata/Cārvāka: A Philosophical Inquiry*, 67–71, 77–81.
23. Dharmakīrti makes this criticism through the expression, "saṁśayāt" in PV I.12. Ratnakīrti in ISD makes the objection more precise by stating that premise stating the universal relation of pervasion between "being a product" and "being caused by an intelligent agent" cannot be proved beyond doubt. According to him the Nyāya argument commits the fallacy called *sandigdha-vipakṣa-vyāvṛttikatvāt anikāntikam* ("Inconclusive due to the dubitability of the exclusion of reason property from dissimilar cases").
24. As Vasubandhu maintains, there are four causal conditions according to the Buddhist sutras: *hetu* (efficient cause), *ālambana* (object as cause), *samanantara* (immediately preceding cause), and *adhipati* (governing cause) "sūtre catasrah pratyayaṭāḥ. hetupratyayaṭā, ālambanapratyayaṭā, samanantarapratyayaṭā, adhipatipratyayaṭā ceti," AKB II.61. Generally, realist schools of Buddhism accepted this classification. On the other hand, Nāgārjuna in the first chapter of *Madhyamakāśāstra* rejected all the four *pratyayas*. Moreover, all the *pratyayas* cannot be defended in the Mind-only school of Buddhism.
25. The three types of causes are *samavāyi* (inherent cause), *asamavāyi* (non-inherent cause), and *nimitta* (efficient cause). "kāraṇaṁ trividhaṁ samavāyi-asamavāyi-nimittabhedāt," TRS, 15.
26. Buddhist criticism of the Vaiśeṣika atomism is multifaceted. Mind-only school of Buddhism denies the existence of atoms. Realists Buddhists accept their existence but question their eternity. They regard atoms as momentary. They deny the Vaiśeṣika view that a combination of atoms constitutes a composite whole (*avayavin*) which exists over and above the atoms.
27. This objection was suggested by Dharmakīrti by the expression "dr̥ṣṭānte asiddhiḥ" (Non-establishment of the intended target-property in the positive instances) in PV, I.12. The objection was elaborated by Śāntarakṣita in TS, 73–74.
28. Naiyāyikas give two different reasons for proving that there is only one God: (1) If there are many Gods then they will quarrel with each other and there will be a chaos. [Twofold answer is possible to this objection. First, it is not necessary that involvement of many agents causes a chaos. Many huge and complex constructions are brought about successfully by many agents collectively and cooperatively. Secondly it is not right to assume that this world is an ideal world and that there is no disorder in it.] (2) According to the law of parsimony (*lāghava*), it is not reasonable to accept many Gods when the world-creation can be explained by accepting one God. [A possible answer to this objection is: It is empirically more consistent to accept many non-omniscient agents rather than a single omniscient agent in

the case of a huge and complex products such as this world and empirical consistency is a higher principle than parsimony.]

29. "tathā hi saudhasopānagopurāṭṭālakādayah/ anekānityavijñānapūrvakatvena nīcitāh// ata evāyam itasya vighātkrdapīyate/anekānityavijñāna-pūrvakatvaprasādhānāt//," TS, 73-74.
30. "īśvarādyanumānaṁ tu utpādyā-pratīti," NM, Part I, p. 113 For a detailed account of the positivist epistemology of "more educated Cārvākas," see Gokhale, *Lokāyata/Cārvāka: A Philosophical Inquiry*, Chapter 4.
31. The difference between the criticism of positivist Cārvākas and that of the Buddhists is that the Buddhists, unlike Cārvākas, do not expect that a sound reason-property gives rise to the knowledge of the target-property which is empirically verifiable. They insist, however, that the reason-property should be necessarily related to the target-property.
32. Gaṅgeśa tries to defend the Nyāya position against this objection by saying that existence of body is not directly relevant to the agenthood of the potter in making a pot. His agenthood can be explained in terms of hands irrespective of body ("hasṭādīnā karṭṛvanirvāheṇa śarīrasyāprayojakatayā," TC, Part II, Vol. II, 55). The argument is unsatisfactory because hands do not function without the support of body. And even if they do, it would imply that God should have some physical mechanism such as hands though he may not have body. The problem will remain, as to who created this physical mechanism and how.
33. Udayana in the chapter IV of NK tries to argue for the view that God's knowledge is eternal and direct. The author of Dinakāri commentary on NSM, claims that God's knowledge, desire and effort are accepted as single and eternal on the basis of the principle of parsimony (lāghava): "etadrśānumitau lāghavajñānasahakāreṇa jñāneccchākrīṣu nityatvam ekatvam ca bhāsata iti nityaikatvasiddhiḥ," Dinakāri on NSM, 22.
34. Gaṅgeśa argues on this that God's knowledge, though eternal, can be the cause of the non-eternal world, because in general, an eternal thing can be the cause of a noneternal thing. For example, the eternal ākāśa causes sound, which is non-eternal. An ordinary soul, though eternal, causes cognition, which is non-eternal (TC, *īśvarānumāna*, 84). The argument is not convincing particularly to the Buddhists according to whom a thing cannot cause anything without itself undergoing change.
35. "siddham yādrghadhīstātrbhāvābhāvānūvrttimat/ sanniveśādi tadyuktam tasmād yādanūmiyate// vastubhede prasiddhasya śabdāsāmād abhedinaḥ/ nayuktānūmitiḥ pāṇḍudravayād iva hutāsane// anyathā kumbhakāreṇa mrdvikārasya kasyacit kasyacit/ ghaṭādeḥ karanāt sidhyed valmīkāsyāpi tatkrītiḥ//," PV, I.13-5.
36. "dharmādharmānavah sarve cetanāvadadhīstīhāt/ svakāryārambhakāḥ śhītvā pravṛttes turitantuvat//," TS, 50.
37. "mahata ṛgvedādeḥ śāstrasya...yonih kāraṇaṁ brahma," BSB, 1.1.3.
38. "athavā yathokam ṛgvedādiśāstram yonih pramāṇamasya brahmaṇo yathāvat-svarūpādhiḡame," BSB, 1.1.3.
39. Naiyāyikas define the power (śakti) of a word to refer to its meaning as God's desire: "śaktiś ca padena saha padārthasya sambandhaḥ. sā cāsmāt śabadād ayam artho boddhavyaḥ iti īśvareccchārūpah," NSM, 265.
40. "sargādau vyavahārasca puṁsām anyopadeśajah/ niyatatvāt prabuddhānām kumāra-vyavahāravat//," TS, 51. (The linguistic practice of the persons in the beginning of the world must be caused by instructions given by someone, because it is a regulated practice of waking people, like the linguistic practice in the case of children.)
41. "vimukhasyopadeśītvam śradhdhāgamyam param yadi/ vaīmukhyam vitanūvena dharmādharmavivekataḥ//," TS, 85. (The instructorship of a mouthless being, if accepted, can be accepted only on faith. God is without mouth because he is without body and that is because he is devoid of merit and demerit.)

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BSB: *Brahmasūtraśāṅkarabhāṣyam*. Edited by Acharya Jagadeesh Shastri. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980.

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## Cārvākim Redivivus

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### 1 INTRODUCTION

As a means of acquiring knowledge, the method of inductive inference has been proposed and critiqued in both Indian and Western philosophies. The method itself refers to a rather broad inference mechanism which is difficult to define in precise terms.<sup>1</sup> Loosely speaking, one may consider inductive inference to be a mechanism for inferring something about unperceived situations based on perceived information. A common example used in debates in Indian philosophy runs roughly as follows. Whenever one has seen smoke, upon inquiry one has also seen fire. In other words, all perceived scenarios of smoke have been associated with fire. From this, one infers that whenever there is smoke, there is fire. Consequently, if in the future one sees smoke, one may infer fire to be present. The inference from the perceived scenarios of smoke associated with fire to the general rule of smoke being always associated with fire is one form of inductive inference. Inductive inference can take a number of

different forms. In this note, we do not discuss the details of various forms of induction. A basic understanding of inductive inference will be sufficient for our purposes.

The issue of whether induction provides a valid means of acquiring knowledge has been debated in several important Indian philosophical works. Among the various schools of thought that existed in India, the Cārvāka (or the Lokāyata) school rejected induction as a valid means of knowledge acquisition. All the other schools, including those that believed in the authority of the Vedas as well as Jainism and Buddhism, admitted induction as a method for gaining knowledge. The Cārvāka view of denying induction was a minority view, while the vast majority of past Indian thinkers admitted induction. Even though it was a conflict of minority versus majority views, the dominant group considered it important to address the arguments against induction raised by the Cārvāka school of thought. The resulting debate is recorded in several important philosophical works.

The main work of the Cārvāka system is the Bṛhaspati Sūtra. For some unknown reasons, neither this work nor any other work of the Cārvāka school, except for the *Tattvopaplavasīmha* by Jayarāsi Bhatta, have survived the vagaries of time. The Cārvāka views on induction are to be found in the works of philosophers who admitted induction as a valid means of gaining knowledge. Important among such philosophers are those belonging to the Nyāya and the Navya-Nyāya schools of thought. *Nyāyakusumāñjali* by Udayana of the Nyāya school and the later work *Tattvacintāmaṇi* by Gangesa of the Navya-Nyāya school are particularly important sources for the debate on the validity of inductive inference. These works first formulated the Cārvāka viewpoint on induction and then proceeded to counter the objections.<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of this note is to crystalize certain arguments arising in the Cārvāka-Nyāya debate on induction and argue how these relate to some modern notions. Below we first highlight the arguments of the Cārvāka-Nyāya debate that we consider in this note and then later we relate these to modern notions.

## 2 ARGUMENTS ARISING IN THE CĀRVĀKA-NYĀYA DEBATE

One of the authoritative texts on Indian philosophy is *A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy*, by Radhakrishnan and Moore.<sup>3</sup> The book provides translations of the chapters discussing the Cārvāka view in the compilations *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* by Mādhava Ācārya and *Sarvasiddhāntasamgraha* by Śamkara as well as a translation of one chapter from *Tattvopaplavasīmha*. Several arguments against causality can be found in the translation of the chapter from *Tattvopaplavasīmha*. In this note, we do not consider such arguments.

Our identification of the arguments discussed hereafter is based on the translations from *Nyāyakusumāñjali* and related explanations provided primarily in the book by Chakrabarti.<sup>4</sup> In addition, we have also benefited from

the books by Perrett and by Gokhale.<sup>5</sup> We note that not all the points mentioned below are complete arguments. Rather, they are fragments of ideas which can be found in the Cārvāka-Nyāya debate on induction.

### CIRCULARITY IN JUSTIFYING INDUCTION

Very briefly, an argument for justifying inductive methods may be summarized as follows. Such methods have been successful in the past and so the use of such methods is justified for future applications. Putting aside the question of whether the success of the methods can be determined with certainty, assume that the methods have indeed been successful in the past. Concluding from such success that the methods will also be successful in the future is to apply inductive inference. So methods of inductive inference are being justified using induction itself. Consequently, this is a circular argument.<sup>6</sup> Much later, David Hume made the following famous observation in *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1738): “instances, of which we have had no experience, must resemble those, of which we have had experience, and that the course of nature continues always uniformly the same.” The point about circularity in justifying induction has been discussed quite extensively in the literature, and we will not consider this point further in this note.

We now turn to the task of identifying certain ideas in the Cārvāka-Nyāya debate appearing at several places in Chapter 1 of *Classical Indian Philosophy of Induction: The Nyaya Viewpoint*. To start with, consider the following passages, which explain how certain aspects of the Cārvāka argument against induction were described in the Nyāya literature. Some of the ideas that we discuss are spread across these passages and so it is convenient to first mention the passages and then discuss their content in a unified manner.

Passage 1:

Cārvāka says: That which cannot be perceived does not exist. The opposite exists. God, etc., are not so; therefore, it should be better be held that these do not exist. It may be objected that inference, etc., will then be eliminated. But this is not unwelcome.

Objection: But then common activities would be impossible. Reply: No. That can be carried out on the basis of expectation alone. Coherence is mistakenly thought to justify the claim of knowledge. (NK 334)<sup>7</sup>

Passage 2:

When fire is actually found, does not that justify, because of coherence between what was previously expected and what is now perceived, that there is knowledge of fire, so that acceptance of inference as a source of knowledge is necessary? The reply is: no. Success of action prompted by expectation does not turn expectation into knowledge. But such success and coherence suffice to generate confidence in expectations and make them appear as knowledge. ‘Appearing as knowledge’ is all that is needed to account for such activities.

Passage 3:

Rucidatta, who wrote the *Prakāśa* commentary on *Nyāyakusumāñjali* has described expectation as a doubt one side (kotī) of which is stronger (utkata) than others (NK 334). If each side of expectation is equally matched, expectation would not lead to action. For example, when one sees smoke, one does not have any rational grounds for being sure that there is fire, but, may nevertheless have a strong expectation that there is fire. This is a doubt with two sides, viz., that (1) there is fire and that (2) fire is not there. But the two sides are not equally matched; the first is stronger than the second, for fire has been observed together with smoke on many occasions. Hence it may very well lead to action of procuring fire.

We identify four ideas which are embedded in the above passages.

### **DOUBT WITH MANY SIDES**

The third passage talks about doubt with multiple sides. Further, it is suggested that the various sides of a doubt can be compared. Two such comparative scenarios are considered. The first scenario occurs when all the sides of a doubt are equally strong, and the second scenario occurs when one side of a doubt is stronger than the others.

### **FORMULATION OF HYPOTHESIS**

In the first and the third passages, the word “expectation” is used in the sense that in the future one can expect to actually perceive the stronger side of a doubt. This expectation is based on prior perceived instances. In modern scientific terminology, one would say that a hypothesis is formulated based on observations, and this hypothesis is used to predict behavior.

### **EXPECTATION LEADING TO ACTION**

The passages allow for the formulation of a hypothesis that would suggest what to expect in a given situation. Action can be initiated solely based on such expectation. In the smoke-fire example, based on perceived instances of fire being associated with smoke, one forms a hypothesis (or expectation) that whenever there is smoke, there is fire. If in the future, smoke is perceived, then this hypothesis is used to justify action leading to the search for associated fire. The search for fire is justified, but what is not justified is concluding that fire will certainly be present whenever smoke is observed.

### **POSITIVE VERIFICATION OF A HYPOTHESIS DOES NOT LEAD TO CERTAINTY**

The argument in the second passage runs as follows. On seeing smoke, an investigation is done and fire is found. So there is knowledge of smoke since it is perceived, and there is knowledge of fire since it is also perceived after investigation. Since presence of fire follows by induction and the knowledge of fire follows from observation, it is argued that one has to admit induction as a valid means of knowledge. In contrast, the Cārvākas argued that confirmation of a hypothesis by a positive verification does

not lead to certainty of the hypothesis.

We mention two other ideas arising in the Cārvāka-Nyāya debate which can be gleaned from various passages and discussions in *Classical Indian Philosophy of Induction: The Nyaya Viewpoint*.<sup>8</sup>

### **SINGLE VERSUS MULTIPLE OBSERVATIONS**

It may be argued that multiple observations of the same phenomenon lead to certainty. The Cārvāka viewpoint argued that this is not the case. Generalizations provided by multiple observations could also be false. On the other hand, while certainty cannot be deduced from multiple observations, the Cārvākas did admit that positive verifications of a hypothesis generate confidence in the hypothesis.

### **PRESENCE OF HIDDEN FACTORS**

Suppose two events are observed in a number of cases. From this, one may generalize that the two events are always present together. The Cārvākas forwarded the following counter-argument. It is possible that in all the observed cases of joint occurrences there are some other hidden factors. One could try to eliminate hidden factors by considering different setups where the two events occur together. The crux of the counter-argument is how can one be sure that all hidden factors have been eliminated? It is mentioned that the argument from hidden factors is not present in Hume’s critique of inductive inference.<sup>9</sup>

### **3 RELATED MODERN NOTIONS AND ARGUMENTS**

We mention some modern notions and arguments that can be considered to have been anticipated, admittedly in a primitive form, in the various ideas arising in the arguments of the Cārvāka-Nyāya debate mentioned in the previous section.

#### **3.1 PROBABILITY**

Probability theory provides a formal mechanism for reasoning about uncertainty. One may think that probability theory can solve the Cārvāka problem of induction. We make a short remark on this point at the end of this section. The main content of this section is to bring out connections of the Cārvāka considerations of uncertainty to certain aspects of probability and statistics. The relationship between the Cārvāka view and probability has been indicated in *Lokayata/Carvaka: A Philosophical Enquiry*,<sup>10</sup> though to the best of our knowledge, the explicit connections that are discussed below have not previously appeared elsewhere.

A key notion in probability theory is that of a random variable. Without getting into the formal measure theoretic definition of a random variable, let us try to understand this in somewhat more simple terms. Suppose there are several possible outcomes of a random experiment. For simplicity, assume that there are only finitely many such outcomes. To each outcome is associated a probability, and the sum of the probabilities associated with all the outcomes is one. A random variable expresses the idea that the possible outcomes occur with their associated probabilities. Encoding the outcomes by concrete labels (or numbers), one can think of a random variable as taking a particular value with a certain probability.



Consider now the idea of doubt with multiple sides which has been mentioned earlier. The notion of doubt is a clear reference to uncertainty. The uncertainty is regarding which side of the doubt will actually occur. In modern parlance, a doubt with multiple sides may be considered to be a random variable. The various sides of a doubt would correspond to the various outcomes of such a random variable with the implicit assumption that there are at least two such outcomes. A comparison between the several sides of a doubt has been suggested. In the language of random variables, this would correspond to comparing the various possible outcomes. It is suggested that each side of a doubt could be equally matched or that one side could be stronger than the others. A conceptual next step would be to find a convenient way to compare the various sides of a doubt. This naturally leads to assigning non-negative numbers to the various sides of a doubt and then comparing the numbers to compare the various sides of a doubt. Normalizing each of the numbers by the sum of all the numbers would lead to probabilities of the various sides of a doubt. Assuming for simplicity that there are finitely many sides, this would correspond to a random variable with finitely many outcomes. The probabilities assigned to the various outcomes would be the probabilities of the corresponding sides of a doubt. If the probabilities are all equal, then all the sides are equally matched. On the other hand, if one outcome has a higher probability than that of the other outcomes, then the corresponding side of the doubt would be stronger than all the other sides. The terminology of doubts with multiple sides and the suggestion that the sides need to be compared in some manner can be considered to have anticipated the quantification of uncertainty and by implication to have anticipated probability.

Based on empirical observations, a hypothesis is formulated. Confirmation of the hypothesis by further observations is supposed to increase confidence in the hypothesis. A hypothesis would be what has been called an expectation, which is a doubt where one side is stronger than the other sides. As discussed above, the various sides of a doubt can be interpreted as outcomes with probabilities. Confidence in a hypothesis can then be considered to be belief in the probabilities of the outcomes. On the other hand, if we consider observations as outcomes of random experiments, then confirmation of a hypothesis by repeated observations may be considered as a rudimentary form of the frequentist view of probability.

Analyzed from a modern perspective, there are certain difficulties and gaps in the aforementioned Cārvāka view of initiating action based on expectation. We consider some of these difficulties. According to the Cārvāka view, if one particular outcome is more likely than the others, then it is reasonable to initiate action based on this outcome. On the other hand, it is also suggested that if all the outcomes are equally likely, then no action is to be initiated. This last suggestion can be problematic as a probabilistic version of the Buridan's ass paradox exemplifies. There is another difficulty to this suggestion. In the smoke-fire example, if both fire and non-fire are equally likely, then is it reasonable to not search for fire? To answer this question, two costs need to be considered: the cost of searching for

fire and not finding fire versus the cost of not searching for fire and fire being present. These are the costs of the two kinds of errors that can occur. Whether action should be initiated is based on the relative costs of the two kinds of errors. In the smoke-fire example, clearly the cost of the second kind of error is much larger than that of the first kind. So action should be initiated even if fire and non-fire are equally likely or, more generally, when there is some non-negligible chance of fire. In statistical terminology, this would be called hypothesis testing. Between the two scenarios of all outcomes being equally likely and one outcome being more likely than all others, there is a lot of middle ground. To take a concrete example, consider a scenario consisting of five possible outcomes out of which two are equally likely and both of them are more likely than the other three outcomes. The Cārvāka arguments do not address what to do in such situations. Another important issue is that of choosing between outcomes in the absence of any prior information. Considering all the outcomes to be equally likely is the principle of indifference which is known to have several problematic interpretations.<sup>11</sup> The issues mentioned in this paragraph are modern concepts, and the Cārvāka views about when to initiate action based on a hypothesis did not develop sufficiently to consider and address such issues.

Probability and its related subject, statistics, provide a modern way of understanding induction. This is succinctly captured in the following view expressed by Prasanta C. Mahalanobis (December 2, 1956): "Statistics is the universal tool of inductive inference, research in natural and social sciences, and technological applications. Statistics, therefore, must always have purpose, either in the pursuit of knowledge or in the promotion of human welfare." It is interesting to note the ethical contrast of this viewpoint to the supposedly sceptical and hedonistic outlook of the Cārvākas. As suggested in Perrett's *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*, the hedonistic viewpoint of the Cārvākas may be seen as arising from their scepticism in the following manner.<sup>12</sup> Since knowledge (understood as something which is certain) can only be acquired through perception, and knowledge of God, soul, after-life, and other related notions cannot be acquired through perception, such notions cannot be held to be valid. The ethical consequence is that since any action in the present life is an end in itself, the notion of leading a pious life to be rewarded later through *mokṣa* stands invalidated. Consequently, this leads to the hedonistic viewpoint of enjoying worldly pleasures in this life itself. In contrast, once the view of knowledge as being something certain is dropped and knowledge is viewed as tentative and a guide to action, which is how the Cārvākas essentially viewed inductive inferences, the ethical viewpoint changes drastically. In the above quote, Mahalanobis claims that statistics is the universal tool of inductive inference. From this, he goes on to say that statistics must have purpose which implicitly underlines the point that inductive inference is vitally important for almost all spheres of human activity. So the hedonistic viewpoint disappears and is replaced by a sense of purpose in improvement of human welfare.<sup>13</sup>

We would like to point out that statistics does not solve the problem of justifying induction. A statement such as

“whenever there is smoke, there is an 80 percent chance of fire” is also a definite statement about uncertainty. The figure “80 percent” would have been arrived at by examining a number of occurrences of smoke and finding fire in 80 percent of these cases. In other words, 80 percent is based on perceived instances, whereas the statement that there is always an 80 percent chance of fire on seeing smoke refers to unperceived instances. So the statement goes beyond perceived instances to make a statement for all instances. As such, it is still an inductive inference and, hence, is open to the usual criticisms about such inferences. We note that there have been attempts to justify induction using probability theory.<sup>14</sup> A discussion of whether this has been successful is outside the scope of this note.

### 3.2 SCIENTIFIC THEORY

A dominant view of scientific theory is that any such theory is tentative. There is a huge literature describing various viewpoints regarding scientific theories. This is not the place to delve into the details of this literature. Instead, we will consider some expressions of modern views on scientific theories and try to relate these to some of the Cārvāka-Nyāya arguments.

Consider the following statement, which is attributed to Albert Einstein: “No amount of experimentation can ever prove me right; a single experiment can prove me wrong.” This encompasses two of the Cārvāka-Nyāya arguments. First, it states that positive verification of a hypothesis does not turn a hypothesis into certainty, and second, multiple observations do not lead to certainty. While the above quotation is attributed to Einstein, it is not known for certain whether he actually mentioned it anywhere. The following authoritative assertion regarding the nature of scientific theories, on the other hand, is by Albert Einstein in *Induction and Deduction in Physics* (1919): “the truth of a theory can never be proven. For one never knows that even in the future no experience will be encountered which contradicts its consequences; and still other systems of thought are always conceivable which are capable of joining together the same given facts.” This statement has traces of several of the Cārvāka-Nyāya arguments. The first part of the quotation refers to the fallibility of any hypothesis and that predicting the future from perceived instances is necessarily tentative. This part is similar to the previously mentioned statement which is attributed to Einstein. The second part of the quotation, on the other hand, provides a different connection to the Cārvāka-Nyāya debate. It is mentioned that there could be other possible explanations of the observed instances. This suggests a clear connection to the theory of hidden issues that the Cārvākas forwarded in their criticism of inductive inference. They argued that it is not possible to know with certainty that all hidden issues have been eliminated. Effectively, this means that some hitherto undiscovered issue can provide an alternative explanation of perceived instances, which is essentially the content of the second part of the above quotation.

From a modern viewpoint, whether the Cārvākas allowed induction as a valid means of knowledge would depend on what is meant by knowledge. One possible view of knowledge is that it is infallible.<sup>15</sup> The Cārvākas did not consider induction to lead to this notion of knowledge.

On the other hand, they did admit that based on empirical observations, one can formulate hypotheses about the probable behavior of nature. In modern terminology this would amount to formulation of a tentative theory. Can the formulation of such a theory be considered acquisition of knowledge? Again, in the modern view, the answer would be yes. Then the Cārvākas did support the use of induction for knowledge acquisition.<sup>16</sup> To drive home the point about the tentative nature of scientific theories, we recall the following statement by Richard P. Feynman in *The Uncertainty of Science* (1963): “What we call scientific knowledge today is a body of statements of varying degrees of certainty. Some of them are most unsure; some of them are nearly sure; but none is absolutely certain.”

### 3.3 PRAGMATISM

The idea that expectation leads to action can be considered to be a precursor of pragmatism. If one side of doubt is stronger than all other sides, then action prompted by this side is justified. So thought process is considered to be a tool for initiating action. The value of a thought process is determined by its applicability in justifying action. This is a pragmatic viewpoint that was anticipated in the Cārvāka arguments. Charles S. Peirce describes the pragmatic maxim in *How to Make Our Ideas Clear* (1878): “Consider the practical effects of the objects of your conception. Then, your conception of those effects is the whole of your conception of the object.” In this sophisticated and abstract formulation, one can identify the germ of the idea in the smoke-fire Cārvāka argument which does not admit any further value to the inductive inference of “smoke implies fire” beyond its practical role of searching for fire on seeing smoke.

### 4 CONCLUSION

As part of their criticism of inductive inference as a method of acquiring knowledge, the Cārvāka viewpoint contains the vital idea of doubting and questioning entrenched beliefs. Unfortunately, this idea did not develop further in India. We mention the following views of two of the foremost intellectuals of the twentieth century to highlight the role of doubt in the development of human thought. Bertrand Russell in *Free Thought and Official Propaganda* (1922) wrote the following: “William James used to preach the ‘will to believe.’ For my part, I should wish to preach the ‘will to doubt.’ . . . What is wanted is not the will to believe, but the wish to find out, which is the exact opposite.” About four decades later, Richard P. Feynman spoke along similar lines in *The Uncertainty of Science* (1963): “freedom to doubt is an important matter in the sciences and, I believe, in other fields. . . . If you know you are not sure, you have a chance to improve the situation. I want to demand this freedom for future generations.” We end with the hope that modern day India will further develop the culture of raising well-reasoned doubts and pinpointed questioning which in the Indian context was pioneered by the Cārvākas in ancient times.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank Prasanta S. Bandyopadhyay for several stimulating discussions and email exchanges as well as for the encouragement to write this note. We thank the reviewers for providing constructive comments, which have helped in improving the paper.

## NOTES

1. In this context, we note the following observation by Richard P. Feynman in *The Uncertainty of Science* (1963): "Extreme precision of definition is often not worthwhile, and sometimes it is not possible—in fact mostly it is not possible."
2. An extensive analysis of induction in Indian philosophy especially from the Nyāya point of view has appeared in Chakrabarti, *Classical Indian Philosophy of Induction: The Nyaya Viewpoint* (Lexington Books, 2010).
3. Radhakrishnan and Moore, *A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy* (Princeton University Press, 1957).
4. Chakrabarti, *Classical Indian Philosophy of Induction*.
5. Perrett, *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 2016); Gokhale, *Lokayata/Carvaka: A Philosophical Enquiry* (Oxford University Press, 2015).
6. A similar circularity issue, though in a different form, was part of the Cārvāka-Nyāya debate and has been discussed in Chakrabarti, *Classical Indian Philosophy of Induction*, 8, 15.
7. *Ibid.*, 2–3.
8. *Ibid.*, 5, 7.
9. *Ibid.*, 15.
10. Gokhale, *Lokayata/Carvaka: A Philosophical Enquiry*, 81–82.
11. See, for example, Howson, *Hume's Problem: Induction and the Justification of Belief* (Clarendon Press, 2003), chapter 4.
12. Perrett, *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*, 90.
13. We refer to Chatterjee, *Statistical Thought: A Perspective and History*, and Sarkar, "Statistics and Induction," for further discussion on the connection between induction and statistics.
14. See, for example, the excellent discussion in Howson, *Hume's Problem: Induction and the Justification of Belief*.
15. For example, on page 81 of Gokhale, *Lokayata/Carvaka: A Philosophical Enquiry*, the following is mentioned: "When other schools accept inference as *pramāna*, they regard it to be a source of certain and indubitable knowledge." Further, on page 83, Gokhale talks about the "absolutist and definitive concept of knowledge accepted by other systems." There seems to be, however, a difference of opinion as to whether the other (i.e., other than the Cārvāka) schools of Indian philosophy considered knowledge to be something which is certain. One of the reviewers has pointed to several places in Perrett, *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*, to support this view. In particular, on page 59, Perrett remarks: "The Naiyāyikas are fallibilists: they do not think that such inferences guarantee certainty, but they believe nevertheless that such inferences are generally reliable."
16. Chapter 4 of Gokhale, *Lokayata/Carvaka: A Philosophical Enquiry*, discusses the "mitigated empiricism" branch of the Cārvāka philosophy which accepts a form of induction as a valid means of knowledge.

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## *Some Critical Remarks on Kisor Chakrabarti's Idea of "Observational Credibility" and Its Role in Solving the Problem of Induction*

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### INTRODUCTION

The problem of induction arises when we make an inference about an unobserved body of data based on an observed body of data. The eighteenth-century philosopher David Hume has usually been credited to be the first philosopher to point out its significance in the Western tradition. In the East, however, the same problem dates back to the sixth century BCE's skeptical school known as the Cārvāka philosophy. Kisor Chakrabarti (hereafter Chakrabarti) has addressed this hard problem in his 2010 book, *The Classical Indian Philosophy of Induction: The Nyāya View Point*. By using classical Sanskrit texts and, whenever needed, reconstructing them in light of contemporary advances in epistemology and philosophy of science, he has tried to argue how classical Indian (Nyāya) philosophers are able to solve this problem. He has also delved into what is known as the new riddle of induction in the West to further show how Indian philosophers of the past should be able to handle it, although their approach need not always be nicely mapped onto their Western counterparts. The most impressive aspect of Chakrabarti's work is his ingenious attempt to reconstruct what we call the Gaṅgeśa-Chakrabarti (hereafter Gaṅgebarti) argument for the resolution of the problem of induction. This argument, we contend, does not pan out in the end, but is no doubt an innovative addition to the existing literature. In this way Chakrabarti's work clearly shows how one should make room for both East and West to meet and thus benefit from one another by means of a first-rate work in comparative philosophy such as this.

We focus on one of the devices introduced by Chakrabarti called the Observation Credibility (hereafter OC) and try to argue that it does not do the required task of resolving the problem of induction. In section 1, we summarize Chakrabarti's view of induction. In the next section, we present the OC as laid out by Chakrabarti. In section 3, we provide a counter-example which uses the same OC principle but leads to a faulty induction. Before we conclude, we briefly state in section 4 some problems in Chakrabarti's attempted resolution of the new riddle of induction.

### 1. INDUCTIVE INFERENCE ACCORDING TO CHAKRABARTI

The author defines inductive inference as a type of "nondeductive reasoning" in which the agent "generaliz[es] from particulars to the universal."<sup>1</sup> However, we think that

this definition does not provide necessary or sufficient condition for something to be called an inductive inference. To show that this characterization is not necessary, we need to show non-deductive inferences that move from particulars to particulars. The inferences made from particular facts involving evidence found at the scene of the crime to conclusions about the particular person who committed the crime are cases in point. Neither is his characterization sufficient. Consider the following example:

1. Donald Trump is currently President of the United States,
2. Therefore, Anyone who is not currently President of the United States is not identical to Donald Trump.

The above argument is an instance of inferring a general statement from a particular one and yet, not inductive.

However, the above defect does not pose any threat to Chakrabarti's treatment of the problem of induction as one could easily fix it. The distinction between deductive inference and inductive inference can be understood in terms of monotonic reasoning. Monotonicity is a property of certain types of inferences and is appreciated in terms of a deductive consequence relation. A relation between a set and a sentence is monotonic if and only if when it holds between a set and a sentence it also holds between any superset of the set and that sentence. A sentence is a deductive consequence of others when it is logically impossible that they should be true, but the sentence is false. To state it in terms of an argument, one can say that a type of reasoning is monotonic if and only if when an argument follows the deductive consequence relation described above, so do any arguments obtained by adding additional premises to that argument. Inductive inference underlies non-monotonic reasoning as adding a premise to a strong inductive argument could very well undermine its conclusion. In a crime situation, for example, if we come to know that a mad man, who otherwise has no criminal record, has walked into the crime scene recently, then this new piece of information would undermine the previous conclusion of that inductive inference as the crime scene could be compromised because of his walking there. In contrast, adding a new premise in the Trump example would not make us lose any information about the conclusion of the argument. So an understanding of the author's characterization of inductive inference in terms of non-monotonic reasoning would help us to stay focused on the author's primary contribution to the resolution of the problem of induction.

## 2. THE GANĠEBARTI PROPOSAL TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEM OF INDUCTION

To set the stage for evaluating the Gaṅgebarti proposal to solve the problem of induction, we discuss, first, the Observational Credibility (OC) principle, which Chakrabarti introduces. According to this, "a factual claim that is backed by observation is preferable to one that is not."<sup>2</sup> A more generalized version of OC is (GOC): "a factual claim that has greater observational support is preferable to one that has less observational support."<sup>3</sup>

It would be helpful to know what "backed by observation" (or "observation support") and "is preferable" mean here. We will assume that observational support is always provided to generalizations and only by instances of those generalizations. We will also assume that "is preferable to" means something like "is more justified than."

Consider the following two general statements as these are the types of instances the Gaṅgebarti proposal is specially designed to handle.

- (I) Wherever there is smoke there is fire.
- (II) All cases of smoke are caused by cases of fire.

Humeans contend that there is no justification for either (I) or (II). The response the author offers on behalf of the Nyāya philosophy is based on the OC principle. The author, to demonstrate how his proposal works for the paradigmatic case of inductive inference, provides the following argument:

1. If smoke is present, then either it is produced by an aggregate that contains fire or is produced by an aggregate that excludes fire.
2. Smoke is present.
3. Therefore, either the smoke is produced by an aggregate that contains fire or is produced by an aggregate that excludes fire.
4. Here is a particular observation of smoke and fire. (This is an implicit premise of the argument the author uses.)

Chakrabarti contends that since the Cārvāka philosophers (and Humeans) buy OC (for example, we see for this particular smoke that it is produced not by an aggregate that excludes fire), it follows that

5. Smoke is produced by an aggregate that contains fire.

About OC, the author further writes that "as long as OC is accepted and it is also accepted that our particular observations are reliable, we should choose the former, i.e, smoke is produced by an aggregate that contains fire. Clearly the latter (i.e., the smoke is produced by an aggregate that excludes fire) is logically possible, but is nevertheless less acceptable than the former, for there is no observational support for the latter."<sup>4</sup> The following statement, we think, is crucial for Chakrabarti's argument as it is intended to show the connection between the above displayed argument and the two statements above (I & II). He writes, "accepting the alternative that smoke is produced by an aggregate that includes fire favors accepting that fire is a constant casual condition of smoke and thus that the induction that wherever there is smoke there is fire is reliable."<sup>5</sup>

On a previous page, Chakrabarti considers the disjunction "Either the smoke is produced by an aggregate that

contains fire or is produced by an aggregate that excludes fire" to be a logical truth. However, logically speaking, it is possible that the smoke is not produced at all, or that it is produced by something that is not an aggregate. Also, we take it that "smoke" refers to some particular smoke, and not "smoke" in general. If it refers to "smoke" in general, then it is perfectly possible, so far as logic is concerned, that some particular instances of smoking (including the smoke coming from the fire I see now) are produced in one way, and other instances (say, the smoke I see from the mountain across the valley), are produced in a different way, and yet other instances are not produced at all. The point is that if a universal claim is being made, as it is a statement about smoke in general, there are more ways for the claim to be false. Therefore, it is questionable whether the disjunction is a logical truth. In other words, we contend that Chakrabarti's reconstruction begins with the fallacy of false dichotomy.

### 3. COUNTER-EXAMPLE TO OC

As we saw in the previous section, OC plays a crucial step in justifying a generalization and hence in justifying causal relation between the mark and the probandum. However, following the same form of the above argument, one can generate another generalized inductive inference (containing claims about all the members of that class), although the inductive generalization should not be justified. Consider the below inference:

1. If bruises are present, then either they are produced by an aggregate that contains punching or are produced by an aggregate that excludes punching.
2. Bruise is present.
3. Therefore, either the bruise is produced by an aggregate that contains punching or is produced by an aggregate that excludes punching.
4. Here is a particular observation of bruise and punching. (OC)
5. Bruise is produced by an aggregate that contains punching.

Paraphrasing what the author has said before, we could say, similarly, that accepting the alternative that a bruise is produced by an aggregate that includes punching favors accepting that punching is a constant casual condition of bruising and, thus, that the induction that wherever there is bruise there is punching is reliable. However, as we know, bruises are also symptoms of aneurysm, which is an abnormal widening or ballooning of a portion of a blood vessel. Therefore, the inductive inference "all bruises are cases of punching" is false, and should not be justified, though the above inference technique proposed by the author seems to endorse this kind of inductive inference.

The natural response might be that our construal of the Gaṅgebarti reconstruction is mistaken because we have misapplied the OC in our own example. However, what is the OC principle? The readers would like to know more about

the principle and how it could be justified. What the author seems to be saying about the principle is that if we see a table being green rather than yellow, then observation of its color is adequate to favor the hypothesis that the table in question is green rather than being yellow. We wonder how the data and hypotheses are being understood here if they are to exemplify the pattern that observational support is always provided only to generalization and only by instances of those generalizations. We have already pointed out that we are yet to have a proper grasp of what is meant by "observational support." Do we understand the observation to be "The table is green at this instant" and the hypothesis to be "The table is green for all instances within some contextually specified range"? That would make them fit the form to which we have just referred. Or is the data something more like "We are having tablish sense data now which are green"? Then they would not be an instance of the pattern we indicated. Unless a more clear understanding is forthcoming about the OC, it is hard to understand its role in the Gaṅgebarti reconstruction and what has gone wrong with our alleged counter-example to the latter.

Another possible response to the counter-example takes us to Chakrabarti's distinction between "how inductions are justified and how inductions are grasped." The above counter-factual reasoning and OC are tools to justify induction. However, to grasp an induction there must be "(1) observation of co-presence so long as (2) a counterexample is not observed and so long as (3) one is not doubtful about the presence of an unobserved counterexample. Both observation of an actual counterexample and the fear that there is an unobserved counterexample are obstructions (*pratibandhaka*) to induction."<sup>6</sup> Using this, it may be said that presence of aneurysm was a *pratibandhaka* which resulted in the faulty generalization. However, the concept of *pratibandhaka* seems to be analogous to the "ceteris paribus" clause, using which one can say "X is the cause of Y unless there is *pratibandhaka*" (analogous to "X is the cause of Y all else remaining equal"). This in turn leads to the possibility of rival hypotheses to be equally justified. For example, H1: "Bruises are caused by punching, unless there is no *pratibandhaka*," and H2: "Bruises are not caused by punching, unless there is no *pratibandhaka*." Hence, the inclusion of the "no *pratibandhaka*" clause seems to be vacuous.

It may be further argued, as Chakrabarti does, that among the possible hypotheses, one must choose the one which has more economy (*lāghava*). Chakrabarti discusses three types of economy: "economy in cognitive link or order (*upasthiti*), economy in relationship (*sambandha*) and economy in constitution (*śarīra*)."<sup>7</sup> Of these, the second one (*sambandha*) applies in this case. According to this, "Of two necessary antecedents (or equally matched hypotheses) the one that is more directly related to the effect (or the explanandum) is more economical."<sup>8</sup> The example given is that of a wheel being a more direct cause for a pot than wheelness. However, in our counter-example, one cannot say that punching is more immediate a cause for bruises than aneurysm. So this counter-response also fails to save the faulty induction.

#### 4. THE OLD AND NEW RIDDLES OF INDUCTION

In Western epistemology, the distinction between the two riddles is clear. In case of the old riddle of induction, the inference from all observed cases to all observed and unobserved cases is not justified, and that is what is known as the problem of induction. The author has shown originality in handling the problem. Consider the new riddle of induction. It assumes that there is a solution to the problem of induction and from there we could still arrive at two mutually incompatible but equally supported hypotheses: all emeralds are green and all emeralds are grue. Here the predicate "x is grue" is defined as "x is observed to be green and it is the year before t or x is observed to be blue and the year is equal or greater than t." Since this way, one could come up with infinitely many incompatible hypotheses consistent with the data, the grue-paradox is also known as the problem of "too many theories" contrasted with "too much evidence" with regard to the raven paradox. Though it is unclear whether Chakrabarti treats these two paradoxes separately, he gives us Gaṅgeśa's version of the grue paradox. Imagine a property called *disni*, which is defined as "not being either the inferential subject or a negative instance."<sup>9</sup> Now, any place which is reliably known to be the locus of fire (probandum) before the inference is also the locus of *disni* (because it is neither the inferential subject, *pakṣa* nor *vipakṣa*). That is, *disni* pervades the probandum. However, if this is the case, then the inferential subject, which is not the locus of *disni* (by definition) cannot be the locus of the probandum (because *disni* pervades the probandum, the absence of *disni* entails the absence of probandum). Hence, the hill cannot be fiery. This contradicts our reliable induction that wherever there is the mark, the probandum also exists and that there is the mark (smoke) observed on the hill now.<sup>10</sup> He applies the belief-behavior contradiction theme discussed in many parts of the book to address both paradoxes. According to this, if an agent believes that food does not nourish her, yet she still keeps on eating food for nourishment, then there is a contradiction between her belief and behavior.<sup>11</sup> This, according to the author, should be counted as a strong argument that induction is justified as well as the green hypothesis. We just wonder whether anyone disputes the theme; consequently, this can be used to question the skeptical challenges to inductive inference of both types: the new and old riddles of induction.

However, the force of the skeptical arguments regarding inductive inferences does not go away because of the invocation of the belief-behavior contradiction. The force of the skeptical argument lies elsewhere. Both skeptical arguments regarding both types of induction involve the question about whether those hypotheses are logically possible. Since they (i.e., the Sun might not rise tomorrow or all emeralds are grue) are logically possible, none of the responses offered by the author including the belief-behavior contradiction is able to put any dent to the skepticism in question. In addition, if the author really thinks that the belief-behavior contradiction addresses the new riddle of induction, then his principle of OC does not endorse choosing either of the hypotheses in the green-grue controversy. We would like to hear his response to the question that if we go by the belief-behavior contradiction, then we, according to him, should choose the green

hypothesis. However, if we go by the principle of OC, then we should in no way favor the green hypothesis over the grue one because there is no observational evidence that would help us to favor one over the other.

#### SUMMING UP

We have presented Chakrabarti's idea of Observational Credibility in this paper and examined its role in solving the old and new riddles of induction. Though a novel attempt has been made by Chakrabarti in reformulating the Navya-Nyāya response by using contemporary language, we raised some key concerns about it. We noted that it allows for certain cases of induction to be counted as valid inferences though they should not be tagged so. We also saw that one method of resolving the problem of induction using the OC principle runs into conflict with the belief-behavior method of resolving it. There is no doubt that the problem of induction was well recognized by Indian philosophers much before Hume and that they tried to provide innovative solutions to the problem. These solutions need to be brought into and discussed in mainstream philosophy. Chakrabarti's work has definitely set the tone for such a dialogue, and we hope that our remarks will prompt further comments and research into this area.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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#### NOTES

1. Chakrabarti, *Classical Indian Philosophy of Induction: The Nyāya Viewpoint*, 1.
2. *Ibid.*, 36.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*; emphasis added.
6. *Ibid.*, 160.
7. *Ibid.*, 49.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*, 72.
10. Strictly speaking, there is a difference between the logical structure of grue-paradox and *disni*-paradox, and Chakrabarti is aware of this (*ibid.*, 73). However, the common feature he sees in both is "some possible gap in the generalization formula."
11. *Ibid.*, 65.

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## Some Thoughts on the Problem of Induction

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I am happy for the opportunity to offer a few clarifications in response to some very interesting observations made by Prasanta Bandyopadhyay and R. Venkata Raghavan ("Some Critical Remarks on Kisor Chakrabarti's Idea of 'Observational Credibility' and Its Role in Solving the Problem of Induction," in this issue) targeted at supplementing, improving, and critiquing some viewpoints in my book entitled *Classical Indian Philosophy of Induction: The Nyaya Viewpoint* (Lexington Books, Rowman and Littlefield, New York, 2010). Bandyopadhyay and Raghavan have graciously acknowledged that there is originality in my work in dealing with the classical problem of induction, that my work is an innovative addition to the literature on the problem of induction and shows how both the East and the West could profit from philosophical dialogue and exchange. Since time is very limited, I am selective in my comments.

The problem of induction involves the question whether our past and present observations of some cases can make general claims about all cases, past, present, and future, reasonable and acceptable. I have offered an account of inductive reasoning as follows: "induction is sometimes used in a broader sense to include virtually any nondeductive reasoning; but we use it in the basic sense of generalizing from particulars to the universal."<sup>1</sup> What is offered here is a description of the basic or the most important sense in which I use induction in my book. A description like this is not a definition and makes no claim to provide necessary or sufficient conditions for induction.<sup>2</sup> Such a description is still useful for the main theme of my work and is consistent with philosophical practice.<sup>3</sup>

Would it be appropriate to distinguish deductive inference from inductive inference with the help of monotonicity?<sup>4</sup> In this connection one should keep in mind that our main context is Nyaya logic in which a kind of reasoning called *nyaya* plays a very important role. A *nyaya* involves inductive reasoning as well as deductive reasoning. An account of such reasoning is provided in my *The Logic of Gotama* (University Press of Hawaii, Honolulu, 1978, chapter III). In the deductive core of a *nyaya*, the conclusion follows necessarily from the premises, but no irrelevant premises are permitted.<sup>5</sup> Since monotonicity allows for irrelevant premises, that is problematic from the perspective of Nyaya logic. Irrelevance is also a serious problem for relevance logicians like Anderson and Belnap.<sup>6</sup> Further, Aristotle defines a syllogism (in part) as an argument with two premises. In the words of Aristotle: *Sullogismos de esti logos en ho tithenton tinon heteron ton keimenon*

*ex anagkes sumbainei to tauta einei* "a syllogism is an argument in which something different from two things being said follows necessarily from their being so"; my translation.<sup>7</sup> It is also required that in a categorical syllogism any two sentences must share a term. The formal syntactic requirements in a categorical syllogism preclude irrelevant premises, and monotonicity is problematic for categorical syllogism as well. Thus, monotonicity that makes room for irrelevance is not the most suitable characterization for deductive arguments for many logicians, ancient and modern. Again, it may be possible that there is a degree of continuity and affinity between deduction and induction as well as analyticity and syntheticity.<sup>8</sup> Under the circumstances, I prefer not to bring in non-monotonicity to describe induction and would like to stay with my account of induction for the purpose at hand, which is to explore whether inductions in the sense of generalizations from some observed cases to all cases is justified.

Now I move on to a matter of substance. Take the induction that all smoky things are fiery. An argument in its support that I have developed following the lead of Gangesha, a great Nyaya Nyaya philosopher, is the counterfactual reasoning (CR: *tarka*) as follows. If smoke were produced neither by an aggregate that includes fire nor by an aggregate that excludes fire, smoke would not be produced. (For the Nyaya 'produced' means something nonexistent coming into being regularly and indispensably preceded by an aggregate of causal conditions.<sup>9</sup>) But smoke is observed to be produced. Thus, the consequent of the above conditional is false, and the antecedent too is false. It follows that smoke is produced either by an aggregate that includes fire or by an aggregate that excludes fire. Now we have two conflicting factual claims: (a) smoke is produced by an aggregate that includes fire and (b) smoke is produced by an aggregate that excludes fire. Nyaya philosophers are empiricists and so are both Carvaka and Hume. A fundamental principle of empiricism is that of two factual claims, one with observational support is preferable to one without observational support. This may be called the principle of observational credibility (OC). While OC and empiricism in general may be challenged, OC should not be rejected by empiricists like Carvaka or Hume. In the above case (a) has observational support. From the Nyaya perspective both particular smokes and particular fires are substances that may be directly perceived and so also that a particular smoke comes into being where the smoke is nonexistent before and where the aggregate including fire is present before the origin of the smoke.<sup>10</sup> Given OC, (a) should be accepted that implies that some smoky things are fiery that is consistent with the induction that all smoky things are fiery and is the contradictory of that no smoky things are fiery.

That some smoky things are not fiery is still logically possible. However, the acceptability of a factual claim is not based on logical possibility alone but further, for empiricists, on observational support. Since (b) has no observational support, it should not be accepted and nor also, given OC, that some smoky things are not fiery. In other words, compared to (a), (b) is more complex and has introduced the additional operator of negation without evidence. The point here is not that (b) is more complex

and that makes it unacceptable. Rather, the point is that (b) makes a claim that is without evidence and that makes it unacceptable. Suppose smoke is observed to be produced by an aggregate that is without fire and not by an aggregate that includes fire. Then (b) would be acceptable and not (a), for the latter then would make a claim without evidence. The underlying principle of reason is that of two claims the one with evidence is preferable to the one without evidence. This may be called the principle of evidential credibility (EC) and it underlies OC. Of course, both (a) and (b) are logically possible, and they are equally matched in that respect. What gives (a) more weight than (b) and makes it acceptable and not (b) is that there is evidence for (a) while there is no evidence for (b). Under the circumstances, if one insists that both (a) and (b) are equally acceptable, one deserves to be ignored just as one who continues to claim that crows have teeth merely because that is logically possible, although crows are observed not to have teeth deserves to be ignored.<sup>11</sup> It is thus clear that acceptance of (a) may be based on such principles of reason as OC or EC and not always on instinct or habit as Hume claims. Ironically, in claiming that the choice of (a) is always based on instinct or habit and not on reason, Hume implicitly relies on induction that, according to him, is irrational.

That smoke is produced by an aggregate that includes fire implies from the Nyaya perspective that fire is a necessary antecedent of smoke and thus that all smoky things are fiery. Both Carvaka and Hume reject causality. How causality should be understood and may be defended is indicated in my book.<sup>12</sup>

In the above argument smoke and fire may be replaced by other effects and causal conditions, respectively. In this way it provides a general framework for a reasoning in favor of causally based inductions.

Now consider the following argument. If bruises were produced neither by an aggregate that includes punching nor by an aggregate that excludes punching, bruises would not be produced. But bruises are observed to be produced. So either (c) bruises are produced by an aggregate that includes punching or (d) bruises are produced by an aggregate that excludes punching. Given OC (c) should be accepted and also that bruises are always caused by punching. This, however, is false, for bruises may sometimes be caused by aneurysm. Is this a counterexample to the above argument?<sup>13</sup>

The answer is no. Bruises caused by punching are not exactly the same as bruises caused by aneurysm just as deaths from drowning or poisoning or suffocation are not exactly the same as I have pointed out in the discussion of causality.<sup>14</sup> Deaths from drowning leave marks on the body that are different from the marks from poisoning, etc. and from this the specific causal condition of death may be determined to the exclusion of others; this is widely used in criminal investigations. Thus, deaths from drowning may be said to be of different kinds from deaths from poisoning. In the same way, bruises from punching leave marks (say a, b, c, and d) on the body that are different from marks (say b, c, d, and e) from aneurysm and from this the specific causal condition of bruise may be found to the exclusion

of others. Accordingly, if bruises are specified as bruises with marks a, b, c, and d, in the said argument, the resultant induction would not be false. Thus, the issue may be resolved with the help of heterogeneity of effects (*karya-vaijatyā*). Alternatively, if homogeneous features are found in all effects under consideration, homogeneous features may also be found in all the causal conditions (*karana-ekajatiyatva*). In the given case, instead of punching, aneurysm, etc. the common causal condition of all bruises could be determined in terms of the common features of punching, aneurysm, etc. If punching were replaced by such common features, the relevant induction would not be false. Close attention to specific features is needed for inductions like "all smoky things are fiery" as well. Here, too, smoke should be appropriately specified to be distinguished from similar phenomena like vapor that may not be caused by fire; without proper specification the induction would be false.

It may be asked, is the counterfactual conditional "if smoke were produced neither by an aggregate that includes fire nor by an aggregate that excludes fire, smoke would not be produced" a logical truth?<sup>15</sup> Gangesha himself has mentioned that this conditional may be challenged by supposing that smoke is unreal and does not exist or that smoke exists but is uncaused, and so on, and how this may be addressed.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the truth of the said conditional depends in part on the logical structure and in part on general intuitions about the nature of causality.<sup>17</sup>

In the above counterfactual conditional, smoke and fire may be replaced by other effects and causal conditions, respectively, but not by others that are not so related. For example, the following is not a proper substitution: if smoke were produced neither by an aggregate that includes a hundred rupee note nor by an aggregate that excludes a hundred rupee note, smoke would not be produced. Here, fire is replaced by a hundred rupee note that is not a causal condition of smoke. Now the denial of the consequent implies that smoke is produced either (g) by an aggregate that includes a hundred rupee note or (h) by an aggregate that excludes a hundred rupee note. Neither (g) nor (h) has observational support and neither is acceptable.

Now, the CR with the counterfactual conditional is useful for inductions where the pervaded and the pervader are related as the effect and a causal condition, respectively. In some other inductions where the pervaded and the pervader are not so related, the CR may be used in a different way. Here, instead of the counterfactual conditional, the CR starts with the supposition that a favorite induction is false and shows that such supposition leads to an undesirable consequence.<sup>18</sup> The CR is needed to address the doubt about the reliability of the induction. In the words of Gangesha: *anukula-tarka-abhavana ...vyapakatva-anishchayat sahadara-darshanadeh samshayakatvat* "without supportive CR there is no certainty of pervasion, for observation of positive instances, etc. leaves doubt (about pervasion)"; my translation.<sup>19</sup> Now take the induction that all emeralds are green and suppose that it is false. Then there would be an emerald that is not green. If there were such an emerald, it would not complement red, for only green complements red. Under the circumstances, if the said emerald were



observed to complement red, that would go against and weaken the supposition that the said induction is false and thus strengthen the induction and make it acceptable and not its denial. Since in this argument what is accepted as a fact is willfully supposed not to be so (*aharya-njana*), this argument, too, is considered to be counterfactual reasoning. Once again, the clincher is lack of support from observed evidence. All observed emeralds are known to complement red. (In the Nyaya view, an emerald is a substance that may be directly perceived and so also the green color and that it complements red.<sup>20</sup>) Since all observed emeralds are known to complement red, there is no observational support for the factual claim that there is an emerald that is not green. The skeptic might harp on that this is still logically possible and that is accepted by the Nyaya and other pro-inductionists. But, as already said, mere logical possibility does not suffice to make a factual claim acceptable; additionally, at least for empiricists like Carvaka and Hume, a factual claim, to be acceptable, should also have observational support as it is enshrined in OC. Thus, OC plays a valuable role in the present case as well. It is worth noting that besides the condition that a given induction may be acceptable if assumption of its denial leads to an undesirable consequence,<sup>21</sup> some other conditions are that there should be corroboration from observation of positive instances or observation of negative instances and non-observation of any counter-instance.<sup>22</sup>

A similar argument may be developed to address the new riddle of induction and the “grue” paradox, a variant of which was discussed by Gangesha and others.<sup>23</sup> In the classical problem of induction, the issue is whether any induction is rational in the face of the charge of circularity, and so on. In the so-called new riddle of induction, the issue is whether any induction is rational if for any induction there is always a rival induction that appears to be equally confirmed by the same inductive evidence while the rival induction makes a conflicting prediction. Take again the induction (e) that all emeralds are green and then take the induction (f) that all emeralds are grue where something is grue if and only if it is observed to be green until now or will be observed to be blue afterwards (an indefinite number of such concocted predicates are possible). Clearly, both (e) and (f) may appear to be equally confirmed by observed evidence, though they lead to conflicting predictions: given (e), the next observed emerald is green; given (f), the next observed emerald is blue.

I have argued that the above predicament may be addressed with the help of CR involving undesirable consequence.<sup>24</sup> If we assume that (e) is false, the next observed emerald may not be green and then would not complement red. This has the consequence that if the next emerald is observed to complement red, that would conflict with assuming that (e) is false, and this would add more weight to accepting (e). Now assume that (f) is false; then the next observed emerald may not be blue; but there is no conflict now if the next emerald is observed to complement red, for something not blue may complement red. This breaks the deadlock from the appearance that both (e) and (f) are equally confirmed by the same observed evidence. By exploring the consequences of supposing that they are false, we see that there is a scenario where observation

may strengthen one but not the other and that one may be acceptable and not the other. Once again, the clincher would have to come from observation showing that one has observational credibility and not the other; accordingly, OC plays a crucial role in this case as well.<sup>25</sup>

As I have said, I have provided an outline of the Nyaya justification of induction that may be a stepping stone towards a deeper and more comprehensive study.<sup>26</sup> Without any doubt, perusal of the extremely subtle analyses and ramifications, especially the brilliant critiques of their own views by the Nyaya philosophers themselves, would be productive and relevant for contemporary philosophy. Nyaya philosophical works display exemplary originality, clarity, and rigor; studying them in the original is necessary for proper understanding and discussion. I hope that this small effort will generate more light than heat and pave the way for a groundbreaking study of one of the great philosophies of the world.

#### NOTES

1. *Classical Indian Philosophy of Induction: The Nyaya Viewpoint* (CIPI), 1.
2. Prasanta Bandyopadhyay and R. Venkata Raghavan (PBVR) have taken my account of induction as a definition and pointed out that it does not provide necessary or sufficient conditions (31).
3. Aristotle speaks of definition (*horos*) in the strict sense that provides necessary and sufficient conditions and states the essence of the definiendum and other kinds of useful definitions that do not state the essence and need not provide necessary and sufficient conditions. See “Aristotle’s View of Definition,” in my *Definition and Induction* (DI) (University Press of Hawaii, 1995). Nyaya philosophers too speak of definitions (*laksana*) that provide necessary and sufficient conditions and acknowledge that a provisional definition or a description (*varnana*) need not provide necessary and sufficient conditions. For example, although they are too narrow, five accounts of pervasion (*vyapti*) are clarified with great rigor and precision in the *Vyaptipancakarahasyam* of Mathuranatha, Kashi Sanskrit Series no. 64, Chowkhamba, Varanasi. See “The Nyaya View of Definition” in DI.
4. This is suggested by PBVR, 31.
5. Irrelevance (*aparthatatva*) is a ground of defeat (*nigrahasthana*) in early Nyaya (*Gautama-sutra-vrtti*, Kolkata, 1928, 5.2.10 and is included as *vyarthatva* under the fallacy called *asiddha* (unsubstantiated) in later Nyaya (*Siddhantamuktavali* with five commentaries (SDM), ed. C. S. R. Shastri (Delhi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratisthan, 1988), 536–37.
6. A. R. Anderson and N. D. Belnap, *Entailment*, Vol. 1 (Princeton University Press, 1975).
7. Aristotle, *Prior Analytics*, ed. W. D. Ross (Oxford, 1974), 1.
8. As I have pointed out in CIPI, 38, 62.
9. SDM, 189–212.
10. For an account of the Nyaya position see my *Classical Indian Philosophy of Mind* (State University of New York Press, 1999), Introduction; Kisor K. Chakrabarti, “The Truth about Perceptual Error,” *Essays in Indian Philosophy* (Kolkata: Allied Publishers, 1997); and B. K. Matilal, *Perception* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), chapters 6 and 7.
11. CIPI, 41–42.
12. CIPI, 42–53.
13. PBVR, 32–33.
14. CIPI, 51.
15. For a related question, see PBVR, 33.
16. CIPI, 131–32.

17. CIPI, 36; also see CIPI, 129.
18. CIPI, 78.
19. Gangesa, *Tattvacintamani* with *Mathuri*, ed. K. N. Tarkavagisa, vol. 1 (Delhi: Motilal Banarassidas, 1974), 355.
20. SDM, 189–212.
21. For undesirable consequences see CIPI, 49–62, 78.
22. CIPI, pp. 3–9, 73, 78.
23. CIPI, pp. 71–80.
24. *Ibid.*
25. I disagree with PBVR that OC does not favor either induction in the green-grue case (33). Considerations of economy that may involve observation pointing to the importance of OC may also make one hypothesis preferable to the other in the green-grue case (CIPI, 78–79).
26. CIPI, 67.

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## PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE AND GRAMMAR

### *Remnants of Words in Indian Grammar*

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In Indian philosophy, the import of word is intimately connected to the question, “what sort of an entity does the importation of a word stand for?” We see the principle that makes an inextricable relation between words and meanings. The word is a primary constituent that constructs a sentence, and people understand the meaning of a word throughout the sentence holism (corporate body of words). This thesis contrasts with meaning atomism, where the representation of words seems semantically atomic or relies on the particular word, not to the whole sentence. The primacy of word sets for an object, and the meaning of the particular word can be derived from the object it stands for.

Jātiśabda (the general/nominal term), the earlier trend of the Indian philosophy of language, instigates a kind of relation between two rival groups—*Vyakti-śakti-vāda* and *Jāti-śakti-vāda*—or, more precisely, a debate pertaining to the meaning particularism versus the meaning generalism from the sense of determining the reference of the general term. *Vyakti-śakti-vādin* asks for a descriptive approach of the singular term by considering that the meaning is correlated to the nominal object. In our practical purposes when we strive to fix the reference, then we always prefer to denote the individual instead of an imperceptible universal. In the context like “The horse is dying,” here the reference of the horse is metonymically recognized by the particular horse, not by its genus. The *Jāti-śakti-vādin* argues that the purport of connotation of a word lies in an individual that is determined by a universal. This riddance of the individual to comprise into a universal domain can be drawn by an example like “The dodos are becoming extinct.” We can properly understand the meaning of the whole sentence if we look over the predicate term and its coherence

relation to the subject term, i.e., “dodo” bird. The property of possession (extinction) of generic birds like “dodo” in our example is going to be extinct bird. This distributive predicate successfully merges not in the individual bird itself like a “dodo,” but collaborately encodes the genus of the bird in general. The truth value of the proposition relies on the collective value of the predicate qualified by the universalistic sense or properties.

Here, the key concern is whether the word itself provides foundation of universal or something else. I think this sort of the metaphysical analysis of linguistic terms ensue a debate in Indian philosophy of language that is highly valued by the grammarians. The *Vyakti-śakti-vāda* delimits a word in terms of the particular term by following a realistic view (the conception of referential expressions makes sense here). *Jāti-śakti-vāda* contends that the import of the word is in no way similar to a particular; actually, it is “the universal in pursuance of laws of logical parsimony.”<sup>1</sup> Ganeri clarifies, “For clearly one might be a referentialist about definite description without being so about indefinite descriptions; likewise, one might be a referentialist about generic uses, but not about non-generic uses.”<sup>2</sup> The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and the Mīmāṃsākas, the realist schools of Indian philosophy, emphasize on a sentence that may be affirmative or negative but have a realistic stand (reference) to the object. The school gets rid of the thesis of an individual edifice of reality that gets closer to the conceptual schemata. Let us see the problem from a different level. My point is to understand the conceding approach of connecting words with ontological categories. Simply, the concern is how does the particular term “cow” categorically connote the universal “cowhood”?

#### WORD-MEANING INTERACTION

Kumārila underpins the debate in connection to the word-essence, which apprehends the meaning of a word that can be impeded only if different speakers failed to identify the particular word, since the identity of the word looks like a pointer that specifies the existence of a simple word-unit. In the case, like “the cow is standing up,” a hearer can understand that a speaker may talk about a particular cow instead of cow *genus*. Here, the popular use assumes the basic identity of the word and meaning as an unwanted premise. The principal understanding of *Mīmāṃsāsūtra*, I think, deciphers the universal as an exclusive connotation that can only concern about eternal words since the efficiencies are not only associated with the individual word like cow (determinatum) but similarly to self-same word *cowhood* as a universal that looks as determinant. The law of parsimony defines the comprehension of universal that can treat individual as a substratum and could be deduced from the indication (*lakṣaṇā*). Let us take an example. The sentence “the smoke is burning” remains nonsensical until the predicate term “burning” cannot be construed by the subject term “smoke” or similarly by “fire” since an inference takes a prominent place here to deduce the latter from the former. The naturalism that is preserved by Mīmāṃsā hinges a sort of non-convention-based language as a key tool that has a universalistic appeal. Besides, the logic that Mīmāṃsākas inculcate in defense of their thesis is an amalgam of universal with the nuance of language.

However, Navya Nyāya aims to criticize both the opinions (the meaning particularism and the meaning generalism). As we know, Gautama (*Nyaya-Sutra*, 2.2.66) articulates the meaning of a word in the sense of particular (*vākti*), form (*akṛti*), and universal (*jāti*). Gautama barely stresses on the concept of form while he hints at a particular as qualified by universal. Early Naiyāyikas believe in the connotation of a particular term that not only resides in the universal but also to the qualities, actions, and the substance as a configuration from a holistic scheme. This theory assigns integrity between the perceptual contents with the conceptual cognitions. If we only put the conceptual cognition as a prime configuration of the connotation of a particular term (like mango), then the taste of mango should not be cognized though the quality or the universal aspect of sweetness or sourness of the particular mango but by the perception of the content of mango that is cognized by *rasana* (palate) only.

Nyāya philosophy enhances the sense of public meaning as a sharable concept. The public meaning can precede the context of a speaker's belief since the word meaning is derived from the realm of sentence meaning that relies on the public sharability of meaning. Navya Nyāya resists this particular method to underline Kumarila's position on the meaning of a word that could be impeded in relation to the number of speakers who may fail to recognize the particular word, since the identity of the word as a pointer denotes the existence of a particular word instead of the genus. However, Navya Nyāya's stance (semantic holism) looks promising since they consider that the meaning of a sentence is a unified relational corpus, whereas the word cannot set as an individual component. The other schools treat the meaning of a word as a nonlinguistic entity, but the grammarians first emphasize the meaning of a word as a linguistic symbol.

### **COLLAPSE OF CONVENTIONALISM**

In Vaiśeṣika philosophy, we notice that the relation between words and meanings is regarded as a matter of convention, and Nyāya accepts this hypothesis strongly. However, Patañjali looks at Kātyāyana's *Vārttika* that instigates an eternal relation of word-meaning by discarding the sense of conventionalism like Mīmāṃsā. Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣa* indicates that a universal seems one and it can be expressed by a word through the power of denotation (*Ekā ākṛtiḥ, sā cā bhidhīyate*). We can know this eternal nonderived linkage between the word and the meaning through people's invariable behaviors. Matilal clarifies, "People are seen to be using words to convey meaning, but they do not make an effort to manufacture words. . . . Jaimini in his Mīmāṃsāsūtra, 1.1.5 says that the relation between word and meaning is 'non-derived' or 'uncreated' (*autpattika*). Both Jaimini and Katyayana (see above) used two rather difficult words, *autpattika* and *siddha*, which do not have any transparent sense."<sup>3</sup>

Mīmāṃsākas might insinuate this problem in two different senses:

- a) Let us consider a word "X" (a pen). The supporters of eternal or non-derivative word-meaning relation can urge that "X" (a pen) is not an object that is

created by an individual since it is created by the omnipotent mind (God).

- b) We cannot expose the explicit origin of the majority of words. This procedure hints that words and their relation to meanings and referents are derived from the omnipotent mind that is beyond of any human endeavor.

Kumārila seems right as he challenges conventionalism to say that any convention should have to maintain the meaning relation within the edge of language, not prior to language. It looks promising to consider that words have a primacy over meanings while meanings are only denoted by words. The purport of words and its relation to meanings intermingles at the level of verbal judgment that confines the implication of public meaning as a conjecture of the causal referential directness to the reality.

The Indian grammarians (*Vaiyākaraṇa*) believe that the word evolves out of *śabda-brahman* (where words represent ultimate reality). The cognition of a word meets the criteria of the corresponding object of the world. Here, meaning connotes the word and the word-meaning relation relies on the process of the usages. Patañjali in his *Mahābhāṣya* refers to the contention of words (*śabdah*) that transmit to the substratum of the world. He considers that the appearance is congregated with the world through the metaphysical identification of words and meanings conjuncture. Patañjali stresses on the nature of cognition, but an eternal verbum (or supreme word) remains unaltered in grammarian as it lies beyond time and space. External verbum sounds as a transcendent principle that segregates all attribution qualities. Besides, eternal verbum as a unitary principle emerges the eternity of supreme reality, an ideal language form (*paśyantī*) that goes through the threefold cords of verbal, pre-verbal, and transcendental reality. In *Vākyapadīya*, external verbum is considered as the essence that is doubtlessly real and independent (*śabdattavaṃ yad akṣaram*). Sastri writes, "That the Eternal Verbum can be regarded as the Supreme Light that manifests different objects may be clearly understood with reference to our everyday experience. It is an undeniable fact that whatever passes current in our thought is determined by an articulate verbal form."<sup>4</sup>

Grammarians argue that the cognitive process of a newborn baby remains determinate, as the form of his/her knowledge is a sort of inarticulate or un-manifestative knowledge that links to the pre-natural knowledge. The reason is that the word according to grammarians is the material cause of the external world and any object beyond time and space dimension is comprehended by the subject's cognition. If there were no subjects or the concomitant objects, still words would have been in the universe as these are all pervading and eternal. For grammarians, eternal words are ahead of the *spatio-temporal* dimension. The eternal verbum emphasizes a comprehensible immutable reality that manifests in plurality and differentiation. In brief, analogically words are one and unique. Actually, the theory of evaluation of words for grammarians is a kind of unmanifested, immutable word essence (*śabda-vivarta-vāda*) that is independent of any kind of transformation

(*pariṇāma*). Like Vedāntin, grammarians' emphasis on the material cause (*upādāna kāraṇa*), an unchanging matrix that manifolds the phenomenal change (*aparīṇāmā prakṛtiḥ*). Bhartṛhari considers that one should not confuse between two different objects that are individually connoted to the different verbal expressions. This intimate relation between the object and the word manifolds a causation that goes towards the eternal verbum as the material cause of the world and the object. Now, one can argue whether the referent of a word differs from the word itself or the object that is determined by the word is identical with the word in nature. Bhartṛhari accepts the two alternatives and says,

*Svamātrā paramātrā va śrutya prakramyate yathā*

*Tathai'va rūḍhatām eti tayā hy artho vidhīyate*  
(*Vākyapadīya*, 1.130)

Bhartṛhari emphasizes that the eternal verbum underlies a principle that accords objects and every being without adjoining any genuine amendment. This doctrine extends a kind of uniformism that discards any bifurcation between the word and the world. Eternal verbum as a *unitary principle* of words emerges from the eternity of supreme reality (*iha dvau śabdātmānau-kāryo nityaś ca* [Puṅyarāja's commentary, 50]).

## ANALYSIS

Bhartṛhari's proposal tracks down a kind of *normativity* of grammar in order to strengthen the impact of grammar on epistemology. It sounds interesting when he says that all object-classes pivot on word-classes (*Vākyapadīya*, 1.15). Grammarians, especially Bhartṛhari are the leading adherent of monism who ensure that a word in its essence can be considered as an indivisible unit where the plurality of the linguistic forms and worldly phenomena has an interim pragmatic validity. One can ask whether we can deflect class characteristic (universal) from an individual. Bhartṛhari clarifies that the universal is the personification of the individual that looks unchanged through all its periods (*padārthasya prāṇa-pradaḥ*). It is intimately entwined with qualities and actions that have relation to the substratum, but the substance sounds nonrelative to the essence of the universal. Universal resides in each individual falling into the same class. However, it is not required to understand all the substitutes of the universal as infinite numbers bound it. Sastri clarifies Patañjali's stand on the universal and its relation to meaning that is closer to grammarians. Sastri writes, "In fact, a universal is neither a summation of individuals nor collectively inherent in the latter. It is a fact that a universal occurs in individuals and, when understood as a meaning, it includes an individual as a substratum of it."<sup>5</sup>

A particular phrase like "pot exists" denotes to the referent, i.e., a particular pot that exists, although the content of specific terms like "heaven," "hell," "intelligence," etc. has no reference fixation (existential reference) in the objective world. So here, the denotation of the empty terms cannot deduce from the existential referents. Despite the denotation of the word from the universal, particular, or quality, etc., the compelling relation (a syntactical relation) revolves around the word-meaning interaction by discarding the denotation method. Bhartṛhari advocates the

same attitude like Patañjali in his writing. Bhartṛhari thinks that the individual character of a word is a type of generous supplement linked to the general characteristic.

Another clue is that the import of a word relies on the context sensitivity of the persons by depending on different impressions (*vāsanā*). These kinds of different opinions exemplify the training of different philosophical schools and their way of understanding the problem, although to understand the ultimate reality, one has to be blessed with the vision of ultimate truth. Our inter-social and experimental knowledge cannot grasp the transcendental truth, so we should not put a great deal of reliance on perceptual knowledge and the denotation of the word from an individualistic sense. Bhartṛhari, I assume, holds a model of indeterminism about the import of word-meaning relation that hints towards an unfeasible attempt to get a universal approval on the meaning of a word and its consequences. As the meaning of a word depends on the society and an agent's preference, so the problem of incongruity or divergence in the case of denotation may recur. Besides, Bhartṛhari attunes an import of a word as fiction, although Bhartṛhari strongly believes in the reality of sentences and the conception of meaning in terms of an inseparable unit. Bhartṛhari questions about the objective validity of words and meanings. This thesis denies the appeal of *Abhihitānvayavādin* who considers that the meaning of a word does not stem from putting together the meaning of each constituent; neither the meaning of a word can be deduced from the corporate body of the sentence as propagated by *Anvitābhidāhnavādin*. Meaning for the grammarians—especially Bhartṛhari—is regarded as an indivisible unit that can be explained in the course of the meaning of an unreal word that comprises it. For Bhartṛhari the sentence seems real, but words are in *vaikaharī* level (ordinary speech that takes place in *spatio-temporal* forms) useful fiction that cannot relate to the empirical real objective. The point is that the semantic and syntactical part of words remains unreal. Bhartṛhari emphasizes, "The *śabda* that is designative of meaning is an individual unit, a sequenceless whole, but it is revealed through the divided items (noisy realities produced in proper sequences). The latter gets intermixed with the object/meaning for it constitutes the very nature of the object/meaning."<sup>6</sup>

Bhartṛhari's *sphoṭa-vāda* nourishes the threefold doctrine of letters, words, and sentences. The term *Sphoṭa* refers to the word-meaning liaison from a causal and effectual efficiency. The use of the word is considered as the instruction for engaging with certain *sphoṭa*. We know that *sphoṭa* (*śabda*) is in nature indivisible and distinct from any kind of internal sequence. Bhartṛhari thinks that there is *pada-sphoṭa*, which refers to the word as a meaning-bearing unit, whereas *vākya-sphoṭa* indicates to sentence, i.e., nonsequence and part less whole. It is controversial that sentences in Bhartṛhari's sense are regarded as a meaning bearing unit, but *sphoṭa* in its real sense interchange with the substratum, a kind of linguistic unit that is akin to meaning. Actually, *sphoṭa* is like the non-differentiated language principle. The metaphysical standpoint of Bhartṛhari instigates that the self is identical with language and this state is called *paśyantī* stage, while language and thought, which transmit an undifferentiated

state where the proper articulation of utterances closes to an intermediary stage (pre-verbal stage). In this pre-verbal stage, the speaker considers a differentiation between thought and language. This intermediate stage is familiar to the name of *madhyamā vāk*. The third stage is called the verbal stage (*vaikharī*) that stands for speaker's word-meaning relation and the comprehension of the hearer. Here, the uttered sound can be perceived by our sense organs. So without comprehending the sound, an agent cannot understand what word (*śabda*) actually is. Now the interesting question is whether Bhartrhari's account tends toward monism or not. If we clearly go through Bhartrhari's analysis, then the pertinent point that we notice is his quest for the transcendental word essence that he called the first principle of the universe, and the *sphoṭa* theory is doubtlessly aligned with the ultimate reality (*sābda Brahma*). The manifestation that Bhartrhari preserved looks at a perfect knowledge of an individual where without being connected to any thought, no communicative language may ever exist. So the word precedes knowledge hypothesis sounds acceptable. In *paśyantī* level, language and meaning are one and inseparable, but at the verbal level, these may differ. *Sphoṭa* doctrine implies a reunion between the symbol and the signifier. Bhartrhari refutes Mīmāṃsākas' opinion that we get sentence meaning conjointly through the word meaning. There is a mutual linkage between the sentence meaning and the word meaning. The sentence meaning is nothing but the sequence of words' meaning. These theories preserve a kind of atomism. Bhartrhari's outlook defines the sentence meaning as an indivisible unit that cannot comprehend the atomistic approach of meaning. In *loka-vyavahara* (human practice), we undertake the holistic approach of language learning in the atomistic unit that correlates words and its meaning separately. The indivisible structure of the sentence is an internal part of language, but the manifestation that makes the whole into part is an external approach that is called speech (*nāda*). *Sphoṭa* and *nāda* are not two distinct issues while grasping the one means grasping the other at the same time. In fact, grammarian thinks *nāda* as an overlay and qualified facade of real language (*sphoṭa*). *Sphoṭa* reflects in the *nāda* as the color red is reflected on the crystal. Moreover, Bhartrhari urges that the comprehension of *sphoṭa* is conditionally (instrumentally) derived from the *nāda* just like through our visual system we can see a tree, etc.<sup>7</sup> In this visual perception, an agent may be unaware of the visual faculty and its features. In Patañjali's words, *nāda* is an attribute of *sphoṭa*. Here the cognition of *nāda* is unable to precede the cognition of *sphoṭa*.

One can disagree with grammarians' hypothesis on the utility of language. In grammarian school, language plays three different roles at a time, communication (*pratipādana*), human practice (*loka-vyavahara*), and cognition (*jñāna*). If we would like to see language as a communication, then the process of comprehension (*pratipatti*) precedes communication (*pratipādana*). It is a sort of speech transaction where speakers accumulate speech reception in the context of speech meaning referred to by some speech acts. Language as a human practice endorses the concept of *speech power* that relates to the explicit language. How could the specific language come up? The answer is through language disintegration (*apabhraṃśa*),

but it is also true that the generalized language competence (*śabda-tattva*) can manifest a sort of specific language through *vāsanā* as an innate capability. This speech-bond procedure is causally dependent on the subject's will (it may be God's will or a person's will). Language as cognition brings a linguistic act that accompanies comprehension and generalized language competence with cognition (experience in mundane level). However, in particular, Bhartrhari hints at the ultimate form of language where the purity of the word generates the manifested essential characters. Without believing in the ideal language form (*paśyantī*), no grammatical form can elucidate how does the word and meaning manifest on the *sphoṭa* theory (real *śabda-bodha*). Language seems an intrinsic component of an individual's awareness. The learning process that is also nourished by this awareness can be gradually increased since the procedure of cognitive awareness is inseparably construed by words.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My sincere thanks go to the anonymous reviewer and Prasanta Bandyopadhyay for inevitable criticism and laudable suggestions.

#### NOTES

1. Sastri, *The Philosophy of Word and Meaning*, 139.
2. Ganeri, *Semantic Powers, Meaning and the Means of Knowing in Classical Indian Philosophy*, 85.
3. Matilal, *The Word and the World, India's Contribution to the Study of Language*, 27.
4. Sastri, *The Philosophy of Word and Meaning*, 5.
5. *Ibid.*, 147.
6. Bhartrhari *Vākyapadīya*, verse 1. 44.
7. *Ibid.*, verse 1, 45–49.

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## APA PANEL ON DIVERSITY

### *Report on an APA Panel: "Diversity in Philosophy"*

Ethan Mills

UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE AT CHATTANOOGA

The Committee on Asian and Asian-American Philosophers and Philosophies sponsored a panel entitled "Diversity in Philosophy" at the 2018 Eastern Division meeting of the APA in Savannah, Georgia. The panel took place on Thursday, January 4, 2018, and it featured B. Tamsin Kimoto (Emory University), Amy Donahue (Kennesaw State University), Monika Kirloskar-Steinbach (University of Konstanz), and Denise Meda Calderon (Texas A&M University). Two other presenters—Brian Bruya (Eastern Michigan University) and Julianne Chung (University of Louisville)—were unable to attend due to weather. The purpose of the present report is to summarize some of each presenter's talk for the benefit of those who were unable to attend and to further the mission of the Committee on Asian and Asian-American Philosophers and Philosophies by sharing, in a wider context, some of the ideas presented at a panel sponsored by the committee. Please note that the following summaries are neither exhaustive nor authoritative. I encourage readers to contact the authors directly if they would like to read their full papers.

The first talk, by B. Tamsin Kimoto, "Skin in the Game: Diversity in (Spite of) Professional Philosophy," highlighted some of the issues that continue to arise in efforts to make philosophy a more diverse and inclusive profession, especially in light of the recent *Hypatia* controversy. Kimoto focused on the often-articulated idea that marginalized people in the discipline are "hypersensitive" and simply need to develop thicker skins. After glossing some of the relevant literature on diversity problems in the discipline, Kimoto discussed the phenomenological experience of being a marginalized person in the discipline, focusing on the idea of skin. Next, Kimoto discussed the notion of epistemic wounding with examples of testimonial quieting (in which an audience simply refuses to acknowledge that a speaker is a knower) and testimonial smothering (in which a speaker withholds testimony due to an audience's inability or unwillingness to constructively engage with that testimony). Such tactics serve to undermine the epistemic credibility of marginalized people. Kimoto ended with a discussion of a sort of reversal of the idea of epistemic wounding in the idea that admitting marginalized people into the discipline is going to "kill philosophy," or that the discipline itself will be wounded; Kimoto suggested, however, that perhaps such "wounding" could be a way to reorganize the discipline.

The second talk, by Amy Donahue, "Nyāya as Therapy for Collective Gaslighting (AKA, Philosophy Is Feeble When It

Isn't Diverse)," applied the contemporary notion of collective gaslighting to the experience of diverse practitioners in the field of philosophy, a process Donahue referred to as "institutionalized gaslighting." After explaining some of the ways such techniques work as practices of exclusion (e.g., through conference programs, syllabi, grants, tenure criteria, etc.), Donahue argued that these sorts of what she calls "epistemic technologies" might be countered by resources from the Nyāya tradition of classical Indian philosophy. In particular, the type of debate known as *vāda* (friendly, truth-directed deliberation) might prove to be a fruitful inspiration. For instance, the Nyāya criteria for a trustworthy authority (*āpti*), which apply regardless of one's social standing, might be used to defend the epistemic authority of those who are gaslit. Furthermore, in Nyāya one cannot restate objections that have already been answered; if such a norm were adopted, it might counter incessant requests for diverse practitioners to justify their activities as philosophy. Donahue ended with the intriguing suggestion that Nyāya's epistemic technology might become the basis for an online reasoning platform.

The third talk, by Monika Kirloskar-Steinbach, "Situating (Cross-Cultural) Philosophy," focused on the problems and promises for cross-cultural philosophy as an avenue for challenging the underrepresentation of minorities (ethnic, gendered, disability, etc.) in the discipline and more broadly for expanding the appreciation of different modes of meaning making in pluralistic societies. Kirloskar-Steinbach noted the potential hazards when members of dominant groups (such as white men) are tasked with authenticating and representing non-Western philosophy—this situation can serve to re-enforce current hierarchies of epistemic authority. In the second part of the talk, Kirloskar-Steinbach argued that cross-cultural philosophy has the potential to challenge the assumptions that only certain forms of meaning making are valid and that only certain types of people should be engaged in meaning making. Drawing on Nishida Kitaro, she explained a model of dialogue that avoids taking its participants *merely* as representations of their respective traditions but rather as individuals with shifting sets of ethical obligations toward one another, a form of dialogue that might open up exciting new possibilities for meaning making in pluralistic societies.

The fourth talk, by Denise Meda Calderon, "Latin American Feminist Philosophy: Distinct Voices on Cultural Identity and Social Justice," offered a critique of traditional, Western epistemology through the work of Latin American and Latinx theorists. Meda Calderon discussed critiques of conceptions of knowledge as *a priori*, objective, and detached from any particular social position or context. Instead, we should see knowledge as situated historically, socially, and politically, a project that Meda Calderon argued provides resources for resonating more with the lived experiences of Latin American and Latinx people as well as offering interesting avenues for interdisciplinary work between philosophy, history, sociology, and other disciplines. Meda Calderon focused on the social and ontological situation of Black Mexicans in Mexico, considering the example of a photography project called *Tierra Negra*. The project became problematic in a number of ways: for instance, it

did not seek input from the subjects of the photos about how they wanted to be represented. Such examples ought to encourage us to situate our own positionality, which will in turn shift dominant paradigms toward inclusion of more perspectives and lived experiences. Meda Calderon ended by examining suggestions from Ofelia Schutte about how attention to situatedness might help to make philosophy more inclusive, for instance by empowering marginalized people to give testimonies of their lived experiences.

Julianne Chung and Brian Bruya were unable to attend the conference due to weather. Chung's talk was to be called "Style, Substance, Methodology, and Diversity: A Cross-Cultural Case Study," and it was to focus on the *Zhuangzi* as a case study for some of the issues that arise in integrating into the philosophy curriculum texts that differ significantly in style from the majority of Anglo-analytic texts. In particular, the style and aesthetic features of the *Zhuangzi* are directly related to its philosophical content, although scholars continue to debate what, exactly, this relation may be. Chung's own interpretation of the *Zhuangzi* as a fictionalist text was to demonstrate how the interplay between form and content might inform ways in which we might bring together differing methodologies and traditions to diversify philosophy, a process that might have moral, epistemic, and aesthetic benefits.

Bruya's talk, "Multiculturalism as Diversity," was to be based on a recent publication, which he was able to provide. In this paper, Bruya argues in favor of diversifying philosophy in terms of subject matter. Drawing on resources from social science, he makes two claims about human nature: the bad news is that humans seem to have an inherent tendency toward ethnocentrism, but the good news is that diverse groups really are more likely to find better solutions. Bruya then shows how the tendency toward ethnocentrism works against the promotion of diversity in philosophy, particularly with regard to popular, yet flawed resources like *The Philosophical Gourmet Report*. Bruya proposes that scholars working in non-Western philosophy organize to promote the advancement of multiculturalism in philosophy through demanding more inclusion in the APA, participating in other philosophical societies, and hosting workshops for philosophers seeking to integrate non-Western content into their curricula.

I remind readers that these summaries should not be taken to be complete records of their respective presentations. They are at best partial sketches of fuller, more detailed discussions. My goal is merely to pique readers' interest in what the authors had to say, and I wholeheartedly encourage readers to contact the authors directly. I would like to thank the participants for their presentations and for providing their papers. I'd especially like to thank Monika Kirsloskar-Steinbach and Amy Donahue for organizing the panel and for suggesting that I write this summary.

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## BOOK REVIEW

### *Minds without Fear: Philosophy in the Indian Renaissance*

Nalini Bhushan and Jay Garfield (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

Reviewed by Brian A. Hatcher  
TUFTS UNIVERSITY

The title of this celebration of modern Indian philosophy in English hearkens to the ennobling words of Rabindranath Tagore. It is an apposite choice. Not only is Rabindranath a shining exemplar of the so-called Bengal Renaissance, but he also played an important role in garnering global recognition for Indian wisdom and spirituality. It was Rabindranath's *Gitanjali* that won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913—the first such prize for a non-Western writer. That collection also contains the poem to which the authors allude, which opens with the words, "Where the mind is without fear." While Rabindranath could give voice to national aspiration, we should recall that he also struggled to reconcile patriotism with universalism. This helps us appreciate the question behind Bhushan and Garfield's book: How did modern Indian thinkers honor the resources of their own tradition while creatively responding to the challenge of colonial modernity?

The book has many merits. To begin with it is written in a lively style and with a real appreciation for the many intellectual projects it surveys. The authors do justice to thinkers who have not always received a fair shake. There was a time when members of the Euro-American philosophical guild could write off an Aurobindo Ghosh or a Swami Vivekananda as intellectually sloppy, derivative, or eclectic (for my own attempt at a correction, see *Eclecticism and Modern Hindu Discourse* [Oxford, 1999]). While appreciating the intellectual accomplishments of such figures, Bhushan and Garfield are committed to helping readers understand what we might call the psycho-social contexts in which they worked. And if Bengal has hitherto been the *locus classicus* for thinking about India's encounter with the West, the authors deserve credit for taking a geographically more expansive view of the Renaissance; they want us to think of India and not just Bengal; likewise they embrace developments among Muslim thinkers instead of perpetuating the notion that India's awakening was strictly a Hindu affair.

The authors' methodology bears noting as well, especially as they discard tired notions of modernity as a rupture of Indian tradition. Following the lead of scholars like David Shulman, Muzaffar Alam, and Sanjay Subrahmaniam, they seek to locate the traces of modernity in the premodern. This allows them to contest narratives that picture India moving from a religious past to a secular present. They prefer we see how India's embrace of secularism came not at the cost of religion but through the re-deployment of religion under the terms of reform. This is a thesis that accords well with a range of recent scholarship that

either interrogates the Western, Christian genealogy of secularism or that explores the way groups like the Brahma Samaj deployed new conceptions of theology and reason to advance arguments about universalism and pluralism. Those already familiar with the literature on India's particular embrace of secularism will not find anything new here, but context is everything. It has been customary to dismiss Indian philosophy as being religious; and if religious, then it had to be either anti-modern or non-secular. This book allows readers to appreciate what is at stake in such claims.

The authors' other methodological strategy is useful if less than original. It involves identifying the concept of the Renaissance as a "master trope" (65). This trope turns on invoking a real or imagined "golden age" and suggests that the hallmark of a Renaissance is the attempt to recover or re-establish the ideals of this postulated bygone era (68). By focusing on the Renaissance trope, the authors wish to highlight a particular modernity whose distinctive component involves a backward gaze of cultural recovery coupled with a "forward-looking" embrace of modernity that had been occasioned by "accelerated interaction with England and the West" (65). To be fair, David Kopf had long ago isolated this very feature of the Bengal Renaissance, viewing it as a kind of "dynamic classicism" (see his *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance* [California, 1968]). It is a shame that Bhushan and Garfield seem unaware of Kopf's widely cited work, which they might have drawn upon to enrich their own analysis. That analysis proceeds to identify a series of subsidiary tropes the authors treat as clustered under the aegis of the master trope. These include themes like self-conscious innovation, tradition

versus modernity, the sacred and the secular, intercultural encounter, and elite cultural production (see 69–76). Whether these are proper tropes is open for debate; it strikes me this is a list of structuring themes in Renaissance thought, which could then be expressed through metaphor. One thinks of Rabindranath deploying the metaphor of the "dreary sands of dead habit" to speak of tradition in his poem from *Gitanjali*. In any case, it is not clear how much this list actually unpacks modern Indian intellectual and how much it merely reflects its major premises.

This raises important questions. Granting that the Indian Renaissance operates as a master trope, just whose trope is it? And how should it be invoked today? Here the authors' celebration of Renaissance philosophy tends to short circuit sustained critical reflection. One might argue that what bears examination is not the fact that Indian thinkers invoked metaphors of rebirth to mobilize communal, regional, and national aspiration, but what the ramifications of such invocations have been. The authors speak approvingly of the "soul" of India and wish to highlight the glories of Indian pluralism, but do they also risk a slippage into essentialism? Does their celebration of modern Indian philosophy rub up too closely against nationalist historiography, while ignoring the shadow-side of such culturalist mobilization? I was disappointed to see that the authors pay scant heed to a wealth of scholarly literature associated with postcolonial and subaltern studies. This may point to the selectivity of their own reading of modern South Asian history. Even so, they have brought the Indian Renaissance back into critical view, and for that we can be grateful.





APA NEWSLETTER ON

# Feminism and Philosophy

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SERENA PAREKH, EDITOR

VOLUME 18 | NUMBER 1 | FALL 2018

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## FROM THE EDITOR

Serena Parekh  
NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

This issue of the newsletter features three book reviews and an invited symposium on Alexis Shotwell's book, *Against Purity: Living Ethically in Compromised Times*. The symposium is a result of the author-meets-critics session at the APA Central Division meeting in February 2018 and includes a response by Shotwell. Many of the themes of Shotwell's book, as well as the discussion of it by her critics, will be of interest to feminist scholars: for example, the ways that moral agents are implicated in forms of harm that make it impossible to be ethically pure, the role of non-ideal philosophy in moral discourse, and strategies for addressing structural injustice. I particularly appreciate Shotwell's insistence that though we are implicated in unjust systems, systems that we cannot easily repair or avoid, we can nonetheless maintain a positive attitude and avoid despair. Her work is a helpful antidote to what Hannah Arendt called the "reckless optimism and reckless despair" that she thought characterized the modern world. Readers of this newsletter will, I believe, find much of interest in the discussion of Shotwell's book published here.

After three years as editor, I will be stepping down from this position. This will be my last issue of the newsletter. I am grateful to everyone who submitted articles and who volunteered to review submissions and to the Committee on the Status of Women for their support. Lauren Freeman, University of Louisville, will take over. Please send all future submissions and questions to her at [lauren.freeman@louisville.edu](mailto:lauren.freeman@louisville.edu).

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## ABOUT THE NEWSLETTER ON FEMINISM AND PHILOSOPHY

The *Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy* is sponsored by the APA Committee on the Status of Women (CSW). The newsletter is designed to provide an introduction to recent philosophical work that addresses issues of gender. None of the varied philosophical views presented by authors of newsletter articles necessarily reflect the views of any or all of the members of the Committee on the Status of Women, including the editor(s) of the newsletter, nor does the committee advocate any particular type of feminist

philosophy. We advocate only that serious philosophical attention be given to issues of gender and that claims of gender bias in philosophy receive full and fair consideration.

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## SUBMISSION GUIDELINES AND INFORMATION

**1. Purpose:** The purpose of the newsletter is to publish information about the status of women in philosophy and to make the resources of feminist philosophy more widely available. The newsletter contains discussions of recent developments in feminist philosophy and related work in other disciplines, literature overviews and book reviews, suggestions for eliminating gender bias in the traditional philosophy curriculum, and reflections on feminist pedagogy. It also informs the profession about the work of the APA Committee on the Status of Women. Articles submitted to the newsletter should be around ten double-spaced pages and must follow the APA guidelines for gender-neutral language. Please submit essays electronically to the editor or send four copies of essays via regular mail. All manuscripts should be prepared for anonymous review. References should follow *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

**2. Book Reviews and Reviewers:** If you have published a book that is appropriate for review in the newsletter, please have your publisher send us a copy of your book. We are always seeking new book reviewers. To volunteer to review books (or some particular book), please send the editor, Lauren Freeman ([lauren.freeman@louisville.edu](mailto:lauren.freeman@louisville.edu)), a CV and letter of interest, including mention of your areas of research and teaching.

**3. Where to Send Things:** Please send all articles, comments, suggestions, books, and other communications to the editor: Dr. Lauren Freeman, University of Louisville, [lauren.freeman@louisville.edu](mailto:lauren.freeman@louisville.edu).

**4. Submission Deadlines:** Submissions for spring issues are due by the preceding November 1; submissions for fall issues are due by the preceding February 1.

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## NEWS FROM THE COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

### COMMITTEE MEMBERS FOR 2018–2019

Adriel M. Trott (APA Blog Series Editor), Kathryn J. Norlock Associate Chair (2019), Charlotte Witt (Chair 2019), Margaret Atherton (Member 2019), Amy R. Baehr (Member 2019), Michael C. Rea (Member 2019), Rachel V. McKinnon (Member 2020), Julinna C. Oxley (Member 2020), Katie Stockdale (Member 2021), Nancy Bauer (Member 2021), Nicole J. Hassoun (Member 2021), Janet A. Kourany (Member 2021), Lauren Freeman (Newsletter Editor), Peggy DesAutels (Site Visit Program Director).

### CHECK OUT THE NEW WOMEN IN PHILOSOPHY BLOG

From editor Adriel Trott:

The “Women in Philosophy” series at the [APA Blog](#) has been going well. The series has been able to offer a platform for voices and perspectives that are not often given space in the field, and future posts will be doing more of the same. Topics thus far have included feminist philosophy conferences, Southern Black feminism, the work of the Graduate Student Council of the APA, the importance of having people who have experienced oppression working in relevant areas of philosophy, and a call to decolonize the philosophical canon, among other topics. I have lined up several senior women in the field to respond to questions more junior scholars and graduate students might have, like whether to be on social media and whether and how one could contest an editor’s decision on a manuscript. The series continues to solicit contributions on topics about women in the field, about women in the public sphere, or about the research women in the field are doing. The series is meant to provide a space for women and genderqueer folks to discuss these issues, but notes that the comment sections still tend to be populated by men, and often men who are telling the posters how to better think about diversity, so it’s still a work in progress. Those who are interested in supporting the series might consider submitting a post to the series editor (Adriel M. Trott at [trotta@wabash.edu](mailto:trotta@wabash.edu)) or commenting on posts.

### CSW POSTERS

Two new posters are available for purchase on the CSW website (<http://www.apaonlinecsw.org/>).

## ARTICLES

### *Introduction to Cluster on Alexis Shotwell’s Against Purity: Living Ethically in Compromised Times*

Ami Harbin

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY

Alexis Shotwell’s *Against Purity: Living Ethically in Compromised Times* (University of Minnesota Press, 2016) advances a view of the moral terrain where it is impossible for agents to hold pure, unimplicated, morally righteous positions, but also where such an impossibility is not cause for despair. Shotwell considers the ways agents are inevitably involved in webs of harm and suffering, considering in depth the presence and histories of, among other realities, colonialism, the social conditions of illness, eco-degradation, and food consumption. No matter how they may try, moral agents cannot remove themselves from their implication in ongoing legacies of suffering, degradation, destruction, and harm. What they can and should do, instead, is acknowledge and inhabit their implicated positions in ways which open new paths of collective action, creativity, and courage in working towards different future landscapes. Shotwell draws out the possibilities for such creativity embodied in such practices as disability and gender justice activism, and speculative fiction.

The following responses originated in an author-meets-critics session devoted to Shotwell’s book at the American Philosophical Association Central Division meeting in Chicago, February 2018. The authors developed their essays further following that conversation and offer them now as a testament to the usefulness of *Against Purity* in multiple areas of philosophy. Michael Doan offers a reflection on Shotwell’s “distributed” or “social” approach to ethics as an alternative to ethical individualism. Kathryn Norlock’s response focuses on Shotwell’s view as non-ideal theory and considers the analysis of gender voluntarism in Chapter 5. Mark Lance’s response explores the notion of prefiguration in Shotwell’s work, as a turning moment, from the reality of impurity to the possibilities of activism and organizing. The variation among the responses attests to the richness of the book and to its appeal to readers throughout and beyond academic philosophy.

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### *Non-Ideal Theory and Gender Voluntarism in Against Purity*

Kathryn J. Norlock

TRENT UNIVERSITY

Alexis Shotwell’s *Against Purity* is an unusual and absorbing collection of ideas. It is a pleasure to delve into the related chapters, but hard to know where to start with a response. It was helpful, therefore, when panel organizer Ami Harbin

suggested that rather than be mere critics, we readers of *Against Purity* provide a focus on our ways of using and developing its themes in our own research. I come to this text as one interested in non-ideal theory, and specifically what I call *non-ideal ethical theory* (NET). (For readers who don't embrace the term, I'll briefly characterize it below.) Shotwell takes up a multiplicity of tasks with respect to what I think of as the non-ideal. In what follows, I trace the relationship of her work to that of non-ideal theorists whose work influences mine. Then, more critically, I probe her analysis of gender voluntarism in Chapter 5, "Practicing Freedom: Disability and Gender Transformation," partly to better understand what she takes it to be, and partly to advance a cautious defense of some of the moral functions of gender voluntarism that non-ideal theory leads me to value. Perhaps my interest in retaining a non-pejorative account of gender voluntarism is due to my tendency to take non-ideal theory as a recommendation for some pessimism, whereas Shotwell's similar commitments turn out to inform her more optimistic philosophy.

First, I should clarify why non-ideal commitments lend me to pessimism. In a recent article,<sup>1</sup> I offered a vision of non-ideal ethical theory (hereafter NET) construed from elements of non-ideal theories as articulated in political philosophy by writers including Laura Valentini and Charles Mills, and in moral theory by writers including Lisa Tessman and Claudia Card. I combine insights like Mills's that political philosophers should reject Rawlsian idealizations that "obfuscate realities,"<sup>2</sup> with the work of moral theorists like Tessman, who argues for avoiding idealizations in morality, saying, "theory must begin with an empirically informed, descriptive account of what the actual world is like,"<sup>3</sup> and we "should forego the idealizing assumption that moral redemption is possible, because it obscures the way that moral dilemmas affect the moral agent."<sup>4</sup> NET offers reminders to theorists of institutional and systemic change that material contexts involve ongoing oppressions, and that individuals are inconsistent and biased, bear emotional and moral remainders, and are often outmatched by the seriousness of the problems we face. Because NET prioritizes attention to the imperfect realities of human nature, I am pessimistic that (inevitably temporary) progress in institutional arrangements will lead to better-behaved persons. Institutions can be orderly, but their orderliness does not thereby yield compliant individuals, because to believe individuals will be compliant with orderly institutions *is* to idealize moral agents, as primarily rational, unencumbered by moral remainders, free from histories of violence or oppressive occupation, and so on. Therefore, ethics should not aim for absolution, and justice should not aim for wiping the record clean, because embodied individuals in the material world will continue on all-too-human paths in a way which forestalls possibilities for purity; instead, moral and political efforts should engage in a necessary struggle that will remain a perpetual struggle. I suggested that NET is methodologically committed to (1) attention to oppression, (2) de-idealized moral agents, (3) recognition of moral remainders, and (4) recognition that some wrongs are not reparable.

How does Shotwell's work in *Against Purity* measure up to these injunctions of mine? I find her work urgently

relevant to all four of the above commitments. In the first chapter, Shotwell refers to "currently extremely oppressive social relations" (25) including colonialism. Her book holds up for scrutiny oppressions including healthism, anthropocentrism, trans-exclusion, and hostility to LGBTQ+ people. So (1) attention to oppression is certainly satisfied! One might infer that Shotwell's concern for oppressed groups motivates the book itself.

Next, (2) de-idealized moral agents, as Tessman describes us, are moral agents who are subject to moral failure: "To see the moral agent as someone who will likely face complicated moral conflicts and emerge from them bearing moral remainders is an important way to de-idealize the moral agent," she says.<sup>5</sup> Tessman criticizes theory that has been unduly focused on *action-guiding*,<sup>6</sup> idealizing the moral agent as one with options that can be exercised toward a right choice, which does not promote "understanding moral life under oppression."<sup>7</sup> I add that a de-idealized moral agent, especially in American political contexts, is a *relational* agent rather than the self-sufficient and independent individual valued by oppressors who long to ignore our shared states. Again, Shotwell exemplifies this attention to our compromised lives; her very subtitle (*Living Ethically in Compromised Times*) heralds her attention to the impurity of choices. Shotwell's attentive criticism even to fellow vegans is instructive here; she describes the attitudes some take toward veganism as mistaken when they fancy themselves as "opting out" of systems of agriculture, migrant labor, environmental degradation, illness and death—as if veganism were an action-guide in a world with right choices that lead to a pure self (117). Shotwell's attention to the relational nature of oppressions and systems of production enables her to clarify that rightly intended actions are still enacted in thick contexts from which no opting out is possible. "It is striking," Shotwell says, "that so many thinkers answer the question 'how should I eat' with an answer that centers on individual food choices" (118), as if one's body were "one's horizon of ethical practices of freedom" (120). Shotwell keeps front and center a relational account of what it means to be a body (interdependently) and what it means to be a less than ideal moral agent.

Shotwell's arguments against purity easily satisfy my (3) and (4) above, to an extent, as her account of pollution and what it means to be a part of a damaged ecosystem make us *feel* the importance of the tenet that (4) some wrongs are not slates that we can later wipe clean, and that (3) we carry the moral remainders of our compromised choices. Of course, in the case of pollution, we carry literal remainders that are not washed away by using Brita filters for our water. Claudia Card attended importantly, however, to one type of moral remainder in particular: emotions as moral remainders,<sup>8</sup> and as insoluble as results of what Card called "the challenges of extreme moral stress."<sup>9</sup> It is the consideration of the challenges of moral stress that moves me to probe Shotwell's account of gender voluntarism in Chapter 5.

I continue to read and learn the literature on gender voluntarism, and readers like me who may need more explication of the term will perhaps have some questions

after reading Shotwell's account of it. This is certainly a project that is complicated in part by the extant literature, in which there does not seem to be a clear consensus as to what gender voluntarism means. Understanding voluntarism is also complicated in part by an uncharacteristic change in Shotwell's writing voice in Chapter 5. Much of the book is written first-personally, and invitationally, including moments when Shotwell leans in and clearly indicates to us that she is offering her own view ("I am identifying this as naturalism" (99), she says of skills of attention to details of the natural world). However, in Chapter 5 she momentarily disappears, when she says, "I examine charges that certain trans theorists are relying on voluntarist conceptions of natural change. 'Voluntarist' here refers to political projects that assume individuals can change themselves and their political circumstances through their own force of will, without regard for current realities or history" (140). The source of the "charges" is unclear in the book; it became clear in discussion at our author-meets-critics panel that she refers to charges on the part of writers including trans-exclusionary feminists whom Shotwell was aiming to avoid citing, which is a worthy ideal.

Absent that explanatory context, the latter sentence, with the "here refers to" phrase, threw me; is this Shotwell's characterization of the voluntarist, I wondered? It's not flagged as such the way naturalism was, even though it seemed to me that this depiction of voluntarism is more distinctively her own than was the depiction of naturalism. Why would she provide an account that seems like no one would hold it—who assumes that individuals can change themselves "without regard for current realities or history"? The most individualistic voluntarist must have some regard for current realities or they wouldn't want their own forms of change. What is the history of this term, and what is its function in this chapter, and does Shotwell intend it to have a pejorative meaning? Is gender voluntarism bad by definition, or is it the effects of the associated attitude that are lamentable? One might think that learning some trans-exclusionary feminists are at least one source of the sense of "gender voluntarist" at work here would remove my questions, but as the chapter proceeds, it becomes clear that Shotwell is not merely tilting at people who use the term accusatorily and unethically. She is also working out arguments against gender voluntarism itself, in which case she must have a conception of the meaning of the term that exceeds the more cartoonish form ascribed to the sources of the "charges." She does not merely take up the term "gender voluntarism" as the construct of trans-exclusionary authors. She also takes it up as a site of her own normative concerns. So the full meaning of the term is worth working out.

At first, I took gender voluntarism to be almost equivalent in meaning to individualism, as she indicated an interest in "nonindividualistic, nonvoluntarist approaches" (140). However, I then reached her comment that the description of the Sylvia Rivera Law Project (SLRP), at first glance, "looks like a kind of voluntarism, or at least individualism" (note: she concludes it may look like voluntarism, but is not) (149). But if individualism is a thinner concept than voluntarism (and not as bad?), then voluntarism is a subset of individualistic attitudes. I double back, I check again:

"SLRP's response points to the dangers of individualist allegiance to voluntarist gender norms as *these norms are enacted by the state*," Shotwell says (140, emphasis mine). Ah-hah! Is it the state's enactment of the norms of voluntarism that are the problem, rather than gender voluntarism itself?

This was an attractive possibility to me, but I realized quickly that a criticism of the state's norming of voluntarism would not cover all of Shotwell's objections. For example, she also resists overattention to the individual's performance of gender. Shotwell says that "discussions about what's happening when someone changes their gender expression often presuppose that gender enactment (or performance) is something people *do*: we *will* to be perceived in one way or another, and dress or move accordingly. For many theorists, part of the making of gender, or its performance, is the uptake we receive or are refused from others" (141, emphasis hers); to my surprise, Shotwell cites Judith Butler here. Is this Butler's view, and is Butler now implicitly saddled with a lack of "regard for current realities or history"? I was sure I was on the wrong track. I could almost see the author shaking her head, that she did not mean that at all; she meant merely to shift everyone's attention to the performance of gender in a thick context which is, as Cressida Heyes says, relationally informed.<sup>10</sup>

But then voluntarism is not an attitude of *disregard* for realities, after all. Instead, perhaps it is an emphasis, an attitude with respect to what has priority for our attention: that which the individual wills, or the "role of individual transformations within collective change" as Shotwell says—collective change which "we instantiate precisely through our agential subjectivities" (141), and collective change which we ought to so instantiate.

Rhetorically, perhaps those of us in intellectual feminist communities or in popular press accounts have overattended to individualist aspects of gender formation when we should have attended more to collective change. Shotwell offers arguments for how we should think about "shifting the grounds of intelligibility and sociality," and focuses on "the question of whether transforming social norms is voluntarist in the sense offered here," where voluntarism refers to "a political position that places emphasis on individual choice and liberty, implicitly assuming *that individuals are the locus of change*" (145). Shotwell calls "the supposition that we make change as individuals" a "danger of voluntarism for engaging with oppressive norms" (146).

I pause, resistant, at the idea that voluntarism is always a danger to collective change. I recall again Shotwell's criticism of some attitudes that veganism opts one out of anything: one's body is not "one's horizon of ethical practices of freedom" (120). But a locus is not a horizon. There is more than one sense in which one can be a locus, more than one sort of change, more than one reason to act. The same act or performance can have multiple moral functions. I share Shotwell's commitment to appreciating the extent to which "the situation in which we live [is one] which we have not chosen and cannot completely control" (145), but I do not know if I equally share her commitment

to *collective change as a norm*. I agree with Shotwell that relational beings are constantly engaged in collective norm-shifting in deliberate and less deliberate ways, but a norm of engagement seems another way to idealize the moral agent, and in non-ideal contexts, gender voluntarism may be the better choice at times.

Gender voluntarism may be, as just one possibility, manifest at those times when one feels morally isolated, when the performance that one wills is to be a voice that shouts “no” despite the likelihood that one will not be heard, or will be heard only as unwell, or criminal, or displeasing. Gender voluntarism may also be manifest at times when one’s expression or performance is idiosyncratic, even as, at the same time, one persists in hoping to change norms. But what if one abandons that hope, or feels they need to carry on in its absence? What if collective change, itself, is in danger of becoming a form of a disciplinary norm, on this analysis, *that for the sake of which we ought to act*? If we have not chosen, and cannot completely control, the situation in which we live, then collective change is not always normatively available. I said above that I am a pessimist, and my commitments to representing de-idealized realities include recognizing the imperfect possibilities for collective change. Oppressive contexts provide an abundance of opportunities for moral failure, that is, for situations permitting multiple responses from an agent, none of which resolve the moral demands presented.

Perhaps voluntarism is available to us at times when transforming social norms is not available. More, voluntarism sounds so successful, and I find myself thinking of times when gender-voluntaristic choices are not received as socially successful, when success is not the point. At times, instances of gender voluntarism may be forms of resistance, a foray in a fight that may have no end, perhaps even a moral remainder, the act of an agent presented, again and again, with a hostile, dangerous, and determinedly unreceptive world. The individual body may not always be the locus of collective norm transformation, but individual acts of resistance in the form of willed gender presentations may serve to shift the agent’s world in ways that provide her self-respect, strength, or as Rachel McKinnon says, epistemic assets, shifts in one’s view of oneself, as a locus of many changes, and as a source of future efforts.

**NOTES**

1. Kathryn J. Norlock, “The Challenges of Extreme Moral Stress: Claudia Card’s Contributions to the Formation of Nonideal Ethics Theory.”
2. *Ibid.*, 177.
3. Lisa Tessman, “Idealizing Morality,” 807.
4. *Ibid.*, 811.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*, 803.
7. *Ibid.*, 808.
8. Claudia Card, *The Atrocity Paradigm: A Theory of Evil*, 169.
9. *Ibid.*, 234.
10. Cressida Hayes, *Self-Transformations: Foucault, Ethics, and Normalized Bodies*, 39–40.

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*Impure Prefiguration: Comments on Alexis Shotwell’s Against Purity*

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Alexis Shotwell has given us a fascinating and rich book. It connects so many themes under the heading of “purity” that I’ll be thinking about, digesting, and trying to respond to it for years. In a stab at manageability, I’m going to focus on applying a few ideas centered on prefiguration to movement-organizing work.

I begin with Alexis’s point that we are practically embedded in structurally violent systems, even when we are working to transform them and the need to embrace and recognize that impurity in our work. She lays out in admirable detail the ways that illusion of purity can harm transformative efforts and argues that the core concept for navigating that impurity is *prefiguration*. Prefiguration, we might put it, is the pivot from impurity to strategy. But prefigurative strategy is a complicated process. In what follows, I outline some of that complexity.

A movement for any sort of social transformation can be thought of as having an internal and an external dimension. By the external, I mean the target of the movement—typically some form of structural oppression or violence and the institutions and individuals that support it. By the internal, I mean the way that the movement is itself configured—who participates and in what ways, how decisions are made, how resources are mobilized, who faces what sort of threat, who speaks, whose understandings of the problem guide group action, what sorts of actions are within the range of options considered, etc.

Of course, these are not fully independent dimensions. The social forces against which we organize will push back in all manner of ways from attempts to marginalize to violent assault. And internal structures and practices will adapt

to that push-back. Obviously, the internal structures that are possible and tactically useful in, say, contemporary Canada are going to be very different from those in 1938 Germany. More fundamentally, though, we have all lived our lives in the capitalist, white supremacist, patriarchal, heterosexist, imperialist, militarist, authoritarian world, and this has profound effects on the attitudes and capacities of each of us, no matter our political orientation, including our capacity to construct prefigurative movements. Familiar histories of anti-racist organizations falling into patterns of sexism, or gay liberation organizations embodying classist or trans exclusion, or the invisibility of disability in many radical praxes make this point straightforward. To recognize our impure political situation is not only to recognize that there are external forces we must struggle against, but that, in the words of the great marxist theorist Pogo, "we have met the enemy and he is us."

But to say that we all suffer from implicit biases and habitual participation in as yet unexamined oppressive social structures is not to say that we are mere automata of these systems of oppression. Alexis picks up a central theme of the anarchist tradition: its insistence that we not merely identify the enemy, form whatever structures are needed to defeat that enemy, and then suppose that we would build a utopia out of the ashes. Rather, if we are not transformed from the impure participants in systemic oppression into new "second natures" exhibiting solidarity, mutual aid, and an ability to see new dimensions of hierarchy, then our post-revolutionary constructions will simply shift who participates in patterns of oppression. Thus, the assumption that we must "build the new world in the shell of the old" [IWW], via "a coherence of means and ends" [early Spanish anarchists]; we must, in our practices of living and struggling with one another, *prefigure* the kinds of social systems that we hope to see post-revolution so as to remake ourselves into the kinds of people who are capable of building the new world.

And prefiguration is obviously possible because it has occurred. The examples of 1920s Catalonia, or current-day Chiapas, and Rojava (among others) provide cases in which whole societies develop radically alternative forms of life. And smaller experiments in living—collective businesses, communes, intentional communities, autonomous zones, and radical spaces of many sorts—are everywhere. We humans constantly imagine new worlds and try to build something closer to that imagination. As Alexis emphasizes, we design these constructions of the imagination in many genres—not only the political theories of Murray Bookchin that inspire the Kurds of Rojava, but also the science fiction of Ursula Le Guin, or the inventive mixed genres of history-poetry-theory-myth spun out under the name "subcomandante Marcos."

But there are important constraints on prefiguration to keep in mind. (Indeed, to imagine that we are capable of imagining a pure future and then proceeding to work in a linear way toward building it is precisely an instance of purity politics.) One reason is that among the consequences of our social embedding is epistemic limitation. To so much as have the concepts of gay pride, queerness, or trans\* identity, sexual harassment, class solidarity, anti-imperialism, direct anti-

capitalist action, syndicalism, consensus process, stepping back, active listening, satyagraha, indigeneity, micro-aggressions, disability positivity, intersectionality, "the 1 percent," or epistemic injustice itself required elaborate intellectual, social, and political labor.

Imaginative work is crucial, but such labor is never purely intellectual for the simple reason that our epistemic impurity stems from the socially and environmentally embodied and embedded aspects of our lives. Alexis's earlier book—*Knowing Otherwise*—has a wonderful discussion of the way that the emergence of various trans identities was only possible as a sort of co-evolution with the growth of new spaces in which local social relations allowed others to give uptake to the living of those identities. There is an enormous amount to say here, but I'll leave it at this: prefiguration is not a one-off process of imagining a better future and then working to build it. Rather, it is a dialectical cycle in which imaginative and caring, but damaged and impure, people vaguely imagine a future, and build alternative ways of being together that allow that future partially to come into being. This, then, allows them to grow, or often to raise another generation a bit freer than their parent, and so to imagine further worlds within which yet further-seeing people can be born. We need fetishize no particular revolutionary blueprint, but rather, in the words of Calvino:

The inferno of the living is not something that will be; if there is one, it is what is already here, the inferno where we live every day, that we form by being together. There are two ways to escape suffering it. The first is easy for many: accept the inferno and become such a part of it that you can no longer see it. The second is risky and demands constant vigilance and apprehension: seek and learn to recognize who and what, in the midst of inferno, are not inferno, then make them endure, give them space.

The interplay of external and internal processes adds another complication to prefiguration. First, a sort of organizing 101 point: there is typically a tension between efficiency and capacity building. Suppose that we—a community housing activist organization—are confronting a slumlord who is allowing a low income property to fall into disrepair. Typically, the most efficient way to get rid of the rats and asbestos is to find a good movement lawyer who can sue the landlord. Externally, that gets tangible benefits for the residents, reliably and efficiently. But on the internal side it does, at best, nothing. A well meaning savior comes into a context they are not a part of and fixes things. And since the underlying problem is a massive power disparity between rich and poor, educated and not, renters and owners, this tactic might even reinforce the central disempowering feature of the tenants' existence—namely, their acceptance of their inability to determine the structure of their own life.

By contrast, imagine convening tenants' meetings with the goal of forming a collective organization that can launch a rent strike. This is probably a higher risk strategy, and certainly slower, but if the tenants succeed, they learn new skills, build capacity, and form a collective consciousness

of empowerment. The result is not just fewer rats, but a social collective capable of joining the next struggle.

Both efficiency and capacity-building are important. If one simply works on building the perfectly woke communist housing co-op, the residents are going to leave to pick up their kids and buy more rat traps. How we should balance the internal and external dimensions depends on the urgency of harm we are confronting, the existing social ties that can be mobilized to build internal solidarity, and the external forces arrayed to protect the harms. One crucial dimension of skill at organizing is a good sense of how to carry out that balance, when to move forward within the impure systems at hand, and when to pause to work on building counter-institutions. It is foolish to denounce “bandaid” solutions if the patient dies from loss of blood while awaiting radical surgery. And yet, at the same time, what is needed in this world is tools sufficient for radical surgery.

More issues arise when we complicate the simple internal-external dichotomy. One current project of BLM-DC is defending the Barry Farm Public housing project from a process initiated by developers and DC City Council. BLM-DC itself is a black-led, queer affirming, consensus-based, non-hierarchical organization of radicals committed to police/prison abolition, socialism, direct action, militancy, and much more. It is certainly not the case that all residents of Barry Farms have signed onto, or even know about, all that. BLM-DC works in solidarity with residents without expecting those residents to endorse their entire agenda or movement practices. There is, we might say, a looser social connection between the actual BLM members and residents than between different BLM members or, hopefully, different residents. So the “internal” here is something like an alliance of two semi-autonomous groups gradually building genuine trust, solidarity, mutual aid, and a lived commitment to one another.

And in more systemic movements, there are far more complex relations. The core organization in the fight for black lives in St. Louis—Ferguson Frontline—has strong but complex relations with the St. Louis Muslim and Arab community, with native organizations, with Latino groups, with a number of national solidarity projects, with progressive anti-zionist Jewish organizations, and with various international comrades. None of these relations of solidarity erases the differences into a single organization, or even a single overarching formal alliance, but all are crucial to the accomplishments of that community. And the same temporal dialectic of individuals “getting more woke” and prefigurative social construction applies to these more complex relationships. The interpersonal understanding and lived social relations of a black-led movement against White Supremacy changes in the process of working out which Jewish allies are genuinely comrades to be relied upon in situations of life and death, just as this same interaction has profound effects on the structure of the local Jewish left.

Finally, we should complicate the internal-external distinction itself. Our goal is not simply to destroy everything involved in an external system of oppression. In fact, the central insight of lived impurity is that this is

literally incoherent, since we, and much beyond us, are all inter-engaged. But even if a conceptual cut could be made between, say, the capitalists and all their tools, and the proletariat and all theirs, one might well want to take up a slightly more conciliatory approach than “hanging the last capitalist with the entrails of the last priest” (in the words of early twentieth-century Spanish terrorist factions) if for no other reason than that among the tools of the capitalists are nuclear-tipped cruise missiles. They have a lot more capacity to eliminate us than we do them. So the internal goal is always eventually to reconcile and integrate internal and external. But this brings along its own dialectical process.

To address one of the most positive and pro-active cases, the necessity for restorative/transformational/repairative justice post-revolution was a constant theme in the African National Congress. For decades they were explicit that the goal was not merely the end of apartheid, but “a new South Africa.” Work to bring down the system was constrained always by the need to build a functional society post-apartheid. Balancing resistance and potential integration with external systems is never simple. I’m not advocating a fetishized nonviolence that says one can never punch a Nazi or shoot a Klan member as he attempts to burn your town. I am saying that a future non-racist society will include people who currently oppose us, and part of the political calculus is thinking about tactics that will make living with them possible.

The complexity of that dialectical process is well illustrated by the South African example. Even with detailed planning and attention, with the systematic implementation of a truth and reconciliation process, with admirable principles of governance and democracy, and with a lot of luck, the evolution of an internal-external conflict to a new world proved hard to predict. In the movement context, the ANC developed procedures that were prefigurative of a democratic anti-hierarchical coalition of diverse groups. The ANC included core representatives of white communists, black communists, black liberals, black radicals of several varieties, and representatives of socially, linguistically, and geographically diverse communities, all working together. The structures that evolved over the decades of revolutionary struggle were enormously functional and in many ways internally transformative, but this functionality evolved in the context of a movement organization where, for example, no group was forced to participate, and so a kind of consensus was a practical necessity, with grassroots funding and solidarity networks, and with a common enemy. When those social systems, habits, and revolutionary individuals took over the power of an industrialized and militarized capitalist state, much changed. Now coalition partners were forced to accept majority votes. Now massive funding was available, not only from the grassroots, but from national and international corporations, leading to new temptations toward corruption and new economic hierarchies. Now decisions were enforced not merely through rational persuasion and revolutionary commitment, but through the police and military.

None of this is to say that we need choose between a simple dichotomy of “revolution realized” and “revolution betrayed.” My whole point is that every revolution will be

both—and in many ways South Africa has navigated the transition better than other post-revolutionary states. But it is to say that the current student and union movements for economic justice and internal decolonization, as well as movements for greater democratization, anti-corruption, queer liberation, and de-militarization, are both heirs to the prefiguration of the ANC struggle and at the same time movements confronting the ANC as an oppressive external force.

I will stop here on the trite conclusion that prefiguration is hard. It is multi-dimensional, dialectical, and always an impure confrontation with impurity. But it is also the most beautiful thing we people do. Our attempts to build the social, psychological, and environmental capacity to be better, richer, more flourishing people, to build “a world in which many worlds can flourish,” is a constantly evolving project carried out by damaged people inside damaged social relations across complex and contested dimensions of solidarity and opposition. We live our prefiguration on multiple fronts simultaneously, whether these be teach-ins at a campus shantytown or facing down the military in the streets of Soweto, whether fighting cops at Stonewall or figuring out how to make a queer-friendly collective space in our apartment, whether marching for black lives in Ferguson or even engaging with the brilliant work of Alexis Shotwell in an author-meets-critic session of the APA.

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## For an Impure, Antiauthoritarian Ethics

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My commentary deals with the fourth chapter of *Against Purity*, entitled “Consuming Suffering,” where Shotwell invites us to imagine what an alternative to ethical individualism might look like in practice. I am particularly interested in the analogy she develops to help pull us into the frame of what she calls a “distributed” or “social” approach to ethics. I will argue that grappling with this analogy can help illuminate three challenges confronting those of us seeking a genuine alternative to ethical individualism: first, that of recognizing that and how certain organizational forms work to entrench an individualistic orientation to the world; second, that of acknowledging the inadequacy of alternatives to individualism that are merely formal in character; and third, that of avoiding the creation of organizational forms that foster purism at the collective level.

### THE ARGUMENT OF “CONSUMING SUFFERING”

In “Consuming Suffering,” Alexis Shotwell takes aim at a long tradition of thought and practice rooted in *ethical individualism*, an approach to ethics that “takes as its unit of analysis the thinking, willing, and acting individual person” (109). Focusing on the complexity of our present circumstances as concerns energy use, eating, and climate change, and emphasizing our constitutive entanglement with countless others and, hence, our inescapable implication in cycles of suffering and death, Shotwell argues that “an ethical approach aiming for personal purity

is inadequate,” not to mention “impossible and politically dangerous for shared projects of living on earth” (107). Not only is ethical individualism ill-suited to the *scale* of especially complex ecological and social problems, but it also nourishes the tempting yet ultimately illusory promise that we can exempt ourselves from relations of suffering by, say, going vegan and taking our houses off grid. Clearly, then, to be against such purity projects and the ethical and political purism underwriting them is to commit ourselves to *uprooting individualism*—a commitment that Shotwell puts to work in each chapter of her book.

I find the negative, anti-individualist argument of the chapter quite convincing. Having developed related arguments in a series of papers focused on collective inaction in response to climate change,<sup>1</sup> I also appreciate Shotwell’s approach as an invaluable contribution to and resource for ongoing conversation in this area. Her critique of ethical individualism has helped me to appreciate more fully the challenges we face in proposing philosophically radical responses to complacency (in my own work) and purity politics (in hers). On a more practical level, I couldn’t agree more with Shotwell’s point that “we need some ways to imagine how we can keep working on things even when we realize that we can’t solve problems alone, and that we’re not innocent.”<sup>2</sup>

As Shotwell recognizes, it is not enough to keep tugging at the individualistic roots of purism until the earth begins to give way. Unless more fertile seeds are planted in its place, individualism will continue crowding out surrounding sprouts, greedily soaking up all the sun and nourishing its purist fruits. As an alternative, Shotwell proposes what she calls a “distributed” or “social” approach to ethics. Rather than taking the individual person as its unit of analysis, a distributed approach would attend to *multiple* agents and agencies, organized into more or less elaborate networks of relationships. Such agents and agencies are capable of performing actions and carrying out procedures the elements of which are distributed across time and space. For those who adopt Shotwell’s proposed alternative, the most basic moral imperative becomes “to understand that we are placed in a particular context with particular limited capacities that are embedded in a big social operation with multiple players” (130).

To illustrate what a distributed ethics might look like in practice, Shotwell draws our attention to Edwin Huchins’s celebrated book, *Cognition in the Wild*, in which he introduces the notion of “distributed cognition” by way of a compelling example.<sup>3</sup> Consider how the crew of a large Navy ship manages to grasp the ship’s location relative to port while docking. No lone sailor is capable of carrying out this cognitive task on their own. To solve the routine problem of docking—not to mention the many, relatively predictable crises of maneuverability regularly foisted upon crews at sea—an elaborate ensemble of social and technical operations need to be carried out all at once, so cognitive processes end up manifesting themselves in a widely distributed manner. Indeed, the ship’s position is only ever “known” by an entire team of sailors geared onto multiple instruments simultaneously, in some cases for weeks and months on end.



Shotwell invites us to wonder: "Might we understand the ethics of complex of global systems in this way?" (129).

The answer, of course, is "Yes!"

. . . followed by a slightly hesitant, "But do you really mean, 'in *this way*'?"

### "WHAT'S MY WORK ON THE SHIP?"

A great deal seems to hang on how seriously Shotwell wants us to take her analogy. Recall that the analogy Shotwell draws is between the shared predicament of a Navy ship's crew, on the one hand, and our shared predicament aboard an imperial war machine of far greater magnitude, on the other. Arguing from the strengths of this analogy, she eventually concludes that "Our obligation, should we choose to accept it, is *to do our work as individuals* understanding that the meaning of our ethical actions is also political, and thus something that can only be understood in partial and incomplete ways" (130).

I have to admit that I stumbled a bit over this conclusion. Yet when Shotwell invokes the language of "doing our work as individuals," I take it that she is mostly just drawing out the implications of the analogy she is working with, and may or may not, upon reflection, want to focus on the question of what our obligations are *as individuals*—a question at the very heart of ethical individualism. I take it that Shotwell wants nothing to do with the questions animating such an approach to ethics. Here, then, are my questions for her: Does an alternative to ethical individualism still need to address the question of individual obligation? Or does a consistent and uncompromisingly social approach to ethics need to find ways to redirect, sidestep, or otherwise avoid this line of questioning? In other words, *is there a way to avoid being compromised by ethical individualism and the epistemic priorities it presses upon us?* Is such compromise merely contingent, or could it be constitutive of our very being as ethically reflective creatures, or of our practices of ethical reflection?

Shotwell does acknowledge the limitations of her analogy, pointing out how it "fails at the point at which we ask where the ship (of nuclear energy use, or of eating) is going, and why" (130). Perhaps, then, she doesn't mean for us to take it all that seriously. Notice, first, that the ship's crew, as a collective agent, has a clearly delineated objective and, significantly, *one that has been dictated from on high*. Given the Navy's chain of command, there is really no question as to where the ship is going, and why. Yet as Shotwell rightly points out, "Our ethical world is not a military—not a hierarchical structure; there's no captain steering the way" (130). Unlike the question of where the Navy ship is going, the questions of where we are and ought to be going when it comes to the extraction and usage of energy sources are pressing, hotly contested, and not easily resolved to the satisfaction of all involved.

Notice, second, that the ship's crew has at its disposal certain well-rehearsed modes of collective action which, when mapped onto the officers' objectives, generate what we might think of as a *collective obligation* to bring the ship to port. In the context of an established chain

of command where decisions flow from the top down, it becomes possible for each sailor to think of their own responsibilities, *qua* individuals, in terms derived from the responsibilities of the crew, *qua* collective agent. Incidentally, this is precisely the sort of analysis of collective responsibility that Tracy Isaacs elaborates in her 2011 book, *Moral Responsibility in Collective Contexts*. According to Isaacs, "when collective action solutions come into focus and potential collective agents with relatively clear identities emerge as the subjects of those actions, then we may understand individual obligations . . . as flowing from collective obligations that those potential agents would have."<sup>4</sup> "Clarity at the collective level is a prerequisite for collective obligation in these cases," she explains further, "and that clarity serves as a lens through which the obligations of individuals come into focus."<sup>5</sup>

What I want to suggest, then, is that precisely in virtue of its limitations, Shotwell's analogy helps to illuminate a significant challenge: namely, the challenge of recognizing that and how certain organizational forms work to entrench, rather than overcome, an individualistic orientation to the world. What Shotwell's analogy (and Isaacs's analysis of collective responsibility) shows, I think, is that hierarchically structured organizations help to instill in us an illusory sense of clarity concerning our obligations as individuals—definitively *settling* the question of what we are responsible for doing and for whom in a way that relieves us of the need to think through such matters for and amongst ourselves. Hierarchical, authoritarian structures are particularly adept at fostering such deceptive clarity, for in and through our participation in them we are continually taught to expect straightforward answers to the question of individual obligation, and such expectations are continually met by our superiors. Shotwell's analogy helps us see that expecting straightforward answers goes hand in hand with living in authoritarian contexts and that ethical individualism will continue to thrive in such contexts, significantly complicating the task of uprooting it.

### "WHERE'S THE SHIP HEADING, ANYWAY?"

Recall that Shotwell ends up putting the Navy ship analogy into question because, as she puts it, "Our ethical world is not a military—not a hierarchical structure" (130). While I agree that, in our world, "there is no captain steering the way," I also wonder whether it might be worth staying with the trouble of this analogy a bit longer to see if it might help shed light on our current predicament in other ways. In the most recent book-length publication of the Zapatista Army for National Liberation (EZLN), there is a delightful series of stories borrowed "From the Notebook of the Cat-Dog"—stories which, we are warned, are "very *other*."<sup>6</sup> In one such story, called "The Ship," we are invited to imagine the following scenario:

A ship. A big one, as if it were a nation, a continent, an entire planet. With all of its crew and its hierarchies, that is, its above and its below. There are disputes over who commands, who is more important, who has the most—the standard debates that occur everywhere there is an above and a below. But this proud ship was having difficulty, moving without clear direction and with water pouring in from both

sides. As tends to happen in these cases, the cadre of officers insisted that the captain be relieved of his duty. As complicated as things tend to be when determined by those above, it was decided that in effect, the captain's moment has passed and it is necessary to name a new one. The officers debated among themselves, disputing who has more merit, who is better, who is the best.<sup>7</sup>

Who, we might add, is the most *pur et dur*? As the story continues, we learn that the majority of the ship's crew live and work unseen, below the water line. "In no uncertain terms, the ship moves thanks to their work"; and yet, "none of this matters to the owner of the ship who, regardless of who is named captain, is only interested in assuring that the ship produce, transport, and collect commodities across the oceans."<sup>8</sup>

The Zapatista's use of this analogy interests me because of the way it forces us to face certain structural features of our constitutive present. In a sense, there *really is* a captain steering the ship of energy use, or of eating—or better, it doesn't matter who is at the helm, so long as the ship owner's bidding is done. The ship *really is* heading in one way rather than another, so the crew have their "work as individuals" cut out for them. And as the narrator explains, "despite the fact that it is those below who are making it possible for the ship to sail, that it is they who are producing not only the things necessary for the ship to function, but also the commodities that give the ship its purpose and destiny, *those people below have nothing other than their capacity and knowledge to do this work.*" Unlike the officers up above, those living and working below "don't have the possibility of deciding anything about the organization of this work so that it may fulfill their objectives."<sup>9</sup> Especially for those who are set apart for being very *other*—*Loas Otroas*, who are "dirty, ugly, bad, poorly spoken, and worst of all . . . didn't comb their hair"<sup>10</sup>—everyday practices of responsibility are organized much as they are in the military. Finally, and crucially, the crew's practices of responsibility *really, already are* widely distributed across space and time.

If we take Shotwell's analogy seriously, then, we are confronted with a second challenge: namely, that of acknowledging the inadequacy of alternatives to individualism that are merely formal in character. Reflecting on Shotwell's proposed alternative to individualism, I now want to ask, is it enough to adopt a distributed approach to ethics? Are we not *already* working collaboratively, often as participants in projects the aims and outcomes of which are needlessly, horrifyingly destructive? And have our roles in such projects not *already* been distributed—our labors already thoroughly divided and specialized—such that each of us finds ourselves narrowly focused on making our own little contributions in our own little corners? What does it mean to call for a distributed approach to ethics *from here*, if we are already *there*?

#### "WHAT DID UNA OTROA SEE?"

Thus far Shotwell's analogy has helped us come to grips with two significant difficulties. First of all, it turns out that organizing ourselves with a view to acting collectively is

not necessarily a good thing, nor is it necessarily an anti-individualist thing. Seeing as how certain organizational forms help to foster and reinforce an individualistic orientation to the world, it seems misleading to treat collectivist and individualist approaches to ethics as simple opposites. Second, it turns out that adopting a distributed approach is not necessarily a good thing either. Seeing as how our current practices of responsibility *already* manifest themselves in a distributed manner, without those of us living below having the possibility of deciding much of anything about the organization of work, proposing merely formal alternatives to individualism might very well encourage more of the same, while at best drawing our attention to the current division of labor.

Taken together, these difficulties point to the need to propose an alternative to ethical individualism that is not merely formal, but also *politically contentful*. Such an alternative would go beyond offering up new destinations for the ship of extraction, production, consumption, and waste—after all, that's the sort of thing a new captain could do. Instead, it would aid us in building new organizational forms in which the entire crew are able to participate in deciding the organization of our work. A genuine alternative would also aid us in resisting the temptation to project authoritarian forms, with all the illusory clarity in responsibilities they tend to instill. Simply put, what we anti-individualists ought to be for is not just a distributed approach to ethics, or an ethics of impurity, but an *impure, anti-authoritarian ethics*. Besides, I can see no better way to meet the third challenge confronting us: that of avoiding organizational forms that foster purism at the collective level.

With this third challenge in mind, I want to conclude by considering what might be involved in "creating a place from which to see," as opposed to "creating a political party or an organization" (8).

As the Zapatista's telling of the ship continues, our attention is drawn to the predicament of the story's protagonist, *una otroa*. *Loas Otroas* were always cursing the officers and "getting into mischief," organizing rebellion after rebellion and calling upon the others down below to join them. Unfortunately, "the great majority of those below did not respond to this call."<sup>11</sup> Many would even applaud when the officers singled out individual rebels, took them on deck, and forced them to walk the plank as part of an elaborate ritual of power. Then one time, when yet another was singled out, something out of the ordinary happened:

The dispute among the officers over who would be captain had created so much noise and chaos that no one had bothered to serve up the usual words of praise for order, progress, and fine dining. The executioner, accustomed to acting according to habit, didn't know what to do; something was missing. So he went to look for some officer who would comply with what tradition dictated. In order to do so without the accused/judged/condemned escaping, he sent them to hell, that is, to the "lookout," also known as "the Crow's Nest."<sup>12</sup>

High atop the tallest mast, the Crow's Nest furnished *una o'troa* with a unique vantage point from which to examine afresh all the activities on deck. For example, in a game periodically staged by the officers, the sailors would be asked to choose from two stages full of little, differently colored flags, and the color chosen by the majority would be used to paint the body of the ship. Of course, at some level the entire crew knew that the outcome of the game would not really change anything about life on the ship, for the ship's owner, and its destination, would remain the same regardless. But from the angle and distance of the Crow's Nest, it finally dawned on *Loa O'troa* that "all the stages have the same design and the same color" too.<sup>13</sup>

The lookout also provided its occupant with an unrivaled view of the horizon, where "enemies were sighted, unknown vessels were caught creeping up, monsters and catastrophes were seen coming, and prosperous ports where commodities (that is, people) were exchanged came into view."<sup>14</sup> Depending on what threats and opportunities were reported, the captain and his officers would either make a toast, or celebrate modernity, or postmodernity (depending on the fashion), or distribute pamphlets with little tidbits of advice, like, "Change begins with oneself," which, we are told "almost no one read."<sup>15</sup> Simply put, the totality of life aboard the ship was fundamentally irrational and absurd.

Upon being banished to the subsidiary of hell that is the Crow's Nest, we are told that *Loa O'troa* "did not wallow in self-pity." Instead, "they took advantage of this privileged position to take a look," and it "was no small thing what their gaze took in."<sup>16</sup> Looking first toward the deck, then pausing for a moment to notice the bronze engraving on the front of the boat ("*Bellum Semper. Universum Bellum. Universum Exitium*"), *Loa O'troa* looked out over the horizon, and "shuddered and sharpened their gaze to confirm what they had seen."<sup>17</sup>

After hurriedly returning to the bottom of the ship, *Loa O'troa* scrawled some "incomprehensible signs" in a notebook and showed them to the others, who looked at each other, back at the notebook, and to each other again, "speaking a very ancient language."<sup>18</sup>

Finally, "after a little while like that, exchanging gazes and words, they began to work feverishly. The End."<sup>19</sup>

### "THE END?"

Frustrating, right?! "What do you mean 'the end'? What did they see from the lookout? What did they draw in the notebook? What did they talk about? Then what happened?" The Cat-Dog just meowed barking, "We don't know yet."<sup>20</sup>

I wonder: What lessons could such frustration hold for we aspiring anti-individualists and anti-purists? Which of our expectations and needs does the story's narrator avoid meeting, or neglect to meet? Where are we met with a provocation in the place of hoped-for consolation?

What might our own experiences of frustration have to teach us about what we have come to expect of ethical theory, and how we understand the relationship between

theory and the "feverish work" of organizing? What stories are we telling ourselves and others about our own cognitive needs—about their origins, energies, and sources of satisfaction? From, with, and to whom do we find ourselves looking, and for what? Who all has a hand in creating *this* "place from which to see" (8)? "Who is it that is doing the seeing?" (5, original emphasis).

One final thought from the EZLN, this time from a chapter called "More Seedbeds":

We say that it doesn't matter that we are tired, at least we have been focused on the storm that is coming. We may be tired of searching and of working, and we may very well be woken up by the blows that are coming, but at least in that case we will know what to do. *But only those who are organized will know what to do.*<sup>21</sup>

### NOTES

1. Michael D. Doan, "Climate Change and Complacency"; Michael D. Doan, "Responsibility for Collective Inaction and the Knowledge Condition"; Michael D. Doan and Susan Sherwin, "Relational Solidarity and Climate Change."
2. Chandra Prescod-Weinstein, "Purity in a Trumped-Up World: A Conversation with Alexis Shotwell."
3. Edwin Hutchins, *Cognition in the Wild*.
4. Tracy Isaacs, *Moral Responsibility in Collective Contexts*, 140.
5. *Ibid.*, 152.
6. Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), 190.
7. *Ibid.*, 190–91.
8. *Ibid.*, 191.
9. *Ibid.*, 194; emphasis in original.
10. *Ibid.*, 191.
11. *Ibid.*, 192.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*, 195.
14. *Ibid.*, 193.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*, 195.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*, 196.
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid.*, 310.

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## Response to Critics

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Participating in an author-meets-critics (AMC) panel is peculiar—there is an artifact, a book, which can't be changed. And then there is rich and generative conversation, which illuminates the vitality and ongoing changefulness of why one thinks about things and writes books about them. Still, perhaps still images of moving objects are all we ever have, in trying to understand the world. In the AMC at the Central APA, where these folks first shared their responses to *Against Purity: Living Ethically in Compromised Times*, this texture felt especially heightened, in part because of the quality of the responses and in part because the conversation in the room from participants beyond the panel was enormously rich and interesting. Several of us commented afterwards on how nourishing it felt to have a wide-ranging, feminist, politically complex conversation that refused to confine itself to disciplinary habits within philosophy. I am grateful to the hard work that went into putting on the Central APA, to the North American Society for Social Philosophy for hosting this book panel, to Ami for organizing it, and to Mike, Kate, and Mark for their generous and provoking responses. I am still thinking through their engagements, and the reflection below is only a beginning.

I am struck by a shared curiosity among all three responses about the relationship between individuals and social relations, between people and our world, especially around the question of how we transform this unjust world that has shaped us. I share this curiosity—in *Against Purity* I am especially interested in what we gain from beginning from the orientation that we are implicated in the world in all its mess, rather than attempting to stand apart from it. I've been thinking through what it means to take up an attitude that might intertwine epistemic humility with a will to keep trying to transform the world even after we have made tremendous mistakes or if we are beneficiaries of oppressions we oppose. Epistemic humility asks of us (among other things) that we not imagine we can be completely correct about things, and a will to keep trying demands that we find ways to be of use without being perfect. Underlying this attitude is a belief in the possibility of transforming the extant world while refusing to sacrifice anyone in service of the envisioned world-to-come—as Mark discusses, this is an anarchist understanding of prefigurative politics. I am compelled by his account of prefiguration as a useable pivot point from recognizing impurity towards shaping strategy. And, indeed, thinking clearly about prefiguration invites us to consider the

question of how capacity building in our social relations might be in tension with efficiency. I've learned so much from social movement theorist-practitioners who take up an essentially pedagogical approach to working on and with the world. Many of the movements Mark mentions have helped me think, too, about one of the key points in his response—the question of dialectics of struggle. Many of us feel a pull in thinking about prefiguration to idealize or stabilize a vision of the world we want—and I believe in having explicit and explicated normative commitments in engaging political work. If we want to change anything, we should be able to say what we want, and why, and we should have some ways to evaluate whether we're winning the fights we take on—this is part of my own commitment to prefigurative political practice. I am still working through what it means theoretically to understand something that activists understand in practice: The victories we win become the conditions of our future struggles. In this sense, social transformation is never accomplished. In the session, I shared an example of this from an oral history project on the history of AIDS activism that I have been doing over the last five years. In 1990, there was a widespread move in Canada towards legislation that would allow Public Health to quarantine people living with HIV and AIDS; in some provinces this was defeated (in BC such legislation passed but was not enacted). At the time, activists argued that if people were transmitting HIV to others on purpose, it would be appropriate for this to be a matter for the legal system rather than a matter of health policy. At the time, this was a strategic move that allowed people to effectively mobilize against forced quarantine; now, Canada is, shamefully, one of the world leaders in imprisoning people simply for being HIV positive. The victories of the past become the conditions of struggle in the present, and if we regard that as only a problem we might become immobilized. Instead, a prefigurative approach encourages us to take a grounded, emergent attitude toward our work. How can we create ways forward even when what we win is incomplete or reveals problems we had not considered?

Prefiguration involves, complexly, the concerns about voluntarism that Kate raises. As Kate notes, in *Against Purity* I discuss fellow feminists' work on questions of gender transformation and voluntarism, rather than turning to trans-hating thinkers. This is in part because as a matter of method I prefer to attend to people who I think are doing good and interesting work in the world, rather than people who are both intellectually vacuous and politically vile (and I have spent some fair amount of time considering the views of trans-hating writers in trying to suss out what their opposition to gender transformation tells us about their understanding of gender<sup>1</sup>). But it is the case that the main source of charges of gender voluntarism come from anti-trans writers who consider themselves to be in opposition to it. So as a conceptual term, it is strange to define "gender voluntarism," since it's something that is almost entirely used in a derogatory sense. Thus, in trying to evaluate whether transforming gender is voluntarist in the relevant sense, I certainly gloss, and perhaps oversimplify, a view that holds, as I put it in the book, "individuals can change themselves and their political circumstances through their own force of will."<sup>2</sup>

I think that Sheila Jeffreys holds the view that trans people are expressing gender voluntarism in this sense. Consider this quote from her book *Gender Hurts*.

Women do not decide at some time in adulthood that they would like other people to understand them to be women, because being a woman is not an 'identity'. Women's experience does not resemble that of men who adopt the 'gender identity' of being female or being women in any respect. The idea of 'gender identity' disappears biology and all the experiences that those with female biology have of being reared in a caste system based on sex.<sup>3</sup>

Now, Jeffreys does not literally say, "people who talk about gender identity are practicing a form of gender voluntarism, which is." Rather, she frames people who transition as making a decision, about identity, which ignores both biology and experience. This is an example of a charge of voluntarism in the relevant sense—although in the book I discuss feminists who affirm trans existence who seriously consider the question of whether voluntarism is at play in gender transformation. Now, I take it that Kate's worry is not (or not only) whether there actually exist people who charge trans people with gender voluntarism. She is concerned with whether my shift to arguing for open normativities as collective projects of world-making moves too far away from understanding the important transformative effects individuals can and do have on social worlds. That is, I take it that she has concerns that perhaps the only way forward I see is collective in nature—and that an account that worries as hard as mine does about individualism risks eliding or negating the important work that a solitary voice or expressive enactment can accomplish. I need to think about this more. Part of my own form of non-ideal theory is trying always to think through what it means to understand us as always relationally constituted. I'm not sure that I believe individuals really exist! In my current project, I'm working with Ursula K. Le Guin's political thinking (through her fiction) on the question of how individuals shape the society that has shaped them, and especially her argument that the only form of revolution we can pursue is an ongoing one, and a corollary view that the only root of social change is individuals, our minds, wills, creativities. So I'll report back on that, and in the meantime have only the unsatisfactory response that, on my view, we act as individuals but always—only—in collective contexts—and that has normative implications for any political theory we might want to craft.

Mike's engagement with the "very other" stories "From the Notebook of the Cat-Dog" is tremendously challenging and generative here. Indeed, a distributed ethics does not flow automatically from simple distribution—we need norms, as well as a place from which to see. I agree with Mike's turn toward "an impure, antiauthoritarian ethics." What such an ethics looks like in practice is, of course, emergent, necessarily unfixed. In the (wonderful!) EZLN story, the tremendously genre-mixing Cat Dog bark meows that perhaps more social scientists ought to learn the words, "We don't know yet." And so it is appropriate that Mike ends with questions that open more questions for me—

especially the question of what it means to become one of those who are organized [who] will know what to do. In thinking about the provocation that Mike offers, I am reflecting on some of his own work on epistemic justice and collective action and inaction. Because while learning the words "we don't know yet" is definitely vital for knowledge practices that can contribute to justice, it is also clear that the distribution of power matters enormously and that some of us need to listen better according to how we are placed in social relations of benefit and harm. This brings me back to Mark's engagement with prefiguration alongside Kate's meditation on what we as individuals might be able to do: If we pursue a prefigurative approach to the theory and practice of becoming organized, we experience that world that we are trying to create—this is how we find perspective from which to perceive where we are, collectively and personally, and what dangers loom on the horizon. As Kate affirms, a locus is not a horizon, but the crow's nest from which we look out changes the frame of the horizon we might perceive—and this, perhaps, is a way that we individuals help determine how to steer our craft. I look forward to more conversations about where we go from here, and how we get there.

NOTES

1. Alexis Shotwell and Trevor Sangrey, "Resisting Definition: Gendering through Interaction and Relational Selfhood," *Hypatia* 24, no. 3 (2009): 56–76.
2. Alexis Shotwell, *Against Purity: Living Ethically in Compromised Times* (University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 140.
3. Sheila Jeffreys, *Gender Hurts* (Routledge, 2014), 5–6.

BOOK REVIEWS

*The Ethics of Pregnancy, Abortion, and Childbirth: Exploring Moral Choices in Childbearing*

Helen Watt (New York: Routledge, 2016). 168 pp. \$49.95 (paperback). ISBN: 978-1-138-18808-2.

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The *Ethics of Pregnancy, Abortion, and Childbirth* is a slim volume that primarily examines the moral obligations that a pregnant woman has to a zygote, embryo, or fetus (which this review will henceforth refer to as a fetus, for the sake of simplicity). This is an area in need of nuanced critical reflection on how pregnancy disrupts the familiar paradigm of the self-possessed subject, and what effect those disruptions have on an individual woman's right to bodily self-determination. Helen Watt's work begins to sketch some of the phenomenological uniqueness of pregnant embodiment, but her focus is very much on the moral questions raised around pregnancy.

Watt argues from the beginning of the book against two mistakes: the first is that we tend to "treat the bodily location of the fetus in the woman as morally conclusive for

the woman's right to act as she wishes in choices that will or may affect the fetus or child long-term," and the second is that we may frame the pregnant woman as merely a neighbor to a second moral subject, with no deeper obligation than one might have to a stranger in need (4). That is, Watt claims that fetuses should not be understood simply as tissues contained within a woman's body. Rather, their presence within and connection to a woman's body creates a moral obligation that is stronger than we might have to anonymous others. Neither of these mistakes seems to do justice to what Watt calls the "familial aspect of pregnancy or the physical closeness of the bond" (3).

On the third page of the book, Watt begins to use language that signals her position on the issue at the heart of debates around abortion and other issues in reproductive ethics: Should we affirm that the pregnant woman is already a mother, and that the fetus is already a child, and indeed *her* child? Watt's stance is that pregnant women have a "familial" relation with an "unborn child," and then unpacks the moral implications of that relation (16). But that familial relation is precisely what is at issue. The limitation of the book is that this conceptual framework and set of normative assumptions will be convincing to those who already agree with its conclusions, and deeply unconvincing to those who do not.

In the first chapter, Watt makes an argument for the moral personhood of the fetus that emphasizes the significance of the body in identity, and the claim that living, experiencing bodies have objective interests: conditions that promote their well-being. In making this argument, Watt objects to the idea that fetuses gradually acquire moral status, or that their moral status is conferred socially, by being recognized and affirmed by others. She appeals to a basic principle of equality in making this claim: "One advantage to connecting moral status with interests—and interests with the kind of being we are—is that it identifies one sense, at least, in which human beings are morally *equal*: a view to which many of us would wish to subscribe" (15). This sentence assumes that a commitment to equality necessarily extends to fetuses, and it therefore insinuates that anyone who rejects this view cannot be normatively committed to equality. Rhetorical moves of this kind appear frequently: for instance, toward the end of the book, Watt discusses an example of a woman who becomes pregnant with twins that resulted from a donated egg fertilized *in vitro*, after six years of fertility treatments. The pregnancy is reduced—one of the fetuses is terminated—and that leads Watt to decry the "betrayals" normalized in "an alarmingly, and, it seems, increasingly atomized, consumerist, and egocentric culture" (106). After this discussion, however, Watt asks a rhetorical question: "Is there not something unhealthy about a society where women—even women of forty-five, even where they have other children, even where they need to use another woman's body—feel drawn to such lengths to have a baby?" (111). There are many such rhetorical questions in the book, and they allow Watt to invoke readers' intuitions about matters in which traditional philosophical concepts, admittedly, tend to be of limited help, given their assumption of an adult, sovereign individual. But such appeals are not arguments.

In the second chapter, Watt offers a sustained critique of the view that frames a pregnant woman as a kind of good Samaritan or neighbor to the fetus. Rather than framing the fetus as too closely identified with the woman, in this model it is too loosely associated with her, such that her moral obligations seem attenuated. This chapter includes Watt's only substantive consideration of arguments that disagree with her position—principally, Judith Jarvis Thomson's violinist analogy. Watt emphasizes the difference between unplugging a violinist from renal support and invading the bodily boundaries of the fetus in order to terminate a pregnancy. This insistence on the bodily sovereignty of the fetus seems in tension with Watt's description of the female body as relational, and pregnant bodies in particular as experiencing "a sense of 'blurred boundaries' between self and other" (4).

In the third chapter, Watt explores the implications of this view of pregnancy for a range of issues: What are our moral obligations when a pregnant woman is comatose? What impact does conception due to rape have on moral obligations during pregnancy? Who else beyond the pregnant woman has obligations to the fetus or child? Should pregnant women choose to have prenatal tests done? What should happen when pregnancy would threaten the health or life of the woman? In these various cases, Watt reasons that the fetus is a full moral person, but one that is uniquely vulnerable, and she concludes that there are almost no situations in which the deliberate termination of a pregnancy is morally justifiable, given the capacities of modern obstetrics.

In the fourth chapter, Watt considers reproductive technologies such as *in vitro* fertilization, egg and sperm donation, and surrogacy. Her arguments here stretch into conclusions based on the claim that children thrive when they are raised by their biological married parents, and that it is psychologically important for children to "know who they are" by being raised by "visibly linked, publicly committed" life partners (114–115). Reproductive technologies of various kinds interfere with that ideal, according to Watt.

There is a fundamental appeal to nature throughout Watt's argument: that women naturally feel maternal instincts when they become pregnant or when they see their children, and that the uterus is "functionally oriented towards the pregnancy it (or, rather, the pregnant woman) carries, just as the woman's fallopian tube is oriented towards transporting first the sperm to the ovum after intercourse and then the embryo to the womb. Pregnancy is . . . a goal-directed *activity*" (4). This appeal to the functional orientation of the reproductive system rests on the presupposition that nature has purposes that are morally binding on us, as if Watt has never encountered or taken seriously Beauvoir's rejection of biological "facts" as defining a woman's purpose (in a way that nature has never been taken to define a man's purpose) or the work of feminist epistemologists on the contingency and political investment that permeates interpretations of nature. There is thus little attention paid to the cultural context of pregnancy, although most philosophers who argue for a relational dimension to the self emphasize the person's

immersion in a social world that shapes her sense of her identity, aspirations, and norms.

In sum, Watt's book demonstrates the disadvantages or risks of care ethics interpreted through its most socially conservative implications: women have moral obligations to accept and welcome pregnancy—her “psychophysical ‘openness’. . . to becoming a mother” (113)—whether or not they have planned to become mothers, because their biology primes them for familial relations and thus familial duties to their children (where fertilization defines the beginning of a child's life). The moral significance of the physical possibility of becoming pregnant or being pregnant is premised on the personhood of the fetus, but this account sets aside too quickly the value of self-possession or self-determination that is at the core of an ethics of justice. And it pushes such a value aside asymmetrically, based on sex.

Watt also writes as if the only possible family configurations are married heterocentric couples committed to having children or single women with children. There is no consideration of LGBTQ families, families headed by single men, or any other possibility. This omission follows from Watt's defense of the following ideal of parenthood: children conceived without recourse to reproductive technology, borne by and born to women who welcome them as moral persons (even if those pregnancies have not been intended or desired) and who are married to the child's biological father, who will then, as a couple, raise the child. It is rather surreal to read this argument in 2018, without any consideration of the sustained critique of heteronormativity that has taken place in philosophy and in the wider culture for the past couple of generations.

Watt's justification for these positions is inadequate. Watt regularly draws upon highly one-sided first-person experiences of women who have been pregnant (with a variety of outcomes). There is no testimony, for instance, to women who are relieved to have had an abortion, or who have no intention of becoming mothers. These first-person descriptions tend to substitute for more rigorous arguments and so risk functioning merely as anecdotal evidence that is then generalized to all women. She also makes claims that cry out for empirical support, such as when she argues that a woman should resist testing during pregnancy that might give her information that would lead her to consider an abortion, because the test itself may be dangerous to the fetus: “This [framing such tests as prenatal care] is particularly objectionable in the case of tests which carry a real risk of causing a miscarriage: one in 100 or 200 are figures still sometimes cited for chorionic villus sampling and amniocentesis” (71). Although these figures are regularly cited in anti-abortion literature, medical scholarship does not confirm those claims.<sup>1</sup> Also without citation, Watt endorses the claim that women who choose to terminate their pregnancies are likely to suffer psychological and physical harm, a statement that has been thoroughly disproven (70).<sup>2</sup>

Watt's book draws out the complexity of pregnancy as a situation in which the traditional tools of moral reasoning are limited: it is not clear at what point it is appropriate

to discuss the rights of one individual over and against another, and it is not clear how to integrate our sense of ourselves as relational beings (when those relations are not always chosen) with our sense of ourselves as self-determining individuals. Approaches to these issues that attended to the embodied experience of pregnancy and other forms of parenthood and caring for children would be most welcome. This book, however, too quickly subordinates the personhood and agency of women to their possibility of becoming mothers. Watt does not challenge the assumptions that currently define debates in reproductive ethics and therefore does not help to move those debates forward; instead, she tries to settle such moral debates through a teleological reading of women's bodies.

#### NOTES

1. See, for instance, C. B. Wulff et al., “Risk of Fetal Loss Associated with Invasive Testing Following Combined First-Trimester Screening for Down Syndrome: A National Cohort of 147,987 Singleton Pregnancies,” *Ultrasound Obstetrics and Gynecology* 47 (2016): 38–44; and C. M. Ogilvie and R. Akolekar, “Pregnancy Loss Following Amniocentesis or CVS Sampling—Time for a Reassessment of Risk,” *Journal of Clinical Medicine* 3, no. 3 (Sept. 2014): 741–46.
2. See, for instance, E. G. Raymond and D. A. Grimes, “The Comparative Safety of Legal Induced Abortion and Childbirth in the United States,” *Obstetrics and Gynecology* 119, no. 2 (2012): 215–19; and B. Major et al., “Psychological Responses of Women After First-Trimester Abortion,” *Archives of General Psychiatry* 57, no. 8 (2000): 777–84.

## *Foucault's Futures: A Critique of Reproductive Reason*

Penelope Deutscher (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017). 280 pp. \$30.00/£24.00 (paperback) ISBN: 978-0231-17641-5.

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Reproduction as a critical concept has re-emerged in feminist theory—with some arguing that all politics have become reproductive politics—coinciding with a period of its intensification as a political field.<sup>1</sup> With the global ascendancy of extreme right, nationalist, eugenicist, neocolonial, and neo-nazi ideologies, we have also seen renewed feminist activism for reproductive rights and reproductive justice, including for access to legal, safe abortion; for instance, in Poland, where it has been recriminalized; in Ireland, where it has been decriminalized following a referendum; and in Argentina, where despite mass feminist mobilizations, legislators voted against abortion's decriminalization. At the same time, the socio-legal category of reproductive citizenship is expanding in certain contexts to include sexual and gender minorities.<sup>2</sup> Trans activists have pressured nation-states “to decouple the recognition of citizenship and rights for gender-variant and gender-nonconforming people from the medicalisation or pathologisation of their bodies and minds”<sup>3</sup> struggling against prerequisites and consequences of legal gender recognition, including forced sterilization, compulsory divorce, and loss of parental rights.<sup>4</sup> What struggles for

reproductive justice and against reproductive exploitation reveal is that violence runs through reproduction; hegemonic politics of reproduction (pronatalist, eugenicist, neocolonial, genocidal) suffuse gendered and racialized regimes of biopolitical and thanatopolitical power, including that deployed in war leading to dispossession, displacement, and forced migration of millions of people. Yet, procreation continues to be conflated with life, not only (obviously) by “pro-life” but also by “pro-choice” politics.

Penelope Deutscher’s *Foucault’s Futures* engages with the recent interest in reproduction, futurity, failure, and negativity in queer theory,<sup>5</sup> but also the historical and ongoing investments in the concept of reproduction in feminist theory as well as (US) social movements. *Foucault’s Futures* troubles the forms of subjectivation presupposed by “reproductive rights” (177) from a feminist perspective, exploring the “contiguity” between reproductive reason and biopolitics—specifically the proximity of reproduction to death, risk, fatality, and threat (63): its thanatopolitical underbelly.

Philosophers are notorious for having little to say about their method, but Deutscher’s writing about her methodology is one of the most interesting contributions of the book. Returning to points of departure Foucault and his readers never took, Deutscher retrieves “suspended resources” in Foucault and in the “queer and transformative engagements” with his thought by his post-Foucauldian interlocutors, including Jacques Derrida, Giorgio Agamben, Roberto Esposito, Lauren Berlant, Achille Mbembe, Jasbir Puar, Wendy Brown, Judith Butler, and Lee Edelman (38-39). In this regard, Deutscher lays out two methodological choices for reading Foucault (or, I suppose, other theorists): the first is to “mark omissions as foreclosures,” while the second is to “read them as suspensions” (101). Pursuing the latter possibility, she contends that “Foucault’s texts . . . can be . . . engaged maximally from the perspective of the questions they occlude” (215n26). Each of the above-mentioned theorists “has articulated missing links in Foucault, oversights, blind spots, and unasked questions” (185). Yet, Deutscher is also interested in the suspensions that can be traced in each theorist’s engagement with Foucault, like words unsaid hanging in the air in their intertextual dialogue, or even the elephant in the room which neither Foucault nor the post-Foucauldian seems to want to confront. Thus, she asks, what are the “limit points” of engagements with Foucault by post-Foucauldian scholars? The figure of wom(b)an and that of the fetus are two such elephants. One interesting consequence of Deutscher’s hermeneutic approach—which focuses on the unsaid or the barely uttered rather than the said—is that it seems to guard against dogmatism: instead of insisting from the outset on one correct reading of Foucault, Deutscher weaves through oft-quoted and lesser known moments, exploiting the contradictions immanent in his account, and pausing on the gaps, silences, and absences, asking, in essence, a classic question of feminist philosophical interpretation, to what extent have women been erased from Foucault (101)?

Still, Deutscher’s method of reading closely at the interstices of what is written does not restrict hers to a merely textual

analysis, as she allows the world to intrude upon and, indeed, motivate her exegetical passion. What I particularly liked about the book was its almost intransigent tarrying with the question of reproduction, pushing us to reconsider how biopower normalizes reproduction as a “fact of life,” and prompting our reflexivity with respect to how we reproduce its facticity even when we contest as feminists the injustices and violences which mark it as a political field. One way in which Deutscher attempts this is by analyzing the “pseudo-sovereign power” ascribed to women, that is, the attribution to them of “a seeming power of decision over life” (104). In other words, she deconstructs “modern figurations of women as the agents of reproductive decisions but also as the potential impediments of individual and collective futures,” demonstrating in how both constructions women’s bodies as reproductive are invested with “a principle of death” (101). If this seems counter-intuitive, it should, since Deutscher tells us, ultimately, “we do not know what procreation is” (72).

This “suspended” argument Deutscher reconstructs as the procreative/reproductive hypothesis, which reveals as biopower’s aim “to ensure population, to reproduce labor capacity, to constitute a sexuality that is economically useful and politically conservative” (76, citing Foucault). Despite its marginal location in Foucault, who makes scant reference to what he terms, at one juncture, the “procreative effects of sexuality” (73, citing Foucault) as an object or a field for biopower, she convinces the reader (at least this feminist reader) that procreation is actually the “hinge” between sexuality and biopolitics (72). Procreatively oriented sex and biopolitically oriented reproduction hinge together to form the population (77).

As Rey Chow has argued, sexuality is indistinguishable from “the entire problematic of the reproduction of human life,” which is “always and racially inflected” (67, citing Chow). Yet, the argument gains interest when Deutscher attempts to show that “biopoliticized reproduction [functions] as a ‘power of death’” (185). A number of important studies of “reproduction in the contexts of slavery,” colonialism, “and its aftermath” constitutes have demonstrated that what Deutscher calls “procreation’s thanatopolitical hypothesis” (4): the fact that “reproduction is not always associated with life” (4), and, in fact, through its “very association of reproduction with life and futurity (for nations, populations, peoples)” it becomes “thanatopoliticised” that is, “its association with risk, threat, decline, and the terminal” (4). This helps us understand, contemporaneously, the ostensible paradox of convergences of pro- and anti-feminist politics with eugenicist ideologies (223n92). Citing the example of “Life Always” and other US anti-abortion campaigns, which deploy eugenics in the service of ostensibly “antiracist” ends (likening abortion to genocide in claims that “the most dangerous place for black people is the womb” and enjoining black women to bring pregnancies to term), Deutscher analyzes how “[u]teruses are represented as spaces of potential danger both to individual and population life” (4). Thus, “[f]reedom from imposed abortion, from differential promotion of abortion, and the freedom not to be coercively sterilised have been among the major reproductive rights claims of many groups of women” (172). These endangered “freedoms”



do not fall neatly on either sides of dichotomies such as privilege/oppression or biopolitics/thanatopolitics. But they do generate conditions of precarity and processes of subjectivation and abjection, which reveal, in all instances, the interwovenness of logics of life and death.

Perhaps most useful to Deutscher's project is what is hanging in the air in the dialogue between Butler and Foucault: the figure of the fetus, "little discussed by Butler and still less by Foucault" (151), but which helps to make her argument about the thanatopolitical saturation of reproduction as a political field. That is, although embryonic/fetal life does not inhere in an independent entity, once it becomes understood as "precarious life," women become "a redoubled form of precarious life" (153). This is because despite being invested with a "pseudo-sovereign" power over life, "[w]omen do not choose the conditions under which they must choose" (168), and they become "relays" as opposed to merely "targets" or passive "recipients" of "the norms of choice," normalizing certain kinds of subjectivity (170). They are interpellated as pseudo-sovereigns over their reproductive "capacities" or "drives" (or lack thereof), pressed into becoming "deeply reflective" about the "serious choice" with which reproduction confronts them (169). Yet, pronatalist politics do not perform a simple defense of the fetus, or of the child—any child—because, as Deutscher states, drawing on Ann Stoler's work, especially in discourses of "illegal immigration and child trafficking . . . a child might be figured as 'at risk' in the context of trafficking or when accompanying adults on dangerous immigration journeys" (think of the Highway Sign that once used to line the US-Mexico borderspace, now the symbol of the transnational "refugees welcome" movement, which shows a man holding a woman by the hand, who holds a presumably female child with pigtails, dragging her off her feet, frantically running). "But the figure of the child can also redouble into that which poses the risk," as in the "anchor baby" discourse.<sup>6</sup> In "zones" of suspended rights" that women occupy, whether as "illegal [sic] immigrants, as stateless, as objects of incarceration, enslavement, or genocide," women are rendered "vulnerable in a way specifically inflected by the association with actual or potential reproduction" (129). Women are made into "all the more a resource" under slavery, as Angela Y. Davis has argued;<sup>7</sup> or women are imagined to be a "biopolitical threat" by nation-states criminalizing "illegal immigrant mothers" (129). Here, Deutscher animates the racialized "differentials of biopolitical citizenship" drawing on Ruth Miller's analysis in *The Limits of Bodily Integrity*, whose work lends a succinct epigraph to a chapter devoted to the "thanatopolitics of reproduction": "[t]he womb, rather than Agamben's camp, is the most effective example of Foucault's biopolitical space" (105, citing Miller). Deutscher reminds us of the expansiveness of reproduction as a category that totalizes survival, futurity, precarity, grievability, legitimacy, belonging. Deutscher's argument points to the centrality of reproduction to the "crisis" forged by the thanatopolitics of the asylum-migration nexus, as illustrated by Didier Fassin's concept of "bioglegitimacy," that is, when health-based claims can trump politically based rights to asylum (215n33, citing Fassin).

Deutscher does not situate her argument explicitly with respect to intersectionality except at one instance, when discussing Puar's critique of "intersectionality" in *Terrorist Assemblages*.<sup>8</sup> Still, it seems that one way to understand the argument in the book is that it insists on the inherently "intersectional" impulse of Foucault's thought that has been, nevertheless, occluded by the separation of sex from biopolitics in the critical literature (68).<sup>9</sup> Given her reading method of retrieving suspensions, particularly interesting is Deutscher's discussion of the relationship between modes of power (sovereign power, biopower) in Foucault's account (88), and her argument in favor of a distinction between thanatopolitics and necropolitics, two terms that are often used interchangeably (103). Here she discusses the (in my opinion, essentially Marxian) concern in Foucault studies about the historical relationship between "modes of power," variously argued to be supplanting, replacing, absorbing, or surviving each other (88). Taking us beyond the equivalent to the "mode of production" narrative in Marxism, Deutscher argues for sovereign power's "survival" in biopolitical times, wherein it has *both* "dehisced" (burst open) and become absorbed by biopower. Deutscher's eight-point definition of thanatopolitics shows how it infuses the biopolitical with powers of death, constituting the "underside" (7) and condition of possibility of biopolitics, the "administrative optimisation of a population's life" (102). It should not be confused with sovereign power or with necropolitics, a term introduced by Achille Mbembe to refer to the "management in populations of death and dying, of stimulated and proliferating disorder, chaos, insecurity."<sup>10</sup> This distinction seems crucial to her argument that reproduction is thanatopoliticized the moment it becomes biopoliticized, aimed at managing "women's agency as threatening and as capable of impacting peoples in an excess to projects of governmentality" (185). For Deutscher, how we construct feminist subjectivities and stake political claims in the field of reproduction ultimately are questions of exposing the "interrelation" of rights claims with (biopolitical, thanatopolitical, necropolitical) modes of power, a genealogical but also a critical ethical project.

If I have a criticism of Deutscher's book, it concerns her conflation, throughout, of reproduction and procreation. Disentangling the two terms, insisting, perhaps, on the "procreative effects" of reproduction, in an analogous gesture to revealing the biopolitical stakes in regulating the "procreative effects" of sexuality, would enable us to pursue an opening Foucault makes but Deutscher does not traverse. Less a missed opportunity than it is a limit point or a suspended possibility for synthesizing an anti-authoritarian queer politics of sexuality with a critique of reproduction as the pre-eminent (if disavowed, by classical political theory) site of the accumulation of capital—an urgent question as what is being reproduced today by reproductive heteronormativity are particularly violent, austere, and authoritarian forms of capitalism.

#### NOTES

1. Laura Briggs, *How All Politics Became Reproductive Politics: From Welfare Reform to Foreclosure to Trump*; see also Tithi Bhattacharya, *Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression*; and Loretta Ross and Rickie Solinger, *Reproductive Justice: An Introduction*.

2. Sasha Roseneil, Isabel Crowhurst, Ana Cristina Santos, and Mariya Stoilova, "Reproduction and Citizenship/Reproducing Citizens: Editorial Introduction."
3. Susan Stryker, "Preface," 16.
4. Amnesty International, *The State Decides Who I Am*, 7.
5. Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*; Robert L. Caserio et al., "The Antisocial Thesis in Queer Theory"; Judith Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*.
6. See Eithne Luibhéid, *Pregnant on Arrival: Making the Illegal Immigrant*; and *Entry Denied: Controlling Sexuality at the Border*.
7. A. Y. Davis, "The Legacy of Slavery: Standards for a New Womanhood." See also A. A. Davis, "Slavery and the Roots of Sexual Harassment."
8. Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, 67–70. See also Puar, "'I Would Rather Be a Cyborg Than a Goddess': Becoming-Intersectional in Assemblage Theory."
9. See also Ladelle McWhorter, *Racism and Sexual Oppression in Anglo-America: A Genealogy*.
10. Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," 102–103.

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## Connected by Commitment: Oppression and Our Responsibility to Undermine It

Mara Marin (New York: Oxford, 2017). 216 pp. ISBN: 978-0190498627.

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In *Connected by Commitment: Oppression and Our Responsibility to Undermine It*, Mara Marin seeks to provide an antidote to the hopelessness we feel in the face of intractable oppression.

Marin follows Marilyn Frye in understanding oppression as characterized by double-binds—"situations in which options are reduced to a very few and all of them expose one to penalty, censure or deprivation."<sup>1</sup> Further, according to Marin, oppression is constituted by systems that adapt to local attempts at amelioration. Oppression, she writes, "is a macroscopic phenomenon. When change affects only one part of this macroscopic phenomenon, the overall outcome can remain (almost) the same if the other parts rearrange themselves to reconstitute the original systematic relation" (6). When we seek to intervene in cases of oppression, we sometimes succeed in bringing about local change only to find the system reconstituting itself to cause similar oppression elsewhere. For instance, a woman with a career outside the home might seek to liberate herself from the so-called "second shift" of unpaid domestic labor by hiring another woman to do this labor, and in this way unintentionally impose low-status gender-coded work on the second woman. One oppression replaces another. The realization that oppression adapts to our interventions in this way can lead us into a "circle of helplessness and denial" (7). Marin argues that we can break the cycle by thinking oppression in terms of social relations and by framing social relations as commitments.

Marin bases her conceptualization of social relations as commitments on the model of personal relationships. (An example early in the book involves a particularly challenging situation faced by a married couple.) We develop personal relationships through a back-and-forth of actions and responses that starts out unpredictably, but becomes habituated—firmed up into commitment—over time. These commitments vary from relationship to relationship and vary over time within a relationship, but all relationships are alike in being constituted by such commitments. "At the personal level," Marin tells us, "obligations of commitment are violated when the reciprocity of the relationship is violated, that is, if its actions are not responded to with equal concern. Similarly, at the structural level open-ended obligations are violated when actions continue to support norms that constitute unjust structures" (63).

As social beings, we are all entwined in relationships of interdependence. We are all vulnerable, argues Marin, not only in infancy, illness, and old age, but throughout our lives. Human beings are not free agents but constitutively interdependent. We are fundamentally social, and our social relations both grow out of and produce open-ended

actions and responses that, once accumulated, constitute commitments.

In her employment of this conception of commitment, Marin aligns herself with political philosophers such as Elizabeth Anderson, Rainer Forst, Ciaran Cronin, and Jenny Nedelsky who understand justice as relational (172 n.8). For Marin, we undertake commitments in the context of various social relations. On this model, commitments are not contractual arrangements that can be calculated in the abstract and then undertaken. Rather, they are open-ended and cumulative. Through our countless small actions and inactions, we incrementally build up the systems of social relations we occupy. And our resulting location within those social relations brings with it certain obligations. While we are in this sense responsible for our commitments, they are not necessarily the products of our intentions. Many, if not most, of these cumulative actions are not the result of deliberation. To borrow and extend an example from Frye, a man may be long habituated to holding the door for women such that he now holds the door without deciding to do so. It's just automatic. Indeed, he may never have decided to hold the door for women, having simply been taught to do so by his father. Intentional or not, this repeated action serves to structure social relations in a way for which the man is answerable.

Further, Marin's account helps to make clear that holding the door is not in itself oppressive, but that it can be oppressive within a larger system of norms:

On the model of oppression I work with here, the oppressiveness of the structure is a feature not intrinsic to any particular norms but of the relationship between different norms. It follows then that what is important for undoing the injustice of oppression is not modifying any particular norms but modifying the oppressive effect they have *jointly*. Thus what is essential for an individual is not to stop supporting any particular norm but to disrupt the connections between norms, the ways they jointly create structural positions of low social value. The oppressiveness of a set of norms can be disrupted in many different ways, which makes discretion as to what is the most appropriate action required. On the commitment model, the individual is only required to have an appropriate response, not to take any particular action. (64-65)

One of the salutary features of Marin's account is the response it provides to debates between ideal and non-ideal theorists. As is well known, Rawls applied ideal theory to states created for the mutual benefit of members, and non-ideal theory to pathological states created for the benefit of only some members. Marin need not weigh in on whether her account is intended for ideal or non-ideal conditions because she rejects the conception of social structures (like states) as organized primarily around intentions and projects. Social structures evolve, as relationships do, in our cumulative interactions with one another, not as means to the end of particular projects. For Marin, oppressive social structures emerge in the same ways that non-oppressive social structures do, and can

be changed just as they were formed, through cumulative actions.

According to Marin, the commitment model of social practices has three advantages: "First, we make familiar the abstract notion of social structure. Second, we move from a static to a dynamic view of social structures, one that makes change intelligible. Third, we add a normative point of view to the descriptive one" (50).

While Marin's primary goal is arguably the third of these aims, I think that the first two are ultimately more successful. With respect to the first aim, by grounding her descriptive account in familiar dynamics from personal relationships, Marin offers a rich naturalistic account of social structures as immanent that is both more plausible and more accessible than the abstractions that are sometimes employed.

Further, and in line with her second aim, Marin's analysis of oppression as a macroscopic system that we are always in the process of constituting through our collective, cumulative actions makes possible a nuanced account of justice that takes seriously the role of social location. For Marin, norms are not *tout court* just or unjust. Rather, they are in some circumstances just or unjust depending on surrounding circumstances. Thus, to return to our earlier example of the domestic worker, it is the surrounding norms about how different kinds of work are valued and rewarded and about how work is gendered that makes the domestic work potentially unjust, not the intrinsic character of domestic work. Thus, Marin's account is a helpful rejoinder to discussions of reverse-racism or reverse-sexism. Social location matters in our assessment of justice and injustice.

This leads to the normative (third) aim. Since norms are just or unjust in virtue of the larger social structure in which they occur, and in virtue of respective social locations of the agents who contribute to or are subject to the norms, our judgments of the justice or injustice of norms must be context-sensitive. Thus, Marin's normative project proceeds not by way of universal rules, but via contingent and shifting local assessments of the commitments that obtain in different contexts. In three dedicated chapters, she illustrates this by applying her framework across the distinct domains of legal relations, intimate relations of care, and labor relations. In each of these domains, Marin shows that once we understand social structures as relational and as constituted by the commitments we build up through our open-ended actions and responses to each other, assessments of justice and remedies for injustice must always be context-sensitive.

A good portion of Marin's discussion in these chapters plays out in terms of critiques of other theorists. For instance, she takes aim at Elizabeth Brake's proposal of minimal marriage, which contractualizes marriage and allows people to distribute their various marital rights—cohabitation, property rights, health and pension benefits, etc.—as they wish among those with whom they have caring relationships. Marin argues that by disaggregating the forms of care that occur within marriage, Brake's account neglects a key feature of intimate care—flexibility. Within marriage, our needs and the corresponding demands we

make on our spouses change unpredictably from day to day. Without flexibility, argues Marin, there is no good care (109). Marin plausibly argues that Brake's account has the unintended effect of denying the labor involved in caring flexibly, and thus fails to accomplish its aim of supporting justice for caregivers.

The strength of Marin's normative project is that it seems really manageable. We change social structures the very same way we create them, through an accumulation of small actions, through the commitments we take on. What's needed isn't moral heroism or new systems of rules but rather small changes that create ripple effects in the various interwoven relations and interdependencies that make up our social structures. We render the world more just not by overhauling the system but by, bit by bit, changing the relations in which we stand.

While this seems like a plausible account of how we ought to conduct ourselves, it's not clear that Marin's account is sufficient to help overcome the hopelessness we feel in the face of intractable oppression. Given the extent of the oppression in the world, it is hard to envisage the small ripples of change Marin describes as enough to rock the boat.

#### NOTES

1. Marilyn Frye, *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory* (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 1983), 2.

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## CONTRIBUTORS

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APA NEWSLETTER ON

# Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy

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CARLOS A. SÁNCHEZ, EDITOR

VOLUME 18 | NUMBER 1 | FALL 2018

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## FROM THE EDITOR

Carlos A. Sánchez  
SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY

The present issue of the newsletter contains three articles, a conference report, and a syllabus. The first article, by Grant J. Silva, urges us to fearlessly speak our truths, not in spite of, but because of our status as racialized bodies. Silva implores us to be ourselves in professional philosophy, especially, he says, "if you are a racial or ethnic minority." His intended audience, he tells us, are both those that believe in the importance of their own social-existential circumstance, and also those "who hold that one's race or ethnic identity is completely irrelevant or out of place in philosophy; it is aimed at those who would devalue the epistemic importance of race, ethnicity, or gender." The underlying question that motivates the article is *What does philosophy have to do with you, or, perhaps more precisely, what do you have to do with philosophy?*

The second article, by José-Antonio Orosco, makes a valuable connection between Mexican existentialism and Chicana philosophy. Orosco argues that "Mexican thinkers . . . provided Chicana philosophers with a sense of continuity between Mexican and Chicana worldviews." The paper focuses on the work of Elihu Carranza who, in the early 1970s, "sought to develop an original Chicana existentialism that could help construct a unique cultural identity, and recover ethical values, for Mexican Americans in the United States." According to Orosco, Carranza "maintains that Chicana identity takes up existential responsibility for itself in a way that eludes the twentieth-century Mexican philosophers in their quest for *lo Mexicano*." Toward this end, Carranza introduces us to the concept of "carnalismo." An important aspect of Carranza's work is that, when all is said and done, Chicana existentialism challenges "the foundations of white supremacy in the United States," in this way being truly in line with other Chicana liberatory movements.

And the third article, by Shoni Ranher, argues for a reconsideration of Kierkegaard in our readings of the Mexican philosopher Jorge Portilla. First, Ranher defends Jorge Portilla's negative appraisal of "relajo," or the "suspension of seriousness," over and against Carlos A. Sánchez's (2012) positive appraisal of the phenomenon. In its most injurious form, *relajo* presents itself as a threat to human freedom and socio-political change, since it disrupts and interrupts progress. Portilla argues that Socratic irony is *relajo*'s antidote. By contrast, Sánchez finds in *relajo* an attitude of resistance and an alternative means to liberatory

struggles against oppressive power structures, a claim he supports by finding Portilla's view misguided by his inheriting an oppressive, Western prejudice, pointing back to Socrates, that thinking well requires thinking seriously. Ranher counters by appealing to Kierkegaard's account of Socratic humor as an alternative to Sánchez's reading of Socratic seriousness as "colonial seriousness."

The newsletter also includes a conference report. Latinx, Chicana, and Latin American/Mexican philosophy has experienced an increase in conference activity over the past year. The various APA meetings saw an increase in panels sponsored by the APA Committee on Hispanics, the Society for Mexican American Philosophy, and the Radical Philosophy Association. There was also a conference on Mexican philosophy held at the University of California, San Diego, and a conference on Latinx philosophy at Rutgers University, while the Third Biannual Conference on Mexican Philosophy in the Twentieth Century is set to take place at Mount St. Mary's University in October 2018 (see <https://www.binationalmexicanphilosophyconference.org>). The conference report included in the present newsletter summarizes the activities of one of these conferences, the Third Annual Student Philosophy Conference at Rutgers University, held this past spring.

And last, but not least, we present Manuel Vargas's syllabus for his Mexican philosophy course at the University of California, San Diego, one of only a handful of courses specifically dedicated to what some would call a "branch" of Latin American philosophy (although I would hesitate to do so). We include this syllabus here for two reasons: one, to provide a model of best practices in the teaching of Mexican philosophy and, two, to highlight the significance of such a course. That is, a course dedicated to Mexican philosophy is indeed a positive step toward the diversification in philosophy to which many of us have aspired for years and even decades; this is a sign that Latinx philosophers are becoming increasingly confident in the presence, value, and necessity of Latin American philosophy as an autonomous and important archive of human knowledge.

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## CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

The *APA Newsletter on Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy* is accepting contributions for the SPRING 2019 issue. Our readers are encouraged to submit original work on any topic related to Hispanic/Latino thought, broadly construed. We publish original, scholarly treatments, as well as reflections,

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book reviews, and interviews. Please prepare articles for anonymous review.

All submissions should be accompanied by a short biographical summary of the author. Electronic submissions are preferred. All submissions should be limited to 5,000 words (twenty double-spaced pages) and must follow the APA guidelines for gender-neutral language and *The Chicago Manual of Style* formatting. All articles submitted to the newsletter undergo anonymous review by members of the Committee on Hispanics.

### BOOK REVIEWS

Book reviews in any area of Hispanic/Latino philosophy, broadly construed, are welcome. Submissions should be accompanied by a short biographical summary of the author. Book reviews may be short (500 words) or long (1,500 words). Electronic submissions are preferred.

### DEADLINES

Deadline for spring issue is November 15. Authors should expect a decision by January 15. Deadline for the fall issue is April 15. Authors should expect a decision by June 15.

Please send all articles, book reviews, queries, comments, or suggestions electronically to the editor,

Carlos Alberto Sánchez, at [carlos.sanchez@sjsu.edu](mailto:carlos.sanchez@sjsu.edu), or by post: Department of Philosophy  
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### FORMATTING GUIDELINES

The APA Newsletters adhere to *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Use as little formatting as possible. Details like page numbers, headers, footers, and columns will be added later. Use tabs instead of multiple spaces for indenting. Use italics instead of underlining. Use an “em dash” (—) instead of a double hyphen (--). Use endnotes instead of footnotes. Examples of proper endnote style: John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 90. See Sally Haslanger, “Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?” *Noûs* 34 (2000): 31–55.

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## ARTICLES

### *On the Difficulties of Writing Philosophy from a Racialized Subjectivity*

Grant J. Silva  
MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY

This essay is about the loss of voice.<sup>1</sup> It is about the ways in which the act of writing philosophy often results in an alienating and existentially meaningless experience for many budding philosophers, particularly those who wish to think *from* their racialized and gendered identities in professional academic philosophy (and still come out

with a job or obtain tenure!). Unless one actively resists and consciously tries to keep sight of who they are while philosophizing—which means being true to one’s interests, writing on topics that they find fascinating (regardless of their disciplinary uptake), and relying upon ways of knowing informed by the particularities of human identity, to say the least—professionalized philosophy has a tendency to disembodiment its practitioners. It can, as Kurt Cobain sings, “beat me out of me.” This disembodiment is strange since most philosophy, especially since Socrates, begins under the banner of “know thy self.” How are we to understand this “self” that philosophy asks us to know, when, for many, any attempt at using *logos* to think about *ethnos* results in nonphilosophy? Ultimately, as I suggest, the act of writing philosophy often amounts to a sleight of hand, one resulting in the alienation, estrangement, and eventual replacement of one sense of self with another that may not really be you.

Contrary to this, I suggest that you be yourself in professional philosophy, especially if you are a racial or ethnic minority. Note, however, that this suggestion does not imply that one is (nor should they be) altogether defined by their gender, race, or ethnicity in terms of their ability to think. While there remains something to be said about the inability of controlling how one’s colleagues or society at large views you, that is, the inescapability of a racialized existence, to demand that all philosophers who happen to be of “minority” status think in essentialized ways that correspond with race and/or gender would be an injustice and quite the totalizing experience. Such a strong stance would deny many philosophers their status as philosopher plain and simple (not a “Black,” “Latinx,” or what-have-you philosopher). For that reason, my suggestion aims at those who hold that one’s race or ethnic identity is completely irrelevant or out of place in philosophy; it is aimed at those who would devalue the epistemic importance of race, ethnicity, or gender altogether.

In order to give shape to this line of thought, I ask the following question: What does philosophy have to do with you? Or, perhaps more precisely, what do you have to do with philosophy? Such a question routinely kick-starts my Latin American philosophy course. It is a question that students (both undergraduate and graduate) often have a hard time answering, regardless of their ethnic or racial background, sexuality, or gender. It is also one that philosophers do not ask enough (or at all for that matter). I start my course in this way because, as I see it, whatever “Latin American” or “Latinx” philosophy might be, it is part of the embodiment of philosophy, a movement (for lack of a better word) that has found new meaning in professional philosophy and is part of a process that says *who* you are matters philosophically.

To call oneself a “Latin American philosopher,” or, perhaps more specifically, to philosophize from a Latin American or Latinx standpoint, is to affirm the importance of one’s *Latinidad*—whatever that might mean—while doing philosophy. This is quite the political statement in mainstream academic philosophy. In a discipline that has for the most part been dominated by white males, both thematically and methodologically, to think from a

nonwhite or nonmale perspective grates against the grain of much professional academic philosophy. Moreover, to regard one's Latinidad as a site for knowledge-construction and/or philosophical analysis is to ascribe epistemic value to race or gender or the intersection of these (and more). How you know is impacted by *who* you are. Charles Mills puts it best when he writes that because of the centrality of whiteness to professional philosophy's self-conception, a point I explain below, those wishing to think from nonwhite perspectives are "challenging philosophy in a way that Black scholars in other areas are not challenging theirs."<sup>2</sup> Not only *should* philosophers embrace this challenge, but if philosophy is to thrive today, attract more students from a variety of backgrounds, and survive in higher education, it *must*. Problem is, many would rather sink the ship than keep it afloat.

### DISEMBODIED PHILOSOPHICAL PRACTICE

The disembodiment of philosophy comes from certain methodological constraints, metaphilosophical commitments, and normative ideals about the end goal of philosophical thought. When first introducing philosophy to students unfamiliar with it, professors and instructors oftentimes fall back upon the transliteration of the Greek work *philosophia* as the "love of wisdom." Given the meaning of the particles *philo* and *sophia*, these professors and instructors are not wrong when reducing philosophy to such an easily digestible cliché (I, too, am guilty of reaching for this formula when I am having a hard time explaining what philosophy is and what philosophers do). Nevertheless, as I argue below, to think of philosophy as merely the love of wisdom is an impoverishment and understatement. First off, most people understand being wise as synonymous with being knowledgeable, and knowledge is not necessarily the same as wisdom. I can know a great deal; that does not make me wise. Wisdom is critical insight or a disposition towards knowing/knowledge that may accompany the state of being knowledgeable, but it also might not. Socrates purported to know nothing or very little but was said to be wise. Loving wisdom does not mean a collection of facts. Second, the loving of wisdom was never meant to be an end in itself; no one loves wisdom simply for the sake of loving wisdom (that would be weird). Philosophers aspire after wisdom because it frees one from obscurantism, ignorance, dogma, falsehood, and various forms of ideology and false-consciousness that support social and political institutions (many of which happen to be unjust). Thus, there is an inherent liberatory quality to philosophy, as Ignacio Ellacuría put it (again, see below), one that extends all the way to Western academic understandings of the origins of this field.

Philosophy is also often described as the universal science of thought, a rigorous and critical examination of "how things in the broadest sense of the term hang together in the broadest sense of the term," to use the famous quote by Wilfred Sellars. Here, philosophy is the province of "big questions." While a precise definition might be untenable, most philosophers agree that their discipline asks important questions about life, death, right, wrong, good and bad, the existence of God, the nature of religious belief, the extent of human knowledge, the meaning of life, and a whole lot more. In order to ask "big questions," however, one has

to achieve sufficient discursive breadth, that is, a way of speaking, thinking, and writing that places you on the same page as the great thinkers of history, e.g., Plato, Augustine, Descartes, Kant, and others. From this perspective, the practice of philosophy requires that we think in a way that transcends human difference, in a way that arises above the particularities of our individual or collective historical and cultural contexts such that our thoughts speak across the ages and ask questions pertaining to all of humanity, not just our individual self or subset of humanity.

The problem with such a conception of philosophy is that in being asked to write, speak, and think in a way that spans space and time, students of philosophy are often forced to downplay or drop those aspects of their selves that tend to be rather meaningful on individual (and collective) levels. Worse, since achieving the widest discursive breadth possible often comes by finding a common (read "universal") ground, budding philosophers are often forced to speak in terms articulated by those of the dominant perspective(s). This is the particular knot that I wish readers think to about: the downplaying of racial or ethnic difference and the simultaneous embracement of a supposed "race-less" disembodied voice.

In "Philosophy Raced, Philosophy Erased," Mills identifies the pervasive whiteness of professionalized philosophy as the root of this problem.<sup>3</sup> As he explains, philosophers of color face an assortment of challenges upon entering the ranks of professional philosophy. Some of these include implicit and explicit racial/gender biases, microaggressions, double standards, forms of tokenization, and outright hostility or animosity. All of these, unfortunately, have come to be expected by racialized minorities entering academic philosophy (which does not make them right). Professional philosophers can rectify the above if the political will and various administrative and institutional support mechanisms are in place. Sadly, both tend to be lacking (but that is a different matter). The most perplexing and unique challenge faced by philosophers of color, Mills continues, is the relegation of the types of interpersonal, structural, and historical issues faced by racialized minorities to the status of "nonphilosophy." In particular, Mills has in mind issues revolving around race, but one can easily add related concepts, historical events, or phenomena such as racism, sexism, colonization, slavery, various types of objectification and denigration, political marginalization, economic exploitation (as women and/or people of color), and more.

In comparison to other fields, such as literature, sociology, or history, philosophy aspires to ask perennial questions. "Philosophy is supposed to be abstracting away from the contingent, the corporeal, the temporal, the material, to get at necessary, spiritual, eternal, ideal truth," writes Mills.<sup>4</sup> From this perspective, the range of questions that fall into the domain of philosophy ought not to include those that lack broad appeal. Questions devoted to race and processes of racialization, therefore, are of limited relevance to "philosophers" on account of them being "local," particular, *too* corporeal (as it were), and mostly of interest to "minorities." It is not that white philosophers altogether lack interest in any of the above concerns. Instead, Mills's analysis centers on the way questions connected to

race or processes of racialization are considered “applied” issues, “special topics,” perhaps even “non-ideal theory,” or whatever term is used to confer peripheral, tangential, outlier-status as *not really philosophy*.

A major reason for this marginalization is the fact that the hegemonic group of individuals traditionally viewed as “philosophers” lack the range of perspective often shared by people of color. To make matters worse, this group also inhabits a position of racialized normativity. Using political philosophy as an example, Mills explains that the experiential starting point for people of color, generally speaking, runs contrary to the basic assumptions about political subjectivity maintained by many “mainstream” thinkers. He writes, “Your moral equality and personhood are certainly *not* recognized; you are *not* equal before the law; and the state is *not* seeking to protect but to encroach upon your interests in the interests of the white population.”<sup>5</sup> In the context of the United States’s racial imaginary, African Americans are fundamentally viewed as criminal and dangerous; the existence of Latinx peoples is predicated on tropes of “illegality.” While the rights of Blacks, Hispanics, and even Native Americans (via treaty) might be protected nominally, these protections are not automatically granted in our society but must be continuously fought for and asserted, a point that gives new meaning to the idea of racial privilege. All this is to say, a metaphysically stable and legally secure political subjectivity is something philosophers can take for granted only when the class of individuals who make up professional philosophy are treated the same way by the law, show up in similar manners in terms of political representation, and also share the same normative concerns. Thus, when relying upon one’s (white racial) self as a frame of reference for discussion of rights or political organization, it is quite possible that, in academic contexts with other philosophers who share the same racialized starting point, the particularity of your view is obscured and the experience of “unraced” whites becomes the norm, as Mills puts it.

I offer the question of political justice as it relates to undocumented immigrants or irregular migration as another example. At the onset of *A Theory of Justice*, John Rawls, arguably the most important political philosopher in the twentieth century, writes that his main object of inquiry is justice, the basic structure of society.<sup>6</sup> Seeking a simple conception of justice, Rawls limits his project in two ways (one of which is important here): “I shall be satisfied if it is possible to formulate a reasonable conception of justice for the basic structure of society conceived for the time being as a closed system isolated from other societies.”<sup>7</sup> In *The Law of Peoples*, he adds “this position views society as closed: persons enter only by birth, and exit only by death.”<sup>8</sup> In *Political Liberalism*, Rawls continues: “That a society is closed is a considerable abstraction, justified only because it enables us to speak about certain main questions free from *distracting details*.”<sup>9</sup> Besides viewing the plight of undocumented peoples in places like the United States as a “distracting detail,” Rawls’s restriction betrays his own principles by providing too much information regarding the persons behind the famed “veil of ignorance.” When formulating the basic principles upon which the structure

of society will depend, we may not know if we are rich, poor, Black, white, able-bodied or not, male or female, gay or straight, but we *do* know that everyone behind the veil will be a citizen or, at the very least, have regular status. Through this restriction Rawls limits justice, *in its most basic form*, to those who are formal members of the body politic, a move that alienates upwards of twelve million undocumented people from the basic structure of society (i.e., justice). Unless such a limitation is justifiable, which is to say that the burden is upon Rawlsians to show how this is not an arbitrary starting point for a theory of justice (again, appealing to Rawls’s own standards), how can the range of justice, *in its most basic form*, be so narrow?

My goal is not to engage the burgeoning literature on the ethics of immigration when I ask the above question—a question that many Rawlsians and political philosophers will dismiss as an instance in “non-ideal theory” (yet another means of downplaying the unique philosophical challenges posed by undocumented or irregular immigration). Instead, building upon Mills’s point, my goal is to demonstrate how many of the assumptions that “mainstream” philosophy depends upon, like taking citizenship (or, even more abstractly, “membership”) for granted when constructing a theory of justice, reflect a rather particular perspective which shapes a specific set of normative concerns. Now, imagine this happening in the aggregate, adding things like prestige, the weight of tradition, and the “need for rigor” into the mix. One can easily see how many of those intellectual endeavors that might attract and welcome more nonwhite people into philosophy—and, again, this is not to say that philosophers of color are *only* interested in “projects of color,” so to speak—are jettisoned (I am tempted to say “deported”) to ethnic studies, area studies, women and gender studies, etc.

It is important to underscore that it is not merely the numerical overrepresentation of whites that leads to the alienation of minorities in philosophy. Mills’s ultimate concern is with gate-keeping methodological constraints and “border-building” tactics that simultaneously curtail the diversification of philosophy as well as obscure *the particularity* of those concerns by passing themselves off as “universal.” Through this process, professional philosophy remains overpopulated by white people (men in particular) and dominated by white interests passing themselves off as race-less philosophical concerns. To put it differently, if philosophy is the “science of thought,” as a “science” it depends on a particular method. Such method does not come from nowhere but is produced by specific philosophers in particular places and points in time. In the context of professional academic philosophy, this means students are asked to speak, write, and think in ways that historically make sense within a methodological context articulated predominantly by dead white men.

Indeed, as one can probably realize, there is no such thing as an objective, impartial “view from nowhere,” a point that sets up quite an interesting predicament: either way one goes about it, one cannot avoid philosophizing from a *particularized* perspective; it is either yours or that of the dominant point of view passing itself off as *universal*. I ask, why not choose to be *you* when you philosophize?



## LIBERATING PHILOSOPHY: ON WHY I FAST PHILOSOPHICALLY

For many individuals attempting to philosophize from racialized identities, philosophy can (and should) mean so much more than the above. At the very least, it should help liberate the mind as well as the body. Problem is, the former is typically viewed as exclusive to philosophy, the locus of our freedom and volition (if such things exist), while the latter is obviously important, but a contingent and accidental fact about you. For racialized “minorities,” however, seemingly adding new significance to Glaucon’s argument in *The Republic* that the semblance of being a good person is more important than actually *being* good, one cannot take their corporeal existence lightly. How you look in the eyes of others can result in life or death. Unfortunately, as this essay explains, most academic philosophy takes place from a perspective of great privilege, where how one appears or looks to others is irrelevant (and, moreover, *should* be irrelevant when it comes to philosophy). The kinds of questions that philosophers ask (i.e., “big questions”) take for granted a philosophical subjectivity that is more or less secure. Freedom of mind, thought, and conscience are prerequisite and assumed outright. For women, racial minorities, colonized peoples (and those whose sense of self begins from a position of oppression) such a starting point is a luxury. To think from these perspectives means one cannot help but use philosophy *for the sake of freedom*.

Think about it in terms of hunger. When you are hungry all you can do is think about food (the stuff of Snickers commercials). Once you are satiated, when you have eaten, then you are capable of entertaining and contemplating abstract philosophical questions (those about God, life, death, good and bad, etc.). Philosophy, to continue with this metaphor, often begins from the point of view of persons stuffed to the gills! To philosophize in a way where you matter, the racialized and gendered you, means that one uses philosophy such that it resembles “the love of wisdom,” but more so in terms of how wisdom sets us free from misguided and hubristic ways of knowing. Along these lines, in “The Liberating Function of Philosophy,” an essay that has become an important point of departure for much of my work, Ellacuría writes,

We can say that philosophy has always had to do with freedom, though in different ways. It has been assumed that philosophy is the task of free individuals and free peoples, free at least of the basic needs that can suppress the kind of thinking we call philosophy. We also acknowledge that it has a liberating function for those who philosophize and that as the supreme exercise of reason, it has liberated people from obscurantism, ignorance, and falsehood. Throughout the centuries, from the pre-Socratics to the Enlightenment, through all methods of *critical* thinking, we have ascribed a great superiority to reason, and to philosophical reason in particular, as a result of its liberating function.

He continues, “[T]his matter of *philosophy* and *freedom* gets to the fundamental purpose of philosophical knowledge,

which even if it is understood as a search for truth, cannot be reduced to being a search for truth for its own sake.”<sup>10</sup> We should appreciate philosophy for its liberatory potential.

How is this liberatory potential cut short when sexual, racial, and political oppression are not viewed as proper or “traditional” philosophical topics? Moreover, given that philosophy as a discipline seemingly thrives when written in the guise of dialogues, how is this field needlessly restrained when it delineates the range of perspective to sanctified, hegemonic perspectives that speak on behalf of all of humanity?

While philosophy might survive in the above described ways, it surely will not thrive. In addition to its institutionalized formulations, philosophy must shift from an erudite “love of wisdom,” a benchmark on the register of Western civility, to a process in which “the *telos* of thinking, if there is any, is the struggle against dehumanization, understood as the affirmation of sociality and the negation of its negation [coloniality],” to quote Nelson Maldonado-Torres.<sup>11</sup> That is to say, philosophy is not an end in itself but part of the struggle against multiple forms of dehumanization and oppression. It is the affirmation of sociality and the denial of antisocial behavior. Philosophy ought not only to free one from misuses of reason or the type of intellectual laziness from which all humans suffer, but it also should be used to liberate ourselves from the types of intellectual nonage imposed by social injustice, racial and gendered totalization, and oppression. In using philosophy to think about the particularities of human existence, we should philosophize as hungry persons. Again, I ask, how are you (i.e., the person you are, your identity, your race, gender, ethnicity, or nationality) relevant to philosophy?

I conclude with the prayer, as he refers to it, Frantz Fanon uses to end *Black Skin, White Mask*: “O my body, always make of me a man who questions!”<sup>12</sup> I find these words to be hauntingly bothersome and yet extremely fascinating and important. I am bothered by them not because I dislike this statement. Being a man of color in professional academic philosophy, I often find myself often repeating Fanon’s prayer as a mantra. This passage is perplexing, however, because it comes at the end of a book devoted to thinking through the significance of the Black body, in a way that sees it burdened by negative valuations and internalized displeasure. To paraphrase what Fanon writes at the onset of *The Wretched of the Earth*, decolonization results in a new humanism, a novel social order, one in which the relations of domination that define the meaning of “white” and “Black” today are destroyed and constructed anew; the replacement of one species of humankind with another. Along these lines, the above prayer signifies Fanon’s attempt at finding value in his Black body in the midst of a world that devalues it. In these words, Fanon recognizes his Black body as enabling philosophical reflection, just the type of attitude towards race and processes of racialization I advocate for in this essay.

Nevertheless, for one’s body to become the source of philosophical skepticism, it has to inhabit the site of social exclusion. It has to bear the mark of difference and run against the racial, gender, and sexual normativity of

one's social structure. If not "different," one will not be afforded the looks, the bewilderment, the fear, the gaze that generates the level of self-awareness leading to the type of questioning that Fanon is grateful for. Along these lines, I, too, am grateful for being different (especially in philosophy, to say the least). Being a nonwhite Latino, I recall (as a child, mind you) the feeling and shame of not being "American." Although I was born in the United States and hold US citizenship, I distinctively remember thinking that if you closed your eyes and pictured the ideal "American," a brown-skinned boy from the east side of Los Angeles would not be the first picture that came to mind. The American imaginary remains thoroughly racialized, gendered, regionalized (say, coming from the Midwest or East Coast), linguistically impoverished (that is, monolingual), overly Christian, and heterosexual (and I'm sure there is more). Being Hispanic, Latino, or Latinx, whichever one prefers, allowed me the epistemic vantagepoint to question what it means to be "American," a citizen of the United States. For me, membership is not something I take lightly.

And yet, for such a proclivity to questioning to be possible, the racial normativity that accompanies white supremacy had to have come into effect (and this is where I am bothered by Fanon's words). I often worry about those times in which whiteness or white supremacy becomes necessary, where we find some meaning in the existence of whiteness. Here, this worry about constructing a theodicy for whiteness is inspired by what Aimé Césaire writes in *Discourse on Colonialism*: "[B]etween colonization and civilization there is an infinite distance; that out of all the colonial expeditions that have been undertaken, out of all the colonial statutes that have been drawn up, out of all the memoranda that have been dispatched by all the ministries, there could not come a single human value."<sup>13</sup> For these reasons, my nonwhite body *should not* be the means through which I approach philosophy. However, it is, and as such, my approach to philosophy does not end with enlightenment, but liberation.

NOTES

1. This essay is an abridged version of "Why Philosophy Does Not (And Should Not) Happen in a Vacuum" (in review). An early version of it was published in *The Write News: The Write Attitude Newsletter*, Spring 2017, Issue 8, 9–11. Elements of the last section draw from Grant J. Silva, "The Americas Seek not Liberation but Enlightenment," *The Pluralist* 13, no. 2 (Summer 2018): 1–21.
2. Charles Mills, "Philosophy Race. Philosophy Erased," in *Reframing the Practice of Philosophy: Bodies of Color, Bodies of Knowledge*, George Yancy, ed. (Albany: SUNY, 2012), 45.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., 60.
5. Ibid., 61.
6. John Rawls, *Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Belknap, 1971), 3.
7. Rawls, *Theory of Justice*, 6–7. Rawls's second limitation is that he wishes to "examine the principles of justice that would regulate a well-ordered society." He continues, "Everyone is presumed to act justly and to do his part in upholding just institutions" (8). This is called "strict compliance theory," an idea that has generated a comprehensive academic literature. In fact, most Rawlsian literature explores the question of whether or not a well-ordered society implies that people share common conceptions of the good, and whether or not people would behave justly if presented with the opportunity to do so.

8. John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2001), 26.
9. John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 12 (emphasis added).
10. Ignacio Ellacuría, "The Liberating Function of Philosophy (1985)," in *Essays on History, Liberation, and Salvation*, Michael E. Lee, ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013), 94.
11. Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "Thinking at the Limits of Philosophy," in *Reframing the Practice of Philosophy: Bodies of Color, Bodies of Knowledge*, George Yancy, ed. (Albany: SUNY, 2012), 261.
12. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2008), 206.
13. Aimé Césaire, "Discourse on Colonialism," trans. Joan Pickham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), 11–12.

## Chicanx Existentialism as Liberation Philosophy

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Mexican philosophy of the twentieth century has experienced a renaissance in North America in the last few years. In Mexico, the work of Guillermo Hurtado, Carlos Pareda, and Mario Teodoro Ramirez has revived interest in thinkers such as Octavio Paz, Leopoldo Zea, Emilio Uranga, and others associated with the mid-century collective, *el Grupo Hiperion*.<sup>1</sup> This loose fellowship of Mexican philosophers concerned themselves with uncovering the foundations of *lo Mexicano*, or authentic Mexican identity, and rescuing it from the obfuscations of colonial history and more recent nationalist ideology. The recovery of these Mexican philosophers has inspired Robert E. Sanchez Jr. and Carlos Alberto Sánchez in the United States to bring this Mexican philosophy into English translation.<sup>2</sup> One of their aims is to place Mexican existentialists into conversation with European existentialists and US American pragmatists<sup>3</sup> in hopes of building the intellectual infrastructure for a dialogue that can diversify the canons of existentialist, phenomenological, and pragmatist philosophy. A second goal is to provide a philosophical method that can serve as a model for the development of liberatory Latinx philosophy in the United States.<sup>4</sup>

In this essay, I want to contribute to this ongoing project by recognizing that twentieth-century Mexican philosophy was a starting point for Chicanx philosophers who reflected on Mexican American cultural identity in the late 1960s. Mexican thinkers such as Octavio Paz, Jose Vasconcelos, Samuel Ramos, and their Spanish inspiration, Jose Ortega y Gasset, provided Chicanx philosophers with a sense of continuity between Mexican and Chicanx worldviews and a "theoretical/philosophical vision about their own identity."<sup>5</sup> In particular, I focus here on the work of Elihu Carranza who, in the early 1970s, sought to develop an original Chicanx existentialism that could help construct a unique cultural identity, and recover ethical values, for Mexican Americans in the United States. Carranza believes this project of Chicanx existentialism important for two reasons. As I examine in the first section, Carranza maintains that Chicanx identity takes up existential responsibility for itself in a way

that eludes the twentieth-century Mexican philosophers in their quest for *lo Mexicano*. This successful articulation of Chicana identity, according to Carranza, allows Chicana existentialism to aspire toward a new kind of humanism, one built around an ethical relationship centered on the Chicana concept of *carnalismo*. I examine the outlines of this Chicana humanism in the second section. In the end, Carranza hoped this Chicana-informed humanism would not only create an ethical foundation for the further development of the Mexican American people in the United States, but he believed it could also help to challenge the foundations of white supremacy in the United States and offer a social critique that would be useful for creating a liberatory perspective for other ethnic groups, including other Latinx and white people.

### THE CHICANO APPROPRIATION OF MEXICAN PHILOSOPHY

In his survey of early Chicana journals and Chicana studies course syllabi from 1968 to 1975, Michael Soldatenko discovers that the writings of philosophers Octavio Paz, Samuel Ramos, and Jose Ortega y Gasset played key roles in providing an intellectual foundation for the discipline.<sup>6</sup> These works influenced early Chicana philosophers to conceive of Chicana identity as a continuation of Mexican identity. Moreover, Mexican philosophy provided rich conceptual frameworks with which to proceed in an examination of that Chicana life. Two particular themes from Mexican thought emerge significantly in this early Chicana philosophy, according to Soldatenko.

First, from Ortega y Gasset, Chicana thinkers took the notion of perspectivalism, the notion that all knowledge of self and world is articulated through a historical, social, and cultural context, a perspective through which one makes sense of one's own identity and place within the world. This perspective or outlook is not something that can be transcended, or overcome, in order to achieve absolute and objective knowledge—no such ultimate perspective is actually accessible to anyone.<sup>7</sup> As Carlos Sánchez adds, Ortega's ideas became a defining feature of several twentieth-century Mexican philosophers such as Leopoldo Zea, Emilio Uranga, and Jorge Portilla. All of them turned away from thinking of a universal "man in general" as a starting point of philosophical reflection and moved toward investigating the unique historical circumstances constituting the Mexican interpretation of self and culture.<sup>8</sup>

Second, Chicana philosophers followed their Mexican predecessors in adopting a phenomenological method for examining their cultural identity. Carlos Sánchez describes the approach that Mexican existentialists took in their work as "analytically introspective [or] auscultatory." Mexican thinkers, such as Uranga, maintained that the "aim of auscultation is ultimately to detect and deconstruct the meta-narratives, ideologies, or pretensions that frame modern Mexican subjectivity, such as the narrative of national exceptionalism that grows out of the revolution."<sup>9</sup> Octavio Paz and Samuel Ramos, for example, followed in this auscultatory mode, each of them focusing on either the masked nature of Mexican subjectivity, or the psychological neuroses and inferiority complex of the flawed *pelado*

personality type. Uranga, Paz, and Ramos all believed that authentic Mexican identity was something to be uncovered by a kind of philosophical analysis that involved peeling back the layers of ideological obstructions laid down by the experience of colonialism, economic dependence, and the history of the Mexican Revolution of 1910–1920.

These two themes both intermingle within Elihu Carranza's reflections on Chicana identity. Carranza's starting point is, in fact, the work of Octavio Paz. In his classic book *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (1950), Paz called for Mexicans to engage in self-examination of their cultural identity. Doing so would reveal "a deep rooted sadness about Mexico and its place in the universe; a sadness that emerges most notably in Mexican poetic expression" and other popular culture.<sup>10</sup> This sadness and melancholy, Paz surmised, is partly a result of the self-realization that Mexicans have been a "subjected people" since the time of the European conquest and who now fearfully hide behind masks, or facades, to conceal their feelings of inadequacy and inferiority from the rest of the world. Paz writes:

It is revealing that our intimacy never flowers in a natural way, only when incited by fiestas, alcohol or death. Slaves, servants, and submerged races always wear a mask, whether smiling or sullen. Only when they are alone, during the great moments of life, do they dare to show themselves as they really are. All their relationships are poisoned by fear and suspicion; fear of the master and suspicion of their equals.<sup>11</sup>

For Paz, one of those grand moments of fiesta and death that allowed the genuine Mexican character to surface was the Mexican Revolution. At the heart of the upheaval was a dedication to the preservation of land rights and communal ways of living—rooted in the indigenous past—that gave all Mexicans the space to commune with one another without fear and suspicion and the interference of foreign powers and ideologies.<sup>12</sup> The tragedy for Paz, as well as for Zea and Uranga, was that this authentic moment was buried by the institutionalization of the revolution into a formal political party of the Mexican state: the Institutional Revolutionary Party, also known by its Spanish acronym: PRI. Under the PRI, the Mexican government took it upon itself to promote an all-encompassing brand of nationalism that glossed over the differences among the Mexican people exposed by the revolution. The task, then, for Mexican existentialists, such as *el Grupo Hiperion*, became to initiate a search for the "depths of the situated human being so as to awaken a consciousness of existential struggle ("misery") and uncertainty, of "lo mexicano" in its ontological/philosophical dimensions."<sup>13</sup>

Carranza's reading of Paz, however, detects a hesitation or fear to take this deep auscultatory examination of situated identity very far. The authentic Mexican identity only peers out in moments of unguarded passion, but the Mexican existentialists did not continue to theorize about what might be needed to tend to this identity and help it flower. This hesitation for self-reflection and further philosophical guidance is something that Carranza believes Mexican Americans started to overcome in the 1960s:

And this is the essence of the Chicano cultural revolution. A confrontation and a realization of worth and value through a brutally honest self-examination has occurred, and has revealed to Chicanos a link with the past and a leap into the future, a future which Chicanos are fashioning, a future that has validity for Chicanos because Chicanos are the agents, i.e. the creators and builders of their destiny.<sup>14</sup>

The Chicano *Movimiento* of the 1960s, then, created the material and political conditions that allowed Mexican Americans to begin examining their own circumstances and history and to “deconstruct the meta-narratives and ideologies” that had come to frame their identity as people of Mexican descent living in the United States. The aim of the movement, in Carranza’s mind, would be to build a social order that allows Chicanxs to fully embody the reality of their particular historical development and cultural circumstances, to live out their authentic identity and build a new role for themselves as social agents in the US. So unlike the handful of Mexican philosophers in *el Group Hiperion* who were concerned about whether their phenomenological analyses could actually unravel the cultural confusions layered on by the Mexican state and its ideas of an official *lo mexicano*—and thereby rouse the Mexican people from their apathetic and inauthentic slumber—Carranza believed that Chicanxs had built a widespread social movement for the development of a new Mexican American perspective that could blossom into a new ethical orientation for humanity itself.

### CHICANX ASCULTATION

Carranza opens his Chicane phenomenological inquiry by noting that a common question, both within and outside of the Movement, was “Who is a Chicano?” Two responses were common. The answer from mainstream society usually relied on an ethnic basis, claiming that a Chicane is a person of Mexican descent, born or living in the United States. The term “Chicane,” then, is synonymous with “Mexican American.” Chicane activists, on the other hand, placed more emphasis on the idea that a Chicane is someone of Mexican descent who explicitly espouses pride in Mexican cultural heritage and seeks to eliminate discrimination barriers toward equal opportunity for Mexican Americans.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, this was the definition provided by scholars and activists involved in drafting the 1969 *El Plan de Santa Barbara*, the document that laid the groundwork for the grassroots student organization *Movimiento Estudiantil Chicane de Aztlan (MEChA)*.<sup>16</sup> Thus, under this understanding, Chicane identity is not just a matter of ethnic or familial descent, but of political attitude and orientation—one could be of Mexican background living in the United States but not be Chicane because one felt ashamed of, or rejected, embracing one’s cultural background and values.

This discussion about the usage of the term “Chicane” opens up for Carranza the more philosophically interesting question: If being a Chicane is a matter of having a particular orientation toward the world or interpretive framework, then what exactly does it mean to embody the Chicane worldview or perspective? Using this Ortega insight, then, Carranza seeks to know what is the distinct way that

Chicanxs experience the world and self? Here, then, it is clear that Carranza is searching for a kind of intersubjective subjectivity of the Chicane, the space in which one comes to an awareness of one’s own being between the discursive categories that have previously been imposed to define oneself:

The Chicane perspective is one way of seeing relevant data in a meaningful relation within reality, as defined and experienced by Chicanos. Thus understood, it follows that the oft asked question, who is a Chicane? Becomes a question not of substances and essential properties (or a variant of Mexicanism, whatever that may be) but of understanding and realistically owning an indigenous, and therefore unique point of view.<sup>17</sup>

For Carranza, the key to understanding the Chicane perspective is to understand that it arises out of a “hyphenated” experience of being a Mexican American, that is, of a person who experiences the world in terms of what Carranza calls a “duality of relations.”<sup>18</sup> Unlike how many contemporary Chicane theorists, such as Gloria Anzaldua or Ana Castillo, talk about Mexican American identity in terms of hybridity, *mestiza*, or mixed identity, Carranza does not mean a duality between Mexican and American identities, or of two different cultures intersecting though one individual, community, or borderlands.<sup>19</sup> Instead, Carranza thinks the duality of relations at the heart of the Chicane experience is between *connectedness* and *disconnectedness*, or what he terms the two relationships of “difference from ( )” and “difference toward ( ).”<sup>20</sup>

The Chicane experience of disconnect means that Chicanxs are related to but *different from* Mexicans. As Carranza understands it, Chicanxs are ethnically related to Mexican nationals, but they have made the social and intellectual commitment to undergo the deep and ongoing auscultatory examination of cultural identity only hinted at, but not successfully carried out, by the Mexican existentialists. Chicanxs are also *different from* other Mexican Americans who choose, under the social pressure of dominant society, to conceal their cultural difference and try to assimilate into a mainstream US American cultural narrative of middle-class stability that “depends on Anglo promises, values, or systems of rewards.”<sup>21</sup> He summarizes:

Chicanos, then, are Mexican Americans who, unlike their ancestors, have removed their masks revealing themselves in confrontation against their oppressors and who, unlike other Mexican Americans, have acquired different perceptions of themselves concerning their role, purposes, and goals. . . . I would say that the Chicane role is guided by the principle of self-determination.<sup>22</sup>

Carranza believes that the struggle by Chicanos to realize this dimension of Chicane identity was not without real dangers. Chicane history hints at the kinds of social and material changes needed to accomplish this kind of auscultatory investigation. He recalls that previous generations of Mexican Americans, particularly the Pacheco youths of the 1940s, attempted to explore and assert

their cultural heritage within the confines of dominant US American society and were violently suppressed. In 1943, scores of young Mexican Americans were terrorized by police and members of the US military in a variety of cities for wearing a popular style of clothing called zoot suits.<sup>23</sup> These zoot suits, with their long coats and baggy pants, exaggerated mainstream men's attire and were popular among Black and Latinx youth. After the US government prohibited the production of the suits in order to conserve fabric for the war effort, young Mexican American men and women were attacked in public, especially in Los Angeles, and many were stripped of their zoot suits down to their underwear. The reaction to this violence by Mexican Americans, according to Carranza, was a fearful rejection of their cultural difference. This Mexican American generation chose to turn away from their heritage and assimilate into US American society: "The Mexican American price was an act of self-immolation in terms of a rejection of heritage and culture, falsely construed as necessarily an inhuman culture of 'spics' and 'greasers', since it did not conform to the unquestioned standard of 'civilized' children."<sup>24</sup> Thus, like Mexicans in Mexico, Mexican Americans before the Chicana *Movimiento* chose to conceal their identities and reveal them only in private intimate moments away from the gaze of mainstream society.

Mexican Americans continued to veil their cultural identity after witnessing the attempt of another group of young people to question the values of US American society some two decades after the Zoot Suit Riots. According to Carranza, the countercultural hippies of the 1960s represented an attempt by young white people to transform US American culture. He calls them the "clutch people" because they tried to "shift gears to a higher level of ethical consciousness in terms of the moral and spiritual dimensions of existence that bind us."<sup>25</sup> The hippies were not necessarily trying to create, or import, an alternative value system in US American society, according to Carranza. Instead, the hippies were interested in putting putative mainstream US American values such as "love of one's neighbor," forgiveness, justice, mercy, and equality of opportunity into practice. However, for Carranza, the hippies made little headway in fermenting this kind of cultural revolution and, by the end of the 1960s, were largely ignored or repressed. This demonstrated to Carranza that mainstream US American society relied on a different set of principles than the ones professed in the narrative of the "American Dream." The suppression of the hippies revealed to him that US American society is built on a nativist, white nationalist core that has scarce room for the expression of Mexican American culture or alternative ideas of America:

It became evident to many Chicanos that there was no hope for them within a set of values the application of which always placed them a priori and arbitrarily at a disadvantage. A set of values the application of which systematically divides the world into the strong and the weak, the superior and the inferior, the best and the worst—according to race—constitutes a distorted world view. It has proven to be a world view of unrealistic hopes and promises for the Chicanos.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, the reason the Chicana *Movimiento* was so important for Carranza is that it created the social and intellectual space for Mexican Americans to envision their relationships to other social groups in a wholly new and productive way.

With this inventory of the *different from*, Carranza thinks we can begin to sketch out the other side of the duality that shapes the Chicana perspective: the *difference toward* relationship. The Chicana worldview is not simply an oppositional stance defining itself against what it is not (not-Mexican, not-US American, and not-Mexican American), but also about an active attempt to find or discover another sense of unity, connectedness, or wholeness. In other words, to be Chicana is also to be involved in an existential project, working *toward* a not-yet-arrived-at authenticity. Chicana identity, then, is not primarily about familial or ethnic descent, nor about political values and affiliation. It is, for Carranza, a dual existential commitment to 1) comprehend the world from a fully decolonized Mexican American perspective that is liberated from its Mexican and US American cultural obfuscations, and to 2) express a way of life that embodies elements of Mexican American heritage and traditions that have been authentically developed.<sup>27</sup>

Carranza does not attempt an extensive catalog of what he considers to be the Mexican American heritage and traditions required for authentic Chicana living in the *difference toward* mode. Instead, he sees his task as laying the ground for those kinds of discussions, using philosophy to clarify "the set of presuppositions or assumptions which Chicanos hold, consciously or unconsciously, about the basic makeup of their world."<sup>28</sup> Carranza is clear, however, that one of these basic foundations of the Chicana perspective is the idea of living-in-community, or in solidarity, with others. The *difference toward* relationship is a kind of ethical comportment that Carranza thinks is best represented in the Chicana ideal of *carlismo*. *Carlismo* was a popular concept during the Chicana *Movimiento*. It typically meant a strong sense of love, attachment, friendship, or camaraderie, usually between men who considered each other *carlales*. The word "carnal" derives from the Spanish word "carne" or flesh; thus, to be someone's carnal is "to be of the same flesh together." For Carranza, then, to be Chicana means to strive to embody an ethical attitude in which "each man recognizes himself in the face of each man."<sup>29</sup>

One way to understand what Carranza means by this formulation of *carlismo* is to consider the work "Pensamiento Serpentino" by Chicana poet and artist Luis Valdez, founder of the renowned *Teatro Campesino*. In this poem, published in 1971, Valdez incorporated an idea that he learned from the work of Mexican philosopher Domingo Martinez Paredes—the Mayan notion of *In Lak'ech*. Valdez describes the ideal of *In Lak'ech* in the following excerpt from the poem:

*Tu eres mi otro yo*  
You are my other me

*Si te hago dano a ti*  
If I do harm to you

*Me hago dano a mi mismo*  
I do harm to myself.

*Si te amo y respeto*  
If I love and respect you

*Me amo y respeto yo*  
I love and respect myself.<sup>30</sup>

For Valdez, using this indigenous idea of right relationship between individuals offered a spiritual underpinning to the moral lessons of unity and common struggle he wished to portray in his theatrical dramas about Chicana life. It was an idea that came to permeate his thinking, and many other Chicana theater and activist groups of the era either struggled to incorporate these indigenous concepts or to find other political alternatives for describing the sense of communal solidarity it articulated.<sup>31</sup>

Given the popularity of Valdez's work among Chicana intellectuals and activists, it seems appropriate to imagine that part of what Carranza wanted to accomplish with his idea of *carnalismo*—as the basic ethical comportment of the Chicana perspective in which “each man recognizes himself in the face of each man”—is to give an existential interpretation of the Mayan concept of *In Lak'éch*. This would make sense of what Carranza means when he says that to be Chicana is to engage in “understanding and realistically owning an indigenous, and therefore unique point of view”: to be a Chicana is to be a person who proceeds in life by expressing one's relatedness to other human beings in terms of responsibility, reciprocity, and mutual self-constitution. Again, this is not a comportment that comes naturally to Mexican Americans by way of their heritage and ancestry, but is an intentional existential and ethical ideal that Carranza hoped could be sought by those Mexican Americans willing to undergo Chicana auscultation.

### MEXICAN AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY Y MAS

Carlos A. Sánchez maintains that the value of the Mexican existentialism of *el Grupo Hiperion* for US Latinxs is not so much in the particular conclusions at which the Mexican thinkers arrived, but in the example they offer of the promise of philosophical labor. He writes: “Whether they failed or triumphed as motivating and instructional tools for Mexicans of the mid-twentieth century is not important for our purposes; it is the work itself that is. It gives us an opportunity to engage in a similar project.”<sup>32</sup> The project Sanchez has in mind is the development of a liberatory Latinx philosophy that can help to achieve self-empowerment of the Latinx community in the United States. The treasure of the Mexican existentialist tradition, of course, is that they attempted to give a philosophical method for unpacking the oppressive narratives that masked authentic Mexican identity. There is a similar struggle for Latinxs to the extent to which they self-identify, and are described by mainstream society, as outsiders, criminals, and threats to US American life in general. Sanchez argues:

Militancy and activism may politically affect the material circumstances underlying vital oppressions, and might indeed be required for the possibility of overcoming and flourishing, but

what must change are the standard narratives that inform our inner selves. To challenge those narratives what is needed is a violent appropriation that preserves and overcomes; in other words, what is needed is a reading into our traditions, those that are constitutive of our historical identity and those that, while framing our present and our future, reject or marginalize us. In the Mexican challenge to philosophy we read the possibility of challenging such narratives, and such traditions, but especially those that aim, through fear, coercion, or promises of reward, to strip us of all traces of difference and particularity.<sup>33</sup>

In this essay, I suggest that the foundations for such a liberatory project have already been laid with Carranza's Chicana existentialism. Carranza saw himself as following in the wake of the mid-century Mexican thinkers, taking on their notions of historically situated and perspectival knowledge of self and world as a basis for examining Mexican American life in the United States. However, Carranza believed that Mexican Americans had actually gone farther than the Mexican existentialists. While Jorge Portilla and Emilio Uranga hoped that their reflections might spur Mexican society toward self-examination, Carranza believed that Mexican Americans had sparked the widespread social, political, intellectual and artistic movement to engage in identity examination and, in particular, to support a philosophical examination of the Chicana perspective. Since Sánchez's work is motivated by an attempt to expand the Western philosophical canon, particularly in regard to its existentialist components, so as to speak to Latinxs in the United States, then Carranza's work can be an important trans-american bridge between *el Grupo Hiperion* and contemporary Latinxs.

In the decolonial mode of “difference from ( ),” Carranza's Chicana phenomenology provides a philosophical method that allowed Mexican Americans to peel away the layers of stereotypes and historical traditions that weigh down their community with feelings of self-doubt and alienation. In doing this rigorous self-examination, Mexican Americans would reveal some of the dynamics of white supremacy at the heart of the American dream narrative. Chicana auscultation demonstrates how the lure of assimilation and the material rewards of white-dominant society create obstructions for the success of Chicana youth. Thus, other Latinx groups in the US can take the method of the Chicana auscultation and begin to articulate the specific manners in which they are “different from” their own Latin American cultures of origin, as well as the US mainstream. Of course, care would have to be taken not to generalize the results of the Chicana perspective to other Latinx groups in the United States, since they may not share the same racial or cultural narratives or political situatedness to white mainstream society as have Mexican Americans.<sup>34</sup>

In the humanist mode of “difference toward ( ),” Chicana existentialism offers Mexican Americans the opportunity to engage in a new ethical composure, a space to sift through the experience of Mexican American life for the traditions and values, such as *carnalismo*, that build and solidify the community of mutual recognition and respect that

undergird identity exploration. Carranza's reflections on this dimension of Chicana duality were published in 1978, with an unfulfilled promise to provide more philosophical guidance for the development of other traditions and practices underlying authentic Chicana identity. While Carranza did not continue this project, Chicana feminists, starting in the 1980s and 1990s, composed compelling existential examinations of Chicana life. Perhaps the most significant foundational text in this vein is Gloria Anzaldúa's *La Frontera/Borderlands*, a phenomenological investigation of Mexican American life that extracts its insights about cultural identity from history, linguistics, women-of-color feminism, queer theory, and Native American wisdom traditions. Other notable works in this vein include Ana Castillo's *Massacre of the Dreamers: Essays on Chicana* (1995), Cherrie Moraga's *The Last Generation* (1993), Jacqueline Martinez's *Phenomenology of Chicana Experience and Identity: Communication and Transformation in Praxis* (1995), and, more recently, Mariana Ortega's *In-Between: Latina Feminist Phenomenology, Multiplicity, and the Self* (2016). All of these works focus on opening up the lived experiences of Chicanas and discerning the interconnection of social norms, selfhood, and cultural values. Most importantly, these works question the way in which Chicana ideals, such as Carranza's *caralismo*, reflect patriarchal inflections. They offer more fine-tuned analyses of the ways in which oppressive practices constrain the liberatory potential of the "difference toward" mode.

For Carranza, Chicana humanism could also serve to model liberatory philosophy for other non-Latina peoples, offering a way to think through and beyond oppressive social ideologies and institutions. His rendering of Chicana auscultation, for instance, involves recognizing that white youth also revolted against the narrative of middle-class achievement and US American political power in the 1960s to the point that the nation suffered a legitimization crisis. This suggests, perhaps, that Chicana existentialist thought can be a catalyst and a tool for US Americans to analyze dominant ideological constructions, such as the nature of the "American dream" or "whiteness," that obscure the exercise of power and control within US American history and traditions. In this way, Carranza's work follows in the line of other Chicana thinkers who thought that the Chicana *Movimiento* could offer lessons to white US Americans about what is oppressive within US American culture and what is needed to be healed: Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales often railed against the "sterilization of the soul" offered by middle-class materialism and participated in Martin Luther King Jr.'s Poor People's Campaign in 1968 to raise awareness of the effects of poverty; Cesar Chavez campaigned against corporate power that threatened to poison the nation's food supply and corrupt political processes through short-sighted greed; Armando Rendón criticized the "gringo mentality" that promoted military dominance in the Americas and proposed Chicana culture as an inter-American bridge for Latin American diplomacy; and Elizabeth "Betita" Martinez criticized founding myths within US American history that obscure the ways nationhood depended upon slavery, genocide, and military conquest for solidification and suggest paying attention to forms of social movement organizing by Latina communities for models of political solidarity and community building.<sup>35</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In this essay, I argue for the recovery of Carranza's Chicana existentialism for three reasons. A Chicana existentialism that evolves out of Mexican philosophy represents a connective tissue between Mexican and US American thinkers, further facilitating the kind of inter-American dialogue between different philosophical traditions and perspectives that philosophers in the US and Mexico have recently initiated. Yet, while it exhibits continuity with Mexican philosophy from the twentieth century, Chicana existentialism of the 1970s intimates that Mexican American philosophy deserves to be its own field of specialization, especially considering how Chicana theorists have expanded the use of phenomenology productively as a method to investigate Mexican American life in the last forty years. Finally, the revelation of a nascent Chicana existentialism demonstrates that the aim of developing a liberatory Latina philosophy shouldn't be thought of as aspirational, but, instead, is an effort that has already been underway for some time among Mexican Americans and offers promise as a dialogue partner for the development of other emancipatory perspectives within the United States, particularly those that want to interrogate ideas of "whiteness" and the US "American dream."

## NOTES

1. See Guillermo Hurtado, *El Buho y el Serpiente: Ensayos Sobre la Filosofía en México del Siglo XX*, (Mexico City: Siglo XXI, 2007); Carlos Pareda, *La filosofía en México en el Siglo XX: Apuntes de un participante* (Mexico City: Dirección General de Publicaciones del Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 2013).
2. Carlos Alberto Sánchez and Robert Eli Sanchez Jr., *Mexican Philosophy in the 20th Century: Essential Readings*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).
3. I use "US American" to refer to residents of the United States, recognizing that "American" is often used to refer to the people and society of the United States, but also acknowledging that in Latin America the term is often used to refer to the entire continent and not just one of the nation states of North America.
4. In this essay, I adopt the gender inclusive terms "Chicana" and "Latina" to refer to Chicanos, Chicanas, as well as gender nonconforming and trans people within the Mexican American community, while retaining the use of "Chicano" in citations.
5. Michael Soldatenko, *Chicano Studies: The Genesis of a Discipline*, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2009), 68.
6. *Ibid.*, 68–69.
7. *Ibid.*, 69.
8. Carlos Alberto Sánchez, "20th Century Mexican Philosophy: Features, Themes, Tasks," *Inter-American Journal of Philosophy*, 7, no. 1 (Spring 2016): 4–5; see also Carlos Alberto Sánchez, *Contingency and Commitment: Mexican Existentialism and the Place of Philosophy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2016).
9. Sánchez, "20th Century Mexican Philosophy," 4.
10. Carlos Alberto Sánchez, "The Demands of a Mexican Philosophy of History," *Dissidences: Hispanic Journal of Theory and Criticism* 2, no. 4 (2008): 5.
11. Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude: Life and Thought in Mexico*, trans. Lysander Kemp (New York: Grove, 1961), 70.
12. See Enrique Krauze, *Redeemers: Ideas and Power in Latin America*, trans. Hank Heifetz and Natasha Wimmer (New York: Harper, 2011), 188–89.
13. Sánchez, "20th Century Mexican Philosophy," 18.
14. Elihu Carranza, *Chicanismo: Philosophical Fragments* (Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt, 1978), 10.

15. Ignacio M. Garcia, *Chicanismo: The Forging of a Militant Ethos* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997), 34–36.
16. Carlos Munoz, *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement* (London/New York: Verso, 1989), 79–84.
17. Carranza, *Chicanismo*, 37.
18. *Ibid.*, 38.
19. See Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunte Lute, 1994); Ana Castillo, *Massacre of the Dreamers: Essays on Xicanisma* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1994).
20. Carranza, *Chicanismo*, 38.
21. Eliu Carranza, *Pensamientos on Los Chicanos: A Cultural Revolution* (Berkeley: California Book, 1969), 11.
22. Carranza, *Chicanismo*, 55–56.
23. See Eduardo Obregon Pagan, *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon: Zoot Suits, Race & Riot in Wartime L.A.* (Charlotte: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Mauricio Mazon, *The Zoot Suit Riots: The Psychology of Symbolic Annihilation* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989).
24. Carranza, *Chicanismo*, 11.
25. *Ibid.*, 16.
26. *Ibid.*, 17.
27. Carranza, *Pensamientos on Los Chicanos*, 16.
28. Carranza, *Chicanismo*, 130.
29. Carranza, *Pensamientos*, 16.
30. Luis Valdez, "In Lak'ech: You are My Other Me" *VUE: Voices in Urban Education*, <http://vue.annenberginstitute.org/perspectives/lak'ech-you-are-my-other>.
31. Jorge A. Huerta, "Luis Valdez's Zoot Suit: A New Direction for Chicano Theatre?" *Latin American Theatre Review* (Summer 1980): 72.
32. Carlos Alberto Sánchez, *Contingency and Commitment: Mexican Existentialism and the Place of Philosophy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2016), 136.
33. *Ibid.*, 140.
34. Gregory Velazco y Trianosky, "Mestizaje and Hispanic Identity," in *A Companion to Latin American Philosophy* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2010), 283–96. I have suggested before that as we may be able to talk about a Chicano existentialism, it might also be possible to imagine something like Puerto Rican existentialism, for instance; these two kinds of auscultation would share some themes, but also be different from one another in other ways; see José-Antonio Orosco, "The Philosophical Gift of Brown Folks: Mexican American Philosophy in the United States," *APA Newsletter on Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy* 15, no. 2 (Spring 2016): 23–28.
35. See Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales, *Message to Aztlan: Selected Writings of Rodolfo Corky Gonzales*, ed. Antonio Esquibel, (Houston: Arte Publico Press, 2001); Cesar Chavez, "Wrath of Grapes," in *Cesar Chavez: An Organizer's Tale*, ed. Ilan Stavans (New York: Penguin, 2008), 193–97; Armando B. Rendon, *Chicano Manifesto* (Berkeley: Ollin, 1996); and Elizabeth "Betita" Martinez, *De Colores Means All of Us: Latina Views for a Multi-Colored Century* (New York: Verso, 2017).

## *The Political Relevance of Kierkegaardian Humor in Jorge Portilla's Fenomenología del relajo*

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In this paper I offer a defense of Jorge Portilla's *Phenomenology of Relajo* (1966) and his negative appraisal of "relajo," the "suspension of seriousness," over and against Carlos Sánchez's (2012) positive appraisal of the phenomenon. For Portilla, *relajo* is the repeated act of invoking a communal solidarity with the negation of "a value proposed to a group of people" by displacing attention from the value and its corresponding behavior toward nonvalue and a corresponding atmosphere of disorder.<sup>1</sup> In one of its more innocuous forms, the anniversary party that turns into a food fight is an instance of *relajo*.<sup>2</sup> Far from harmless, however, Portilla's analysis of the phenomenon reveals *relajo* as an obstacle that threatens human freedom and socio-political change towards genuine democratic community. Socratic irony is its antidote. By contrast, Sánchez finds in *relajo* an attitude of resistance and an alternative means to liberatory struggles against oppressive power structures, a claim he supports by finding Portilla's view misguided by his inheriting an oppressive, Western prejudice, pointing back to Socrates, that thinking well requires thinking seriously. I support my defense with Kierkegaard's account of Socratic humor as an alternative to Sánchez's reading of Socratic seriousness as "colonial seriousness" in Portilla.<sup>3</sup>

Two central concerns frame Portilla's phenomenological study of *relajo*. The first is uncontested: the imperialism of Western reason, capitalism, and its colonialism perpetrate systemic oppression against freedom and democratic community.<sup>4</sup> The second is the question over which attitudinal orientation to value best serves the liberatory task of transforming oppressive noncommunity into genuine community?<sup>5</sup> To this end Portilla considers four attitudinal candidates: the ironist, the humorist, the *relajiento* (the agent who engenders a *collective* suspension of serious value), and the *apretado* (the self-assuming proprietor of value). His verdict is that "'Relajientos' and 'apretados' constitute two poles of dissolution of that difficult task . . . the constitution of a Mexican community, of a genuine community, and [the overcoming of] a society divided into proprietors and the dispossessed."<sup>6</sup>

To see why Portilla arrives at this verdict, it is necessary to point out his standard for evaluation, that is, phenomenology's universal law of intentionality, which he also formulates as the Socratic commitment to the negative truth in affirming the nonpossession or ignorance of value.<sup>7</sup> This obligation to truth means affirming the "negation [that] is the same one that all human beings have inside," namely, that we cannot possess value as we do a house or propositional knowledge.<sup>8</sup> Rather, the *ultimately nonproprietary, evanescent character of value* is necessary for making sense of our lives. The negative truth of value is a "guide for self-constitution" precisely because it is always



something we consciously chase after but which we can never quite arrive at possessing (e.g., punctuality).<sup>9</sup>

With Portilla's standard clearly in mind, in the following I will lay out Portilla's negative appraisal of the *relajiento* and the *apretado*, and his positive evaluation of the ironic attitude. I will then offer Sánchez's objections to Portilla before closing with a response to them by appeal to the Kierkegaardian humorist who, I argue, addresses Sánchez's concerns and surpasses all the other attitudes considered in terms of their liberatory and community-building capacities.

Against the standard of an ultimately nonproprietary relationship to value, it is easy to see why the *apretado* (that is, the proprietor of value) fails. The *apretado* affirms a tradition's values, but does so while taking on the uncritical attitude of *possessing* those values in their very being. This proprietary attitude, Portilla tells us, marks the "snob" who "refuses to take notice of the distance between 'being' and 'value,' in any manner in which this could occur."<sup>10</sup> Because of this, the slightest criticism of the *apretado* is a severe insult; and one quickly learns simply to listen rather than to discuss value with him.<sup>11</sup> To the extent that the *apretado* prevents real dialogue and communication amongst its members, she also prevents genuine community.

The freedom of the *apretado's* relation to value that affirms itself as proprietor is a negative freedom that essentially rejects community. This is clear, Portilla argues, since here freedom means negating others in order to contradistinguish oneself as proprietor of property and value from those who have neither nor. Thus the *apretado's* mantra, "One who possesses is, one who does not is not."<sup>12</sup> If this were not enough to discourage community, Portilla finds that when the dispossessed claim this same freedom to embody worth and possesses property, the *apretado's* attitude turns from the love of freedom to the love of order and law, which corroborates the *apretado's* continued "pleasure of embodying value" over and against the dispossessed.<sup>13</sup> In short, with its systemic "monopolizing pretense" the *apretado* serves as one pole of the dissolution of the possibility of community by dividing society into proprietors and the dispossessed.<sup>14</sup>

The *relajiento*, the agent of *relajo*, serves as the other pole impeding community and can be seen as the extreme reaction to the values proposed, or *imposed* by the colonizing and alienating world of the *apretado*.<sup>15</sup> However, these two attitudes are not opposites since both, Portilla argues, "are negative freedoms [marked by the] rejection of community."<sup>16</sup> *Relajientos* reject community by *repeatedly* inviting a *collective* unwillingness to engage in the values and behaviors a community proposes "to his or her freedom" until the "dizzying thrill of complicity in negation takes over the group—the most paradoxical of all communities."<sup>17</sup> But real freedom, Portilla argues, requires the "'possession of oneself within an order', whichever order this may be" and yet the *relajiento* wants the freedom to choose nothing and so "promotes disorder so as not to have to do anything in a prolonged action with sense."<sup>18</sup> For this attitude, freedom means just saying no: to value, to order, and so also to freedom and community. Whereas the *apretado's* mantra is "One who possesses is; one who

does not is not," the *relajiento's* is "Fuck it!" but with the open invitation that we all do the same.<sup>19</sup>

Whereas *relajo* might be understood as the extreme reaction to the colonized world of the *apretado's* proprietary attitude to value, Portilla argues that irony is "the adequate response to the 'self-assuming person'."<sup>20</sup> Like the *apretado* and *relajo*, irony is a relationship between consciousness and value. But the ironist is a consciousness that judges the distance between the self-assumption of value and its possible ideal realization.<sup>21</sup> The ironist, in short, gets right the ultimately nonproprietary character of value and accordingly consists in moving from the particular grasping for value towards the ideal that continually transcends all of our particular grasps. Whereas *relajo* suspends the link between the individual and serious value, irony signifies the Socratic commitment to the negative truth of value's transcendence, Socratic ignorance, or, as Portilla expresses it, the seriousness of standing "alone with myself before the value."<sup>22</sup>

In addition, that irony's response to the self-assuming person is a *transformative communication* demonstrates irony's positive, community-building freedom.<sup>23</sup> For example, Portilla argues that when Socrates says to Euthyphro, "You know what piety is," his irony animates the proposition such that both it and Euthyphro change before us.<sup>24</sup> In contrast to the negative freedom of the *apretado* and *relajiento*, the transformative power that marks irony's freedom involves its revealing the limitations of both propositions and people to *possess* value. It reveals this and the transcendence of value precisely by its communicating the opposite and pointing beyond what is given both propositionally and in Euthyphro's vain self-assumption. Irony, Portilla argues, is affirmative "liberation for us" insofar as it removes the obstacle of vanity from the path of truth, transforms the world, and creates an opening, a foundation, for community and the communication of truth seekers for a constructive task.<sup>25</sup>

Before turning to consider Portilla's Kierkegaardian account of humor, here I want to develop further the above by briefly considering Sánchez's objections to it. Rather than serving as one pole of the dissolution of community, Sánchez's thesis is that *relajo* signifies the dissident attitude of the marginalized, which has the potential as "a catalyst to political and social action."<sup>26</sup> He supports this by attacking two key presuppositions in Portilla's analysis: first, the seriousness of Socratic irony as the standard attitude for realizing the goals of value, order, freedom, and community building; and second, the infertility of *relajo's* dissident attitude regarding these same ends.<sup>27</sup>

Appealing to the alternatives of Nietzschean play and the romantic appraisal of the fecundity of chaos, Sánchez rips the mask from the first presupposition to reveal Portilla's "strange," prejudicial "blindness to *other* ways of world making besides the ironic seriousness of Socrates."<sup>28</sup> Against Portilla's second presupposition about *relajo's* infertility, Sánchez argues that *relajo* is analogous to "death" as it figures in the tradition of Heidegger and phenomenology. *Relajo*, like death, must be a condition and deep source of meaning, since in the absence of

each there can be no futurity for human beings and so no transcendence of value, and thus no value.<sup>29</sup>

*Relajo*, Sánchez further argues, appears impotent only when held against the “rationality of power and capitalism” to which Portilla wittingly or unwittingly subscribes since he rejects *relajo* on the grounds that it, like death, is incapable of serving as a valuable means to other, more profitable ends.<sup>30</sup> Absent this arbitrary standard, Sánchez concludes that “we cannot call [*relajo*] a negation of meaningful human being,” since the *relajo* individual is not necessarily impotent and infertile, as Portilla thinks, but rather a will capable of something like “the great refusal” by creating a collective suspension and disorder of colonizing seriousness imposed from without, and in this *relajo* shows its potential for world building.<sup>31</sup>

In response to Sanchez’s objections, I want to end here by offering a defense of Portilla’s account of *relajo* by appealing to Kierkegaard’s account of humor as an attitude surpassing the liberatory and community-building capacities of those attitudes hitherto considered. That Portilla himself considers Kierkegaardian humor as an attitude superior to irony suggests that he avoids Sánchez’s first charge and is not entirely blind “to *other* ways of world making besides the ironic seriousness of Socrates.”<sup>32</sup> And against the charge that Portilla justifies this exclusion by adopting the arbitrary standard of instrumental thinking, we can note that the attitude of humor is instrumentally useless.

According to Portilla’s Kierkegaardian account, rather than ironically pointing to value, instrumental or otherwise, humor is an attitude that continually traverses the distance between human suffering and freedom.<sup>33</sup> The joke Portilla tells about the man who saved a person drowning simply because he wanted to *know* who threw the person in, or the one about the man who while looking for *menudo* gets stabbed and remarks, with his guts spilling out, that he could only get his own, illustrates humor.<sup>34</sup> The practical issue of whether one is saved or dies is not the issue here; rather, each joke illustrates that humor’s focus is the adversity and wretchedness of human existence and, ultimately, the freedom and responsibility to transcend it.

Given the magnitude of adversity in the struggle against the monopolizing pretense and systemic oppression of Western imperialism, reason, capitalism, and its colonialism, the humorist attitude seems nothing short of necessary for this liberatory struggle, since it essentially signifies that “humans continue to be responsible for their lives and the things they do . . . in spite of the fact that life drags along with it a formidable volume of difficulties and adversity.”<sup>35</sup> Still, of the two sorts of freedom which Portilla considers, instead of the *direct external sort* associated with instrumental reasoning, humor points to a “Stoic” *internal sort* for which what matters most is that there remains an interior freedom of the human being that cannot be canceled by external sufferings.<sup>36</sup> Humor, then, is an attitude poorly suited for instrumental reasoning and arbitrarily excluding others, namely, the dispossessed *relajiento*, due to instrumental infertility.<sup>37</sup>

To the contrary, citing Kierkegaard, Portilla claims that because “humor is a hidden suffering it is also an instance of sympathy” rather than exclusion.<sup>38</sup> Humor essentially sympathizes since, in contrast to the ironist who works “from above,” from ideal value, the humorist operates “from below,” “perpetually oriented in the direction of . . . human wretchedness.”<sup>39</sup> Because of this, Portilla not only argues that the pleasantness of the humorist’s company surpasses the ironist’s, but also and not incidentally that so too does the humorist’s capacity for community building.<sup>40</sup> Humor sympathizes with all who suffer, that is, all who exist. Accordingly, humor is not directed to others as a source of laughter, as is, by contrast, irony’s movement between other’s self-assumption to value and the ideal. Humor depends on the freedom to laugh at all of existence and not least at oneself, and thus to endure and inhabit lands that irony cannot without the apparent need to silence its inhabitants.

Still, while humor surpasses irony in serving the liberatory task of transforming oppressive noncommunity into genuine community, Portilla nevertheless seems to champion Socratic irony over humor. Part of the reason for this perhaps is that humor for Kierkegaard points to the religious and away from the order and value that the *relajiento* likewise threatens. As Portilla puts it, again echoing Climacus, humor shows that [irony’s project] ends up abolished by the finiteness and adversity of existence.<sup>41</sup> Humor’s movement from the suffering of human existence to freedom requires revoking in jest existence as a whole and so appears to move in the direction of *relajo*; since each suspends, or has the potential to suspend, the universal truth of the ethical order.<sup>42</sup> It is perhaps this transgressive commonality between humor and *relajo* that forces Portilla’s hand to champion irony as the ideal liberatory attitude toward value.<sup>43</sup>

However, by following Kierkegaard closer than Portilla is perhaps willing, one finds little warrant in siding with irony over humor because of humor’s transgressive character. Humor’s transgressive, negative freedom, which it shares with the *relajiento*, is that of the comic, but the comic in humor is born from the humorist’s awareness of the contradiction between the finitude of existence and her infinite passion for the idea. Humorists such as Socrates, according to Climacus, place the comic between themselves and others as an “incognito” in order to protect the sanctity of their infinite pathos for the ideal from becoming an occasion for their own or others’ comic misunderstanding.<sup>44</sup> This affirmative freedom and responsibility is absent in the *relajiento*.

And, as we have seen, while it is true that humor means knowing how to laugh at all of existence including oneself, humor is not simply the comic. It also means suffering life’s adversity and thus sympathizing with the living. Not surprisingly, then, Climacus defines humor as the “equilibrium between the comic and the tragic” and lauds Socrates as a humorist who unifies the two, an ethicist bordering on the religious.<sup>45</sup> In short, humor is not simply the comic transgression of established value and order. As equal parts tragic and comic, humor marks the double-movement of freedom that Portilla himself

seems to endorse, namely, that of (tragically) possessing “oneself within an order,” whichever order this may be” and simultaneously (comically) having “that ideal distance from myself,” which allows the possibility of my acting in “a direction opposite to that” order.<sup>46</sup>

By reading Portilla’s *Phenomenology of Relajo* through Kierkegaard, I argue, we get a Socrates who is not simply reducible to the seriousness with which Sánchez indicts Portilla (and Kierkegaard by association) with colonialism. Rather, Socrates as humorist expresses an orientation of interdependency between committed earnestness and subversive jest towards the values conferred by the social-historical practices in which we find ourselves.<sup>47</sup> As such, I hope to have shown that the Socratic standard retains the subversive political virtue Sánchez finds in *relajo* without giving way to the disorder and indifference to value that makes *relajo* “infertile” for community building by Portilla’s lights. But, please note, this standard is that of Socratic humor, which while requiring and is capable of irony, also surpasses it as a liberatory attitude to value and genuine community building against a society divided into proprietors and the dispossessed.<sup>48</sup>

NOTES

1. Jorge Portilla, *Fenomenologia del relajo*, trans. Eleanor March and Carlos Alberto Sánchez, in Sánchez’s *Suspension of Seriousness: On the Phenomenology of Jorge Portilla* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2012), 135.
2. Portilla, 156.
3. Sánchez, 121.
4. Portilla, 127, 199; cf. Sánchez, 119.
5. Portilla, 169; cf. 125–26.
6. *Ibid.*, 199.
7. *Ibid.*, 176.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*, 177, 151.
10. *Ibid.*, 191.
11. *Ibid.*, 197.
12. *Ibid.*, 192; cf. 194–97.
13. *Ibid.*, 196.
14. *Ibid.*, 197.
15. Sánchez, 104–05. See also Sánchez’s argument that Portilla as a critic of modernity ought to concede that if modernity caused the *relajiento*, then it is modernity and not the *relajiento per se* that we ought to blame (*ibid.*, 116). An alternative causal explanation is that *relajiento* and *apretado* are each reactions of despair before the evanescence of value in the task of becoming a self.
16. Portilla, 198.
17. *Ibid.*, 128, 133–35; cf. Sánchez, 103.
18. Portilla, 188.
19. *Ibid.*, 192; cf. 194–97. I thank Carlos for this translation suggestion of the *relajo* attitude at the 17th Annual Meeting of the Phenomenology Roundtable at San Jose State University last summer, 2017.
20. *Ibid.*, 131.
21. *Ibid.*, 171.
22. *Ibid.*, 129.
23. *Ibid.*, 177.
24. *Ibid.*, 171.
25. *Ibid.*, 176.
26. Sánchez, 105.
27. *Ibid.*, 104.
28. *Ibid.*, 107, 110.
29. *Ibid.*, 109.
30. *Ibid.*, 109–10.
31. *Ibid.*, 114; 110–11, 116, 119–20.
32. *Ibid.*, 107, cf., 181, 184.
33. Portilla, 176–77; cf. Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Howard Hong and Edna Hong (Princeton, NY: Princeton University Press, 1992), 520–22 (hereafter, *CUP*).
34. *Ibid.*, 179–80. “‘Menudo’: a typical Mexican soup made with beef stomach and tripe” (Sánchez, 213, endnote 25).
35. *Ibid.*, 185.
36. *Ibid.*, 179; cf. 162–63. To be clear, Portilla argues that in internal freedom “nothing changes in the world with my change of attitude but I myself. But to the degree that I am part of the world . . . my change can be the beginning of the change in the world” (169).
37. In *Contingency and Commitment*, Sánchez continues to argue that Portilla’s solution to *relajo* and nihilistic attitudes is seriousness; and that this prescription for seriousness signifies modernity’s and Portilla’s faith in “the power of reason (‘logos’) to overcome nihilism and chaos . . . a defense of modernity and all that it represents, especially rational control over excessive, unchecked freedom in all of its forms.” See Carlos Alberto Sánchez, *Contingency and Commitment: Mexican Existentialism and the Place of Philosophy* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2016), 50–51; cf., 104.
38. Portilla, 184; Kierkegaard, *CUP*, 447–51.
39. *Ibid.*, 179.
40. *Ibid.*, 178–81.
41. *Ibid.*, 177. *CUP*, 501–02; 294–95.
42. Cf. Kierkegaard’s *Fear and Trembling*.
43. This seems the case even while Portilla himself sees that “irony and humor are negations [respectively, negations of the self-assumption of value and the adversity of existence] that affirm [respectively, affirmations of the transcendence of value and the possibility of freedom to overcome adversity], negations that negate themselves in an ulterior affirmation” (Portilla, 189).
44. *CUP*, 506–08. The comic misunderstanding of pathos results from taking on an attitude to value on the authority of another’s passion rather than what Portilla expresses as the seriousness of standing “alone with myself before the value” (Portilla, 129). Climacus poignantly remarks that failing in this is like laughing at a joke because others laugh, and in which case one can omit the joke (*CUP*, 325). The danger also goes the other way, that is, the admiration of others for one’s passion can also mislead one from the proper relationship to meaning, purpose, and value. Climacus illustrates the use of the comic as an incognito when he writes for Socrates as his mouthpiece, “It would sound like jesting if a person in receiving an invitation replied: I will come, definitely, believe me, except in case a roof tile falls down and kills me, because then I cannot come. And yet this may also be the highest earnestness, and the speaker, while jesting with someone, may be in the presence of the god” (*Ibid.*, 88).
45. *Ibid.*, 292, 503; cf., 87–92, 202–08. Published a year before *Postscript*, in 1845 Kierkegaard also expressed this view of Socrates in *Stages on Life’s Way*: “If, in accord with one of Plato’s views, one quite ingeniously takes Socrates to be the unity of the comic and the tragic, this is entirely right; but the question remains: in what does this unity consist?” Søren Kierkegaard, *Stages on Life’s Way*, trans. Howard Hong and Edna Hong (Princeton, NY: Princeton University Press, 1988), 365–66.
46. Portilla, 188, 127. Portilla’s language of “possessing oneself within an order” is also used by Judge William in *Either/Or Part*

Two and is likewise expressed in terms of "suffering" in the esthete's essay on the tragic in *Either/Or Part One*. See Shoni Ranher, "Suffering Tragedy: Hegel, Kierkegaard and Butler on the Tragedy of *Antigone*" in *Mosaic* vol. 40 (2008): 63–79; "Kierkegaard and the Tearful, Laughable Goal of Human Nature and Narrative Unity" in *Acta Kierkegaardiana VI: Kierkegaard and Human Nature* vol. 6 (2013): 29–41; "*Antigone*: The Tragic Art of *Either/Or*" in *Kierkegaard's Literary Figures and Motifs in Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources* 16 (2014): 49–65.

47. CUP, 80–93.

48. Of course, according to Kierkegaard, humor as well will fail in this struggle and points to the religious as the liberatory attitude *par excellence*. This is fascinating not least for Portilla's own religious conversion; although his formula that Reason is God, at least by Sanchez's lights, does not fit right with Kierkegaard's formula that the Christian God is essentially an offense to reason (see Sánchez, *Contingency and Commitment*; Kierkegaard, *Practice in Christianity*).

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## CONFERENCE REPORT

### *Report on the Third Latinx Philosophy Conference at Rutgers University*

Danielle Guzman, Lauren Viramontes, and Omar Moreno

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS, EL PASO

The Third Latinx Philosophy Conference took place at Rutgers University, April 19–20, 2018. The conference aimed to create a space to facilitate discussion among Latinx philosophers and about Latinx philosophy from a wide range of philosophical backgrounds and traditions. Participants of the conference were engaged in conversation from a wide range of research within philosophy, as well as discourse focused on contemporary issues that continue to impact the Latinx community at large. The conference was organized by Stephanie Rivera Berruz (William Paterson University), Alexander Guerrero (Rutgers University), and Edgar Valdez (Seton Hall University). We attended the 2018 conference, and in what follows we offer our summary of the different presentations.

Erick Ramirez (Santa Clara) opened the conference with a discussion about ecological and ethical issues in virtual reality research. His paper aimed to raise awareness about the ethics behind such research given its recent growth. Ramirez argued that the environments created within the virtual world have the capacity of evoking responses out of its participants in nearly as effective ways as do real-world experiences. In light of that, he defends the claim that we should more carefully consider the ethical implications of virtual reality research specifically when individuals are repeatedly exposed to environments that alter their emotional states. Such exposure leaves one apt to changes within their character and dispositions. Comments were given by Javiera Perez-Gomez (University of Maryland).

Eduardo Duarte (Hofstra) followed with a paper entitled "The Question of Latin American Philosophy" in which he urges readers to understand philosophy as comprised of both the logical and the poetic. Duarte contrasts "originality"

in thought with "originary" thought, wherein originality refers inward, but originary thought is grounded in situated experience. He addressed the importance of engaging with and exploring the philosophical richness of texts and sources of knowledge that have historically been denied philosophical import. He stressed the concept of "feeling-thinking," which allows for the emergence of the subjective and culturally primordial experience of individuals to shine forth as well as challenges the basic framework one usually takes up when "doing philosophy." Comments were given by Stephanie Rivera Berruz.

As the first of three presenters on the panel "Why 'Structural Racism' Matters: Social Philosophy and Epistemology," César Cabezas (Columbia) discussed the paper "What Is Structural Racism?" Cabezas proposed that structural racism can be evinced by a systematic privileging of some groups over others within a given society. This idea runs in opposition to the notion that racism consists primarily of specific interpersonal interactions and that changing individual attitudes is what matters most when addressing racism. Cabezas argued that when race becomes a significant categorization tool for organizing human life, this results in the development of hierarchical relations among racialized groups and the racial domination of peoples.

Annette Martin (NYU) discussed her paper, "Race as a Cause of White Ignorance." Martin argues that three core causes—settlement, individualism, and no oppression—are grounded in epistemic states that create or promote racial domination and social hierarchies. Concerning settlement, Martin claims that preconceptions regarding land and people as "unconquered" and "savage" leads to instances of settlement and the ensuing racial and social structures. Individualism is a "colorblind" ideology which holds that a person's position in society, as well as their success and failures, are a personal responsibility, and so, under this ideology racial discrimination is nonsense. The final cause described "selective education" as an attempt to hide the "unsavory episodes" of American history leading to the idea of "no oppression," which describes a position of ignorance regarding the historical foundations of racism.

Eric Bayruns Garcia (CUNY) ended the panel discussion by defending the claim that power relations are just as capable of affecting the epistemic states of believers as others that concern traditional epistemologists. On this view, power relations are potentially even more pervasive of individuals' and groups' perceptual and environmental conditions in comparison to others such as barn facades because of their persistence over time. Garcia argues that power relations' embeddedness into history textbooks and intergenerational testimony can also affect one's internal states more heavily, which can cause believers to have implicit attitudes. Moreover, he shines a light on the notion that dominant groups will usually affirm false beliefs that bear the right relation to their interests as a dominant group, leaving minority groups vulnerable. The panel closed with comments and a Q&A session led by Carolina Flores (Rutgers).

Linda Alcoff (CUNY), one of three keynote speakers at the conference, concluded the first day with a presentation entitled “Cultural Racism and Revolutionary Nationalism.” According to Alcoff, racism is not solely directed towards groups and individuals; racism is also directed towards cultures. Recognizing and addressing cultural racism is key to decolonization and to appreciating the racism that Latinx individuals, in particular, face. On Alcoff’s view, the shift from biological racism to cultural racism is merely an attempt to lend legitimacy to continued racialized domination and oppression, and it is through revolutionary nationalism that cultural racism must be identified and addressed.

The following day, keynote speaker Natalie Cisneros (Seattle University) drew upon queer theory for her presentation, “Unapologetic and Unafraid: On Fear, Risk, and Resistance in Migration Politics,” during which she asked whether or not “coming out” as undocumented could be an act of resistance. Beginning with a discussion of the discourse surrounding undocumented individuals, Cisneros elucidated how the ideas of “risk and danger” have become conceptually tied to the bodies of the undocumented. Ultimately, Cisneros concluded that although coming out may be an effective act of resistance for some, it does involve a significant risk for the speaker, and as such, it is a viable means of resistance primarily for those who have sufficient means to shield themselves from the backlash.

Following a break for lunch, Noël Saenz (University of Illinois–Urbana-Champaign) presented his paper “The Disciplining of Grounding,” expressing the need for a more disciplined approach to grounding. It discussed the principle of oneness, which claims that if  $z$  grounds  $x$  and  $z$  grounds  $y$ , then  $x$  is  $y$ . Although the talk explains grounding by differentiating between four kinds of claims—composites, normativity, biological, gender—the principle of oneness is focused primarily on entity grounding, as opposed to factual grounding. Saenz contrasted his work with related work by Louis deRosset and Eric T. Olson. “The Disciplining of Grounding” argues against the possibility of “Priority Monism,” which resonates with the monism found in Baruch Spinoza’s *Ethics*. Comments were given by Andrei Buckareff (Marist College).

Anthony Fernandez’s (Kent State) “A Truly Genetic Phenomenology: On the Possibility of Transcendental Contingency” challenges the phenomenological process provided by Husserl. The paper focuses on the “transcendental structure of selfhood” in terms of the self, self-ownership, the thoughts and feelings that belong to me, as well as the cognitive and bodily agency. The major concern was that phenomenology did not account for the subjectivity of specific empirical manifestations, such as childhood, and mental health. Criticism is aimed at the “cognitive and bodily agency” or the ability to distinguish between thoughts, feelings, and actions that originate in me as opposed to an external source. The proposed solution for the concern raised by Fernandez is the moving away from the transcendental to an ontological account of the human experience, which may include the naturalistic approach of psychology. Comments were presented by Alexander Guerrero (Rutgers).

The conference came to a close with keynote speaker J. L. A. Garcia’s (Boston College) presentation, “Social Construction: Breaking It Down.” He challenges the idea that race can be socially constructed. He is currently working out the distinction between accounts that address the social impact of race and arguments for the notion that race is a social *construction*. Garcia argues that while social causations can have a negative impact on the world, causations should be understood as distinct from social constructions.

During lunch, on the second day of the conference, the three of us, undergraduate students Danielle Guzman, Omar Moreno, and Lauren Viramontes (all from University of Texas at El Paso), had the opportunity to present posters detailing our individual research projects. (This opportunity was supported in part by an American Philosophical Association Small Grant award for the project “Beyond Borders: Bringing Latinx Undergraduates into Philosophy.”) Lauren and Danielle presented on topics pertaining to metaethics, and Omar presented on nineteenth-century German idealism. The undergraduate presenters provided the following remarks about their experiences of the conference:

The Latinx Conference enriched my undergraduate studies in several ways. The presentations allowed me to see how philosophical ideas are received and encouraged by the responses and questions of others, to the next stage of their development. The opportunity to present a poster was a unique experience that helped me think about the different ways to organize and present research and philosophical ideas. The conference was also an excellent opportunity to further develop my intrapersonal communication skills. Hence, the most rewarding part of participating in the poster presentations was interacting with the philosophers who graciously provided me with their perspectives on my efforts and engaged with my poster by asking questions about its content.

– Omar Moreno

The Latinx Philosophy Conference was an incredible experience. The atmosphere was very welcoming and it was wonderful to learn about emerging work on a diverse range of topics. Using a poster to present my research at the conference was a great way to organize and communicate my thoughts clearly. The feedback I received from philosophers has helped shape and better my project. Overall, the setting was very comfortable and provided a space to strengthen and enrich the existing community of diverse Latinx philosophers.

– Danielle Guzman

The Latinx Philosophy Conference provided me with the opportunity to attend presentations from philosophers working in a broad range of subfields, and at diverse points in their academic lives. I am left feeling grateful for the candid conversation

that developed during my poster presentation. Receiving valuable feedback, interspersed with lighthearted discussion, allowed for an experience that was both instructive and enjoyable. Engaging in a conversation about my research, instead of merely reading through my paper, forced me to articulate my ideas in ways that I might not have previously. It was certainly fulfilling to sit down with philosophers who I respect greatly, and really just “talk philosophy.»

– Lauren Viramontes

The plan for the 2019 Latinx Philosophy Conference is not yet set in detail, but if you have ideas or suggestions for the Latinx Philosophy Conference, either for this upcoming year or in future years, please send them to [latinphilosophyconference@gmail.com](mailto:latinphilosophyconference@gmail.com).

## SYLLABUS

### *UCSD PHIL 155: Mexican Philosophy*

Spring 2018

T/Th 9:30–10:50 a.m., Solis 110

Prof. Manuel Vargas

#### OVERVIEW

Welcome! This is a course on Mexican philosophy, largely focused on notable figures, movements, and debates within the history of Mexican philosophy. Topics include the nature of atrocities and war; the ethics of bringing about moral revolutions; the social construction of agency; the relationship of race and culture; various approaches to identity; problems for the very idea of something being Mexican; and various other topics.

#### READINGS

- Required text: Sánchez and Sanchez, eds. *Mexican Philosophy in the 20th Century. Essential Readings* from this volume are marked as (S&S).
- Other readings available as pdf files on TritonEd. These are marked as (pdf).

#### EVALUATION

2 papers (2200 words each) (25% each = 50% total)

1 final exam (take-home; roughly equivalent to another paper) (25%)

Reading quizzes (pop; indeterminate number) (15%)

Participation (10%)

#### PROVISIONAL SCHEDULE

Subject to change, but if so, there will be advance warning. Read the articles prior to the date of the class meeting.

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| 4/3        | Intro. What is philosophy? What does one mean by Mexican Philosophy?              |
|            | Rec. background reading: Hurtado, G (2016) "Philosophy in Mexico" (pdf)           |
| 4/5        | Sepúlveda, J (1544) <i>Democrates Alter</i> (selections) (pdf)                    |
|            | Las Casas (1550) <i>In Defense of the Indians</i> (selections) (pdf)              |
| 4/10       | Andújar, E (1997) "Las Casas and Sepúlveda" (pdf)                                 |
|            | Villoro, L (1989) "Sahagún or the Limits of the Discovery of the Other" (pdf)     |
| 4/12       | Poem, Letter from Sor Filotea; Reply to Sor Filotea (start)                       |
| 4/17       | Sor Juana readings (continue)   |
| 4/19       | Sierra, J (1910) "Discourse at the Inauguration of the National University" (S&S) |
| 4/23 (MON) | Paper 1 Due, 5pm  |
| 4/24–6     | Vasconcelos (1925) <i>Prologue to La Raza Cósmica</i> (pdf)                       |
|            | Forbes, J (1973) <i>The Mestizo Concept</i> (pdf)                                 |
| 5/1–3      | Ortega y Gasset (1914) <i>Meditations on the Quixote</i> (selections) (pdf)       |
| 5/8–10     | Sánchez & Sanchez "Introduction", pp. xxi-xxxvii (S&S)                            |
|            | Ramos, S (1941) "Twenty Years of Education in Mexico" (S&S)                       |
|            | Ramos, S (1943) "The History of Philosophy in Mexico" (S&S)                       |
| 5/15       | Gaos & Larroyo (1940) "Two Ideas of Philosophy" (S&S)                             |
| 5/17       | Gaos, J (1942) "My Two Cents: "American" Philosophy" (S&S)                        |
| 5/21 (MON) | Paper 2 Due, 5pm  |
| 5/22       | Uranga, E (1951) "Essay on an Ontology of the Mexican" (S&S)                      |
| 5/24       | Revueltas, J (1958) "Possibilities and Limitations of the Mexican" (S&S)          |

- 5/29 Catellanos, R (1950) "On Feminine Culture" (S&S)  
Hierro, G (1994) "Gender and Power" (pdf)
- 5/31 UCSD Mexican Philosophy Conference panel
- 6/5 Villegas, A (1960) "The Problem of Truth" (S&S)
- 6/7 Oliver, A (2014) "Seeking Latina Origins" (pdf)
- 6/12 Final

**Shoni Rancher** earned his PhD from Binghamton SUNY's SPEL program in 2014 and is currently an independent scholar living in Athens, GA. His publications include "Antigone: The Tragic Art of *Either/Or*" in *Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources*, vol. 16 (2014), and "Kierkegaard and the Tearful, Laughable Goal of Human Nature and Narrative Unity" in *Acta Kierkegaardiana VI*, vol. 6 (2013).

**Grant J. Silva** is assistant professor of philosophy at Marquette University and co-coordinator of the Race and Ethnic Studies Program.

**Manuel Vargas** is a professor of philosophy at the University of California, San Diego. Among other things, he is the author of *Building Better Beings: A Theory of Moral Responsibility* (OUP 2013).

**Lauren Viramontes** will graduate in the spring of 2019 from the University of Texas at El Paso with a bachelor's degree in philosophy and a minor in linguistics. Over the past two years, Lauren has worked with the Philosophy for Children in the Borderlands program, and it is through her involvement in this program that she discovered her passion for philosophy and for teaching.

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## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

**Danielle Guzman** is a senior at the University of Texas at El Paso. She has strong interests in metaethics, moral psychology, and social philosophy.

**Omar Moreno** is an El Paso, Texas, native and five-year veteran of the US Army Military Police Corps. He is currently completing his undergraduate coursework in philosophy at the University of Texas at El Paso.

**José-Antonio Orosco** is professor of philosophy at Oregon State University. His primary area of interest is in social and political philosophy, particularly democratic theory and global justice. He teaches classes in American philosophy and Latino/a and Latin American thought, with an emphasis on Mexican culture, history, and immigration to the United States. He is director of the Peace Studies program at OSU.



APA NEWSLETTER ON

# LGBTQ Issues in Philosophy

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GRAYSON HUNT, EDITOR

VOLUME 18 | NUMBER 1 | FALL 2018

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## FROM THE EDITOR

Grayson Hunt

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

I am honored to be the new editor of the *APA Newsletter on LGBTQ Issues in Philosophy*. This position reflects my shifting professional focus as the Program Coordinator and Lecturer for the newly launched LGBTQ Studies Program at the University of Texas at Austin. It is a great pleasure to be organizing, teaching, and researching in this field as a philosopher. This fall issue includes a book review by Ami Harbin of Alexis Shotwell's *Against Purity: Living Ethically in Compromised Times* as well as a cluster of essays on trans experience.

Harbin offers a timely review of Alexis Shotwell's latest book, *Against Purity: Living Ethically in Compromised Times*. The review is organized around the concepts and practices that shape Shotwell's approach to ethics: constitutive impurity, interdependence, and world-making. One of the central queries that drives Shotwell's fifth chapter, "Practicing Freedom," is posed in two parts: "Is feeling like you can do whatever you want with your gender voluntarist? Or does this feeling itself shift the norms that constitute gender?" These questions get at the heart of the many debates within feminism and philosophy. For Shotwell, as for Foucault, "the conditions for freedom are thus set by the norms available or created in the context of struggling with the situation in which we live but which we have not chosen and cannot completely control." What I appreciate most about this book, and Harbin's thoughtful review, is how both contextualize the conditions out of which the transgender feminisms of Pitts, Zurn, and Kimoto are written. Transgender studies is, after all, the practice of freedom in compromised times. Rooted firmly within Black feminism, phenomenology, and existentialism, transgender philosophy exemplifies the task of world-making under oppressive conditions.

Against the backdrop of biopolitical containment techniques—such as institutionalized curiosity, bioethical standards, binary gender logic, and state-sanctioned "protections" in the form of sanctuary cities and gender-based asylum—all of which target trans people in particular, the essays explore resistant strategies of trans world-making. Whether that be the power of trans-specific curiosity, erotic embodiment, disjunctive gender becomings, or trans abolition, such strategies craft new affective landscapes and psycho-social economies.

Andrea Pitts, in "Embodied Thresholds of Sanctuary: Abolitionism and Trans Worldmaking," argues that sites of state-sponsored protection, such as sanctuary cities and gender-based asylum, entrench (rather than suspend) violence against trans and gender-nonconforming peoples. They do so by reifying state investments in upholding civic order by surveilling, constraining, and imprisoning people of color and other communities rendered "deviant" or "threatening" to national stability. Pitts offers a rich intersectional history of (im)migration and its attendant laws and its racialized, gendered, and ableist investments, and illustrates the carceral power of immigration with examples of how sanctuary and asylum actually reinforce the carceral logic that is at once anti-trans and anti-Black. Pitts concludes by exploring alternative tactics developed in trans-abolitionist praxis and discourse.

The trans subject is also centered in Perry Zurn's essay, "Puzzle Pieces: Shapes of Trans Curiosity." Zurn begins by granting that biopolitical structures and disciplinary practices institutionalize certain objectifying ways of seeing, investigating, and accounting for trans people, casting them as socio-epistemological problems. Trans people are not simply the objects of curiosity, however; they are also practitioners in their own right. Zurn argues that curiosity is a strategy of resistant world-making through which trans people foster the rich individual and social life denied them under current structures of governmentality.

Finally, Tamsin Kimoto's essay, "Merleau-Ponty, Fanon, and Phenomenological Forays in Trans Life," draws on the tools of phenomenology to describe two key experiences in the lives of many trans people: hormonal transition and transphobia. In attending to these experiences, Kimoto aims to reorient our understanding of what it means to be an embodied subject by critically engaging the genital-sexual schema. Kimoto argues that trans embodiment is best understood not within a bioethical or political framework of repair, but rather through a liberatory framework that centers the deep and diffuse meanings of gender transition. Developing a phenomenological reading of hormonal transition, specifically through the lived experiences of trans feminine people of color, Kimoto contests and reframes medical transition as a central site of trans world-making praxes and transformative politics.

Overall, this cluster of essays contributes to the project of, on the one hand, specifying the unique pressures and constraints on trans existence today, and, on the other, recording, appreciating, and theorizing the salient resistance strategies generated within this community. In doing so, the authors crystallize a variety of insights into

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the nature of power, knowledge, and identity relevant to trans studies and philosophy.

## BOOK REVIEW

### *Review of Shotwell's Against Purity: "Interacting in Compromised Times"*

Alexis Shotwell (University of Minnesota Press, 2016). ISBN 978-0816698646.

Ami Harbin

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY (MICHIGAN)

Alexis Shotwell's *Against Purity: Living Ethically in Compromised Times* offers a timely and discerning account of the complexities of action in our fraught moral landscape. As I read it, the book's main aim is to challenge a number of pervasive assumptions that are getting in the way of effective ethical action in current contexts of harm, oppression, and suffering. The book will be of interest to, among others, readers attentive to the particular injustices against queers and those beyond the gender binary—it devotes chapters to understanding the work of the ACT UP Oral History Project in reshaping how AIDS was understood, as well as to gender formation and transformation. It will also be of interest to those aware of broader queer histories and practices of reframing moral action, as it builds on and carries forward an archive of queer and feminist theorists who envision moral actions more expansively than do many standard philosophical accounts of the efforts of atomistic, autonomous individuals.

One of the assumptions the book challenges is that the standard contexts for ethical action are ones that are fairly straightforward and dualistic. There is a right way to act and a wrong way. If you are smart enough, you can identify both, and if you are good enough, you will be in the camp of the right ones. On Shotwell's view, to be motivated by the idea that we could get ourselves into such a camp is to be motivated by a myth, and if this goal is our source of motivation, we will not be able to sustain meaningful, long-lasting action.

My reflections will focus on questions about the quality of experiences of acting impurely. I am interested to think about what it is like to come to terms with the inevitability of impure action, and what it can feel like to be within relationships with others who are also unable to get on the "right side," but who are, in many cases, still drawn to the idea that getting to the right side is the goal.

#### WHAT IT IS LIKE TO ACT IN COMPROMISED TIMES

We seem to be commonly raised (by ethical traditions and by social movements) to think that it is possible to locate the right course of action and secure ourselves within it. As Shotwell writes,

Every major ethical system assesses individual moral formation and activity in the context of

certain collective considerations. And yet each predominant system takes as its unit of analysis the thinking, willing, and acting individual person. Ethics, as it has historically developed, aims to help individuals in their personal ethical decision-making, and we continue to assess moral rights and wrongs at the scale of the individual human. (109)

Given this, and given how formative such approaches may be for many, it does seem that it is likely to be uncomfortable and disconcerting to become more realistic about impure circumstances. Shotwell notes this regularly—it is not likely to feel natural. Such a shift may be deeply disorienting. Within a context of impurity, agents will not get the feeling of satisfaction, of "doneness," that they may be inclined to think signals movement in the right direction.

#### WHAT IT IS LIKE TO INTERACT IN COMPROMISED TIMES

The book shows that agents live "in a world of unimaginable complexity and difficulty" where they are likely to become "overwhelmed by any attempt to understand the knottiness and tangle of entanglement" in ways which lead to "a purity politics of despair" (195). We are living "in the ruins" (166). Given this, what will be the *interpersonal* dynamics of impure action?

I want to suggest that the realities Shotwell has described mean that there are more complexities of interpersonal ethical relating than agents may have realized. What would it be like to, as she puts it, "perceive complexity and complicity as the constitutive situation of our lives" (Shotwell 2016, 8) while in the midst of relationships with other impure agents? What kind of interaction is called for?

There are suggestions about the kind of interpersonal relating that is needed throughout the book. I want to draw out and group together two of those claims now: (1) opening freedom to others; and (2) prefigurative interaction.

#### 1. OPENING FREEDOM TO OTHERS

Shotwell introduces a sense of "distributed ethics" and claims that we need to "open freedom to others"—that doing so is an "ethically ambiguous but necessary task" (128). She draws on an understanding of distributed cognition and Edwin Hutchins's example of the large navy ship to make the point. Just as the ship will only be navigated if many people and instruments work together to navigate it (no one person alone knows where the boat is), so too is ethical action dependent on multiple agents and conditions—no one agent can act ethically alone. As Shotwell writes, "The moral imperative, taking a distributed morality approach, is to understand that we are placed in a particular context with particular limited capacities that are embedded in a big social operation with multiple players" (130).

Building on this account of distributed ethics, Shotwell turns to Beauvoir to clarify the task of "opening freedom to others." As Shotwell writes,

When I will, as in the case of responding to a war or occupation, I place myself politically . . . [but] the meaning of our willing is determined only in relation to others. . . . Ethics enters through the necessity to hold in view other people's projects in enacting our own. This holding in view will never be completely attained. (131)

She adds further, "We should act in the present in a way that cares for the harms involved in being alive and that tries to open different futures for all of the beings and relations we are with" (135). Given that ethical action is not something that any one agent can do, and given that the meaning of one's actions is determined by the ways they are happening in the context of, and conditional on, the actions of others, agents must act to open up possibilities for others to act (and with the hope that they will open possibilities for us). This is one of the features of interacting in compromised circumstances. I read this as describing something like a capacity to hold space for others such that even when we inevitably and repeatedly fail, we are not fundamentally failures. This partly seems to have to do with a forgiving stance, but also combined with more optimistic expectation—relating to others as though they are unsurprisingly imperfect but also bound, in collectivity with others, to win.

## 2. PREFIGURATIVE INTERACTION

For Shotwell, prefiguration is "the practice of collectively acting in the present in a way that enacts the world we aspire to create" (166). What prefiguration requires, in part, as Shotwell builds on Angela Davis, is that we "identify into" a new world (167, 169). Such identifying into does not reduce to an idea about identity as determining what politics we are committed to, but rather, involves our taking our identities from our politics so that "we collectively craft identities, ways of being, based in the specific political context we encounter and the political commitments that shape our response to those contexts" (170). Shotwell notes that, for Harsha Walia, prefiguration involves the relationships we facilitate within our movements (184). What modes of interpersonal interaction will be part of prefigurative action and this "identifying into"?

One way Shotwell writes about prefigurative relations is in the discussion of "loving social movement practices" (204) and "being good to each other" (185). Interacting prefiguratively would seem to involve, particularly in conditions of conflict, recognizing the toxic conditions in which many agents learned to relate, and seeing work together as a site to practice recovery and healing. This process is not likely to be straightforward. As Shotwell writes,

I have no settled accounts for where we go from here; only a conviction that we do indeed need to work collectively toward a more collective and relational form of ethics adequate to the global and systemic crises we face. For surely from wherever these crises arise, they produce abiding and urgent moral dilemmas—and surely, it is precisely such situations that such an impure ethics ought to be positioned to address. (132)

The question of how to act and interact in the circumstances Shotwell describes—how to, among other things, open freedom to others, and relate to each other prefiguratively—is complex. Perhaps our best access to knowing how to best relate to each other in our compromised conditions will come from experiencing real-life situations and relations. That is, it seems we will need to look to those who are actively able to do some of this well, who are able to hold others gently and openly, as though failing does not make one a failure. Thankfully, *Against Purity* gives us guidance in how to do so.

## ARTICLES

### *Embodied Thresholds of Sanctuary: Abolitionism and Trans Worldmaking*

Andrea Pitts

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This paper is a brief set of reflections on the contemporary functions of sanctuary and gender-based asylum efforts in the United States. My purpose here is to draw out some lines of inquiry regarding the impact of framings of sanctuary and asylum on the communities most directly harmed by anti-immigrant, anti-Black, and anti-indigenous policies in the United States. More generally, this paper focuses on the criminalization of immigration and the punitive constraints placed on trans and gender-nonconforming migrants in the United States. More specifically, I examine two sites of contemporary state-centered forms of redress offered to migrants: sanctuary city policies and gender-based asylum. My claim is that both sanctuary cities and gender-based asylum reify conceptions of civic order that effectively maintain the US carceral state. First, I briefly outline a history of US immigration policies impacting trans migrants. Then, in the following section, I examine both sanctuary cities and gender-based asylum as responses to the harms impacting trans migrants in the United States. In both cases, I hope to demonstrate, by drawing from work in trans studies, queer migration studies, and critical prison studies, how sites of state-sponsored protection further entrench state violence against trans and gender-nonconforming people. I conclude by briefly discussing possibilities for trans-abolitionist futures.

I begin here with two brief vignettes, each woven from the threads of news media, reports from various nonprofit organizations, and other archival traces of the lives of two people. First, consider a verse from one of Victoria Arellano's favorite songs, a few lines from a 1994 Gloria Trevi ballad, "Siempre a mí":

Si un día maldices la hora en que naciste,  
O si tu amor se vuelve un imposible,  
Recuerda que me tienes a mí,  
Para luchar contra todos, para reír,  
Recuerda que me tienes a mí, siempre a mí.<sup>1</sup>

While attending a high school in Los Angeles, Arellano would eventually copy these lyrics in English, her hand leaving words on a page that her mother would one day show to reporters. Those lyrics read,

If one day you curse the time in which you were born,  
Or if your love becomes impossible,  
Remember that you have me,  
To fight against everyone, to laugh,  
Remember you always have me, always me.

Arellano was seven years old when she traveled north with her mother from Guadalajara, Mexico, settling in California. She was twenty-three in 2007 when she died at Terminal Island Federal Correctional Institution in Los Angeles. Those that knew her remembered her as “muy alegre,” and that she found joy in singing and was hoping to record an album someday.<sup>2</sup>

I return to more details of Arellano’s life later, but I would like us to consider here another all too brief story, this one drawn from the 1935 autobiography of Edward Corsi, an Italian immigrant who served as the Federal Commissioner of Ellis Island from 1931–1934. While at Ellis Island, Corsi describes a long conversation he had with Frank Martocci in 1931, an interpreter who conducted immigration interviews throughout the early 1900s. Martocci tells the following story about a case that was “queer and hard to handle.”<sup>3</sup> Martocci’s comments, as we will see, elide the affirmed identity of his interviewee, and, as such, the specter of state violence against trans migrants that I allude to above in Victoria Arellano’s story begins to come into sharper focus. In the following story, however, this violence occurred over one hundred years ago.

Martocci recounts the following story:

There was, for instance, a second-class passenger from Vera Cruz booked under the name Alejandra Veles. Boyish in appearance, with black hair and an attractive face, she proved to be, despite her earlier insistence to the contrary, a young woman. Vehemently she insisted that her identity had not been questioned before. When Dr. Senner asked her why she wore men’s clothes, she answered that she would rather kill herself than wear women’s clothes. Perhaps some psychoanalyst can explain it, but she said she had always wanted to be a man and it was no fault of hers she had not been born one!<sup>4</sup>

From this fragment, recounting a presumably violent affront to Veles that I return to at the close of this piece, we begin to see some of the contours of the United States’ investments in gender, civic reproduction, and the control of perceived “deviancy,” all iterations of violence that continue to undergird carceral logics of the nation-state today.

From here, I turn to what C. Riley Snorton has described as the “transitive relations” undergirding processes of “subjection and subjectification within racial capitalism.”<sup>5</sup> One of Snorton’s foci in *Black on Both Sides* (2017) are the

logics of exchange by which Blackness and transness have been put into a series of relationalities within nineteenth- and twentieth-century historiography.<sup>6</sup> Snorton threads the intricate means by which the Transatlantic slave trade and the fungibility of chattel slaves have framed the terms through which modern transness takes shape, i.e., transness as a conception of the mutability of gender (among other things).<sup>7</sup> Drawing from Hortense Spillers’s conception of a process of “ungendering,” Snorton analyzes fugitive narratives of Black people who utilized “cross-gendered modes of escape” from captivity.<sup>8</sup> Fugitivity, on these terms, offers a racialized gender politics of mobility wherein the modern terms of gender/sex that frame trans identities in our contemporary moment have been prefigured by the fungibility, changeability, and relational qualities emerging between the captivity and freedom of enslaved Black peoples. The importance of Snorton’s work for my analysis is to emphasize a view of transness and migration as likewise constituted by state logics of violence and deathly subjectivization. As Lisa Lowe has noted, studies of slavery and immigration have long been treated separately within US history.<sup>9</sup> As such, the overlapping means by which a given nation-state’s participation in and enactment of anti-Black violence, and its means to reify or attempt to maintain the legitimacy of its borders through immigration policy and enforcement can often be overlooked. Moreover, as Lowe highlights, the modern liberal humanism that undergirds the US democratic nation-state relies on settler colonial logics of domination and imported indentured servitude to shore up the nation’s political legitimacy and continued occupation of the land now labeled “the United States.” Under these critical frameworks, then, I follow Snorton and Lowe to begin to trace a conception of critical trans-migration studies that follows the relational and constitutive means by which “transness” and “migration” function in and against the confines of the nation-state. Thus, in the following section, I seek some critical tools to begin to highlight these transitive relationships.

### TRACING THE GEOPOLITICS OF MOBILITY

One place to begin outlining the forms of state violence functioning through discourses of transness and migration would be to look at the shapes and contours of US immigration law. Regarding the constitutive matrices of gender, historically US immigration law in the twentieth century has blurred the relationship between gender and sexuality, and has furthermore utilized exclusionary matrices of disability to delimit the body politic. For example, the Immigration Act of 1917 stated that people considered “constitutional psychopathic inferiors” should be denied entry to the US. The phrase “constitutional psychopathic inferior” is listed with a number of other criteria for exclusion, and the courts thereafter interpreted the phrase to refer to the exclusion of people “who by nature were subject to insanity of one sort or another; that is to say, whose constitution was such that they had not normal mental stability” (1929); and, in 1948, this phrase was interpreted as including “all psychopathic characters such as chronic litigants, sexual perverts, pathological liars, dipsomaniacs, moral imbeciles, and mentally peculiar persons who because of eccentric behavior, defective judgment or abnormal impulses are in repeated conflict with social customs and constituted authorities.”<sup>10</sup> In 1952,

the McCarran-Walter Act explicitly listed among reasons for refusal of admission “psychopathic personalities,” which as stated in a US Senate report made by the Public Health at the time included “homosexuals, sex perverts,” and “sexual deviants.” During this time, state administration explicitly linked “sexual deviancy” to visual gender expression in enforcement efforts to address the difficulty of detecting forms of deviance that serve as markers for exclusion.<sup>11</sup> For example, a 1952 report conducted by the Public Health Service for Congress, states the following:

In some cases, considerable difficulty may be encountered in substantiating a diagnosis of homosexuality or sexual perversion. In other instances, where the action or behavior of the person is more obvious, as might be noted in manner of dress (so called “transvestism” or fetishism), the condition may be more easily substantiated.<sup>12</sup>

What this suggests, aside from a fallacious medical belief in a theory of “sexual inversion,” is that those who we might consider today as trans and gender nonconforming migrants were explicitly targeted for exclusion under immigration law by this legislation. By 1965, immigration law went through a reform process, and until 1990, trans and gender nonconforming people could be specifically excluded as “sexual deviates.”<sup>13</sup>

These forms of exclusionary immigration criteria also point to some important distinctions with respect to the functions of the state confronted by migrants, including many contemporary migrants who are seeking asylum in the US today. As Eithne Luibhéid has demonstrated,

Unlike the immigration system, which frames entry as a privilege that can be granted in a discriminatory manner by a sovereign nation-state, the refugee/asylum system is underpinned by a different logic. Here, admission is supposed to be granted based on the United States’ commitment to upholding international human rights laws, which provide asylum to those fleeing persecution on the basis of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular group.<sup>14</sup>

As such, the first state inclusions of queer or trans people under asylum protection occurred in a 1990 Board of Immigration Appeals case (Toboso-Alfonso 1990) in which a gay man seeking asylum from Cuba was considered a member of a particular social group that can be offered asylum.<sup>15</sup> In 1994, this case became the precedent for other queer persons seeking asylum who could prove a “well-founded fear of future persecution” as members of a specifically targeted group. Later, in 2000, another case, *Hernandez-Montiel v. INS*, found the following:

that a transgender person from Mexico qualified for asylum as a member of a “particular social group.” But that decision did not refer to the applicant as transgender; the court instead called Hernandez-Montiel a “gay man with a female sexual identity.”<sup>16</sup>

This legal recognition of trans migrants thus secures a narrative both about the terms that constitute “an asylee” and “a transgender person.” Moreover, in the case of asylum,

refugee/asylum determinations are often driven as much by US foreign policy considerations as by the merits of individual claims (the disparate treatment of Haitian versus Cuban asylum seekers, historically, is an example). Furthermore, asylum adjudications provide opportunities for the construction or reiteration of a racist, imperialist imagery that has material consequences on a global scale.<sup>17</sup>

Here, we see that imperial aspirations, including the racialized hierarchies of the US and Europe, function in and through immigration and asylum law.

A few things to note about this legal history: first, although my focus in this paper is migration, asylum and immigration processes are, as Luibhéid notes, “still most accessible to those migrants who are cisgender heterosexual economically privileged white men of Western European origins.”<sup>18</sup> In this vein, as Rhonda V. Magee has argued, the political and legal apparatuses of chattel slavery served as the United States’ first iterations of what we might consider immigration law. She writes:

[C]hattel slavery was, among very many other things, a compulsory form of immigration, the protection and regulation of which, under federal and state law, was our nation’s first system of “immigration law.” As a consequence, the formal system that developed was inculcated with the notion of a permanent, quasi-citizen-worker underclass and privileged white ethnics under naturalization law—its legacies we can see up to the present day.<sup>19</sup>

Magee’s aim (and my own) is not to conflate twentieth- and twenty-first-century patterns of voluntary migration with the brutality, dehumanization, and forced captivity, confinement, and commodification of African and African diasporic peoples that occurred through the Transatlantic slave trade. Rather, Magee argues that the white supremacist racializing order that operates within contemporary immigration law can be better elaborated through an understanding of the singularly brutal legal administration of the Transatlantic slave trade, and the development of nineteenth-century immigration law that was built in the afterlife of US chattel slavery. Notably, Martha D. Escobar explains:

Once slavery was transformed (rather than abolished) in 1865, the federal government began to regulate who entered the nation and under what conditions. This regulation was established in part because the United States desired cheapened labor in order to continue its westward expansion. However, the end of slavery limited the ability of white settlers to make use of Black bodies for this project. Consequently, the United States turned

toward Asia, specifically China. The introduction of Chinese and other Asian (im)migrants enabled the development of the West. However, informed by racial knowledge developed in relationship to slavery and indigenous genocide, the presence of foreign bodies who culturally and racially appeared different created conflict and, in turn, influenced (im)migration policies. The first federal (im) migration law, the Page Law of 1875, barred the entrance of Asian women believed to be entering for “lewd and immoral purposes.”<sup>20</sup>

Thus, the origins of immigration law in the United States follow from the shifting terms of formal abolition legislation, US settler colonial capitalist expansion to the West, the transitive relations of migrant labor classes, and the gendered practices of workers. As such, the Page Law of 1875 sought to regulate of bodies, desires, and intimacies between Asian women and men (both Asian and white) participating in the industrialization and colonization of the West.<sup>21</sup>

Lastly, an additional important component to bring out of this history connects to what Mansha Mirza has described as an overlapping relationship between migration studies and disability studies. Mirza draws on a conception of the geopolitics of mobility to link the limits and constraints imposed through seeking asylum with the construct of disability. Mirza writes, specifically describing experiences of displacement by those seeking asylum status,

both disability and displacement represent a disruption of the “natural order of things,” the social categories that modern societies tend to be grounded in. The condition of displacement subverts social categories based on “nation-states,” thereby generating anomalies, that is, persons embodying a transitional state—neither belonging to their country of origin or their country of asylum. Likewise, disability subverts social constructions of “personhood,” whereby disabled people are also seen as anomalies, that is, embodying a transitional state—neither full person nor nonperson. Disabled and displaced persons are often construed as “aberrations in need of therapeutic intervention” and become recipients of institutionalized practices targeted at returning them to the natural order of things, either back into the fold of the nation-state or back into the state of normalcy. And until this return to the natural order is achieved, people falling under both conditions may be subjected to long-term confinement.<sup>22</sup>

Mirza’s work connects the stability and maintenance of the nation-state to a normative conception of embodiment. Notably, the framing of “normalcy,” including gender, sexual, psychological, and morphological normalcy, to conceptions of rightful citizenship can be found throughout the immigration law listed above.

In this way, if we extend these arguments regarding the limitations and constraints of migrants to the carceral logics impacting trans migration, this will specifically link

us to the pathologization and exclusion codified through contemporary immigration law. Moreover, as I outline below through two state-sponsored responses to violence inflicted on migrants, such state-centered solutions may still carry punitive outcomes that reify carceral logics that continue to impact trans migrants specifically.

## SANCTUARY CITIES AND GENDER-BASED ASYLUM

With this legal framing in mind, I would like to focus on sanctuary cities and gender-based asylum, two state-centered responses to violence committed against migrants. The first effort involves establishing sanctuary spaces for undocumented migrants to seek refuge if they are being targeted by Immigration and Customs Enforcement. A. Naomi Paik writes of the sanctuary movement:

Originally established in the 1980s and reinvigorated since the early 2000s, this movement encompasses a coalition of religious congregations, local jurisdictions, educational institutions, and even restaurants, that commit to supporting immigrants, regardless of status. Emerging from congregations that have provided shelter to refugees and immigrants under threat of deportation, the movement has spread to city, county and state governments that have passed sanctuary policies that limit their cooperation with federal immigration authorities in tracking down and deporting undocumented immigrants.<sup>23</sup>

There is a long and multifaceted history of the sanctuary movement in the US, much of which involves the massive migrations of Central American peoples fleeing US-backed civil wars in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras in the 1980s. While I do not have space to describe that history in detail here, there are a few important differences between this earlier movement and contemporary iterations of sanctuary efforts today. In particular, in the 1980s, churches and religiously affiliated leaders and groups were central to providing shelter and safe passage across the US-Mexico border. Today, while many religiously affiliated groups remain committed to providing shelter for undocumented migrants, sanctuary policies have also come to take the form of citywide ordinances that instruct local law enforcement to refuse to honor detainer requests from US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (“ICE”), or to refrain from asking people questions regarding their citizenship status. Moreover, unlike the 1980s critique of US foreign policy that operated within the sanctuary movement, today, many of the justifications for citywide sanctuary efforts are focused on supporting local police enforcement. Namely, when local police officers are required to enforce federal immigration law (e.g., through 287g agreements between federal and local police), the argument contends, migrants will no longer report crimes to the police and thus may become further victimized.

Yet, as Paik outlines, while a number of “sanctuary cities” have issued ordinances that aim to prevent local police and law enforcement administration from carrying out the duties of federal immigration law, many “noncompliance”

policies, in practice, offer little to protect those who are impacted daily by harassment, raids, and deportation under US immigration policy more generally. Because sanctuary city policies often stem from liberal framings of jurisdictional responsibilities for local and federal law enforcement, these efforts support state investments in civic order by surveilling, constraining, and imprisoning people of color and other communities rendered “deviant” or as “undeserving” of the state’s neoliberal protections. As such, trans people, Black, brown, and indigenous peoples, and disabled people, many of whom are already targeted by local police, are likely to continue to face harassment and abuse under sanctuary policies.

Even within the New Sanctuary Movement (“NSM”), a series of efforts taking place through churches and nonprofit organizations, the narrative of the “deserving immigrant” also tends to surface. Paik writes,

while the scope of the NSM among churches has expanded to encompass anyone facing deportation orders, it, too, selects immigrants “whose legal cases clearly reveal the contradictions and moral injustice of our current immigration system.” The chosen must be facing a deportation order and have US citizen children, a “good work record,” and a “viable case under current law.”<sup>24</sup>

As Paik reminds us, “ICE has found ways to meet its deportation orders despite sanctuary policies, which, while refusing cooperation, cannot ban ICE from performing its work on its own. ICE agents have stalked courthouses, accosting people and crosschecking publicly posted bond sheets against DHS databases.”<sup>25</sup> In this sense, in cities like Los Angeles, which has had sanctuary policies in place since 1979, undocumented trans people like Victoria Arellano may likely continue to face persecution from immigration and customs enforcement. That is, under Los Angeles law, Arellano’s criminal convictions for three misdemeanors—driving without a license, driving under the influence, and being under the influence of a controlled substance—were what led to her eventual detention at Terminal Island.<sup>26</sup> While local police did not interrogate her about her citizenship status, the sentencing judge that she confronted once in custody concluded that “the conviction of the offense for which [she was] charged [would] have the consequences of deportation, exclusion from admission to the United States, or denial of naturalization.”<sup>27</sup> In fact, Arellano’s detention and subsequent death at the hands of immigration and customs enforcement was made possible via a policy put into place decades earlier. Under the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, persons convicted of a felony or three misdemeanors were deemed inadmissible for legalization. As such, while sanctuary efforts do offer protections against interrogation and federal enforcement by local police and have responded to some of the administrative obstacles experienced by migrants, such policies do not prevent the forms of harassment, abuse, hyperpolicing, and strict sentencing that many trans people, people of color, disabled people, and poor people experience regardless of their citizenship status.

Secondly, we can briefly explore another option available for trans migrants seeking to avoid further displacement. As we also see in Arellano’s story, she and several other trans women at Terminal Island were seeking asylum from their countries of origin. By establishing a “credible fear of persecution” stemming from the threat of violence against them as transgender people, trans migrants may be granted status to remain in the US and obtain a work permit. Given that trans people in Mexico, for example, face high rates of violence, and that transphobic attacks and homicides have risen in recent years following the 2010 legalization of same-sex marriage in Mexico City, a number of Mexican trans migrants have sought asylum within the US.<sup>28</sup> Along these lines, a number of attorneys and aid groups for trans migrants have sought to clarify the process for seeking asylum. The Transgender Law Center, for example, offers bilingual (Spanish and English) factsheets for trans and gender-nonconforming migrants to help support detainees through the interview process used to establish eligibility for asylum status.<sup>29</sup> For many migrants who are detained, applying for asylum becomes a means “to fight for your papers” as Diana Santander, a fellow trans woman and friend of Arellano locked up at Terminal Island, encouraged her to do upon her arrival.<sup>30</sup>

Like sanctuary city policies, however, filing for asylum also provides a limited set of state-centered options for undocumented trans and gender-nonconforming people. Candidates for asylum are often required to give a very specific set of narratives that will legibly justify their claims for staying in the US. As Lionel Cantú’s work as an expert witness in cases involving migrants from Mexico demonstrates:

One issue was that to gain asylum on the basis of being persecuted for one’s sexual orientation [or, we could add, gender], the applicant has to prove that being [queer or trans] is an “immutable” aspect of [one’s] selfhood. This tricky undertaking runs the risk of reinscribing essentialist notions of [gender and sexual] identity that scholars have spent decades painstakingly challenging. The second issue was that . . . receiving asylum requires painting one’s country in racist, colonialist terms, while at the same time disavowing the United States’ role in contributing to the oppressive conditions that one fled.<sup>31</sup>

In this sense, the conditions of survival for transgender and gender-nonconforming peoples are placed directly within the US’s ability to ensure their “safety” and “security” from a seemingly corrupt or unstable site of civic (dis)order. Additionally, the result of such reifications of “backwardness” or lack of civic stability thereby serve to further support military and cultural interventionist efforts, including trade restrictions or increased funding for the militarization of a given country’s law enforcement.

A further patterned violence impacting trans migrants, including those seeking asylum status, is that legally, detention centers do not operate within the same jurisdictional boundaries as other forms of contemporary US incarceration. Notably, detention centers, even those that

are housed within federal prison facilities such as Terminal Island, are effectively “extra-territorial zones,” which are, as Mirza states, “exceptional states [that are] both inside and outside the law.”<sup>32</sup> As such, detained migrants often experience prolonged periods of detention, without due process and access to bond hearings (given the recent Supreme Court decision in *Jennings v. Rodriguez*), and there is little oversight regarding basic health and safety conditions within detention centers.

Regarding this set of concerns, we return to the deathly nexus of disability, racism, and transphobic violence impacting Arellano. Her death, like many others under conditions of incarceration, was preventable. She died from an AIDS-related infection that could have been treated with antiretroviral medication as well as antibiotics that are known to be effective for HIV-positive patients, such as dapson, which Arellano had been taking prior to being detained.<sup>33</sup> Yet, rather than being treated, Arellano’s infection worsened, her health deteriorated, and medical staff repeatedly ignored and neglected her demands for medical care. A number of people whom she had befriended while she was incarcerated describe caring for her after she became ill. People began helping her get into and out of bed, and began helping her eat during her last few months alive. Among these caretakers was her close friend Walter Ayala, who had fled El Salvador to the US after witnessing the murder of his friend, a trans woman, who was killed by a military soldier during the country’s civil war. Ayala, who, along with a number of other migrants seeking sanctuary from the violence in their home countries caused in part by US interests, sadly would witness another trans friend die at the hands of the state, this time, however, through the slow death of medical neglect within the facility that was imprisoning them both.<sup>34</sup>

Lastly, while citywide sanctuary efforts and gender-based asylum may offer substantive benefits for those seeking temporary state aid, these efforts need to be examined in terms of their collateral impacts on US-born Black populations as well. As Janaé Bonsu has argued regarding sanctuary,

Whether it’s stop-and-frisk or no-knock raids, both undocumented immigrants and US-born Black folks have a vested stake in redefining what sanctuary really means, and in resisting Trump’s “law-and-order” agenda. Trump has made it clear that he is committed to strengthening all law enforcement, not just immigration agents. Thus, policies that address racist policing, incarceration and criminalization must be part of the demands of the immigrant rights movement. As long as the immigration and criminal justice systems are interconnected, creating real sanctuary cities is an issue of linked fate and real practical, principled solidarity.<sup>35</sup>

In this vein, the current political administration’s policies, including its “zero-tolerance” efforts that have heightened and made more visible the destructiveness of family separation through immigration enforcement, are intricately linked to anti-Black and anti-indigenous

state action as well. Notably, the ravages of social and civil death, including the destruction of legal, spatial, and intimate bonds between families, partners, and loved ones, can be traced through US chattel slavery and its afterlives, including the hyperpolicing and incarceration of Black communities today.<sup>36</sup> So too, as Sarah Deer has outlined in her work, indigenous communities across what is currently the United States continue to face the long-term cultural, familial, and administrative harms that have resulted from the forced family separations that occurred under government-sponsored boarding schools. Such patterns of state-sponsored social and civil death remain haunting precursors and present realities that help frame the family separations occurring through US immigration enforcement today. Specifically, they remind us of the interconnected white supremacist policies that continue to “secure” the nation’s borders.<sup>37</sup>

I want to thereby urge us to continue to critically imagine stretching, bending, and expanding worlds beyond contemporary conceptions of sanctuary and gender-based asylum. This does not necessarily mean that we must fight against these efforts per se, but rather to see their limitations and their means for reifying the state as a site of security and stability. Such investments in the state’s carceral power to decide who is deserving of care, trust, health, and mobility invariably leads to increased harms for trans, disabled, Black, indigenous, and any other people vulnerable to the state’s refusal. As such, I conclude here with a few brief comments on worldmaking beyond the prison-military industrial complex.<sup>38</sup>

### TRANS WORLDMAKING BEYOND THE PRISON-MILITARY INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

Against such state-centered efforts, organizations such as Familia: Trans Queer Liberation Movement, Ni Uno Más/Not 1 More, Southerners on New Ground, the Sylvia Rivera Law Project, and the Undocuqueer Movement, among others, have developed nonpunitive, community-centered models as an alternative to current immigration policy. Community-centered models aim to reframe social life around the creation of conditions that ensure the thriving of vulnerable communities regardless of desert or merit, including communities of color subject to the harms of military interventionism and harms against gender-nonconforming and trans persons who are subject to conditions of state surveillance, policing, and violence.

Alongside the work of these organizations, we can glean further insight into the models for care and affirmation for trans life beyond those of asylum and state-sponsored sanctuary. On July 12, while Arellano lay dying in her bed, a group of detainees refused to comply with orders to do an evening head count and began shouting, “Hospital! Hospital! Hospital!” to demand that she receive care.<sup>39</sup> Finally, through this act of resistance, Arellano would eventually be taken to a medical facility and put on a respirator. Unfortunately, their efforts could not save her life, and she died on the morning of July 20, 2007. However, the efforts of the sixty-one detainees who signed a petition protesting the medical neglect she had experienced and those who shouted for her, cared for her, and sang with

her speak to the affirmation of her life. My paper here may not be adding much to Victoria Arellano's story, or to the fragmented history that we have of Veles, who suffered invasive questioning about his body and understanding of self at the hands of immigration enforcement at Ellis Island. Within these vignettes and their placement within the two broader state-centered approaches I describe above, I urge us to look for worlds beyond the state's demands for compliance with binary gender norms, and for life-giving worlds that exist beyond the state's conceptions of "desert" or "merit" that are then used to distribute the resources necessary for survival.

I like to think of these worlds as akin to what Reina Gossett describes as "trans legacies."<sup>40</sup> Notably, she writes that she "wants to know more about how trans people have supported or rejected abolitionism and gender self-determination within a range of political movements. . . . I want a fuller scope of our social history. . . . Rather than simply reclaiming our lineage, let's start to change the context."<sup>41</sup> As such, perhaps we can draw from the Gloria Trevi lyrics that Arellano penned in her hand, that "si [nuestro] amor se vuelve un imposible"/"if [our] love becomes impossible," we must remember Victoria/recordemos Victoria, and with her, we can "luchar contra"/"fight against" the systems that seek to entrench cycles of death for so many communities.

Finally, perhaps we can also "reir"/"laugh" with her in an effort to turn away from the state's desire for racialized death. In this vein, consider Veles again, who appears to have protested his interrogation by asserting that he had never been questioned regarding his identity, and whose good fortune allowed him access to a lawyer to aid his case. When Veles was asked if there was anything else he wanted before he left the US port, he demanded, in the face of the state's invasive and violating inquiries, "two plugs of tobacco and a pipe," which he was granted.<sup>42</sup> In this sense, finding the pleasures, joys, and worlds beyond state-sponsored forms of security and comfort are important to rejecting carceral logics as well.

As Mimi Kim has argued with respect to feminist anti-violence work, often social movements aimed at critiquing state logics of violence end up becoming entwined and reliant on state-centered models of law enforcement and stability. What Kim describes as "the dance of the carceral creep" "reveals how impressive social movement successes can lead to effects that undermine the goals of and eventually subordinate movement actors and institutions to the greater aims of the movement's prior targets."<sup>43</sup> By this, Kim points to the means by which previously survivor- and community-centered models of feminist antiviolence organizing shift to models of law enforcement that "lock their gaze with predominantly male, state targets, located within the masculine systems of the criminal justice system."<sup>44</sup> As such, finding further means to resist state-sponsored dependency and comfort is important when seeking to understand the relationalities between transness and migration.<sup>45</sup> Sanctuary efforts and gender-based asylum are but two instances of the ways in which "the dance of the carceral creep" may begin to become part of our social networks and hopes for the liveability of trans communities. To honor the lives and memories of

Veles and Arellano, we must call upon and remember our trans ancestors who have refused state logics of violence and to remain accountable to them: *recuerden que ustedes tienen a nosotros, siempre a nosotros.*<sup>46</sup>

NOTES

1. Gloria Trevi, "Siempre a mí," Letras.com, <https://www.letras.com/gloria-trevi/868208/>. Accessed March 11, 2018.
2. Ben Ehrenreich, "Death on Terminal Island," *Los Angeles Magazine*, September 1, 2008, <http://www.lamag.com/longform/death-on-terminal-island/>. Accessed March 11, 2018.
3. Edward Corsi, *In the Shadow of Liberty: The Chronicle of Ellis Island* (New York: MacMillan, 1935), 81.
4. Ibid.
5. C. Riley Snorton, *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2017), 6.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., 56–57.
8. Ibid., 57.
9. Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 37–38.
10. US Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit – 33 F.2d 267 (2d Cir. 1929), June 10, 1929; Cited in US Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit – 250 F.2d 436 (2d Cir. 1957). "Matter of LaRochelle," in *Deportation Proceedings A-7128195*. Decided by Board December 1, 1965.
11. § 212 (a) (4) of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952; Cited in Eithne Luibhéid, "Queer Migration and Citizenship," in *Queer Migrations: Sexuality, US Citizenship, and Border Crossings*, ed. Eithne Luibhéid and Lionel Cantú, Jr. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005): xii–xiii.
12. House, 82d Cong., 2d sess., 1952, Rep. 1365, 47; Cited in Eithne Luibhéid, "'Looking Like a Lesbian': The Organization of Sexual Monitoring at the United States-Mexican Border," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 8, no. 3 (January 1998): 477–506.
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## Puzzle Pieces: Shapes of Trans Curiosity

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Ryka Aoki, in *Seasonal Velocities*, writes, “To be transgender means never quite knowing which reaction you’re going to get, where, or from whom. You can be a sister one moment, then have a security guard stop you in the bathroom the next. In one store, the salesperson will smile and say welcome. In another, you’ll get ugly stares and giggles.”<sup>1</sup> It would be one thing if it were everyone, every time. But it’s anyone, any time. The monadic lottery of it all is almost cruel. And when you are stopped or stared at, it is with some version of the question, *What are you?* Never who. Later in the book, Aoki continues:

I don’t want to have to worry about the closet, or being erased, or never accepted. I really would rather wonder which friends will I grow old with, comfortable with? Who will I watch old TV shows with? Who will be with me at 2031 Pride? Who will bring the dog? Who has the program, and hey, did anyone remember a pen?<sup>2</sup>

Here, Aoki deftly shifts from being a what to being a who. She wants the freedom to wonder, to ask, to be curious, rather than be another person’s curiosity. Rather than wonder, as any trans person must, when the next inquisition, the next rejection will strike, she wants the chance to wonder about the people and the dogs, the Prides and the programs that will lend shape to her life. Wondering about the mundanities of *un stylo* is the privilege of a who, a who in this case with a special affinity for pens.

What Aoki captures so well on an individual level, transgender studies analyzes on a structural level. In framing trans studies, scholars often combat reductive cultural representations of transgender people with rich, complicated depictions and histories that are true to trans realities. Against, as Sandy Stone put it, the “relentless totalization” of trans experience, which reduces trans people to “homogenized, totalized objects,”<sup>3</sup> trans studies scholars aim to explore the divergent experiences of trans subjectivities in community. Scholars undertake this work along a number of vectors. Where contemporary cultural productions repeatedly represent trans people as singular, voiceless, non-agential individuals, who appear on the scene as ever new and strange, trans studies scholars underscore the multiplicity of trans experience, the voice and activism of trans people, and the long history of trans communities. That is, they insistently demonstrate that trans people are not objects but subjects, not whos but whos. Sandy Stone, after insisting that trans people have typically had “no voice”<sup>4</sup> in discussions about them, calls for trans people “to generate a true, effective and representational counterdiscourse.”<sup>5</sup> As if in answer, Susan Stryker wrote *Transgender History*, which counters the “exploitative or sensationalistic mass media representations”<sup>6</sup> of transgender experience with a “collective political history of transgender social change activism in the United States.”<sup>7</sup> Against the reduction of trans experience to a single

signifier, therefore, trans studies undertakes a historical, as much as phenomenological, counteroffensive.

Whether in journalism or medicine, education,<sup>8</sup> law,<sup>9</sup> or television,<sup>10</sup> trans writers and trans studies scholars consistently develop this critique of the representational totalization of trans people, whereby they are and have been made whats, not whos; objects, not subjects; voiceless, not vocal; passive, not active; dehistoricized, not historical; and single, not multiple. In what follows, I aim to supplement this critique by attending to the role of curiosity both as a technique of (trans) objectification and as a practice of (trans) freedom, on both the individual and social level. That is, I trace how curiosity—through the monadic and collective acts of gazing, inquiring, investigating, and imagining—functions as part of the project of the representational totalization of trans people but also as part of trans people’s own praxis of resistant de-totalization. My goal, throughout this inquiry, is not only to contribute to the nascent sociopolitical philosophy of curiosity, but also to advance independent conversations in both curiosity studies and trans studies. Within curiosity studies, there is a bivalent account of curiosity as oppressive and liberating, as objectifying and humanizing.<sup>11</sup> Here, I extend that account to trans studies. Trans studies, in turn, has long diagnosed an objectifying curiosity; here, I highlight the rarely remarked or theorized fact that curiosity is also practiced within trans communities—in rich, multivariant, and perhaps unexpected ways. Through these analyses, I argue, philosophically, that curiosity is more than an individual, innate capacity; it is also a series of social practices that must be ethically and politically evaluated as such.

## I. METHOD AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To begin, let me offer a quick note on method. Consistent with my commitment to honoring trans meaning-making and knowledge-building practices, I explore curiosity as a technique of objectification and practice of freedom through the terms and discourses of trans people themselves. As such, I consult primarily a substantive selection of trans memoirs and autobiographical writings (including work by Ryka Aoki, Sarah McBride, Jennifer Boylan, Lady Chablis, Ma-Nee Chacaby, Lovemme Carazon, Ivan Coyote, Jamison Green, Nick Krieger, Dierdre McCloskey, Lei Ming, Janet Mock, Rae Spoon, Rizi Xavier Timane, and Max Valerio). My reliance on trans memoir should not signal a reduction of trans people to their experiences—as if they are only capable of feeling and not thinking—but rather a recognition that, in the very negotiation of experience, trans people are always already theorizing. Furthermore, within these texts, I trace the word “curiosity,” related words or phrases (such as question, inquiry, and the desire to know), and interrogative sentences themselves. While I make no claim to an exhaustive analysis of curiosity’s role in trans literature and scholarship, I trust that I offer here a representative sampling of trans perspectives on curiosity, as well as a preliminary analysis thereof.

What precisely is curiosity, such that it can make objects and (re)claim subjects? According to Enlightenment thinkers, curiosity is a natural, organic impulse that contributes to science, industry, and therefore the prosperity of humankind. This curiosity is innate and individual, rational

and useful. John Locke, for example, defined curiosity as an “appetite for knowledge,” which ought to be “as carefully cherished in children as other appetites suppressed.”<sup>12</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in turn, characterized curiosity as “a principle natural to the human heart,” which must be scrupulously trained if the young person is to become an ideal citizen.<sup>13</sup> As a natural capacity, curiosity is itself neutral and is either badly or bravely applied by individuals based on their character and education. By contrast, for late modern and postmodern thinkers, it is impossible to understand curiosity—even if it is an embodied desire—apart from its function in a sociopolitical context. Curiosity, here, is expressed through material and discursive practices within social and institutional frameworks. For Friedrich Nietzsche, there is a sort of curiosity that is “sober, pragmatic,” busying itself with the “countless minutiae” that buoy civilization;<sup>14</sup> whereas there is another, “fateful curiosity”<sup>15</sup> that has the capacity to deconstruct everything. For Michel Foucault, there is likewise an institutional curiosity that categorizes and taxonomizes according to inherited frameworks,<sup>16</sup> while there is another, resistant curiosity that “throw[s] off familiar ways of thought.”<sup>17</sup> Rather than bely moral or immoral character, expressions of curiosity are here radical or repressive depending on whether they sustain or disrupt oppressive systems of power.

Today, curiosity is largely understood as a desire to know. From the dominant psychological perspective, this desire to know is generated by novel stimuli; curiosity is the drive to fill a newly perceived information gap. If trans people deviate from a natural gender binary, for example, it would stand to reason that they constitute novel stimuli and, as such, would be natural objects of curiosity. While illuminative of the symbiosis between novelty and curiosity, this perspective is dissatisfying insofar as it fails to account for the sociohistorical contexts that determine the expression of biological impulses. Trans people are *made* novel through the naturalization of binary categories; proper gender signifiers are constructed in advance. It is perhaps more accurate to say, then, that there are collections of individuals whose innate desiring machines are honed in such a way as to take trans people as objects. Curiosity here remains an individual, embodied desire, which is nevertheless cultivated, disciplined, and directed by specific social forces and investments. On this model, curiosity is a trained affect, embedded in a *habitus*, appearing on individual and collective registers. Curiosity is something one or more persons feel and what one or more persons do. As such, curiosity might be defined as a material and discursive multivariant praxis of inquiry, coupled with certain affects and neurological signatures, and traceable in individuals and groups.<sup>18</sup> Thus, in the following analysis of curiosity’s role in trans objectification—and especially in trans freedom, the question is both how does curiosity feel and how does it function? How are the practices of gazing, querying, investigating, experimenting, and world-traveling lived and deployed?

## II. TRANS PEOPLE AS THE OBJECTS OF CURIOSITY

Trans people consistently experience themselves as the object of other people’s curiosity. Whether that be the long

looks, stares, or outright gawking by people on the street (Are you male or female? Boy or girl?), the well-meaning, but often invasive questions of friends and family (How do you know? Will you have the surgery? What about hormones?), the battery of questionnaires and exams conducted by medical professionals (including general practitioners, surgeons, psychologists, psychiatrists, etc.), or the spectacularizing attention afforded trans icons across various social media (from Christine Jorgenson to Janet Mock, Laverne Cox, and Caitlyn Jenner), this experience is a bit like living under “orange alert,” to use Coyote’s phrase.<sup>19</sup> As the object of curiosity at every turn, trans people are forced to live defensively, constantly parrying unwanted attention, often in a vain attempt to guard not only their privacy but their legitimacy. After all, to be steadily questioned here is to be fundamentally put in question, to be made the object of suspicion. As such, trans people regularly experience themselves as a socio-epistemological problem. The barrage of questions constitutes them as outliers, as nodes in a network that denies them, as puzzle pieces picked up, pressed unforgettingly, and then put to one side.

Transgender literature and scholarship identify five primary sources of objectifying curiosity: the public, friends and family, the media, medicine, and academia. Green speaks for many when he recalls the curious “stares”<sup>20</sup> of strangers who, particularly when he was more androgynous, “gawked” at him and “scrutinized” him for “signs of any gender.”<sup>21</sup> Whether on the street or the subway,<sup>22</sup> in a restaurant<sup>23</sup> or a bathroom,<sup>24</sup> relentless public attention can signal anything from mild “indifference or mere curiosity” to “loathing,” “anger,” and impending “violence.”<sup>25</sup> For many trans people subject to public gawking, there is no respite at home, only fewer stares and more questions. Friends and family typically think their relative position of intimacy with a trans person gives them a right to full disclosure, warranting any demand for information they can muster, whether regarding names or pronouns, hormones or surgery, sexual practices or dysphoria. Boylan recalls being asked, “How did you know, when you were a child?”<sup>26</sup> And Coyote: “I was just wondering if you always knew?”<sup>27</sup> Often, according to Green, these questions are less than innocent, masking the real query: “How could you do this to me? How could you be so selfish? How could you? How *could* you?”<sup>28</sup> In media circuits and medical settings, trans people face a particularly potent curiosity, often targeting the status of their bodies and sexual morphology. As Carol Riddell states, “We have some curiosity value to the media as freaks.”<sup>29</sup> Reporters are particularly keen to ask if so-and-so has had “the surgery.”<sup>30</sup> This is a “genital-curiosity,” as S. Orchard calls it, from which medical professionals are far from immune.<sup>31</sup> Wherever it appears, this objectifying curiosity involves practices of staring, gawking, and scrutinizing,<sup>32</sup> as well as asking sometimes seemingly innocent,<sup>33</sup> but other times overtly abrasive, passive aggressive questions.<sup>34</sup>

Academia is a realm in which the curious objectification of trans people is especially entrenched. While this gaze is sometimes located in classmates<sup>35</sup> and students,<sup>36</sup> its real bastion lies in theory and scholarship. As Talia Mae Bettcher says of academic discourse, “trans people have long been curious objects, puzzles, tropes, and discursive levers on the way to somebody else’s agenda.”<sup>37</sup> Amy Marvin argues that

such objecthood is the result of a process of “curiotization” which abstracts and dehistoricizes trans people, turning them into curios.<sup>38</sup> The effect of this curiosity is detrimental to trans people insofar as it produces conceptual distinctions that underscore the artifice of trans identity or stereotypical narratives that deny the gnarled complexity of trans experience.<sup>39</sup> Sandy Stone famously attributed a fundamental coloniality to the academic “fascination” with and “denial of subjectivity” to trans people.<sup>40</sup> Vivian Namaste, in turn, insists that the theoretical uses of trans experience in feminist theory must be decolonized through accurate, relevant research that affords trans communities equal partnership in the inquiry and ownership of the results.<sup>41</sup> This is more than a shift in citational practices, C. Jacob Hale insists; it is a real “humility” and willingness to travel in trans worlds.<sup>42</sup> Thus, as it appears in academia—or in public, among friends and family, in the media, or in medicine—the curious objectification of trans people is felt, practiced, and resisted on an individual as well as a social register.

### III. TRANS PEOPLE AS THE SUBJECTS OF CURIOSITY

Curiosity is not only present in trans people’s accounts of their own experiences with others; it also functions as a tool of resistance by which trans people foster the rich self and social life typically denied them by institutionalized forms of curiosity. That is, rather than merely objects of curiosity, trans people are practitioners of curiosity—whether in their early explorations of themselves, their cis counterparts, or their queer family, their choice of name, their clothes, their self-advocacy within the medical industry, as lovers and sexual partners, or in their reimagination of masculinity and femininity. To be trans, authors consistently emphasize, is a journey, a discovery, a quest, an exploration, an evolution, involving experimentation, observation, imagination, and so, so many questions. It is a vortex of curiosity.

The early development of trans identity involves a long series of trial and error experiments, forming the eminently curious investigation of gender itself and gender for oneself. Mock captures this moment well when, rejecting the “born this way” narrative, she admits, “I grew to be certain about who I was, but that doesn’t mean there wasn’t a time when I was learning the world, unsure, unstable, wobbly, living somewhere between confusion, discovery, and conviction.”<sup>43</sup> As many trans narratives attest, the process often begins with the “family laundry hamper.”<sup>44</sup> What would it be like to wear these clothes, to be treated like the primarily estrogen or testosterone-based organism expected to wear these clothes?<sup>45</sup> What would it be like to be that organism? Kiki calls it “the curiosity factor.”<sup>46</sup> “It was a curiosity about being,” McCloskey confirms.<sup>47</sup> What is it like to want to play with these toys, to be allowed to play with these toys? What is it like to enjoy that hairstyle, to desire that kiss? Why am I not like other boys, other girls? Sometimes this exploration manifests itself as “a fascination with [ . . . ] otherness” in beings who are supposedly self-same,<sup>48</sup> at other times as a “searching for clues” about who it is one might become,<sup>49</sup> and at still other times it signals, according to Coyote, a special “kind of lonel[iness].”<sup>50</sup>

Trans people's developmental curiosity, however, is not limited to the cisheteronormative world. It invariably includes other trans and genderqueer people, fictive or real, present-day or long ago. Trans community and culture becomes and often remains a lodestone of trans people's own curiosity. Krieger, who describes himself as a "Curious George,"<sup>51</sup> recalls being "driven by my own personal curiosity," devouring "everything written about trans lives and experiences: narrative nonfiction books, reportage, journalism, legal documents, health and medical studies, memoirs, diaries, and zines."<sup>52</sup> Depending on era and geography, the availability of these resources differs. Coyote recalls sneaking peaks at lesbian magazines in a store downtown.<sup>53</sup> McCloskey reminisces about her first drag show as a mature adult.<sup>54</sup> And Valerio tells a humorous, yet painful story of seeing Leslie Lothstein's 1983 book, *Female-to-Male Transsexualism*, in a bookstore window, feeling queasy, walking away, turning around, and telling himself to forget it, before buying it and running home to hide it.<sup>55</sup> Corazon states simply, "The internet fed my curiosity,"<sup>56</sup> Timane singles out "Google" and "YouTube."<sup>57</sup> Sometimes trans people ping each other, as a way to help situate themselves;<sup>58</sup> at other times, their interest is even keener. Lady Chablis admits to being "more than mildly curious" about "some *fine-ass titties*" her friends had acquired,<sup>59</sup> while McCloskey recalls peppering other transwomen with questions, "gathering data like some sort of anthropologist."<sup>60</sup> Likewise, Valerio describes his transmale friendships as "a gender think tank, an unfunded, underground research project driven by an obsessive sense of exploration and ceaseless investigation."<sup>61</sup> Whether tentative or brazen, occasional or committed, secretive or proud, curiosity about trans experiences and communities is a necessary component of trans people's development and survival.

Beyond deconstructing cisheteronormativity and exploring trans communities, trans people also report a generalized curiosity, as if being trans itself requires an ethos of curiosity. Overwhelmingly, trans people talk about their transition and trans life as a journey, a quest. Transition is not the solution to a problem. "Rather than fix a problem," Krieger states, transition involved "my experimentation and uncertainty, my quest to reinvent my body."<sup>62</sup> Similarly, Valerio writes: "My transition felt like more than simply a medical solution to a personal problem; it soon expanded into an exploration, an erotically charged boundary-crossing, and a risk-filled journey."<sup>63</sup> As not a solution to a problem, but a journey, transition involves "exploring,"<sup>64</sup> "experimenting,"<sup>65</sup> "introspecting,"<sup>66</sup> "investigating,"<sup>67</sup> and "adventuring."<sup>68</sup> In fact, "a gender quest," as Green muses, "is a kind of spiritual question. It is our willful destiny to find that balance, that strength, that peace and logic of the soul [ . . . ] Each step along the way brought me closer to my own center; each candle I lit in the cave of my own fear brought me clarity and stability."<sup>69</sup> Underscoring the way in which this journey beyond the self is precisely a movement of returning to the self, Mock describes transition as "a complicated journey of self-discovery that goes way beyond gender and genitalia. My passage was an evolution from me to closer-to-me-ness. It's a journey of self-revelation."<sup>70</sup> The character of this quest or journey is precisely a long process of "self-discovery,"<sup>71</sup> "evolution,"<sup>72</sup>

"migration,"<sup>73</sup> and "invention."<sup>74</sup> It involves decades, Ming confirms, of "questioning everything."<sup>75</sup> Given the endless practice of curiosity implicit in the "trans journey," Aoki muses, "trans" is the perfect word: "the great traveler of the Latinate prefixes, the great explorer and pioneer."<sup>76</sup>

These many testaments to trans curiosity leave no doubt: curiosity functions on both the individual and social level. It is a drive to know—to know physically, intellectually, and experientially—but always within a social milieu and therefore in dialogue with inherited structures of value, theoretical frameworks, and a complex *habitus*. Trans authors describe this dynamic in microcosm with respect to their childhoods. Lady Chablis, for example, recalls the vibrancy of her personal "curiosity," which led her as a child, day after day, to sketch her name into oak leaves, drop them in a stream behind her house, and travel with them "to other worlds within my 'magination."<sup>77</sup> Some trans curiosity goes socially unrecognized precisely because its contours or complexion fall outside of certain norms. Chacaby, for instance, only came to recognize her own curiosity through her grandmother. "When other people called me weird or poisonous," she writes, "[my grandmother] would tell me that I was curious and smart in ways that some people did not understand."<sup>78</sup> When neither left to flourish nor lost to social recognition, trans curiosity can be purposefully suppressed. For Corazon, childhood is the graveyard of her curiosity, a time when her curiosity was stolen through sexual assault and transphobia. It is only now, as an adult, that she "crave[s] the curiosity of a child"<sup>79</sup> and vows to live her gender journey in a way that honors that lost possibility. Because curiosity expresses itself across the fabric of self and society, it can be nurtured or occluded, championed or stolen. And because trans people (and particularly trans youth) fall between the cracks of social values, their curiosity is more vulnerable to the vicissitudes of custom and policy, not to mention the whims of individual actors, for better and for worse.<sup>80</sup>

As it appears in trans memoirs, however, trans curiosity is not simply an affect or a feeling, caught in the nexus of norm enforcement, on the one hand, and creative resilience, on the other. Trans curiosity is also a practice that stretches beyond states of consciousness and into objects, architectures, and organized matter: the very stuff of the universe. When trans people change their clothing, it is not simply that curiosity takes them to the laundry hamper or to the department store. Curiosity is the act of standing in the dressing room eyeing oneself, sometimes gingerly at first and then with pride. It is marking how and where the clothes hit, that first day one wears a new piece. When trans people change their name, it is not simply that curiosity suggests perhaps one might go by something else. Curiosity is telling one's confidants, hearing one's new name as friend and stranger all in one, standing awkwardly before a judge. When trans people search for their people and their history, it is not simply that curiosity suggests one read Leslie Feinberg's *Stone Butch Blues* or Janet Mock's *Redefining Realness*. Curiosity is holding it in one's hands, keeping it in one's pillowcase or on one's nightstand, buying a copy for one's parent. When trans people seek out medical interventions, it is not simply that curiosity leads one to the pharmacy or the operating table. Curiosity

is tracking with a mixture of wonder, fear, and hope the minute changes in one's body schema. And all of this happens within a political framework of inherited gender norms, histories of trans resistance to those norms, and as yet unimagined possibilities. The practice of trans curiosity is not a momentary, spontaneously generated question, nor is it an innate force untouched by social context; rather, it is a series of material, intergenerational, and transhuman acts of exploration.

In sum, if trans autobiographical writings suggest anything for the socio-political philosophy of curiosity, it is this: Where an objectifying curiosity denies trans people the complexity and mobility of human subjects, freezing them in a state of whatness, a liberatory curiosity opens up the possibility of nuance, change, and transformation coincident with the whoness of trans people. Given this complexity, it is not enough simply to denigrate or to celebrate curiosity. Before following Timane's recommendation that we add another letter to the LGBTQQIA moniker: a "C" for "curious,"<sup>81</sup> a sustained examination of the styles and stakes of curiosity—including trans curiosity—is necessary. Curiosity as an affect and a set of practices, at once individual and collective, has to be subject to ethico-political evaluation.

#### IV. TRANS CURIOSITY AS PRAXIS

The rich record of trans curiosity has been almost completely occluded, experientially and theoretically, by the objectifying curiosity to which trans people are subjected. As trans people, sometimes the burn of the gaze and the sting of the question is so sharp as to make one forget that one, too, looks and queries, beckons and explores. It is perhaps, then, no surprise that, within trans studies, the discourse surrounding curiosity remains a critique of objectifying curiosity, with little attempt to reclaim curiosity, as *such*, for trans people.<sup>82</sup> Given its capacity to turn something into a spectacle, to freeze and immobilize it for the purposes of the inquirer, thereby dehistoricizing, decontextualizing, and dehumanizing it, curiosity plays a clear role in the representational totalization of trans people, their reduction to whats, and to their specific body parts (or lack thereof). But, given its corollary capacity to open perspective and possibility, curiosity also plays an undeniably integral role in trans people's resistant detotalization, their claim to who, to wholeness, to community, and to history. Trans memoirs, moreover, demonstrate that *both* potentialities of curiosity are traceable in affects as well as practices, at individual and social levels.

Trans people—and trans writers and scholars in particular—have already gone to great lengths to diagnose the objectifying curiosity to which they are subject, as well as recommend strategies for change within cisheteronormative worlds. What I offer here is but a gesture. The analysis above might prompt individuals to reflect phenomenologically on whether they take trans people as objects of their curiosity. Do they reduce trans people to the latter's genital status or story? Do they imagine trans people as strange, washed-out aliens in an otherwise rich, familiar landscape? It might also prompt individuals to reflect genealogically on why and how they find trans people curious. What political values and investments, local idiosyncrasies and global trends,

have trained their affects in this way? It might push people to hold themselves accountable for their objectifying curiosity. How, for example, would their immediate reactions to genderqueer kids change if they recognized how much these kids are already overburdened with the stares of strangers, pestering questions, and reductive jokes? How might their tactics for self-education around trans issues change if they acknowledged that trans people have a long and rich history, replete with changing subcultures? Finally, it might also push people to collectively reevaluate how these affects, habits, investments, and practices are embedded in material and discursive structures. That is, how is trans-objectifying curiosity institutionalized in the media, medicine, and education, as well as public and private spaces? And how might the very function of internet clickbait, digital databases, IRB standards, and airport surveillance, for example, become trans-affirming, even trans-humanizing?

And yet, as I have argued, trans people are not only the objects but the subjects of curiosity, not merely the brunt but practitioners of curiosity. What further lessons are to be learned here? Insofar as trans people are curious, trans objecthood is untenable. That is, if curiosity is a capacity of a human subject,<sup>83</sup> then trans curiosity defeats—or gives the lie to—trans objecthood. As a tactic for repositioning trans people in the realm of human subjectivity, then, reclaiming trans curiosity is valuable. Nevertheless, such a tactic unfortunately does nothing to change existing structures of value and privilege predicated upon said human subjectivity, including those tied to the notions of Enlightenment rationality, individualism, and Anthropocentrism. While it will ultimately be important to recognize other grounds for trans liberation, still more can be drawn from reflections on trans personhood. Indeed, insofar as trans people in general are curious, individual trans people are curious, often in unique, idiosyncratic ways. How might trans curiosity modulate by geography and era, social group and social standing, or along the axes of gender, sexuality, disability, or socioeconomic status? How might attention to the racialization of curiosity, for example, demand the very reconceptualization of the subject/object divide? In what ways could all of these differences be better recognized, and in some cases celebrated, in and beyond the trans community? And how might attending to this variability necessarily demand posthuman or transhuman coalitions?

But the praxis of trans curiosity, with all its material and discursive effects, promises more than a subsumption of thing into human. It provides new ways of thinking about cultures of curiosity and their liberatory potential. Consider the sociopolitical function of the practices, forms, and configurations of curiosity generated in trans communities. By engaging curiosity as a practice of political imagination, the kinesthetic signatures of trans curiosity pose an implicit challenge to the everyday paradigms of curiosity common today. Consider, first, the trans practice of second-guessing cisheteronormative expectations of clothing, play, roles, and desires. This constitutes, at least, a strand of curiosity that makes the familiar strange. Second, the practice of finding trans places, people, culture, and community signals, again at least, the sort of curiosity that

seeks out subjugated knowledges and embodiments, or even subjugated knowledges as embodiments. Third, the practice of taking a gender journey—including questing, exploring, introspecting, investigating, and experimenting—is a style of curiosity that self-creates. What if these sorts, strands, and styles of curiosity—this family of curious practices—were the paradigmatic acts of curiosity? That is, what if the word curiosity signaled not a violent inquisition, an objectifying gaze, or an inane question? What if it called to mind not value-neutral science, media obsession, or useless trivia? Indeed, what if curiosity signaled, instead, this trio of habits: making the familiar strange, searching out subjugated knowledges, and cultivating a life of purposeful experimentation and authentic engagement in the project of self-creation in community? This honest, harrowing, exuberant quest. What if these were the practices given preference in the thought of curiosity? Trans curiosity does just this.

Attending to curiosity as a praxis, or set of practices, which are each subject to ethico-political evaluation is a necessary supplement to the classical interpretation of curiosity as an innate human capacity to desire knowledge. It is certainly important for individual differences in the expressions of curiosity to be recognized and for individual people to be accountable for their own expressions. But that is not enough. Insofar as curiosity as a praxis can belong to human collectives, networks of human and nonhuman things, as well as non-desiring materials, this supplemental model helps to explain how trans-objectifying curiosity is embedded in architectures and institutions, in multimedia and digital platforms. From this perspective, curiosity is an inquisitive movement within an ecological fabric. But what are the grounds for choosing some curious practices over others? Surely the practices of defamiliarization, desubjugation, and self-creation in community are not good simply by virtue of being practiced by trans subjects, by marginalized subjects, or by resistant subjects. Or because they embody some abstract notion of justice. Instead, they are good by virtue of fashioning space for life under exclusionary conditions, a function which may or may not be present in particular trans, marginalized, or resistant subjects' actions or perspectives. Thus, rather than demanding a whyless treatment or laying claim to the human condition, I suggest that trans curiosity opens up a space through which to think curiosity as a practice of socio-political resistance. It provides a model of curiosity that at once combats and deploys transhuman assemblages, and creatively breaks and rebuilds transhuman embodiments. More fundamentally, trans curiosity theorizes, in its very resistant praxis, new styles and frameworks for the study of curiosity itself.

**NOTES**

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4. *Ibid.*, 229.

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20. Jamison Green, *Becoming a Visible Man* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2004), 35.
21. *Ibid.*, 182.
22. *Ibid.*, 21.
23. *Ibid.*, 17.
24. Ivan Coyote, *Tomboy Survival Guide* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2016), 132.
25. Green, *Becoming a Visible Man*, 37.
26. Jennifer Boylan, *She's Not There: A Life in Two Genders* (New York: Broadway Books, 2013), 22.
27. Coyote, *Tomboy Survival Guide*, 109.
28. Green, *Becoming a Visible Man*, 207–208.
29. Carol Riddell, "Divided Sisterhood: A Critical Review of Janice Raymond's *The Transsexual Empire*," in *Transgender Studies Reader I*, eds. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2006), 145.
30. Spoon and Coyote, *Gender Failure*, 223.
31. S. Orchard, "Questions," *DUDE Magazine* 1 (2011): 26; Lei Ming, *Life Beyond My Body* (Oakland: Transgress Press, 2016), 145–46.
32. See also Lovemme Carazon, *Trauma Queen* (Toronto: Biyuti publishing, 2013), 177–78; The Lady Chablis, *Hiding My Candy* (New York: Pocket Books, 1996), 102; Sarah McBride, *Tomorrow Will Be Different* (New York: Crown, 2018), 53, 178; Ming, *Life Beyond My Body*, 62–63.
33. Carazon, *Trauma Queen*, 128–29.

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58. Valerio, *The Testosterone Files*, 109.
59. Chablis, *Hiding My Candy*, 87.
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77. Lady Chablis, *Hiding My Candy*, 41.
78. Ma-Nee Chacaby, *A Two-Spirit Journey*, 19; cp. Ming, *Life Beyond My Body*, 63.
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## Merleau-Ponty, Fanon, and Phenomenological Forays in Trans Life

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### INTRODUCTION

Recent articles and books on transgender phenomena have explored a variety of the experiences of trans people, but relatively few scholars working in trans studies deploy the language and tools provided by phenomenology or use trans experience to challenge and rework text in the history of phenomenology. One notable exception is the work of Gayle Salamon,<sup>1</sup> who explicitly draws on trans phenomena and describes them in the terms put forward by thinkers in the phenomenological canon.

My own work in this paper is in a similar vein. In particular, I use the tools of Merleau-Ponty and Fanon to describe two key experiences in the lives of many trans people: the experience of hormonal transition and the experience of

transphobia. Given the wide variety of experiences of each of these, I can only offer partial pictures here and draw heavily on my own lived experience of both. My aim in attending to each of these experiences is to demonstrate the ways in which taking trans people's lived experiences seriously ought to reorient our understanding of what it means to be an embodied subject.

There are two parts to this paper. In the first, I use some of Merleau-Ponty's work to describe the experience of hormonal transition. In the second, I use Fanon's work to take up the experience of being subject to transphobic violence by focusing on how our typical understandings of those events, and their tacit justification in law, privilege what I call here a genital-sexual schema.

### MERLEAU-PONTY AND A PHENOMENOLOGY OF HORMONAL TRANSITION<sup>2</sup>

While not determinant of one's trans status, hormonal transition is nevertheless an interesting site of inquiry for trans phenomenology. We can understand intentionality very basically as the fact that consciousness is always being conscious or aware of objects in our environment; thus, intentionality refers to the ways in which our attention is directed at or away from particular objects in our environment.<sup>3</sup> By looking at how it is that we move in the world, Merleau-Ponty demonstrates how our movements in the world constitute a mode of consciousness.<sup>4</sup> These perceptions, therefore, are not always chosen in the way that a purely reflective understanding of intentionality might hold.<sup>5</sup>

One way that we might also understand this is through the Merleau-Pontean terms of the body schema and the body image. Recall that, for Merleau-Ponty, the body schema refers to the experience of the body's possibilities in a spatial and temporal world.<sup>6</sup> This experience is one that is not reflective in nature; rather, it seems to be best understood through the performance, and over time the habitual performance, of actions in the world.<sup>7</sup> The body schema is the body's intentionality precisely because it refers to a way of being directed or of moving in relation to other objects in the world. The body image, on the other hand, is specifically reflective and refers to the ways in which we conceive of our bodies and their possibilities in the world when we actually think about them.

The most obvious effect of HRT on our bodies is the way in which it can serve to reconfigure our body image. Many trans people experience dysphoria, a kind of psychic distress that occurs when our bodies do not align with our expectations of them in terms of their particularly gendered characteristics.<sup>8</sup> HRT alters body image by actually reshaping the body in various ways and thus also our cognitive apprehension of our own bodies and their possibilities.<sup>9</sup> Our conscious perceptions of these changes on our bodies and the ways they shift our senses of our embodied possibilities necessarily transforms our body image. Developing breast tissue, and my attending to that, has shifted my sense of my body's possibilities in relation to how I can move in certain clothing or whether running without discomfort is possible. This is a shift in body image

precisely because my reflexive intentions, those ways in which my body intends possibility without consciously attending to it, do not always align with my reflective perception of my body's possibilities.

The body schema is also reworked during HRT. In his memoir-cum-critical inquiry, Paul Preciado describes the ways in which taking testosterone destabilized his ways of moving in the world without his conscious assent to those changes.<sup>10</sup> Our bodies begin to perceive the world around us differently than they did before we began HRT. Developing breast tissue, for example, has affected even my more reflexive actions. In the world, I find myself moving through crowds differently than I had before because my body has become alert to the possibility of an errant elbow appearing in my path. This does not require any kind of conscious effort on my part, but it is connected to experiences of having elbows and other hard objects impact budding breast tissue. Experiences of pain have shifted my body's reflexive actions in the world directly as an effect of HRT.<sup>11</sup>

Perhaps the most obvious ways in which body image and body schema come together in the process of HRT is in our erotic encounters. Merleau-Ponty describes what he calls a "sexual schema" in which he notes that our perceptual experiences are tinged by sexuality in a way that crosses the easy division between body image and body schema. The sexual schema seems to refer both to our sense of our own body's possibilities and the possibilities of others' bodies and the performances of certain bodily actions and their habituation.<sup>12</sup> An awareness of the other, then, is an awareness of the other's body and its possibilities, and this is equally true of our own bodies.

In addition to realigning the appearance of our bodies, HRT also realigns how we feel our bodies. Estrogen softens our skin and makes it more sensitive to external stimuli, like the feel of certain fabrics or the touch of another. The erotogenic zones on my body have shifted over the last several months due to an increased sensitivity across the surface of my body. At the same time, however, my reflexive perception of a situation as potentially erotic has also shifted such that a state of active arousal occurs less frequently. HRT, then, has shifted my cognitive and non-cognitive perceptions of my own body and the environment in which it finds itself specifically in the ways that sexuality does or does not appear as part of my perceptual experiences.

HRT, especially its erotic aspects, occurs in the context of other bodily shifts. In his poem "Queer Poetics: How to Make Love to a Trans Person," Gabe Moses stages an imagined erotic encounter between the reader and a trans person and implores us to reimagine the body before us by "break[ing] open the words" like "cock" or "clit" so that they correspond to our imagined partner's gender rather than how we might otherwise understand those terms. Moses's provocation in his poem is to read and encounter the trans body before us in this imagined erotic encounter as one laden with possibility rather than delimited by the presence or absence of certain bodily features.<sup>13</sup> Talia Bettcher refers to this as "recoding." On Bettcher's account, recoding involves the imagined reconfiguration



and reconceptualization of the body in order to experience them as sites of erotic pleasure.<sup>14</sup> For example, a trans woman might recode her penis as a clitoris in order to experience oral sex as cunnilingus.

What is significant about these experiences of HRT and body recoding for my purposes here is that they both point to ways in which a body is reworked in the experience of transition. Due to the accumulation of habit, the social context in which we find ourselves, and the capacities that appear to us in our own bodies, we develop a particular understanding, both cognitive and non-cognitive, of them over time that presents itself as merely given. Transition demonstrates ways in which the organization of our bodies is not merely given to us; rather, what transition shows is that our bodies become organized largely as they are because we do not often attend to them as malleable. The organization of a “developed” body appears to us as a mostly natural fact, but transition relies on actively reworking our bodily intentions in a way that both denaturalizes our habits and reconfigures our relations with the world through which we move and act. Transition, then, is a way of putting the body into disarray such that a more or less complete reconfiguration of it appears as a possibility.

### FANONIAN SCHEMAS AND A PHENOMENOLOGY OF TRANSPHOBIA

In writing about the lived experience of the Black man, Frantz Fanon makes a series of provocative statements that I want to think with and through in this section of the paper. I am particularly interested in the Fanonian schemas that he articulates in the beginning of Chapter 5 of *Black Skin, White Masks*: the historical racial schema and the epidermal racial schema. I want to be clear here that, by juxtaposing Fanon’s phenomenological descriptions of the experiences of Black men under conditions of colonialism with the work of trans phenomenologists, I am not supposing that these experiences are identical. Rather, what is of central interest to me is the way in which Fanon and trans phenomenological theory rework, rewrite, and retheorize what it means to be embodied in the world; there are, I hope, promising insights in each that we can use to develop the other further. I will do this by pairing readings of Fanon with some reflections on transness to elaborate what I am tentatively proposing here as a genital-sexual schema. Fanon writes,

In the white world, the man of color encounters difficulties in elaborating his body schema. The image of one’s body is solely negating. It’s an image in the third person. . . . Beneath the body schema I had created a historical-racial schema. The data I used were provided . . . by the Other, the white man who had woven me out of a thousand details, anecdotes, and stories. I thought I was being asked to construct a physiological self, to balance space and localize sensations, when all the time they were clamoring for more. . . . As a result, the body schema, attacked in several places, collapsed, giving way to an epidermal racial schema.<sup>15</sup>

There are at least three ways to read this passage, so I will describe each briefly in turn. First, we might, especially given my earlier reliance on Merleau-Ponty, be tempted to read this passage merely as a rejoinder to the Merleau-Pontean schematization of the body. On this account, what Fanon is up to amounts more or less to a correction of the relatively abstract body in Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological account, a reminder that race matters for any theory of embodiment or of the body. This is, I think, a fairly impoverished reading of Fanon that reduces him to the status of critic of phenomenology rather than a critical phenomenologist in his own right.

There is, I think, a similar worry when we think about something like a phenomenology of transness—to assume that trans phenomenologists are simply doing the work of correcting mistakes in the phenomenological canon. What is at stake, then, might be a revision of the Merleau-Pontean body schema/body image, perhaps reinforcing our fundamentally intersubjective and historically situated embodiment. But it might also be a challenge to what Merleau-Ponty and others in the phenomenological canon are up to—demonstrating the assumptions undergirding his work that people who belong to dominant identity groups along axes of identity are, as Christine Wieseler puts it in her recent interview with Shelley Tremain, “normal” and render the rest of us “pathological.”<sup>16</sup> The entanglements of body image and schema in transition suggest that the division that interpreters of Merleau-Ponty like Shaun Gallagher want to uphold is troubled when we consider more critically the body at stake in phenomenology.

Another way to read Fanon is as articulating a retheorization of the body by looking to how it is that we interpret our own bodies or encounter them as interpreted by others. On this account, what Fanon shows us is that the moment of direct perceptual access even to our own bodies is mediated through the inherited and sedimented conceptual world we inhabit: “On that day, completely dislocated, unable to be abroad with the other, the white man, who unmercifully imprisoned me, I took myself far off from my own presence, far indeed, and made myself an object.”<sup>17</sup> For the Black man, living under the effects of colonialism and white supremacy has the curious effect of interrupting his own access to his body or his ability to articulate it in ways that are not overdetermined by the accumulated data about bodies like his own. Indeed, this accumulation of data has the effect, in turn, of causing him to objectify his own bodily existence to such an extent that recovering a subject position is fraught at best. We can think here about the ways in which, for example, police who murder Black people describe the actual bodies of those they kill: larger than life, endowed with supernatural ability, monstrous. Under such conditions, Fanon makes clear, the idea that we have direct perceptual access to our own bodies is naïve or even misleading.

Phenomenological work in trans studies forces us to ask similar questions about the status of the body in our work and how we are thinking about the possibility of direct perceptual access to our own bodies in ways that are not overdetermined by oppressive epistemic and metaphysical frameworks. Talia Bettcher has attended to the phenomenon

of body “recoding” in trans people’s sexual experiences. Because of the particular relations to embodiment that trans persons have (i.e., negotiating a body that is not as one would wish it or as social custom indicates it ought to be for a given gender alignment), many must engage in “coding,” which is the imaginary reconfiguration of bodily features (e.g., genitals, breasts) or sexual prostheses (e.g., strap-on dildos, artificial nails).<sup>18</sup> The process of learning to read or reread our bodies is akin to the process of struggling to find one’s own subject position that Fanon describes. As trans people, we often find ourselves stumbling over the language we have inherited for describing our own bodies. How, for example, to describe a body that was assigned male in a way that does not assume the assignment was correct—that it named a male body—while at the same time leaving open the possibility of speaking of our own particular bodies.

One final way to read Fanon’s schemas that I consider here is as a rearticulation of intersubjectivity and something like embodiment in its most broad sense. He writes, “In the train it was no longer a question of being aware of my body in the third person but in a triple person. . . . I existed triply: I occupied space. . . . I was responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors.”<sup>19</sup> This tripling of self seems to reflect each of the schemas he has addressed in the text thus far: the body schema, the epidermal-racial schema, and the historical-racial schema, to each of which he bears some sort of responsibility. While living under conditions of pervasive anti-Blackness, Black men are made to stand in for both all other living Black men and all of those who have come before them. This latter standing in, the historical-racial schema, carries with it the histories of racist beliefs and frameworks that dehumanize Black men and deny them the status of full humanity or subjectivity proper. The former, which would seem to be the epidermal-racial schema, reduces the Black man to his interchangeability with any other given Black man. Insofar as skin becomes determinant of who he is, then his own body and his own particularity recede into the background. The account of embodiment at stake here, then, is one that understands the body and embodiment as actually constituted both spatially *and* historically—such an account is also thoroughly saturated with the social and political such that an individual body or an individual’s embodiment is not easily isolatable.

One way to see how we might deploy this Fanonian theory of embodiment is to look at the trans panic defense and transphobia. A panic defense, usually specified as either gay or trans, is a legal defense strategy used in situations in which the victim of a violent crime, often murder, is said to have engaged in a behavior that justifies the response of the person or persons responsible for the crime. It is used, especially in cases where the victim was killed, to downgrade the crime from a felony murder to a form of voluntary manslaughter. The sort of behavior that might be considered to justify such a violent response tends to fall into one of two categories: (1) the victim is said to have misconstrued their gender by presenting in a way that is incongruent with their genital status, or to have deliberately hidden in some other way their genital status, only for that status to be revealed and shock the perpetrator of the

crime into violent action; or (2) the victim is said to have engaged in unwelcome romantic or erotic behavior with the perpetrator while openly presenting a gender identity and/or genital status that does not align with the recipient’s sexual identity as determined by the genital object (e.g., a penis or a vagina) of their sexual desires. The term first emerged into public discourse following the murder of the young trans woman Gwen Araujo in 2002. To date, the state of California is the only state within the United States to ban explicitly the use of panic defenses; in all other jurisdictions, it remains a very real possibility.

Trans feminist philosopher Talia Bettcher gives a detailed account of the trans panic defense in her 2007 article entitled “Evil Deceivers and Make-Believers.”<sup>20</sup> I will only briefly describe here the arguments she makes in the article, but they should serve to demonstrate how the panic defense reflects the broader understanding of trans people in US society. She argues that what undergirds the legal viability of trans panic is the presence of the pervasive belief that trans persons engage in practices that are deceptive to the wider public. These deceptive practices are those that reflect a disjunction between the “appearance” involved in a gendered presentation and the “reality” involved in a sexed body; the belief that this is a disjunction and therefore a kind of deception reflects what she calls, following sexologist Harold Garfinkel, the “natural attitude about gender.”<sup>21</sup> The natural attitude about gender is simply the notion that one’s gendered presentation—that is, one’s dress, mannerisms, and other modes of engaging the world—reflects a particular genital status; thus, if one presents in a way that is consistent with the ways of those we designate as women, then one’s genitalia, for example, should consist of the vagina and those bodily features we expect to accompany the presence of a vagina. A penis or its revelation as part of the body of a person who presented as a woman, then, represents a kind of deception to a person engaged in the natural attitude about gender.

As an alternative to deception, a trans person might also disclose their trans status up-front and declare that their presentation does not align with their genital status in the way that most would expect. However, as Bettcher notes, such a revelation does little to alter the fundamental notion that a deception is still at work; the deception might simply take on the less morally weighted notion of pretend: “For in coming out, she [Gwen Araujo] would have no doubt been interpreted as ‘really a boy who dressed up like a girl.’”<sup>22</sup> In order to demonstrate the accuracy of such a prediction, one need only consider the many responses to Caitlyn Jenner’s coming out as trans, which include a wide number of people who continue to refer to her as “Bruce,” a he, and explicitly deny that she could be considered a woman at all, or the work of any number of radical feminists who make similar claims. Disclosure of one’s status as trans does little to mitigate the fact of deception; it merely makes the deception a kind of imaginary game in which we all know the real “truth” about that person’s gender identity.

On Bettcher’s account, what the dominant reading of transgender as a misalignment between gender presentation and genital status demonstrates is that gender presentation is taken to have a kind of truth value on the basis of which

one can be said to present themselves truthfully or falsely. Trans people, then, in a cisnormative society do engage, according to Bettcher, in a kind of deceptive practice insofar as the natural attitude about gender aligns presentation and body in a way that privileges the presentations and bodies of cis persons. Given that this is the case, we cannot simply construe the label of “deceiver” as “inexplicable or bizarre stereotypes used against transpeople.”<sup>23</sup> Any attempt to do so fails to engage adequately the lived realities of being trans in the United States, and effective change in the circumstances of trans people, and especially trans women of color, will need to be able to respond to these realities precisely because either model, deception or pretending, makes possible and legitimates the deployment of the trans panic defense.

The relatively unchallenged legitimacy of the trans panic defense leads to a heightened sense of precarity and exposure among trans people. The possibility of being subject to violence, the awareness of that possibility, and the understanding that such violence would likely go unpunished appear throughout the memoirs and autobiographies of trans people. There are similarities worth exploring between these experiences and the lived experience of the Black man that Fanon offers us. In both cases, we run into the problem of a mismatch between our own first-person experiences and the way in which we are read through inherited and sedimented epistemological and metaphysical frameworks that “code” our bodies in such a way that our own ability to perceive them may be diminished. Rather, though, than an epidermal-racial schema, what we seem to have in the case of trans people is something akin to a genital-sexual schema. Whereas skin color and features on the surface of the body become a primary mark of the Black man’s otherness and the most immediate site of his reduction to object, for trans people, it is often our genitals or the histories of our genitals that become the site of both objectification and otherness.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, the awareness of this genital-sexual schema has a direct affect on the embodied possibilities and perceptions of trans people due to an intensified awareness of how our bodies might be read by others.

For trans women living under the threat of trans panic, this presents the following situation: one must present in ways that read as woman in all situations in order to avoid a particular sort of scrutiny that might reveal a sexed body that “misaligns” with one’s gender presentation. Yawning in a particular way, for example, might cause a man to look twice where he may not have otherwise; this may not even be conscious on his part, and it may simply be that the yawn, in combination with other motions or past events, might cause him to notice the trans woman before him in a way that he had not before. This is a kind of experience of the figure/background relationship that Merleau-Ponty describes in his phenomenology. The “figure” should be understood to name whatever object or objects we are attending to in a given perceptual experience, while the background is the field against which that figure appears; these are not inherent properties of objects because different objects can become figures while others recede to background as our intentional awareness shifts.<sup>25</sup> What makes an object figure as opposed to background is the

extent to which it is attended to by the perceiver. For many trans women, then, one’s ability to present successfully as a woman can be read as an attempt to remain background in the perceptual experiences of heterosexual men or to present as figure in a certain way; both of these are strategies to avoid being subject to the transphobic violence that trans panic makes possible.

NOTES

1. See *Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010); and *The Life and Death of Latisha King: A Critical Phenomenology of Transphobia* (New York: NYU Press, 2018).
2. While my primary goal in this section is to present a phenomenology of transition, moving directly into a particular account of transness without contextualizing it at least a little within the contemporary situation of trans people in the United States would be a mistake. A number of recent studies on anti-LGBT violence, both in the United States and abroad, point to the overrepresentation of trans women and trans femmes of color among the victims of this violence. This dynamic is best captured in the phenomena that Dean Spade (2015) describes as “administrative violence.” Very basically, administrative violence captures those ways in which the state’s administration of gender conducts its own violence while also producing and maintaining the conditions for myriad other acts and practices of violence. As an example of this, we might consider, as Spade does, the various ways in which legal identification documents administrate gender. In the United States, one is assigned a designation of either M or F at birth, and this designation has very real effects on one’s life. For trans people, the designation can often be a serious hurdle in transition processes. The federal government has specific policies for changing these designations, and each state has its own as well. This creates the very real and common occurrence that one might be attempting to change these documents while navigating at least three different ways of administrating gender.
3. Ronald McIntyre and David Woodruff Smith, “Theory of Intentionality,” *Husserl’s Phenomenology*, ed. J. N. Mohanty and William McKenna (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1989): 147–79. While this sounds entirely reflective, later phenomenologists such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty rework intentionality to refer also to the ways in which our bodies are or are not aware of their environment.
4. Charles Siewert, “Consciousness and Intentionality,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/consciousness-intentionality/>.
5. Indeed, many of our bodily actions and perceptions in the world are conditioned in ways of which we are not consciously aware.
6. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. David Landes (New York: Routledge, 2014): 142–43.
7. Shaun Gallagher, “Body Image and Body Schema: A Conceptual Clarification,” *The Journal of Mind and Behavior* 7, no. 4 (1989): 541–54.
8. Common sites for dysphoria are facial hair or breasts: a trans man, for example, might experience dysphoria as a result of possessing large breasts. Dysphoria is rarely a permanent state; instead, it occurs more frequently as a result of attending to our bodies in a particular way or in response to certain stimuli. Being stared at might trigger dysphoria if it seems that the stares result from being perceived as “not really a man” or “possessing too much facial hair to be a woman.”
9. In HRT aimed at feminization, for example, one takes both testosterone blockers and estrogen, which, to varying degrees and at varying paces, causes breast growth, shifts the accumulation of body fat to the hips and thighs, decreases body hair, and a number of other bodily changes. Interestingly, one bodily change that many trans women experience as a result of HRT that is not well-documented in the medical literature on the subject is the development of something like a menstrual cycle (sans menstruation itself) after several months of taking hormones: <https://theestablishment.co/yes-trans-women-can-get-period-symptoms-e43a43979e8c>. This phenomenon is rarely discussed in much of the medical literature and is usually

not discussed as part of an informed consent process when beginning HRT.

10. Paul B. Preciado, *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era*, trans. Bruce Benderson (New York: Feminist Press, 2013).
11. This suggests ways in which body image and body schema are perhaps more in conversation with one another than Merleau-Ponty seems to suggest, but it is very much in line with Iris Young's phenomenological account of the ways in which the movement of girls and women becomes restricted over time. Iris Marion Young, "Throwing Like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Bodily Compartment, Motility, and Spatiality," *Human Studies* 3, no. 2 (1980): 137–56.
12. I claim that the sexual schema has more of a cognitive function than the body schema itself precisely because Merleau-Ponty refers to the sexual schema "accentuating" and "sketching out" features of one's own body and the bodies of others (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 158).
13. It is important to note here that Moses is implicitly drawing on a particular model of trans, one overlaid with the history of dysphoria—not all trans persons will figure their own bodies in this way in which validation of gender is wrapped up in the acknowledgment or avowal of certain bodily features—but I think we can understand this call beyond that particular context. Similarly, while the poem is ostensibly addressed to the lovers of trans persons, we can quite readily imagine that these processes might also be occurring the mind of the trans person.
14. Talia Mae Bettcher, "When Selves Have Sex: What the Phenomenology of Trans Sexuality Can Teach about Sexual Orientation," *Journal of Homosexuality* 61 (2014): 605–20.
15. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skins, White Masks*, translated by Richard Philcox (2008): 110–12.
16. "Dialogues on Disability: Shelley Tremain Interviews Christine Wiesel," *Discrimination and Disadvantage*, March 21, 2018, [http://philosophycommons.typepad.com/disability\\_and\\_disadvanta/2018/03/dialogues-on-disability-shelley-tremain-interviews-christine-wiesel.html](http://philosophycommons.typepad.com/disability_and_disadvanta/2018/03/dialogues-on-disability-shelley-tremain-interviews-christine-wiesel.html).
17. Fanon, *Black Skin*, 112.
18. Bettcher, "When Selves Have Sex," 610–11.
19. Fanon, *Black Skin*, 112.
20. Talia Mae Bettcher, "Evil Deceivers and Make-Believers: On Transphobic Violence and the Politics of Illusion," *Hypatia* 22, no. 3 (2007): 43–65.
21. *Ibid.*, 48–49.
22. *Ibid.*, 50.
23. *Ibid.*, 55.
24. Of course, trans people of color may also be subject to the very schemas that Fanon describes in addition to this genital-sexual schema.
25. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 4.

## CALL FOR PAPERS

The APA Newsletter on LGBTQ Issues in Philosophy invites members to submit papers, book reviews, and professional notes for publication in the fall 2019 edition. Submissions can address issues in the areas of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, gender, and sexuality studies, as well as issues of concern for LGBTQ people in the profession. The newsletter seeks quality paper submissions for review. Reviews and notes should address recent books, current events, or emerging trends. Members who give papers at APA divisional meetings, in particular, are encouraged to submit their work.

### DEADLINE

The deadline for submission of manuscripts for the fall edition is May 1, 2019.

### FORMAT

Papers should be in the range of 5,000–6,000 words. Reviews and Notes should be in the range of 1,000–2,000 words. All submissions must use endnotes and should be prepared for anonymous review.

### CONTACT

Submit all manuscripts electronically (MS Word), and direct inquiries to Grayson Hunt, Editor, APA Newsletter on LGBTQ Issues in Philosophy, [graysonhunt@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:graysonhunt@austin.utexas.edu).

## CONTRIBUTOR BIOS

**Ami Harbin** is an associate professor of philosophy and women and gender studies at Oakland University (Michigan). She is the author of *Disorientation and Moral Life* (Oxford University Press, 2016). Her research focuses on moral psychology, feminist ethics, and bioethics.

**Andrea J. Pitts** is assistant professor of philosophy at the University of North Carolina, Charlotte. Their research interests include critical prison studies, Latin American and US Latinx philosophy, critical philosophy of race, and feminist theory. Their publications appear in *IJFAB: International Journal of Feminist Approaches to Bioethics*, *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, *Radical Philosophy Review*, and *Inter-American Journal of Philosophy*. They are also co-editor of *Beyond Bergson: Examining Race and Colonialism through the Writings of Henri Bergson* (SUNY Press 2019).

**Perry Zurn** is assistant professor of philosophy at American University. He researches broadly in political philosophy, gender theory, and applied ethics, and contributes specifically to critical prison studies and curiosity studies. He is the author of *The Politics of Curiosity* (University of Minnesota Press, under contract), the co-author of *Curious Minds* (MIT Press, under contract), and the co-editor of *Active Intolerance: Michel Foucault, the Prisons Information Group, and the Future of Abolition* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), *Curiosity Studies: Toward a New Ecology of Knowledge* (University of Minnesota Press, forthcoming), *Intolerable: Writings from Michel Foucault and the Prisons Information Group* (University of Minnesota Press, under contract), and *Carceral Notebooks 12*. His articles have appeared in *Carceral Notebooks*, *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy*, *Modern and Contemporary France*, *philoSOPHIA*, *Radical Philosophy Review*, and *Zetesis*.

**Tamsin Kimoto** is a PhD student in the philosophy department at Emory University. Their areas of specialization are trans studies and philosophy, Women of Color feminisms, and social and political philosophy. Their current projects include a dissertation on the intersections of utopian political theories and critical trans politics and articles on queer of color critique and the practice of philosophy.



APA NEWSLETTER ON

# Native American and Indigenous Philosophy

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AGNES B. CURRY, MANAGING EDITOR

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## FROM THE MANAGING EDITOR

Agnes B. Curry  
UNIVERSITY OF SAINT JOSEPH

We are excited to welcome you to Volume 18 of the *APA Newsletter on Native American and Indigenous Philosophies*. This edition of the newsletter focuses on scholarship, and it is particularly strong in suggesting the range of ways Native American and Indigenous philosophy can contribute across both traditional and emerging branches of philosophical inquiry, from logic, metaphysics, epistemology, and philosophy of mind, to ethics and politics, to philosophies of art and culture.

As detailed by Lori Underwood, chair of the APA Committee on Native American and Indigenous Philosophers, in her introductory "Notes from the Committee Chair," the scholarly articles by Purcell, Welch, and Gallegos build from papers they presented at the 2018 APA Pacific Division meeting. We are grateful to Brian Burkhart for his work organizing the sessions and look forward to featuring scholarship from other 2018 session participants in future editions of the newsletter.

Our first scholarly article focuses on logic, particularly the partial and exclusionary model of rationality conveyed by traditional logic and the gate-keeping force this model continues to exert on Native and other underrepresented students. In "Sacred Truths, Fables, and Falsehoods: Intersections between Feminist and Native American Logics," Lauren Eichler of the University of Oregon examines the resonances between feminist and Native American analyses of classical logic. After considering the range of responses, from overly monolithic rejection to more nuanced appreciation, Eichler argues for a careful, pluralist understanding of logic as she articulates her suggestion that feminists and Native American philosophers could build fruitful alliances around this topic. Eichler's paper is a development of work presented at the 2017 Conference on "Decolonizing and Indigenizing Feminist Philosophy" sponsored by the Association for Feminist Ethics and Social Theory.<sup>1</sup>

Moving from classical Western logic as the gateway of Western philosophy, our second article makes its way to one of its citadels, if you will: Aristotle's metaphysics. In "On What There 'Is': Aristotle and the Aztecs on Being and Existence," L. Sebastian Purcell of SUNY Cortland starts from the fact that Nahuatl lacks the terms for "being" or "to be" that a Western approach would deem necessary to formulate the basic question of metaphysics—namely,

"What is there?" Yet, Purcell argues, not only were the Aztecs interested in metaphysics, their process-based answer animates a *prima facie* reasonable theory, grounding both a meaningful conception of "wisdom" and a conceptual apparatus to rival Aristotle's concept of substance. This essay is a continuation of Purcell's work comparing Aztec and Aristotelean thinking. His essay, "*Nehtilitzli* and the Good Life: On Aztec Ethics," won the 2016 APA Essay Prize in Latin American Thought sponsored by the Committee on Hispanics and is printed in the spring 2017 *Newsletter on Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy*.<sup>2</sup>

Our third article, "Dance as Native Performative Knowledge," by Shay Welch of Spelman College, focuses on epistemology—with implications of philosophical anthropology and ethics. Welch synthesizes work across Native American philosophy, cognitive science, phenomenology, and contemporary dance studies to ground a claim familiar to Native American and Indigenous people the world over yet marginalized in philosophy, that dancing vitally connects to the emergence of Truth. Moving from a propositional framework for knowledge to a performative, procedural framework that allows for attention to the work of metaphors not only at conscious but also non-conscious levels of bodily knowing, we see how dancing is storytelling. In dancing, the knowing-body summons individual and collective knowledge that can be "taken up"—in multiple senses of the term—into the lived, if not necessarily verbally articulable, knowledge-stance of a respectfully receptive viewer.

Continuing with the intertwining of epistemology and ethics, our fourth article, by Sergio Gallegos of John Jay College of Criminal Justice (CUNY), articulates the role of meta-ignorance in perpetuating epistemic injustice. In "En México no hay negros': Epistemic Injustice and the Struggle for Recognition of Afro-Mexicans," Gallegos describes how patterns of meta-ignorance undergird systemic failures of recognition that chronically render Afro-Mexicans in Mexico simultaneously invisible and foreign. After considering responses of coerced silencing and of epistemic resistance practiced by some Afro-Mexicans, particularly women from the Costa Chica region of Mexico, Gallegos then expands his inquiry to consider analogous situations affecting Native Americans in US society.

Finally, epistemological, artistic, and social-political issues animate Karl Mays's interdisciplinary examination, *Hip Hop Beats, Indigenous Rhymes: Modernity and Hip Hop in Indigenous North America*, reviewed by Andrew Smith of Drexel University. Smith describes how Mays's consideration of Native hip hop as an emerging art form

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helps to complicate notions of masculinity as well as modernity and indigeneity.

Like contemporary Native Dance, Indigenous hip hop invites us to consider from a variety of perspectives the significance of a whole host of activities, only inadequately understood as “artistic expressions” or “cultural practices,” in Native American and Indigenous people’s ongoing efforts to craft responsible, resilient, and creative response to current conditions. Our opening photo essay, “Túkmal Tóonavqal//Weaving Baskets,” by Shelbi Nahwilet Meissner of Michigan State University, lucidly—and beautifully—illustrates this point. Along with its stunning images, Meissner’s reflection prompts us to see not only how basketry connects to her research in Indigenous philosophy of language, but, more deeply, how such practices can help make the work *existentially* possible. As such, it is a fitting launching point for the inquiries that follow it—one that reminds us of the livings stakes of our attempts to expand the philosophical field.

**NOTES**

1. For more information on the FEAST conference, see <http://www.afeast.org/conferences/> and <http://www.afeast.org/resources/feast-2017-compact-schedule-draft-July-.pdf>.
2. L. Sebastian Purcell, “*Eudaimonia and Neltiliztli: Aristotle and the Aztecs on the Good Life*,” *American Philosophical Association Newsletter on Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy*, Vol 16, no. 2 (Spring 2017): 10-21, available at <https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.apaonline.org/resource/collection/60044C96-F3E0-4049-BC5A-271C673FA1E5/HispanicV16n2.pdf>.

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## SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

We invite you to submit your work for consideration for publication in the spring 2019 newsletter. We welcome work that foregrounds the philosophical, professional, and community concerns regarding Native American philosophers and philosophers of all global Indigenous nations. We welcome comments and responses to work published in this or past issues. Editors do not limit philosophical methods, modes, or literatures, as long as the work engages in substantive and sustained re-centering of the philosophical conversation to focus on Native American and Indigenous concerns. Nor do we limit the format of what can be submitted: we accept a range of submission formats, including and not limited to papers, opinion editorials, transcribed dialogue interviews, book reviews, poetry, links to oral and video resources, cartoons, artwork, satire, parody, and other diverse formats. For book reviews, in addition to evaluating the argument and scholarship of the work, reviewers should attend to whether, and if so how, the work is useful in developing Native American and Indigenous philosophy as a field and in teaching Native American and Indigenous philosophy at various levels. Evaluation of the work’s place in the project of decolonizing philosophy more generally, and of connecting to other decolonial projects is appreciated as well.

For all submissions, references should follow the *Chicago Manual of Style* and utilize endnotes rather than in-text citations except for extensive reference to a single source.

For further information, please see the Guidelines for Authors available on the APA website. The submission deadline for the spring 2019 newsletter is January 15, 2019. Please submit copies electronically to Agnes Curry at [acurry@usj.edu](mailto:acurry@usj.edu).

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## FROM THE COMMITTEE CHAIR

Lori J. Underwood  
CHRISTOPHER NEWPORT UNIVERSITY

Greetings, everyone. It’s been quite a busy year for the committee. You may have noticed a name change in our newsletter that reflects a corresponding change for our committee from “Newsletter on Indigenous Philosophers” to “Newsletter on Native American and Indigenous Philosophers.” After much consideration and discussion, we decided that this name better represents our vision and our mission.

We also welcomed two new members to our committee this year, Alex Guerrero and Christopher Kavelin. Alex, who has both a Ph.D. and J.D. from New York University, teaches at Rutgers University. Chris resides in Australia, has a Ph.D. in law and indigenous intellectual property from Macquarie University, and is associated with the Institute for Social Justice at Australian Catholic University. Welcome to the committee, Alex and Christopher. We look forward to sharing your ideas and insights in the years to come!

One of the highlights of the past year for us was the Pacific APA. This year the committee sponsored two sessions. The first session, “Indigenous Contributions in Existentialism, Ethics, Metaphysics, and Social Political Philosophy,” was chaired by Alejandro Santana from the University of Portland. James Maffie (University of Maryland) presented his paper “Mexica Ethics: Balance, Nepantla, and Weaving the Good Life.” Sebastian Purcell (SUNY Cortland) presented “On What There ‘Is’: The Aztec Approach Existence and Causation.” Krista Arias (University of British Columbia Okanagan) presented “Temazcalli: Crying, Bleeding, and the PsychoPolitics of Water Womb and Woman,” and Brian Yazzie Burkhart (California State University, Northridge) presented “We Are Made from Red Earth: Cherokee Decolonial Existentialism from the Land.”

The second session, “Epistemic Resistance, Survival Ethics, Social Justice, and Performative Knowledge in Native American and Mexican America,” was chaired by Lara Trout of the University of Portland. Sergio Gallegos (now of John Jay College of Criminal Justice) presented “En México no hay Negros, no hay Negras’: AfroMexican Women’s Epistemic Resistance Against Practices of Silencing.” Shay Welch (Spelman College) presented “Dance as Native Performative Knowledge.” Gregory Frenando Pappas (Texas A&M University) presented “How to Approach Injustices? Lessons from Some Mexican-Americans,” and Lori Gallegos (Texas State University at San Marcos) presented “The Ethics of Making a Home: Tactics of Survival and the Politics of Assimilation.” The papers were insightful and elicited thoughtful and productive discussion.

The Central Division meeting also featured a panel, co-sponsored with the International Society for Environmental Ethics and chaired by Robert Melchior Figueroa (Oregon State University). He also presented "Memo to Maria: Engendering the Legacy of Environmental Colonialism in Puerto Rico." Other panelists were Chaone Mallory (University of Southern California) who presented "Decolonizing Environmental Philosophy: Whiteness, Gender, Dis/Ability, and Teaching 'the Canon' of Environmental Ethics," Brian Yazzie Burkhart (California State University, Northridge) who presented "Environmentalism through Being-from-the-Land: Indigenous Decolonial Environmental Philosophy," and Bjørn Kristensen (Oregon State University) who presented "An Interspecies Perspective on Food Justice in the Majority World."

We look forward to featuring more work developed from these sessions in future newsletters and to extending our involvement at all three divisional meetings in the coming years.

Finally, the committee would like to highlight the excellent artistic and academic works of Shelbi Nahwilet Meissner. Those interested in helping Indigenous youth, adults, and elders access quality basketweaving opportunities, please follow the [California Indian Basketweavers Association](#) and consider making a charitable donation to this important organization.

Thank you all for your continued support.

## ARTICLES

### *Túkmal Tóonavqal // Weaving Baskets*

Shelbi Nahwilet Meissner  
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY



**Figure 1.** A coil-style grass basket in progress. This is a gift for Meissner's mother.

In my research, I often feel overwhelmed and lonely, as one of very few Indigenous women in academic philosophy, and as the only Southern California Indian person I know of studying in the Midwest. I often feel very homesick, or, as we might say in Luiseño, *notmá ahiichumay*, literally, "my mouth is a little orphan." To combat this loneliness while writing a dissertation about Indigenous philosophy of language, I have been taking long breaks to weave baskets, process *kwíila*

(acorns) into delicious treats, and to practice singing and chattering to myself in my language. Participating in these cultural practices thousands of miles from my ancestral home has been a profound act of self-care and has helped me ground myself in my work.

I realize while I weave that the process of making a basket is so deeply connected to Luiseño conceptions of language; just like the basketry materials, the *tóonavpish*, come from the land, so does our language. Just as the *tóonavpish* should be gathered in our traditional gathering places, according to our ancestral protocols, our language should

be tended to in the places it grows best, and reclaimed according to the system of ethics embedded in the Luiseño cosmology. Just as the juncus, deergrass, pine needles, and sumac we weave our baskets with are regarded as living relatives to whom we have responsibilities, our language, too, is a living relative, not a mere system of sounds, symbols, names, and predicates. Language reclamation, like basketweaving, is an act of visiting. And just as every basket I weave is a gift for one of my colleagues, a family member, or a mentor, the language reclamation work myself and others do is first and foremost a gift for our communities.

If you are interested in helping Indigenous youth, adults, and elders access quality basketweaving opportunities, please follow the [California Indian Basketweavers Association](#) and consider making a charitable donation to this important organization.



**Figure 2.** The beginning stage of a pineneedle basket Meissner wove as a gift for one of her mentors. The centerpiece of the basket is a slice of a walnut shell. The white seashells in the corner were sewn into the crown of the finished basket.



**Figure 3.** Beginning stages of a tiny horsehair basket. Woven with brown horsehair and beige palm grass.

## *Sacred Truths, Fables, and Falsehoods: Intersections between Feminist and Native American Logics*

Lauren Eichler  
UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

"As a young American Indian undergraduate philosophy student . . . I harbored a deep desire to do well in logic. Euro-American professors wanted philosophy students to believe that logic courses presented to us the opportunity to 'master' the methodology of philosophy, that the very structure of human philosophical thought would be revealed to us in our study of logic," writes Seminole philosopher Anne Waters.<sup>1</sup> Though Waters went on to teach dozens of logic courses, she remained uncomfortable with some of the characteristics of logic itself, particularly its reliance on abstraction and discrete binary dualisms. Her discontent with the limits of classical logic was mirrored by the difficulty some of her Native American students also had with the subject. Many Native students, she noted, were dropping out of and having difficulty passing logic courses. This was not because they were incapable of doing logic, but because this kind of ordering did not resonate with many of them and the methods of reasoning used by their communities.<sup>2</sup> Rather than focusing on particulars and content, the things that make inquiry into philosophical meaningful, logic was largely about form and ordering the world so as to fit that form and no other. Formal logic excluded the students' experiences and the standpoint of their nations while forcing their traditions, values, and knowledges into the framework of Western rationality.

The experience of feeling alienated by formal logic yet desirous to prove that one is an authentic philosopher and not an impostor has been shared by other traditionally marginalized groups in the discipline of philosophy, especially feminist scholars. For example, in her essay "Power in the Service of Love," Carroll Guen Hart recounts her experience of fearing and avoiding taking logic courses: "Like many women in philosophy I did not begin there as an undergraduate because of logic . . . I had taken a look at the logic textbooks . . . and knew I could never grasp all of this."<sup>3</sup> Later, in graduate school, when taking a course on ontology, her worst fears were realized—she was told by her mentor that she had "no gift for high abstraction."<sup>4</sup> Likewise, Andrea Nye reflected on her difficult experience of learning logic, asking herself, "Is it because I, as a woman, had a different kind of mind, incapable of abstraction and therefore of theorizing, is it because I was too 'emotional'? Is it because when I read the logic exercise I persisted in thinking about [the context of the problem]. . . , when none of this matters?"<sup>5</sup> Like Waters's Native students, many female students in philosophy wrestled with the emphasis on form rather than substance in logic classes. The similar experiences of these two groups despite their different backgrounds demonstrate that there are recurring problems with formal logic that need to be solved so that logic can be less intimidating and ostracizing. The common experiences of these two groups also suggest that overcoming these challenges could be a collaborative effort, ensuring that

the particular effects of these challenges that each group faces are adequately addressed.

The problems identified by the writers of the above stories are closely associated with classical logic. Classical logic refers to the method of formal logic developed by the Ancient Greeks—particularly Parmenides, Plato, and Aristotle. It is based on three main metaphysical principles: the law of identity, the law of non-contradiction, and the law of the excluded middle. In *Logic: Argument, Inquiry, Order*, Scott Pratt argues that there are four main issues that have been raised against logic, all of which can be seen in the classroom experiences described above: the problem of abstraction, the problem of dualism, the problem of incommensurability, and the problem of boundaries.<sup>6</sup> As Nye's experience above shows, the problem with abstraction is that it divorces form from content, which "institutes a separation from the world, adopts a structure that is in accord with the interests of a certain class and gender, and then is returned to the world as an absolute structure which necessarily frames human interactions and experience."<sup>7</sup> The problem with dualism is specific to the way that negation is treated in classical logic. According to Val Plumwood, dualisms are relations of difference that have become "relations of separation and domination inscribed and naturalized in culture."<sup>8</sup> Abstraction and dualism can lead to the third and fourth problems. If divisions are necessary and those divisions have become naturalized and inscribed in culture, then it may be impossible or very difficult for different logics to be communicable or even to coexist. When one term in the division is privileged over the other as it is in dualism, the other term may be dismissed as wrong, irrelevant, or unimportant, leading to incommensurability. Dualistic thinking and incommensurability suggest that there are strict boundaries that either cannot or should not be crossed. Such boundaries divide the world into abstract categories that exclude the in-between and border spaces that connect the two sides of the dualism. Though there have been developments in formal logic since the Classical period, the laws of classical logic have frequently been treated as impervious, necessary, and objectively true. However, classical logic is just one interpretation of logic. Pratt, for example, defines logic as "a study of the principles that order the relations among claims about the world."<sup>9</sup> According to this definition, there can be many different logics. As such, his definition is more expansive than the strict interpretation of logic under the laws of classical logic. Based on Pratt's definition, classical logic becomes just *one of many* legitimate forms of logic.

Scholars of various backgrounds, including feminist, decolonial, Latinx, and Native American scholars, have voiced many variations of these claims and concerns. In this paper, I draw on the criticisms of classical logic raised by feminist and Native American philosophers in order to show that logic does not have to be a site of incommensurability and domination. First, if we accept that there can be many different legitimate forms of logic such as feminist and Native American approaches, then we can move away from the idea of the superior monolithic logic that has been the tool of domination. Second, because they come from different starting points as insiders or



outsiders to Western systems of rationality, feminist and Native American scholars can each bring something to the table to solve their common problems regarding logic. In the first section I draw on the work of feminist philosophers Genevieve Lloyd, Andrea Nye, and Val Plumwood to explain how abstraction and dualism have been used to exclude certain methods of reasoning and discount the people who use those methods. Next, with the help of Native American scholars Anne Waters, Vine Deloria Jr., Viola F. Cordova, and Thomas Norton-Smith, I show how these problems have sustained the notion that Western and Native American logics are radically different and incommensurable, leading to the dismissal, erasure, and destruction of Native American logics, methodologies, and even cultures. In the final section, I argue that feminist and Native American approaches to logic offer an opportunity to overcome incommensurability for two reasons. First, both groups share many of the same criticisms of logic, which gives them a common starting point for philosophical collaboration. Second, Native American logics offer solutions to many of the concerns feminists raise, meaning that feminists, should they be truly committed to solving the problems that have been identified with logic and willing to listen, stand to learn much from Native scholars. Likewise, Native American scholars may be able to use these similarities as an opportunity to gain allies who will respect, support, and fight for them within the dominant colonial culture. I argue that the key to overcoming incommensurability and boundaries for these two groups (who are already critical of abstraction and dualism) is to become, in Anne Waters's words, "bi-cultural"—that is, able to translate information from one worldview to another and vice versa.<sup>10</sup>

## I. ABSTRACTION AND DUALISM: FEMINIST CRITIQUES OF CLASSICAL LOGIC

Logic has often been touted as an entirely rational, neutral, and objective method of reasoning that can consistently lead to a clear, distinct, and truthful ordering of the world when the correct forms, methods, and principles are followed. Feminist logicians have debunked this myth, arguing that classical logic, which has formed the foundation for many subsequent formal and symbolic logics, is actually a culturally biased, selected form of reasoning that enables one group to exclude and dominate others, especially via classical logic's understanding of negation. According to Genevieve Lloyd, the domain of reason, of which logic is a part, has been historically treated as the domain of men.<sup>11</sup> Deemed irrational and emotional, women were considered in Aristotle's cosmology to be more rational than animals, but less rational than men. Such beliefs were maintained throughout the Middle Ages and into the modern period, during which time women became associated with virtues such as chastity, docility, and passivity, considered opposite to the virtues displayed by men such as detachment from transient emotions and material concerns. As these values sedimented into cultural mores, women were frequently denied the opportunity to receive an education that would permit them to participate in rational discourse on the assumption that they were incapable of it. In denying women the opportunity to learn the various methods of reason proposed by philosophers like Descartes, Leibniz, and Spinoza, men made women conform to the image they

had of them. As Lloyd puts it, "women are perforce *left* emotional, impulsive, fancy-ridden . . . [making] it true, in a way . . . that women are less rational than men."<sup>12</sup> As Lloyd and other feminists have pointed out, the effects of this history are still being felt by women today as the stories above and the large discrepancy between genders in the professional discipline of philosophy attests.

In her book *Words of Power*, Nye also critiques the history of reason from a feminist perspective, but with a narrower focus on logic per se. Nye argues that logic is a sphere of unlimited abstraction that has been used to assert the mastery of some groups over others by positing logic as objective, neutral, and uncorrupted by emotion, human concerns, and sensible content. From a traditional view of logic, the political, religious, and cultural views of the logician are utterly outside its concerns. The success and failures of logic are entirely formal.<sup>13</sup> Logicians, she claims, "have agreed that to do logic you must remove yourself from any concrete situation in time and space to contemplate eternal verities."<sup>14</sup> In other words, in order to properly practice logic one must ignore context—the motivations behind an inquiry, historical and cultural situations, the person of the logician, and the origins of logic and the ideas being spoken about. In this view, logic transcends interpersonal relationships and stands outside and beyond lived experience.

However, Nye contends that while logic presents itself as unfettered by human ideology, it is actually steeped in masculinist, Eurocentric assumptions. In particular, she claims that logic is a language spoken by men that excludes other forms of speech including "the emotional expression of women, the subrational words of slaves, the primitive political views of barbarians, and the tainted opinions of anyone who does manual labor."<sup>15</sup> It employs division, abstraction, and negation as instruments to dominate the Other. Given these tendencies in logic and its disconnection from context, relationships, and lived experience, Nye advocates a strong response—do away with logic altogether and adopt a new method of arriving at truth: "reading."<sup>16</sup> Unlike logic, which focuses on the form of propositions, reading takes the content, language, and speaker into account. Whereas Nye holds that logic can be easily manipulated by those in power because the meaning of words becomes secondary to the form of the argument, she contends that reading emphasizes the importance of textual analysis, of listening to the words of others, and of the exchange of ideas rather than forms. Reading takes into account the relationships between speakers, the place in which they are speaking, and the historical and cultural circumstances of their utterances. Broadly speaking, Nye advocates a substantive approach to determining the truth rather than a formal approach for several reasons. First, logicians deceive themselves when they claim that logic is neutral and objective because logic itself is a human-derived methodology that arose in a specific time and place. Second, formal logic, when abstracted from context, can be manipulated by those in power to dominate and control. Third, formal logic requires everyone to conform to a certain methodology, erasing differences and perpetuating homogeneity. A substantive approach to truth-finding would relinquish the myth of

the one right way to reason, thus taking logic out of the hands of the powerful and opening up the possibility of more democratic and varied ways of rationalizing. These methods would not rely on formal structures, arguments, and counter-arguments, but on creating consensus through cooperation, reciprocity, intimacy, custom, ritual, and art.<sup>17</sup> Nye believes that by taking this approach all people, not only logicians or those in power, will be better equipped to understand and assess the ideas that are circulated in the social and political spheres.

Like Nye, Val Plumwood agrees that classical logic has been used as a tool to dominate, marginalize, and colonize non-Europeans, women, and nature. But unlike Nye, Plumwood asserts that “feminists and others concerned to develop conceptual structures which can be tools of liberation need not abandon the field of logic entirely.”<sup>18</sup> She resists Nye’s claim that logical abstraction is inherently oppressive; rather, the problem is that particular doctrines of abstraction have been used to delegitimize the sphere of the particular and personal while claiming to be politically neutral.<sup>19</sup> Plumwood also rejects the way in which Nye treats logic as monolithic, ignoring the many newer developments in symbolic logic such as relevant and paraconsistent logics. Nye also assumes that logic stems from a Western tradition and that non-Western cultures like Indigenous cultures do not employ their own logical systems that may not necessarily follow the same reasoning as classical Western logic. According to Plumwood, if we accept that there are many logics, then “we can begin to understand systems of logic and their corresponding systems of rationality as *selected*” to privilege certain forms of reasoning as intuitive or normal.<sup>20</sup> Because there can be a variety of different logics for determining truth, logic itself is not the problem. Taking Nye’s concerns into consideration, Plumwood focuses those criticisms toward classical logic, specifically on the operation of negation within classical logic and its tendency toward constructing dualisms and promoting binary thinking.

In *Metaphysics*, Aristotle presents three principles which have become pillars of classical logic: the principles of identity, non-contradiction, and the excluded middle. According to the principle of identity  $p$  equals  $p$ , or each thing is identical with itself. Aristotle intended us to understand this to mean that each thing is composed of its own essence and characteristics that define it as that which it is. The principle of non-contradiction holds that  $p$  and  $not-p$  cannot both be true simultaneously and in the same way. Alternately, a thing cannot both exist and not exist at the same time and in the same respect. Finally, according to the law of the excluded middle, everything must be or not be.<sup>21</sup> In terms of truth-statements, this means that a proposition is either true or not true and cannot be both simultaneously. These three principles rely explicitly on a mode of binarial thinking in which our understanding of truth and falsity, reality and fiction rely on a dichotomous distinction between the two. It also suggests a fixed, static, and orderly way of understanding reality and truth where change, flux, intermediaries, and borderlands do not exist. Either  $p$  exists or it does not; either  $p$  is true or it is not;  $p$  is always fixed as itself. Plumwood voices her concern with classical logic by focusing on the role of negation as it

pertains to these principles and the dualistic thinking that results.

Plumwood defines dualism “as a particular way of dividing the world which results from a certain kind of denied dependency on a subordinated other . . . dualism can be seen as an alienated form of differentiation, in which power construes and constructs difference in terms of an inferior and alien realm.”<sup>22</sup> Whereas dichotomy is simply making a division or distinction, dualism treats the division as absolute and as part of the natural order of things. It uses the patterns of difference rendered by dichotomies to establish hierarchies in which the dualized other is systematically constructed as Other. In dualistic thinking each term of a relationship ( $p$  and  $not-p$ ) is treated as a self-identical entity that possesses an essential, unchanging nature. The two terms are then related to one another not just in terms of being different, but so that one side of the relation always represents a lack or absence of some positive quality that exists in the other. In other words, dualisms like culture/nature, male/female, savage/civilized, and human/animal treat differences as inherent and fixed where the second term in the relationship is the representation of the absence of the essence of the first term. The perpetual use of these dualisms, which place different levels of value on each term, and the way that they so neatly align with the principles of classical logic helps to naturalize systems of domination. The rational structure of dualisms plays out quite clearly in theories of classical negation if we take negation to represent “Otherness.” In classical negation  $not-p$  consists of “the universe without  $p$ , everything in the universe other than what  $p$  covers,” meaning that  $not-p$  depends on  $p$  for its definition and is not treated as an independent other.<sup>23</sup> This ultimately ends up centering  $p$  while placing  $not-p$  on the periphery.

The problems with classical logic arise when its principles are taken to not just apply to propositional statements, but to the beings and institutions that constitute our material, social, and political reality. When this happens, Plumwood argues that this understanding of negation results in a logic of domination in which one group of people asserts its superiority over another. Dualistic thinking diminishes the importance of the negative value, the Other, in a variety of ways. Through backgrounding, the Other is deemed inessential, their contributions and reality treated as unimportant and not worth noticing. The view of the positive value, the “master,” is considered universal, and alternative perspectives are not considered or even imagined.<sup>24</sup> Despite this, the master requires the Other to be the boundary against which the identity of the master is defined. In this relational definition, the Other is perceived as a lack or negativity.<sup>25</sup> Yet, because the master does not want to admit any kind of dependency on the Other, the master polarizes the relationship by downplaying similarities while maximizing and magnifying differences, resulting in radical exclusion.<sup>26</sup> Radical exclusion, in turn, reinforces essentialist approaches to the Other, specifically via objectification (treating the Other as an object or instrument for one’s use rather than as an independent agent with its own goals and purposes) and homogenization (ignoring differences that exist within those relegated to a lesser status).<sup>27</sup> In this respect, classical

negation reflects a relationship of mastery wherein one side of a dualism or one *p*-value is privileged over another. Through these five characteristics, dualism imposes a stark, uncompromising, and hierarchical division between two orders that could be understood in more integrated ways. As such, dualism “provides the cultural grounding for an ideological structure which justifies many different forms of oppression, including male-centeredness, Euro-centeredness, ethno-centeredness, human-centeredness, and many more.”<sup>28</sup>

Unlike Nye, Plumwood does not believe these problems are grounds for abandoning logic altogether. Instead, Plumwood affirms the notion of a diversity of logics, some of which are “fully worked out” systems with different features that do not run into these issues.<sup>29</sup> Pursuing other logics, like paraconsistent and relevant logics, can help us move away from the harmful effects of classical ways of thinking. In addition to these other systems of formal logic, many non-Western cultures have their own fully worked out logical systems. As we will see in the next section, Native American cultures have robust logics that consist of principles, which order the relations among claims about the world while not getting mired in the problems beset by classical logic.

## II. INCOMMENSURABILITY AND BOUNDARIES: NATIVE AMERICAN SOLUTIONS TO CLASSICAL LOGIC

Native American scholars have identified the same problems with logic that feminists have: formal logic is exclusionary of other forms of rationality, is too abstract, and promotes thinking in terms of discrete binary dualisms. Just as formal logic has been considered the domain of the masculine, it has also been the domain of the Eurocentric worldview which has treated other worldviews as inferior and illegitimate. Yet, for Native scholars the exclusion of different forms of reasoning does not just lead to oppression, it also erases and destroys traditional ways of life and the worldviews that accompany them. In this respect, classical logic quite literally enacts what Patrick Wolfe calls the “logic of elimination,” which refers to the metaphysical principles and assumptions that characterize and justify settler colonialism.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, Western philosophy has long used “rationality” as the measuring stick for who gets recognized as an autonomous, adult person with legitimate and worthwhile goals. Thus, denying another’s rationality is tantamount to denying that the Other is a person worthy of respect and moral consideration. This problem has plagued Native Americans for centuries as white settlers used this reasoning to dehumanize Indigenous peoples and justify practices of ethnic cleansing, forced removal, and re-education. In what follows, I outline the criticism Native scholars have brought against logic and show how the problems of abstraction and dualism lead to incommensurability and boundaries. I will also draw on the work of several Native American philosophers to show how Native methodologies *are actual* logics based on principles that describe the relations of claims about the world. Although this section focuses on what Native American logics bring over and how Native peoples have suffered because of Western logic, we can

also see a number of parallels between the criticisms of Native peoples and feminist scholars. This similarity can help provide a starting point for making Western and Indigenous logics more commensurable.

As a logic instructor, philosopher Anne Waters had the opportunity to observe the experiences of Native American students in her classroom. Noting that these students tended to have more difficulty passing and staying in logic classes, Waters determined that two main factors were contributing to this situation: logic’s reliance on abstraction and its reliance on dualism.<sup>31</sup> According to Waters, the problem with abstraction can be traced back to Plato’s metaphysics in which he envisioned reality and “truth” as static, of the mind, and abstract. In his schema, “[t]he ‘true’ became an object of worship, existing in total abstraction from the physical bodies of the universe,” and the physical realm “became an object of derogation and want, drawing attention away from the realm of ‘the true,’ which for Plato is also the highest form of good.”<sup>32</sup> By establishing a correspondence between abstraction, truthfulness, and goodness, Plato created a hierarchy in which the non-changing, abstract Forms of Truth and the Good were valued higher than the impure material world, which only functioned to distract and restrict thought. In this manner, dualisms like mind/body, abstract/concrete, and good/evil were established and connected. As an endeavor of abstraction, logic separates form from content, then that form gets applied to the world with the expectation that everything will fit into it. However, despite its aspirations toward objective, pure truth, the selection and application of this logic reflects the prejudices and hierarchies of those in power and making the distinction. This can be seen in the way Ancient Greek metaphysics spread throughout the world, first, through Christian scholars who introduced it to much of Europe, and later, when Conquistadors, pilgrims, and Catholic missionaries took it to the Americas, Africa, and Asia where it was used to impose colonial cultures.

For the Indigenous peoples of the Americas, the logic and metaphysics of the newcomers proved oppressive and deadly. The imposition of European systems of reasoning on Native cultures had several concrete effects. It obliterated opportunities for communication between the two cultures by treating one way of knowing as absolute and “right” while the other was misguided and primitive.<sup>33</sup> As such, Native logic was treated as incommensurable with Western logics. Because non-abstract and non-binary approaches to thought were deemed inadequate to the task of acquiring the Truth and the Good, those methodologies and peoples who used them were also relegated to the lower side of a dualistic hierarchy. This led to labeling Indigenous people as irrational, inferior, uncivilized, ignorant, primitive, and so on. The hierarchy established between the different peoples created boundaries, making it possible for the European colonists to believe Native Americans were members of an ontologically inferior category that, like animals and other resources, could be killed, used up, and transferred to more convenient locations. The imposition of Western logical systems and the metaphysics that founded them also disrupted and transformed Indigenous cultures. Theistic and masculinist worldviews took the place of more harmonious and complementary systems of relations in Indigenous

communities as large numbers of Native Americans died from disease and genocide, their traditional knowledge and methodologies disappearing with them.<sup>34</sup>

As dualistic structures took hold, the effect was to artificially limit the number of possibilities and potentialities that Native ontologies typically include. As we saw above, one of the central characteristics of binary logic systems is that all meaning is put into a value system that only has two values—true and false, *p* and *not-p*. Following the law of the excluded middle, binary thinking eliminates other values. By way of example, Waters looks at the treatment of gender in Chippewa society before and after colonization. After colonization, gender became fixed into the two categories of male and female, which were based on phenotypical expressions of chromosomes. Furthermore, these categories appear to be fixed in time and space, unchanging and essential. However, from a Chippewa perspective on gender three categories exist: male, female, and indeterminate/irrelevant. Indeed, even “male” and “female” are not necessarily given categories, but are, at times, an achieved status.<sup>35</sup> In this respect Native logics and ontologies were already constructed in such a way as to think beyond the binary and beyond the laws of classical logic. But as fewer people were alive to sustain and pass on these methodologies, settlers were able to more effectively take control of these relationships and conform them to their logic.

Dualisms like the male/female are, as we see here, culturally constructed, reflecting dominant cultural identities, values, and hierarchies. Many feminists, who wish to reject these binaries, have had to struggle to imagine alternative ontologies and logics that permit the existence of third terms while not simply reversing the hierarchies. For Indigenous people, the resistance against the metaphysics of classical logic has consisted of reasserting and reclaiming the logic of their traditional methodologies and worldviews. This is vital because in Native American philosophies logic and epistemology are not separate areas of inquiry from metaphysics and ethics. What are often considered different branches of philosophy in the Euro-American view are related and intertwined in Native American philosophies. In *The Soul of the Indian*, Charles Eastman (Dakota Sioux) tells a story that illustrates the way in which these two approaches to logic and reality conflict, leading to incommensurability.

A missionary once undertook to instruct a group of Indians in the truths of his holy religion. He told them of the creation of the earth in six days, and of the fall of our first parents by eating an apple.

The courteous savages listened attentively, and after thanking him, one related in his turn a very ancient tradition concerning the origin of maize. But the missionary plainly showed his disgust and disbelief, indignantly saying: ‘What I delivered to you were sacred truths, but this that you tell me is mere fable and falsehood!’

“My brother,” gravely replied the offended Indian, “it seems that you have not been well grounded in

the rules of civility. You saw that we, who practice these rules, believed your stories; why, then, do you refuse to credit ours?”<sup>36</sup>

In classical logic, either *p* or *not-p* is true; the value of true cannot be assigned to both. The missionary, who adheres to this reasoning, cannot accept the truth of the Indians’ stories while the Native people, rejecting the principle of non-contradiction, see these two origin stories as equally true. This story illustrates how the principles of classical logic can lead to incommensurability as adhering to them does not permit the acceptance of multiple truths simultaneously or for middle terms. However, in Native American logics, more than two values can appear to be accounted for without leading to radical exclusion or contradiction. In this way, Native logics are inclusive rather than exclusive. By accepting the possibility that there are different truths for different people in different contexts and situations, Native logics cannot just dismiss, background, or objectify alternative methodologies the way that classical logic does. Given this, Native logics’ approach to truth might seem as though it leads to relativism, but this is not accurate. Instead, Native logics use different principles for determining truth. Because there are as many Native philosophies as there are Native nations, all of which are practiced differently than Western philosophy, I have identified three main principles described by various Indigenous philosophers that characterize the metaphysics of Native American logic. The first principle is that there is a diversity of creations. According to Jicarilla Apache philosopher Viola F. Cordova, many Native American cultures share the idea of separate creations, of different people coming into being in their own places and times. As a result, “Native Americans do not argue over differences in how the world is described by various groups of human beings. The reason is that each description is assumed to be *local*; the stories of origin . . . are assumed to refer to a definite bounded space.”<sup>37</sup> In other words, because people come from different places with their own histories, they can have knowledge and truths that are not possessed by others. But rather than this becoming an incentive to spread one single truth to which all others should conform, the diversity of creations makes it acceptable for different groups to have different areas of knowledge and expertise. Knowing the limits of one’s own knowledge and being willing to share and listen to what’s shared are thus integral to supporting this principle. In the story above, we can see that the missionary, who treats his story as universal to all creation, dismisses the story told by the Native Americans. The Indians, on the other hand, understand their story and the missionary’s to be localized creations, reflective of their own particular times, spaces, and relations.

The incommensurability displayed by the missionary in the above story also illustrates the assumption in classical logic that boundaries are stark, fixed, and absolute. In creating a boundary between sacred truth on the one side and fable and falsehood on the other, the missionary imposes this division in such a way that implies that he is superior for having access to the truth while the Native people are inferior, ignorant savages. As such, he establishes a dualism. This, too, is antithetical to Native methods of reasoning. Ontologically speaking, American Indian

philosophies generally do not recognize hierarchies of difference. According to Cordova, “Instead of hierarchies [Native Americans] see *differences* which exist among equal ‘beings.’ The equality is based on the notion, often unstated, that everything that is, is of one process.”<sup>38</sup> In other words, Native American thought tends to ascribe to a relational ontology in which there are no discrete, atomistic individuals, but, rather, ongoing processes and practices that make and remake the world and its inhabitants.

This leads to the second principle of Native American logic—everything is related. In this story there is an emphasis on engaging in ethical relations. Note the respectful way in which the Native Americans interact with the missionary and his disrespectful response to them. For the missionary, suggesting that there might be an alternative to his version of the truth violates his principles, which hold that truth transcends the particular material situation of individuals. From Plato or Aristotle’s perspective, rejecting the principles of non-contradiction and the excluded middle would be proof of Native Americans’ irrationality, but this would overlook the goals of Native American philosophies. Instead, the *ethics* of assuming that both tales in the above story are true needs to be taken into account. Unlike Eurocentric logics, Native logics are not solely interested in the *p*-value of propositional statements; instead, logic is directed toward taking the right actions and developing healthy relationships. For Plato the goal of logic was to help one attain the highest Form of the Good: Truth. The goal of logic for Native cultures is also the truth and the good, but what those concepts mean from a Native American perspective is quite different. Where Plato idealized abstraction and a life free of material restraints and distractions, many Indigenous worldviews hold that the good is not an abstract concept, but a way of living that comes out of meaningful, reciprocal relationships with the community including the land and the nonhuman beings that make life possible. Brian Yazzie Burkhart explains how the principle that everything is related conveys the idea that we should focus on what is around us that are direct parts of our experience. This is because we do not just react to stimuli from the world; instead, “[w]e participate in the meaning-making of the world. There is no world, no truth, without meaning and value, and meaning and value arise in the intersection between us and all that is around us.”<sup>39</sup>

Burkhart’s account of the principle that everything is related also suggests that truth is an effect of action rather than of formal propositions. According to Shawnee philosopher Thomas Norton-Smith, performances or actions have as much semantic force as language does in Western contexts. In classical logic, language is often treated as descriptive and, as such, can be judged on whether or not it makes true statements about the world that it describes. For many Native American cultures, action and performance are the primary carriers of truth. For Smith, performance does not just describe the world, it has the power to create and recreate the world. By practicing, performing, following certain procedures, one creates truth by shaping reality through one’s actions. In this respect, Native American logics reject correspondence theories of truth that hold that the world exists independently of us and our representations of it. Instead, Norton-Smith explains that “According to the

Native conception of truth an action or performance is true for an individual or group only if the action or performance respectfully and successfully achieves its goal.”<sup>40</sup> In other words, truth is not something figured out abstractly in the mind alone; it emerges out of a set of practices that can only be understood in a relational and ethical context. As such, rationality and logic take a different form insofar as they are directed toward a different goal. They could more accurately be described as “kinship logics,” modes of reasoning that organize the world and direct moral action based on relationships rather than on truth values.

This brings us to the third principle: the universe is alive and must be approached in a personal manner.<sup>41</sup> To say that the universe is alive is to say that it is populated by lively beings that are not passive recipients of human actions, but active participants in relations. Just as humans can alter the world, the world can act on and alter us. In this respect, the universe is personal—that is, having personality and particularity. According to Vine Deloria Jr. of the Lakota Sioux, this means that “the personal nature of the universe demands that each and every entity in it seek and sustain personal relationships.”<sup>42</sup> For Deloria, knowledge is useful insofar as it is directed toward helping humans find and walk upon the proper ethical and moral road. He elaborates, explaining, “Absent . . . was the idea that knowledge existed apart from human beings and their communities, and could stand alone for ‘its own sake.’ In the Indian conception, it was impossible that there could be abstract propositions that could be used to explore the structure of the physical world.”<sup>43</sup> Gregory Cajete, a member of the Tewa elaborates: Native philosophy “is not based on rational thought alone but incorporates to the fullest degree all aspects of interactions of ‘human in and of nature,’ that is, the knowledge and truth gained from interaction of body, mind, soul, and spirit with all aspects of nature.”<sup>44</sup> In other words, the type of reasoning deployed takes into account one’s context, situation, and material conditions. This is not to say that abstraction does not exist in Native American thought but that abstraction is inadequate for explaining a whole range of experiences, questions, and challenges people face that affect one’s experience of the good. Thus, knowledge divorced from content, experience, and life—in other words, pure abstraction—has only a small place in Native American thought. Focusing on the particulars and one’s relations are believed to be more successful in achieving a good life.

By examining the differences between the principles of classical logic and principles of Native American logic, we can see how the problems of abstraction and dualism are avoided in Native thought. We also see that abstraction and dualism cause the problems of incommensurability and boundary-making in Western thought. For feminist philosophers concerned with the harmful effects of naturalized notions of abstract truth and binary dualisms, Native logic appears to offer many of the solutions that they desire. The focus on the particular, the content of one’s words and actions, and the substantive over the formal satisfies Nye’s desires for a more personal, meaningful system of logic. The emphasis on relatedness and diversity helps overcome the problems with dualism that Plumwood raises while also providing space for multiple logics to

coexist. As such, Native logics fulfill Lloyd's hope for an inclusive rather than exclusive method of reason. The compatibility between the principles of Native American logic and the critiques of feminist logicians against classical logic show that there is common ground between the two groups that can help overcome incommensurability while breaking down strict binaries. In the concluding section of the paper, I consider the notion of bi-culturalism as one means of overcoming the divisions that have been imposed by Western logic.

### III. LOGICAL PLURALISM AND BI-CULTURALISM

Though Waters raises many of the same criticisms against logic as those presented by Lloyd, Nye, and Plumwood, she does not reject logic outright for several reasons. First, Western rationality is the dominant paradigm, especially in academia. Learning logic skills can help Native students navigate and succeed in non-Native spaces.<sup>45</sup> Second, logic can be made to be relevant and relatable. Instead of just focusing on form alone, Waters strives to incorporate historical, traditional, and other relevant examples into her class to demonstrate argumentative strength and fallacies.<sup>46</sup> In this way she can show students why logic is meaningful for their lives. Finally, and most importantly, when logic is made to be culturally relevant it can empower Native American learning and understanding while reinforcing a positive sense of self and cultural identity.<sup>47</sup> Native students, she explains, are bi-cultural; that is, they inhabit Native-centric and Euro-centric cultural spaces at the same time. Because American society has treated these two worlds as radically separate and has dismissed the Native-centric worldview as unimportant, Native students may struggle to connect these two different aspects of their lives. Critical thinking and logic classes can help students to translate one set of standpoints and values to the other worldview and back again. For Waters, doing logic bi-culturally means "placing identity information about myself into the classroom setting, and using a variety of culturally relevant content for my examples."<sup>48</sup> Doing so creates a safe and inclusive space for students to express the diversity of their cultural values, affirming that diversity instead of forcing it to conform to a rigid set of rules. Thus, Western logic can be relatable and empowering when done thoughtfully and respectfully, with Native values in mind.

If feminists are committed to overcoming the problems they have identified with logic, then adopting a bi-cultural method should be a priority for them. However, the majority of feminist philosophers are of Euro-American descent and, thus, bi-culturalism is not something they are born into. For white feminists, affirming bi-culturalism would mean, first and foremost, acknowledging that there can be a diversity of logics, each equally effective. But acknowledgement alone is not enough. Feminists must become involved in the making and remaking of the world by practicing respectful methods of philosophical engagement with the work of non-Western scholars. This would involve attentive listening, incorporating other forms of logic into one's teaching repertoire, and adopting the practice of making logic more relevant and relatable. Through actions like these, white feminists can help break down the binary dualisms that privilege one form of rationality over others, preventing marginalized groups including women from

being backgrounded, stereotyped, and excluded. Native logics are already receptive to the idea of non-dualistic and concrete relations. It is up to feminist logicians to transform Western logic to offer the same kind of receptivity in turn. Respecting and affirming the legitimacy of other logics and bringing them into the classroom would be a major step toward decolonizing logic and philosophy. If white feminists are truly committed to toppling the oppressive regime of classical logic, then they must be especially cautious about implementing new systems and methods that perpetuate, even inadvertently, the erasure of Indigenous and non-Western modes of reasoning. Starting a dialogue between white feminists and Native American scholars is the first step to critically examining the history of logic and developing new, more inclusive and less oppressive and colonial systems of truth determination, but other voices from Latinx, Black, and decolonial scholars need to be incorporated as well. As Plumwood points out, there are many different models and forms that logic can take. Realizing the similarities between our critiques can help us build alliances, and can also remind us that logic does not have to be monolithic and absolute but can arise in different ways out of different contexts to meet the different needs of different groups of people.

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## On What There "Is": Aristotle and the Aztecs on Being and Existence

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### 1. WHAT "IS" THERE?

A curious feature of Aztec philosophy is that the basic metaphysical question of the "Western" tradition cannot be formulated in their language, in Nahuatl. Aristotle, writing on what he variously called first philosophy, wisdom, and theology, formulates its subject matter thus: "There is a science [*epistēmē*] which investigates being *qua* being [*to on hē on*] and what pertains to it when considered in its own right."<sup>1</sup> What we now call metaphysics or ontology, then, is concerned with being just insofar as it is. W.V.O. Quine, writing more than two millennia later, expresses the same broad concern. He writes that the basic problem of ontology "can be put in three Anglo-Saxon monosyllables: 'What is there?' It can be answered, moreover, in a word—'Everything'—and everyone will accept this answer as true."<sup>2</sup>

The difficulty in the case of the Aztecs is that Nahuatl has no word for "being" or "to be." As a result, there is no way to formulate the question, "What is there?" or to claim that the aim of first philosophy is to understand "being *qua* being." This point does not suggest that the Nahuas were unconcerned with metaphysics, or that even the traditional "Western" metaphysical question could not be expressed (imperfectly) through circumlocution in their language. Rather, it suggests the grounds for why the Nahuas, the pre-Columbian people who spoke Nahuatl in Mesoamerica, approached this question so differently.

The present essay thus argues for three closely related points: first, that the Nahuas may be understood to provide an answer to the fundamental character of reality, one which served to give content to the meaning of "wisdom" just as one finds in Aristotle; second, that their conception of reality consists in a conceptual couplet *teot* and *omeoteotl*, which view rivals Aristotle's substance (*ousia*); and, third, that the Nahua answer is *prima facie* reasonable. To explain, a little, the significance of these claims and the motivation for the comparison with Aristotle, one might consider the following points.

Aristotle's metaphysics is a paradigm case of substance ontology, that is, the view which holds that the answer to the basic question of metaphysics "What is there?" is substance (*ousia*). He thinks this is a good answer, moreover, because it satisfies some apparently reasonable desiderata any account should provide. In the first place, we would like to know that the answer can explain what the basic subjects of the universe are, those in which other properties inhere, and those beyond which analysis is no longer meaningful. In the second, we would like the answer to explain *what* something is, and not simply how it is, or why it is. Intuitively, we sense that we know something when we know its "what." Substance, Aristotle argues, satisfies both these criteria.

The Nahuas' outlook may instead be taken as a paradigm case of process metaphysics, that is, a view which answers the basic question of metaphysics by holding that reality at base is a "process" in a sense to be described below. This view may be distinguished from the substance approach because it rejects not only the formulation of the basic question for metaphysics, since there is no "is" for the Nahuas, but also the desiderata which Aristotle thinks any good account should satisfy.

The comparison proposed is thus of interest for several reasons. A first concerns its consequence for the discipline of metaphysics itself. The Nahua view challenges the basic presuppositions of the ontological tradition in "Western" philosophy, whether that formulation is Aristotle's, or Quine's.<sup>3</sup> The view proposed is also rather different from the handful of self-consciously styled process-based metaphysical accounts in the "West."<sup>4</sup> It matters, then, whether such a view is at least *prima facie* coherent. If one cannot use the word "being" to answer the basic question of metaphysics, after all, just what is it that is left over, and why would it make sense?

It is also of interest to indigenous, Nahua philosophy to clarify just what is intended by their "process" metaphysics. Others have claimed that their metaphysics is "relational" or "process" based, but of course Aristotle could make sense of relations and process.<sup>5</sup> In some reasonable sense, the *what* of something, its *to ti esti*, just is what it does.<sup>6</sup> So it is unclear, if one uses only these terms, just in what way Aristotle and the Nahua outlooks are to be distinguished.

Finally, with respect to philosophers of classical Hellenic antiquity, the inquiry matters because it presents at least one new direction of study. The major scholarly controversy in the *Metaphysics*, for example, concerns just how to make sense of Aristotle's claim in book VII.13 that no universal is a substance, when he appears to have been arguing, up to this point, both that substance is form, and form is universal.<sup>7</sup> Yet perhaps Aristotle has arrived at this position because the desiderata outlined previously are themselves problematic—this is, at least, an open question—and this would bear on all the further notions which Aristotle develops, including form and matter, potency and activity, and universality and particularity. In this way, comparative philosophy may help to raise new avenues for study in Hellenistic inquiry.

As the first comparative essay on this topic in any modern language, the discussion faces a few initial hurdles that might not otherwise exist. To avoid them, it proves easiest to begin with the way in which epistemic claims are related to metaphysical ones in the thought of both Aristotle and the Nahuas. The next sections, §§2-3, thus look to distinguish a variety of forms of knowledge, including knowledge by acquaintance, know-how, experience, practical wisdom, and theoretical wisdom. The argument matches the sorts of appeal that Aristotle makes in book I of the *Metaphysics* with the accounts provided about Nahua philosophers themselves. An important difference that emerges is that the Nahuas had no notion comparable to Aristotle's *epistēmē*. In one respect, this is unsurprising, because Aristotle's notion itself is quite specific to his

philosophical outlook and not shared, even, with Plato. In another, there is a larger philosophic reason why the Nahuas had no similar notion, namely, because they were not metaphysically realist in their outlook.

To explain what might be called their quasi-realism, the argument moves, in §§4-6, to the content of theoretical wisdom for Aristotle and the Nahuas, namely, *ousia* and (*ome*)*teotl*, respectively. The claim in this case is that *teotl* is the best answer to the question (posed in English), "What is there?" but that *teotl* is always expressed under a certain cosmological configuration as *ometeotl*. The cosmological configuration is what the Nahuas metaphorically call a "sun," and they hold that our cosmos exists in the fifth sun (explained below). The formula that thus emerges is that *teotl* only exists *qua* some sun as *ometeotl*, and *ometeotl qua* the fifth sun is our cosmos. Since it is thought that this fifth sun too will pass into another configuration, it is not possible to have eternal knowledge, much less scientific knowledge (the sort expressed by Aristotle's *epistēmē*) of *teotl*. The best that can be done is to provide more beautiful metaphors of this notion, i.e., *teotl*, which may explain why the Nahuas' highest metaphysical literature is expressed poetically and not in treatise form. Moreover, since only a provisional account of reality as *ometeotl* is possible, the Nahua metaphysical outlook is best thought to be a sort of quasi-realism. The argument concludes with further avenues for research.

## 2. WISDOM: SOPHIA

Aristotle begins *Metaphysics* I.1 with something that he takes will be readily accepted, "[a]ll humans naturally desire to know" (*Met.* I.1, 980a20).<sup>8</sup> He proceeds dialectically, teasing through ways of knowing until he reaches wisdom (*sophia*). The line of reasoning runs as follows. A sign of our desire to know is our preference for the sense of sight, which enables us to know the look of things quickly.<sup>9</sup> Animals too have faculties of sensation, but some among them also have memory, which enables them to learn. What they mostly lack, however, is connected experience (*empeiria*). Still, this sort of knowledge (*to eidenai*) is limited to individual matters. For humans, memory forms experience, and when this experience gives rise to many notable observations and a single universal judgment is formed concerning them, one has an art (*technē*). While experience may thus lead to effective action and production just as well as art, since actions and productions concern individual affairs, knowledge and understanding (*to epaiein*) properly belong to art. For the one who possesses an art knows the cause, the why, while the person of experience does not. The object of study for science (*epistēmē*), unlike art, cannot be other than it is, and so exists of necessity and is eternal.<sup>10</sup> Science does not, moreover, aim at production while art is just this disposition to produce something which may or may not be (*NE* VI.4, 1140a20-25).

Two conclusions follow from these reflections. First, they explain why we do not regard any of the senses to provide wisdom, for while they give knowledge of particulars, "they do not tell us the 'why' of anything" (*Met.* I.1, 980b11-12).<sup>11</sup> Second, they explain why "all people suppose that what is called wisdom concerns the first causes [*ta prōta aitia*] and the principles [*ta archas*] of things" (*Met.* I.1, 980b28-29).<sup>12</sup>



For while art can explain the why, or cause, of a production or action, it cannot explain the why for what is eternal and could not be otherwise. Yet wisdom is thought most to consist in just this latter sort of topic.

To get a better sense of which science yields wisdom, Aristotle changes his approach in *Metaphysics* I.2. Rather than simply consider what is commonly accepted, he considers the wise person (*ho sophos*), as commonly understood, and develops five criteria from this reflection that any science would have to satisfy to yield wisdom. This person (1) knows all things, (2) knows what is most difficult, (3) knows the exact causes and is able to teach them, (4) knows what is complete, or desirable on its own account and not for something else, and, finally, (5) knows what is most authoritative, giving instruction to other branches and people (*Met.* I.2, 982a8-19).

What these criteria suggest is that the science which yields wisdom ought at least to have these qualities. This means that the science desired must (1) give knowledge of what is universal, which is also (2) the hardest to know since it is furthest from the senses; (3) give knowledge of first principles, which are most exact and which are teachable because they explain the why; (4) give knowledge of what is most knowable and not know for the sake of another subject, which is what the first principles do; and, finally, (5) give knowledge that specifies the end for each thing to be done, and in this way is most authoritative. This last point suggests especially that the science in question is one, rather than multiple sciences, so that the same name applies to each of the desiderata (*Met.* I.2, 982a24-b10). What Aristotle leaves unresolved at this point is just what that name is, and he instead considers what would not satisfy the inquiry, including productive arts and proposals by other historical figures.

### 3. WISDOM: TLAMATILIZTLI

What is interesting about the Nahua approach to wisdom is that it too worked to distinguish wisdom from other sorts of knowledge. There are, broadly, four sorts of knowledge at work in the Nahua understanding: *tlamatiliztli*, wisdom; *ixtlamatiliztli*, connected experience or prudence; *toltecayotl*, artisanal knowledge; and the sort of magical knowledge that a *nahual* (shaman) was thought to possess. Finally, one should note that the basic word from which many of these terms are derived is *mati*, which means both to know epistemically (*savoir, saber*) and to know by acquaintance (*connaître, conocer*).<sup>13</sup>

Some of the descriptions of various knowledge-workers from the *Florentine Codex* provide sound evidence for these distinctions. The description of the craftsman, *toltecatl*, reads in part as follows:

The craftsman [*toltecatl*] is well instructed [*tlamachtilli*], an artisan. There were many of them. The good craftsman is able, discreet, prudent [*mimati*], resourceful, retentive. The good craftsman is a willing worker, patient, calm. He works with care, he makes works of skill [*toltecati*]; he constructs, prepares, arranges, orders, fits, matches [materials]. (*FC* 10, 25)

One observes in this passage that the *toltecatl* is one who is learned, “*mach-*” is the base 4 stem of *mati* used in passive constructions, in various matters (*tla-*). His<sup>14</sup> knowledge is a sort of prudence, *mimati* (more below), but it is also primarily focused on know-how. In fact, the term *toltecati* is later best translated as “skill.”

The philosopher *tlamatini*, by contrast, is the one who possesses *tlamatiliztli* (wisdom), but who, among the people described in the *FC*, does not possess *toltecayotl*, artisanal knowledge.<sup>15</sup> The relevant portion for the description reads as follows:

The good philosopher is a knowledgeable physician, a person of trust, a teacher worthy of confidence and faith. [He is] a teacher [*temachtiani*] and adviser, a counselor [*teixtlamachtiani*] who helps one assume a face [*teixcuitiani, teixtoman*]; one who informs one’s ears [*tenacaztlapoani*]. [He] is one who casts light on another; who is a guide who accompanies one (*FC* 10, 29).<sup>16</sup>

This description largely highlights the role of the philosopher as a counselor (*te-ixtlamachtia-ni*), which was a bit like Socrates’s role as the gadfly of Athens, and this is identified as (part of) his know-how (*ixtlamatiliztli*).<sup>17</sup> In this capacity the philosopher is one whom one sought out for consultation. And the specific goal of the philosopher was to aid the counseled in “assuming a face.” Two highly compounded terms, *te-ix-cui-tia-ni* and *te-ix-to-ma-ni*, appear juxtaposed. The construction indicates that they are intended to express a single thought. The initial ‘*te*’ in both cases means that the action is performed for an indefinite person, for someone else, while the ‘*ix*’ is the stem of *ixtli*, meaning “face” in the most literal sense. Yet the term is widely used in its more metaphorical sense to indicate an aspect of one’s psyche, namely, the seat of one’s judgment. Finally, the root concept of both words (*cui* and *ana*) means “to take.” As a result, the idea expressed is that the philosopher helps another person (*te*) take or assume (*cui, ana*) a “face” (*ixtli*), i.e., a basis for sound judgment.

The philosopher thus has a certain sort of *ixtlamatiliztli*, but it is not of the same quality as that of the *toltecatl*, the artisan. The latter has *ixtlamatiliztli* in the sense that he knows just how to execute his craft, how to work with gold, or arrange quetzal plumes in headdresses. In the philosopher’s case, *ixtlamatiliztli* consists in being able to act as a guide for the counseled, to lay out a path for one’s life, and to serve as a mirror to clarify one’s reflections. His *ixtlamatiliztli* thus consists in knowing how to lead a good life, and knowing how to enable others to do the same. It is thus much closer to Aristotle’s *phronēsis* than the *toltecatl*’s craftsmanship.

Finally, the philosopher’s knowledge is distinct from the knowledge that other wise men receive. Specifically, the soothsayer (*tlapouhqui*), who made predictions based on the day signs, and the shaman or sorcerer (*naoalli*) are also described as *tlamatini* of a sort. The description of the sorcerer, for example, begins as follows: “The sorcerer is a wise man [*in naoalli tlamatini*], a counselor, a person of trust” (*FC* 31). Similarly, the soothsayer’s description begins, “The soothsayer is a wise man [*in tlapouqui ca tlamatini*], an

owner of books and writings" (FC 31). The term *tlamatini*, then, is generally used for wise persons of various sorts and not only philosophers. But the descriptions distinguish just in what their wisdom was thought to consist. The sorcerer's knowledge involves enchantment, and the soothsayer's wisdom is limited to counting or reading (*pouh*) the day sign calendar (*tonalamatl*). While it is possible that a single person could have served in all three roles, then, the Nahuas took care to distinguish among the sorts of wise men by the sort of knowledge that they had and would have recognized the differences among those roles.

How is it, then, that the philosopher has this sort of knowledge, has the *ixtlamatiliztli* which is essential to her *tlamatiliztli*? The answer, in part, is that she will have had enough life experiences to know how to counsel in specific ways. As Aristotle would have said, she has been brought up well and lived well. Yet, she also knows because the philosopher, *tla-mati-ni*, also has wisdom, *tla-mati-liztli*, the term most directly connected with her name, concerning the most important matters. This is to say, she knows because the philosopher knows about the character of reality, i.e., the way things are through their changes.<sup>18</sup> What follows is an example that illustrates how philosophers, in this case Nezahualcoyotl, were preoccupied with the most fundamental way things are. He writes:

Are you real, rooted [*toteycneliya*]?  
 Is it only as to come inebriated?  
 The Giver of Life, is this true [*nelli*]?  
 Perhaps, as they say, it is not true?  
 May our hearts be not tormented!  
 All that is real, that is rooted,  
 they say that it is not real, not rooted.  
 The Giver of Life only appears [*omonenequin*]  
 absolute.  
 May our hearts be not tormented,  
 because he is the Giver of Life.<sup>19</sup>

The passage shows Nezahualcoyotl's doubts and desires to understand the fundamental character of reality. He gives it various names. Here it is the Giver of Life (*ipalnemohuani*), but in others, including the song recorded just above in the codex, it is he who is self-caused (*moyocoya*). It is by understanding this principle and its relation to our lives, its balanced harmony, that the Nezahualcoyotl hopes to avoid a "tormented" heart.

Like Aristotle, then, the Nahuas distinguished among sorts of knowledge, and a comparison is summarized as follows:

|                           |                  |                        |
|---------------------------|------------------|------------------------|
| knowledge by acquaintance | <i>aisthesis</i> | <i>mati</i>            |
| connected experience      | <i>empeiria</i>  | <i>ixtlamatiliztli</i> |
| prudence                  | <i>phronēsis</i> | <i>ixtlamatiliztli</i> |
| artisanal knowledge       | <i>technē</i>    | <i>toltecaoyotl</i>    |
| science                   | <i>epistēmē</i>  |                        |
| wisdom                    | <i>sophia</i>    | <i>tlamatiliztli</i>   |

One notes first that Aristotle and the Nahua philosophers share many roughly similar terms for epistemic matters. Yet, second, and crucially, the Nahua philosophers had no corresponding term for *epistēmē*, which defines both Aristotle's specific objective of inquiry in the *Metaphysics*, and the character of *sophia* as he understands it. The reason for this is that *sophia* is a sort of *epistēmē* about first causes. Finally, Aristotle holds that *epistēmē* can be had of matters that are eternally true, so that *sophia* also concerns eternal truths, while the Nahuas did not think such knowledge was possible, so that *tlamatiliztli* only concerns the best or most important truths.<sup>20</sup>

While both Aristotle and the Nahuas thus conceived of philosophy as the pursuit of wisdom (*tlamatiliztli*), where this wisdom consists in understanding the fundamental principles of what is real or true (*nelli*), they still thought of the matter differently. Aristotle's sense of philosophy is methodical, one which uses logical proof and, where this is not suitable, dialectical reasoning. His understanding of science, moreover, is a body of knowledge that seeks the eternally true. The Nahuas did not have a similar methodological focus, and this is tied to their sense that the character of reality as it is given to us is not eternal. Wisdom for them consists of the best sort of knowledge, but what makes it best is not that it is guaranteed by the seal of eternity. This point explains, moreover, why poetry would be more apt to express this wisdom than logical argument on the Nahuas' conception.

The differences between Aristotle and the Nahuas on wisdom thus turn in large part about the fundamental character of reality which they sought to investigate, so it is just to this topic which the argument now turns, beginning with Aristotle's account in the *Metaphysics*.

#### 4. WHAT THERE "IS": OUSIA

In book III of the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle develops a series of puzzles concerning the possibility of the universal science desired in book I. He writes:

We must, with a view to the science which we are seeking, first recount the subjects that should be first discussed. These include both the other opinions that some have held on certain points, and any points besides these that happen to have been overlooked. (*Met.* III.1, 995a24-7)

The statement is important, since it shows that Aristotle is still in search of this science and that having it is desirable. It also introduces the series of puzzles that follow. In a broad

way, these puzzles may be classed as (1) those concerning the possibility of this science, i.e., puzzles *about* this science, and (2) those concerning its character, i.e., puzzles *for* the science, such as those concerning substance, form, matter, and so on. It is possible to understand book IV as a response to the former puzzles about the science, while book VII, with special supplementation from books VIII, IX, and XII as a response to the latter questions.

The central puzzles about the universal science which Aristotle raises in book III, at least for present purposes, may be understood as a sort of dilemma. If the universal science studies causes, then it would appear to conflict with the special sciences, which also study causes (*Met.* III.2, 996a18-b1). Yet, if it studies substance, then at least two problems may be thought to follow. First, the science would not appear to qualify as the sort that studies first axioms, since it would need to take the truth of those axioms for granted as other sciences do (*Met.* III.2, 996b33-997a5). Second, it is difficult to understand how there could be a science of substances as such, since this science would have to discuss essence as well—a substance, in part, explains the what, or essence (*to ti esti*), of something. Yet, “there seems to be no demonstration of the essence [*to ti estin*]” (*Met.* III.2, 997a31-2).<sup>21</sup> The universal science, as a result, would appear to take for granted what it was supposed to study.

To address the puzzles about the desired science, Aristotle begins book IV with a new approach; it is that the universal science ought to be that which seeks to understand being *qua* being.

There is some science [*episteme*] which investigates being *qua* being and the attributes which belong to it in itself [*kath' auto*]. Now this is not the same as any of the so-called special sciences; for none of these others deals generally with being *qua* being. They cut off a part of being and investigate the attributes of this part—this is what the mathematical sciences do for instance. Now since we are seeking the first principles and the highest causes, clearly there must be something to which these belong in themselves. (*Met.* IV.1, 1003a21-28)<sup>22</sup>

The approach is intended to avoid immediately falling into the pitfalls identified in book III. Adding “*qua* being” helps, because it shows why it is that this science does not study the same causes as the special sciences. They cut off a piece of being, but this science does not. Additionally, this approach suggests that the science studies what is truly universal, what any being must be, and so does not presuppose a set of axioms in the worried way.<sup>23</sup> Finally, this science does study essential properties of being, not those which are incidental, and so it does explain the what (*to ti esti*) of an entity.

Yet something additional emerges from Aristotle’s new approach, namely, a set of conditions for what this science must be. He begins IV.2 by recalling that there are many senses in which a thing may be said to be. Yet they are not homonymous, but are all rather related to a central term.

The term “to be” functions just as “health” does. Yet as the various forms of “health” are all studied by one science, because there is a basic and central meaning, so too it would follow that all the senses of “being” are studied by one science, because it too has one central and basic meaning. He concludes:

It is clear then that it is the work of one science to study beings [*ta onta*] *qua* being.—But everywhere science deals with that which is basic [*kuriōs*], and on which the other things depend, and on account of which they get their names. And so if this is substance [*hē ousia*], then it is of substances [*tōn ousiōn*] that the philosopher must have the principles and the causes. (*Met.* IV.2, 1003b15-19)<sup>24</sup>

In addition to concluding that the science of being *qua* being is one, then, Aristotle also concludes that it must study that which is basic, and that this basic topic might turn out to be substance, *hē ousia*. As he develops the argument, however, he adds a second condition which substance must satisfy if it is to be the subject matter of the science of being *qua* being.

If, now, being and unity are the same and are one thing in the sense that they are implied in one another as principle and cause are . . . and if, further, the substance [*hē ousia*] of each thing is one in no mere accidental way, but with respect to the very what a being is [*kai hoper on ti*]—all this being so, there must be exactly as many species of being as of unity. And to investigate the essence [*to ti esti*] of these is the work of a science [*tēs epistēmēs*] which is generically one. (*Met.* VI.2, 1003b23-35)<sup>25</sup>

Aristotle’s argument in this case is a little unclear, given the number of antecedents he uses before stating the consequent of the sentence. Yet his central point is that insofar as each being is one, in no mere accidental way, it is a what, an essence. And in making this case, moreover, he identifies *hē ousia* with the essence, the very what of a being, thus marking out a second condition which substance must satisfy if it is to qualify as the subject matter for the science of being *qua* being.

Collecting these points with the surrounding ones Aristotle addresses in the section, the following thesis emerges. If there is a science of being *qua* being, then it would be a single science with parts. The first among these parts is the study of *ousia*, substance, since the other parts would presuppose it. Moreover, since this is the proper topic for philosophy, the study of being *qua* being pursued in this way is first philosophy. Yet in order to supply the antecedent to this conditional claim, one must show that *ousia* both is the basic subject of intelligibility, and that *ousia* identifies the what or essence of a being. One must identify the basic subject, because otherwise one would not have reached the topic of first philosophy, and one must identify the essence, because otherwise the notion would not enjoy explanatory priority.<sup>26</sup>

At the end of book VII.1, Aristotle claims to have completed the argument left unfinished at the end of book IV. He writes:

And indeed the question which, both now and of old, has always been raised and always been the subject of doubt, namely "what is being [*ti to on*]?", is just this question, "what is substance [*ti hē ousia*]?" (*Met.* VII.1, 1028b2-4)<sup>27</sup>

In short, the question which the pre-Socratic philosophers had asked, and for which they offered answers which included fire and water, has been answered instead with *ousia*. Yet in order for Aristotle to be satisfied with his answer, he needs to have shown that *ousia* is the primary subject and that it is an essence. How does he do that?

With respect to the first topic, his argument is that the doctrine of the categories, discussed earlier, shows that substance is primary because it retains the right sort of asymmetrical relation with the other categories: they depend on it. This is the case because the others are not self-subsistent, capable of being separated, and substance is that which underlies them. "Clearly then," Aristotle concludes, "it is in virtue of this category that each of the others *is*. Therefore, that which is primarily and *is* simply (not *is* something) must be substance" (*Met.* VII.1, 1028a29-31).

To show that substance is an essence, that it explains the what of a being, Aristotle argues that substance retains explanatory priority with respect to the other categories in three ways: in time, formula, and order of knowledge (*Met.* VII.1, 1028a31). Temporally, one must recall that only substance exists independently. With respect to the formula [*logō*] of each term, substance must be present to complete the definition. Finally, he provides two arguments for the order of knowledge. At the beginning of the section, he argues from our linguistic use:

While 'being' has all these senses, obviously that which is primary is the 'what,' which indicates the substance of a thing. For when we say of what quality a thing is, we say that it is good or beautiful, but not that it is three cubits long or that it is a man; but when we say *what* it is, we do not say 'white' or 'hot' or 'three cubits long,' but 'man' or 'God'. (*Met.* VII.1, 1028a13-18)

The argument here, then, is that we speak in such a way that we treat the what of something as its substance, but this may only be a manner of speaking. This is why, at the end of the section, he also highlights what might be called a phenomenological argument: we experience a sense of knowing something when we know its substance: "we think we know each thing most fully when we know what it is, e.g. what man is or what fire is, rather than when we know its quality, or its quantity, or where it is" (*Met.* VII.1, 1028a36-b1).

The progression of argument in the *Metaphysics* thus moves from a statement about the subject matter of *sophia* (wisdom) as the *epistēmē* (science) of being *qua* being, to an articulation of its first principle as *ousia* (substance), to

the basic criteria which an account of *ousia* must satisfy, namely, that it should identify both the basic subject of an entity and its what, or essence (*to ti esti*). Finally, in book VII Aristotle shows that *ousia* does satisfy these requirements, only to introduce the problematic relation of form and matter with their related notions, which will occupy him through books VIII, IX, and XII. Since the Nahuas conceive of wisdom rather differently, it is unsurprising that they should also understand the fundamental character of reality differently.

## 5. THE IMPLICATIONS OF OMNIPREDICATIVITY

Like Aristotle, the Nahua philosophers also sought to understand the basic character of reality. Yet the answer they proposed was not a form of being, suitably abstracted. One reason for this is that they had no word for "being" available to them. Considered semantically, the closest available term is *câ*, which means to be in some place or in some way. Nahuatl has several ways to abstract terms, so that it might have been possible to speak of *ca-yotl* as roughly equivalent to *hē ousia*, or *ca-ti-liztli* as close to *to einai*, but in neither case would the terms have been suitably general. One would only have a sense of being-in-place/way-ness, rather than being-ness (*ousia*).

The semantic deficiency, however, leaves open the possibility that "being" is in some way conceptually implicit in the syntax of grammatical constructions in Nahuatl. Surprisingly, this is also not the case, for Nahuatl is not only an omnipredicative language, it is *the* paradigm case of a strongly omnipredicative language.<sup>28</sup>

In brief, an omnipredicative language is a bundle concept with eleven morphosyntactic features, where only one is necessary: that the language have no copula. To explain why Nahuatl lacks a copula verb or function, one must note first that in an omnipredicative language, as the name suggests, all lexical items can be used as (rhematic) predicates. As a result, even single nouns or pronouns can serve as a complete sentence. Yet, because nouns may function as predicates only in the present tense, it is necessary to supply a copular-type construction to broaden the tenses available. But in addition to forms of *câ*, one may use *neci* (to seem), *mocuepa* (to be turned into), *mochihua* (to become),<sup>29</sup> *monotza* (to be named), and a few other grammatical possibilities using the determiner *in* and the locative *ipan*. This range of possibilities shows that there is just no single copular verb or necessary copular construction.

A certain amount of the remaining properties are needed to establish that the language is sufficiently robust to be classed as omnipredicative, though it is not possible to produce a rule which states just how many. Yet one may imagine a scale of strength, so that at its far end one could claim that a language is paradigmatically strong if it exhibits all ten of the "optional" morphosyntactic features in addition to the necessary absence of a copula. Nahuatl is perhaps the only language which satisfies that strong requirement.

What this analysis suggests is that there is no notion in Nahuatl that is like "being" in the "Western" tradition of philosophy, whether that concept is taken to be expressed

either semantically or syntactically. While it is accurate, then, to claim that the Nahuas had an understanding of the basic character of reality, that they had a metaphysical outlook, it would be inaccurate to call it an onto-logy, where this term is understood etymologically to indicate the study of “being” (ōn). It is to spell out some of the features of this metaphysical but non-ontological outlook that the essay now turns.

## 6. WHAT THERE “IS”: (OME)TEOTL

If the Nahuas did not think of “being” as the fundamental principle of reality, then what did hold that position? They had in mind two closely related notions, *teotl* and *ometeotl*. To explain, the analysis develops five closely related points: (1) that the Nahuas took there to be one fundamental principle of reality; (2) that its name is *(ome)teotl*; (3) that it is fundamentally relational or “dualizing”; (4) that it is all of reality, entailing that the Nahuas were pantheists; and that (5) *teotl* and *ometeotl* are related roughly as being and existence were related for some “Western” philosophers.<sup>30</sup>

Beginning with the first point, recorded texts indicate that all the “gods” were taken, even by many commoners, to be a single being.<sup>31</sup> In the *FC*, for example, we read the following, which is said after a child had been delivered.

The midwife addressed the goddess Chalchiuhtlicue, the water. She said: our lady of the jade skirt [*Chalchiuhtlicue*], he who shines like a sun of jade [*Chalchiuhtlatonac*]. The deserved one has arrived, sent here by our mother, our father, Dual Lord [*vme-tecuhtli*], Dual Lady [*vme-cihuatl*], who dwells in the middling of the nine heavens [*chicunauh-nepan-juhca*], in the place of duality [*vme-ioca*]. (*FC* 6, 175)<sup>32</sup>

One perceives in this text that the same being is addressed as *Chalchiuhtlicue* and *Chalchiuhtlatonac*, and then later as *Ometecuhtli* and *Omecihuatl*. This means that the single god, which is addressed, has a double gender. The singularity is underscored by the following reference to the place where the god dwells: the middling of the nine heavens, the place of duality. Despite the opinions of the Conquistadors, the Nahuas of the pre-conquest period did not believe in a pantheon of gods, but treated all as mere aspects of a single supreme being. There is, in short, just one principle of reality, just one god, who has a double gender, and who metaphorically “dwells” at the point where the nine (*chicunauh-*) heavens (*-iuhca*) middle (*-nepan-*).

If the first important feature of reality for the Nahuas is that there is just one basic principle, then a second closely related point follows, namely, that this principle is best named *(ome)teotl*, by which is intended two closely related notions: *teotl* and *ometeotl*. As a first approximation for this claim, one might focus on the support for “*ometeotl*” as a basic name for the principle, leaving its relation to *teotl* for discussion with point 5 below.

That “*ometeotl*” is a basic name for the fundamental principle of reality is already supported by the word for “two” or “double,” i.e., “*ome*,” included in all the significant names for the Nahua god. The passage just above, for

example, refers to this god as Dual Lord (*Ometecuhtli*) and Dual Lady (*Omecihuatl*). The conception itself appears in the *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca*, which a linguistic analysis shows to be from a period prior to the Mexica empire, likely from or just after the nomadic (*chichimecas*) period of the people.<sup>33</sup> Appearing in a song of philosophical poetry, it reads as follows:

Which way shall I go? Which way shall I go

To follow the path of the god of duality [*ome-teotl*]?

Perhaps your house is

in the place of the fleshless?

Perhaps in the interior of the heavens?

Or is the place of the fleshless just here, on earth [*tlalicpac*]?<sup>34</sup>

What this passage shows is that the *tlamatinime* seek to follow the path of the god of duality (*ome-teotl*), the single principle of existence. Unlike the many *ome-* uses one finds in the *FC*, moreover, this passage directly names the principle *ometeotl*, so that one can have confidence that the notion is not a philosophical reconstruction, but something held explicitly.

If there is just one principle, one god (first claim), and its best single name is *ometeotl* (second claim), then a third claim follows closely on these: the basic principle is characterized by a sort of duality. The texts identified so far amply support this notion, with the male-female doubling of each name for the god, and the not infrequent use of *ome-* prefixes for these names. Yet in the passage that follows, from the *Códice Matritense*, an earlier version of Sahagún’s *Florentine Codex*, one finds further support for the notion that the double is the consort or *inamic* pair. It reads as follows:

1. And the Toltecs knew
2. that the heavens are many,
3. they said that there are twelve superimposed divisions.
4. The rooted god [*nelli teotl*] lives there with his consort [*inamic*].
5. The celestial god [*ilhuicateotl*] is called the Lord of Duality [*ometecuhtli*],
6. and his consort the Lady of Duality [*omecihuatl*], the Lady of the Heavens,
7. which means:
8. he is king, he is lord over the twelve heavens.<sup>35</sup>

A few words of explanation about the broader context of line 4, in which the *inamic* appears, may facilitate comprehension.

In line 1 the term "Toltec" appears. At the time of the conquest, the Nahuas, and especially the Mexica in Tenochtitlan, admired the predecessor culture they found when they, as a wandering group, came to settle on the swampy bog and found their city. They called this lofty culture the Toltec culture, and the term "Toltec" came to indicate refinement, skill, and (as noted above) a knowledge about crafts. The Mexica (especially) distinguished this culture from the culture of the wandering "Chichimechas," a term roughly equivalent to the Greek "barbarian," i.e., a people who spoke a different language and were considered rude, even though they were themselves such wanderers at one point.<sup>36</sup>

With respect to lines 2-3, it is helpful to bear in mind that the Nahuas, like Aristotle, thought that there were multiple heavens, or spheres, which accounted for the movements of observable celestial bodies. Exactly how many heavens there were varies on the text consulted, ranging from nine to thirteen. What the Toltec wisdom conveys, then, is a general understanding about the structure of the heavenly bodies and our cosmos.

The remaining lines make two points. The first, in lines 7-8, is that the one god under discussion is the basic principle of the cosmos, of all reality. Here that understanding is expressed metaphorically as the god's rule over the twelve heavens. The second point, in lines 4-6, is that the one divine being, *teotl*, is identified in the singular, though it has a dual, reciprocal, aspect. In the singular, it is called the *nelli teotl*. The word *nelli* most basically means "rooted," as a tree is rooted to the earth, but in its broader sense it came to be used as the term for "truth" and "reality." This is the true god. Yet the very same line identifies this god as one that appears with his consort, *inamic*, which is why s/he always appears in doubles: the Lord of Duality, the Lady of Duality. As the context suggests, moreover, these doubles are related to each other in a reciprocal and complementary way, as are male and female, heaven and earth, day and night, hot and cold, life and death, cleanliness and filth, and so on.<sup>37</sup>

These remarks support what is most important about *ometeotl*'s consorts. Though discussion of relations among pairs tends to predominate in the Nahua outlook, what matters is that a relationship of reciprocity is established among complementary aspects, so that in principle any number of consorts might be involved, from three (the underworld, the earth, and the heavens), to four (the number of cardinal coordinates), to nine or thirteen (the number of heavens). The claim that *ometeotl* is dualizing in character thus means more than that it is expressed in doubles. Most centrally it means that it is a principle that exists as a linking (coupling, or trilling, or quadrupling, *et cetera*) relation.

These points lead naturally to the next claim, namely, that the Nahuas were pantheists for whom *ometeotl* is existence. This point is supported variously, though one

finds it perhaps most clearly in the Nahua cosmological myths. The *Historia de los Mexicanos por sus pinturas*, which relates the character of the cosmos and the origin of human beings, especially as the Mexica in Tenochtitlan adapted the tale, runs as follows. It begins by stating that the Mexica had one god, *Tonacatecutli~Tonacacihuatl*, Lord and Lady of Sustenance, and that this being has always existed in the thirteenth heaven.<sup>38</sup> It had no beginning, and was not caused or created by another. Because it is dualizing, an *inamic*/relational being, it is the source of all the other gods and all the five Sun-Eras of cosmic history.

*Tonacatecutli~Tonacacihuatl* then "engendered four sons," which are identified with the cardinal coordinates: Red Smoking Mirror (*Tlatlauqui Tezcatlipoca*), Black Smoking Mirror (*Yayauqui Tezcatlipoca*), Quetzalcoatl (Plumed Serpent, also called "*Yohualli Ehecatl*," Wind and Night), and Bone Lord (*Omitecutli*), whom the Mexica, with their penchant for rewriting myths, all called *Huitzliopotchli*, their city's specific patron deity.<sup>39</sup> These four gods are the forces which activate the history of the cosmos, as they relate, balance, and struggle with each other. They are, in brief, the first expression of the dual principle. In the second chapter, after six hundred years, the gods come together to put the world in motion and, in the following passages especially, Quetzalcoatl must undertake a series of actions to restore humans to the cosmos.<sup>40</sup>

What one witnesses in this account, then, is a sequence of reasoning such that the primary dual principle comes to be expressed progressively as more complex sets of relations, as four forces, as time, as cosmic Era-Suns, and eventually as people, who are brought into existence through the life-force of the gods themselves. The account thus provides conceptually strong support for the claim that the Nahuas, especially their learned *tlamatinime*, were pantheists, for they held that the divine (*teotl*) pervades all things, is expressed through all of existence itself.<sup>41</sup>

This feature of the divine also explains several points concerning the names given to it. Why, for example, is its name Smoking Mirror (*Tezcatlipoca*), and how is that name related to the title Lord of the Near and Nigh (*Tloque Nahque*), or Wind and Night (*Yohualli, Ehecatl*)? For example, in the *FC* we read the following address during the rite of confession: "And can you, using human sight, behold the Lord of the Near and the Nigh, the Young Man, the Self-Creator, Our Lord, Smoking Mirror?" (*FC* 6, 33).<sup>42</sup> How are we to understand statements like these?

One might begin to respond with the most straightforward of the names: Lord of the Near and the Nigh. The name is straightforward because it directly suggests that *Ometeotl* is always nearby, is omnipresent, and this is true because *Ometeotl* not only pervades all things, but self-expresses as all things. The next conceptual name, Wind and Night, evokes cases where our human vision functions poorly or fails altogether. It is hard to see the wind, because we only see what the wind moves, and it is hard to see during night, precisely because we have only outlines of those objects. The core idea at work in the name Wind~Night, then, is that *Ometeotl* is imperceptible, or at least not directly perceptible, since *Ometeotl* is everything. Stated

differently, Ometeotl is not a single object which might be the focal point of perception, and it is this imperceptibility which explains why the passage begins by asking whether human sight (*tic-tlacatl(l)-itta*) will be sufficient to perceive the single and same being given all the following names. Turning to the last, and most puzzling names, Tezcatlipoca, the foregoing provides some context. Standardly translated as Smoking Mirror, the grammatically central and the uncontested portion of the name is *tezcatl*, mirror.<sup>43</sup> In Nahua literature a mirror is used as a metaphor for an object that illuminates an area. Yet the context here is cosmological, rather than local, so the suggestion is that Ometeotl is a source of light, the mirror, the sun, which is clouded, smoked, at night. This would be consistent, of course, with the panentheistic outlook of the *tlamatinime*, for whom Ometeotl is imperceptibly everywhere, and so is the cosmos and its heavenly motions.<sup>44</sup>

*The Legend of The Suns*, recorded in the *Codex Chimalpopoca*, provides important details about the character of cosmogenesis as the Nahuas understood it, but it also introduces an important philosophical distinction for the fundamental character of reality, namely, the difference between existence (*Ometeotl*), and “being” or “reality” (*teotl*), which is the fifth claim for this section. The recorded text is a transcription in Nahuatl which relays the information that an indigenous *tlamatini* (philosopher) read to a scribe from an ideographic pre-Cortesian *amoxtli* (painting-book). He begins by pointing out the origin of the story: “Here is the wisdom-fable-discourse, how it transpired long ago that the earth was established, how each thing found its place. This is how it is known in what way all the suns began.”<sup>45</sup> The discourse records the first four suns as a complete unit, then interjects two tales, one about maize corn and another about Quetzalcoatl’s journey to bring humans back to life on earth, and then relates the story of the fifth sun, in which we are presently supposed to live.

The stories of the five suns often strike the modern reader as mythical curiosities, though it should be noted that the sense that humans had been created and destroyed, or lived and perished, multiple times was broadly shared in Mesoamerican culture.<sup>46</sup> Briefly, the story goes as follows (formatted for clarity).

With the first sun, named 4 Jaguar, the humans who lived survived 676 years, but were eventually devoured by Jaguars and so destroyed totally. During the period of this sun, the text tells us that the people ate “7 straw [*chicome malinalli*],” which would have been the calendrical name of a sacred food, such as corn or squash, but we are uncertain which exactly. (CC, slide 75.7)

Under the second sun, named 4 Wind, humans were blown away and became monkeys, though not totally destroyed. What they ate was 12 snake.

In the third sun, named 4 Rain, humans were rained on by fire, and turned into birds. Their food was 7 Flint.

In the fourth sun, named 4 Water, humans who ate 4 flower were inundated in a flood and became fish.

It is at this point that the two additional fables about maize and Quetzalcoatl are related, and then the story of the fifth sun, 4 Motion, is relayed. For its creation Nanahuatl throws himself into a fire, and his consort Nahuitecpatl threw herself into the ashes. Yet, because Nanahuatl would not move, the other gods living in the paradise garden Tamoanchan sacrificed themselves so that he would continue in his orbit.

This is our age, and though it is not stated in the text now entitled *Legends of the Sun*, in a companion text, *Annales de Cuauhtitlan*, the retelling of the five suns relates the following:

This fifth sun, 4 Movement [*ollin*] is its day sign, is called Movement Sun [*olintonati*], because it moves along and follows its course. And what the old ones say is that under it there will be earthquakes and famine, and so we will be destroyed. (CC, slide 2.42)

As with the previous suns, ours too will come to an end, and as was the case with those suns, it is the basic character of the cosmic organization, jaguars, rain, and so on, that spells the end of the living people. Since our sun is a sun of movement, specifically *ollin* movement, which is associated with undulating or wave-like motion, our end will be through earthquakes with famine.

What matters about the *Legend of the Suns* for philosophical purposes is that it can explain the relationship between *teotl* and *ometeotl*. For it makes clear that what happens to exist now is an expression of a specific configuration of the divine, i.e., *teotl*. Each sun is a special configuration of the *teotl* in a cosmic order, complete with the sorts of food that are appropriate to the kind of being which lives in that order. *Teotl* is thus expressed *qua* sun as *ometeotl*. Yet *ometeotl* exists only *qua* a specific sun, such as 4 Movement, which happens to be our specific cosmic configuration.

To contextualize the matter more broadly in Nahua thought, one might put it as follows. Though the Nahuas occasionally spoke of *teotl* simply as what there is, in general they spoke and wrote of it as *teotl* under some aspect, as a specific god such as *Tezcatlipoca*, or by a specific characteristic, as the Wind and Night, or most generally as *ometeotl*. Yet what the legend of the suns shows is that any of the specific configurations we witness, the way in which *teotl* takes concrete form through doubling, through balancing or rooting consorts, could have been otherwise. In fact, it was otherwise at some point, and will be again later. This is why Nezahualcoyotl claims that we live fundamentally “in a house of paintings,” in the painting book of the divine, wherein the slightest brush movement may blot us out (RS, fol. 35r). “The earth,” that is, the place where humans live, “is slippery, slick” as a famous Nahua saying goes (FC 6, 228).<sup>47</sup> But the cosmos itself, and not only our human condition, is fragile in its balance and ephemeral at its core.

This is why, if 4 Movement is our cosmic order, *ometeotl* may be thought of as “existence,” and *teotl*, the reality of all possible cosmic expressions, as “being.”

### 7. DIVINITY: *OUSIA AKINĒTOS* AND *TEOTL*

Before concluding, the argument considers what would appear to be an important difference in the accounts of reality as one finds it in Aristotle and the Nahuas. Aristotle’s presentation in the central books of the *Metaphysics*, books IV through IX, roughly, appear to proceed by way of a naturalist directive, i.e., they do not require any specific sort of religious commitment, while the Nahuas’ directive, at first blush, appears to be fully theological. (*Ome*)*teotl* may be taken as the basic character of reality, but it never loses its connection with divinity. The foregoing argument does provide grounds to understand *teotl* as “the way things are through their changes,” but it does not suggest that the term, which is most often translated as “god,” is unconnected to divinity in the Nahuatl mind. Two points should be noted in response.

A first is that certain authors, Nezahualcoyotl, for example, do question the existence of the divine and the specifics of religious belief. In a philosophic poem entitled “I Am Sad,” he writes:

I am sad, I grieve  
 I, lord Nezahualcoyotl.  
 With flowers and with songs  
 I remember the princes,  
 Those who went away,  
 Tezozomocztzin, and that one Cuacuahtzin.  
 Do they truly live,  
 There Where-in-Someway-One-Exists?<sup>48</sup>

Nezahualcoyotl is in these lines clearly expressing doubt about life in a place after death. Must it be a place where one in some, non-fleshy way exists? This doubt in the afterlife, further, explains Nezahualcoyotl’s ongoing preoccupation with death, since he is little comforted by the ordinary stories. Yet, beyond this and similar instances of doubt, it is important to recognize that the Nahua conception of *teotl* is hardly a personal god. *Teotl* is rather more like a universal energy which is formed into our specific cosmos for a time. As pantheists, their conception of *teotl* was closer to the Buddhist Nirvana or Benedict Spinoza’s substance than the personalist conceptions of the divine that often trouble those who would like philosophy to be strictly naturalist. Taken together, these remarks suggest that the Nahua *tlamatinime* did not think of a personal god as the fundamental source of reality, but rather argued for a view of the world that recognized a divinity to be present in all features of the natural world.

A second response is that the matter is not so straightforward in Aristotle either. One may think of the project of the

*Metaphysics* to be completed in either of two ways. One way is as a general theory of substance, one that articulates how substance satisfies the requirements for a science of being *qua* being, and just in what the characteristics of that substance consist. Another way is to consider substance’s most exemplary case, the first mover or uncaused cause. In the opening chapter of book VI of the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle suggests that the latter is closer to his understanding. He writes:

if there is no substance other than those which are formed by nature, natural science [*physikē*] will be the first science; but if there is an immovable substance [*ousia akinētos*], the science of this must be prior and must be first philosophy, and universal in this way, because it is first. And it will belong to this [discipline] to consider [*theōrēsai*] being *qua* being—both what it is [*ti esti*] and the attributes which belong to it *qua* being. (Met. VI.1, 1026a27-32)

Aristotle not only states that the study of this immovable substance is best named first philosophy, its consideration uses the Greek word *theōrēsai*, which is composed of the terms *theos*, divinity, and *horaō*, to see. It would be too much, in general, to take the etymological origin of the word as its meaning, namely, “to see the divine,” but in this case, Aristotle is explicitly supporting just this outlook.

What, then, is one to make of Aristotle’s approach in the *Metaphysics*? Some have suggested that this is but a holdover from Aristotle’s earlier Platonic education in the Academy.<sup>49</sup> Others have argued that we should rather excise the offending passage from our interpretation of the *Metaphysics* so that Aristotle completes a naturalist account of substance in book IX, and in XII undertakes a special investigation into a substance which is divine and with a mind.

Yet the most natural reading would be to take Aristotle at his word: he understands the arguments of book XII, which investigation he also explicitly calls theology, first philosophy *par excellence*. The idea would appear to be that the first mover is a model of substance, and in that way an answer to the general question of being *qua* being.<sup>50</sup> This would make Aristotle’s outlook generally consistent with his arguments in the NE that theoretical contemplation is the only way that we humans can act as immortalizing beings, and that this is one of the reasons why the contemplative life is the best and accompanied by the best pleasure (*hēdonē*).<sup>51</sup>

What these points suggest is that there is likely not so great a distance between Aristotle and the Nahuas in taking the basic character of reality to be divine. Similarly, neither view is committed to understanding the divinity of reality to be of the sort that is guaranteed by a personal and soteriological god.

### 8. CONCLUSION: WISDOM AND METAPHYSICS

The basic question of “Western” metaphysics cannot be put into words in Nahuatl, whether three or more, because the language has no concept of “being,” understood



either semantically or syntactically. Yet the pre-Columbian *tlamatinime* (philosophers) did ask about the fundamental character of reality. Like Aristotle who called this knowledge *sophia*, “wisdom,” the Nahuas called it *tlamatiliztli*, which is also best translated as “wisdom.” For Aristotle, however, *sophia* consists in grasping the first principle of the science (*epistēmē*) of being *qua* being, which he argued was identified when one understood just in what substance (*ousia*) consists. For the Nahuas *tlamatiliztli* consists in understanding the way things are through their changes, *teotl*, and giving it the most adequate expression one can, namely, in poetry. The reasons for this conclusion are two: first, one can neither grasp *teotl* directly, She-He is the Wind and Night, and, second, *teotl* is nothing but the ways of cosmic (punctuated) radical transformation. Finally, for Aristotle, any account of the substance of an entity ought to explain why it is a basic subject, and why it is an essence (*to ti esti*). For the Aztecs, *teotl* is doubly expressed, as some cosmos generally, as *ometeotl*, and as a cosmos specifically, for example, ours, which is 4 Movement—these are, if not the criteria, then at least the character of *teotl*’s intelligibility.

The present essay thus bears several fruits for scholarship. It is not only the first to undertake the comparative task in thinking through the relations among Aristotle’s ontological project and the Nahuas’ metaphysical outlook, it is the first to look seriously at the epistemic terms used and the specific epistemic claims each project implies. Aristotle is traditionally taken to hold a metaphysically realist view, since for him we can both know what there is, perhaps by induction (*epiagōgē*) or intuition (*nous*), and what there is, *ousia*, is intelligible and eternal. The Nahuas, by contrast, were quasi-realists. They did not deny that we could know, in some sense (as *mati*), the cosmic order in which we live, but they did deny that this cosmic order was the basic character of reality itself. That reality, the *nelli teotl* (true/rooted being), is only ever expressed as a cosmic order, *ometeotl*, which undergoes radical, punctuated transformations. Wisdom (*tlamatiliztli*) thus consists in grasping the limits of our knowledge (*mati*), in understanding the evanescence of the cosmic order itself.

A final and important fruit concerns the adequacy of these outlooks. The philosophic task for historical works shares something in common with anthropology and history, namely, that it aims to describe accurately the notions and basic frameworks which were held by historical persons or traditions. Unlike these other disciplines, however, philosophy also aims to evaluate the character of the frameworks under discussion for their reasonability. As Socrates might have asked: Are they true? The topics of the present essay are difficult to answer generally, and especially so in the space of a single essay. What it is hoped is that the foregoing provides the grounds for concluding that while quite different from Aristotle’s substance ontological, the Nahua’s process metaphysics is at least *prima facie* reasonable when considered alongside his. Moreover, it approaches the fundamental question of metaphysics in a way that does without the two basic criteria which Aristotle thinks any good answer should meet, namely, that the account address basic subjects and essences. If the Nahua approach is the correct one, then it

would appear that not only is Aristotle’s approach likely to be inaccurate, but much of the “Western” tradition, which follows him to some degree, is as well. Whether the Nahua account holds up under further scrutiny may form a task for future research.

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#### NOTES

1. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, trans. W. D. Ross, vol. 2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), book IV.1, 1003a20-1. To be abbreviated *Met.* hereafter. When not using the English translation, or when modifying it, I have used *Aristotelis Metaphysica*, ed. W. Jaeger (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957) for the Greek source.
2. Willard Van Orman Quine, *From a Logical Point of View: Nine Logico-Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 1.
3. The same point holds for Martin Heidegger as well, but his case is different insofar as he sought not so much to engage in the tradition of “Western” metaphysics as to dig beneath it. This is just the point that he makes in the “Introduction” to *Gesamtausgabe*, Band 2, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1972), available in English as *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996). In light of Heidegger’s aim, one might wonder whether a better way to his goal might not have been simply to undertake work in comparative philosophy.
4. I of course have in mind Alfred North Whitehead’s *Process and Reality*, ed. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: The Free Press, 1978), and Gilles Deleuze’s work in *Différence et répétition* (Paris: Épipiméthée Press, 2013), available in English as *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), and *Logique de Sens* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1982), available in English as *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester and Charles Stivale (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).
5. See, for example, James Maffie, *Aztec Philosophy: Understanding a World in Motion* (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2014), 23. I do not, of course, disagree with Maffie. The purpose of the present essay is to clarify just what is intended by a “process” metaphysics when faced with an articulate account which would appear to take the substance of an entity to be just that, a process, *energeia*.
6. I mean only to support the tradition notion here, to write for a moment as the schoolmen did, that the essence (*to ti esti*) of an entity is its first actuality.
7. The views on this topic are vast, but two that are of interest are those who develop some form of the answer that forms are particulars, including Wilfred Sellars, “Substance and Form in Aristotle,” *Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 54 (1957): 688–99, and Charlotte Witt, “Aristotelian Essentialism Revisited,” *The Journal of the History of Philosophy*, vol. 27 (1989): 285–98, and others who maintain that only some universals are not substances (rather than no . . . are), including G. E. L. Owen, “Particular and General,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 79 (1978): 1–21, and Michael J. Loux, *Primary Ousia: An Essay on Aristotle’s Metaphysics Z and H* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1991).
8. Translation is my own.
9. The connection with sight and knowing in this passage is much closer in the Greek, since the word Aristotle here uses is “*eidenai*,” which is related to the word “*idea*,” literally, the look of things.
10. Aristotle here references his discussion of science and art in *Aristotelis Ethica Nicomachae*, ed. I. Bywater (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), book VI.3, 1139b22-23, and so the present development takes these points from that work to complete the argument. Hereafter abbreviated as *NE*.

11. Translation is my own.
12. Translation is my own.
13. The present study uses Bernadino de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex: A General History of the Things of New Spain*, vols. 1-12, ed. and trans. by Arthur J. O. Anderson and Charles E. Dibble (Santa Fe: The University of Utah Press, 1953–1981), hereafter abbreviated *FC*. For an example of “*mati*” in its use as knowledge by acquaintance, see the description of the old merchants who have already visited other places “*in inpilhoan in ie onmatia veca*” (*FC* 4, 65).
14. Although it is possible that a *toltecatl* could have been female, this would not in general have been the case among the Nahuas, as women who were trained in practical affairs would have learned different skills such as weaving. The Nahua educational system was more gender equal with schooling for the arts used in governing, literature, philosophy, history, law, astronomy, and religion. I have thus used the male pronoun, since this is a more accurate gender representation of the Nahua culture.
15. Or perhaps they might, but it would be incidental to their role as a *tlamatini*.
16. Translation is my own.
17. Recall that “*mach-*” is the base 4 stem of *mati* used in passive constructions so that the word for counselor *te-ix-tla-mach-tia-ni* is a compound term indicating that the agent (*ni*) causes (*tia*) another (*te*) to gain experience (*ix* and *mach*) about things (*tla*). It is thus the same sort of knowledge as experience (or prudence) that *ix-tla-mati-liztli* means, namely, connected experience (*ix* and *mati*) about things (*tla*) -ness (*liztli*).
18. This phrase, the way things are through their changes, is my best translation of “*teotl*.”
19. *Ballads of the Lords of New Spain: The Codex Romances de los señores de la nueva españa*, transcribed by John Bierhorst (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), fol. 19v-20r. Hereafter abbreviated as *RS*.
20. The topic of truth and knowledge is a difficult one in Nahua thought, and it is not directly the focus of the present essay. The following may suffice for the present. The present account is likely closest to Miguel León-Portilla’s in the first and third chapters of *La filosofía nahuatl: Estudiada en sus fuentes*, seventh edition (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1993), originally published in 1956. He argues there that poetry is this highest form of knowledge and truth available. What the present account adds is that this is the case because of a metaphysical conception of the universe, and not our epistemic access to this reality. This approach stands at some distance from two further accounts. A first is Willard Gingerich in “Heidegger and the Aztecs: The Poetics of Knowing in Pre-Hispanic Poetry,” in *Recovering the World: Essays on Native American Literature*, ed. Brian Swann and Arnold Krupat (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), 85–112, argues that the Nahuas had an understanding of truth and knowledge that was close to Martin Heidegger’s sense of *alētheia*, as he develops that notion in some of his later writing, such as “*Vom Wesen des Grundes*,” in *Wegmarken, Gesamtausgabe*, Band 2 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1976), 73–108. A second approach is James Maffie’s in “Double Mistaken Philosophical Identity in Sahagún’s ‘*Colloquios y Doctrina Cristiana*,’” *Divinatio* 34 (Autumn-Winter 2011): 63–92, argues that the Nahuas had a path-seeking understanding of truth and knowledge, rather than a (traditionally “Western”) truth-seeking understanding.
21. Translation is my own.
22. Translation modified.
23. There is, additionally, the thornier problem concerning the methodological status of the *Metaphysics*: Is it dialectical, or is it somehow the demonstrative science Aristotle develops in the *Organon*, or perhaps neither? Perhaps, as Terence Irwin suggests in *Aristotle’s First Principles* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), Aristotle is using a sort of “strong” dialectic here. Or perhaps the character of demonstrative science in the *Organon*, as it is generally understood, is not accurate, as Patrick Byrne suggests in *Analysis and Science in Aristotle* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997). There is also the possibility that Aristotle modified his position, and that the best resources for his methods may be found in his biological works. This is a view that Gorgios Anagnostopoulos supports in “Aristotle’s Methods,” in *A Companion to Aristotle*, ed. Gorgios Anagnostopoulos (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell Publishers, 2013). For the present work, I set this problem aside as either solution would suffice, though I note that some such position is necessary for Aristotle’s argument here.
24. Translation modified.
25. Translation modified.
26. That Aristotle’s argument in the *Metaphysics* turns on showing that the desired science of being *qua* being study a matter which specifies both a basic subject and an essence is uncontroversial. Aryeh Kosman, for example, in *The Activity of Being: An Essay on Aristotle’s Ontology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 23, notes that the whole argument of the metaphysics follows these two criteria into Aristotle’s discussion of subject and predicate, form and matter, and so on. What the present account does suggest is that Aristotle establishes these criteria much earlier than is typically identified, neither in book seven, as is often argued, or (even) in book five, as Kosman holds. The result supports the contention that the main chapters of the *Metaphysics* be read as a single, coherent argument.
27. Translation modified.
28. Michel Launey is the first to have coined the term “omnipredicative” to characterize the specific features of Nahuatl grammar in his *Une grammaire omniprédicative: Essai sur la morphosyntaxe du nahuatl classique* (Paris: CNRS Press, 1994), but similar insights were made by others at about the same time, for example, J. Richard Andrews in the first edition of his *Introduction to Classical Nahuatl* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975). Launey’s first grammar book appeared in 1979 in French as *Introduction à la langue et à la littérature aztèques*, vol. 1: *Grammaire* (Paris: L’Harmattan). For a development of the grammatical scholarship on Nahuatl, see James Lockhart’s “Editorial Preface” to the bilingual edition of Horacio Carcochi’s *Grammar of the Mexican Language With an Explanations of Its Adverbs (1645)*, ed. and trans. by James Lockhart (Stanford: Stanford University Press (2001), vii–xxii. The primary and most updated account of omnipredicativity, which the present essay uses, is Launey’s explanation in “The Features of Omnipredicativity in Classical Nahuatl,” *Sprachtypologie und Universalienforschung* 57 (2004): 49–69.
29. The root of this word, *chihua*, means “to act” or “to do,” and has a reflexive prefix *mo-* added. It is not, then, related to the system of verbs deriving from *câ*. Any connection between being and becoming, conceptually and linguistically present in English, is thus artificial, resulting from translation of Nahuatl into English.
30. The analogy is not exact, but I have in mind Thomas Aquinas in *De ente et essentia* in English translation as *Thomas Aquinas on Being and Essence*, trans. Armand Maurer (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1968).
31. This is against Jacques Soustelle’s claim, which he develops in chapter seven of *La vie quotidienne des aztèques à la veille de la conquête espagnole* (Paris: Hachette, 1955), that this sort of knowledge was confined to an elite or at least selective class of individuals in Nahua culture.
32. The translation is my own. The reader should recall that “*o*” is often recorded as “*u*,” and “*u*” is sometimes recorded as “*v*,” so that “*vme*” is here a transcription for “*ome*,” meaning “two” or “dual.”
33. Angel Garibay, *Historia de la literatura náhuatl*, vol. 1 (Mexico City: Porrúa Press, 1953), 128–30. Alfonso Caso makes a case for this in his *La Religión de los Aztecas* (Mexico City: Enciclopedia Ilustrada Mexicana, 1936), 8.
34. *Historia-Tolteca Chichimeca*, ed. and trans. by Luis Reyes García, Paul Kirchoff and Lina Odena Güemes (Puebla: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1976), 166. I have followed Miguel León-Portilla’s Spanish in *La filosofía Nahuatl*, 149.
35. *Código Matritense de la Real Academia*, VIII, fol. 175v, which is available online <http://bdmx.mx/documento/bernardino-sahagun-codices-matritenses>. Last accessed June 20, 2018. The present translation follows Miguel León-Portilla’s Spanish translation in *La filosofía nahuatl*, 151.
36. See especially chapters three and seven of Soustelle’s *La vie quotidienne des aztèques à la veille de la conquête espagnole*

for a more careful analysis of the relationship of the Mexica to their predecessor cultures, and the Toltecs and Chichimecas in particular.

37. For further development, see Alfredo López Austin, *Cuerpo humano e ideología: Las concepciones de los antiguos Nahuas*, vol. I (Mexico City: Universidad Autónoma de México, 1984), 55–68.
38. *Historia de los Mexicanos por sus pinturas*, originally published by Joaquín García Icazbalceta in *Teogonía e Historia de los Mexicanos: Tres Opúsculos del Siglo XIV*, ed. Ángel Garibay, (Mexico City: Porrúa Press, 1965), 23.
39. *Ibid.*
40. *Ibid.*, 25.
41. This line of argument stretches back at least to Hermann Bayer's "Das aztekische Götterbild Alexander von Humboldt," in *Wissenschaftliche Festschrift zu Enthüllung des von Seiten S. M. Kaiser Wilhelm II, dem Mexicanischen Volke zum Jubiläum, seiner Unabhängigkeit Gestifteten Humboldt-Denkmal...* (Mexico City, Müller hons., 1910), 116. It is a line of argument of course continued in Soustille's *La vie quotidienne des aztèques*, Miguel León-Portilla, even in his more recent *Aztecas-Mexicas: Desarrollo de una civilización originaria* (Mexico City: Algaba Press, 2005), and also James Maffie's *Aztec Philosophy: Understanding a World in Motion*.
42. Translation is my own.
43. This translation of *Tezcatlipoca* is a contentious one. Frances Karttunen, in the entry to the name in her *An Analytical Dictionary of Nahuatl* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983), notes that although the stem *poc*, from *poch-tli* for "smoke" exists, there is no corresponding verb *poca*. It might rather be related to the word *ihpotza*, which would have the intransitive verb *ihpoca*, meaning to belch, or perhaps even give forth smoke. What is critical for the present analysis, however, is the uncontested term *tezcatl*, mirror, which is amply attested as metaphor for an object which lights up another.
44. This analysis follows, *grosso modo*, the analysis León-Portilla provides in chapter three of *La Filosofía Nahuatl*.
45. *Codex Chimalpopoca: The Text in Nahuatl with a Glossary and Grammatical Notes*, ed. John Bierhorst (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1992), 87. Hereafter abbreviated as CC. All translations of this text are my own, though in this case, because it accepts Bierhorst's corrections, the resulting translation is close.
46. See, for example, the stories of the four creations of humans in parts one and three of the *Popul Vuh*, Dennis Tedlock (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).
47. Translation is my own.
48. *Cantares Mexicanos*, fols. 25r and v. Translation is slightly modified for readability from Miguel León-Portilla's in *Fifteen Poets of the Aztec World*, 93.
49. This is especially Werner Jaeger's view as expressed in *Aristoteles: Grundlegung einer Geschichte seiner Entwicklung* (Berlin, Weidmann, 1923), English translation by Richard Robinson, *Aristotle: Fundamentals of the History of his Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1934).
50. This is the view developed in different ways by Günther Patzig in "Theologie und Ontologie in der 'Metaphysik' des Aristoteles," *Kantstudien* 52 (1960–1961): 185ff; reprinted in *Articles on Aristotle: 3 Metaphysics*, ed. J. Barnes, M. Schofield, and R. Sorabji (London: St. Martin's Press, 1979), 33ff, and chapter seven of Kosman's *The Activity of Being*. The unified view likely finds its earliest source, among "Western" commentators, in Thomas Aquinas' *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, trans. John Rowan (Notre Dame: Dumb Ox Books, 1961).
51. This is the view of Aristotle's contemplative life that C. D. C. Reeve develops in chapter six of *Action, Contemplation, and Happiness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

## Dance as Native Performative Knowledge

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Over the past few decades, there has been an upsurge in Native American performance arts to revisit and remember—to tell through retelling—stories of the past and how they have shaped Native identities and knowledges as those stories, identities, and knowledges have struggled to survive continued expropriation, abuse, and erasure. Native dance, specifically, has experienced a revitalization through a number of Native artists' endeavors to interweave the traditional with the contemporary. Native performance arts companies such as Native American Theatre Ensemble, DAYSTAR, Institute of American Indian Arts, Dancing Earth Contemporary Indigenous Dance Creations, Oxlaval Q'anil, Native Earth Performing Arts, Turtle Gals Performance Ensemble, Spiderwoman Theater, and Red Arts Performing Arts Company have utilized embodiment and motion as a way of accessing and extracting blood memory to communicate such knowledges to Native and non-Native audiences. In the Foreword of *Native American Dance: Ceremonies and Social Traditions*, Richard West explains that

Dance is the very embodiment of Indigenous values and represents the response of Native Americans to complex and sometimes difficult historical experiences. Music and dance combine with material culture, language, spirituality, and artistic expression in compelling and complex ways, and are definitive elements of Native identity.<sup>1</sup>

Beyond the articulation of identity, dance within the Native American worldview is deeply entrenched in and as ways of knowing. Charlotte Heth explains: "Indeed, in Indian life, the dance is not possible without the belief systems and the music, and the belief systems and the music can hardly exist without the dance."<sup>2</sup>

In 1921 the Canadian Department of Indian Affairs issued the following Circular decree:

I have, therefore, to direct you to use your utmost endeavours to dissuade the Indians from excessive indulgence in the practice of dancing. You should suppress any dances which cause waste of time, interfere with the occupations of the Indians, unsettle them for serious work, injure their health or encourage them in sloth and idleness. You should also dissuade, and, if possible, prevent them from leaving their reserves for the purpose of attending fairs, exhibitions, etc., when their absence would result in their own farming and other interests being neglected. It is realized that reasonable amusement and recreation should be enjoyed by Indians, but they should not be allowed to dissipate their energies and abandon themselves to demoralizing amusements. By the use of tact and firmness you can obtain control and keep it, and this obstacle to continued progress will then disappear.<sup>3</sup>

This circular demonstrates why it is that the deployment of dance as a mechanism for articulating Native American epistemology is not merely a fanciful interdisciplinary trick. Dance, whether as social or ritual performance, has always been a cornerstone of cultural practice and education and communal relationship strengthening. Further, dance is often explicitly regarded as a highway for Truth, as exemplified by David Delgado Shorter's book title, *We Will Dance Our Truth: Yaqui History in Yoeme Performances* (2009). It is for this reason that the activity of dancing specifically was targeted by settler-colonial states as one that needed to be promptly eradicated throughout the Americas.<sup>4</sup> Scholars and practitioners of Native American dance have had to fight for their right to dance within the broader fight for sovereignty and cultural rejuvenation. This is because, as María Regina Firmino Castillo rightly claims, "[i]t is in the body, and very often, the dancing body, that ontological control and regeneration begins."<sup>5</sup> Historically, the fight was merely to dance at all. Today, the fight is to dance on one's own terms: as a tribal nation, as a performer, as an urban Native American, as a mixed-blood, as a storyteller. The questions surrounding the centrality and significance of dance to Native American identity and survival is explored in numerous texts, most notably Jaqueline Shea Murphy's book, *The People Have Never Stopped Dancing: Native American Modern Dance Histories* (2007) and the *Chinook Winds: Aboriginal Dance Project* (1997) anthology. Therefore, I offer this analysis of dance as a mode of Native American epistemology in solidarity with others as a decolonial act of resistance, both in the academy and on the stage.

### §1

Knowers operating from within a Native American worldview do not view knowledge as something that can be gathered and owned; the idea that knowledge might be possessed by an individual is, well, rather wacky. The notion is bizarre in two respects: first, it is bizarre that knowledge is conceived of as a possession and, second, it is bizarre that a solitary individual could know any truth. Knowledge is necessarily communal insofar as the Native American worldview does not rest on a foundation of atomism and, therefore, no one individual can come to know alone. Knowledge qua knowing relies on the community consensus-building and concerted, collective analysis.<sup>6</sup> And no individual could or would be positioned in a way that made it possible for that knowledge to be exploited for individual gain. Dennis McPherson and Douglas Rabb<sup>7</sup> mark the communalistic nature of the Native American worldview as one constituted by epistemological pluralism<sup>8</sup> and polycentric perspectives.<sup>9</sup> That is, no one person can possess a whole picture of the truth of any one thing. Knowledge is constituted by a repository and conglomeration of perspectives. All persons experience the world distinctly and thus come to see the truth of matters from their social position and through their individuality that is a product of that sociality.<sup>10</sup> To have knowledge, then, requires us to interact with others—to tell them the stories of some thing or experience—and then to ask them for their stories so that we each may develop a broader understanding of that thing or experience. Consequently, knowledge exists for the purpose of being shared; it is a social product yielded through social interactions

and practices for the purpose of action. Native American epistemology highlights two distinctive goals regarding the relationship between knower and knowledge. Primarily, the purpose of pursuing knowledge is to help guide individuals along the right path. Relatedly, knowledge has at its end the nurturing of relationships between individuals and community members, including non-human persons and the environment, to ensure harmony betwixt them and to pass down the stories of the histories of such relationships. It is in this sense, then, that knowledge within the Native American worldview is regarded not only as relational, but also as ethical.

That knowledge is social, relational, and must be constrained by and is imbued with ethical considerations has further implications for knowers themselves that do not obtain within the mainstream Western framework.<sup>11</sup> First, knowers must come to their knowledge through ethical modes of interaction that show respect for relations.<sup>12</sup> Ethical constraints on knowers include the need to attain consent from the person sharing their knowledge—one cannot trick another into sharing knowledge, and knowledge cannot be stolen. And trust in the speaker's credibility should be given, which is often signified through respectful practices of listening. D'arcy Rhealt explains that we are only able to truly receive our teachings through practices of ethical listening; in Anishinaabe, this practice is called *bzindamowin*.<sup>13</sup> Second, the communal and individual practices around forming beliefs themselves must be ethical in nature. In "Ethics and Understanding," John DuFour distinguishes two mutually reinforcing types of merit a belief holds: state merit and content merit.<sup>14</sup> Content merit denotes a belief's reasonableness or epistemic acceptability. State merit connotes the ethical acceptability of a belief and the ethical acceptability of how that belief came about. While Western epistemology centers on content merit and gives little, if any, consideration to state merit, they are conjoined in Native American epistemology. According to DuFour, the most important epistemological trait a knower must cultivate is that of being a responsible knower. And this epistemological trait is developed through the ethical belief practices of a society, which are, by virtue of their very persistence, (implicitly or explicitly) endorsed. According to DuFour, belief practices that generate a belief's state merit are social praxes that help knowers determine if beliefs are morally repugnant.<sup>15</sup> Ultimately, they indicate a community's commitment to and moral concern for the care we take in the things we claim to know and how we understand them.<sup>16</sup> DuFour, Rhealt, Marelene Brant Castellano, and many others from many distinct tribal affiliations believe that we have ethical obligations regarding how, when, and with whom we share knowledge and which beliefs we proliferate. Subsequently, this portends that we can be morally culpable for knowledge that leads one down the wrong path.

This understanding of knowledge as an ethical, active, and interactive means through which to discover the right path requires a shift in how we understand the conception of truth in itself. Thus, Native American epistemology culminates in what Thomas Norton-Smith characterizes as an analytic procedural—as opposed to propositional—analysis of knowledge and truth.<sup>17</sup> Truth is defined by

the successful, respectful performance of some action to achieve some goal. Knowledge consists in knowing *how* to P, not *that* P. One typically cannot know how to P without “knowing that P,” but one can easily “know that P” without knowing how to P, and thus makes a propositional construal of knowledge and truth as relatively useless in the practical sense on which Native epistemology focuses. Actions are guided by information and facts, which are a function of accuracy or correctness. Truth, on the other hand, is an assignation of action, and only those actions satisfy the constraining normative criteria, which function as the basic truth conditions for the Truth of performance. It is perfectly consistent to admit that you do not know whether a story is factual, but that you also recognize that telling the story can successfully achieve its goal of conveying the sanctity and symbolism of the target in a respectful manner and therefore be True.<sup>18</sup>

As Lawrence Gross notes, within the Native American worldview, it is processes that achieve whatever goal is desired.<sup>19</sup> Actions, unless involuntary or nonconscious, are never without purpose. When I engage in action, I already have propositional content regarding the action *and* the conditions for goal satisfaction, or else I could not do the action. I could not practice handstands if I did not know what it was to do a handstand or what it was to practice. Propositional content is never employed outside of action insofar as it is utilized to, again, achieve some purpose. Action is required to transmit propositional content. Propositional content cannot exist outside of action with some purpose, including the conventional, cultural social practices structuring the acquisition and dissemination of information. Thoughts and cognates, which propositions represent via subject-predicate structures, are the products of the complex act of thinking in, of, and with the world, whether through sensual sensing, conceptualizing, mind wandering, critical inquiry, or creative exploration. This account regards all such concepts as understanding, believing, and desiring as actions rather than mental states or propositional attitudes. Given that the entirety of our lives is constituted by actions, it seems rather unprovocative and ordinary to say that actions are the ground of Truth.

Native American languages largely give rise to this praxis-based epistemology. Generally speaking, Native languages are verb-based. Conjugated verbs can account for the vast majority of the content of European grammatical components. Subjects are within the verb. In this sense, the subject is a part of the action—not merely grammatically but also ontologically. Similarly for adjectives, which are built into the verbs.<sup>20</sup> Indigenous languages identify objects and concepts according to their relationship to other things in an active process.<sup>21</sup> For example, Gross explains the distinction between English “the book is blue” and Anishinaabe “the book blues.”<sup>22</sup> So from the Native epistemological point of view, the relation between blueness and the book is only True if the book successfully achieves its goal of, well, blueing<sup>23</sup>—that is, if it displays and is perceived as blue to one with whom it is in relation; for why else would it blue if it did not intend to be seen as blue? It is certainly true that actors may engage in actions for purposes other than those which the receiver interprets. There remains some controversy on what color

that silly white and gold? black and blue? dress *really* was.<sup>24</sup> I suppose we would know the truth of the matter if we knew the goal of the dressmaker (or even the dress!). Maybe the dressmaker had no goal aside from confusing observers. And in that case, claims that the dress was gold OR that the dress was blue would both be False because the aim was never for us to really know in the first place. Or, rather, in all actuality, both claims would actually be a little bit True. In English, the phrase “actions speak louder than words” hints at the idea that Truth cannot be strictly about propositions of the subject-predicate form; this is the one idea that I often use as an example for my students to clarify how Truth is a measure of action rather than of statement. And because Native languages are largely verb-based, this colloquium would be trivially true insofar as Truth attributions, and the propositions regarding Truth, are simply linguistic markers for the actions themselves rather than something else entirely.

Native epistemology is not procedural merely because its language is verb-based, its language is verb-based because the worldview is fundamentally grounded in dynamicism.<sup>25</sup> This dynamicism stems from two sources. First, dynamicism is inherent in the foundational principles of Native metaphysics, science, and epistemology. This is because the Native worldview posits a creative and creativity-inducing energy and chaos that orders the universe, which is always in states of flux and that proceeds through moments of balance and harmony that are established through the participatory activities and actions of persons.<sup>26</sup> Gregory Cajete sagely explains that

Native science [, which can be used interchangeably with knowledge,] continually relates to and speaks of the world as full of *active* entities with which people engage. To our sensing bodies, all things are active. Therefore, Native languages are verb based, and the words that describe the world emerge directly from actively perceived experience. In a sense, language “*choreographs*” and/or facilitates the continual orientation of Native thought and perception toward active participation, active imagination, and active engagement with all that makes up natural reality. . .<sup>27</sup>

From this one can see that the second respect in which Native epistemology is dynamic ensues from its phenomenological nature. The nature of nature, the nature of our bodies, and the nature of knowing as sensed and sensing active entities accentuates the extent through which our lived bodies are vessels of knowing. Knowing always happens from and within the body, and the things that we know emerge from the ways in which we participate as embodied beings with nature and with others.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, knowing and knowledge result from our actions and our doings, which always connect with our phenomenological performances and interactions.

## §2

For both Native American philosophy and embodied cognitive theory, meaning is grounded in corporeality. According to embodied cognitive theory, meaning is phenomenological and stems from embodiment in that it

comes together for us through nonconscious and mostly unaware bodily perceptions of space, movement, and environmental qualities that constitute our experiences.<sup>29</sup> The very fact that we live on a planet with gravity gives rise to a vast amount of meaning and knowledge regarding ourselves and others that would never crop up on planets lacking gravitational pulls. Movement, specifically, grounds our ongoing connection to and interaction with others and the world; it is what keeps us in touch with the world.<sup>30</sup> We wade through creeks full of algae and fish for fun or for hygiene, we climb mountains to get closer to heaven, we twirl, we itch, we scratch, we move always—even when we are dead and merely slowly decomposing—and this movement is always in response to others or to our environment. Even an involuntary wiggle of the nose is, in part, communication with our environment, because it tells us that something is in the air—and if it's April in Atlanta, then it is telling us that the flowers and trees are having a party (though to be fair, at this point your whole face is doing all kinds of involuntary unpleasant movements). However, because meaning is born from unconscious embodied perceptions and movements, its role in the process of worldmaking becomes invisible. Mark Johnson explains:

the meaning is in what you think and feel and do, and it lies in recurring qualities, patterns, and structures of experience that are, for the most part, unconsciously and automatically shaping how you understand, how you choose, and how you express yourself. You *have* meaning, or are *caught up* in meaning, before you actually experience meaning reflectively.<sup>31</sup>

Initially, meaning arises from embodied movement and interactions that are later extended metaphorically in the form of image schemas in our linguistic and conceptual mappings. An image schema develops when our sensorimotor experiences track repeated patterns and relations. The resultant image schemas are what give our broader experiences shape and meaning, as well as serving as models and modes of reasoning insofar as the repetitions generate neural mappings that eventually constitute what gives rise to abstract thought. Examples of embodied perceptions that engender meaning include verticality, twisted, circular, toward, away from, into and out of, sharp, hot, shape, and rush. Thus, not only knowledge but even our particular cultural logical forms of reasoning stem from how our bodies operate in situations.

*life is change and existence is an ongoing process. The logic we humans have is an embodied logic of inquiry, one that arises in experience and must be readjusted as situations change. . . . Logical thinking can thereby actually change experience, because it is in and of that experience.*<sup>32</sup>

A foundational, pervasive image schema, which serves as a universal primary metaphor, is that of a container. Through our embodiment, we come to have understandings of and meanings for experiences of ourselves and other things as being “in” or “out” of some perceived boundary. We can be in the water or out in the cold or within an embrace or

under a car, etc. These sensorimotor experiences, which are source domains, help us extend meaning to similar situations or ideas, which are target domains. From the basis of the source domain mapping, we then understand ideas such as categories and family concepts as operating as kinds of containers of smaller ideas. Ultimately, without our body’s capacities to act—to move, perceive, manipulate, and engage—we would have no source from which to imaginatively draw ideas, induce, or infer. Imagination itself is a function of this embodiment at the deep level and therefore cannot spawn meaning and concepts on its own.

Embodied cognitive processes initiate at a nonconscious level, and much of the content and products of this processing remains at that level. This level, this ground-floor production site—the cognitive substratum—is what Lakoff and Johnson term the “cognitive unconscious.”<sup>33</sup> The cognitive unconscious is the realm of the vast majority of our reasoning; it encompasses all of our mental operations and structures, including embodied emotion, perception, and memory. The reason why these operations manifest at the nonconscious level out of our control is because they occur too swiftly for us to be aware of them. They refer to this base of operations as cognitive, even though we are unaware of it and do not have access to it, because all aspects of thought, including motor operations, are cognitive “when they contribute to conceptualization and reason, including conceptual systems, meaning, inference, [induction,] and language.”<sup>34</sup> They postulate that

[Our unconscious conceptual system] creates the entities that inhabit the cognitive unconscious—abstract entities like friendship, bargains, failures, and lies—that we use in ordinary unconscious reasoning. It thus shapes how we automatically and unconsciously comprehend what we experience. It constitutes our unreflective common sense.<sup>35</sup>

Therefore, if the cognitive unconscious is the locale where our embodied meaning emerges, then one can reason that it will also be the seat of our subconscious tacit knowledge, which is the deep knowledge we have of conceptual rules and structures. Embodied logic at the tacit level is the foundation for our explicit abstract logic in that it is our bodies that give meaning and understanding to rules and inferences such as causation, containment, and transitivity.<sup>36</sup> From here, as mental operations ascend closer and closer to the conscious level, we develop much of our implicit knowledge by gaining more access to embodied rules of logic and inference and applying them practically through phenomenological experience, which makes us more consciously aware of them. One can imagine the chain of meaning and knowledge reliant on embodiment progressing in the following manner: from the cognitive unconscious and tacit knowledge to implicit knowledge (intuition and implicit procedural knowledge<sup>37</sup>) to, finally, explicit knowledge (propositional and explicit procedural knowledge).<sup>38</sup>

Native American sources of knowledge are more substantial and prolific than those acknowledged within Western epistemology. Dreams, visions, vision quests, and interactions with nature, along with insight and intuition,

are all significant to access meaning and knowledge. Some scholars refer to the source of insight and intuition as the inscape and some call it the inner space. Others, such as Ermine, identify intuition more specifically with terms such as the Cree concepts *Muntou*<sup>39</sup> and *mamtowisowin*. *Muntou*—literally, the mystery—is the law of the underlying energy of the universe and existence qua interconnection. *Mamtowisowin* is our capacity to tap into our inner energy that comes from the universal energy in order to be creative, be in connection, or simply become.<sup>40</sup> V. F. Cordova calls this energy *Usen*.<sup>41</sup> Similar concepts include the Algonquin term *Manitu*, *Namandu* in Gaurani, *Orenda* in Iroquois, *Nigilia* or *Wakan* in Lakota.<sup>42</sup> In Māori and Melanese, this power and energy is known as *Mana*. In Anishinaabe, dreams (*manidoo-waabiwin*) and visions (*naanaagede'enmowin*) are regarded as primary sources of *revealed* knowledge. Intuition (*gidisi'ewin*) is a form of revealed knowledge, but it also points to our internal capacity to recognize Truths. Rhealt explains that “truth or the ability to perceive truth is the ‘feeling’ that one has, at the moment of intuitive clarity. Intuition is the voice of one’s spirit.”<sup>43</sup> Many Native people utilize dreams and vision quests as a way of closing the gap between our internal connection to the energy of the universe and our more explicit knowing and understanding of the world.<sup>44</sup>

While embodied cognition is shared among us, our embodied knowledge, and the intuitions and subsequent insights it gives rise to, will be specific to us as individuals as a result of our experience in and with the world. Similarly, we all carry some aspect of *Muntou* or *Usen* with us by virtue of our embodiment and interconnectedness with others and the universe, but our unique experiences and relations will synthesize the two and to move between the inner and outer spaces for meaning and understanding. Joseph Couture rightly argues that most non-Natives cannot make sense of this nonlinear way of knowing that oscillates between both analytic and metaphorical intuitions, as we have seen historically through mainstream epistemology and philosophy of mind.<sup>45</sup> He explains that

Native “seeing” is a primary dynamic, an open and moving mindscape. This process determines and drives the Native habit to be fully alive in the present, without fear of self and others, non-compulsively and non-addictively in full relationship to all that is—in relationship with the “is”-ness of a self-organizing ecology, a cosmic community of “all my relations.”<sup>46</sup>

These intuitions and insights are believed to be gifts to us from our relations to the earth and the world. Castellano points out that “[s]ometimes knowledge is received as a gift at a moment of need; sometimes it manifests itself as a sense that ‘the time is right’ to hunt or counsel or to make a decisive turn in one’s life path.”<sup>47</sup> Our individualized experiences of knowledge in and about the world, much of which evolve from the interplay between embodied tacit knowledge and intuition, are what constitutes both the phenomenological and the pluralist, polycentric components of Native American ways of knowing. Universal, “objective” knowledge as Western epistemology conceives it is not simply not possible—it’s not even

desired. The subjectivity of experiential knowledge that stems from our unique interactions is what gives us more authentic meanings of the world and more practical and sharable bits of knowledge that tie us together.

There are two other specific Native American modes of knowing that this understanding of embodied cognition and the cognitive unconscious helps to flesh out, rather than contradict. The first is the notion of blood memory.<sup>48</sup> Blood memory is a Native American concept that connotes the passing down of knowledge from the ancestors and the spirit world through the body to other members of the community through generations. Native dancer Monique Mojica explicates this idea by saying that

our bodies are our libraries—fully references in memory, an endless resource, a giant database of stories. Some we lived, some were passed on, some dreamt, some forgotten, some we are unaware of, dormant, awaiting the key that will release them.<sup>49</sup>

She relies on praxes of improvisation as a method of “mining” her body for “organic texts” to motivate her choreographic storytelling. However, blood memory is within all of us and we all carry it with us; it is just that it may be more accessible through embodied activities and processes such as dancing. While blood memory is a term that is unique, at least historically, to Indigenous peoples, it is not a wholly unique conception. There are two strands by which blood memory extends to other similar notions. The first is in the idea of generational trauma. Most people conceive of this idea of blood memory as being passed down as a result of violence and genocide, much like the generational trauma of the Jewish community.<sup>50</sup> Trauma rewires the neural synapses and both the behavior of trauma, and the way of thinking consequent of trauma can be passed down biologically and behaviorally.<sup>51</sup> Another similar concept is that of the collective unconscious.<sup>52</sup> This is the idea that all humans inherit cultural archetypes, primordial images, and ideas from their previous generations.

Blood memory is not necessarily tied to trauma and therefore can be imagined as occupying the intersection of generational trauma and the collective unconscious, both of which are instances of the cognitive unconscious. Moreover, blood memory, generational trauma, and the collective unconscious all give rise to knowledge in the form of intuition. Native dancer Rosy Simas explains:

Recent scientific study verifies what many Native people have always known: that traumatic events in our ancestors’ lives persist in our bodies, blood, and bones. These events leave molecular scars that adhere to our DNA.<sup>53</sup>

But unlike generational trauma, in most cases Native individuals see themselves as benefiting from the inheritance of blood memory, as it functions as a tie to Native ways of coming to know and be. Mi’kmaq dancer Shalan Jourdry posits that

My understanding is that as we go from one generation to the next a part of our spirit and body is passed on to our children, and they pass on a bit of their collected spirit, and so on. Therefore, within me is a piece of all my ancestors, and I have that memory within me somewhere. The challenge is to get in tune with that, to hear and feel it, and respond to that kind of memory.<sup>54</sup>

Similarly, blood memory is distinct from the collective unconscious because it can be accessed and made aware of through individual or collective efforts qua practices, even if only intuitively or minimally explicitly. I highlight the perspective of dancers not only to remind the reader that our goal is ultimately to get to dance as Truth-making, but also to highlight the substantial embodied notion of blood memory.

This leads to the second mode of knowing which might be thought to be in tension with embodied cognitive theory—the vision quest. The vision quest is its own mechanism through which to gain insight into intuitive knowledge through bodily practices; but it is also a bodily practice through which access to blood memory, more specifically, might be gained. Most times, vision quests are an individual journey towards deeper meaning and knowledge of the world and oneself through an extended testing of the body in exposed natural conditions. In some instances, these quests can be taken on in the confines of a sweat lodge alone, in community, and/or in the presence of a medicine person. But in all cases, the embodied practice is to deprive the body of nourishment and expose it to extreme conditions in order to turn in towards the inscape to tap into the knowledge that lives there. In the chapter “Dancing with Chaos: Phenomenology of a Vision Quest,” McPherson and Rabb interview a Blackfoot Métis man named Douglas Cardinal to demonstrate how it is that supposed “mystical” and “magical” Native experiences, typically discounted by Western culture and theory, actually share common features with many other similar embodied phenomena, such as the near-death experience. In their discussion of the vision quest, they argue:

In the case of the vision quest, phenomenological description allows us to discuss it without dismissing such experience as mere dream or hallucination, as many non-Natives might be tempted to do. At the same time, we are not required to admit that such experience is actually a glimpse into the spirit world, whatever that would mean. Note that many Native Americans believe that dreaming itself is a glimpse into the spirit world. . . . [And] to ask these kinds of questions [that interrogate the authenticity and reliability of Native embodied ways of knowing] is to miss the point. In one sense it really doesn’t matter whether or not he was, in a technical sense, hallucinating. What is important is what you learn from such an experience, what you take away with you.<sup>55</sup>

And while it is true that it is a moot point as to whether the experience is mystical, spiritual, or neural, it does matter that it can be shown that these experiences create and

give access to meaning. Both modes of Native embodied knowledge—blood memory and vision quests—have accounted for the kinds of meaning and knowing that Western philosophy has rejected as valid ways of knowing historically because Western philosophers and scientists were unable (or unwilling) to identify, examine, and analyze them until only very recently. Thus, yet again, it becomes apparent that Native American epistemology has born more accuracy and comprehensiveness with respect to knowing and Truth than has Western epistemology. This also sheds some light on why it is that much of the contemporary cognitive science and quantum physics references Native American theories within their own.

Though I have demonstrated some aspects of the relation between Native American embodied ways of knowing and embodied cognitive theory, there remains a further step in this chain that must be clarified: the conceptual metaphorical component of embodied cognitive theory. It is in this respect that embodied cognitive metaphor is most noticeably relevant to Native epistemology insofar as embodied metaphor extends from the activities of the body to the most visible domains of interrelational communicative practices. Embodied conceptual metaphors are central to Native epistemology, as highlighted by McPherson and Rabb (2011), Norton-Smith (2010), and myself (2016), given that knowing and storytelling are both dynamic, embodied, oral, and metaphorical phenomena. The above discussion foregrounds how it is that many of our concepts and much of our reasoning is metaphorical at the unconscious and tacit levels. Cognitive embodied metaphor theory posits that how we conceive the world is a function of our embodied interaction with the world and, as such, most of our depictions, linguistic representations, imaginative operations, and abstract thought are metaphorical with respect to our spatial-locomotive-sensory activities and experiences.<sup>56</sup> That is, all of our conscious and higher-level cognitive functions are explicitly metaphorical. While most people will concede that much of our linguistic expressions and imaginative capacities are metaphorical, the remaining operations are typically met with suspicion or outright disavowal.<sup>57</sup> That is, most Western theorists reject the idea that metaphors are embodied, that they have meaning and are meaningful, and that they serve as anything other than linguistic devices to make propositions saucy.

Conceptual metaphors are of the kind like my twitchy person example above. They originate in our embodied image schemas constituting our primary metaphors that bring embodied logics with them and then are extrapolated and applied out and onto the world by mixing together to imaginatively create more robust metaphors that capture our higher-level conscious cognitive activities.<sup>58</sup> Our use of conceptual metaphors occurs naturally and automatically and becomes ingrained incognito into our linguistic understanding of the world as they become systematized through social and cultural use. But they are used systematically because the metaphors themselves are experienced systematically. We presume much of our strict theoretical and scientific posturing are free of the fluffiness of poetic, imaginative metaphor because the metaphors are natural extensions of our embodied experiences. In *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) and then



*Philosophy in the Flesh* (1999), Lakoff and Johnson develop and flesh out how it is that our abstract reasoning and even linguistic understandings—meaning itself—are properties and functions of these primary metaphors. They argue that it is impossible to think about our subjective experiences without these embodied metaphors and any attempt to do so would result in impoverished understandings of the world and our existence in it.

And yet complex cognitive conceptual and linguistic metaphors are neither invisible nor ignored within the Native metaphysical and epistemological framework. Rather, metaphor is highly valorized. This can be seen just by virtue of the fact that the Native framework regards the Native mind primarily as a “metaphoric mind.” Native philosophy, science, and literature are all attuned to the significance and efficacy of metaphors, particularly in their epistemological functions when thinking from and with diverse perspectives to ensure pluralistic analyses of the world. Cajete claims that the metaphoric mind is our oldest mind and is the first foundation of Native science. I cite him at length here to reveal the extent to which Native American science has rightly understood the role and depth of metaphor as an epistemological groundwork as well as the extent to which it aligns with embodied cognitive metaphor theory.<sup>59</sup> He explains:

As the rational mind develops, the metaphoric mind slowly recedes into the subconscious, there to lie in wait until its special skills are called upon by the conscious mind. . . . In Native science, the metaphoric mind is the facilitator of the creative process; it invents, integrates, and applies the deep levels of human perception and intuition to the task of living. Connected to the creative center of nature, the metaphoric mind has none of the limiting conditioning of the cultural order [contained within particular linguistic or conceptual systems]. It perceives itself as part of the natural order, a part of the Earth mind. Its processing is natural and instinctive. It is inclusive and expansive in its processing of experience and knowledge. . . . Because its processes are tied to creativity, perception, image, physical senses, and intuition, the metaphoric mind reveals itself through abstract symbols, visual/spatial reasoning, sound, *kinesthetic expression*, and various forms of ecological and integrative thinking. These metaphoric modes of expression are also the foundations for various components of Native science, as well as art, music, and *dance*.<sup>60</sup>

Native epistemology has been working with and through metaphors longer than Western theorists have recognized them as more than poetic whimsies. Metaphor as an experiential epistemological device imbues all mediums and modes of Native ways of knowing. And the most prevalent abode for metaphor is also the most conspicuous site of metaphor—storytelling. The difference is that, unlike the vast preponderance of Western philosophy, Native philosophy regards storytelling as not only a valid, but also the primary, medium through which one can come to know. This is because it operates through the oral tradition and

relies on the sharing of pluralist individual experiences for knowledge construction. Laurelyn Whitt rightly explains that indigenous knowledge is inconceivable apart from its relationship to experience, and imagination and stories “are vehicles for knowing and respecting.”<sup>61</sup>

Keith Basso raises the question of how metaphor in narrative can be effective. He portends:

For where metaphor is concerned, the question always arises, On what *grounds* is one kind of thing understood in terms of another? In other words, what must individuals believe about themselves and their surroundings for their metaphors to “work”? . . . [M]etaphors all point to the same general idea, which is that depictions provided by Apache speakers are treated by Apache hearers as bases on which to build, as projects to complete, as invitations to exercise the imagination.<sup>62</sup>

Native practices of narrative storytelling as communicative action make room for and encourage the communication of differences through reciprocal and imaginative activity. The practice of reciprocity allows for narrative testimony to connote one’s subjective particularity through the uniqueness of one’s story while also recognizing and respecting the cultural specificity of social group membership by unveiling systemic patterns of shared histories and social locations between group members, which illuminate distinctive cognitive schemas and contributes to the collective unconscious. In light of multifarious expositions about differing lived experiences and preferences, individuals can see that their reference points mark their own perspective as just one of many within a holistic frame. We come to know others by relating to them, by using our imagination to imagine what it must be like for them in the world.<sup>63</sup> The imaginative procedures used to make sense of divergent perspectives exact a substantial amount of creativity in that individuals’ comprehension of the import of difference through others’ narrative requires individuals to invoke a respectful wonder.<sup>64</sup> A stance of respectful wonder calls on community members to engage their imaginations to try to understand the needs of others who are distinct from them. And it must be respectful in that imaginative capacities unconstrained by normative dictates are likely to go in the direction of exoticization of others rather than empathizing; an account of wonder not constrained by respect would ultimately violate the condition of respect in the Native American procedural analysis of knowing. Wonder, as an embodied experience, is also an emotional experience triggered by novel and/or inexplicable encounters.<sup>65</sup> The imaginative activity of a cognitive form of wonder can spark the affective motivations in listeners to reorient their schemas around what the speaker emphasizes. The employment and management of imaginative perceptions of others involves utilizing one’s imagination to piece together narratives of their lived experiences that are both similar to and different from one’s own.

There is a one-image schema that seems to play a rather vigorous role in the operations of narrative storytelling: center/periphery. The center/periphery image schema

accounts for how our field of vision is contained by the horizon. When we look at the center, everything is in focus and we can see everything clearly. When we look further and further out and away from the center, things become blurred and unclear, and many things become difficult to discern unless we put them back into relation to what is in the center. Embodied cognitive theory refers to this as perceptual framing. Conceptual metaphors in oral storytelling work in much the same fashion. Conceptual metaphors guide the listeners on the speaker's journey. This is why word choice for storytellers—and of philosophers—is of such significance. The ability to find just the right words determines the difference between success and failure in communication of the speaker's point. Varied linguistic phrases, and even prepositional phrases (most of which trace back to primary embodied metaphors), can fix the main point at the center of the listener's attention. Without a strong grasp on language, an idea can easily and quickly run away from the speaker. Moreover, any digressions can rip the moral of the story away from the listeners. Thus, in storytelling, the main objective can become crystal clear or indecipherable depending on how near to the center or far off into the horizon the storyteller's word choice takes it. One cannot be led down the right path if the storyteller can't stay right on her path, as it were.

As most contemporary cognitive theorists and phenomenologists have stressed, embodiment entails the fact that the I Can precedes the I Know and also that I Know far more than I can Tell. It should make sense, then, when I purport that narrative testimony and narrative storytelling is, in essence, literal lived Truth.<sup>66</sup> From the subjective perspective, our bodies are our situations insofar as they are the grounds for our experiences and organize our knowing through the cognitive unconscious.<sup>67</sup> The admixture of embodied forms of implicit knowing within the cognitive unconscious and the ways of knowing engendered through Native narrative cognitive schemas and ethical practices generates a form of embodied procedural knowledge. Marie Battiste and James Youngblood Henderson capture this deep procedural structure of narrative that stems from the verb-based metaphorical nature of Indigenous languages when they explain that

Stories are unfolding lessons. Not only do they transmit validated experience; they also renew, awaken, and honor spiritual forces. Hence almost every ancient story does not explain; instead it focuses on processes of knowing.<sup>68</sup>

Moreover, lived Truth is the quintessential form of phenomenological Truth in that these Truths are induced through and extracted from our bodies at both the deep and surface levels. The Truths of stories are capable of being received and realized indirectly through the shared phenomenological activities. Wendelin Küpers rightly espouses that

Each story conveys knowledge, not only about one or more "subject matters" but also knowledge about the teller, her background and the common situation. In this way stories communicate always something of and about the embodied context

in which the narration is taking place. Therefore, stories convey a lot of non-explicit information, emotional knowledge, and "meta-knowledge."<sup>69</sup>

Lived Truths are also taken up directly vis-à-vis the shared conceptual metaphors of the listeners or viewers. The implicit and explicit interactive nature of narrative storytelling ensures that the embodied procedural knowing dynamically manifests bilaterally (or multilaterally) between storyteller and storyhearer. The procedural nature of this interactive embodied knowing of narrative is consequent of the skillful knowing how on the parts of both (or all) participants involved in the coming to know that. Together, members construct a shared, holistic Truth through the deployment of shared or negotiated conceptual metaphors and participatory narrative practices.

So phenomenologically, our interactive implicit, embodied knowing constitutes procedural knowing. And the ethical participatory nature of Native American storytelling and narrative praxes satisfies the Truth conditions for respectful, successful performance within Native American epistemology. The question remains as to how dance as a form of narrative storytelling—as opposed to verbal narrative—is capable of serving as a substantial and substantive vehicle for Truth.

### §3

It was only when I began the process of putting this project together that the significance of dance as a Native American metaphor jumped out at me. From Norton-Smith's book title *The Dance of Person and Place*, to the chapter in McPherson and Rabb—"Dancing with Chaos"—to the numerous other sources on and in Native Studies that reference the dancing of ideas and the dancing of the creative energy of the universe and the dancing of relations, and the dancing of water and earth, the notion of dancing as an active underlying principle and way of knowing and being is pervasive within the purviews of Native and other Indigenous worldviews. What I discovered was that dance has been and continues to be such an intractable component of Native identity, culture, and epistemology that for me to argue that dance is a paradigm way of knowing for Native American epistemology became somewhat redundant. It is something that is and has always been known in Native communities. As it turns out, there is an entire sphere—an entire hemisphere!—of Native dance studies that is thriving. Therefore, I must state in no uncertain terms that my general claim is no jaw-dropping, awe-inspiring revelation in the field of Native Studies. What I hope to do, that I hope that I can add to what has been a long-standing Native epistemological given, is flesh out that which is given. My aim is not to engage in a sort of philosophical masturbatory game, but to make the analytical philosophical connections between the assorted and distinctive conversations within Native theory and Native Studies in an attempt to make evident the unifying circle underlying the connected but discrete accounts of knowing and dancing that I have encountered by linking them together through the implementation of what I take to be connecting strands available from disciplines of dance theory and embodied cognition. What I hope to do is draw from the knowledge already apparent within the

Native and other Indigenous Studies to contribute to the growing discourse in Native Philosophy.

There is a sense where it may seem as if I am working in reverse, given that I addressed the significance of narrative storytelling in the previous section using deep embodied knowledge, including the cognitive unconscious. However, this is not the case. To glean how dance is a form of storytelling and knowing, it is first imperative to understand how narrative storytelling works as a mode of embodied procedural knowing in the more obvious, explicit sense. From there, we can dive deeper into the body in the more literal sense. From a dancer's perspective, and from the perspective of the Native American worldview, dance is more apparent as a way of knowing because it is this literal embodied examination and exploration of embodied knowledge. Yet, for most, the idea of the dancing body as a direct form of creating and communicating knowledge is foreign because the colonial approach to knowledge is inherently static, stale, and propositional. It is for this reason that I began with an approach to knowing that is more familiar to most readers and then worked to reveal how it is that narrative is not static propositional knowledge but rather a decidedly dynamic knowing that stems from the body. Since I have shown how narrative knowing emerges from embodied knowing through embodied cognitive theory, it should be more palpable for the reader to extend this understanding of embodied knowing to the immediate source of embodied metaphors—the dancing body.

The meaning and role of dance within the Native worldview far surpasses that of dance within Western culture. Certainly, dancers and performance philosophers themselves would refute this claim, and with good reason; they have learned something that Native folks have always known and that I have recently come to know. But dance does not constitute nor contribute to the ontological foundations of the Western worldview as it does in Native and other Indigenous worldviews. Within Western ideology and philosophy—give or take an Aristotle or Nietzsche—dance is utterly marginalized as a frivolous obsession with the body that is contraindicated with the real and serious modes of rationality that yield knowledge and Truth. Conversely, within Native and other Indigenous worldviews, dance is intimately embedded in and constative of the metaphysics and epistemology. To be clear, dance theory and embodied cognition do not substantiate or legitimate performative knowing in Native dance; Native dance shines a light on, and provides a richness to, the claims put forth in dance theory, performance philosophy, and embodied cognition theory. Because dance is so entirely interwoven into Native American philosophy as a form of knowing, we can see how staunchly traditional Western philosophy has denied its significance as an art, as a mode of being, and as a way of knowing.

Murphy states that Aboriginal stage dance and its choreography are epistemological ways of knowing because it is about the stories they tell, "the theories of embodiment and enactment the dance work investigates, the familial and tribal connections, processes, dedication, and intention with which the dancing is made."<sup>70</sup> Jerry Longboat explains that dance is part of the oral tradition in

that it combines story and myth into a form of expression.<sup>71</sup> It is an expression of embodied knowledge because, he says, "it is 'in the bones'. And, when we dance, our timeless oral narratives possess the ancient stories of wisdom and understanding."<sup>72</sup> But it is important to realize that the communication of values and Native knowledge through dance is not constrained by ritual forms. By engaging in creative processes such as "undoing and remaking," Rulan Tanagen sees contemporary performances as practices of decolonization of both practices of dance and of the imagination. For her, contemporary dance captures and communicates how Native values, stories, and lived experiences adapt and regenerate in resilient and innovative ways.<sup>73</sup> She argues:

contemporary embodiment can protect the traditional by allowing that to stay private, while filling in missing links that have occurred through various treacheries of colonization... There are gaps, yes. The stories that are remembered and interpreted are important, but so too are the ones that had been forgotten, and that emerge from the creative process without a word or thought or plan, but come into being and knowing because of the entity of motion.<sup>74</sup>

Native forms of dance are embodied metaphorical, kinaesthetic creations and communications of knowledge both above and below the surface of the body. Below the surface, Native dancers draw heavily on implicit body knowledge, often through blood memory and the inscape, as a way of "remembering the future." But just as much knowledge acquisition occurs above and on the surface. Tanagen explains that drawing on knowledge through the senses by closing one's eyes, as children do in many Indigenous games, is central to understanding the world; these senses operate as "kinetic portals" that "we begin to fill with Intention, Intuition, Instinct, Imagination."<sup>75</sup> Because Native dance often has multiple functions, such as telling stories for continuance, healing trauma, recovering and sharing Native identities and values—ultimately, proliferating Indigenous ways of knowing—embodied movement metaphors play crucial roles in satisfying these objectives. Broad metaphors such as circles, expressions of gifting, and repetition play a role in such knowledge cultivation; but more specific metaphors aid in the ability for knowledge to come through clearer. Metaphors that Tanagen identifies include undoing, shedding, cleansing, releasing, and purifying. Sandra Laronde also highlights embodied movement metaphors:

Throughout the dance project, I learned delicate, softer, spiraling movement . . . I realized that different images and emotions inhabit these finer crevices of movement . . . our bodies continue to carry cultural memory, imagery, knowledge, and emotion. If trusted and approached with respect, the body has an infallible memory. . . . When dancing traditional, for example, there is a downward rhythm of the body towards the earth, which acknowledges our connectedness with Mother Earth.<sup>76</sup>

In addition to dance being relational in terms of its communal nature, it also is a source of ethical relations itself. The activity of dance establishes ethical relationships between the dancer(s) and the audience. In the Native framework, relations are held together by processes; this is true in many ethical frames, but what makes dance in the Native framework distinctive is that it is within the dance, it is the dance, that galvanizes the bond. Typically, this sort of bond is accounted for through Native songs—one primary example being the songs by medicine persons during healing ceremonies. It is not that the medicine person is the healer; the song used unites the medicine person and empowers healing powers between them in their relation together; without the song, there would be no relation and therefore no ability to cure. Gross explains:

It would be incorrect to say the song belongs to the person, since as a living being the song cannot be owned by another person . . . the song has a life of its own, which is spiritual in nature. . . . One develops a relationship with the song . . . and relationships take work, hard work.<sup>77</sup>

One way to explain how dance can be respectful and vitalize ethical relations is through creating kinesthetic empathy at the level of the cognitive unconscious using embodied moving metaphors. When we see others move in ways that connect with our embodied shared understandings of the world, specifically through movements that convey embodied metaphors associated with emotions, those emotions transfer from the dancer through the dance into ourselves and we feel those emotions as well. This is one of the reasons why people describe dance as being so powerful and connecting.

This notion of kinesthetic empathy also satisfies on part of the success criterion of Truth insofar as it is the embodied medium through which knowledge is successfully picked up by the viewer. It is how, for example, dance is not merely subjective interpretation of entertaining movement but, rather, how knowledge that is created by and drawn from one's body may be communicated to an external, but connected, other in a rather objective sense. I say "rather objective" because "objectivity" is not a facet of Native epistemology insofar as it is a polycentric frame. What I mean is that, like all stories, there are values and principles and claims that are to be taken up through the narrative. Narratives are not open to subjective readings because that would violate the relation. To be seen as successful, and not purely subjective, the story, which is never intended to be a direct telling, should help lead the audience to knowledge rather than try to force some "objective" claim onto her/ them. This is the second notion of success that must be satisfied—it must lead the audience down the right path through guiding knowledge. Ultimately, a dance may fail to communicate Truth in two ways: it can fail to ignite kinesthetic empathy as a result of inauthentic movement and expression, and it may fail to lead the audience to a shared knowledge. But dance that relies heavily on embodied knowledge both above and below the surface will typically succeed in these respects and gift Truth unto others.

This section is clearly much shorter than one would like, as there are oh so many questions left unanswered. This is because I am still thinking through the diverse and wide-ranging questions that must be addressed around and in between the claims offered here. There are questions about the relations between dancer and audience; questions on how the limits of ethical knowing constrain and protect Indigenous kinesthetic storytelling; questions on whether or not nontraditional Native folks will have less difficulty or equal difficulty receiving the embodied metaphorical narratives gifted to them on the stage, however one conceives of a stage. The conditions of success for a procedural analysis of knowing that is grounded in performance are delicate conditions to satisfy. What this means is that there is a much larger domain for failure, which entails that there is going to be a much smaller realm of knowing in the fullest sense and greatest degree. I hope that you keep an eye out so that you may dance with the finished project.

**NOTES**

1. Richard West, "Foreword," *Native American Dance: Ceremonies and Social Traditions*, ix.
2. *Native American Dance: Ceremonies and Social Traditions*, 9.
3. Creeden Martel, "Historic Letter Recalls Time When Indigenous People Were Discouraged from 'Excessive Indulgence' in Dancing." While dance was entirely prohibited in Native North America, there was a slightly different approach to the regulation of Indigenous dance by the colonizers in Native South America. The Christian enforcers allowed dancing, but only insofar as it kept them busy, as it were, and did not address any of the original Indigenous spiritual purposes.
4. Such edicts were made throughout the Indigenous Americas. See Castillo, "Dancing the Pluriverse: Indigenous Performance as Ontological Praxis," 55–73.
5. *Ibid.*, 60.
6. Castellano, "Updating Aboriginal Traditions of Knowledge"; Cordova, "Ethics: The We and the I"; Cordova, *How It Is: The Native American Philosophy of V. F. Cordova*; Fixico, *The American Indian Mind in a Linear World*.
7. Dennis McPherson and J. Douglas Rabb, *Indian from the Inside: Native American Philosophy and Cultural Renewal* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, Inc. Publishers), 2011.
8. Whitt uses this term in "Indigenous Peoples and the Cultural Politics of Knowledge" and *Science, Colonialism, and Indigenous Peoples: The Cultural Politics of Law and Knowledges*.
9. According to McPherson and Rabb, the polycentric perspective applies both internally and externally to the Native American worldview. Internally, it accounts for the fact that knowledge must be collaborative. Externally, it accounts for how the metaphysical and epistemological frames of the Native American worldview contribute one component of a complete metaphysical and epistemological picture that is supplemented by and with the metaphysical and epistemological frames of other worldviews. Norton-Smith uses the frame of constructivism to account for the polycentric and pluralist nature of Native epistemology.
10. That knowledge is necessarily comprised of plural perspectives is not unique to Native American epistemology. Much of Western feminist philosophy holds this tenet, but it is neither constitutive of the foundation of all of feminist philosophy, nor is it a standard position held within mainstream Eurocentric epistemology.
11. For related Western work on this issue, see Damian Cox and Michael Levine, "Believing Badly," *Philosophical Papers* 33, no. 3 (2004): 309–28; Richard Feldman, "The Ethics of Belief," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 60, no. 3 (2000): 667–95; and William James, "Percept and Concept," *Some Problems of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1911), 21–60. For Western neuro-cognitive science regarding

- the social, relational, and value-centered nature of knowledge, see Vittorio Gallese, "A Neuroscientific Grasp of Concepts: From Control to Representation," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London* 358 (2003): 1231–40; Vittorio Gallese and George Lakoff, "The Brain's Concepts: The Role of Sensory-Motor Systems in Conceptual Knowledge," *Cognitive Neuropsychology* 22 (2005) 455–79; and Mark Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding*. University of Chicago Press, 2007.
12. Cordova, "Ethics: The We and the I"; Cordova, *How It Is: The Native American Philosophy of V. F. Cordova*; McPherson and Rabb, *Indian from the Inside: Native American Philosophy and Cultural Renewal*; and Norton-Smith, *The Dance of Person & Place: One Interpretation of American Indian Philosophy*.
  13. D'Arcy Rheault, *Anishinaabe Mino-Bimaaziziwin (The Way of the Good Life): An Examination of Anishinaabe Philosophy, Ethics and Traditional Knowledge* (Peterborough, Ontario: Debwevin Press, 1999), 75.
  14. John DuFour, "Ethics and Understanding," *American Indian Thought*, ed. Anne Waters (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004) 36.
  15. *Ibid.*, 37.
  16. *Ibid.*, 38.
  17. Thomas Norton Smith, *The Dance of Person and Place: One Interpretation of American Indian Philosophy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2010).
  18. *Ibid.*, 68.
  19. Lawrence Gross, *Anishinaabe Ways of Knowing and Being* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2014), 107.
  20. *Ibid.*, 110.
  21. Marie Battiste and James (Sa'ke'j) Youngblood Henderson, *Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage: A Global Challenge* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 2000), 50.
  22. Gross, *Anishinaabe Ways of Knowing and Being*, 112.
  23. While I will not get into specificities here, I should point out—and it is important to this line of thought—that the book could not be blue in the absence of a perceiver. Colors only happen as they exist as a property of our body's interactions with some thing. Without our color cones, there would be no colors since what exists outside of our color cones are merely untranslated light waves. For more, see George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).
  24. If you were on another planet and out of the dress sensation loop (or you just weren't born at the time this was written), see, <https://www.wired.com/2015/02/science-one-agrees-color-dress/>.
  25. For further clarification of Native metaphysics and ontology, see Cajete, *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence*; Fixico, *The American Indian Mind in a Linear World*; Gross, *Anishinaabe Ways of Knowing and Being*; Norton-Smith, *The Dance of Person & Place: One Interpretation of American Indian Philosophy*. See also Shay Welch, "Native American Chaos Theory and the Politics of Difference," *The Routledge Companion to Feminist Philosophy*, ed. Ann Gary, Serene Khader, and Alison Stone (New York: Routledge Press, 2017), 370–81.
  26. Cajete, *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence*; Welch, "Native American Chaos Theory and the Politics of Difference."
  27. Cajete, *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence*, 27 italics mine.
  28. An analysis of perception itself as an action, and a particularly participatory action, is fleshed out in Noë, *Action in Perception*.
  29. Johnson, *The Body and the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason*; Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding*.
  30. Johnson, *The Body and the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning*, 20.
  31. Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding*, 79.
  32. *Ibid.*, 105. The role and significance of cultural constructs and practices in embodied logic helps clarify how it is that some different cultures operate according to differing logic systems. The Native American system of logic is non-dualistic and therefore does not contain nor need the law of non-contradiction.
  33. See George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); and George Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).
  34. Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 12.
  35. *Ibid.*, 13.
  36. Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding*, 139.
  37. Lieberman demonstrates that the relationship between intuition and implicit knowledge is a recurring feedback loop. See Matthew D. Lieberman, "Intuition: A Social Cognitive Neuroscience Approach," *Psychological Bulletin* 126, no. 1 (2000): 109–37.
  38. For a general account of the differences between kinds of knowledge, see Martin Davies, "Knowledge—Explicit, Implicit, and Tacit: Philosophical Aspects," *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2nd ed., vol. 13 (London: Elsevier, 2015), 74–90. For a more detailed distinction between intuition and insight, especially as it relates to implicit forms of learning, see Richard Brock, "Insight and Intuition: Two Concepts that Illuminate the Tacit in Science Education," *Studies in Science Education* 51, no. 2 (2015): 127–67.
  39. Because the notion that there is an underlying energy which organizes the world and allows us to create relations is a foundation of Native American metaphysics, most Native American languages have some version of this concept.
  40. Willie Ermine, "Aboriginal Epistemology," *First Nation Education in Canada: The Circle Unfolds*, ed. M. Battiste and J. Barman (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000), 104.
  41. Viola Cordova, *How It Is: The Native American Philosophy of V. F. Cordova*, ed. Kathleen Moore, Kurt Dean Peters, Ted Jojola, and Amber Lacy (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007). I capitalize *Usen* and *Muntou* because they are terms that identify the great energy of the universe and thus are concepts of great significance.
  42. Battiste and Youngblood Henderson, *Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage: A Global Challenge*, 76.
  43. Rheault, *Anishinaabe Mino-Bimaaziziwin (The Way of the Good Life): An Examination of Anishinaabe Philosophy, Ethics and Traditional Knowledge*, 92.
  44. McPherson and Rabb, *Indian from the Inside*, 63.
  45. *A Metaphoric Mind: Selected Writings of Joseph Couture*, ed. Ruth Couture and Virginia McGowan (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2013), 49.
  46. *Ibid.*, 48.
  47. Marlene Brant Castellano, "Updating Aboriginal Traditions of Knowledge," *Indigenous Knowledges in Global Contexts: Multiple Readings of Our World*, ed. George Sefa Dei, Budd Hall, and Dorothy Goldin Rosenberg (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 24.
  48. For more on how blood memory is a function of ancestor-related collective memory, see Neal McLeod, *Cree Narrative Memory: From Treaties to Contemporary Times* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 2007).
  49. Monique Mojica, "Stories from the Body: Blood Memory and Organic Texts," *Native American Performance and Representation*, ed. S. E. Wilmer (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2009), 97.
  50. See M. Gerald Fromm, *Lost in Transmission: Studies of Trauma Across Generations* (London: Karnac Books, 2011).
  51. Shay Welch, "Radical-cum-Relational: Bridging Native Individual Autonomy and Feminist Ethics," *Philosophical Topics* 41, no. 2 (Fall 2015): 203–23.
  52. See Carl Jung, "The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious," *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung, Vol. 9, Part 1, The Archetypes and The Collective Unconscious* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).

53. Rosy Simas, "My Making of We Wait in the Darkness," *Dance Research Journal* 48, no. 1 (2016): 29.
54. Cited in Murphy, *The People Have Never Stopped Dancing*, 224.
55. McPherson and Rabb, *Indian from the Inside*, 60, 62.
56. In addition to the individual and co-authored works by Lakoff and Johnson, see *Cognition and Categorization*, ed. Eleanor Roche and Barbara B. Lloyd (Hillsdale: Erlbaum Press, 1978); and Francisco Valera, Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Roche, *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991). Earlier analyses on the relation between phenomenology, movement, and motor skills, which serve as a jumping off point for many contemporary embodied cognition theories, include Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald Landes (New York: Routledge Press, 2012); Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1964 [1968]); and Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, *The Primacy of Movement* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 1999). For example, Sheets-Johnstone remarks that movement is the mother of all cognition (253). However, she rejects the terms "embodiment" and "lived body" for "animate form."
57. The idea that metaphor has meaning beyond accounting for similarities between ideas or objects is almost completely rejected by mainstream Western Philosophy of Mind and Philosophy of Language. One theorist in particular that is cited regularly as the paradigm of Western philosophy's resistance to the significance of metaphor is Donald Davidson. See Donald Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean," *Critical Inquiry* 5, no. 1 (1978): 31–47.
58. In fact, studies have shown that the implementation of metaphors can purposefully activate the cognitive skills associated with those metaphors. For example, using metaphors denoting creativity can actually enhance people's ability to be creative. See, Angela K.-y Leung, Suntae Kim, Evan Polman, Lay See Ong, Lin Qiu, Jack Goncalo, and Jeffrey Sanchez-Burks, "Embodied Metaphors and Creative 'Acts'," *Psychological Science* 23, no. 5 (2012): 502–09.
59. And it's worth mentioning that neither Johnson nor Lakoff are cited in Cajete's book, so one can be certain that he did not glean his understanding of the metaphoric mind from them.
60. Cajete, *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence*, 28–30, italics mine.
61. Laurelyn Whitt, *Science, Colonialism, and Indigenous Peoples: The Cultural Politics of Law and Knowledges* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 52.
62. Keith Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Place: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 68, 85.
63. Whitt, *Science, Colonialism, and Indigenous Peoples*, 35.
64. Iris Marion Young, "Communication and the Other: Beyond Deliberative Democracy," *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political*, ed. Seyla Benhabib (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 120–35.
65. Robert Fuller, "From Biology to Spirituality: The Emotional Dynamics of Wonder," *Practices of Wonder: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Sophia Vasalou (Eugene: Pickwick Press, 2012), 67.
66. To satisfy any far-fetched, obvious philosophical objections, let me state that I do not include the telling of knowingly incorrect or inaccurate stories or lies, nor do I mean to include fables, and I put aside questions of narrative testimony by those with intense mental disabilities such as schizophrenia (which may or may not give access to other forms of truths).
67. Wendelin Küpers, "Phenomenology of Embodied Implicit and Narrative Knowing," *Journal of Knowledge Management* 9, no. 6 (2005): 16.
68. Battiste and Henderson, *Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage*, 77.
69. Küpers, "Phenomenology of Embodied Implicit and Narrative Knowing," 121.
70. Jacqueline Shea Murphy, "Editor's Note: Doing Indigenous Dance Today," *Dance Research Journal* 48, no. 1 (2016): 7.
71. Jerry Longboat, "Dancing a Higher Truth," *Chinook Winds: Aboriginal Dance Project*, Heather Elton, ed. (Banff: The Banff Center Press, 1997), 8.
72. *Ibid.*, 9.
73. Rulan Tangen, "Dancing Earth: Seeds Rooted Plants and Foods, from Origin-Nation to Re-Generation," *Dance Research Journal* 48, no. 1 (2016): 21.
74. *Ibid.*
75. *Ibid.*, 19.
76. Sandra Laronde, "They Give Us Their Strength," *Chinook Winds: Aboriginal Dance Project*, ed. Heather Elton (Banff: The Banff Center Press, 1997), 18–19, 21.
77. Gross, *Anishinaabe Ways of Knowing and Being*, 106.

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## *Epistemic Injustice and the Struggle for Recognition of Afro-Mexicans: A Model for Native Americans?*

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### INTRODUCTION

Though it is well documented that some of Hernán Cortés's companions during the conquest of the Mexica (Aztec) Empire were black men<sup>1</sup> and that hundreds of thousands of African slaves were brought to New Spain during the colonial period and that they contributed greatly to the development of the territory,<sup>2</sup> many Mexicans nowadays maintain that there are no black people in Mexico. But how can this be the case? One of the most common accounts that is offered to explain this assertion is that the African slaves brought to New Spain progressively mixed with white Spaniards and Amerindians, thus giving rise to a *mestizo* (mixed-race) population. In fact, this explanation has also been used to support the view that there is no racism in Mexico since all the different castes that existed during the colonial period gradually vanished after the Independence through a process of *mestizaje* (i.e., race-mixing) that eventually homogenized the post-colonial Mexican population.<sup>3</sup>

However, the thesis that pervasive *mestizaje* in Mexico has brought an end to racism by dismantling the racial distinctions made during the colonial period is a myth. In particular, various scholars have argued that the process of *mestizaje* has in fact strengthened and perpetuated certain forms of racism in Mexico to the extent that, by promoting the view that all Mexicans are *mestizos*, Mexicans whose

visible markers (i.e., skin color, hair texture) depart from a certain norm are racialized in ways that push them to the margins of Mexican society.<sup>4</sup>

To be more specific, as the traditional narrative about modern Mexican identity typically stresses that Mexicans are descendants from Spaniards and Amerindians in different degrees of admixture, Mexicans who exhibit visible phenotypical markers associated with Afro-descendant populations often fail to be recognized as Mexicans by their own countrymen despite providing testimony about their national identity. In particular, when Afro-Mexicans (who traditionally live in isolated and impoverished rural communities in coastal states such as Guerrero, Oaxaca, and Veracruz) venture outside their communities, Mexican civil authorities often mistake them with undocumented Caribbean or Central American immigrants. In fact, in some cases, police officers and civil servants disbelieve the testimony of Afro-Mexicans about their national identity, thus resulting in consequences that range from a denial of services in government offices to actual deportations.<sup>5</sup> Given the occurrence of these situations, two pressing questions emerge: How can philosophy help us explain the systematic failure to recognize Afro-Mexicans as Mexicans? And can philosophy help to develop remedies to the treatment that Afro-Mexicans are subject to (i.e., being treated as strangers in their own country)? The pressing nature of these questions is further amplified by the fact that the treatment that Afro-Mexicans receive is not an isolated case, but rather part of a pattern of recognition failures that also afflicts other minorities in different geographic locations. In particular, Native Americans are often misrecognized as foreigners in the US by both civil authorities and average citizens.<sup>6</sup>

My two main goals in this paper are to provide some tentative answers to these two prior questions by using some tools developed both by feminist epistemologists and recognition theorists—namely, the concepts of meta-ignorance, epistemic injustice, and recognition—and to show how the application of these concepts to the situation of Afro-Mexicans illuminates how they are related to each other. After offering a brief account in Section 2 of how blackness was perceived in colonial times and in the post-Independence period in Mexico to provide some context, I contend in section 3 that one can effectively explain the situations that many Afro-Mexicans face (i.e., having their Mexican identity questioned by others) in virtue of the fact that other Mexicans who fail to recognize their national identity are subject to what José Medina refers as “meta-ignorance.” Using Medina’s analysis of the nature of meta-ignorance and of the circumstances in which it arises, I show that the failure of recognition which Afro-Mexicans are subject to can be accounted for in terms of the existence of a first-level ignorance about the history and the current presence of Afro-descendants in Mexico, which is compounded by a second-level ignorance about the social relevance of race in Mexico—a second-level ignorance that is manifested in the belief that racial differences are nonexistent, or, at least, irrelevant in contemporary Mexico. In addition, I also show that the application of the notions of meta-ignorance, recognition, and epistemic injustice to this case illuminates the relationship among them in

the following way: meta-ignorance creates relations of misrecognition, and these in turn promote instances of epistemic injustice (in particular, of testimonial injustice) that are directed against Afro-Mexicans. Subsequently, I show that the systematic misrecognition of Afro-Mexicans as Mexicans by many of their fellow countrymen has another deleterious effect, since it promotes instances of coerced silencing. Following Kristie Dotson, who maintains that “many forms of coerced silencing require some sort of capitulation or self-silencing on the part of the speaker,”<sup>7</sup> and using Rae Langton’s insight that certain forms of speech can be considered as silencing acts since they disable the conditions to make certain assertions,<sup>8</sup> I show that in the case of some Afro-Mexicans (particularly from the state of Veracruz), testimony about their own identity illustrates in certain cases the occurrence of coerced silencing given that they often refer to themselves in conversations with others as “morenos” (“swarthy”), thus foreclosing further conversation about their African ancestry.

Having done this, I then argue in section 4 that, in response to the epistemic injustice they suffer, some Afro-Mexicans (in particular, women) have engaged in activities that José Medina describes as instances of “epistemic resistance.”<sup>9</sup> In particular, I show that one of these instances of epistemic resistance by Afro-Mexicans involves a struggle for recognition that I label “self-referential empowerment,” which consists in a demand to be able to self-designate rather than letting others (in particular, Mexican civil authorities) name them. Using the taxonomy of different forms of recognition developed by Axel Honneth,<sup>10</sup> I also show in this section that the struggle for recognition that Afro-Mexicans are engaged in has a dual dimension, which involves a demand for respect of civil rights and a demand for social esteem. Finally, in section 5, I provide a brief conclusion that aims to explore to which extent some of the strategies used by Afro-Mexicans in Mexico can be modeled or replicated in the US to address the situation faced by Native Americans, and I also sketch some lines of future inquiry.

## 2. BLACKNESS IN MEXICO DURING COLONIAL TIMES AND IN THE POST-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

As I mentioned in the introduction, historians have documented extensively the vicissitudes of African men and women who were brought in large numbers to New Spain throughout the colonial period (1521–1810). In particular, Herman Bennett has maintained that by 1640, Spaniards had imported 275,000 slaves from West and Central Africa into New Spain in order to replace Amerindian populations as sources of labor,<sup>11</sup> since some groups had been decimated as a result of diseases introduced by Europeans.<sup>12</sup> Now, in the framework of the Spanish colonial system (which was structured on the basis of caste divisions), African slaves were perceived, as Gates and Appiah have pointed out, under a negative light, and, in virtue of this, “they were invariably placed at the bottom of the hierarchical society that the Spaniards had established.”<sup>13</sup> Given their position at the bottom of the hierarchical Novohispanic society, African slaves and their descendants pursued different strategies to resist or subvert the oppression they were



subject to. In particular, while some openly revolted and escaped from plantations to remote mountainous areas where they established free settlements (*palenques*),<sup>14</sup> others sought to undermine the colonial caste system from within by assimilating to the upper castes, learning their language and mixing progressively with Spaniards, Amerindians, and mestizos in order to climb the social ladder. This climbing was made possible in part by the fact that, in contrast to the North American English colonies, the one-drop rule did not exist in New Spain. As a result of this, while caste divisions were established and enforced by colonial authorities, their borders were rather porous and could be challenged in individual cases within the court system. Thus, while blackness was perceived within the Novohispanic colonial framework as a feature that was demoting or devaluating for individuals, it was not deemed to be a characteristic that was fixed once and for all in populations, which were considered to be capable of racial transformation over time.<sup>15</sup>

Even after the triumph of the independence movement in 1821 and the official abolition of caste divisions, phenotypical and cultural markers of blackness remained features that pushed individuals to the margins of Mexican society, making them both invisible and foreign at once. In light of this, one can then maintain, using the notion of cultural imperialism articulated by Iris Marion Young, that Afro-Mexicans have been traditionally subject to cultural imperialism, since “victims of cultural imperialism are (. . .) rendered invisible as subjects, as persons with their own perspective and group-specific experience and interests. At the same time, they are marked out, frozen into a being marked as Other, deviant in relation to the dominant norm.”<sup>16</sup> One of the manifestations of this cultural imperialism was that although several prominent Mexican politicians and intellectuals throughout the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century (in particular, Justo Sierra and Francisco Bulnes) vigorously debated how the project of building a strong and modern nation and creating a common Mexican identity should unfold, none of the proposals that were articulated acknowledged the significant presence of Afro-descendants in the territory and their economic and cultural contributions to the Mexican mosaic.<sup>17</sup> As a result of this neglect, though the ideology of *mestizaje* (or race-mixing) was promoted by members of the Mexican intellectual and political elite such as José Vasconcelos (1925) and Manuel Gamio (1916) as a policy that that would allow Mexicans to finally turn the page on the lingering racial divisions and discriminations inherited from their colonial past, it actually operated, as Christina Sue has pointed out, as “a mechanism to whiten the country through the dilution and eventual elimination of the country’s black and indigenous populations.”<sup>18</sup>

In particular, while some photographers such as Romualdo García (1852–1930) and Agustín Casasola (1874–1938) documented during the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century the presence of people of visible African descent in Mexico, as Wendy Phillips has shown,<sup>19</sup> systematic efforts were made to ignore (or, at least, downplay) the role of Afro-descendants in the construction of the Mexican nation to the point that an important theme in several Mexican movies and novels in the late 1940s,

1950s, and the early 1960s was the ignorance of one’s Black heritage.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, insofar as blackness was implicitly perceived as a stain or a badge of shame, any cultural expressions associated with it (such as certain types of culinary practices or musical compositions) were either systematically suppressed or attributed to the *mestizaje* process while deliberately ignoring or whitewashing their African roots. For instance, in the 1940s, certain regional musical expressions from Veracruz with African influence progressively became symbols of Mexican culture on the national stage while their origins were ignored, as Theodore Cohen has argued:

As “La Bamba” became a popular song in the radio, in politics and in feature films, it became a national symbol that sometimes lost any affiliation with blackness. In the mid to late 1940s the Mexico City-based radio station XEQ regularly broadcast Baquero Foster’s Suite Veracruzana No. 1 on the Sunday evening [program] “El Instituto Salvador Díaz Mirón’ Sección cultural del Casino de Veracruz.” The program celebrated the history and culture of Veracruz. . . . One commentator declared that “La Bamba” etymologically and musically originated in Andalusia, Spain. There was no reference to indigeneity or blackness.<sup>21</sup>

Now, considering the strength of this tremendous social pressure to negate or make invisible blackness in Mexico in the post-Independence period, I argue that, given this historical context, it is not very surprising that people of visible African descent in Mexico have been subject to forms of epistemic injustice such as disbelieving their testimony when they are asked about their nationality. In my view, this can be explained in terms of the fact that most Mexicans are subject to what José Medina has referred to as meta-ignorance.

### 3. RACIAL META-IGNORANCE, MISRECOGNITION, AND EPISTEMIC INJUSTICE IN MEXICO

One can explain the epistemic injustice that Afro-Mexicans are subject to when they give testimony about their national identity in terms of the presence of a meta-ignorance that is prevalent in Mexican society. In order to appreciate how this meta-ignorance affects mainstream Mexicans, let me first briefly rehearse how Medina characterizes meta-ignorance in racial relations with others. Following Medina, one can characterize meta-ignorance, which is a specific type of ignorance about one’s beliefs or cognitive gaps, by distinguishing it from another type of ignorance, which operates at the level of objects:

On the one hand, there are specific things we should know about the racialized subjects we interact with: for example, how they think about themselves, how society thinks of them, the history and current status of the social positionality of their group, and the history and current status of the social relationality that binds the perceived and perceiving subject together. One may fail to know all kinds of specific things in these areas; and these

failures constitute (some degree of) *first-order or object-level of racial ignorance*. But, on the other hand, specific mistaken beliefs or lack of beliefs about the racial others with whom we interact may be rooted in and supported by very general attitudes about them and about social relationality: for example, the inability to see racial others in their differences—*blindness to racial differences*; or the assumption that racial differences are irrelevant to one’s life—*blindness to the social relevance of race*. Here we would have a *second-order or meta-level ignorance*, which is what I have termed racial *meta-blindness*: blindness to one’s blindness, insensitivity to insensitivity.<sup>22</sup>

In the case of Afro-Mexicans, I contend that the epistemic injustice that they endure vis-à-vis their testimony about their national identity is the product of a racial meta-ignorance that most other Mexicans are victims of. This type of meta-ignorance arises in virtue of the fact that, as the school curriculum has traditionally privileged the narrative according to which modern Mexicans are the descendants of Spaniards and Amerindians in various degrees of admixture, most Mexicans nowadays associate the presence of the descendants of African slaves in Mexico with the colonial period, and thus fail to consider them as part of the fabric of contemporary Mexican society.<sup>23</sup> This type of ignorance, which is a first-order or object-level ignorance insofar as it pertains to the current status of the descendants of African slaves, has been compounded by the fact that most Mexicans tend to believe, given the pervasive myth that the process of *mestizaje* has homogenized Mexican society and erased the racial divisions imposed by the colonial caste system, that racial differences have either vanished in contemporary Mexico, or that they have become irrelevant in everyday life. Thus, the development of a second-order or meta-level racial ignorance has led most Mexicans to ignore the social relevance of race in Mexico, and the effects of this ignorance are manifested in various facets of life. For instance, given that this meta-ignorance erases racial differences by perpetuating the belief that Mexicans are racially homogenous, it shapes common patterns of social identification by systematically making mainstream Mexicans associate phenotypical markers of blackness (e.g., skin color or hair texture) with foreignness.<sup>24</sup> And since Afro-Mexicans are often misidentified as foreigners, they tend to be subject to a deep credibility deficit, which can be a type of epistemic injustice,<sup>25</sup> because they are often taken to be undocumented Caribbean or Central American migrants that use Mexico as a platform to ultimately reach the US when they travel outside their communities.<sup>26</sup>

Considering this, the situation that Afro-Mexicans endure casts light on the relationship between the notions of meta-ignorance, recognition, and epistemic injustice. The racial meta-ignorance that has traditionally been created and maintained in Mexico through the ideology of an homogenizing *mestizaje* underpins a particular relation of misrecognition, and this failure of recognition in turn supports the emergence of instances of epistemic injustice in which the testimony that Afro-Mexicans give about their national identity is systematically doubted or challenged by other Mexicans. The illumination of the relations

between these three notions is of crucial importance because it suggests that failures of recognition, which are often driven by forms of ignorance, promote instances of epistemic injustice. And, if this is indeed the case, this is potentially quite useful since the nature of the relationships between the three notions suggests that, in order to remedy the systematic instances of epistemic injustice created by misrecognition, we have to push back against the forms of ignorance that create and perpetuate failures of recognition.

Having clarified this, I want to examine some reactions that Afro-Mexicans display to the epistemic injustice they are subject to. In particular, I argue that one usual type of reaction that Afro-Mexicans have developed involves developing certain attitudes that correspond to what Dotson calls “coerced silencing,” which obtains when “a speaker capitulates to the pressure to not introduce unsafe, risky testimony.”<sup>27</sup> It is my contention that a form of coerced silencing can be appreciated in the case of certain Afro-Mexicans, when they are questioned about their identity. For instance, Henry Louis Gates Jr. has provided, in his recent book *Black in Latin America*, a clear example of this coerced silencing among some Afro-Mexicans when narrating a conversation that one of his hosts in Mexico, Sagrario Cruz-Carretero (who is an Afro-Mexican professor at the Universidad Veracruzana), had with her grandfather in her late teens. As Gates points out in his narration, when Cruz-Carretero traveled to Cuba, she came to discover that “my family was black—because [Cubans] looked like my grandfather, like my father. I started tasting the food and I said ‘Oh, my God—this is the food my grandmother prepares at home’.”<sup>28</sup> After describing to Gates Jr. the realization of her Black heritage and the feelings that this generated in her, Cruz-Carretero subsequently narrates to him the interactions with her grandfather: “I came back to Mexico and I asked my grandpa why he never told me we were Black. And he told me, holding my hand, ‘We are not Black; we’re *morenos*.”<sup>29</sup>

I contend that the assertion of Cruz-Carretero’s grandfather is a clear case of coerced silencing. Indeed, if we agree with the claim, made by Rae Langton, that “it is possible to use speech to disable speakers and possible to prevent them from satisfying the felicity conditions for some illocutions they may want to perform,”<sup>30</sup> one may argue that, in claiming a *moreno* identity, Cruz-Carretero’s grandfather aimed to disable the line of inquiry undertaken by her regarding the family’s African ancestry. This form of coerced silencing is prevalent among many old Afro-Mexicans, who often prefer to pass as Indigenous rather than accepting a Black identity. Indeed, since indigeneity is acknowledged by virtually all as a familiar and recognizable feature of individuals within the Mexican social fabric (in spite of being a negative social marker) while blackness is perceived as a foreign and potentially disruptive element, the deployment of this strategy enables its users to push back partially against failures of recognition of their Mexican identity since being *moreno* does not preclude (as being Black very often does) being Mexican in the collective imagination. However, despite the tremendous social pressure that has traditionally existed to hide, downplay, or ignore blackness in Mexico, it is important to

emphasize that not all Afro-Mexicans have bowed to this pressure and that certain groups (particularly, associations of women from the Costa Chica region that overlaps Guerrero and Oaxaca in the Pacific coast) have in the last three decades developed various attitudes and actions that can be properly considered as constituting a type of epistemic resistance.

#### 4. 'SOMOS AFRO-MEXICANAS': SELF-REFERENTIAL EMPOWERMENT AND OTHER FORMS OF EPISTEMIC RESISTANCE DEVELOPED BY AFRO-MEXICAN WOMEN

As I mentioned at the end of the previous section, in response to the traditional social pressure to either conceal or ignore their African heritage, a number of Afro-Mexicans from the Costa Chica region (particularly, women) have engaged in actions to push back against the epistemic injustice that they suffer. Echoing Medina, I maintain that these actions are forms of epistemic resistance since they involve "the use of our epistemic resources and abilities to undermine and change oppressive normative structures and the complacent cognitive-affective functioning that sustains this structure."<sup>31</sup>

One of the axes pursued by Afro-Mexican activists has consisted in pressuring institutions of higher education such as the National School of Anthropology and History to modify the school and university curriculum to make visible the African heritage of Mexico. This is of great importance given that, as Carlos López Beltrán and Vivette García Deister have emphasized, most of the anthropological and medical research undertaken in Mexico during the twentieth century was focused almost exclusively on Amerindian and mestizo groups, leaving aside Afro-Mexican groups whose invisibility was then further reinforced and perpetuated.<sup>32</sup> Considering this, one of the main victories of the epistemic resistance led by Afro-Mexican groups has been the establishment in May 2017 of a UNESCO Chair at the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) that is devoted to the study of Afro-descendants in Mexico and Central America.<sup>33</sup>

In addition to the creation of spaces for the study of the African diasporic experience in Mexico, another axis of epistemic resistance has been the struggle of Afro-Mexicans to be recognized in the national census and to be able to choose how they want to be named. In my view, this has been the most difficult struggle because it aims to roll back deliberate and systematic efforts by the Mexican state to eliminate racial distinctions in the twentieth century. Indeed, after the 1921 national census, the Mexican government stopped collecting data about the racial status of the different regional subpopulations that inhabit Mexico under the assumption that using racial categories in the census promoted and perpetuated racism.<sup>34</sup> However, although this deliberate ignorance vis-à-vis any racial origin or status of people was well intended, it had some perverse consequences since it made Afro-Mexicans demographically and legally invisible.

As a result of this, Afro-Mexican communities (which are still nowadays among the most socially marginalized and

impoverished in Mexico, often lacking electricity, running water, sanitation, or basic health-care services) have been traditionally disadvantaged with respect to Amerindian communities. Indeed, Amerindian communities have been usually recognized by the Mexican state on the basis of linguistic affiliation and, in virtue of this, data have been collected in the national census concerning the lacks and lags that they suffer. Because of this, the Mexican government was able to devise and implement development policies which, though exhibiting a very mixed track record, have been at least aimed to alleviate the marginalized and impoverished situation of Amerindian groups. However, since Afro-Mexicans became demographically and legally invisible as a group (even though individuals were singled out as potential undocumented foreigners) in virtue of the cultural imperialism they were subject to, no targeted efforts were made to improve their material conditions.

In virtue of this, some Afro-Mexican women have developed a form of epistemic resistance that I call *referential self-empowerment*. This form of epistemic resistance has consisted in organizing their communities to pressure the Mexican government to include, once again, racial designations in the national census to be able to identify them and, rather than letting the government impose certain categories to designate them, to retain the right of how they want to be named and recognized. And as one of their spokeswomen, Yolanda Camacho, explained in a 2016 interview, after organizing a debate in their communities on this issue, they agreed that they want to be named and politically recognized as "Afro-Mexicanas" rather than as "costeñas," "morenasm," "negras," "mascogas," or "jarochas" because "we are descendants of Africa, but we live in Mexico, we were born in Mexico, we are in Mexico."<sup>35</sup>

In virtue of this, the process that Afro-Mexican women have followed to resist the epistemic injustice consists in articulating a positive double identity (as descendants of Africa and as Mexicans) and demanding that they are recognized as possessing this double identity. As a result of the pressure exerted by various Afro-Mexican NGOs, the Mexican government allowed a question about racial self-adscription to be included in its 2015 national census so that people of African descent in Mexico could be identified as Afro-Mexicans if they so chose. In undertaking these actions, I contend that Afro-Mexican women activists have implicitly adopted a general recommendation put forth by Young for victims of cultural imperialism, which is that "having formed a positive self-identity through organization and public cultural expression, those oppressed by cultural imperialism can then confront the dominant culture with demands for recognition of their specificity."<sup>36</sup>

It is important to point out here that the demands for recognition that Afro-Mexicans make have a dual nature: as Camacho emphasizes in the interview, they want to be recognized specifically as *descendants of Africa* and as *Mexicans*. This is important because the recognition that they demand has a double dimension. On one side, Afro-Mexicans want to be recognized as Mexican citizens who are entitled, just as any other Mexicans, to the same civil and social rights that their fellow countrymen enjoy. In virtue of this, one aspect of the Afro-Mexicans' demand for

recognition involves a specific pattern of intersubjective recognition that depends on being accepted in a community of equal citizens where all are entitled to the same civil and social rights. This form of recognition, which Honneth labels “legal recognition,” is important since it is tied to the acknowledgment of the obligation to respect certain rights. In particular, as Honneth remarks, “in being legally recognized, one is now respected with regard not only to the abstract capacity to orient oneself vis-à-vis moral norms, but also to the concrete human feature that one deserves the social standard of living necessary for this.”<sup>37</sup>

On the other side, Afro-Mexicans want to be recognized as descendants of Africa who are different in their specificity from other groups of Mexicans. In virtue of this, the other aspect of the Afro-Mexicans’ demand for recognition involves a different pattern of intersubjective recognition that depends on becoming socially esteemed for possessing certain characteristics that differentiate one’s particular group from others while contributing, nonetheless, to the collective realization of societal goals. This form of recognition, which Honneth terms “social esteem,” is also important since it is tied to the development of a positive self-valuation that drives individuals to acknowledge and take pride in the contributions that their specific characteristics allow them to make to society. Indeed, as Honneth observes, “people can feel themselves to be ‘valuable’ only when they know themselves to be recognized for accomplishments that they precisely do not share in an undifferentiated manner with others.”<sup>38</sup>

For Afro-Mexican activists, achieving these two forms of recognition is a very important step, given that when Afro-Mexicans have gained not only legal recognition but also social esteem from other Mexicans, they will not only become visible as an important group that that has been (and is) a crucial part of the Mexican nation, but they will also be able, as individuals, to develop symmetrical relations of solidarity with other Mexicans. Thus, for Yolanda Camacho and other activists, the struggles for legal recognition and social esteem (which are two parallel forms of epistemic resistance) are of the utmost importance since they view them as gateways to the achievement of a true social equality. Because of this, they clearly accept the insight of Young, who has maintained that “groups cannot be socially equal unless their specific experience, culture and social contributions are publicly affirmed and recognized.”<sup>39</sup> Indeed, according to these activists, once there are actual data on the total number of Afro-Mexicans, the locations where they live, their levels of health and educational attainment, Afro-Mexican communities will be in a better position to demand from the Mexican government targeted intervention policies to improve their material conditions.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Let me recap. I have argued that, in response to the epistemic injustice that they have been traditionally subject to when they are questioned by other Mexicans (in particular, by police officers and other civil authorities) about the intersection of their national and racial identities (which is an epistemic injustice that is rooted in a relation of misrecognition), Afro-Mexicans deploy at least two different responses. While some resort to some form of

coerced silencing, others have developed certain types of epistemic resistance in order to create beneficial epistemic friction that would force the vast majority of other Mexicans to acknowledge their existence and recognize them as both descendants of Africa and as Mexicans. As I mentioned in the introduction, I am interested in exploring briefly whether some of these strategies can be replicated in the US to address the situation of Native Americans, which is very similar to that of Afro-Mexicans. Indeed, various scholars have pointed out that “what differentiates Native Americans [from other minorities] is that they uniquely experience absolute invisibility in many domains in American life,”<sup>40</sup> and this invisibility causes them to be misrecognized as foreigners (in particular, as Mexicans). Now, though Native Americans have been recognized in the US census for a longer period than Afro-Mexicans have in the Mexican census, they are subject to policies by the US federal government that have made them invisible to the extent that they usually have to prove a certain degree (or blood quantum) of Nativeness to be recognized as Native Americans.<sup>41</sup> This is particularly problematic, as Native Americans themselves stress, because these policies not only divide them against each other, but they also promote in the long run a dilution of Nativeness, thus paving the way to a situation in which, once they are erased, the federal government will no longer have to respect treaties and will be able to take over Native American lands and resources.<sup>42</sup> In virtue of this, perhaps a way in which Native Americans could exert epistemic resistance against the treatment they are subject to would consist in collectively organizing (as Afro-Mexicans have done) to pressure the US federal government to change the ways in which they are recognized at the national and state level. In future work, I intend to explore whether other potential strategies (such as collective organizing to put pressure on film and other media industries to change the traditional representations of Afro-Mexicans in Mexico and of Native Americans in the US) could be effective to change the relations of misrecognition that give rise to epistemic injustices on both sides of the US-Mexico border.

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## NOTES

1. Matthew Restall, “Black Conquistadors: Armed Africans in Early Spanish America,” *The Americas*, 57, no. 2 (October 2000): 171–205.
2. See, for example, Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, *La población negra de México: estudio etnohistórico* (Fondo de Cultura Económica: México, DF, 1946).
3. For a careful analysis of how *mestizaje* has operated to create and perpetuate a series of racist beliefs and practices in Mexico, see Mónica Moreno Figueroa, “Distributed Intensities: Whiteness, *mestizaje*, and the Logics of Mexican Racism,” *Ethnicities* 10, no. 3 (2010): 387–401.

4. Christina A. Sue, *Land of the Cosmic Race: Race Mixture, Racism, and Blackness in Mexico* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).
5. For further details, see the reportage "Somos Negros" made by the Mexican TV channel Televisa, which was aired in 2013 in the news segment *Primero Noticias* and is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DrvjN1z1WhY>.
6. This is clearly illustrated by the treatment received by Kanewakeron Thomas Gray and Skanahwati Lloyd Gray, two Mohawk brothers who were detained by police officers on April 30, 2018, while participating in a campus tour at CSU-Fort Collins for prospective students and their families after the mother of another prospective student called 911 to have them questioned since they looked out of place and foreign (in the phone call, she told the dispatcher: "I think they are Hispanic, one for sure"). For further details, see <https://safety.colostate.edu/reported-incidents-of-bias/>. In addition, it is important to notice that the misrecognition of Native Americans as foreigners is underscored by the structure of Harvard's Implicit Association test for bias against American Indians, which is available at <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/education.html>. (I thank Agnes Curry for bringing this to my attention).
7. Kristie Dotson, "Tracking Epistemic Violence, Tracking Practices of Silencing," *Hypatia*, 26, no. 2 (2011): 244.
8. Rae Langton, "Speech Acts and Unspeakable Acts," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 22, no. 4 (1993): 293–330.
9. José Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance: Gender and Racial Oppression, Epistemic Injustice, and the Social Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).
10. Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995).
11. Herman L. Bennett, *Colonial Blackness. A History of Afro-Mexico*. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), 4.
12. The traditional narrative stresses that the dramatic decline of Amerindian populations in New Spain (and in the rest of the hemisphere) was due to epidemics such as that of *cocoliztli* in 1545–1548. However, some historians, such Andrés Reséndez, have recently provided a far more nuanced picture according to which the decline was also due to the fact that Amerindians groups were subject to slave-like treatment under the *encomienda* system. See Andrés Reséndez, *The Other Slavery: The Uncovered Story of Indian Enslavement in America* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2016).
13. Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Africans in Colonial Mexico," in *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience*, 2nd ed., Vol. II (2005), 167.
14. The most famous example of a free Black settlement in New Spain is the one founded by the runaway slave Gaspar Yanga. For further discussion, see Sagrario Cruz-Carretero, "Yanga and the Origins of Black Mexico" *Review of Black Political Economy* 33, no. 1 (2005): 73–77.
15. A recurrent theme in *casta* paintings (pintura de castas) made during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is that, though improper mixes lead to offspring that tumble down the social ladder, the proper mixes lead instead to a progressive improvement of one's descendants who may become, after several generations, white. In light of this, *casta* paintings had not only a descriptive role of portraying different mixes, but also a prescriptive dimension. For further discussion of this, see Magali Carrera, *Imagining Identity in the New Spain: Race, Lineage and the Colonial Body in Portraiture and Casta Paintings* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2003).
16. Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 123.
17. See, in particular, Sierra, "México Social y Político," and Bulnes, *El porvenir de las naciones latinoamericanas ante las recientes conquistas de Europa y Norteamérica. Estructura y evolución de un continente*.
18. Sue, *Land of the Cosmic Race: Race Mixture, Racism, and Blackness in Mexico*, 65.
19. Wendy E. Philips, "Representations of the Black Body in Mexican Visual Art: Evidence of an African Historical Presence or a Cultural Myth?" *Journal of Black Studies*, 39, no. 5 (2009): 774–79. It is important to stress here that, though photography has had historically an important role in documenting the existence of Afro-Mexicans as Phillips shows, it also has been used in ways that either perpetuate their "otherness" by representing them as "primitives" or that emphasize their integration to mainstream Mexican society by "taming" distinctively African features such as hairstyles. For a thorough discussion of this, see Mariana Ortega, "Photographic Representation of Racialized Bodies: Afro-Mexicans, the Visible and the Invisible" *Critical Philosophy of Race* 1, no. 2 (2013): 163–89.
20. For further discussion of this theme (and, in particular, for a detailed analysis of two case studies, the movie *Angelitos Negros* from 1948 and the novel *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* from 1962), see Marco Polo Hernandez Cuevas, *African Mexicans and the Discourse on Modern Nation* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2004), chapters 8 and 9.
21. Theodore W. Cohen, "Among Races, Nations and Diasporas: Genealogies of 'La Bamba' in Mexico and the United States," *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture* 35 (2017): 63–64.
22. José Medina, "Color-Blindness, Meta-Ignorance, and the Racial Imagination," *Critical Philosophy of Race* 1, no. 1 (2013): 35.
23. Rodrigo Zárate, "Somos Mexicanos, no somos Negros: Educar para visibilizar el racismo 'anti-negro,'" *Revista Latinoamericana de Educación Inclusiva* 11, no. 1 (2017): 72. In particular, "De modo sistemático y consistente a través del tiempo, la pedagogía nacionalista del Estado ha construido como inexistente la afrodescendencia en el territorio nacional, y se ha limitado a señalar la presencia de esclavos en los procesos de conquista y colonización emprendidos por los españoles en América," 58.
24. A clear example of this association consists in the fact that, as Sagrario Cruz-Carretero has pointed out, dark-skinned Afro-Mexicans in Veracruz are often referred to as "cubanos" (i.e., "Cubans"). See her presentation at the national colloquium "¿Cómo queremos llamarnos?" ("How do we want to call ourselves?") on April 17, 2017, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5-wfYVXKN88>.
25. Miranda Fricker has argued that credibility deficits that some people suffer in virtue of their social identities constitute instances of epistemic injustice, which are injustices "in which someone is wronged in her capacity as a knower." Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice. Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 20.
26. This misrecognition is further reinforced by the fact that, in recent years, a growing number of Cubans have traveled to Mexico in order to reach the US more easily and request asylum. See the ABC news article by Esteban Roman published on October 12, 2012 and available at [https://abcnews.go.com/ABC\\_Univision/News/cuban-immigrants-entering-us-mexico-spikes-400-percent/story?id=17516832](https://abcnews.go.com/ABC_Univision/News/cuban-immigrants-entering-us-mexico-spikes-400-percent/story?id=17516832).
27. Dotson, "Tracking Epistemic Violence, Tracking Practices of Silencing," 245.
28. Henry Louis Gates Jr., *Black in Latin America* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 64.
29. *Ibid.*, 65.
30. Langton, "Speech Acts and Unspeakable Acts," 319–20.
31. Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance: Gender and Racial Oppression, Epistemic Injustice, and the Social Imagination*, 3.
32. Carlos López Beltrán, Carlos and Vivette García Deister, "Aproximaciones científicas al mestizo mexicano," *História, Ciências, Saúde-Manguinhos* 20, no. 2 (2013): 391–410.
33. For further details on this, see the official announcement made by the INAH as well as portions of the inaugural lecture by Alberto Barrow, which is available at <http://www.inah.gob.mx/es/boletines/6138-instauran-la-catedra-unesco-afrodescendientes-en-mexico-y-centroamerica>.
34. For further discussion of this, and for a detailed historical analysis of various shifts in the methodologies employed in the realization of national censuses in Mexico, see Emiko Saldivar and Casey Walsh, "Racial and Ethnic Identities in Mexican Statistics," *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Research* 20, no. 3 (2014): 455–75.

35. In order to appreciate the crucial importance of the issue of self-identification for Afro-Mexican women, see the interview made by journalist Lulú Barrera in the internet TV channel *Rompeviento TV* of two Afro-Mexican activists, Yolanda Camacho and Patricia Ramírez, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D1JiQsKX5wo>.
36. Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, 155.
37. Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, 117.
38. *Ibid.*, 125.
39. Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, 174.
40. Peter Leavitt, Rebecca Covarrubias, Yvonne Perez, and Stephanie Fryberg, "'Frozen in Time': The Impact of Native American Media Representations on Identity and Self-Understanding," *Journal of Social Issues* 71, no. 1 (2015): 41.
41. It is important to stress here that there are some tribes that recognize documented genealogical connection to those whose names were on the 1934 rolls, even if that puts them below blood quantum levels that would kick them out of other tribes. For further discussion of the multi-layered legal complexities pertaining to this issue, see the blog post by Paul Spruhan published on February 27, 2018, which is available at <https://blog.harvardlawreview.org/warren-trump-and-the-question-of-native-american-identity/>. (I thank Agnes Curry for bringing this issue to my attention).
42. For further discussion of this, see the documentary by Michèle Stephenson and Brian Young, "A Conversation with Native Americans on Race," which is available at <https://www.nytimes.com/video/opinion/10000005352074/a-conversation-with-native-americans-on-race.html>.

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## BOOK REVIEW

### *Hip Hop Beats, Indigenous Rhymes: Modernity and Hip Hop in Indigenous North America*

Kyle T. Mays (SUNY Press, 2018). 194 pp. ISBN: 978-1-4384-6945-4 (Hardcover, 2018); 978-1-4384-6946-1 (Paperback, 2018).

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This compact, engaging book operates at a number of cultural intersections. Over the course of five chapters, along with an introduction and conclusion, Kyle T. Mays provides an academic study of a musical subgenre that is about as far from the proverbial ivory tower as one can get, at least in North America. Mays's primary focus, the character and contours of Indigenous hip hop, highlights a site of cross-cultural pollination—sometimes good, sometimes not—between Native peoples and Black Americans. He introduces us to rappers who employ artistic and aesthetic techniques that have great currency in popular culture expressly to resist settler colonialism. He considers how Indigenous feminists' challenges to heteropatriarchy and hypermasculinity, prevalent as they are in hip hop culture, can serve as a corrective to ailing aspects of Indigenous masculinity. And he concludes that Indigenous hip hop reveals there to be far less tension than we may assume between embracing modernity and adhering to tradition. I focus on the last of these issues first.

#### MODERNITY AND TRADITION

Being modern is typically associated with being white, Mays contends, and with comfortably finding one's niche in present times. "Being Indigenous means being nonwhite [. . .] and lacking the ability to live in a world that has passed [one] by—at least that is how the narrative goes" (13). This narrative is ambient in settler culture. It's frequently deployed quite overtly to render Indigenous peoples invisible, primarily in order to dispossess them of their land. Indigenous artists seek to unsettle this narrative expressly "to position themselves as modern people" (18), not just for personal edification but as part of a larger struggle for Native sovereignty.

Embracing modernity isn't an act of assimilation or capitulation, at least in this context. While it's hardly useful to ally oneself with "certain products of modernity, including colonialism, imperialism, patriarchy, racism, sexism, and so forth" (24), the language of modernity also supports a discourse of resistance that serves to remind us that while we may be products of colonialism, we needn't be bound by it.<sup>1</sup> We see this discourse deployed today by members of such movements as #NoDAPL, #MeToo, and #BlackLivesMatter. It also permits us to acknowledge and appreciate that there are countless ways to be Indigenous, Mays states, that expectations of what it means to uphold tradition can fit within prototypical modern contexts.

Take, for example, the fact that most Native people in Canada and the United States live in cities. "The 'urban' is supposedly where premodern Native people go, lose their 'traditions,' and bring back the negative aspects of cities to the rez, which [negatively] impacts social relations," Mays remarks (2). There are a number of problematic assumptions at work here. The author highlights two. The first is that Native people are constitutionally ill-suited for urban life.<sup>2</sup> They are perpetual outsiders who only live in cities in such great numbers because of the enactment of policies like the Relocation Act of 1956, which was designed to force assimilation by severing ancestral ties. The second is that exposure to Black culture is detrimental to Native people, "who are supposed to be pristine, innocent, stoic" (3). This is partially because of rampant poverty in the inner city (as if this too isn't the result of government policy) and partially because Black and Latinx cultures—typified in the media by violence, drug use, and gang activity—are themselves perceived as retrograde and dangerous, including by some Native people (125).

Aside from the fact that the latter assumption perpetuates a form of lateral hostility that only serves to strengthen settler colonialism, it also does a genuine disservice to the idea of a quintessentially modern way that Indigenous people can uphold, and even strengthen, their traditions. Traditions aren't static. Indigenous hip hoppers are exploring new ways into them, members of the artist collective Beat Nation note (13). In the process, they're enacting "ways of being and knowing in the world that are informed by our ancestors," states Scott Richard Lyons, "but not in such a way that makes us relics of the past, participating in the colonial imagination constructed by settlers" (quoted on 23-24). And they're working, indicates the artist Dreezus, to build bridges and break down misconceptions between Indigenous people who live in cities and those who live on reservations (33).

Consider, too, how Indigenous hip hop serves to disrupt settler fantasies about "authentic" Indigenous representations, which, in part, have been appropriated and commodified through the use of mascots. Citing the artist David "Gordo" Strickland, Mays states that while hip hop may be rooted most firmly in Black culture, "the spirit of indigeneity" has been there from the beginning. Strickland's "metaphoric reasoning is simple," Mays adds: "the drummer serves as a deejay, the singers and storytellers are the rappers. Thus, we see the collusion of modernity and 'tradition' easily adapted to contemporary times" (37). Perhaps this is why Indigenous hip hoppers, Tall Paul among them, have found success encouraging young people to learn their Native tongue and, more broadly, asserting their peoples' right to their own voices employed in speaking their own language to express with their own beats and rhymes what it means to be Indigenous.

#### INDIGENOUS FEMINISM AND MASCULINITY

While Mays asserts that Indigenous men like himself "should strive . . . to continue to learn from our grandmothers, aunts, cousins, nieces, and non-gender binary people" (68), he is adamant that Indigenous feminism isn't intrinsically tied to gendered bodies. Instead, it's a generalizable stance that promotes care for one's community, including non-

Indigenous relatives. Women, though, are more likely to maintain this stance than are men, and both men and their communities suffer as a result of men's reluctance. This isn't a moral failing on the part of men, Mays maintains. Still, the responsibility inevitably lies with them to resurrect healthier, empowering, feminism-friendly forms of masculinity. While hip hop artists are all too frequently heteropatriarchal, alternative voices—Indigenous voices—are coming to the fore.

Where do the heteropatriarchal tendencies in hip hop come from? Black masculinity has been shaped for centuries by racialization. Black male selfhood is itself a product of white-supremacist patriarchy, bell hooks asserts. It "is the image of the brute—untamed, uncivilized, unthinking, and unfeeling."<sup>3</sup> Framing Black masculinity in this way isn't just a means to control Black men's bodies but to justify their destruction at white hands, Mays notes. We've seen this scenario play out time and again in recent years with the deaths of unarmed Black men and boys at the hands of the police. (This phenomenon is nothing new, of course. In the age of the smartphone, it's simply more routinely been captured on video.) Duly internalized, the racialization of their bodies bolsters the presumption among Black men and boys that manhood requires visceral toughness, including the willingness to engage in deathly violence and to assert control over female bodies.<sup>4</sup>

Indigenous masculinity is racialized, too, but it's also treated by settlers as an anachronism. Indigenous men may have a proud warrior past, Mays comments, but they've been rendered powerless by settlers "taming" a continent—the very words Trump used during a recent commencement speech at the US Naval Academy.<sup>5</sup> Both this sense of pride and its conquest are represented by the pervasive, often stereotyped, Indigenous symbolism and imagery throughout settler culture. The dispossession of Native lands coincides with the appropriation of the Native countenance.

Indigenous feminism provides particularly fertile ground for Indigenous men to reclaim and refashion their masculinity in the fight against these settler practices, Mays argues:

In reimagining Native masculinity, we must realize that we do not need to rely on the Western idea of heterosexual social relations. In fact, we should embrace all types of families, however it becomes necessary to raise an Indigenous child in the modern world, where they can be Indigenous and healthy. Above all, Indigenous young men need to know that they can love themselves, their communities, and their people, while performing progressive forms of masculinity that uplift their communities. (77)

While Mays seems to suggest that Indigenous masculinity is tied to gendered bodies in a way that Indigenous feminism is not (is the difference a matter of the *-ity* and the *-ism?*), I don't see why this should be the case. While the female artist Eekwol is a staunch defender of Indigenous women's agency, for example, she emphasizes the need for women, men, and, yes, two-spirit people to reengage with their communities and acknowledge one another as sources of

mutual support. For his part, Frank Waln emphasizes the importance of Indigenous men walking with, beside, and, when appropriate, behind, Indigenous women. He uses beats and rhymes to unpack his own latent patriarchy as openly and honestly as he can (119).

Eekwol and Waln hereby both stand as "progressive warriors." While they acknowledge the ways in which hip hop can be less than socially conscious, they actively "question the imposition of patriarchy and the relegation of Native women" (75) within the genre. Again, the goal here isn't merely to refashion the genre but to facilitate a form of Native sovereignty fit for modernity. This, in part, is what it means "to teach the next generation to be more progressive and loving in our social relations," Mays remarks. "Indeed, if Indigenous masculinity is going to be anything worthwhile in the twenty-first century, then it needs to be rooted in care for community and love of humanity" (68).

To what extent Mays's visions of Indigenous feminism and Indigenous masculinity actually differ is an open question. So is their applicability as a result. Perhaps it would help if we heard more from Indigenous female hip hop artists. Eekwol is the only artist he quotes, although there's a photo of Miss Chief Rocka in a chapter on the fashion of Indigenous hip hop to provide an example of "Native bling." Nor is there much representation of rappers from the Indigenous LGBTQ+ community. This provides a worthwhile avenue for further exploration.

### BLACKNESS AND INDIGENEITY

Indigenous hip hoppers routinely appropriate linguistic, sartorial, and musical styles from their Black counterparts. This is unavoidable insofar as hip hop is most firmly rooted in Black culture. While it's neither malicious nor invidious, it nevertheless must be made explicit, Mays states. Otherwise, Indigenous hip hoppers risk repeating the same forms of unacknowledging cooptation that have routinely occurred as Black hip hop styles have become pervasive in settler culture.

The artistic endeavors of Indigenous rappers both are and aren't a "Black thing," as Frank Waln puts it (124). The influence of Black (and, to a lesser extent, Latinx) artists is obvious to anyone familiar with the musical genre. Again, it's unavoidable, and there's no salient reason to avoid it. Black language gives hip hop its particular vibe and power. It serves as a stark rejection of the normalization of "standard" English. Geneva Smitherman<sup>6</sup> asserts that it's both linguistic and stylistic, a performative form of resistance against racial subjugation. While paying respect to hip hop's cultural roots, Indigenous artists can employ linguistic crossover (and sartorial and musical crossover too) to resist colonial subjugation. So too can they meld these styles with traditional Indigenous musicality and attire, as Supaman does in the video for "Prayer Loop Song," to express their particular mode of modern indigeneity.

Tensions between blackness and indigeneity in hip hop culture persist, though. In the early days of hip hop, Pow Wow, a member of the Soul Sonic Force, led by Afrika Bambaata, wore a ceremonial headdress. So did Pharrell



Williams, a regular collaborator with black rappers, on the cover of *Elle* in 2014. The Grand Hustle Gang uses a chief head as the symbol for its brand. And in 2004, André 3000 of Outkast “dressed up as an ‘Indian,’ and scantily dressed women emerged out of a large teepee” (87) during a televised performance on the Grammy Awards. “The Natives are getting truly restless,” he muttered, as his song began.

These depictions are complicated, Mays remarks. Perhaps like other non-Indigenous people the artists are unaware of Native genocide in North America. Perhaps they “find something noble in Native histories, a white settler masculine version, where they desire to align themselves with being a chief, the best artist in the game” (51). And maybe, just maybe, young men trapped in the ghetto are expressing solidarity with those trapped on the reservation. But redfacing is redfacing, he concludes, including when it’s executed by Indigenous rappers, as Chief does (in the process of objectifying Native women) in the video for “Blowed” with Snoop Lion (formerly Snoop Dogg). It’s unacceptable on its face, a form of complicity with settler colonialism. Being at the forefront of the fight for racial justice doesn’t excuse being in the wrong when it comes to the fight for Indigenous humanity and sovereignty.

Fortunately, Indigenous artists also are finding creative ways to reimagine Black-Indigenous relations in hip hop. In one song, for instance, rapper SouFy highlights that “black labor plus red land equals white gold.” This illustrates “how white supremacy and settler colonialism can operate in parallel, impacting two groups treated differently historically, at the same time,” Mays states. “It is also a reminder of that painful history, and a call to action for those folks to get together” (111–12).

### “WARRIORS WITHOUT WEAPONS” AND THE STRUGGLE FOR VISIBILITY

In his wide-ranging conclusion, Mays hints at a number of areas in which Indigenous rappers can serve as “warriors without weapons” (75), a term he uses in another context but that’s equally fitting here. Mays remarks that “The two major goals of Indigenous hip hop artists are obtaining Native sovereignty and asserting themselves as modern Native people. [. . .] Other groups use hip hop to assert their humanity; Indigenous people have to convince others that they exist” (5). There are many—too many—avenues for them to do so.

More work must be done to foster antiracist-anticolonialist alliances. Standing against the construction of pipelines and police brutality are but two forms of activism about which artists can speak. They are well positioned in their respective communities to take a firm stand against the kleptocratic and repressive practices of both the US and Canadian governments and their affiliates. Indeed, taking a firm anticolonialist stance is entirely compatible with antiracism, and vice versa.

Indigenous artists also must step up for their communities, Mays insists, in part by acknowledging the ways in which Indigenous men reproduce regressive practices of settler culture. The “restoration of progressive masculinities and

gender performances” (135) includes taking up the cause of the thousands of missing and murdered Native women in North America. Combatting youth suicide, the erasure of urban Indigenous voices, and harmful relations between human and other-than-human beings also deserve their attention. Given what Mays offers here, Indigenous artists even have a powerful pedagogical role to play in adding depth and nuance to both Native and Hip Hop Studies. It will be interesting to see how the involvement of more Indigenous artists in these various forms of advocacy and activism plays out academically, musically, and culturally.

Mays provides a good deal to work with philosophically as well, even if his considerations only scratch the surface. He insists, for example, on defending modernity as a basis for Native identity. But with the debate over the merits of *post-modernity* seemingly having long since run its course among academics, what is it about modernity that should hold such charm? Perhaps the term is just a stand-in for living—and being visible *and* being heard—in contemporary times. Perhaps also there’s something powerful about linking Indigeneity with modernity that has yet to be made explicit.

Mays’s discussion of the revitalizing prospects offered by Indigenous feminism deserves more attention too. And it’s not just the fate of Indigenous masculinity that’s at stake. Women, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, have played a (if not *the*) central role in establishing and scaling up every currently active progressive movement. Feminists—elders, activists, scholars—today are vocal defenders of men, themselves, and the land. Now, what resources do feminists have at their disposal to decolonize popular culture? Mays offers a discursive foothold for a much broader conversation.

Lastly, *Hip Hop Beats, Indigenous Rhymes* should find a welcome audience among instructors across the humanities, particularly for courses involving cultural criticism. Chapters are modular in their construction; each one can be studied on its own. The text also lends itself well to integration with multimedia. This makes it user-friendly, particularly for undergraduates.

### NOTES

1. Scott Richard Lyons, “Actually Existing Indian Nations: Modernity, Diversity, and the Future of Native American Studies,” *American Indian Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (Summer 2011): 294–312.
2. Hilary N. Weaver, “Urban and Indigenous: The Challenges of Being a Native American in the City,” *Journal of Community Practice* 20 (2012): 470–88.
3. bell hooks, *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity* (New York: Routledge, 2004), xii.
4. Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in an Age of Colorblindness* (New York: Free Press, 2010); and Aimé Ellis, *If We Must Die: From Bigger Thomas to Biggie Smalls* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2011).
5. Jason Le Miere, “Donald Trump Says ‘Our Ancestors Tamed a Continent’ and ‘We Are Not Going to Apologize for America,’” *Newsweek*, May 25, 2018, <http://www.newsweek.com/donald-trump-tame-continent-america-945121>.
6. Geneva Smitherman, *Talkin and Testifyin: The Language of Black America* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1986); Geneva Smitherman, *Word from the Mother: Language and African Americans* (New York: Routledge, 2006).



APA NEWSLETTER ON

# Philosophy and Computers

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PETER BOLTUC, EDITOR

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## MISSION STATEMENT

### *Mission Statement of the APA Committee on Philosophy and Computers: Opening of a Short Conversation*

Marcello Guarini  
UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR

Peter Boltuc  
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS, SPRINGFIELD, AND THE WARSAW  
SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

A number of years ago, the committee was charged with the task of revisiting and revising its charge. This was a task we never completed. We failed to do so not for the lack of trying (there have been several internal debates at least since 2006) but due to the large number of good ideas. As readers of this newsletter know, the APA committee dedicated to philosophy and computers has been scheduled to be dissolved as of June 30, 2020. Yet, it is often better to do one's duty late rather than never. In this piece, we thought we would draft what a revised charge might look like. We hope to make the case that there is still a need for the committee. If that ends up being unpersuasive, we hope that a discussion of the activities in which the committee has engaged will serve as a guide to any future committee(s) that might be formed, within or outside of the APA, to further develop some of the activities of the philosophy and computers committee.

The original charge for the philosophy and computers committee read as follows:

The committee collects and disseminates information on the use of computers in the profession, including their use in instruction, research, writing, and publication, and it makes recommendations for appropriate actions of the board or programs of the association.

As even a cursory view of our newsletter would show, this is badly out of date. Over and above the topics in our original charge, the newsletter has engaged issues in the ethics and philosophy of data, information, the internet, e-learning in philosophy, and various forms of computing, not to mention the philosophy of artificial intelligence, the philosophy of computational cognitive modeling, the philosophy of computer science, the philosophy of information, the ethics of increasingly intelligent robots, and

other topics as well. Authors and perspectives published in the newsletter have come from different disciplines, and that has only served to enrich the content of our discourse. If a philosopher is theorizing about the prospects of producing consciousness in a computational architecture, it might not be a bad idea to interact with psychologists, cognitive scientists, and computer scientists. If one is doing information ethics, a detailed knowledge of how users are affected by information or information policy—which could come from psychology, law, or other disciplines—clearly serves to move the conversation forward.

The original charge made reference to “computers in the profession,” never imagining how the committee’s interests would evolve in both an inter- and multidisciplinary manner. While the committee was populated by philosophers, the discourse in the newsletter and APA conference sessions organized by the committee has been integrating insights from other disciplines into philosophical discourse. Moreover, the discourse organized by the committee has implications outside the profession. Finally, even if we focus only on computing in the philosophical profession, the idea that the committee simply “collects and disseminates information on the use of computers” never captured the critical and creative work not only of the various committee members over the years, but of the various contributors to the newsletter and to the APA conference sessions. It was never about simply collecting and disseminating. Think of the white papers produced by two committee members who published in the newsletter in 2014: “Statement on Open-Access Publication” by Dylan E. Wittkower, and “Statement on Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)” by Felmon Davis and Dylan E. Wittkower. These and other critical and creative works added important insights to discussions of philosophical publishing and pedagogy. The committee was involved in other important discussions as well. Former committee chair Thomas Powers provided representation in a 2015–2016 APA Subcommittee on Interview Best Practices, chaired by Julia Driver. The committee’s participation was central because much of the focus was on Skype interviews. Once again, it was about much more than collecting and disseminating.

Over the years, the committee also has developed relationships with the International Association for Computing and Philosophy (IACAP) and International Society for Ethics and Information Technology. Members of these and other groups have attended APA committee sessions and published in the newsletter. The committee has developed relationships both inside and outside of philosophy, and both inside and outside of the APA. This has served us well with respect to being able to organize

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sessions at APA conferences. In 2018, we organized a session at each of the Eastern, Central, and Pacific meetings. We are working to do the same for 2019, and we are considering topics such as the nature of computation, machine consciousness, data ethics, and Turing's work.

In light of the above reasons, we find it important to clarify the charges of the committee still in 2018. A revised version of the charge that better captures the breadth of the committee's activities might look as follows:

**The committee works to provide forums for discourse devoted to the critical and creative examination of the role of information, computation, computers, and other computationally enabled technologies (such as robots). The committee endeavors to use that discourse not only to enrich philosophical research and pedagogy, but to reach beyond philosophy to enrich other discourses, both academic and non-academic.**

We take this to be a short descriptive characterization. We are not making a prescription for what the committee should become. Rather, we think this captures, much better than the original charge, what it has actually been doing, or so it appears to us. Since the life of this committee seems to be coming to an end shortly, we would like to open this belated conversation now and to close it this winter, at the latest. While it may be viewed as a last ditch effort of sorts, its main goal is to explore the need for the work this committee has been doing at least for the last dozen years. This would provide more clarity on what institutional framework, within or outside of the APA, would be best suited for the tasks involved.

There have been suggestions to update the name of the committee as well as its mission. While the current name seems nicely generic, thus inclusive of new subdisciplines and areas of interest, the topic of the name may also be on the table.

We very much invite feedback on this draft of a revised charge or of anything else in this letter. We invite not only commentaries that describe what the committee has been doing, but also reflections on what it could or should be doing, and especially what people would like to see over the next two years. All readers of this note, including present and former members of the committee, other APA members, authors in our newsletter, other philosophers and non-philosophers interested in this new and growing field, are encouraged to contact us. Feel free to reply to either or both of us at:

Marcello Guarini, Chair, [mguarini@uwindsor.ca](mailto:mguarini@uwindsor.ca)

Peter Boltuc, Vice-Chair, [pboltu@sgh.wawu.pl](mailto:pboltu@sgh.wawu.pl)

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## FROM THE EDITOR

Piotr Boltuc

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS, SPRINGFIELD, AND THE WARSAW SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

The topic of several papers in the current issue seems to be radical difference between the reductive and nonreductive views on intentionality, which (in)forms the rift between the two views on AI. To make things easy, there are two diametrically different lessons that can be drawn from Searle's *Chinese room*. For some, such as W. Rapaport, Searle's thought experiment is one way to demonstrate how semantics collapses into syntax. For others, such as R. Baker, it demonstrates that nonreductive first-person consciousness is necessary for intentionality, thus also for consciousness.

We feature the article on Machine Intentions by Don Berkich (the current president of the International Association for Computing and Philosophy), which is an homage to L. R. Baker—Don's mentor and our esteemed author. Berkich tries to navigate between the horns of the dilemma created by strictly functional and nonreductive requirements on human, and machine, agency. He tries to replace the Searle-Castaneda definition of intentionality, that requires first-person consciousness, with a more functionalist definition by Davidson. Thus, he agrees with Baker that robots require intentionality, yet disagrees with her that intentionality requires irreducible first-person perspective (FPP). Incidentally, Berkich adopts Baker's view that FPP requires self-consciousness. (If we were talking of *irreducible first-person consciousness*, it would be quite clear these days that it is distinct from self-consciousness, but *irreducible first-person perspective* invokes some old-school debates.) On its final pages, the article contains a very clear set of arguments in support of Turing's critique of the Lady Lovelace's claim that machines cannot discover anything new.

In the "Logician Remarks..." Selmer Bringsjord argues, *contra* W. Rapaport, that we should view computer science as a proper part of mathematical logic, instead of viewing it in a procedural way. In his second objection to Rapaport, Bringsjord argues that semantics does not collapse into syntax because of the reasons demonstrated in Searle's *Chinese room*. The reason being that "our understanding" is "bound up with subjective understanding," which brings us back to Baker's point discussed by Berkich.

In his response to Bringsjord on a procedural versus logicist take on computer science, Rapaport relies on Castaneda (quite surprisingly, as his is one of the influential nonreductive definitions of intentionality). Yet, Rapaport relates to Castaneda's take on philosophy as "the personal search for truth"—but he may be viewing personal search for the truth as a search for personal truth, which does not seem to be Castaneda's point. This subjectivisation looks like Rapaport is going for a draw—though he seems to present a stronger point in his interview with Robin Hill that follows. Rapaport seems to have a much stronger response defending his view on semantics as syntax, but

I'll not spoil the read of this very short paper. Bill Rapaport's interview with R. K. Hill revisits some of the topics touched on by Bringsjord, but I find the case in which he illustrates the difference between instructions and algorithms both instructive and lively.

This is followed by two ambitious sketches within the realm of theoretical logic. Doukas Kapantaïs presents an informal write-up of his formal counterexample to the standard interpretation of Church-Turing thesis. Joseph E. Brenner follows with a multifarious article that presents a sketch of a version of para-consistent (or dialectical) logic aimed at describing consciousness. The main philosophical point is that thick definition consciousness always contains contradiction though the anti-thesis remains unconscious for the time being. While the author does bring the argument to human consciousness but not all the way to artificial general intelligence, the link can easily be drawn.

We close with three papers on e-learning and philosophy. We have a thorough discussion by a professor, Fritz J. McDonald, who discusses the rare species of synchronous online classes in philosophy and the mixed blessings that come from teaching them. This is followed by a short essay by a student, Adrienne Anderson, on her experiences taking philosophy online. She is also a bit skeptical of taking philosophy courses online, but largely for the reason that there is little, if any, synchronicity (and bodily presence) in the online classes she has taken. We end with a perspective by an administrator, Jeff Harmon, who casts those philosophical debates in a more practical dimension.

Let me also mention the note from the chair and vice chair pertaining to the mission of this committee—you have probably read it already since we placed it above the note from the chair and my note.

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## FROM THE CHAIR

Marcello Guarini  
UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR

The committee has had a busy year organizing sessions for the APA meetings, and things continue to move in the same direction. Our recent sessions at the 2018 meetings of the Eastern, Central, and Pacific meetings were well attended, and we are planning to organize three new sessions—one for each of the upcoming 2019 meetings. For the Eastern Division meeting, we are looking to organize a book panel on Gualtiero Piccinini's *Physical Computation: A Mechanistic Account* (Oxford University Press, 2015). For the Central Division meeting, we are working on a sequel to the 2018 session on machine consciousness. For the upcoming Pacific Division meeting, we are pulling together a session on data ethics. We are even considering a session on Turing's work, but we are still working out whether that will take place in 2019 or 2020.

While it is true that the philosophy and computers committee is scheduled for termination as of June 30, 2020, the committee fully intends to continue organizing

high-quality sessions at APA meetings for as long as it can. Conversations have started about how the work done by the committee can continue, in one form or another, after 2020. The committee has had a long and valuable history, one that has transcended its original charge. For this issue, Peter Boltuc (our newsletter editor and associate committee chair) and I composed a letter reviewing our original charge and explained the extent to which the committee moved beyond that charge. We hope that letter communicates at least some of the diversity and value of what the committee has been doing, and by "committee" I refer to both its current members and its many past members.

As always, if anyone has ideas for organizing philosophy and computing sessions at future APA meetings, please feel free to get in touch with us. There is still time to make proposals for 2020, and we are happy to continue working to ensure that our committee provides venues for high-quality discourse engaging a wide range of topics at the intersection of philosophy and computing.

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## FEATURED ARTICLE

### *Machine Intentions*

Don Berkich  
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

#### INTRODUCTION

There is a conceptual tug-of-war between the AI crowd and the mind crowd.<sup>1</sup> The AI crowd tends to dismiss the skeptical markers placed by the mind crowd as unreasonable in light of the range of highly sophisticated behaviors currently demonstrated by the most advanced robotic systems. The mind crowd's objections, it may be thought, result from an unfortunate lack of technical sophistication which leads to a failure to grasp the full import of the AI crowd's achievements. The mind crowd's response is to point out that sophisticated behavior alone ought never be taken as a sufficient condition on full-bore, human-level mentality.<sup>2</sup>

I think it a mistake for the AI crowd to dismiss the mind crowd's worries without very good reasons. By keeping the AI crowd's feet to the fire, the mind crowd is providing a welcome skeptical service. That said, in some cases there are very good reasons for the AI crowd to push back against the mind crowd; here I provide a specific and, I submit, important case-in-point so as to illuminate some of the pitfalls in the tug-of-war.

It can be argued that there exists a counterpart to the distinction between *original intentionality* and *derived intentionality* in agency: Given its design specification, a machine's agency is at most derived from its designer's original agency, even if the machine's resulting behavior sometimes surprises the designer. The argument for drawing this distinction hinges on the notion that intentions are necessarily *conferred* on machines by their designers' ambitions, and intentions have features which immunize them from computational modeling.

In general, skeptical arguments against original machine agency may usefully be stated in the *Modus Tollens* form:

1. If X is an original agent, then X must have property P.
2. No machine can have property P.

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∴ 3. No machine can be an original agent. 1&2

The force of each skeptical argument depends, of course, on the property P: The more clearly a given P is such as to be required by original agency but excluded by mechanism the better the skeptic's case. By locating property P in intention formation in an early but forcefully argued paper, Lynne Rudder Baker<sup>3</sup> identifies a particularly potent skeptical argument against original machine agency. I proceed as follows. In the first section I set out and refine Baker's challenge. In the second section I describe a measured response. In the third and final section I use the measured response to draw attention to some of the excesses on both sides.<sup>4</sup>

### THE MIND CROWD'S CHALLENGE: BAKER'S SKEPTICAL ARGUMENT

Roughly put, Baker argues that machines cannot act since actions require intentions, intentions require a first-person perspective, and no amount of third-person information can bridge the gap to a first-person perspective. Baker<sup>5</sup> usefully sets her own argument out:

- A
1. In order to be an agent, an entity must be able to formulate intentions.
  2. In order to formulate intentions, an entity must have an irreducible first-person perspective.
  3. Machines lack an irreducible first-person perspective.

---

∴ 4. Machines are not agents. 1,2&3

Baker has not, however, stated her argument quite correctly. It is not just that machines are not (original) agents or do not happen presently to be agents, since that allows that at some point in the future machines may be agents or at least that machines can in principle be agents. Baker's conclusion is actually much stronger. As she outlines her own project, "[w]ithout denying that artificial models of intelligence may be useful for suggesting hypotheses to psychologists and neurophysiologists, I shall argue that there is a radical limitation to applying such models to human intelligence. And this limitation is exactly the reason why computers can't act."<sup>6</sup>

Note that "computers can't act" is substantially stronger than "machines are not agents." Baker wants to argue that it is impossible for machines to act, which is presumably more difficult than arguing that we don't at this time happen to have the technical sophistication to create machine agents. Revising Baker's extracted argument to bring it in line with her proposed conclusion, however,

requires some corresponding strengthening of premise A.3, as follows:

- B
1. In order to be an original agent, an entity must be able to formulate intentions.
  2. In order to formulate intentions, an entity must have an irreducible first-person perspective.
  3. Machines necessarily lack an irreducible first-person perspective.

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∴ 4. Machines cannot be original agents. 1,2&3

Argument B succeeds in capturing Baker's argument provided that her justification for B.3 has sufficient scope to conclude that machines cannot in principle have an irreducible first-person perspective. What support does she give for B.1, B.2, and B.3?

B.1 is true, Baker asserts, because original agency implies intentionality. She takes this to be virtually self-evident; the hallmark of original agency is the ability to form intentions, where intentions are to be understood on Castaneda's<sup>7</sup> model of being a "dispositional mental state of endorsingly thinking such thoughts as 'I shall do A'."<sup>8</sup> B.2 and B.3, on the other hand, require an account of the first-person perspective such that

- The first person perspective is necessary for the ability to form intentions; and
- Machines necessarily lack it.

As Baker construes it, the first person perspective (FPP) has at least two essential properties. First, the FPP is irreducible, where the irreducibility in this case is due to a linguistic property of the words used to refer to persons. In particular, first person pronouns cannot be replaced with descriptions *salve veritate*. "First-person indicators are not simply substitutes for names or descriptions of ourselves."<sup>9</sup> Thus Oedipus can, without absurdity, demand that the killer of Laius be found. "In short, thinking about oneself in the first-person way does not appear reducible to thinking about oneself in any other way."<sup>10</sup>

Second, the FPP is necessary for the ability to "conceive of one's thoughts as one's own."<sup>11</sup> Baker calls this "second-order consciousness." Thus, "if X cannot make first-person reference, then X may be conscious of the contents of his own thoughts, but not conscious that they are his own."<sup>12</sup> In such a case, X fails to have second-order consciousness. It follows that "an entity which can think of propositions at all enjoys self-consciousness if and only if he can make irreducible first-person reference."<sup>13</sup> Since the ability to form intentions is understood on Castaneda's model as the ability to endorsingly think propositions such as "I shall do A," and since such propositions essentially involve first-person reference, it is clear why the first person perspective is necessary for the ability to form intentions. So we have some reason to think that B.2 is true. But, apropos B.3, why should we think that machines necessarily lack the first-person perspective?

Baker's justification for B.3 is captured by her claim that "[c]omputers cannot make the same kind of reference to themselves that self-conscious beings make, and this difference points to a fundamental difference between humans and computers—namely, that humans, but not computers, have an irreducible first-person perspective."<sup>14</sup> To make the case that computers are necessarily handicapped in that they cannot refer to themselves in the same way that self-conscious entities do, she invites us to consider what would have to be the case for a first person perspective to be programmable:

- a) FPP can be the result of information processing.
- b) First-person episodes can be the result of transformations on discrete input via specifiable rules.<sup>15</sup>

Machines necessarily lack an irreducible first-person perspective since both (a) and (b) are false. (b) is straightforwardly false, since "the world we dwell in cannot be represented as some number of independent facts ordered by formalizable rules."<sup>16</sup> Worse, (a) is false since it presupposes that the FPP can be generated by a rule governed process, yet the FPP "is not the result of any rule-governed process."<sup>17</sup> That is to say, "no amount of third-person information about oneself ever compels a shift to first person knowledge."<sup>18</sup> Although Baker does not explain what she means by "third-person information" and "first-person knowledge," the point, presumably, is that there is an unbridgeable gap between the third-person statements and the first-person statements presupposed by the FPP. Yet since the possibility of an FPP being the result of information processing depends on bridging this gap, it follows that the FPP cannot be the result of information processing. Hence it is impossible for machines, having only the resource of information processing as they do, to have an irreducible first-person perspective.

Baker's skeptical challenge to the AI crowd may be set out in detail as follows:

- C 1. Necessarily, X is an original agent only if X has the capacity to formulate intentions.
- 2. Necessarily, X has the capacity to formulate intentions only if X has an irreducible first person perspective.
- 3. Necessarily, X has an irreducible first person perspective only if X has second-order consciousness.
- 4. Necessarily, X has second-order consciousness only if X has self-consciousness.

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- ∴ 5. Necessarily, X is an original agent only if X has self-consciousness. 1,2,3&4
- 6. Necessarily, X is a machine only if X is designed and programmed.

- 7. Necessarily, X is designed and programmed only if X operates just according to rule-governed transformations on discrete input.
- 8. Necessarily, X operates just according to rule-governed transformations on discrete input only if X lacks self-consciousness.

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- ∴ 9. Necessarily, X is a machine only if X lacks self-consciousness. 6,7&8

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- ∴ 10. Necessarily, X is a machine only if X is not an original agent. 5&9

### A MEASURED RESPONSE ON BEHALF OF THE AI CROWD

While there presumably exist skeptical challenges which ought not be taken seriously because they are, for want of careful argumentation, themselves unserious, I submit that Baker's skeptical challenge to the AI crowd is serious and ought to be taken as such. It calls for a measured response. It would be a mistake, in other words, for the AI crowd to dismiss Baker's challenge out of hand for want of technical sophistication, say, in the absence of decisive counterarguments. Moreover, counterarguments will not be decisive if they simply ignore the underlying import of the skeptic's claims.

For example, given the weight of argument against physicalist solutions to the hard problem of consciousness generally, it would be incautious of the AI crowd to respond by rejecting C.8 (but see<sup>19</sup> for a comprehensive review of the hard problem). In simple terms, the AI crowd should join the mind crowd in finding it daft at this point for a roboticist to claim that *there is something it is like to be her robot*, however impressive the robot or resourceful the roboticist in building it.

A more modest strategy is to sidestep the hard problem of consciousness altogether by arguing that having an irreducible FPP is not, contrary to C.2, a necessary condition on the capacity to form intentions. This is the appropriate point to press provided that it also appeals to the mind crowd's own concerns. For instance, if it can be argued that the requirement of an irreducible FPP is too onerous even for persons to formulate intentions under ordinary circumstances, then Baker's assumption of Castaneda's account will be vulnerable to criticism from both sides. Working from the other direction, it must also be argued the notion of programming that justifies C.7 and C.8 is far too narrow even if we grant that programming an irreducible FPP is beyond our present abilities. The measured response I am presenting thus seeks to moderate the mind crowd's excessively demanding conception of intention while expanding their conception of programming so as to reconcile, in principle, the *prima facie* absurdity of a programmed (machine) intention.

Baker's proposal that the ability to form intentions implies an irreducible FPP is driven by her adoption of Castaneda's<sup>20</sup> analysis of intention: To formulate an intention to A is to endorsingly think the thought, "I shall do A." There are,

however, other analyses of intention which avoid the requirement of an irreducible FPP. Davidson<sup>21</sup> sketches an analysis of what it is to form an intention to act: "an action is performed with a certain intention if it is caused in the right way by attitudes and beliefs that rationalize it."<sup>22</sup> Thus,

If someone performs an action of type A with the intention of performing an action of type B, then he must have a pro-attitude toward actions of type B (which may be expressed in the form: an action of type B is good (or has some other positive attribute)) and a belief that in performing an action of type A he will be (or probably will be) performing an action of type B (the belief may be expressed in the obvious way). The expressions of the belief and desire entail that actions of type A are, or probably will be, good (or desirable, just, dutiful, etc.).<sup>23</sup>

Davidson is proposing that S A's with the intention of B-ing only if

- i. S has pro-attitudes towards actions of type B.
- ii. S believes that by A-ing S will thereby B.

The pro-attitudes and beliefs S has which rationalize his action cause his action. But, of course, it is not the case that S's having pro-attitudes towards actions of type B and S's believing that by A-ing she will thereby B jointly implies that S actually A's with the intention of B-ing. (i) and (ii), in simpler terms, do not jointly suffice for S's A-ing with the intention of B-ing since it must be that S A's because of her pro-attitudes and beliefs. For Davidson, "because" should be read in its causal sense. Reasons consisting as they do of pro-attitudes and beliefs cause the actions they rationalize.

Causation alone is not enough, however. To suffice for intentional action reasons must cause the action in the right way. Suppose (cf<sup>24</sup>) Smith gets on the plane marked "London" with the intention of flying to London, England. Without alarm and without Smith's knowledge, a shy hijacker diverts the plane from its London, Ontario, destination to London, England. Smith's beliefs and pro-attitudes caused him to get on the plane marked "London" so as to fly to London, England. Smith's intention is satisfied, but only by accident, as it were. So it must be that Smith's reasons cause his action in the right way, thereby avoiding so called wayward causal chains. Hence, S A's with the intention of B-ing if, and only if,

- i. S has pro-attitudes towards actions of type B.
- ii. S believes that by A-ing S will thereby B.
- iii. S's relevant pro-attitudes and beliefs cause her A-ing with the intention of B-ing in the right way.

Notice that there is no reference whatsoever involving an irreducible FPP in Davidson's account. Unlike Castaneda's account, there is no explicit mention of the first person indexical. So were it the case that Davidson thought

animals could have beliefs, which he does not,<sup>25</sup> it would be appropriate to conclude from Davidson's account that animals can act intentionally despite worries that animals would lack an irreducible first-person perspective. Presumably robots would not be far behind.

It is nevertheless open to Baker to ask about (ii): S believes that by A-ing S will thereby B. Even if S does not have to explicitly and endorsingly think, "I shall do A" to A intentionally, (ii) requires that S has a self-referential belief that by A-ing he himself will thereby B. Baker can gain purchase on the problem by pointing out that such a belief presupposes self-consciousness every bit as irreducible as the FPP.

Consider, however, that a necessary condition on Davidson's account of intentional action is that S believes that by A-ing S will thereby B. Must we take 'S' in S's belief that by A-ing S will thereby B *de dicto*? Just as well, could it not be the case (*de re*) that S believes, of itself, that by A-ing it will thereby B?

The difference is important. Taken *de dicto*, S's belief presupposes self-consciousness since S's belief is equivalent to having the belief, "by A-ing I will thereby B." Taken (*de re*), however, S's belief presupposes at most self-representation, which can be tokened without solving the problem of (self) consciousness.

Indeed, it does not seem to be the case that the intentions I form presuppose either endorsingly thinking "I shall do A!" as Castaneda (and Baker) would have it or a *de dicto* belief that by A-ing I will B as Davidson would have it. Intention-formation is transparent: I simply believe that A-ing B's, so I A. The insertion of self-consciousness as an intermediary requirement in intention formation would effectively eliminate many intentions in light of environmental pressures to act quickly. Were Thog the caveman required to endorsingly think "I shall climb this tree to avoid the saber-toothed tiger" before scrambling up the tree he would lose precious seconds and, very likely, his life. Complexity, particularly temporal complexity, constrains us as much as it does any putative original machine agent. A theory of intention which avoids this trouble surely has the advantage over theories of intention which do not.

In a subsequent pair of papers<sup>26</sup> and a book,<sup>27</sup> Baker herself makes the move recommended above by distinguishing between weak and strong first-person phenomena (later recast in more developmentally discerning terms as "rudimentary" and "robust" first-person perspectives), on the one hand, and between minimal, rational, and moral agency, on the other. Attending to the literature in developmental psychology (much as many in the AI crowd have done and would advise doing), Baker<sup>28</sup> argues that the rudimentary FPP is properly associated with minimal—that is, non-reflective—agency, which in turn is characteristic of infants and pre-linguistic children and adult animals of other species. Notably, the rudimentary FPP does *not* presuppose an *irreducible* FPP, although the robust FPP constitutively unique to persons does. As Baker puts it,

[P]ractical reasoning is always first personal: The agent reasons about what to do on the basis of her own first-person point of view. It is the agent's first-person point of view that connects her reasoning to what she actually does. Nevertheless, the agent need not have any first-person concept of herself. A dog, say, reasons about her environment from her own point of view. She is at the origin of what she can reason about. She buries a bone at a certain location and later digs it up. Although we do not know exactly what it's like to be a dog, we can approximate the dog's practical reasoning from the dog's point of view: Want bone; bone is buried over there; so, dig over there. The dog is automatically (so to speak) at the center of the her world without needing self-understanding.<sup>29</sup>

Baker further argues in these pages<sup>30</sup> that, despite the fact that artifacts like robots are intentionally made for some purpose or other while natural objects sport no such teleological origin, "this differences does not signal any ontological deficiency in artifacts *qua* artifacts." Artifacts suffer no demotion of ontological status insofar as they are ordinary objects regardless of origin. Her argument, supplemented and supported by Amie L. Thomasson,<sup>31</sup> repudiates drawing on the distinction between mind-dependence and mind-independence (partly) in light of the fact that,

[A]dvances in technology have blurred the difference between natural objects and artifacts. For example, so-called digital organisms are computer programs that (like biological organisms) can mutate, reproduce, and compete with one another. Or consider robo-rats with implanted electrodes that direct the rats movements. Or, for another example, consider what one researcher calls a bacterial battery: these are biofuel cells that use microbes to convert organic matter into electricity. Bacterial batteries are the result of a recent discovery of a micro-organism that feeds on sugar and converts it to a stream of electricity. This leads to a stable source of low power that can be used to run sensors of household devices. Finally, scientists are genetically engineering viruses that selectively infect and kill cancer cells and leave healthy cells alone. Scientific American referred to these viruses as search-and-destroy missiles. Are these objects—the digital organisms, robo-rats, bacterial batteries, genetically engineered viral search-and-destroy missiles artifacts or natural objects? Does it matter? I suspect that the distinction between artifacts and natural objects will become increasingly fuzzy; and, as it does, the worries about the mind-independent/mind-dependent distinction will fade away.<sup>32</sup>

Baker's distinction between rudimentary and robust FPPs, suitably extended to artifacts, may cede just enough ground to the AI crowd to give them purchase on at least *minimal* machine agency, all while building insurmountable ramparts against the AI crowd to defend, on behalf of the mind crowd, the special status of persons, enjoying as

they must their computationally intractable robust FPPs. Unfortunately Baker does not explain precisely how the minimal agent enjoying a rudimentary FPP develops into a moral agent having the requisite robust FPP. That is, growing children readily, gracefully, and easily scale the ramparts simply in the course of their normal development, yet how remains a mystery.

At most we can say that there are many things a minimal agent cannot do rational (reflective) and moral (responsible) agents can do. Moreover, the mind crowd may object that Baker has in fact ceded no ground whatsoever, since even a suitably attenuated conception of intention cannot be programmed under Baker's conception of programming. What is her conception of programming? Recall that Baker defends B.3 by arguing that machines cannot achieve a first-person perspective since machines gain information *only* through rule-based transformations on discrete input and no amount or combination of such transformations could suffice for the transition from a third-person perspective to a first-person perspective. That is,

- D 1. If machines were able to have a FPP, then the FPP can be the result of transformations on discrete input via specifiable rules.
- 2. If the FPP can be the result of transformations on discrete input via specifiable rules, then there exists some amount of third-person information which compels a shift to first-person knowledge.
- 3. No amount of third-person information compels a shift to first-person knowledge.

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- ∴ 4. First-person episodes cannot be the result of transformations on discrete input via specifiable rules. 2&3

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- ∴ 5. Machines necessarily lack an irreducible first-person perspective. 1&4

The problem with D is that it betrays an overly narrow conception of machines and programming, and this is true even if we grant that we don't presently know of *any* programming strategy that would bring about an irreducible FPP.

Here is a simple way of thinking about machines and programming as Argument D would have it. There was at one time (for all I know, there may still be) a child's toy which was essentially a wind-up car. The car came with a series of small plastic disks, with notches around the circumference, which could be fitted over a rotating spindle in the middle of the car. The disks acted as a cam, actuating a lever which turned the wheels when the lever hit a notch in the side of the disk. Each disk had a distinct pattern of notches and resulted in a distinct route. Thus, placing a particular disk on the car's spindle "programs" the car to follow a particular route.

Insofar as it requires that programming be restricted to transformations on discrete input via specifiable rules,



Argument D treats all machines as strictly analogous to the toy car and programming as analogous to carving out new notches on a disk used in the toy car. Certainly Argument D allows for machines which are much more complicated than the toy car, but the basic relationship between program and machine behavior is the same throughout. The program determines the machine's behavior, while the program itself is in turn determined by the programmer. It is the point of D.2 that, if an irreducible FPP were programmable, it would have to be because the third-person information which can be supplied by the programmer suffices for a first-person perspective, since all the machine has access to is what can be supplied by a programmer. Why should we think that a machine's only source of information is what the programmer provides? Here are a few reasons to think that machines are not so restricted:

- Given appropriate sensory modalities and appropriate recognition routines, machines are able to gain information about their environment without that information having been programmed in advance.<sup>33</sup> It would be as if the toy car had an echo-locator on the front and a controlling disk which notched itself in reaction to obstacles so as to maneuver around them.
- Machines can be so constructed as to "learn" by a variety of techniques.<sup>34</sup> Even classical conditioning techniques have been used. The point is merely that suitably constructed, a machine can put together information about its environment and itself which is not coded in advance by the programmer and which is not available other than by, for example, trial and error. It would be as if the toy car had a navigation goal and could adjust the notches in its disk according to whether it is closer or farther from its goal.
- Machines can evolve.<sup>35</sup> Programs evolve through a process of mutation and extinction. Code in the form of so-called genetic algorithms is replicated and mutated. Unsuccessful mutations are culled, while successful algorithms are used as the basis for the next generation. Using this method one can develop a program for performing a particular task without having any knowledge of how the program goes about performing the task. Strictly speaking, there is no programmer for such programs. Here the analogy with the toy car breaks down somewhat. It's as if the toy car started out with a series of disks of differing notch configurations and the car can take a disk and either throw it out or use it as a template for further disks, depending on whether or not a given disk results in the car being stuck against an obstacle, for instance.
- Programs can be written which write their own programs.<sup>36</sup> A program can spawn an indefinite number of programs, including an exact copy of itself. It need not be the case that the programmer be able to predict what future code will be generated, since that code may be partially the result of information the machine gathers, via

sensory modalities, from its environment. So, again, in a real sense there is no programmer for these programs. The toy car in this case starts out with a disk which itself generates disks and these disks may incorporate information about obstacles and pathways.

Indeed, many of the above techniques develop Turing's own suggestions:

Let us return for a moment to Lady Lovelace's objection, which stated that the machine can only do what we tell it to do.

Instead of trying to produce a programme to simulate the adult mind, why not rather try to produce one which simulates the child's? If this were then subjected to an appropriate course of education one would obtain the adult brain. Presumably the child brain is something like a notebook as one buys it from the stationer's. Rather little mechanism, and lots of blank sheets. (Mechanism and writing are from our point of view almost synonymous.) Our hope is that there is so little mechanism in the child brain that something like it can be easily programmed. The amount of work in the education we can assume, as a first approximation, to be much the same as for the human child.

We have thus divided our problem into two parts. The child programme and the education process. These two remain very closely connected. We cannot expect to find a good child machine at the first attempt. One must experiment with teaching one such machine and see how well it learns...

The idea of a learning machine may appear paradoxical to some readers. How can the rules of operation of the machine change? They should describe completely how the machine will react whatever its history might be, whatever changes it might undergo. The rules are thus quite time-invariant. This is quite true. The explanation of the paradox is that the rules which get changed in the learning process are of a rather less pretentious kind, claiming only an ephemeral validity. The reader may draw a parallel with the Constitution of the United States.<sup>37</sup>

As Turing anticipated, machines can have access to information and utilize it in ways which are completely beyond the purview of the programmer. So while it may not be the case that a programmer can write code for an irreducible FPP, as Argument D requires, it still can be argued that the sources of information available to a suitably programmed robot nevertheless enable it to formulate intentions when intentions do not also presuppose an irreducible FPP.

Consider the spectacularly successful Mars rovers Spirit and Opportunity. Although the larger goal of moving from one location to another was provided by mission

control, specific routes were determined in situ by constructing maps and evaluating plausible routes according to obstacles, inclines, etc. Thus the Mars rovers were, in a rudimentary sense, gleaning information from their environment and using that information to assess alternatives so as to plan and execute subsequent actions. None of this was done with the requirement of, or pretense to having, an irreducible FPP, yet it does come closer to fitting the Davidsonian model of intentions. To be sure, this is intention-formation of the crudest sort, and it requires further argument that propositional attitudes themselves are computationally tractable.

**A LARGER POINT: AVOIDING EXCESSES ON BOTH SIDES**

Baker closes her original article by pointing out that robots' putative inability to form intentions has far-reaching implications:

So machines cannot engage in intentional behavior of any kind. For example, they cannot tell lies, since lying involves the intent to deceive; they cannot try to avoid mistakes, since trying to avoid mistakes entails intending to conform to some normative rule. They cannot be malevolent, since having no intentions at all, they can hardly have wicked intentions. And, most significantly, computers cannot use language to make assertions, ask questions, or make promises, etc., since speech acts are but a species of intentional action. Thus, we may conclude that a computer can never have a will of its own.<sup>38</sup>

The challenge for the AI crowd, then, is to break the link Baker insists exists between intention formation and an irreducible FPP in its robust incarnation. For if Baker is correct and the robust FPP presupposes self-consciousness, the only way the roboticist can secure machine agency is by solving the vastly more difficult problem of consciousness, which so far as we presently know is a computationally impenetrable problem. I have argued that the link can be broken, provided a defensible and computationally tractable account of intention is available to replace Castaneda's overly demanding account.

If my analysis is sound, then there are times when it is appropriate for the AI crowd to push back against the mind crowd. Yet they must do so in such a way as to respect so far as possible the ordinary notions the mind crowd expects to see employed. In this case, were the AI crowd to so distort the concept of intention in their use of the term that it no longer meets the mind crowd's best expectations, the AI crowd would merely have supplied the mind crowd with further skeptical arguments. In this sense, the mind crowd plays a valuable role in demanding that the AI crowd ground their efforts in justifiable conceptual requirements, which in no way entails that the AI crowd need accept those conceptual requirements without further argument. Thus the enterprise of artificial intelligence has as much to do with illuminating the efforts of the philosophers of mind as the latter have in informing those working in artificial intelligence.

This is a plea by example, then, to the AI crowd that they avoid being overly satisfied with themselves simply for simulating interesting behaviors, unless of course the point of the simulation simply is the behavior. At the same time, it is a plea to the mind crowd that they recognize when their claims go too far even for human agents and realize that the AI crowd is constantly adding to their repertoire techniques which can and should inform efforts in the philosophy of mind.

**NOTES**

1. With apologies to BBC Channel 4's "The IT Crowd," airing 2006–2010.
2. Consider John Searle's article in the February 23, 2011, issue of the *Wall Street Journal*, aptly entitled, "Watson Doesn't Know It Won on Jeopardy!"
3. L. R. Baker, "Why Computer's Can't Act," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 18 (1981): 157–63.
4. This essay is intended in part to serve as a respectful homage to Lynne Rudder Baker, whose patience with unrefined, earnest graduate students and unabashed enthusiasm for rigorous philosophical inquiry wherever it may lead made her such a valued mentor.
5. Baker, "Why Computer's Can't Act," 157.
6. *Ibid.*
7. H-N. Castaneda, *Thinking and Doing: The Philosophical Foundations of Institutions* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1975).
8. Baker, "Why Computer's Can't Act," 157.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*, 158.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*, 159.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*, 160.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*
19. D. Chalmers, "Consciousness and Its Place in Nature," *Philosophy of Mind: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, 247–72 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
20. Castaneda, *Thinking and Doing: The Philosophical Foundations of Institutions*.
21. D. Davidson, "Intending," *Essays on Actions and Events*, 83–102 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980).
22. *Ibid.*, 87.
23. *Ibid.*, 86–87.
24. *Ibid.*, 84–85.
25. D. Davidson, "Thought and Talk," *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation*, 155–70 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984).
26. L. R. Baker, "The First-Person Perspective: A Test for Naturalism," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (1998): 327–48; L. R. Baker, "First-Personal Aspects of Agency," *Metaphilosophy* 42, nos. 1-2 (2011): 1–16.
27. L. R. Baker, *Naturalism and the First-Person Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).
28. Baker, "First-Personal Aspects of Agency."

29. Baker, *Naturalism and the First-Person Perspective*, 189.
30. L. R. Baker, "The Shrinking Difference Between Artifacts and Natural Objects," *APA Newsletter on Philosophy and Computers* 07, no. 2 (2008): 2–5.
31. A. L. Thomasson, "Artifacts and Mind-Independence: Comments on Lynne Rudder Baker's 'The Shrinking Difference between Artifacts and Natural Objects'," *APA Newsletter on Philosophy and Computers* 08, no. 1 (2008): 25–26.
32. Baker, "The Shrinking Difference Between Artifacts and Natural Objects," 4.
33. R. C. Arkin, *Behavior Based Robotics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998).
34. R. S. Sutton and A. G. Barto, *Reinforcement Learning: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. A Bradford Book, 1998).
35. D. H. Ballard, *An Introduction to Natural Computation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997).
36. *Ibid.*
37. A. M. Turing, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence," *Mind* 59 (1950): 454–58.
38. Baker, "Why Computer's Can't Act," 163.

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LOGIC AND CONSCIOUSNESS

*Consciousness as Process: A New Logical Perspective*

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**1. INTRODUCTION**

**A NEW LOGICAL APPROACH**

I approach the nature of consciousness from a natural philosophical-logical standpoint based on a non-linguistic, non-truth-functional logic of real processes—Logic in Reality (LIR). As I will show, the LIR logic is strongly anti-propositional and anti-representationalist, and gives access to a structural realism that is scientifically as well as logically grounded. The elimination I effect is not that of the complex properties of human consciousness and reasoning but of the chimerical entities that are unnecessary to and interfere with beginning to understand it. I point to the relation of my logic to personal identity, intuition, and anticipation, viewed itself as a complex cognitive process that embodies the same logical aspects as other forms of cognition.

**A TYPE F MONISM**

In his seminal paper of 2002, David Chalmers analyzed several possible conceptions of consciousness based on different views of reality.<sup>1</sup> Type F Monism "is the view that consciousness is constituted by the intrinsic properties of fundamental physical entities: that is, by the categorial bases of fundamental physical dispositions. On this view, phenomenal or proto-phenomenal properties are located at the fundamental level of physical reality, and in a certain sense, underlie physical reality itself." Chalmers remarks that in contrast to other theories, Type F monism has received little critical examination.

LIR and the theory of consciousness I present in this paper are based on the work of Stéphane Lupasco (Bucharest, 1900–Paris, 1988). It could be designated as a Type F or Neutral Monism<sup>2</sup> provided that several changes are introduced into the standard definition: a) in complex systems, properties have processual as well as static characteristics. Much of the discussion about consciousness is otiose because of its emphasis on entities, objects, and events rather than processes; b) properties and processes, especially of complex phenomena like consciousness, are constituted by both actual and potential components, and both are causally efficient; c) properties do not underlie reality; they are reality. The first two points eliminate the attribution of panpsychism. This theory allows consciousness-as-process to be "hardware,"<sup>3</sup> albeit in a different way than nerves and computers. FPC is not information processing in the standard computationalist sense, since information itself, as well as FPC, is conceived of as a process.<sup>4</sup> For hardware we may also read, for FPC, proper ontological status.

## 2. THE PROBLEM OF LOGIC

I propose that the principles involved in my extension of logic to real phenomena, processes, and systems enable many problems of consciousness to be addressed from a new perspective. As a non-propositional logic “of and in reality,” LIR is grounded in the fundamental dualities of the universe and provides a rationale for their operation in a dialectical manner at biological, cognitive, and social levels of reality. Application of the principles of LIR allows us to cut through a number of ongoing debates as to the “nature” of consciousness. LIR makes it possible to essentially deconstruct the concept of any mental entities—including representations, qualia, models and concepts of self and free will—that are a substitute for, or an addition to, the mental processes themselves. I have accomplished this without falling back into an identity theory of mind, as described in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.<sup>5</sup> Recent developments in the Philosophy of Information by Floridi, Wu, and others support the applicability of LIR to consciousness and intelligence.<sup>6</sup>

I characterize the science of consciousness today as

- embodying a process ontology and metaphysics, following the work of Bickhard and his colleagues.
- integrating the obvious fact that consciousness is an emergent phenomenon, and that arguments against emergence, such as those of Kim, are otiose.
- placing computational models of mind in the proper context.

The brain is massively complex, parallel, and redundant, and a synthesis of multiple nested evolutionary processes. To further capture many of the essential aspects of consciousness, in my view, one still must:

- ground consciousness in fundamental physics, as a physical phenomenon;
- define the path from afferent stimuli to the conscious mind and the relation between conscious and unconscious;
- establish a basis for intentionality and free will as the basis for individual moral and responsible behavior;
- from a philosophical standpoint, avoid concepts of consciousness based on substance metaphysics.

Valid insights into the functioning of some groups or modules of neurons and their relation to consciousness have come from the work of Ehresmann using standard category theory.<sup>7</sup> Standard category and set theories, as well as computational models of consciousness, however, suffer from the inherent limitations for the discussion of complex phenomena imposed by their underlying bivalent propositional logics.

## 3. PROCESS METAPHYSICS; INTERACTIVISM

The fundamental metaphysical split between two kinds of substances, the factual, non-normative world and the mental, normative and largely intensional world, goes back to Descartes. In Mark Bickhard’s succinct summary, substance metaphysics makes process problematic, emergence impossible, and normativity, including representational normativity, inexplicable.

The discussion of nature of consciousness is facilitated as soon as one moves from the idea that consciousness is a thing or structure, localized or delocalized to some sort of process view. This has been demonstrated by Mark Bickhard and his associates at Lehigh University in Pennsylvania in a paper entitled quite like mine, “Mind as Process”<sup>8</sup> and subsequently. Arguments can be made<sup>9</sup> to model causally efficient ontological emergence within a process metaphysics that deconstructs the challenges of both Kim (metaphysical) and Hume (logical). For example, Kim’s view is that all higher level phenomena are causally epiphenomenal, and causally efficacious emergence does not occur. This argument depends on the assumption that fundamental particles participate in organization, but do *not* have organization of their own. The consequence is that organization is not a locus of causal power, and the emergence assumption that new causal power can emerge in new organization would contradict the assumption that things that have no organization hold the monopoly of causal power. Bickhard’s counter is that particles as such do not exist; “everything” is quantum fields; such fields are processes; processes are organized; all causal power resides in such organizations; and different organizations can have different causal powers and consequently also novel or emergent causal power.

Representations have had a major role to play in discussions of the nature of consciousness. Interactivism, Bickhard’s interactionist model of representation, is a good point to start our discussion since it purports to link representation, anticipation, and interaction. Anticipatory processes are emergent and normative, involving a functional relationship between the allegedly autonomous organism and its environment. The resulting interactive potentialities have truth values for the organism, constituting a minimal model of representation. Representation, whose evolutionary advantages are easy to demonstrate, is of future potentialities for future action or interaction by the organism, and Bickhard shows that standard encoding, correspondence, isomorphic, and pragmatic views of representation, such as that of Drescher, lead to incoherence. The major problem with this process view is that it still defines its validity in terms of the truth of propositions, without regard to the underlying real processes that constitute existence. Further, the ontological status of representations can by no means be taken for granted, as I will discuss. The interactionist movement towards a process ontology is to be welcomed, many of its underlying ontological assumptions regarding space, time, and causality embody principles of bivalent propositional logic or its modal, deontic, or paraconsistent versions. Such logics fail to capture critical aspects of real change and, accordingly, of emergent complex processes, especially consciousness. The extension of logic toward real phenomena attempts to do just that. The increase in

explanatory power for the characteristics of processes is therefore, in this view, a new tool in the effort to develop a science of consciousness. It complements systemic approaches, computational approaches to anticipation, such as those of Daniel Du Bois and the informational approaches of Floridi.

#### 4. LOGIC IN REALITY (LIR)

The concept of a logic particularly applicable to the science and philosophy of consciousness as well as other complex cognitive phenomena will be unfamiliar to most readers. I will show that this has been due to the restriction of logic to propositions or their mathematical equivalents, and an alternative form of logic is both possible and necessary. Someone to whom I described my physicalist, but non-materialist theory of consciousness commented, "But then mind is just matter knowing itself!" The problem with this formulation is that it appears illogical, perhaps even unscientific. The logical system I will now propose is a start on naturalizing this idea.

LIR is a new kind of logic, grounded in quantum physics, whose axioms and rules provide a framework for analyzing and explaining real world processes.<sup>10</sup> The term "Logic in Reality" (LIR) is intended to imply both 1) that the principle of change according to which reality operates is a *logic* embedded in it, *the* logic in reality; and 2) that what logic really *is* or should be involves this same real physical-metaphysical but also logical principle. The major components of this logic are the following:

- The foundation in the physical and metaphysical dualities of nature
- Its axioms and calculus intended to reflect real change
- The categorial structure of its related ontology
- A two-level framework of relational analysis

#### DUALITIES

LIR is based on the quantum mechanics of Planck, Pauli, and Heisenberg, and subsequent developments of twentieth-century quantum field theory. LIR states that the characteristics of energy—extensive and intensive; continuous and discontinuous; entropic and negentropic—can be formalized as a structural logical principle of dynamic opposition, an antagonistic duality inherent in the nature of energy (or its effective quantum field equivalent), and, accordingly, of all real physical and non-physical phenomena—processes, events, theories, etc. The key physical and metaphysical dualities are the following:

- Intensity and Extensity in Energy
- Self-Duality of Quantum and Gravitational Fields
- Attraction and Repulsion (Charge, Spin, others)
- Entropy: tendency toward Identity/ Homogeneity (2nd Law of Thermodynamics)

- Negentropy: tendency toward Diversity/ Heterogeneity (Pauli Exclusion Principle)
- Actuality and Potentiality
- Continuity and Discontinuity
- Internal and External

The Fundamental Postulate of LIR is that every element *e* always associated with a non-*e*, such that the actualization of one entails the potentialization of the other and vice versa, alternatively, without either ever disappearing completely. This applies to all complex phenomena, since without passage from actuality to potentiality and vice versa, no change is possible. Movement is therefore toward (asymptotic) non-contradiction of identity or diversity, or toward contradiction. The midpoint of semi-actualization and semi-potentialization of both is a point of maximum contradiction, a "T-state" resolving contradiction (or "counter-action"), from which new entities can emerge. Some examples of this are the following:

- Quantum Level: Uncertainty Principle
- Biological Level: Antibody/Antigen Interactions
- Cognitive Level: Conscious/Unconscious
- Social Level: Left-Right Swings

#### AXIOMS AND CALCULUS

Based on this "antagonistic" worldview, I have proposed axioms which "rewrite" the three major axioms of classical logic and add three more as required for application to the real world:

**LIR1:** *(Physical) Non-Identity:* There is no A at a given time that is identical to A at another time.

**LIR2:** *Conditional Contradiction:* A and non-A both exist at the same time, but only in the sense that when A is actual, non-A is potential, reciprocally and alternatively.

**LIR3:** *Included (Emergent) Middle:* An included or additional third element or T-state (T for "*tiers inclus*," included third term) emerges from the point of maximum contradiction at which A and non-A are equally actualized and potentialized, but at a higher level of reality or complexity, at which the contradiction is resolved.

**LIR4:** *Logical Elements:* The elements of the logic are all representations of real physical and non-physical entities.

**LIR5:** *Functional Association:* Every real logical element *e*—objects, processes, events—is always associated, structurally and functionally, with its anti-element or contradiction, non-*e*, without either ever disappearing completely; in physics terms, they are conjugate variables. This axiom applies

to the classical pairs of dualities, e.g., identity and diversity.

**LIR6: Asymptoticity:** No process of actualization or potentialization of any element goes to 100 percent completeness.

The nature of these real-world elements can be assumed to be what are commonly termed “facts” or extra-linguistic entities or processes. The logic is a logic of an *included middle*, consisting of axioms and rules of inference for determining the state of the three dynamic elements involved in a phenomenon (“dynamic” in the physical sense, related to real rather than to formal change, e.g., of conclusions).

In the notation developed by Lupasco, and as far as I know used only by him, where **e** is any real-world element involved in some process of change;  $e_A$  means that **e** is predominantly actual and implies  $\bar{e}_P$  meaning that non-**e** is predominantly potential;  $e_T$  and  $\bar{e}_T$  mean that **e** in a **T-state** implies non-**e** in a **T-state**; and  $e_A$  means that non-**e** is predominantly actual implying  $e_P$ , that is, that **e** is potential. In the LIR calculus, the reciprocally determined “reality” values of the degree of actualization A, potentialization P and T-state T replace the truth values in standard truth tables, as summarized in the following notation where the symbol **T** refers *exclusively* to the **T-state**, the logical included middle defined by Axiom **LR3**.

These values have properties similar to non-standard probabilities. When there is actualization and potentialization of logical elements, their non-contradiction is always partial. Contradiction, however, cannot take place between two classical terms that are rigorously or totally actualized or absolute, that is, where the axiom of non-contradiction holds absolutely. The consequence is that no real element or event can be rigorously non-contradictory; it always contains an irreducible quantity of contradiction.

The semantics of LIR is non-truth-functional. LIR contains the logic of the excluded middle as a limiting case, approached asymptotically but only instantiated in simple situations and abstract contexts, e.g., computational aspects of reasoning and mathematical complexity. Paraconsistent logics do mirror some of the contradictory aspects of real phenomena, as Priest has shown in his work on inconsistency in the material sciences. However, in LIR the “contradiction” is conditional. In paraconsistent logics, propositions are “true” and “false” at the same time; in LIR, only in the sense that when one is actual, the other is potential. Truth is the truth of reality. I recall here Japaridze’s subordination of truth in computability logic as a zero-interactivity-order case of computability.

LIR is a logic applying to processes, in a process-ontological view of reality, to trends and tendencies, rather than to “objects” or the steps in a state-transition picture of change. Relatively stable macrophysical objects and simple situations are the result of processes of processes going in the direction of a “non-contradictory” identity. Starting at the quantum level, it is the potentialities as well as actualities that are the carriers of the causal properties necessary

for the emergence of new entities at higher levels. The overall theory is thus a metaphysics of energy, and LIR is the formal, logical part of that metaphysical theory. LIR is a non-arbitrary method for including contradictory elements in theories or models whose acceptance would otherwise be considered as invalidating them entirely. It is a way to “manage” contradiction, a task that is also undertaken by paraconsistent, inconsistency-adaptive, and ampliative-adaptive logics. More relevant Hegelian dialectic logics as “precursors” of LIR are reviewed briefly below.

### CATEGORIAL NON-SEPARABILITY IN THE ONTOLOGY OF LIR

The third major component of LIR is the categorial ontology that fits its axioms. In this ontology, the sole material category is Energy, and the most important formal category is Dynamic Opposition. From the LIR metaphysical standpoint, for real systems or phenomena or processes in which real dualities are instantiated, their terms are *not* separated or separable! Real complex phenomena display a contradirectional relation to or interaction between themselves and their opposites or contradictions. On the other hand, there are many phenomena in which such interactions are not present, and they, and the simple changes in which they are involved, can be described by classical, binary logic or its modern versions. The most useful categorial division that can be made is exactly this: phenomena that show non-separability of the terms of the dualities as an essential aspect of their existence at their level of reality and those that instantiate separability.

LIR thus approaches in a new way the inevitable problems resulting from the classical philosophical dichotomies, appearance and reality, as well as the concepts of space, time, and causality as categories with *separable categorial features*, including, for example, final and effective cause. Non-separability underlies the other metaphysical and phenomenal dualities of reality, such as determinism and indeterminism, subject and object, continuity and discontinuity, and so on. This is a “vital” concept: to consider process elements that are contradictorily linked as separable is a form of category error. I thus claim that non-separability at the macroscopic level, like that being explored at the quantum level, provides a principle of organization or structure in macroscopic phenomena that has been neglected in science and philosophy.

Stable macrophysical objects and simple situations, which can be discussed within binary logic, are the result of processes of processes going in the direction of non-contradiction. Thus, LIR should be seen as a logic applying to processes, to trends and tendencies, rather than to “objects” or the steps in a state-transition picture of change.

Despite its application to the extant domain, LIR is neither a physics nor a cosmology. It is a logic in the sense of enabling stable patterns of inference to be made, albeit not with reference to propositional variables. LIR resembles inductive and abductive logics in that truth preservation is not guaranteed. The elements of LIR are not propositions in the usual sense, but probability-like metavariables as in quantum logics. Identity and diversity, cause and effect,

determinism and indeterminism, and time and space receive non-standard interpretations in this theory.

The principle of dynamic opposition (PDO) in LIR extends the meaning of contradiction in paraconsistent logics (PCL), *defined* such that contradiction does not entail triviality. LIR captures the logical structure of the dynamics involved in the non-separable and inconsistent aspects of real phenomena, e.g., of thought, referred to in the paraconsistent logic of Graham Priest. LIR thus applies to all real dualities, between either classes of entities or two individual elements. Examples are theories and the data of theories, or facts and meaning, syntax and semantics. Others are interactive relations between elements, relations between sets or classes of elements, events, etc., and the descriptions or explanations of those elements or events.

LIR does not replace classical binary or multivalued logics, including non-monotonic versions, but reduces to them for simple systems. These include chaotic systems which are not mathematically incomprehensible but also computational or algorithmic, as their elements are *not* in an adequately contradictorial interactive relationship. LIR permits a differentiation between 1) dynamic systems and relations *qua* the system, which have no form of internal representation (e.g., hurricanes), to which binary logic can apply; and 2) those which do, such as living systems, for which a ternary logic is required. I suggest that the latter is the privileged logic of complexity, of consciousness and art, of the real mental, social, and political world.

**ORTHO-DIALECTIC CHAINS OF IMPLICATION**

The fundamental postulate of LIR and its formalism can also be applied to logical operations, answering a potential objection that the operations themselves would imply or lead to rigorous non-contradiction. The LIR concept of real processes is that they are constituted by series of series of series, etc., of alternating actualizations and potentializations. However, these series are not finite, for by the Axiom **LIR6** of Asymptoticity they never stop totally. However, in reality, processes *do* stop, and they are thus not infinite. Following Lupasco, I will use the term “transfinite” for these series or chains, which are called ortho- or para-dialectics.

Every implication implies a contradictory negative implication, such that the actualization of one entails the potentialization of the other and that the non-actualization non-potentialization of the one entails the non-potentialization non-actualization of the other. This leads to a tree-like development of chains of implications. This development in chains of chains of implications must be finite but unending, that is, transfinite, since it is easy to show that if the actualization of implication were infinite, one arrives at classical identity (tautology):  $(e \supset e)$ . Any phenomenon, insofar as it is empirical or diversity or negation, that is, not attached, no matter how little, to an identifying implication of some kind,  $(\bar{e} \supset e)$  suppresses itself. It is a theorem of LIR that both identity and diversity must be present in existence, to the extent that they are opposing dynamic aspects of phenomena and consequently subject to its axioms.

**STRUCTURAL REALISM**

Some form of structural realism, such as those developed by Floridi and Ladyman<sup>11</sup> and their respective associates, is also required for a logico-philosophical theory of consciousness of the kind I will propose. In the Informational Structural Realism of Luciano Floridi, the simplest structural objects are *informational objects*, that is, cohering clusters of *data*, not in the alphanumeric sense of the word, but in an equally common sense of *differences de re*, i.e., mind-independent, concrete points of lack of uniformity. In this approach, a datum can be reduced to just a lack of uniformity, that is, a binary difference, like the presence and the absence of a black dot, or a change of state, from there being no black dot at all to there being one. The relation of difference is binary and symmetric, here static. The white sheet of paper is not just the necessary background condition for the occurrence of a black dot as a datum; it is a constitutive part of the datum itself, together with the fundamental relation of inequality that couples it with the dot. In this specific sense, nothing is a datum *per se*, without its counterpart, just as nobody can be a wife without there being a husband. It takes two to make a datum. So, ontologically, data (as still unqualified, concrete points of lack of uniformity) are purely relational entities.

Floridi’s informational ontology proposes such partially or completely unobservable informational objects at the origin of our theories and constructs. Structural objects work epistemologically like constraining affordances: they allow or invite constructs for the information systems like us who elaborate them. Floridi’s ISR is thus primarily epistemological, leaving the relation to the energetic structure of the universe largely unspecified, even if, correctly, the emphasis is shifted from substance to relations, patterns and processes. However, it points at this level toward the dynamic ontology of LIR in which the data are the processes and their opposites or contradictions.

In the Information-Theoretic Structural Realism of James Ladyman and Don Ross and their colleagues, the notion of individuals as the primitive constituents of an ontology is replaced by that of real patterns. A real pattern is defined as a relational structure between data that is informationally projectable, measured by its logical depth, which is a normalized quantitative index of the time required to generate a model of the pattern by a near-incompressible universal computer program, that is, one not itself computable as the output of a significantly more concise program. In replacing individual objects with patterns, the claim that relata are constructed from relations does not mean that there are no relata, but that relations are logically prior in that the relata of a relation always turn out to be relational structures themselves.

An area of overlap between OSR and LIR is Ladyman’s definition of a “pattern” as a carrier of information about the real world. A pattern is real iff it is projectable (has an information-carrying possibility that can be, in principle, computed) and encodes information about a structure of events or entities *S* which is more efficient than the bit-map encoding of *S*. More simply: “A pattern is a relation between data.” Ladyman’s position is that what exist are just real patterns. There are no “things” or hard relata,

individual objects as currently understood. It is the real patterns that behave like objects, events, or processes and the structures of the relations between them are to be understood as mathematical models.

Lupasco's question "What is a structure?" now appears, but the only answer to it is not a set of equations! The indirect answer of Ladyman and Ross is in terms of science as describing modal structures including unobservable instances of properties. What is not of serious ontological account are unobservable *types* of properties. Thus, seeing phenomena not as the "result" of the existence of things, but their (temporary) stability as part of the world's modal structure, necessity *and* contingency, is something that is acceptable in the LIR framework, provided that the dynamic relation of necessity and contingency is also accepted. There is information carried by LIR processes from one state (of actualization and potentialization) to another, describable by some sort of probability-like non-Kolmogorovian inequalities, although it may not be Turing-computable.

### **DIALECTICAL LOGICS**

Because of the parallels to Hegel's dialectics, logic, and ontology, I have shown in some detail how LIR should be differentiated from Hegel's system.<sup>12</sup> Hegel distinguished between dialectics and formal logic, which was for him the Aristotelian logic of his day. The law of non-contradiction holds in formal logic, but it is applicable without modification only in the limited domain of the static and changeless. In what is generally understood as a dialectical logic, the law of non-contradiction fails. Lupasco considered that his system included and extended that of Hegel. One cannot consider Lupasco a Hegelian or neo-Hegelian without specifying the fundamental difference between Hegel's idealism and Lupasco's realism, which I share. Both Hegel and Lupasco started from a vision of the contradictory or antagonistic nature of reality; developed elaborate logical systems that dealt with contradiction and went far beyond formal propositional logic; and applied these notions to the individual and society, consciousness, art, history, ethics, and politics.<sup>13</sup>

Among more recent (and lesser-known) dialectical logicians, I include the Swiss philosopher and mathematician Ferdinand Gonseth who discussed the philosophical relevance of experience.<sup>14</sup> The system of Gonseth has the advantage of providing a smooth connection to science through mutual reinforcement of theoretical (logical in the standard sense), experimental and intuitive perspectives. Its "open methodology" refers to openness to experience. The interactions implied in Gonseth's approach can be well described in Lupascian terms. In a prophetic insight in 1975, in his "open methodology" he described the immersion of the individual in "informational processes." (As it turns out, Gonseth was also critical of Lupasco's system, considering it insufficiently rigorous.) More congenial and very much in the spirit of Lupasco was the work of the Marxian Evald Ilyenkov.<sup>15</sup> In a section entitled "The Materialist Conception of Thought as the Subject Matter of Logic," Ilyenkov wrote, "At first hand, the transformation of the material into the ideal consists in the external first being expressed in language, which is the immediate actuality of thought

(Marx). But language itself is as little ideal as the neuro-physiological structure of the brain. It is only the form of expression (JEB: dynamic form) of the ideal, its material-objective being."

### **NON-DUALISM**

Non-dualism attempts to relate key insights of Eastern Asian thought to Western thought about life and mind. It establishes a "working" relationship between opposites. Eastern and Western thought processes have been discussed in a series of compendia to which I have contributed.<sup>16</sup> Non-dualism has been criticized as being non-scientific, perhaps for the wrong reasons, but Logic in Reality can be considered a "non-standard" non-dualism in that it recognizes the existence of the familiar physical and meta-physical dualities. However, the additional interactive, oppositional feature it ascribes to them as a logic avoids introducing a further unnecessary duality between it and Eastern non-dualism. Let us now turn to the Lupasco theory of consciousness as such.

### **5. THE LIR THEORY OF CONSCIOUSNESS**

As Lupasco proposed in the mid-twentieth century, the opportunity and the possibility of characterizing consciousness as a complex process, or set of processes, arise from consideration of the details of perception and action.<sup>17</sup> Such consideration allows one to include, from the beginning, a complementary structure of processes that corresponds to what is loosely referred to as the unconscious, to the relation between the conscious and the unconscious, and to the emergence of a second order consciousness of consciousness. Higher level cognitive functions are perhaps easier to characterize as processes than "having consciousness," but consciousness of consciousness is active enough. It remains to demonstrate the evidence for their also resulting from contradictorial interactions of the kind described as fundamental in LIR.

The analysis of the processes of consciousness in LIR starts with that of the initial reception of external stimuli and the consequent successive alternations of actualization and potentialization leading to complex sequences of T-states, as follows:

- An initial internal state of excitation, involving afferent stimuli.
- An internal/external (subject-object) state in which afferent and efferent (motor) mechanisms interact.
- The above states interacting in the brain to produce higher level T-states: ideas, images, and concepts.
- Further interactions leading to consciousness and unconsciousness (the unconscious) as T-states, memory, and forgetting.
- At the highest level, the emergence of consciousness of consciousness, knowledge, intuition, and overall psychic structure.

The originality of this picture does not reside in its identification of a consciousness, a consciousness of



consciousness (sometimes designated as awareness), and an unconscious. Rather, it is in its emphasis on the logical origin of these higher-level dynamic structures in a principle of opposition at the level of basic physics that provides the mechanism for their emergence and the subsequent complexification of their interactions. Thus, it can be shown that there are, in addition and as a consequence, three (types of) the other mental processes of memory, forgetting, imagination, and creativity. Only *via* a system complex enough to incorporate these aspects might one be able to arrive at a meaningful, real dynamics of consciousness.

To try to disentangle the various issues involved in consciousness and cognition, I therefore will first position some of the entities involved in this picture of consciousness in the key categories of the ontology of LIR:

- Energy: light; thermal, chemical, and electrochemical gradients;
- Process: chemical and ion flows; chemical synthesis; structural changes of molecules; actions and behavior; remembering and forgetting;
- Dynamic Opposition: activation/excitation and passivation/inhibition;
- Subject and Object: the phenomenological subject-object;
- T-states and Emergence: control states; feelings; concepts; ideas.

### **THE DIALECTICS OF AFFERENT AND EFFERENT SYSTEMS**

The next step is to look in more detail at the dialectics, in human perception, of afferent nerve impulses moving from peripheral receptors toward the central nervous system and efferent impulses moving toward the peripheral, especially, motor systems. Prior to excitation by internal or external stimuli, let us assume that the afferent system is in a state of potentiality, maintained by the antagonistic actualization of the polarization or electrostatic equilibrium.<sup>18</sup> Excitation results in a new actualization, potentializing the ionic equilibrium, the reception of an equivalent to a heterogeneity of sensations. The new equilibrium state of perception appears, in its homogeneity, as something objective, exterior, an identity of which one can have “knowledge,” while sensations, although really belonging to the external world, *appear* interior to the senses and more subjective. The dialectics established in and by the afferent process is, accordingly, between the conscious mind, the “knower” as such, actualizing a series of energetic heterogeneities, and the “known” displaced to the exterior, in the potentiality of energetic homogeneity. This conception could be called “pan-energetics,” but it is not a pan-psychism; the mind appears as an aspect of the structuring and functioning of energy itself, like the physical and biological, but admittedly the most complex one.

Following re-equilibration (re-polarization) of the excited nerve cells in a T-state, efferent stimuli leave the brain in the direction of organs of movement (of course, with the possibility of many intermediate feedback loops), with a dialectics that is the inverse of the afferent system. Its actualization looks like a *plan*, an operation of active structural homogenization, which will be opposed by the heterogeneity of the external world in which it will operate, and the dialectics involve thus the imposition of this plan on the external world, and the potentialization of this heterogeneity. There is thus a dialectic of the contradictory and antagonistic dialectics of perception and action, which implies, since one does not exist without the other, that each succeeds the other, but neither is very far, in the nervous system, from the T-state. The difference between actualizations that potentialize and potentializations that actualize is not continuous, and the pauses in the process, in the T-state, are what can be considered states of control. These constitute the dialectic of the psyche itself, which *becomes* what is generally called consciousness.

### **CONSCIOUSNESS AND UNCONSCIOUSNESS AND THEIR DIALECTICS**

The next step in the explanation is to identify what appears in the most primitive consciousness as the objects capable of satisfying physiological and biological needs—food, the sexual partner—in *potential form*, through the actualization of the biochemical phenomena of those needs. The consciousness of hunger is not the *consciousness of* an alimentary need, but *is* the need in a potential state. The actualization of this need projects, by antagonism and contradiction, the missing objects into potentiality, and it is this potentiality that is or constitutes consciousness. In other words, the same concept of parallelism is to be rejected here as in the case of energy itself: not here energy and there its properties, intensity and extensity. The needs, the operations of biological satisfaction are not on one side and the consciousness of those needs on the other mediated by some enigmatic entity, leading to the common, but misleading expression “consciousness of.” There is, in the LIR theory, no such “consciousness of,” no reification or objectification, only *that* which occupies the conscious mind, *that* which is potentiality itself is what is commonly called consciousness.

A potentiality is a conscious energetic state that contains *that* which will be actualized, the need, and its opposite, the lack of which is the need, and is unconscious. However, in contrast to standard theories of mind, there is no actualized structure corresponding to the conscious mental state: it *is* delocalized potentialities. When the lack (hunger) is replaced by the sensation of satiety, the missing elements (food) are eliminated from consciousness and replaced by the potentiality of satiety, which in turn creates a consciousness of satiety and rejection of operations leading to food intake.

What it is actualized, then, does not disappear totally but disappears into the unconscious mind. The next step is to see that there were present, on the one hand, the consciousness of the need and what the need required for its actualization and the unconsciousness of the lack

of this requirement, and on the other hand, consciousness of the satisfaction by the actualization and consequently unconsciousness of the disappearance of the lack. Thus, there are two consciousnesses and two un-consciousnesses that alternate. There is a constant dialectical movement between what occupies and *is* consciousness and that, which, by its actualization, leaves the domain of potentiality and “falls” into the unconscious. But, as always, these moves are never total; there is always some potentiality or relative consciousness in unconsciousness and vice versa.

The extent of movement into the unconscious is normally inversely proportional to the importance of the event. After locking my car, I will in general not find it necessary to remember that I locked it, but there is always a probability of the belief that I did not lock it. If this is actualized, I will go back and check it unless I remember enough of the diffuse (diverse) circumstances at the time of my locking to convince me I did so. The dualism in consciousness can be captured in the example of perception of an object, say, a chair, which shows at the same time how the concepts of internal and external can be understood. When one is conscious that something is a chair, one says that one is conscious of *it*, rather than of its detailed form and color. In this view, I “am” the chair in a potential state; it is the potentiality of the chair *qua* chair that is the content of my consciousness of the chair, that is, consciousness itself. But the identity, permanence, and so on of the chair are also actual, although I am unconscious of them. Everything happens as if the chair were my representation of it and at the same time external to me. There is double consciousness and double unconsciousness, of an external world as if made up of objects, that is, of identities, whose location is my consciousness, and an external world of sensations, actualizations of my sense organs, which, as actualizations, disappear into my unconscious. My consciousness is polarized by the object of perception, but this object is only potentialized relative to my senses. The key difference between this description of external and internal reality is in the relation of the internal representation with the potentiality that appears in the perception of the object, “of the chair, of this chair, in back of the heterogeneous actualizations of my senses, my receptors and brain centers, contradictorily associated with the chair, with this chair.” (These are the examples essentially as presented by Lupasco in reference 27.) This consequently permits the elaboration of a complex system of two consciousnesses of homogeneity and two sub-consciousnesses of heterogeneity, one of each stronger and the other weaker, succeeding one another dialectically. Table 4.2 illustrates this.

**Table 4.2**

|  | <b>Stronger</b>                  | <b>Weaker</b>    |
|--|----------------------------------|------------------|
| Consciousness (of homogeneity of)                    | Object of perception (potential) | Afferent stimuli |
| Subconsciousness (of homogeneity(ies) of perception) | Afferent stimuli (actual)        | Object           |

The two inverse dialectics, of consciousness and sub-or un-consciousness, are themselves antagonistic and contradictory, involved in a dialectic, succeeding, interfering, and dependent on one another, with the result that there exist, in a waking state, no less than *eight* mental structures, four consciousnesses and four sub-consciousnesses, with different gradients of homogeneity and heterogeneity.

**CONSCIOUSNESS OF CONSCIOUSNESS**

I suggest, as have many others, that what distinguishes individual human awareness from animal or primitive consciousness is consciousness of consciousness. The best-known formulation of self-awareness is Descartes’s *cogito, ergo sum*. Descartes also said, “we cannot doubt of our existence while we doubt,” but Lupasco emphasized that it is through doubting that one becomes conscious of thought and therefore conscious of one’s consciousness. Lupasco said, specifically, *dubito ergo sum*. Doubting implies being aware of oneself as the locus of the contradictory consciousnesses referred to above, and of their T-states of the semi-actualization and semi-potentialization of each, which also includes the corresponding processes in the subconscious. One then possesses, in effect, two consciousnesses, each of which is aware of the other, of their contradiction, of their antagonism and accordingly of themselves, through a consciousness of consciousness, via an internal dialectics of control. (Such a control state is, admittedly, an hypothesis; no control state has been identified, although it may be implied by recent work on latency and response times.) This dialectic of dialectics is thus at the same time a dialectic of consciousness of consciousness and consciousness of subconsciousness, and constitutes what is generally called the mind or psyche as such.

The “sequence” of events in consciousness in this picture is the following:

**Level 1:** When a set of perceptions is actualized by the afferent system, two things happen: the heterogeneous actualizations as such, which constitute a primitive subject, without self-awareness, disappear into an unconscious (or subconscious, SC1A). The corresponding potentializations constitute a primitive consciousness C1A, also lacking self-awareness, in which the perceptions appear as largely homogenous objects, OA. When a set of actions is initiated by the efferent system, the related, actualized homogeneous plan of action becomes another subconscious (SC1E), and its heterogeneous objects OE constitute another consciousness C1E. At this level, the resting state of equilibrium in the absence of afferent and efferent influx is defined as a T-state of control (see above).

**Level 2:** Self-awareness develops out of the dynamic opposition between the above two consciousnesses C1A and C1E, at the point of equilibrium of semi-actualization and semi-potentialization of each, producing, *always as an energetic pattern*, a T-state which is a consciousness of consciousness. Interaction of the latter with the unconscious or sub-consciousnesses SC1A and SC1E result in a consciousness of sub-consciousness.

**Level 3:** The two dynamically opposed general subjects of Level 1, SA and SE, and the corresponding general objects OA and OE are not isolated entities, but overlap and interact. At Level 2, via the corresponding semi-actualizations and semi-potentializations, a consciousness of the consciousness of the subject and object will develop as well as the corresponding consciousness of the unconsciousness of subject and object. Out of these and their related dynamic oppositions develop the higher functions of images, concepts, and creativity. Memories are present as delocalized potential events in the consciousness of consciousness and as re-actualized events in the consciousness of subconsciousness.

A key property of the interactions that I have described as obtaining between a real mental element and its opposite or contradiction, and between both and any emergent included middle (T-state) is bidirectionality. Since all elements, conscious or sub-conscious, are present in the same configuration space-time, the LIR picture of the reciprocity between A and non-A, A potentializing non-A followed by non-A potentializing A is a description of a bidirectional process. In the two-level LIR framework, the two elements may be at different levels. This picture finds support in the apparent irreducibility of sub-conscious psychophysical computation to neuronal brain activation. Bentwich has found that while most models of brain computational processes propose that neurochemical activity causes cognitive, behavioral, or physiological processes (PCP), the opposite does not take place.<sup>19</sup> In one case, he shows that this assumption results in a contradiction. This leads to the conclusion that PCP takes place at another (higher) computational level that is not reducible to the lower neural level and has received the term "Duality Principle." Bentwich suggests that the Duality Principle may apply to other brain-related computational processing. Although I criticize some aspects of computational models in relation to intentionality, this work fits closely the dynamics that I propose between the potentialized elements in the brain and the actualized, observable ones at the neuronal level. A duality principle of this kind should be a preferred heuristic.

For comparison with the LIR system, Table 4.3 lists the four types of consciousness defined by Daniel Dubois in 1990.<sup>20</sup>

Although there are a number of differences with the LIR view of consciousness, I fully agree with Dubois's statement that global consciousness is constituted by interactive loops between the different types of consciousnesses. The LIR types are differentiated according to the ontological features of identity and diversity, and development from the systems of perception or action, rather than a left-right brain division. The other difference is that in LIR, one is never fully conscious of acts, and there is no separate self to be conscious of either. At this point, I can only say that the LIR view is not incompatible with non-reductionist informational approaches to the fundamental information processing components of brain function such as those of Pedro Marijuan.<sup>21</sup> The "topodynamic" duality principles leading to minimization of the ratios of excitation to inhibition allows for continuity between the nervous system, the cellular signaling system, and consciousness. To conclude this rapid overview, it is clear that only a phenomenological

differentiation, at least as complex as that which Dubois and I have described, will enable a potential relation of consciousness to the underlying neuroscience to be made.

**Table 4.3**

| Primary Localization:<br>Left Hemisphere                    | Primary Localization:<br>Right Hemisphere                                 |
|---|---|
| Objective Psychological<br>Consciousness                    | Subjective Psychological<br>Consciousness                                 |
| Consciousness of Acts                                       | Consciousness of Self   |
| Meta-Consciousness =<br>Consciousness of<br>Consciousness = | Meta-Self-Consciousness =<br>Self-Consciousness of Self-<br>Consciousness |
| Conscious Consciousness                                     |   |
| Unconsciousness =<br>Unconscious Consciousness              |   |

**MEMORY AND FORGETTING**

No theory of consciousness is complete or acceptable unless it accounts for memory, images, concepts, qualia, intentionality, and creativity, and I will just make a few comments here on the LIR view of memory. The contradictory picture of the processual interactions, in the brain, of macrophysical, biological, and neuro-psychical systems provides the basis for a new explication of memory, in which a distinction is made between conscious "information" or remembrance (souvenir) consciously present and memory-as-such. In the LIR point of view, memory is not a receptacle, a box containing past events in potential form, and the souvenir their actualization, which springs up all at once for one reason or another into consciousness. Memory is the actuality and actualization themselves, albeit, as actualizations, in the unconscious. The souvenir, on the other hand, is the potential event as it emerges in consciousness, occupies, and creates it. Memory and souvenir are thus also antagonistic and contradictory to one another.

In the LIR picture, like that of Bergson, one is subject to the constant interference and antagonism, a dialectics of dialectics of memory and souvenir in opposition, of the two physical (mechanical) and biological (organic) memories that correspond to the chemical and neurophysiological constituents of the brain plus a third cognitive memory, constituted by the consciousness of sub-consciousness and consciousness of consciousness in a T-state, an emergent included middle. This third memory is equivalent to self-awareness, a memory "that knows it is a memory." It is not to be found as an actualized structure but as an incessant internal contradictory process, greatest when afferent and efferent operations are cut off from external, relatively non-contradictory contacts.

A forgetting is also a neuro-energetic process activity that prevents an actualization in the unconscious or a semi-

actualization in the subconscious from potentializing itself, that is, emerging at the level of consciousness, becoming conscious. There are, accordingly, three forgettings, one for each of the three kinds of memories: the forgetting of identities, actualized by unconscious homogenizing forces; the forgetting of variations and diversities actualized by unconscious heterogenizing forces; and a third forgetting at the same time of the identities and diversities in the subconscious, even though the relevant force of actualization is only a semi-actualization in the T-state. As noted below in the section on creativity, it is from this third memory and its corresponding forgetting that emerge discoveries and inventions, all the riches of the creative imagination, all the new combinations of images, concepts, and ideas.

Mechanistic biology looks for a precise location, a fully actual location for memory. Edelman's neural network picture is one of many possible examples from current neuroscience and cognitive science. One general problem with this picture is the well-known turnover of brain structure at the molecular level; something different must be maintaining the relative stability of the memory, and I see this as explained by the LIR conception of the persistence of non-localized but also potential properties of the physico-chemical brain structures themselves and of the higher levels built up from them, as suggested above.

### THE BENNETT AND HACKER VIEW OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The Lupasco logic of real processes allows an interpretation of many of the criteria proposed by Bennett and Hacker for a theory of consciousness, without getting into the details of their neurological model.<sup>22</sup> Bennett and Hacker focus on the human being as a psychophysical unity, without attributing thought or knowing to the brain or its parts, such as its hemispheres. The following summarizes where I have found their approach useful:

- Mind and Self

The self, defined as something that is identical with me, as something I have or as something in me is an aberration. There is no such thing, and "I" does not refer to an "Ego" owned by me. One has, as arguments, the formal one from infinite regress and the phenomenological one from our existence as human beings, not brains or minds. There is no such thing as my perceiving, rather than having, my own thoughts. The LIR appearance/reality dialectics is useful here. The mind is not an entity or a thing or a "domain"; this term refers idiomatically to a wide range of human powers and their exercise.

- Representation

In this view, it is a mistake to say that what we or some "mind" perceive is an image or representation of an object, or that perception involves *having* an image of the object. The so-called binding problem is a false problem, since the brain does not construct a perceived world, but enables an animal to see a

visible scene. Damasio was mistaken in his distinction between having and feeling an emotion, as if emotions were some sort of somatic image or marker.

- Qualia

The term of "qualia" was introduced to signify the alleged private character of experience, its phenomenal qualities, or qualia for short. This led to Nagel's strategy of explaining the subjective or qualitative feel of experience in terms of their being something it is like to have it. However, as Bennett and Hacker show, neuroscientists such as Damasio and Edelman shift the sense of the term "quale" from the qualitative character of experience to the qualitative character of objects. The term "quale" equivocates between what it is like to have an experience and the experience itself. The indexical approach clarifies the problem, although in the LIR conception of human psychological types, it will never convince everybody. The question "Why is seeing red like seeing *this* (Wittgensteinian pointing to a sample) is misguided because seeing red does not *resemble* seeing *this*, it *is* seeing this. The alleged incommunicability of the subjective qualities of an experience is confused. One cannot describe a quality in the same way as one describes an object by specifying its qualities; what one needs is a better vocabulary. A description is not a substitute for experience.

There are two points where one can criticize the Bennett and Hacker approach: (1) I agree that to perceive is not to form a hypothesis or make an inference, but I disagree that inferences are not mental processes, but transformations of propositions in accordance with a rule. LIR extends inference to process. (2) The authors say correctly that it is the task of neuroscience to investigate empirical nature of consciousness, while that of philosophy is to elucidate its defining its concepts and connections with related ones such as anticipation, thought, and so on. They also say, however, that philosophy can contribute nothing to the scientific theories about the neural basis of consciousness, although the two activities are complementary, not competitive or mutually exclusive. Perhaps standard philosophy cannot, but I submit that the logic and metaphysics of LIR cannot be separated from science; complementarity implies interaction, and the concepts of LIR are thus pertinent to a science of consciousness.

Intransitive consciousness is a condition for various forms of occurrent transitive consciousness—that is, for being conscious of something at a given time. Transitive consciousness is a form of knowledge, or, preferably, knowing. Above all, what one is perceptually conscious of is not something over and above some of the things one perceives. One is conscious of what occupies one's mind at a particular time, and Lupasco emphasized the dynamics of *change* from conscious to unconscious as one from (primarily) actual to (primarily) potential.

Bennett and Hacker urge us to avoid taking "mysterian" positions that start by *trying* to see First Person Consciousness as outside nature. It is the richness of

cognitive processes in human beings that are the *logical criteria* for a creature's being conscious. "Cognitive neuroscience operates across a categorial 'divide' between the psychological and the neural (which is a particular case of the physical). There is nothing mysterious about this divide." It is constituted by the logico-grammatical differences as well as the connections between the characteristic concepts of neuroscience and those of psychology. "Cognitive science has constantly to cross this logical divide." This is ample justification, in my mind, for a reworking of the underlying logic.

## 6. REVISITING SOME KEY QUESTIONS

### THE MAJOR APPROACHES OF COGNITIVE SCIENCE. REPRESENTATIONALISM

The major, related approaches of cognitive science to the phenomenological data of consciousness are as follows:

- *Representationalism*, according to which internal mental entities stand for or correspond to real external properties and events. Representationalism includes the next two approaches, in which the entities involved are the symbols and properties, respectively.
- *Computationalism*, the view that thinking is basically a form of computation in the sense of computer science, an algorithmically determined process of manipulation of symbols in a neural network;
- *Connectionism*, which sees cognitive function as the operation of the system of neural networks, not with isolated symbols, but with vector distributions of properties according to a dynamical model and following rules for non-linear dynamic systems.
- *Functionalism*, of which computationalism is a variety, the view that thinking is wholly defined by its function in a physical system as it interacts with other internal and external processes.

These approaches, alone or in various combinations, all seem to me to have one or more of the following weaknesses and, accordingly, are fair targets for debate:

1. Reification of consciousness, neglecting its *process aspects*, equivalent to a classical substance ontology;
2. Reference to actual entities to the exclusion of potential ones;
3. Functional separation of external and internal aspects of consciousness, despite reference, as in discussions of biological phenomena, to the environment;
4. Absence of adequate complexification of conscious and unconscious processes, suggested by the Lupasco scheme above.

The "*Working Hypothesis of Neurophenomenology*" is that phenomenological accounts of the structure of experience (or structured phenomenological accounts of experience) and their counterparts in cognitive science relate to each other through reciprocal constraints.<sup>23</sup>

Although from my point of view these authors' attempts to find a specific locus for the bridge between the two domains were unsuccessful, the concept that the mutual constraints would need to be operationally generative, that is, *directly* link "appearances" to specific emergent biological processes, points directly toward the positions of what I have called Logic in Reality (LIR). LIR is a way of joining, to use the term used by Roy et al., both the two types of data separated by a "wavy line" at a level of description that is sufficiently general, rather than abstract, to provide for functional interactions between the elements on both sides of the line.

If one assumes, on the other hand, as in the computational form of representationalism, that there is a symbolic entity between neurobiological and phenomenological data, a host of secondary problems arise as to the properties and relations of the symbols involved. In representationalist theories, internal entities of some sort stand for or correspond in some way to external processes and events. These mental representations explain or are explanatory devices for cognition in that they are, or correspond to (this vagueness is typical) intentional states, instances of intentionality considered as embodying the irreducible first-person properties that are alleged to characterize consciousness, reasoning, and qualia. This account of mental processes suffers from the need to introduce additional entities due to the lack of a principled categorial method of relating its critical concepts contradictorily. LIR on the other hand supports not only the "truth" of first-person consciousness<sup>24</sup> but its ontological existence. A mental phenomenon is not something other than the physical processes with emergent properties. It only "displays" its contradictorial origins in appearing to have symbolic and non-symbolic aspects, and being closer or farther from the center of attention at a particular time.

My approach is thus fundamentally anti-representationalist, bringing it into conflict with the semiotics of Peirce and his current followers, especially Sören Brier. I have proposed LIR as an ontological substitute for Peirce's theory of signs both in the field of information and more generally.<sup>25</sup> Very rapidly, I conclude that signs are both 1) ontologically dependent on the phenomena of which they are the signs and 2) incapable of reflecting the dynamic and value-laden interactions involved in real phenomena, such as personal identity.

### PERSONAL IDENTITY

For human beings, the concepts of consciousness and personal identity are inextricably linked. I have described the LIR view of consciousness of consciousness, and I can now claim that recent philosophical work by Dan Kolak supports this picture, especially as regards the origin of individual and collective responsibility. The characterization of personal identity is thus a key issue for science as well as philosophy. The logical perspective of LIR, which sees

identity also as a process of identification, accompanied by its opposite, permits a naturalization of concepts of personal identity such as that of Kolak. LIR can be seen as a bridge between philosophy and science that places this view in logic and therefore in science and society. The picture that emerges from this analysis is an ethical one. It supports and explicates another of the insights of Dan Kolak in his major book, *I am You; The Metaphysical Foundations for Global Ethics*.<sup>26</sup>

In the June 2008 volume of *Synthese* dedicated to the subject of personal identity, Kolak wrote that "(a) consciousness makes personal identity and (b) in consciousness alone personal identity exists." His analysis of public vs. first-person perspectives, using cases from neuropsychiatry, provides the scientific, mathematical, and logical frameworks for what he calls a new theory of self-reference wherein consciousness, self-consciousness, and the "I" are precisely defined in terms, close to Sartre, of the subject and the subject-in-itself. In Kolak's approach, the critical move is to avoid a separation of the subject that is the bearer of personal identity from its psychological object identifications. LIR supports the argument by providing the rules for the relative, alternating dominance of the two perspectives: personal identity and the intuition of personal identity, the reality of subject-dependence and the appearance of subject-independence of experience are dynamically, dialectically related in the LIR logic. Logical, psychological, and metaphysical perspectives intersect in this view. In LIR terms, Kolak's statement that one's essential subjectivity is obscured by the intuition of one's own existence and identity is that the former is potentialized by the latter. The conjoined personality experience by the subject from the inside as the identified self that expresses itself as "*I am I*," not my brain, not my body, and not even my "self." LIR thus allows a principled *ontological* process view of consciousness. It is constituted by systems of systems of past and present mental processes following the LIR dynamics of alternating actualization and potentialization from which personal identity is constituted as an emergent structure. LIR offers no explanation of why I am *this* I and you are another one, but nobody has yet done so, as far as I know.

### KNOWLEDGE AND INTUITION

As Kolak states, the above line of reasoning gives a privileged status to the role, function, and nature of intuition. I would like to expand on it to illustrate the application of LIR to one of the controversial functional properties of human consciousness. The problem is that there has been no obvious way to make an absolute differentiation between knowledge, or knowledge-as-such, and intuition as regards how they arise and their respective functions as protagonists in the drama of knowledge. Let us postulate that knowledge-as-such and intuition or intuitive knowledge are indeed two forms of knowledge or better knowing. Actualization and potentialization constitute, at the same time, the mechanisms of both knowledge and existence (logical becoming), both involving alternation between states in which one term is (almost) fully actualized and then the other is (almost) fully potentialized. Then, as stated by Lupasco in his State Thesis of 1935, given any cognitive process, a logical becoming is involved since knowing

means inhibiting one antagonistic factor by another. The knowledge associated with the strongly actualized terms is the identifying knowledge-as-such, the major content of consciousness. The statistical process of oscillation "leaves behind," however, a minor, accidental knowledge or known that can be designated as intuition. Intuition is thus an embryonic non-identity, always an unexpected and brief "irrational" invasion of consciousness, discontinuous, without a direct relation to it. In terms of cognitive power, the difference between intuition and knowledge as such is only one of degree, and their relation can be described by saying that what is given intuitively is the inverse of what is given to knowledge; the content of knowledge is contradictory in the sense of being dynamically opposed to the content of intuition, and the existentiality of one is a function of that of the other. Intuition in this dynamic aspect must be seen as a *logical* process, subject to the rules of LIR applied to knowledge. I claim that both types of intuition, sensible and intellectual, are direct experiences, actions, or processes and have a place in a theory of mind. From the point of view of difference in function, what is primarily retained in the conscious mind is a kind of identity and synthetic rationality, and what constitutes intuition is the knowledge of movement, time, intensity, the heterogeneous, etc. Thus, one does not "see" change itself, but rather one identity replacing another. Change is "felt," i.e., known intuitively. Other functional examples that can be developed are those of intellectual consciousness vs. active consciousness, the first the consequence of vital becoming, where science dominates and intuition is avoided; the second of material becoming and "action," in which intuition is essential and the role of formal knowledge is reduced.

The position taken by Levy regarding the distinction between knowledge-that and knowledge-how supports my anti-propositional view of logic in real processes in general.<sup>27</sup> The argument is succinct: knowledge-how requires both propositional knowledge and motor representations in the mind. But motor representations are not mere dispositions to behavior; they have some representational content. Since that content is not propositional, propositional knowledge is not sufficient for knowledge-how. Neither propositions nor representations are required in the LIR approach: if motor representations play a central role in realizing the intelligence in knowledge-how, or more simply, are a form of knowledge hence of consciousness, the concept of a representation as a separate entity can be replaced by that of process.

### ANTICIPATION

Anticipation is primarily a property of conscious living systems. That anticipation can play a role in systems that involve substantial abstract modeling rather than self-representation at their level of reality is simply another case, in my view, of the projection of aspects of the real world, reality, into a configuration space of lower dimensionality. The clearest example of this notion is to be found in the work of Gödel. The Gödel theorems and logic—as written—do not apply to physical or mental emergent phenomena, but LIR views the principle involved, the duality of consistency and completeness, axiomatically, as another instantiation of the fundamental duality of the universe. Gödel rejected,

correctly in my view, the more idealist implications of many-world pictures of reality, but did not make the extension of his own ideas to it. The logical and ontological development undertaken in LIR provides a bridge between prior definitions of the principle of dynamic opposition and Gödelian dualism and illuminates Gödelian dualism as another expression of the fundamental dynamic opposition at the heart of energy and phenomena.

I have argued that potential states and processes, of which consciousness is an example, are causally effective and not epiphenomenal. If this is accepted, then the naturalization of anticipation follows logically, at least in my logic. One needs to differentiate, however, between anticipation in living beings and anticipation in machines, or, rather, between anticipatory systems that are and are not computable. I, in fact, assimilate anticipation at the cognitive level to particularly well-formed, homogeneous potential states that are opposed to the general fuzziness of the "stream of consciousness." I differ with Dubois, however, in that I do not assign a separate subjective or objective character to anticipation or to a particular hemisphere to the exclusion of the other. I believe it is important to focus on all high-level properties as properties of the whole human being, of whom the alleged parts are convenient abstractions for analysis. I am thus not saying that there are some anticipatory systems that are not computable, with which I am sure we can all agree. I am saying that conscious anticipation is not fully computable. What distinguishes anticipatory processes is a higher degree of potentiality, but anticipation does not define all processes. Anticipatory processes are thus a sub-class of a broader group of processes that constitute "consciousness."

My key difference with Dubois can be summarized as follows:

- Dubois: anticipation is the potential future value of a system's variables
- LIR: anticipation is the current potential value of some systems' variables

Dubois has criticized Rosen's concept of anticipation as "quasi-anticipation" as failing to account for feedback. The LIR model does not require full predictability. Nevertheless, I am sympathetic with Rosen's intuitions about life in general, expressed in his emphasis on semantic aspects of entailment and organization, but he does not provide a basis for the relational aspects of organization and complexity.<sup>28</sup>

Leydesdorff and Dubois have also looked at anticipation in social systems, but their analytical model is orthogonal to the contradictory LIR view of individual-group interactions. This basically states that the individual and the group share some of each other's properties.

## 7. CONCLUSION

I have proposed a logic of and in reality as a new perspective on the nature of consciousness. My arguments have covered issues in fundamental physics, mechanisms of perception, and the emergence of consciousness, and

implications of this view of consciousness for man in society. I am aware that the "transport dialectique," to use the term of Gilles Deleuze, may have been a difficult one. My vision of the world and theories of the world as related, consistent, and inconsistent conflicts with much received wisdom. I ask, to begin with, that the reader renounce, for the sake of a science of consciousness, some standard (and cherished) notions not only of logic, but also set theory, category theory, causality, and accept concepts from the latest quantum field views of the secondary ontological status of spacetime. The methodology of LIR means looking for structures in nature that are potential as well as actual, in a sense that is neither more nor less than that a certain sequence of amino acids in an enzyme has the potential for binding with specific substrates under the appropriate conditions in the appropriate medium.

In the LIR epistemology, we as knowers are not totally external to what is known by us and not completely different from it. I must know, then, that if there are other knowers, as there are, they must be part of my known and vice versa. The source of human dignity is in ourselves as knowers, but if we avoid the error of solipsism, the origin of the sense of moral responsibility can only come from the relation to other knowers, in other words, all human beings, and by extension, other beings and perhaps even, as suggested by Lorenzo Magnani, certain non-living entities. *A contrario*, one cannot find responsibility in oneself as an isolated agent. Since we are both a "not-other" and an "other" at the same time, a self-interest argument for morality holds. Two or more human individuals and their relations constitute interactive systems in the LIR categorial sense of non-separable subjects and objects, sharing in part one another's characteristics. An individual is no more isolated logically, psychologically, or morally than he or she is economically. The fact that potential or potentialized states exist does not, in a deterministic universe, mean that we have the capacity to make a choice among them that is independent of our genetic and experiential background. Every individual is indeed unique, but this should not be taken to mean that his or her mind is independent, since each incorporates a portion of the subjective experience of other brains. As Bennett and Hacker point out, our ability to know the states of other persons' minds is not folk psychology, but a natural consequence of the evolution of our species. LIR simply adds the logical consequence as an origin of individual moral responsibility.

My claim is that the LIR contradictory picture of consciousness is a *form* of identity theory of mind which avoids the difficulties of both standard identity and dualist theories by the introduction of the principle of dynamic opposition at all levels of perception, mental processing, and action. No new, independent entities of the kind postulated in the various forms of representationalism are required, due to the availability, in LIR, of a dynamic relation between internal and external, actual and potential, and identical and diverse aspects of phenomena. It is the alternating actualizations and potentializations derived from initial energetic inputs that are our ideas, images, beliefs, etc. Some further phenomenological classification of these process elements (such as that made by Husserl) is possible, but it does not change the overall structure of

my proposed picture. One of my objectives to further this work is to find mathematical formalizations of the systems aspects of LIR that would render them both more accessible and more rigorous. I would be grateful for suggestions along these lines.

NOTES

1. Chalmers, "Consciousness and Its Place in Nature."
2. Stubenberg, "Neutral Monism."
3. Boltuc, "First-Person Consciousness as Hardware."
4. Wu and Brenner, "Philosophy of Information: Revolution in Philosophy. Towards an Informational Metaphilosophy of Science."
5. Smart, "The Identity Theory of Mind."
6. Floridi, *The Philosophy of Information*; Wu, "The Interaction and Convergence of the Philosophy and Science of Information"; Wu and Brenner, "Philosophy of Information."
7. Ehresmann, in *Memory Evolutive Systems. Hierarchy, Emergence, Cognition*.
8. Bickhard, "Mind as Process."
9. Bickhard, "Process and Emergence: Normative Function and Representation."
10. Brenner, *Logic in Reality*.
11. Ladyman, *Every Thing Must Go*.
12. Brenner, *Logic in Reality*.
13. Taylor, *Hegel*.
14. Pouget, Le rôle de la contradiction dans l'œuvre de Ferdinand Gonseth; Cohen-Tannoudji, "Ferdinand Gonseth."
15. Ilyenkov, *Dialectical Logic; Essays on Its History and Theory*.
16. Brenner, "Linking the Tao, Biomathics and Information Through a Logic of Energy."
17. Lupasco, *Du Devenir Logique et de l'Affectivité, Vol. 2. Essai d'une Nouvelle Théorie de la Connaissance*. Paris: Vrin, 1935.
18. Lupasco's expression was "electro-chemical gradient of equilibrating antagonism."
19. Bentwich, "The Duality Principle: Irreducibility of Sub-threshold Psychophysical Computation to Neuronal Brain Activation."
20. Dubois, "Breakthrough in the Human Decision Making Based on Unconscious Origin of Free Will."
21. Del Moral, "From Genomics to Scientomics: Expanding the Bioinformation Paradigm."
22. Bennett and Hacker, *Philosophical Foundations of Neuroscience*.
23. Formulated by Roy et al., "Beyond the Gap. An Introduction to Naturalizing Phenomenology."
24. Petitmengin, "Listening from Within."
25. Brenner, "On Representation in Information Theory."
26. Dan Kolak, *I Am You. The Metaphysical Foundations for Global Ethics*.
27. Levy, "Embodied Savoir-Faire: Knowledge-how Requires Motor Representations."
28. Rosen, *Life Itself*.

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## *A Counterexample to the Church-Turing Thesis as Standardly Interpreted*

(Theoretical outline and technical results)<sup>1</sup>

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The standard (extensional) interpretation of the Church-Turing thesis is that every mechanically calculable function is Turing Machine computable. A counterexample to this interpretation is that proof of the totality of a function  $K$  (from Kapantaïs) constructed upon addition, iteration and a family of programs on programs can be performed by a human, but not a Turing Machine. The human computer, assisted by some instructor, can construct a hierarchy of functions with broad similarities to the finite part of existing fast growing function hierarchies on the sole basis that addition is a mechanical item, which can be mechanically operated on according to some mechanical programs on programs and iteration. She can then calculate the values for any assignments to functions of this hierarchy, and can also arrive at proving that function  $K$  (a function that lies outside of the same hierarchy) is total. No Turing Machine can do the same, since a Peano Arithmetic proof of the totality of function  $K$  would have required Induction up to  $\varepsilon_0$ .

### BACKGROUND

Kapantaïs 2016 criticized a strong (intensional) interpretation of the Church-Turing thesis, according to which what the Thesis says is that everything which can be effectively calculated can be computed by a Turing Machine equivalent, with all maximal models of computation being equivalent to Turing Machines up to isomorphism.<sup>2</sup> This interpretation has been criticized on the grounds that a human computer (computer, henceforth)<sup>3</sup> can compute the values of the Ackermann function in a mechanical way, which cannot be translated into a Turing Machine computation in an isomorphism preserving manner.<sup>4</sup> The proof that these specific calculations by the computer and the Turing Machine are not isomorphic rests on two particular assumptions. The first is the clearly true presumption that addition is a mechanical item, which can be mechanically operated on. The second is that a "for loop" mechanical operation that initially operates upon addition exists and iteration of it yields mechanical operations for all functions upon the Knuth up-arrow notation hierarchy. Such an operation can clearly be specified and justification given for why it should be regarded as mechanical. On these assumptions, it can be proved both that (i) a computer can employ a program made out of "for loops" uniquely for effectively calculating the values of the Ackermann function and (ii) that no Turing Machine can employ a program made out of "for loops"

uniquely for the same task. Since there is a way a calculator can compute the values of the Ackermann function, which has no isomorphic counterpart in Turing Machines, there are models of computation, which are not Turing Machine equivalent up to isomorphism.

The present proof builds on a counterexample to the standard (extensional) interpretation of the Church-Turing thesis. The standard interpretation does not contain the claim that all maximal models of computation are isomorphic. Its sole claim is that Turing Machines is one of them. That is to say that what matters concerning the extensional interpretation is the output(s) of the effective calculation(s), not how one arrives at this (these) output(s).

The counterexample in the present proof rests upon a generalization of the algorithm in Kapantaïs 2016. It is a counterexample to the Thesis in its standard interpretation insofar as it shows that a proof of the totality of a function  $K$  can be performed by a computer but not by a Turing Machine.

### STIPULATIONS ABOUT THE CONCEPT OF A MECHANICAL PROCESS

Following Turing, Post, Kleene, and others, the terms "mechanical" and/or "effective" remain formally undefined in our proof.<sup>5</sup> "Mechanical/effective" is taken to be the intuitive pre-formal notion all putative (maximal) models of computation aim at capturing. The test of whether they capture it or not must always be decided according to actual evidence. That is to say that in case one has no empirical evidence of a mechanical process that outbids Turing Machines one is compelled to abide with the Thesis, but, once such a model is put forward, one has to abandon it. This also means that the Thesis can only be refuted and never be proved, which, in turn, implies by no means that the Thesis might not be true. If it is true, no such model will ever be found and we will always be compelled to abide with the Thesis. However, we will never be in position to ascertain this fact from within our historical perspective.

Pre-theoretical concepts are not formally defied, and yet pre-theoretical concepts are systematically discussed, which means that the absence of a formal definition over a concept does not condemn one to say nothing about the concept. As far as "mechanical" is concerned one is far from being at a loss on what to say. Direct evidence for the above is that there are lots of processes, about which one can be certain that they are mechanical, and lots of processes, of which one can be certain that they are not. Hence, even if the concept is formally undefined, we take it for granted that there is (ought to be) some general consensus on what is *definitely* mechanical and what is *definitely* nonmechanical.

*Stipulations* 1 and 2 below aim at reflecting part of this general consensus on what is *definitely* mechanical and what is *definitely* nonmechanical. Keep in mind, however, that we do not suggest that each one of these or their conjunction is a *definition* of "mechanical"—even more so, since the term "mechanical" appears both in subject and predicate position in some of these *Stipulations*.

We distinguish between “mechanical” as an object predicate (“mechanical item”) and “mechanical” as a process predicate (“mechanical operation”).

*Stipulation 1:* All mechanical items are such that they can be manipulated by purely mechanical means.

Examples of mechanical items according to *Stipulation 1:*

(a) Natural numbers in the form of finite sequences of strokes are mechanical items. Apprehending such a sequence and mechanically operating upon it does not require any interpretation of what the sequence stands for.

(b) Computer programs are mechanical items. They signify nothing (at least for the machine) and yet the machine can, by purely mechanical means, “understand” what they expect it to do and do it.

*Stipulation 2:* All mechanical operations are such that (i) they engage purely mechanical means, e.g., no appeal to intuition, only finitary methods etc., (ii) the items they operate upon are mechanical, and (iii) the items they transform the items they operate upon are mechanical.

Examples of mechanical operations according to *Stipulation 2:*

(a) Turing Machine numerical operations.

(b) Mechanical operations on programs.

Examples of nonmechanical items and operations according to *Stipulations 1-2:*

(a) Transfinite ordinals. They cannot be apprehended as finite sequences of strokes or by other mechanical/finitary means.

(b) Implicit representations of transfinite ordinals within Peano Arithmetic by functions. The “representation” is a trick, requiring interpretation, i.e., these functions correspond to transfinite ordinals only for the proof theorist, who knows the trick/interpretation.

(c) Transfinite arithmetical operations.

So, some items/operations are definitely mechanical and some are definitely nonmechanical. Operations/items which are neither clearly mechanical nor nonmechanical must be classified on an individual basis. This applies also to all methods/operations within our proof. To begin with, they certainly do not betray any of the above criteria. Our claim is that they do not betray any other sensible criterion for “mechanical” either.<sup>6</sup>

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Our proof is performed within the following general setting. An instructor provides mechanical guidance to a computer, in order to enable her to construct a hierarchy of programs and to prove that a program lying outside of this hierarchy returns an output for every input to its input

placeholders. This program is shown to calculate the values of a function, which, in order to be proved total by standard formal Arithmetic, requires Induction up to  $\varepsilon_0$ .

## STRUCTURE OF THE PROOF

### STAGE 1

Initially, a hierarchy  $H$  of infinite hierarchies of programs is generated. All programs in  $H$  are generated upon (i) a preexisting mechanical program for addition, (ii) iteration, and (iii) a family of programs on programs. All programs in  $H$  are named after a recursively trackable system of coordinates of the  $n < \omega$  dimensional space. All programs in  $H$  correspond to recursive functions (i.e., they calculate values of specific recursive functions).<sup>7</sup> While constructing  $H$ , the computer mimics *ad indefinitum* the way that the Ackermann function governs the Knuth up-arrow notation hierarchy, and it does so by systematically constructing new hierarchies upon functions that govern previous hierarchies.

A function  $H'$  governing  $H$  itself is proved total, *relative to all assignments to its variables*.  $H'$  takes as arguments functions in  $H$  together with assignments to their variables and returns as values the values that these functions yield for the latter assignments. The clause “total, *relative to all assignments to its variables*” is key with respect to this and all our subsequent results.<sup>8</sup> This is why: Most programs in  $H$  are noneffective, since most of them are either non effective pointers or “for loop” programs depending on noneffective pointers. The pointers in question are noneffective because they have infinite pointing scopes. The way that our calculator proves that functions calculated by these pointers are total is by mechanically showing that *for any assignment to the variables* of the same functions there is a mechanical method to construct an appropriate *for this assignment* finite initial segment of the infinite pointing scope of the pointer in question, such that the pointer becomes effective *relative to this assignment to the variables*. So this is the core of our proof in Stage 1: It shows that there is a mechanical operation such that, on input a function in  $H$  and an assignment to its variables, makes the computer able to mechanically construct the programs needed for the calculation of the value of the same function for the same assignment.

NB.  $H'$  can be proved total by other means too. The most standard one employs Mathematical Induction up to  $\omega^\omega$ . This proof, instead of turning the noneffective pointers into effective *relative to specific assignments to the variables*, substitutes the pointers for other programs that calculate extensionally equivalent functions, and continues by  $\mu$ -minimization in order to show these latter total. This is, in a sense, the “canonical” way to prove  $H'$  total. Now, the height of the Induction employed in this, i.e.,  $\omega^\omega$ , suggests that  $H'$  as well as all functions governed by it can be proved total by Turing Machines too. So, thus far, this is not a refutation of the Church-Turing thesis, as standardly interpreted.

### STAGE 2

We proceed by repeating the same general mechanical routine for the generation of infinite hierarchies of functions,

until we reach function  $K$ , which, in order to be proved total by Peano Arithmetic, would have required Induction up to  $\varepsilon_0$ . We prove  $K$  total by Induction  $< \varepsilon_0$ . We claim that this proof does not betray any among the intuitive criteria for “mechanical”, as stated in the first part, and we also claim that it does not betray any other expressly stated and sensible criterion for “mechanical” either.

The proof in Stage 2 proceeds as follows.

Following Stage 1, which ends by the program for function  $H'$ , the computer repeats *ad indefinitum* the same procedure. That is to say that, just like in Stage 1 the computer constructs all programs by employing (i) a program for addition, (ii) a family of programs on programs, and (iii) iteration, she now constructs similar programs by employing the same (ii) and (iii), but, this time, she does so upon the program for  $H'$ , not addition; she also proves that a function  $H''$  governing these latter programs is total. This is straightforward because our proof in Stage 1 was relying solely on the fact that the program for addition is effective. Now, since the program for  $H'$  is proved effective, the same procedure can be repeated on the basis of  $H'$  being effective, and end with the proof of  $H''$  being effective. This whole process/algorithm can be repeated at will, so as to produce the sequence of programs:  $H', H'', \dots$ , that governs the sequence of hierarchies:  $H, H', \dots$

Following this sub-stage, another program is constructed, which is a pointer to the entire sequence of the  $H, H', \dots$  hierarchies. This program suggests another general process/algorithm for the generation of yet some other hierarchies of programs.

In general, each new and more complex general algorithm for generating hierarchies of programs produces hierarchies that are more complex than the previous ones, and which are governed by more complex programs, and so on *ad indefinitum*. For example, just like the sequence of hierarchies  $H, H', \dots$  is governed by a program that is more complex than any of the programs of the same hierarchy, this program suggests a general algorithm that produces a sequence of hierarchies of such hierarchies. These latter are governed by yet another more complex program, which suggests an even more complex general algorithm, and so on.

Each such general algorithm is made to correspond to a distinct general iterative circle along our way to function  $K$ .

We distinguish between “inner” and “outer” iterative such circles, but in order to see what these circles are, and how they matter in our proof, a digression is needed.

All functions from within hierarchy  $H$  can be mechanically named by the computer, since their names come from the previously mentioned mechanical method of attributing coordinates of the  $n$ -dimensional space. For the rest of programs, i.e., the ones beyond  $H'$ , the same method won't do, since the computer has no means to mechanically represent coordinates of the  $> \omega$  dimensional space. For naming these programs, we employ a hybrid notational method, which uses the coordinates of the  $n$ -dimensional

space still, albeit together with the entire  $\omega$  vocabulary. The method resembles, in several respects, the Archimedean technique of enriching the depository of available numerals beyond an initial cluster. Moreover, the method is such that the name assigned to the program suggests (or at times is) the ordinal that is needed for the Peano Arithmetic proof of the totalness of the function corresponding to the program.<sup>9</sup> E.g., the Peano Arithmetic proof for the totalness of  $H'$  requires Induction up to  $\omega^\omega$ . The method used by the computer is such that the name of the program for  $H'$  happens to be “ $\omega^\omega$ ”. Notice here that the use of the  $\omega$  vocabulary is entirely for the needs of our proof and does not suggest any use of transfinite arithmetic tools on the part of the computer. Only the instructor knows the correspondence between names and ordinals. For the computer, all  $\omega$  expressions are senseless names that have been given to the programs by a purely mechanical technique and upon a recursively definable vocabulary.

Now, an “inner circle” in our way towards  $K$  is defined by the distance separating the pair of programs that govern two consecutive general iterative circles, as described above. In other words, to each distinct general iterative algorithm, there corresponds an inner circle. As for the specific names of programs located at the boundaries of the inner circles, they are such that they notationally represent the distance between two limit ordinals. For example, the distance between programs  $\omega^\omega$  and  $\omega^{\omega+\omega}$  constitutes an inner circle, and program  $\omega^{\omega+\omega}$  is meant to be a pointer to all programs of the hierarchy  $\omega^\omega, \omega^{\omega+1}, \omega^{\omega+2}, \dots$

An “outer circle,” on the other hand, is represented by the distance separating a program  $\omega^{(\omega^{\dots^{\omega^n}})}$  and a program  $\omega^{(\omega^{\dots^{\omega^{n+1}}})}$ , where the  $\omega$  tower of the latter exceeds the  $\omega$  tower of former by one  $\omega$ . (Obviously, each outer circle is also an inner circle.)

Finally, program  $K$  is a pointer to all programs of the sequence of  $\omega$  towers,  $\omega^\omega, \omega^{\omega^\omega}, \omega^{\omega^{\omega^\omega}}, \dots$  Exactly because  $K$  is this pointer, and also because of the specific program-naming technique we have employed, it is obvious that the Peano Arithmetic proof for  $K$ 's totalness would have required Induction up to  $\varepsilon_0$ . For notice that the Peano Arithmetic proof of the totalness of the function calculated by program  $\omega^{\omega^\omega}$  is  $\omega^{\omega^\omega}$ , the Peano Arithmetic proof of the totalness of the function calculated by program  $\omega^{\omega^{\omega^\omega}}$  is  $\omega^{\omega^{\omega^\omega}}$ , and, so, the Peano Arithmetic proof of the totalness of the function calculated by  $K$ , which is a pointer to all programs within the above sequence, must be  $\varepsilon_0$ .

Our main proof consists in showing by Induction  $< \varepsilon_0$  that  $K$  is total.

The Induction for our main result is on the length of  $\omega$ -s in the above towers. It proceeds as follows. First, we use the result of Stage 1 and take for granted that the program  $\omega^\omega$  (i.e., the program for  $H'$ ) returns an output for every input. Then, we prove that all programs from  $\omega^\omega$  to  $\omega^{\omega^\omega}$ , this one included, return an output for every input. Finally, we assume that some program  $\omega^{(\omega^{\dots^{\omega^n}})}$  with arbitrary  $n$  returns an output for every input, and show that, on this assumption,  $\omega^{(\omega^{\dots^{\omega^{n+1}}})}$  returns an output for every input.

This essentially completes the proof, because program  $K$  is a pointer to all programs of the sequence of  $\omega$  towers. So, since  $K$  is a pointer to all such programs, the claim that it returns an output for all inputs is equivalent with the claim that (i) all programs at the boundaries of the outer circles return an output for all inputs and (ii)  $K$  has effectiveness means to reduce any assignment to its input placeholders to an assignment to the input placeholders of (i). We show (ii) in a separate proof.

In some more detail, the core of the main proof consists in showing that there is a construction chain of programs that leads from  $\omega^{(\omega^{\dots^{\omega}})^n}$  to  $\omega^{(\omega^{\dots^{\omega}})^{n+1}}$ , such that "effectiveness" is hereditary upon it. We show this by some subsidiary Induction that takes place within our main Inductive step, i.e., within the circle that begins by  $\omega^{(\omega^{\dots^{\omega}})^n}$  and ends with  $\omega^{(\omega^{\dots^{\omega}})^{n+1}}$ . This subsidiary Induction is on the inner circles in between  $\omega^{(\omega^{\dots^{\omega}})^n}$  and  $\omega^{(\omega^{\dots^{\omega}})^{n+1}}$ . Hereditariness of "effectiveness" concerns programs within these inner circles. For example, as said previously, the distance between programs  $\omega^\omega$  and  $\omega^{\omega+\omega}$  constitutes an inner circle. Now, this inner circle happens to be within the outer circle  $\omega^\omega$  to  $\omega^{\omega^\omega}$ . In order to prove that effectiveness is hereditary in between  $\omega^\omega$  and  $\omega^{\omega+\omega}$ , we first assume that program  $\omega^\omega$  is effective and then show that the pointer  $\omega^{\omega+\omega}$ , which has the sequence  $\omega^\omega, \omega^{\omega+1}, \omega^{\omega+2}, \dots$ , as its pointing scope is effective too. Here again, the clause "relative to all assignments" is key to our proof. For the pointer  $\omega^{\omega+\omega}$  is not effective in the standard use of the term, since it has an infinite scope. The pointer becomes effective relative to all assignment to its input placeholders, because the computer can acquire a mechanical method, which reduces any assignment to the input placeholders of  $\omega^{\omega+\omega}$  to an assignment to the input placeholders of a program from within the sequence  $\omega^\omega, \omega^{\omega+1}, \omega^{\omega+2}, \dots$ , and can also learn how to mechanically construct this program. Again, this because the computer learns from the instructor how to mechanically construct any initial segment of the sequence of programs  $\omega^\omega, \omega^{\omega+1}, \omega^{\omega+2}, \dots$ . By similar sub-proofs, the entire distance between  $\omega^\omega$  and  $\omega^{\omega^\omega}$  is traversed. *Mutatis mutandis*, so can be traversed the distance between  $\omega^{(\omega^{\dots^{\omega}})^n}$  and  $\omega^{(\omega^{\dots^{\omega}})^{n+1}}$  of our main Inductive step.

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If our general claim is correct, and nothing but mechanical means are employed in our proof, this proof consists in a refutation of the Church-Turing thesis, as standardly interpreted. This is because in standard formal arithmetic the proof of function  $K$ 's totalness requires Induction up  $\varepsilon_0$ . So, our proof is a refutation of the Church-Turing thesis, because a consequence of the Church-Turing thesis is that Turing Machines and equivalent formalisms exhaust the limits of "mechanically computable." Therefore, since Peano Arithmetic is such a formalism and Peano Arithmetic (if consistent) cannot prove  $K$  total, there is a mechanical operation that cannot be performed by Turing Machines: the mechanical proof of the totalness of function  $K$ .

NOTES

1. This is a summary of both our general philosophical argument and of the specific technical results.

2. Dershowitz and Gurevich, "A Natural Axiomatization of Computability and Proof of Church's Thesis"; Boker and Dershowitz, "The Church-Turing Thesis Over Arbitrary Domains"; Gurevich, "Sequential Abstract State Machines Capture Sequential Algorithms"; heavily relying on Gandy, "The Confluence of Ideas in 1936"; and Sieg, "Step By Recursive Step: Church's Analysis of Effective Calculability" and "Calculations by Man and Machine: Conceptual Analysis"; see also Sieg, "Church without a Dogma: Axioms for Computability."
3. Following Gandy, "The Confluence of Ideas in 1936", we call "computer" a human that computes, i.e., she is not allowed to employ nonmechanical means during her calculations.
4. Kapantaïs, "A Refutation of the Church-Turing Thesis According to Some Interpretation of What the Thesis Says."
5. Turing, "On Computable Numbers, with an Application to the Entscheidungsproblem," ch. 9; Post, "Finite Combinatory Processes – Formulation" Kleene, *Introduction to Metamathematics*.
6. For an indicative picture with respect to these, see Piccinini, "The Physical Church-Turing Thesis: Modest or Bold?"
7. In this proof-sketch, we will suppress the difference between functions and programs constructed by the computer for calculating the values of the same functions. We hope that which is which is always clear from the context.
8. See also Stage 2: main inductive step.
9. In this summary, we will encounter no hybrid names, though there are plenty of such in the hierarchies beyond  $H$ .

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## RAPAPORT Q&A

### *Logicist Remarks on Rapaport on Philosophy of Computer Science<sup>+</sup>*

(in the context of his Barwise Prize)

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#### INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

I shall restrict my brief remarks herein to William “Bill” Rapaport on philosophy of computer science (PCS) and some intimately related topics (which are gestured at by the superscripted + in my title), guided by his ever-expanding, online *Philosophy of Computer Science (PCS)*; and I’ll begin (in the next section) with some comments on this restriction itself. The present commentary is informed by a recent, sustained dialogue with Rapaport, one undertaken to inform my remarks (and, I confess, to allow me to somewhat selfishly enjoy some philosophical debate).<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, and I wrap up the present essay by returning to this issue, our dialogue, at least by my lights, needs to continue, because important societal issues in the context of the philosophico-history of computer science and AI have been left unanalyzed, and more importantly (at least as I see things), because Rapaport (and his readers) would be well-served by having some errors that infect his *PCS*, beyond those touched upon herein, remedied. In particular, since—for reasons to be shortly seen—he views CS through the obfuscating lens of *algorithms* (first do *A*; now do *B*; if condition *C* holds, do *A* again; and so on), rather than as a part of reasoning in a well-defined logical system, it’s especially important that Rapaport’s account of PCS, which seems destined to be highly influential, be modified. I suppose it’s possible that despite sustained discussion with him subsequent to what informs the present essay, he may resist such modification; but I hold out hope that he will engage in the discussion and see the light.

#### THE VASTNESS OF RAPAPORT’S REACH VS.

##### WHAT I TREAT

As the reader will well know, much if not all of the field of philosophy is composed of sub-parts long traditionally designated by the phrase “philosophy of *X*,” where instantiations of *X* include, for instance, “mind,” “art,” “economics,” “religion,” and “language.”<sup>2</sup> In cases where a sub-part of philosophy is designated without this syntax, as, for example, “epistemology” or “metaphysics,” there can be little doubt that no accuracy is sacrificed if the PoX template is employed (though elegance, I concede, is threatened). Rapaport has made contributions in many a philosophy of *X* ≠ ‘computer science’ area, but my interest, in keeping with his recent Barwise Prize, and with the venue that the present discussion is bound for, is PCS, to which, arguably, Rapaport is *the* greatest contributor—and at any rate he certainly stands minimally as one of the five or so greatest authorities on PCS today, when the whole of CS, from theory to concrete practice, is considered. The

restriction to PCS means, in particular, that very little will be said herein about philosophy of artificial intelligence (PAI),<sup>3</sup> another PoX subject on which Rapaport is a world-class authority, in no small part because of his being a longtime leader in a seminal team at the University at Buffalo devoted to AI and computational cognitive science. Multiple essays of the present sort could be written on the work of this group in connection with PCS and PAI, a group long led as well by AI pillar Stuart “Stu” Shapiro. Shapiro and Rapaport have long labored to advance the SNePS system, which can be used to build artificial agents that know, reason, plan, and act. Obviously, upon hearing my implicit claim (expressed by the previous sentence) that such artificial agents are on a planet that’s lucky, AI-wise, to build self-driving cars that only *occasionally* kill people, readers who are philosophers will pay attention. Are such agents in fact with us *already*? it will be asked by such readers. I think an affirmative reply would come from Rapaport and Shapiro, and I suggest that philosophers of CS, AI, mind, and logic study the work in question, deeply.

So the target is Rapaport on PCS. In our context, this target should strike the alert reader as pregnant. I’m writing for the Philosophy and Computers Committee (P&CC) of the APA; note my emphasis. It follows that I’m writing for a committee whose mission centers on the relationship between philosophy on the one hand, and “computers” on the other. But what is the meaning of “computers” in this mission? This is very much like the question with which Rapaport has wrestled, when, for instance, he deliberated about what title to use for his *PCS* book. It turns out that he isn’t particularly happy with the phrase “philosophy of computer science.” He finds the continuous string “computerscience” to be helpful, because (to brutally simplify the issue and his thinking) this neologism is easier to view as something that picks out a domain over which to philosophize that isn’t in any way narrowly restricted to computers, or to what must be a science, and so on. One would think that a similar attitude is wise to adopt regarding the title and nature of the P&CC: Surely this committee’s mission isn’t any such narrow thing as exploring, sorting out, and charting for the APA the relationship between philosophy and, literally, computers, as in laptops and desktops. Surely “computers” here is to mean that vast space of all philosophical things computational and computation-based, from all that Rapaport deals with in the bordering-on-1,000-page *PCS* volume, to rigorously characterizing what privacy is by the standards of philosophy (which includes characterizations in its analytic side that at least aspire to jointly necessary and sufficient conditions) in an age of social media, where interaction on the shoulders of computation has led to philosophical problems as thorny as most longstanding ones, an issue to which I return when wrapping up.

Please note that in confining attention to Rapaport on PCS, the target remains enormous. This is true for the simple reason that PCS itself is gigantic. It’s perhaps not uninteresting that in philosophy today, still, PCS is often thought of as some kind of Lilliputian curiosity off to the side, with the center proudly occupied by the venerable giants (ethics, epistemology, metaphysics, etc.) continuing to go merrily along as they have since Socrates. Those with this attitude should read *PCS*, and then think objectively

about whether this traditional center-side conceptualization is accurate and/or sensible today. We have reached a time, now, when the prospect of artificial agents (which after all consist in things whose essence is *computing* over input to produce output) that are ethical agents unto themselves, with radical forms of autonomy (e.g., the ability to write the very programs that power them), seem to many imminent. Understanding these creatures, and what they mean for us and the cosmos, will be impossible without a prior understanding of PCS.

**ACTUALLY, COMPUTER SCIENCE IS A (SMALL) PROPER PART OF LOGIC**

In *PCS* Rapaport bravely gives a distilled answer to “What is computer science?” The answer is given at the very end of the chapter whose title is the very question, and, verbatim, Rapaport’s summative reply is this:

Computer science is the scientific (or STEM) study of:  
 what problems can be solved,  
 what tasks can be accomplished,  
 and what features of the world can be understood . . .  
 . . . computationally, that is, using a language with only:  
 2 nouns (‘0’, ‘1’),  
 3 verbs (‘move’, ‘print’, ‘halt’),  
 3 grammar rules (sequence, selection, repetition), and  
 nothing else,  
 and then to provide algorithms to show how this can  
 be done:  
 efficiently, practically, physically, and ethically.

This answer has a certain flair, I think. After all, by it, a great, big, daunting philosophical question is answered crisply and confidently in nothing more than a flash. Unfortunately, this is an account of computer science ferociously biased in the procedural direction. (The account is very nicely elaborated in *PCS*, and is explicitly aligned with (similarly biased) accounts of so-called “computational thinking,” the cultivation of which, at least in the US, is sought by its federal government, by many states as well, and by funders like the Gates Foundation.) Yet this is not *my* answer to the question, nor is it even *approximately* in line with my answer; and I doubt whether it’s the answer that would be given by anyone who thinks of computation as a proper part of reasoning and nothing more, not as a do-this-step-do that-step-do-this-step (DTS) process. Moreover, for philosophy and philosophers, I think a DTS account of CS is particularly unwise. The reason is simply that philosophers, if they do nothing else, reason; and to teach philosophy is therefore naturally to in no small part teach how to reason. (Such pedagogy is of course self-evidently in operation in the case of logic as taught and pursued under philosophy.) In my experience, sometimes philosophers with little exposure to

CS are surprised to learn that computation can be studied and mastered, without loss of formal generality or of practical functioning, as reasoning, but some illumination can be provided quickly by presenting the rudiments of standard logic programming. I personally have found that the instant a rigorously trained philosopher without any prior exposure to computer science/computation is shown the underlying theory of logic programming for Prolog (a programming language in the logic-programming fold), a light snaps on.<sup>4</sup> In fact, sometimes the coming on of that mental light is more akin to a sort of explosive eureka moment. “Wait, you mean a valid deduction by the machine from this set *A* of formulae expressed in something that looks quite like first-order logic, to that particular formula *p*, is what execution of my ‘program’ consists in!?” That is correct. No need to write any DTS thingie here, at all. The traditional coverage of logic programming in mathematical logic isn’t based on inference schemata that philosophers learn (e.g., *modus tollens*, universal elimination, etc.), but rather on inference schemata in the proof theories based on schemata conforming to **resolution**, but regardless, this is a far superior way to understand what computation is, in my opinion—yet this way is utterly alien in the DTS landscape of *PCS*.<sup>5</sup>

**SEMANTICS AS SEMANTICS, AND SEARLE**

I have been intrigued for years by Rapaport’s longstanding desire to portray semantics as syntax, and accordingly took up for the present project his 2016 “Semantics as Syntax” (which was wisely solicited by editor Boltuc) to study. Rapaport, as far as it goes, is entirely correct, at least spiritually speaking. (I’m limited to saying only that Rapaport is in *spirit* right, because were details discussed here, too much space would be consumed.) For my money, one major reason he’s right is that the fundamental observations upon which proof-theoretic semantics (in any form thereof) is motivated by, and possibly even rests upon directly, can’t be denied.<sup>6</sup> A simple example comes by way of considering the standard extensional semantics of a conditional with *p* as antecedent and *q* as consequent. We are standardly told in this case that the semantics for a material conditional  $p \Rightarrow q$  consists in that such a conditional holds if and only if (iff), if *p*, then *q*. That is, expressed a bit more succinctly,  $p \Rightarrow q$  iff if *p* then *q*. When you think about it, this is quite extraordinarily one-dimensional. Does it not directly give semantics via syntax? Consider the conditional  $(p \ \& \ q) \Rightarrow q$ . Does this conditional have the semantic value TRUE? Certainly. Why? Because it’s TRUE iff if *p* and *q*, then *q*. Well, is it in turn TRUE that if *p* and *q*, then *q*? Absolutely:

**Proof:** Suppose that *p* holds, along with *q*. We can deduce *q* directly. Hence our supposition implies *q*. **QED**

We are here using the standard textbook semantics for elementary extensional deductive logic, in use in classrooms across the globe, and what just happened? What happened is that we pinned down the meaning of the syntactic formula via a perfectly, indeed purely, syntactic process.<sup>7</sup> I view Rapaport as having found this phenomenon at work in a deep and intricate way, far and wide.

Yet why do I say that Rapaport’s “sem-by-syn” view is correct only *as far as it goes*? The reason is that Rapaport is spot on with respect to *one* sense of “semantics,” and dead wrong with regard to *another* sense of the term. The first sense aligns with proof-theoretic semantics, in general; we have just seen this sense in operation on a simple specimen; *and* it aligns with any formal dyad covering syntax on the one hand and semantics on the other. Unfortunately, the second sense can’t be separated from *understanding on the part of a mind*; this is the Searlean sense of semantics, and is what stands at the heart of Searle’s justly famous Chinese Room Argument (CRA), whose kernel, as a slogan, is that syntax doesn’t produce semantics. Rapaport believes that the sem-by-syn view can be extended in order to allow syntactic expressions (e.g., “hamburger”) to be “internalized,” and hence CRA to be dodged. He writes:

In the case of a real human being, [a] *representative* is the end result of, say, the visual process of seeing a hamburger . . . resulting in a “mental image” of a hamburger. . . . More precisely, the biological neural network in the human’s brain has neurons whose firing represent the word ‘hamburger’, and it has neurons whose firings represent the actual hamburger. Both of these sets of neuron firings are in the same “language”—the same syntactic system.<sup>8</sup>

This quote does nothing beyond communicating the faith of computationalist materialists, and/or (with the “neuron” here, e.g., mapped to artificial neurons in artificial neural networks so in vogue again these days) Strong Alniks. Can’t we imagine this more elaborate syntactic dance happening in the complete and utter absence of our understanding, bound up with subjective awareness as it is, of the shout by a grillmaster that our redolent burger is done? Of course we can. What Rapaport is in the end doing is ingeniously (but to a degree unwittingly) working out the sem-by-syn paradigm in and for AI—but not for *us*.

### HYPERCOMPUTATION

Rapaport’s *PCS* includes a chapter on hypercomputation (which is, harshly encapsulated, forms of information-processing more powerful than the operation of standard Turing machines); coverage of the topic therein is what most would no doubt classify as “steadfastly balanced.” I somewhat less charitably classify this chapter as noncommittal, and in being so, well, irrational. However, the chapter is also, even in its present, not-fully-polished form, the absolute best overview of the topic available in one place, over one digestible-in-one-sitting stretch of content. Indeed, I suspect that even most aggressive fans of hypercomputation will regard the chapter’s wishy-washy maybe-maybe-not position on hypercomputation to be fully redeemed by its laconic erudition, right down to the lucid presentation of some key theorems. After all, *PCS* is intended to be a broad-coverage textbook, not a polemical position statement.

Nonetheless, I’ve declared the chapter to be irrational. Why? In short, because there can be no denying, in light of the relevant logico-mathematics, that hypercomputation is as real and robust as can be, in the context of the fact

that even if (like me) we count Leibniz as having discovered general-purpose computation in the seventeenth century, the human race has really only been at this modern computation thing for about three centuries. The late twentieth century, and the beginning of the third millennium, have revealed that computation absolutely, positively cannot be rationally restricted to what standard Turing machines and their equivalents (which Rapaport lists and often discusses in *PCS*) can compute. I can’t here review in any detail my own writings on this subject, and will rest content to mention but two things. To wit:

One: Rapaport respectfully cites and discusses Martin Davis’s “The Myth of Computation.” While there can be no denying that Davis is the author of much brilliant work, this paper is far from his finest hour; it may, in fact, be his worst. Calling a spade a spade (and I did have the opportunity to do so orally, in debating the issue with Davis in person), joined by my colleague N. S. Govindarajulu, we wrote something I recommend to Rapaport, his readers, and readers of the present essay: “The Myth of ‘The Myth of Hypercomputation’,”<sup>9</sup> in which is shown that Davis’s arguments are anemic at best and stunningly fallacious at worst. I confess to being deeply surprised that Rapaport is content, at least at present, to leave the impression that Davis may have succeeded in revealing that hypercomputation is to be placed alongside, say, Hercules and Odin.

Two: It’s a logico-mathematical fact that hypercomputation is as real as can be. In the logicist interpretation of computer science adumbrated above, we have only to consider, for a few minutes, any number of computing machines vastly more powerful than standard Turing machines and their equivalents, specified via the use of formal logic. Not wanting (again) to cite my own work in this connection, I can simply rely on infinite-time Turing machines;<sup>10</sup> they provably exceed standard Turing machines, and yet *are* Turing machines; end of story. An even-more-direct route is simply to take note of the fact that formal logic includes infinitary logics, and some reasoning (e.g., proof discovery) in even the smallest of these (which allow infinitely long formulae and infinitely long proofs) is logic-style hypercomputation. Of course, some myopic empiricists may deny the reality of hypercomputation because they affirm the dogma that what is *real* is only what is *physical*. But this position is not only at odds with such mathematical facts as that there is a natural number  $N$  too large to correspond to any physical entity whose components sum to  $N$ ; it’s also at odds with something that Rapaport leaves aside: Since we are coming to see that physics can be axiomatized (by, say, the axiom system  $P$ ), absent a disproof of the proposition that  $P$  and a formal assertion of the *physical* existence of hypercomptuational machine is consistent, it’s irrational to advance the claim that hypercomputation is only mathematically possible.<sup>11</sup>

### FINAL REMARKS

Any serious dialogue with Rapaport, and engagement with his writings, could clearly continue, profitably and enjoyably, for a very long time. Yet, as is always the case, in order for a piece to be delivered and published, we must end—with, if you’ll allow, a final thought: viz., that we need to hear at some point soon from Rapaport-qua-philosopher

on the *history* of computation, of the fields which centrally partake of it (e.g. AI, logic, mathematics, linguistics, and nowadays computing machines as ethical agents), and on the complex and philosophically charged turbulence that has now been catalyzed by so-called “social media.” Rapaport’s professional life shows no signs of slowing down (witness the ever-growing *PCS* book itself), which means his contributions will continue, but his professional life to this point has passed through the evolution of the computational sciences over a period of decades, during which time a *lot* has happened. Rapaport is one of only a handful of computationally informed philosophers who have seen firsthand the evolution (with an occasional spate of rapid change) of the many parts of philosophy intimately connected to computation (philosophy of mind, of language, etc.). Did he ever think for a moment, yesterday, that today’s advocacy of the end of programming (in light of such phenomena as “Deep Learning”) would ever arrive? That the concept of a machine which self-learns and thereby beats humans at their own games would become reality, as happened in the case of AlphaGo? Did he think, yesterday, that computation, first isolated in the minds and soon thereafter the simple, disconnected “pet” machines of Turing and von Neumann et al., would come to mediate arguably all that Earth’s technologized youth do, daily, via social-media technology? In all this, who are we? What is truth? What is fake? What is real? What control can computation be allowed to have over our interaction with each other, and over the analysis and presentation thereof? Philosophy, and anyone concerned with the intersection “philosophy and computers,” is going to need to come to grips with these computation-infused questions, the lack of answers to which has already started to plague us.<sup>12</sup> Actually, truth be told, *I* need to come grips in this regard. Time to talk again to Rapaport . . .

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Some research in AI and theoretical computer science that informs my commentary was made possible by support from ONR and AFOSR, and I’m very grateful for this support. I have an enormous debt to Piotr Boltuc for his guidance and supernatural patience as I (irrationally?) poured more and more time into thinking about Rapaportian work, all the while with the clock cranking beyond a series of promised delivery dates. Rapaport’s body of work, as I’ve said, has only been quickly touched upon herein. That body of work is endlessly stimulating, and I’m grateful to Rapaport for creating it.

#### NOTES

1. The current version of *PCS*, as this sentence is written, is May 2018, and is available at <https://cse.buffalo.edu/~rapaport/Papers/phics.pdf>. The reader should take account of the difference between *PCS* (the subject) and—note the italics—*PCS*, the Rapaportian book on that very subject.
2. I don’t mean to imply that the sub-parts of philosophy to which I refer are self-contained. In point of fact, philosophy of language and philosophy of logic (in the Occidental case, anyway), are inseparably linked. Another inseparable link, one at the heart of any comprehensive analysis of Rapaport’s *PCS* and his body of work, is that between *PCS* and PAI.
3. PAI, and for that matter AI itself from a philosophical point of view, is covered in the SEP entry *Artificial Intelligence* (<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/artificial-intelligence>).
4. Wonderful introductory coverage of logic programming is provided in Ebbinghaus et al., *Mathematical Logic*.

5. I would personally have preferred to use automated theorem proving rather than Prolog’s basis in what I just wrote, but the need for economy at the moment rules. This is as good a place as any to report that in my interview of Rapaport, he indicated that he opted for DTS, and the encapsulation of it that I’ve quoted, for pedagogical purposes. However, even taking his expression of this strategy at face value, as I’ve explained, even from the perspective of pedagogy, reasoning is by my lights something much more valuable to teach than DTS. And besides, even after DTS is used, we are still left with the challenge of showing that the procedural artifact we have produced is correct; and showing this can only be accomplished via reasoning. Why not simply start and end with reasoning?
6. Readers unfamiliar with proof-theoretic semantics could start with Gentzen, “Investigations into Logical Deduction.” For what it’s worth, nearly all my own work in intensional logic and philosophy is proof-theoretic in nature. See, e.g., Bringsjord et al., “Introducing the Doxastically Centered Approach to Formalizing Relevance Bonds in Conditionals.”
7. Die-hard Tarskians might accuse me of tendentiously and unfairly passing straightaway to a proof, rather than giving a truth-table or truth-tree (or in the first-order case a model/interpretation). Balderdash. We shall need for the skeptic a proof that the result of tabular or tree-based manipulation yields TRUE.
8. Rapaport, “Semantics as Sytax,” 12.
9. Govindarajulu and Bringsjord, “The Myth of ‘The Myth of Hypercomputation’.”
10. Hamkins and Lewis, “Infinite Time Turing Machines,”
11. Govindarajulu et al., “Proof Verification and Proof Discovery for Relativity,” isn’t a bad place to start reading about such matters.
12. I recommend, as a quick, non-technical start to this side of *PCS*, Wiesberg, “The Digital Poorhouse.”

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#### RAPAPORT RESOURCES

- Rapaport’s *PCS* is currently available, in the May 2018 edition, here: <https://cse.buffalo.edu/~rapaport/Papers/phics.pdf>.
- Rapaport, W. “Semantics as Sytax.” 2016. <https://cse.buffalo.edu/~rapaport/Papers/synsemapa.pdf>.



## Comments on Bringsjord’s “Logician Remarks”

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

I am grateful to my long-time friend and debating partner Selmer Bringsjord for the email interview that was the source of his “Logician Remarks”<sup>1</sup> and for his generous comments on my research and my textbook-in-draft.<sup>2</sup> In this brief response, I simply wish to clarify three of my positions.

### 2. A PROCEDURAL-LOGICAL CONTROVERSY

Whereas I argue that computer science is fundamentally concerned with algorithms,<sup>3</sup> Bringsjord argues that “computation . . . [is] a proper part of reasoning *and nothing more*.”<sup>4</sup> It’s the “and nothing more” clause that I disagree with.

I agree that computation as a subject of study can be viewed “as a proper part of reasoning” or logic. But it can *just as well* be viewed as the study of (what Bringsjord somewhat dismissively characterizes as “do-this-step-do-that-step-do-this-step”) procedures (loc. cit.). These are equivalent viewpoints from different perspectives. But I find the procedural perspective more perspicuous.<sup>5</sup>

This is exactly the same situation that we find in the theory of computation: Computation as a mathematical enterprise can be understood functionally, in terms of recursive functions or the lambda calculus (as well as in other ways, and by other formalisms), as well as procedurally, in terms of Turing machines or register machines (etc.). The multiple views (in both cases) are not rivals, but equivalent alternatives, each with its own advantages. Gödel found the Turing-machine analysis more convincing as a model of computability than even his own recursive functions.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, I would argue, the procedural view is more compelling (for me, as well as for my students) than the logical view with respect to what is unique and interesting about computer science and computation.

### 3. SYNTACTIC SEMANTICS

I have long advocated for the position that syntax suffices for semantics—that the semantic enterprise of understanding is fundamentally a syntactic one. Briefly, I take syntax as the study of the properties of, and relations among, the members of a set of objects, and I take semantics as the study of the relations *between* two sets of objects—one studied syntactically, and other providing its semantic interpretation. (The latter set can also be studied syntactically, and its syntax is its “ontology”.) But when you take the union of those two sets, the formerly semantic relations become syntactic ones of the union.<sup>7</sup> A real-life, biological (and not merely “Strong AI”) example of such a union is the neuron firings in our brain, some of which represent the objects in the external world and some of which represent the concepts (and language) that we use to understand them. But they all form one neural network.

Bringsjord says that “this . . . does nothing beyond communicating the faith of computationalist materialists, and/or . . . Strong Alnicks.”<sup>8</sup> But it does do more than that: It shows that our subjective sense of understanding—the kind involved in Bringsjord’s example of “the shout by a grillmaster that our redolent burger is done” (loc. cit.)—is accomplished by a single system (a single, unioned set) that is understood syntactically, not by two separate systems (a syntactically understood one and its semantic interpretation).

### 4. HYPERCOMPUTATION

Bringsjord’s discussion of my position on hypercomputation was based on an earlier version of *Philosophy of Computer Science*, Chapter 11, than the one currently available. That earlier version was, indeed, somewhat “noncommittal.”<sup>9</sup>

Rather than distinguishing between Turing-machine computation and hyper-computation, I prefer to think of there being three categories:<sup>10</sup>

#### Sub-Turing Computation:

Finite-state automata, pushdown automata, primitive recursive functions, etc.

#### Turing-Machine Computation:

Turing machines and their equivalents (partial recursive functions, lambda calculus, etc.)

#### Super-Turing Computation:

Oracle machines, Zeus machines, Malament-Hogarth machines, analog recurrent neural networks, interactive computing, trial-and-error machines, etc.

To my mind, the only interesting kinds of super-Turing computation are not the “newer physics” kind (Zeus machines, etc.),<sup>11</sup> but the ones that can be modeled by Turing’s own theory of oracle machines. These include interactive and trial-and-error computing. But oracle computation, studied under the rubric ‘relative computability’, is well-understood and not something that computer scientists have ignored (as some hypercomputationalists have suggested). Nor is it typically understood as a counterexample to the Church-Turing Computability Thesis.<sup>12</sup>

### 5. CONCLUSION

Bringsjord raised a number of important questions in his “Final Remarks” (some of which I touch on in my book), observing that it was “time to talk again to Rapaport.” I look forward to continuing our conversation!

#### NOTES

1. Bringsjord, “Logician Remarks on Rapaport on Philosophy of Computer Science.”
2. Rapaport, “Philosophy of Computer Science.”
3. Rapaport, “What Is Computer Science?” 13–16; Rapaport, “Philosophy of Computer Science,” §3.15
4. Bringsjord, “Logician Remarks on Rapaport on Philosophy of Computer Science,” §“Actually, Computer Science Is a (Small) Proper Part of Logic,” my italics.

5. As I note in Rapaport, "Philosophy of Computer Science," §§2.3, 2.7, on the question of what philosophy is, I take philosophy to be the personal search for truth, in any field, by rational means, following Hector-Neri Castañeda, who said that philosophy should be done "in the first person, for the first person" (Rapaport, "Castañeda, Hector-Neri").
6. Gödel, "Undecidable Diophantine Propositions," 168; Shagrir, "Gödel on Turing on Computability"; Sieg, "Gödel on Computability"; Soare, "Turing Oracle Machines, Online Computing, and Three Displacements in Computability Theory," §2; Copeland and Shagrir, "Turing versus Gödel on Computability and the Mind."
7. Rapaport, "Searle's Experiments with Thought"; "Syntactic Semantics: Foundations of Computational Natural-Language Understanding"; "Understanding Understanding: Syntactic Semantics and Computational Cognition"; "How to Pass a Turing Test: Syntactic Semantics, Natural-Language Understanding, and First-Person Cognition"; "Holism, Conceptual-Role Semantics, and Syntactic Semantics"; "What Did You Mean By That? Misunderstanding, Negotiation, and Syntactic Semantics"; "How Helen Keller Used Syntactic Semantics to Escape from a Chinese Room"; "Yes, She Was! Reply to Ford's 'Helen Keller Was Never in a Chinese Room'"; "Semiotic Systems, Computers, and the Mind: How Cognition Could Be Computing"; "Semantics as Syntax"; and "Syntactic Semantics and the Proper Treatment of Computationalism."
8. Bringsjord, "Logician Remarks on Rapaport on Philosophy of Computer Science," §"Semantics as Semantics, and Searle." I suspect that this section title is a typo for "Semantics as Syntax, and Searle."
9. Bringsjord, "Logician Remarks on Rapaport on Philosophy of Computer Science," §"Hypercomputation."
10. I am limiting myself here to digital computing, so analog computation is another story, told best, I think, in Piccinini, *Physical Computation: A Mechanistic Account*.
11. The term "newer physics" is from Copeland and Sylvan, "Computability Is Logic-Relative," 190.
12. See Davis, *Computability and Unsolvability*, 20–24; Soare, "Turing Oracle Machines, Online Computing, and Three Displacements in Computability Theory"; Soare, "Formalism and Intuition in Computability"; and Fortnow, "What Is Computation?" for this point of view.

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## Exploring the Territory: The Logicist Way and Other Paths into the Philosophy of Computer Science

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William J. Rapaport holds the position of Associate Professor Emeritus of Computer Science, as well as Affiliated Faculty Emeritus in Philosophy and Linguistics, Member Emeritus of the Center for Cognitive Science, and Associate Director of the SNePS Research Group, all at the University at Buffalo.

The scholarly work on the philosophy of computer science that most nearly achieves comprehensive coverage is the "Philosophy of Computer Science" textbook, manifest as an ever-growing resource online,<sup>1</sup> by William J. Rapaport, winner of both the Covey Award and the Barwise Prize in 2015. His former Ph.D. student, Robin K. Hill, interviews him herein on that and related subjects. They start with a discussion of the proper perspective on logic from the philosophy of computer science, and on the philosophy of computer science from logic, in response to Selmer Bringsjord's commentary.<sup>2</sup> While Rapaport doubts that *the philosophy of computer science* has anything to say, or has to say anything, about logic, or that logic has anything to say, or has to say anything, about *the philosophy of computer science*, certainly logic has something to say about computer science proper, e.g., it can help us to understand the nature of algorithms or to verify programs. What about the algorithm?

**Hill:** The avowed logicist Selmer Bringsjord condemns the spotlight on the algorithm in the philosophy of computer science, claiming that the study of a DTS ("do-this-step-do-that-step" process) yields an inadequate account of computer science, which is, in his view, a study of reasoning. I admire reasoning as much as the next guy, so to speak, but he claims that "a valid deduction by the machine from this set A of formulae expressed in something that looks quite like first-order logic, to that particular formula p, is what execution of my program consists in." This is *not* the right description, in my view. We *do* need to emphasize the "DTS thingie," the sequence of steps, just as that process is respected in the low-level principles of programming languages that implement logic programming.

**Rapaport:** If you have a bunch of logically equivalent ways of representing or expressing something, and each has a very different "flavor," does it make sense to say that one of them is the best or right one? I think that it is better to say that each sheds different light on the common phenomenon that is represented or expressed or analyzed, enabling us to see it from different perspectives, each of which may be more appropriate or useful in different circumstances or for different purposes. (You can write programs that will behave the same using any programming language, but some languages will make the job easier or be more easily understood by humans, etc.) Gödel was not convinced by his own recursive functions or by Church's lambda calculus, but was by Turing's DTS analysis. So, rather than saying that any of these are avoidable or unavoidable, I'd prefer to say that the DTS approach opened up a fruitful way of understanding things. Logic programming and functional programming, like imperative programming, have their own realms where each is most fruitful.

**Hill:** Certainly, no one can gainsay the primacy of logic. Formal reasoning may be the most distinct accomplishment of the human race. The state of the world—not just now but at any time—supports Bringsjord's personal view that "reasoning is by my lights something much more valuable to teach than DTS." Logic served humanity long before computerized algorithms did. In this sense, the significance of computing is its novelty, which calls for research, whereas logic already enjoys high respectability in that regard. Should we resist the invitation to treat them as competitors?

**Rapaport:** Yes; let a thousand flowers bloom. Pedagogically, if you find it easier to explain computation logically rather than imperatively, go for it. If you as student find it easier to understand logically rather than imperatively, fine! Yet Dan Dennett, in his *Darwin's Dangerous Ideas* (which I'm just reading now for the first time) makes a point of distinguishing between logical approaches (specifically, the deductive-nomological scientific method) and an algorithmic approach of the sort that he claims Darwin took.<sup>3</sup>

**Hill:** I claim that an algorithm is an abstract imperative control structure,<sup>4</sup> with the *imperative* characteristic the most radical claim, and relentlessly DTS. Declarative structures, such as recursive definitions, are not algorithms under this view. One simply can't convey, teach, explain, or show an algorithm without telling some computing device to do something. Of course, my arguments are based on the big names—well-known and widely taught working algorithms such as Binary Search and Heapsort, which enjoy a robust conceptual life outside of their implementations in various Turing Machines. I would say that the algorithm is where no distinction holds between *satisfying* and *following* rules;<sup>5</sup> in other words, algorithms are not conceptually distinct from, and built upon, but rather are embodiments of, "the rules." The ascription of algorithms to a category incompatible with the declarative nature of logic disrupts the standard analyses. Now, yanking algorithms out of the declarative logic realm altogether might assuage Professor Bringsjord's concerns or it might irritate them. What do you think? Based on your deep dive into the nature of computer science, do

you recommend any reconsideration of the received views of other aspects of computation?

**Rapaport:** You say that “an algorithm is an abstract imperative control structure.” I agree, but I’d prefer to say that it can be expressed as one, but could also be expressed logically or functionally. Surely both binary search and heapsort can be expressed not only in an imperative language like, say, Algol, but also in Prolog or Lisp.

**Hill:** Your hospitality to philosophical views is welcome. The conflict between computationalists and others smacks of demagoguery, even hostility, and I have always been glad to follow your example of objective scholarship. How great a role does affect play? Some philosophers of computer science want human intellect to be demoted and computation raised to its proper place, while others want to see computation demoted and human intellect raised to its proper place. Should we, and can we, account for this somehow?

**Rapaport:** I’ll use this question as an excuse to tell a story that I need to think about some more: My wife recently opened a restaurant and asked me to handle the paperwork and banking that needs to be done in the morning before opening (based on the previous day’s activities). She wrote out a detailed set of instructions, and one morning I went in with her to see if I could follow them, with her looking over my shoulder. As might be expected, there were gaps in her instructions, so even though they were detailed, they needed even more detail. Part of the reason for this was that she knew what had to be done, how to do it, and why it had to be done, but I didn’t. This actually disturbed me, because I tend to think that algorithms should really be just “Do A,” not “To G, do A.” Yet I felt that I needed to understand G in order to figure out how to do A. But I think the reason for that was simply that she hadn’t given me an algorithm, but a sketch of one, and, in order for me to fill in the gaps, knowing why I was doing A would help me fill in those gaps. But I firmly believe that if it made practical sense to fill in all those gaps (as it would if we were writing a computer program), then I wouldn’t have to ask why I was doing it. No “intelligence” should be needed for this task if the instructions were a full-fledged algorithm. If a procedure (a sequence of instructions, including vague ones like recipes) is not an algorithm (a procedure that is fully specified down to the last detail), then it can require “intelligence” to carry it out (to be able to fill in the gaps, based, perhaps on knowing why things are being done). If intelligence is not available (i.e., if the executor lacks relevant knowledge about the goal of the procedure), then the procedure had better be a full-fledged algorithm. There is a difference between a human trying to follow instructions and a machine that is designed to execute an algorithm. The machine cannot ask why, so its algorithm has to be completely detailed. But a computer (or a robot, because one of the tasks is going to the bank and talking to a teller!) that could really do the job would almost certainly be considered to be “intelligent.” This neither demotes human intellect nor raises computation, but shows *how* (not necessarily *that*) human intellect can be computationally understood. I think it’s a nice case study for Dennett’s “Turing’s strange inversion of reasoning,” that is, “In order

to be a perfect and beautiful computing machine it is not requisite to know what arithmetic is.”<sup>6</sup>

**Hill:** You note, in your most recent *APA Newsletter* pieces,<sup>7</sup> that the Semantic Web is really a syntactic web, which provides a perfect example of your thesis. In the World Wide Web, a network of nodes and connections, the only handy meaning of a node is its location relative to other nodes, and the only possible meaning of a connection is its association of two nodes. In the Semantic Web, the new tags applied to markup elements, such as <date> or <component>, are not actual meanings in a different domain, but rather strings from the same category as the formatting markup tags such as <h1>; in other words, all those tags belong to the domain S of character strings. But how is it that we understand the <date> tag to be richer, more contentful, than the <h1> tag?

**Rapaport:** You ask, “how is it that we understand the <date> tag to be richer, more contentful, than the <h1> tag?” I think the crucial word here is “we.” My first reaction is that we understand <date> more richly than <h1>, but the Semantic Web itself doesn’t. My second reaction is to say that the Semantic Web might understand <date> more richly than <h1> in the same way that we do, namely, by the amount and complexity of the connections it can make with them. Presumably, both of us have more and richer connections with dates than with tags. If you’re referring to the fact that the tag <date> contains the word “date,” surely that’s for our, human, benefit, not for the Semantic Web. (This is Drew McDermott’s point in his “AI Meets Artificial Stupidity.”<sup>8</sup>)

**Hill:** In your analysis of the Chinese room, you point out that both the hamburger and the word “hamburger” map to neuron firings, which is the common domain. You are, no doubt, willing to accept another relation as part of the overarching domain U that associates the “hamburger” neuron firings with morphemes and the hamburger neuron firings with food. Is that how the richer connotation is captured?

**Rapaport:** I’m not sure what U is, unless it’s the world itself, the world that contains not only my neuron firings but also certain morphemes (better?: certain sound waves) as well as certain real, perishable foodstuffs. But I would argue that I don’t have direct access to parts of U: I only have access to those sound waves and those foods as mediated by my sensory organs (OK, OK: I eat hamburgers, and that gives me pretty direct access to them. But in terms of seeing, touching, smelling, etc., it’s only via sensory organs.) Only God (*sive Natura*) would have such access.

**Hill:** Professor Bringsjord notes that “[Rapaport’s] professional life to this point has passed through the evolution of the computational sciences over a period of decades, during which time a lot has happened.” Indeed. He invites you to reflect on the history, an invitation that I will accept for you in asking these questions: How has your view of the philosophy of computer science matured in the time that you have been thinking about it? Compared to your mature appreciation, was your view limited at the start? Which aspects are stale and which deserve more thought? Are there some issues still under contention that

are analogous to determining how many angels can dance on the head of a pin? Can you predict which inquiries may rise to prominence in the future?

**Rapaport:** When I created my course, I didn't know what the philosophy of computer science was, nor could I find anything about it, so I created my list of questions principally as an organizing rubric for the course:

- What is CS?
  - Is it a science? (What is science?) – Engineering? (What is engineering?)
  - Both?
  - Something else?
- What does it study?
  - Computers? (What is a computer?) – Computation?
    - What is computation?
      - What is an algorithm?
      - What is the Church-Turing Computability Thesis?
      - What is hypercomputation?
    - What is a computer program?
      - What is the relation of a program to the world?
      - Are programs scientific theories?
      - If a program implements an algorithm, what is implementation?
      - What is software, and how is it related to hardware?
      - Can or should programs be copyrighted or patented?
      - Can programs be verified?
- What is AI?
  - What is the relation of computation to cognition?
  - Can computers think?
  - What is the Turing Test and the Chinese Room Argument?
- Computer Ethics
  - Should we trust decisions made by computers? – Should we build intelligent computers?

My views have matured in the sense that I have some firmer beliefs about where I stand on some of these issues than I did when I first began looking at them (and my views continue to mature as I revise my textbook). And the two ethical issues that I chose to focus on have become much more central to the philosophical conversation than they were thirteen years ago when I created the course, what with the advent of autonomous vehicles and advances in “deep learning” AI.

I think hypercomputation might be an “angels on a pin” question. As for which questions might become more prominent, perhaps the issue of how computer programs relate to the real world that they model is one of them, or the issue that you discuss and that I formulate as “Is the form of an algorithm A to accomplish goal G merely ‘Do A’ or is it ‘To accomplish G, do A?’” (These may be the same issue.)

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Since 2005, Dr. Rapaport has been developing, publishing, and exercising teaching materials for the philosophy of computer science, asking and answering myriad questions connected with the exploration and establishment of that subject in the academy. In Professor Rapaport's outline of the philosophy of computer science, we see examination of every aspect of computer science. We look forward to more disciplined elaboration, complete with encyclopedic references, of this interesting subject that deploys a perspective from the humanities to reflect on the roots of technology.

**NOTES**

1. William J. Rapaport, “Philosophy of Computer Science,” <https://cse.buffalo.edu/~rapaport/Papers/phics.pdf>.
2. Selmer Bringsjord, “Logician Remarks on Rapaport on Philosophy of Computer Science.”
3. Daniel Dennett, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea*, 48, n. 6.
4. Robin K. Hill, “What an Algorithm Is.”
5. Rapaport, “Philosophy of Computer Science,” §12.4.4.1.2.2.
6. Daniel Dennett, “Examining the Work and Its Later Impact: Daniel Dennett Is Inspired by Turing's ‘Strange Inversion of Reasoning’.”
7. William J. Rapaport, “Semantics as Syntax;” “Comments on Bringsjord's ‘Logician Remarks’.”
8. Drew McDermott, “Artificial Intelligence Meets Natural Stupidity.”

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## TEACHING PHILOSOPHY ONLINE

### *Synchronous Online Philosophy Courses: An Experiment in Progress*

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There are a number of reasons why professors teach online. Some have decided on their own to do so. Some might have been pressured by their colleges or universities to teach online. As Peter Boltuc has stressed in this newsletter, as more and more online courses are offered, it is vital for the survival of philosophy as a profession that philosophy is taught online.<sup>1</sup> If philosophers do not take the opportunity to teach such courses, we risk the possibility of losing students completely who might otherwise take philosophy classes.

In my own case, I decided to teach online for practical reasons. I live in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and my university is fifty-five miles away in Metro Detroit. Saving myself a two-hour-a-day commute is quite useful for personal and financial reasons. I do love teaching, and my hope was that I could teach online while not leaving behind the elements of teaching that I love the most.

Many of my colleagues teach online, and the most common approach, I have found, is the asynchronous course. In an asynchronous online course, students can do work at any time, generally at their own pace, without any required class sessions. This is a good thing for students with complex life and work schedules. In my experiments in online teaching, I have taken a synchronous approach instead. In a synchronous online course, there are required meeting times where students and professors gather together in an online environment.

It is not my purpose here to argue that synchronous courses are superior to or even inferior to asynchronous online courses. To really study this issue, one would have to ensure that the asynchronous and synchronous courses being studied were similar in many relevant respects except insofar as they are asynchronous or synchronous. This would be difficult. It certainly seems possible that a good asynchronous course could be much better than a poor synchronous course and that a good synchronous course is better than a poor asynchronous course. How do we compare courses when the quality of instruction can

differ in any class? College courses are complex things, and a lot has to be taken into consideration to make any good comparisons. Blanket judgments of relative quality between broad categories like synchronous and asynchronous courses, or face-to-face and online courses, are likely to be somewhat dubious.

As a result, I view my own work in teaching online as something of an experiment in progress. At Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan, where I am an associate professor of philosophy, I have taught several online-only courses using synchronous elements. These courses include Introduction to Philosophy, Introduction to Ethics, Ancient Greek Philosophy, and Early Modern Philosophy. All of these courses involve the teaching of historical materials, particularly because our introductory philosophy and ethics courses at Oakland University are part of the Western civilization component of our general education program. To get my students to learn important aspects of Western civilization and the history of philosophy, I require them to do extensive reading of historical texts and a good deal of writing.

At my university, we use the open-source course management software Moodle. Moodle contains resources for assignment collection, journals, forums, and a gradebook, among many other features. We also have access to the videoconferencing software WebEx from Cisco. There is other software, such as Elluminate, that can serve similar purposes. Faculty have also used popular software such as Skype or Google Hangouts for videoconferencing. E-Learning and Instructional Services (E-LIS) at Oakland University linked WebEx to Moodle, so videoconferencing sessions and recordings of these sessions can be accessed directly through the course management software.

### VIDEOCONFERENCING AND THE ONLINE CLASSROOM

My aim in the courses I teach is to use the technology available to create online courses that do not lack any of the elements that might be helpful in good face-to-face instruction. To do this, I have leaned fairly heavily on the videoconferencing software. In all of my online courses, I have put in the university schedule of classes language indicating that there will be required, regularly scheduled, online course sessions on specific dates and times. One of the challenges I have faced is that students do not always read the schedule of classes completely and closely; so I have had to explain the requirement of attendance at videoconferencing sessions on several occasions to students, sometimes after they had registered, very often after the course start date.

Software such as Cisco WebEx provides many resources that are highly useful for online class sessions. I can use my computer's webcam and microphone to broadcast video and audio of myself. WebEx also allows for the broadcasting of whatever is on the screen of my laptop. This can include a presentation, whether made in Microsoft PowerPoint, Apple Keynote, Google Slides, or any other presentation software. In fact, anything whatsoever that can be displayed on a computer, including video, can be

displayed live to students who are viewing the WebEx presentation.

WebEx also allows my students to broadcast audio and video of themselves to the class. One of my favorite features of the software is that the window that contains video of the instructor automatically switches to show video and broadcast audio of anyone who happens to raise their voice during the class session. This is seamless when it works well. (As noted below, it does not always work well). So if I have finished making a point, and one of my students wants to make a point herself, as soon as she starts talking, audio and video of her is broadcast to the entire class.

It is also possible to allow students or other participants in the class to capture the images on their screens and broadcast them to the class. So, if you would like your students to give in-class presentations, it is possible to have your students use the resources of WebEx to present PowerPoints or any other sort of presentation from their own computer screen to the entire class. Whatever your student puts on her desktop can be broadcast to the class.

Students do not need to use audio or video in WebEx to communicate with me and with each other. The software also contains a chat window, where the instructor and students can send messages either to the entire class or to each other. In my experience, this sometimes brings about more class discussion than is common in my face-to-face classes: my students have tended to be very comfortable with communicating through text.

In case you do not want your students to broadcast audio or video, or to participate in chat, there is a feature in WebEx that allows you to deny permission to any student in the class to utilize such features.

In addition to the ability to broadcast presentations to one's students, one can type or draw using the virtual whiteboard contained in the software. This whiteboard has its limits, and it does not allow for the kind of quick drawing one might like to use to create, say, logic diagrams. To make up for the lack of a chalkboard or whiteboard in the videoconferencing environment, I purchased a USB document camera. I use an IPEVO Ziggi-HD High Definition camera. When attached to my laptop, I can use the document camera's software to put images on my screen of whatever I happen to be drawing at a given time. This allows for the real-time writing of anything whatsoever. This seems like it would be especially useful for teaching logic—one could write out a truth-table or truth-tree live on a piece of paper for students. The WebEx feature that allows me to broadcast whatever is on my screen allows me to broadcast the live video I am capturing with my document camera.

A further useful feature of broadcasting with the document camera is the ability to display a textbook. I can show the students specific passages from the textbook to guide them to particular words or a diagram. I like to do a lot of close readings of texts in my classes, so the ability to display the text comes in quite handy.

While I require my students to attend the online class sessions, it is, of course, unavoidable that some students might miss class for emergencies. Fortunately, WebEx allows for the recording of online class sessions. These recordings contain all of the elements noted above—the video and audio of myself, the video of whatever is on my screen at a given time, audio and video of my students, and the text from the online chat sessions.

Were this sort of online environment to work perfectly, I cannot think of any element of a face-to-face class that would be missing from this kind of online environment. This might help overcome objections from those who think philosophy can only be done best in the face-to-face environment. Lecturing, one obvious element of the traditional face-to-face class, is easily made possible. Perhaps more importantly, discussion can occur as well. The professor can use presentation software to convey information, and so can the students. A document camera allows one to use a writing surface to present text, diagrams, or pictures. Videoconferencing even allows for additional elements that are not part of the typical face-to-face classroom environment, such as the chat feature, which allows professors or students to send text to the entire classroom or to each other. As I mentioned above, this chat feature proves really useful for spurring discussion. As Frank McCluskey has noted, "It is well known that introverts prefer writing to speaking. So here is medium where they are able to take chances in ways they might not in the bricks and mortar classroom."<sup>2</sup> In my experience, this is true of live online chat writing.

Videoconferencing is not the only online resource I have found helpful. The many elements of the Moodle course management software we use at Oakland University come in quite handy. For example, as many professors have encountered, it can be difficult to get students to do the reading. So I use the journal feature on Moodle. I require students to write about each reading before we discuss them in the online class session. These journal entries are graded, and they are a quite useful way in any class to get students to do the reading.

The kind of synchronous class I offer hence has the potential to contain all of the relevant features of face-to-face classes, and there is no reason not to also use all of the useful elements that have been part of asynchronous online classes as well. Nothing prevents the teacher of the synchronous class from also including recorded lectures, using an online forum for discussion, or using a software program to provide guided instruction. Anything that can be done in an asynchronous class can obviously be done in a synchronous class as well. So it would seem that synchronous online classes have their own advantages while not missing any of the advantages of asynchronous online instruction or face-to-face instruction.

#### **LIMITS OF THE SYNCHRONOUS CLASS**

While, in the ideal, there should be nothing lost in a synchronous online course, I have faced a number of difficulties over the past five years of teaching online.

I face the challenge of conveying the importance of synchronous class sessions to students who are accustomed to taking asynchronous online courses. I have had students balk at the requirement to show up regularly for online classes. One of my students told me early in a semester that my requirement that students show up at a regular time for online classes was the stupidest thing he had ever heard. There have been complaints about my synchronous approach to teaching courses, including in my teaching evaluations. Even students who have spent an entire semester registered in my class without dropping have complained about the synchronous element in their student evaluations. It seems to me that a number of students have had the impression that it is almost by definition that an online class is an asynchronous online class, where one can work on one's own schedule without a required class time.

I am sympathetic to the needs and concerns of students who would be best served by asynchronous classes. Some students have work or life schedules that prevent them from being available regularly at a given time. I have had students in the military whose work prevents them from involvement in such a class. All that being said, I do indicate to my students, both in our schedule of classes and immediately at the beginning of the class, that there are mandatory online videoconferencing sessions. This sometimes leads to students dropping my section of the class. Even at a university with a robust online program such as Oakland University, this might possibly lead to lower student demand for online courses with required synchronous elements. This is a concern. As noted above, Peter Boltuc has rightly stressed the importance for philosophy as a profession of offering online courses that appeal to students. The administrators at my university are certainly interested in all of my courses having a heavy enrollment!

In my experiences teaching online, I have not been able to achieve the ideal environment I had hoped for. As a result, I do think, until student preparation and technology advances, there are some significant limits to the use of synchronous online teaching sessions in courses.

I base the following points only on my own experiences. Others might have had different experiences, more positive or negative. This is a place where greater study and collection of data across the profession might be useful for improving online instruction.

I find that students are hesitant to use the audio and video capturing features available from their own computers. I often have to tell students to turn on their webcams or microphones to make video and audio of themselves available. WebEx does not automatically turn on webcams and microphones. Even after insisting on the students turning their equipment on, there are still a significant number of students in my courses who never turn on their microphones or webcams. I suspect I have had a few students who do not even have webcams and/or microphones on their computers.

When the relevant equipment is turned on, the students are not always in the best environments for philosophical

discussion. Unlike the controlled environment of a classroom, a virtual classroom composed of video and audio captured from a number of students' computers can contain many distractions. Friends and family can often be heard in the background. Crying babies are not uncommon. Noises of all sorts interfere with the discussion.

Joshua Kim has noted issues of this sort in *Inside Higher Education*:

The other audio problem that I see is feedback. Students forget to mute their computer audio, causing terrible echoes. Or background noise, the barking dog or busy office, makes it difficult for everyone to hear. Online meetings are often loud and distracting events. I'm not sure how to achieve a quieter experience.<sup>3</sup>

To best allow for really good discussion, all students should be in a relatively quiet environment with minimal distractions. Getting actual, real-world students to do this during synchronous online class sessions is a difficult task.

A number of students will not have excellent presentation skills. We are not all accustomed to broadcasting ourselves to others. I have encountered some difficulties with poorly placed webcams and microphones. A number of students do a poor job of using the technology on hand to communicate. This is not a skill that all students have practiced or learned.

There is still a serious concern of a digital divide. Not every student will have the computer, webcam, microphone, and high-speed internet access required for videoconferencing. There are also issues of disability and accommodation. Elements of online learning that might best serve disabled students might not serve other populations of disabled students well. A student who might be best served by a text-only online course might be at a disadvantage in a text, video, and audio class such as mine.

An instructor might also, by teaching a course using videoconferencing technology, lose some of the historical advantages of text-based online education. Ron Barnette has noted the ways in which an online environment might be useful insofar as it removes any sort of influence factors like race, gender, or age might have upon listeners to an open discussion.<sup>4</sup> If students are using webcams and audio, some of the effects of factors such as this might reoccur.

In the ideal environment, the technology currently available ought to allow for online courses to have all of the positive features of traditional face-to-face classes. Terry Weldin-Frisch has expressed a similar opinion of synchronous online instruction in this newsletter:

There is simply no good reason to think that this particular educational delivery method cannot be perfected in such a way that long held predispositions regarding the second-rate quality of online philosophical education need continue to dominate a twenty-first century educational milieu.<sup>5</sup>



Perhaps in the near future this perfection will be achieved. Even in the present day, where technology is such a key part of our lives, a cultural shift is required, with students being more prepared, both personally and with their technology, to bring to the table what is needed for a good synchronous online class.

It is also worth noting that not all universities and colleges have put the considerable resources that my own university has put into online education. I have been provided with some of the best hardware and software available for teaching online, and I recognize that I am fortunate to have it.

## THE FUTURE OF ONLINE PHILOSOPHY EDUCATION

It is exciting to think of what technology might make possible. More and more, computing is done not on desktop or laptop computers but on smartphones, tablets, and wearable devices. If the kind of technology I am using now is able to be ported well to such devices in the future, synchronous online videoconferencing classes might be even more accessible in a wide range of environments, including for students who have cut the cord on broadband in favor of cellular-only data.

With many challenges having been noted, I have had several good experiences teaching a number of students online, and I have found the experience of teaching using videoconferencing software to be often as rewarding as the experience of teaching in the traditional face-to-face environment. At times, it has even been better. When videoconferencing works, it makes possible in online classes what has henceforth only been possible within the physical classroom.

### NOTES

1. Peter Boltuc, "e-Teaching Philosophy," *APA Newsletter on Philosophy and Computers* 5, no. 1 (2005): 3–5.
2. Frank McCluskey, "Reflections from Teaching Online," *APA Newsletter on Philosophy and Computers* 11, no. 1 (2011): 23.
3. Joshua Kim, "Running Synchronous Online Classes," *Inside Higher Education*, August 28, 2013.
4. Ron Barnette, "Reflecting Back Twenty Years," *APA Newsletter on Philosophy and Computers* 11, no. 1: 20–22.
5. Terry Weldin-Frisch, "A Comparison of Four Distance Education Models," *APA Newsletter on Philosophy and Computers* 11, no. 1 (2011): 25.

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## The Paradox of Online Learning

Adrienne Anderson

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Marshall McLuhan observed that "we shape our tools and afterwards our tools shape us." The truth of this statement has never been more apparent to me than after reflecting on my e-learning experience. The time spent in the digital classroom studying philosophy has affected me, my way of being, and my worldview, which is truly valued. However,

in contemplating my experience, it is clear that for every pro, there is also a con. The strengths of online learning seem to be, at this moment in time, also its weaknesses. The purpose of this paper is to shed light on the advantages and disadvantages of e-learning in pursuit of progress for prospective students of cyberlearning and facilitators within the field.

Similar to the online gaming world where you are free to be and act according to your desires, digital learning provides students the liberty to explore ideas and fully express them in an environment where physicality is completely removed. Engagement occurs strictly within the infosphere where inhibitions that accompany age, race, class, and/or physical threats are significantly lessened. Students participate in the safety and convenience of their own home. Consequently, thoughts and ideas can be expressed openly and without the physical fear or anxiety that is sometimes experienced in traditional classroom settings.

At the same time, cyberlearning completely ignores the physical body. Experiential learning, which promotes a unique type of knowledge, is nonexistent. Signals that the body receives from others in a classroom environment, which can serve to inform the mind, is just not available online. Passion of experience, which is retained and reflected in the body, is excluded from the online experience. The physical aspect of learning is a missing piece within the digital space.

Another feature of traditional learning that is absent in online learning is the time-honored role of a professor who lectures and disseminates information into a bunch of empty heads. Rather, instructors utilize the online forum to post critical questions that promote guided discussions. Students are free to read and take in information at their own pace. Responses are then shared openly in an online forum wherein each student initiates a discussion, as opposed to following one main discussion led by an all-knowing teacher. This allows for dynamic discussions to take place among students and facilitator. Contributions to different discussions occur during the week within multiple threads, allowing time for reflection and integration of new information. Learning is enhanced from the perspective of others, not just a single Mind who expects information to simply be parroted back.

As a result of an exorbitant amount of time reading and writing online, those skills are remarkably enhanced. As a philosophy student, the ability to present a clear, concise argument and to engage others online becomes second nature. Writing online provides immediate feedback due to the ability to gauge your work and the work of others' and allows for self-assessment and redirection if necessary. This approach, at first glance, is liberating and revolutionary. However, as my education progressed, it became clear that there are significant drawbacks to this approach as well.

I was shocked to find out that I had difficulty expressing into words the material I had so passionately studied online. In natural conversations in everyday life with family, friends, and coworkers, I found that the philosophical concepts and ideas I had read and written about were sometimes

swirling above my head. It was difficult to filter them down into coherent sentences. Outside my experience as a student, my entire adult career has been as a court reporter. I listen to sounds and carry those sounds through my hands into the written word, completely bypassing my mouth. The online college experience is no different. It is extremely reading and writing intensive; however, it omits speech entirely in the process. Verbal expression of ideas is entirely lacking. My mind quickly turns to a story from the book *Mirrors* wherein it states, "Hunger, which kills silently, kills the silent. Experts speak for them, poorologists who tell us what the poor do not work at, what they do not eat, what they do not weigh, what height they do not reach, what they do not have, what they do not think, what parties they do not vote for, what they do not believe in."<sup>1</sup> The poor, the marginalized, the weak, they do not have a voice. In order to be heard, it is necessary to be able to speak. With this revelation, it is clear that an oral pathway must be formed and grounded in reality if students want to be fully empowered in the world. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary that verbalization is more explored in the e-learning community.

If it were not for e-learning, however, I would not have been afforded the opportunity to expand my education and, consequently, worldview. Its accessibility, flexibility, and affordability cannot be found in brick-and-mortar schools. As a full-time working, single mother, I was able to manage my time and availability in accordance with my hand-picked class schedule. Adhering to a set schedule dictated by an institution would not have been viable. Although online learning is a solitary and sometimes lonely endeavor, it is also extremely rewarding and gratifying. It opened me up to worlds I never would have imagined existed. The ideas I have been exposed to are now navigating my life in a new direction that seeks to augment reality with the help of the digital world, which, ironically, is the whole point of online learning.

So is e-learning perfect? No, but neither is traditional learning. They both have their pros and cons. However, online learning is a convenient entry point into the educational system for those who cannot otherwise access it. Although online learning lacks the physical aspects of engagement such as the essential ability to orally express ideas, it nevertheless provides a pedagogy that provides a new depth of interaction that involves the ability to follow and explore multiple threads of thought and ideas from a variety of perspectives. As reality transforms due to technological advances, e-learning serves as a gateway to the masses to navigate in this new world. As we transition from a separate offline life to a fully integrated digital life, the advantages and disadvantages will, no doubt, become a moot point.

**NOTES**

1. Eduardo Galeano, *Mirrors: Stories of Almost Everyone* (Nation Books, 2009), 125.

## *Sustaining Success in an Increasingly Competitive Online Landscape*

Jeff Harmon

SOUTHEAST MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY

The line between for-profit and not-for-profit universities is being blurred everywhere as state or publicly funded universities are receiving less funding from their respective governments. While the online education market is global, the US market is more mature, and can serve as a good example for European and other universities to learn from. But even as these differences become more profound, some aspects of this industry segment have not changed at the rate that many of us expected.

Recently, I was searching for new insights in online education marketing. To my surprise, when I searched for those terms on Google, the first result below the ads was a link to my presentation from the 2004 University of Wisconsin distance education conference. Much of what I discussed included many of the options available today such as search engine optimization, pay per click ads, and content marketing. For this article however, we will start the discussion at a higher level—the institutional brand.

**THE BRAND**

Your institution brand is not just a logo. It is comprised of so much more. The brand is the complete experience. And that experience is created and delivered by the staff and faculty of your institution. In the brand training sessions I lead, I try to instill the thought that each of us has a responsibility to treat our students (customers) professionally and consistently. Yes, the students are customers who can purchase their education elsewhere. And online, the process of choice is very convenient. Think about your favorite retail store or restaurant and how it makes you feel special every time you frequent the establishment. That is what we should be striving for as an experience for our students. So how do we deliver on a brand promise in the online environment? For starters, let's reply to student emails promptly and also ensure our technology support team does the same. There is nothing more frustrating for students than technology that is not working at the time they need it most.

Communication style is another way by which we convey the brand. At Southeast Missouri State, we communicate our brand by using particular personality terms that we believe bring our brand to life. Your institution probably has personality words as well. But it is not just the words that matter. The tone, particularly in personal communication, can have an impact on your students' perception of your institution. When good students transfer and share the negative experience in social media platforms, the results are certainly negative for the brand.

**LET'S TALK MARKET RESEARCH**

The importance of market research cannot be overstated. Understanding your prospective and current customers is invaluable, and too often dismissed due to time, budget, or

expertise. Not only should we be researching how to best reach our prospective students, but we also must prove that there is demand for any new degree programs prior to developing plans to launch.

A recent study regarding the online student market by the Learning House and Aslanian Marketing Research<sup>1</sup> revealed a few important statistics:

- 65 percent of online students choose an institution within one hundred miles
- Direct mail is very effective
- Affordability and accreditation are the top messages
- Follow-up with prospective students within twenty-four to forty-eight hours is imperative

I was surprised that direct mail is considered effective in this environment. After a few conversations with colleagues around the country, we are all experiencing a resurgence of effectiveness of direct mail. It seems there is less noise in this channel and thus, it is working quite well.

### LANDING PAGES AND TRACKING

Maximizing return on investment from marketing tactics requires special attention and effort. Many things must be in place. First, always consider creating special landing pages for campaigns. If the landing page is similar to an ad a prospective student clicked on or watched, they will know they are at the right place. The chance of them taking an action is dramatically increased because of this. If you cannot create a special page, please ensure that your online degree pages are consistent and succinct, and include phone, chat, a web form, etc. Make it as easy as possible for prospective students to connect with you.

You also need to ensure you are maximizing the potential of your everyday online degree website. The home page and all of the degree pages must be well optimized for the search engines. While great search results are not easily obtained, you will be surprised at how much more visible your pages can be with a little effort. Let me give you an example of why this is so important.

Generating leads with pay-per-click ads can cost hundreds of dollars per lead, especially if you do not have the expertise to properly target the ads and set up campaigns in Google or Facebook. Look for a Google Partner to assist you at <https://www.google.com/partners/>. Listing your degree programs on lead aggregator sites is an easier alternative. Consider sites such as GetEducated.com or US News Degree Finder. These leads will cost \$50 to \$150 each.

But why is search engine optimization (SEO) so important? SEO is important because it will generate organic leads from prospective students who are genuinely interested in your degree program and institution, and will convert at a rate much higher than leads from ads or other websites. Organic leads are naturally more familiar with your brand and want to connect. Secondly, they cost practically

nothing. While at University of Illinois Online (UIOL), we optimized our home page for the phrase "online degrees." We stayed in the top five results on Google for three years. That effort generated nearly 1,200 leads per month for free. It could cost more than \$120,000 per month to generate or purchase that number of leads.

The first step was to create an inquiry form accessible from each degree program description page. Then, work to optimize every single page for the search engines. Optimization includes the following basic tasks:

- Check Google Trends (<https://www.google.com/trends/explore#>) to ensure you are optimizing for the best terms
- Include the degree and institution name (which should include the top terms) in the page title.
- Ensure that the best terms are also used at least three times in the page content. The more they are used the better.
- Create alt tags for images and use the same top terms.
- Create a news section on the homepage so that Google sees fresh content appear. If your content gets stagnant, Google knows and will lower the page rank.<sup>2</sup>

You should see improvement in the search results within a couple of weeks. Keep tweaking and updating content for continual improvement.

### TRACKING SUCCESS

In order to get the most out of every advertising dollar (or lack thereof) you need to track return on investment (ROI). There are several ways to accomplish this. For every web ad (Google, Facebook, YouTube, etc.), you will be asked for a click destination URL when you place the ad. Let's say you want visitors to go to <http://semo.edu/admissions>. The URL you submit will need to be more complicated than that in order to provide tracking data. You need to add variables describing the source, content, and campaign, etc. And you need to set up your customer relationship management (CRM) system to receive the data and save it with each prospective student record. A tracking URL for the page listed above could be [http://www.semo.edu/admissions?utm\\_source=facebook&utm\\_medium=web&utm\\_content=LowTuition&utm\\_campaign=SEOnlineFall2016](http://www.semo.edu/admissions?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=web&utm_content=LowTuition&utm_campaign=SEOnlineFall2016).

Notice that everything in bold is for tracking. If you only have one variable, and that variable is "source," then the additional text you add at the end could be simply. ?utm\_source=facebook. You can add as many variables as you wish. By doing this, you will be able to see what campaigns, ads, and even specific messaging produces the highest ROI and thus the best results.

In order to calculate marketing ROI on a campaign, you need to establish the average value of a student. So let's say

your financial office has established that the average value of an online student is \$10,000. Calculate the campaign ROI as follows:

Campaign cost = \$100,000

New Students Enrolled = 30

Revenue Value of 30 Students = 30 x \$10,000 = \$300,000

|                                    |                       |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Value of Students - Marketing Cost | \$300,000 - \$100,000 |
| Marketing Cost                     | \$100,000             |

ROI = 200%

### MARKETING CHANNELS TO CONSIDER

There are many ways to reach prospective online students, and not all of them are online. Naturally, web ads are a great way to start, but an integrated approach will always work best. For example, direct mail is great for driving traffic to a website. If an admissions representative is going to attend an education fair at a large company in a particular city, it would be a good idea to place web ads in that geographical location a week or two prior to the event. The ads would be targeted to the audience the representative will interact with at the fair in order to increase awareness and interest in advance. The result will be much more traffic to the representative's table.

Recommended channels for consideration include the following:

- Google ad network (includes desktop and mobile)
- Facebook ads and post boosts
- You Tube commercials
- Twitter
- Instagram
- Pinterest
- Pandora
- Direct Mail
- Radio
- Television
- Billboards
- US News Degree Finder
- Get Educated.com

You might be wondering why Spotify is missing. Spotify requires a minimum expenditure that is quite high and would not make sense for most institutions. Google, Facebook, and You Tube should be part of any marketing mix. You can easily target and maintain tight control on your budget. Tracking is easily managed as well. If you have a slightly larger budget, consider adding Pandora audio and digital ads, Twitter, and Instagram. Larger brands such as Apple are really starting to view Instagram as a powerful brand builder. Pinterest may seem an outlier, but many brands are seeing it as a requirement. Direct mail is still very effective but can be expensive. And TV and radio, while effective, require a very large budget in order to be effective. Billboards are great for awareness, but there is no way to track effectiveness unless your team is very good at asking each new student how they found out about your programs.

### INFRASTRUCTURE

Every single thing that has been discussed in this article should not be implemented if you do not have the proper infrastructure in place. And by that I mean software, people, and processes. Institutions waste hundreds of thousands of marketing dollars due to lack of infrastructure.

First, institutional administration must all be supportive and clearly understand the complex nature of offering online degrees and the effects on capacity of traditional face-to-face students who wish to take an online course. In fact, many traditional on-campus students take at least one online course per year, and the trend is growing. About 5.8 million students were enrolled in at least one distance learning course in fall 2014—up 3.9 percent from the previous fall, according to "Online Report Card: Tracking Online Education in the United States," an annual report by the Babson Survey Research Group.<sup>3</sup> This trend causes many problems for enrollment managers for online degree programs. Colorado State University attempted to make it easier to manage the online degree enterprise by launching Colorado State University's CSU Global Campus. It is a completely separate entity, free from restraints of managing seats for on campus and online students. This is just one example, and I believe the level of success of this venture cannot yet be measured. The University of Illinois failed when it launched the U of I Global Campus. There could be many reasons for the success or failure of these entities.

Other issues that may arise when attempting to grow online programs tied to the main institution include developing a good strategy for using adjunct faculty, and establishing course content that can be used without strings attached by strict agreements with faculty. In other words, efficiency is key. There is no need to market programs if an institution does not have a solid plan addressing all of these areas that will constrain growth.

If all of these issues regarding capacity (product availability) are taken care of, congratulations, you are ready to put a team together and give them the tools to succeed.

First, identify if you have a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system in place through your admissions team that you can leverage. If not, they probably need one, and you should consider Salesforce.com. Salesforce has plugins for many marketing tools that will allow your marketing team to be incredibly efficient. Salesforce also has a foundation that allows nonprofits to use up to ten licenses for free. You will need to do some customization to give the system a higher education nomenclature, but it can certainly be done. There are also third-party companies who have already customized Salesforce for higher education, but their versions come with a hefty price tag and annual fees.

You probably have great advisors that can get applicants and current students where they need to go to be successful, but practically no nonprofit understands the realities regarding "selling" online degree programs. The market has become very competitive; just complete a lead form at University of Florida Online, Arizona State University

Online, or try a for-profit such as Grand Canyon University. Once they have your mobile number and email address, I think you will fully understand the competitive nature of the online education industry. Once these institutions receive a lead from a prospective student, they begin calling within just a couple of hours. You may even get a call within fifteen minutes. Once, I secret shopped University of Phoenix and received eight calls in twenty-four hours. While you do not need to be this aggressive, you do need to understand what the competition is doing.

So how do you compete? You either need to hire enough admissions reps (sales reps) in-house or consider outsourcing. A couple of trusted firms to keep in mind are Perdia Education and Barker Education Services Team. Perdia just launched an enrollment management mobile app that ensures prospective students move through the enrollment process efficiently and easily. Because of this, the conversion rate increases dramatically. Pearson Education has been a large player in this area as well as all other aspects of higher education for some time. They may also be a viable solution.

Lastly, I want to share some numbers. If you plan to grow, you need to clearly understand how many admissions reps you need to get you to your goal. One rep can handle 150 leads per month—converting to ten to fifteen enrolled students per rep on average.

Five hundred to 1,000 older leads can be managed per rep while working new leads. These numbers have been vetted by discussions with higher education call center professionals.

So, after reading this article, are you ready to take your institution's online degree program enrollment to the next level? I think you have much to think about.

#### NOTES

1. David L. Clinefelter and Carol B. Aslanian, *Online College Students 2016: Comprehensive Data on Demands and Preferences*. Rep. Louisville: Learning House and Education Dynamics, 2016.
2. Christopher Ratcliff, "Search Engine Watch," Guide to Google Ranking Signals Part 4 Content Freshness Comments. *Search Engine Watch*, September 26, 2016.
3. I. Elaine Allen, and Jeff Seaman, Online Report Card Tracking Online Education in the United States. Rep. Online Learning Consortium, February 2016, <http://onlinelearningconsortium.org/read/online-report-card-tracking-online-education-united-states-2015/>.

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## CALL FOR PAPERS

It is our pleasure to invite all potential authors to submit to the *APA Newsletter on Philosophy and Computers*. Committee members have priority since this is the newsletter of the committee, but anyone is encouraged to submit. We publish papers that tie in philosophy and computer science or some aspect of "computers"; hence, we do not publish articles in other sub-disciplines of philosophy. All papers will be reviewed, but only a small group can be published.

The area of philosophy and computers lies among a number of professional disciplines (such as philosophy, cognitive science, computer science). We try not to impose writing guidelines of one discipline, but consistency of references is required for publication and should follow the *Chicago Manual of Style*. Inquiries should be addressed to the editor, Dr. Peter Boltuc, at [pboltu@sgh.waw.pl](mailto:pboltu@sgh.waw.pl).





APA NEWSLETTER ON

# Philosophy and Medicine

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MARY RORTY AND MARK SHELDON, CO-EDITORS

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## FROM THE EDITORS

Mary Rorty

STANFORD UNIVERSITY

Mark Sheldon

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

This is, we think, a particularly interesting newsletter. The articles included in this issue seem to go back to fundamentals, pushing back against either established practices or conventionally accepted views.

First is J. David Velleman's book review of *The Risk of a Lifetime* by Rivka Weinberg. The book pushes back hard, among other things, against the permissibility of egg and sperm donation, and Velleman, in basic agreement with Weinberg, engages in lively and thoughtful discussion of utilitarian and deontological perspectives on the issue. Particularly interesting is his discussion of Weinberg's application of Rawls to the parent/child relationship. *Runaway Bunny* gets a strong nod of approval from Velleman.

Included second is Susana Nuccetelli's succinct critique of *Zubik v. Burwell*, the Supreme Court decision that recognized the legitimacy of religious objection in relation to non-profit organizations being required to include contraception in their employee health-care plan. Nuccetelli finds the decision problematic on two grounds: what are identified as religious objections are actually moral in nature, and, second, the "dirty hands" argument does not succeed.

A paper by Michael Davis follows in which he takes issue with a practice that occurs every day and that is fully accepted by most who have looked at the issue. Davis puts forward a very thoughtful challenge to the idea that it is ethical for doctors to harvest, for purposes of transplantation and for the purpose of saving lives, non-vital organs from adults who provide a fully informed consent.

Fourth is a paper by Gabriel Andrade who takes up the question of what to make, philosophically, with the idea of living forever through the technology of mind uploading. His focus is on *transhumanism*, and, in relation to this, he discusses the issue of identity in the work of Derek Parfit.

What follows next is a very short review by Wanda Teays of what sounds like a very unique book—*Teaching Ethics with Three Philosophical Novels* by Michael Boylan. What makes the book apparently is the inclusion of novels actually

written by Boylan. Teays finds the first half of the book on moral theory very well presented and finds the novels interesting.

Last, a poem by Felicia Nimue Ackerman is included in this volume. We are always grateful to her for submitting her work to the newsletter.

Please consider submitting papers, works-in-progress, and book reviews to the newsletter.

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## SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

The *APA Newsletter on Philosophy and Medicine* is published by the APA Committee on Philosophy and Medicine. We invite submissions of articles and book reviews on any topic related to philosophy and medicine, as well as responses to material that appears in this newsletter.

All papers should follow the APA guidelines for gender-neutral language and use endnotes rather than footnotes. The *APA Newsletters* use *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

Send submissions electronically to the editors: Mary Rorty ([mvr2j@stanford.edu](mailto:mvr2j@stanford.edu)) and Mark Sheldon ([sheldon@northwestern.edu](mailto:sheldon@northwestern.edu))

Submissions for spring issues are due by the preceding September 1. Submissions for fall issues are due by the preceding February 1.

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## ARTICLES

### *Comments on Rivka Weinberg, The Risk of a Lifetime*

J. David Velleman

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*The Risk of a Lifetime* illuminates every corner of procreative ethics and does so with bracing forthrightness and clarity—also a joy that belies the author's claim to believe that life sucks. "Even when it's good, it's bad," she says (120). Well, someone thoroughly enjoyed writing this book, as I enjoyed reading it, and the authorial voice sure sounds like Rivka Weinberg's. So I doubt her profession of pessimism.

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Unfortunately, for present purposes, that is my most significant disagreement with Weinberg. I agree with her that one's gametes are like hazardous materials, and that one bears the responsibility of protecting others from their hazards or helping them to cope with whatever hazards they can't avoid. (Weinberg calls this the Hazmat Theory of procreation. Wonderful.) I therefore agree that procreation is permissible only under conditions favorable to the life-chances of the person created. I'm tempted to agree that some amount of risk to that person can be justified by the costs to prospective procreators of forgoing parenthood instead. I definitely agree that the so-called non-identity problem is not and never was a problem for moral philosophy, because it arises under moral assumptions that no philosopher holds. I agree that the parental obligations attendant on procreation are not transferable in advance, and that donating gametes or embryos to strangers is therefore wrong. I agree that creating children with the intention of parenting them alone, or even with a non-marital partner, is morally problematic. In short, even Weinberg's politically incorrect conclusions have my enthusiastic support.

I therefore find myself with nothing to do but kibbitz from the sidelines of her project. I'll start with her solution to the non-identity problem. First, a brief review of the problem for those who would like a refresher.

We have an obligation to ensure that when children are born, they are born into good enough circumstances. In many cases, though, we cannot significantly improve the circumstances into which people will be born in the future without changing who gets born. Obviously, if a financially strapped couple puts off child-bearing until they are better situated, they are acting in the interests of their future children only *de dicto*—the interests, that is, of whoever ends up satisfying the description "their children"—since the children who are born well-off will not be the ones who would otherwise have been born into poverty. Less obvious but equally true is that our efforts to slow climate change will benefit future generations only *de dicto* as well, since reducing our use of fossil fuels for transportation, heating, and cooling will affect who copulates with whom and when, which eggs get fertilized by which sperm, and, consequently, who is born. After several generations, there may be no one on Earth who would have incurred the costs of climate change if we had let it take its course; and if we do let it take its course, there may be no one who would have enjoyed the benefits if we hadn't.

So why not let climate change take its course? By the time any significant costs accrue, the world will be populated by people who wouldn't have benefited from our preventive measures anyway—people, indeed, who will owe their very existence to our not having taken those measures, which in preventing the costs from accruing would also have prevented those people from existing. No one will be worse off for our having shirked our supposed obligations to future generations. Why, then, should we suppose that we have such obligations in the first place?

That's the non-identity problem, made famous by Derek Parfit, who named it for the non-identity between the

people who would exist if we took action and the people who would exist if we didn't, neither of whom would be benefited or harmed by our choice. Weinberg's ultimate response to the problem is that there is no known moral theory under which it can arise.

Utilitarianism takes no account of whether performing an action would make particular individuals better or worse off. Insofar as utilitarians have anything to say about consequences for people living in the future, they say it *de dicto*, referring to whichever people happen to satisfy that description. For this very reason, of course, utilitarianism encounters other problems in dealing with procreation. The version of the principle that calculates the general welfare as a sum requires us to make as many babies as we can, so long as the next baby would enjoy some positive amount of utility, however small, and would not detract as much or more from other people's utility as it would add to the total with its own. The thought that we are morally obligated to bring about this result is what Parfit called the Repugnant Conclusion.

The alternative version of the principle, which calculates the general utility as an average, forbids us to create any people with lower-than-average utility. Maybe that's not a problem in the current state of the world, given how many people live in desperate circumstances: the average is a dismally low bar below which the population probably shouldn't be increased, by anyone's lights. Yet if the average level of utility in the world somehow rose, the Principle of Average Utility would begin to forbid the creation of happy people simply because their happiness would be below average. And insofar as we were in a position to create happier-than-average people, the principle would positively obligate us to create them.

In Parfit's presentation, these problems appear as fallout from the non-identity problem, but only because Parfit attempted to address the non-identity problem by resorting to utilitarianism. The solution to these other problems is simple: don't let fear of non-identity drive you into the arms of utilitarians.

Weinberg argues that deontological theories do not face a non-identity problem because the problem concerns the consequences of actions, and deontology doesn't deal with consequences. Here I am with her in spirit, but the letter of her argument leaves me unsatisfied. I never know what people mean by "deontology" or "deontological theories." If the term simply means moral theories that apply the concepts of right and wrong to action types directly, rather than through some indirect calculation, then I would say that consequences can figure in deontology, since some action-types are individuated by their consequences. Immiserating future people is wrong—that's a deontological claim, and it forbids the very course of action that we will be taking if we ignore climate change.

I prefer to deal with specific deontological theories—one in particular, because it is the most plausible, in my view. And although this theory has no problem with non-identity, it may yet have a problem with non-existence, which would be a problem with future generations all the same. I'll



get to that problem shortly, but first let me raise a further question about Weinberg's treatment of non-identity.

Weinberg interprets the non-identity problem as arising from the assumption that existence is a benefit that will compensate future generations for any burdens that we might create for them. "The mistake that generates the non-identity problem," she says, "is the counting of existence itself as a benefit bequeathed to you by your ancestors and capable of offsetting life's burdens (either directly or by enabling you to enjoy life's benefits)" (86). Her solution to the problem thus interpreted is that existence is neither a benefit nor a burden because it is rather a precondition for incurring either one:

Some things benefit us, some things burden us, but existing per se is just what it means to be a possible subject of benefits and burdens. And no matter how delighted you are to find yourself eligible as a subject of benefits and burdens, that eligibility is not a gift or benefit bestowed upon you by your parents because it is something you didn't need and could not fail to have had. Never existing is not an option for any real person because all real people exist. Even if you love life, if your ancestors bury their hazardous waste sloppily and you suffer from the ensuing pollution, that suffering is harm they inflicted on you (i.e., they have set your welfare interests back). (86–87)

This solution to Weinberg's version of the non-identity problem strikes me as raising another non-identity problem, which is, in fact, the one that I thought was the problem to begin with. Although environmental pollution will set your welfare back from the level it would have reached in a cleaner environment, the non-identity problem assumes that the pollution was caused by a social decision that also caused your existence. And although you can curse the pollution for damaging your welfare, you cannot curse the decision that caused it, even if Weinberg is right that existence itself cannot compensate for the damage. The reason why you cannot curse the decision for damaging your welfare is that you fare no worse because of it: you are no worse off in your polluted environment than you would have been if the decision that caused it had never been made, because you wouldn't have existed in that case. And because you are no worse off for that decision, you have no grounds for complaining about it, much less cursing.

In this version, the non-identity problem is the same as the problem of locating the harm of death. The problem in both cases is that nonexistence has no welfare effects that can be compared to the goods and ills attendant upon existence. Future people sweating it out in the global sauna will be no worse off than they would have been if we had dealt with climate change because, in that case, they would never have existed; and dealing with climate change will not make future snow boarders better off, either, because they too would not have existed in the alternative. The problem, in other words, is how to apply the comparative concepts of harm and benefit where there is no second term for the comparison.

Weinberg apparently thinks that this problem, of comparing the welfare values of existence and nonexistence, would actually solve the non-identity problem. In a footnote, she says,

Those who reject comparisons between the value of existence and nonexistence . . . can reject the reasoning that leads to the non-identity problem since the non-identity problem relies on the view that a life worth living is no worse than non-existence, which, in turn, implies a value comparison between existence and nonexistence. (88, n. 9)

Here Weinberg suggests that the non-identity problem compares existing with never having existed and finds the comparison favorable so long as one's life is worth living. On this interpretation, the problem would be forestalled by the argument against the possibility of making the comparison. But that argument—which is decisive, in my view—leads to the conclusion that future people who bear the costs of climate change will be no worse off than they otherwise would have been, because they wouldn't otherwise have existed at all. So the incomparability of existence and nonexistence doesn't solve the problem, but rather re-creates it.

Implicit in this last-quoted passage is that Weinberg does not reject comparisons of value between existence and nonexistence. She never makes such comparisons explicitly, so far as I recall, but she does discuss whether life itself is good or bad, and that discussion cannot help but presuppose a basis for comparison, because the distinction between good and bad is established by the zero-point on a scale of better and worse. Drawing that distinction requires a decision as to how much better than not-so-bad something has to be in order to be good, or how much worse than not-so-good in order to be bad. Without a scale of better and worse, there can be no question of where to place the zero-point.

Of course, we can discuss whether a particular life would be better or worse than other lives, but that comparison is not relevant to a judgment about the value of life itself, the value of having a life at all, which is what I take Weinberg to be deprecating when she opines that life is bad. Having a life has to be judged in comparison with not having one, which is an impossible comparison from the perspective of the person involved, and so it cannot be better or worse enough to qualify as good or bad.

Now, the question whether life is good or bad might be interpreted as depending on a different comparison, between good things and bad things *in* life, the things that make a life better or worse than it otherwise would have been. This comparison is implicit in the philosophical notion of a life worth living, but that notion I do not understand. The phrase "a life worth living" is supposed to mean a life that sufficiently repays one for living it, which depends, I suppose, on whether all of the good things in that life outweigh the bad. I do understand asking whether a particular good in life is worth the price of bearing a particular ill; and so I can just about understand

pairing goods and ills that cancel each other out and then evaluating the remainder as a surplus of good or ill. What I don't understand is the assumption that this calculation will yield a value that is relevant to the decision whether such a life should be created. Whether a particular good is worth a particular cost may determine whether one should bear the cost in order to obtain the good, but it doesn't determine whether one should elect to face that choice in the first place. The good may be worth it if one has to choose, but sometimes one would rather not have to. And the decision whether to face the choices inherent in a human life is the one that's relevant to procreative decisions. *That* choice cannot be based on the welfare interests of the person whose life it might end up being, because it's a choice between his having welfare interests to begin with and his having none.

After all, many of the choices in life are about how to satisfy needs that come with being alive and being human. Hunger, cold, illness, loneliness, and boredom constantly threaten, and one ends up shouldering many burdens simply to stave them off. The tradeoffs that one is willing to make in the face of those threats are not necessarily the same as one would make if the threats were lifted—as they certainly would have been if one's parents hadn't decided to have a child. I love my job, mostly, and I'm glad that in my youth I spent two years abroad during which I was desperately unhappy but acquired skills that turned out to be of great value to me as a professor of philosophy. Even so, I view that tradeoff against the background of the need to make a living and to find something to fill the time between September and May every year. If the living-worthiness of my life had figured in my parents' procreative decision-making, however, it would have had to be judged not on the basis of costs and benefit *given* the exigencies inseparable from human life itself, but rather on the basis of costs and benefits assessed in abstraction—an assessment I have no idea how to make.

Parfit favored assessing the living-worthiness of a life retrospectively, in terms of whether the person would regret having lived it. But retrospection on a life is biased in favor of it and should not be the criterion of whether it should be started. For as Jay Wallace has argued, there is a natural bias in favor of one's actual life, resulting from one's attachment to it;<sup>1</sup> or, as I have argued, resulting from one's self-love.<sup>2</sup> We shouldn't justify creating a person on the grounds of the feelings he would develop for his life or himself if we created him. It's one thing to create someone for *ourselves* to love; it's quite another to create a self for *him* to love—he who wouldn't need anyone to love if we didn't create him. What's worse, we tend to make the retrospective assessment of living-worthiness from the first-person perspective, by asking ourselves whether we would regret having lived the life in question. When we imagine looking back from the perspective of our deathbeds, we naturally imagine the attachment anyone would feel for an actual past and an actual self, and that attachment is irrelevant to procreative decisions, in which the question is whether the attachment will be formed in the first place.

Even when thinking about lives third-personally, we are strongly disinclined to say that they aren't worth living, because that judgment would imply that the people living them should die or should never have been born, and that's a nasty thing to say about anyone. But of course it's not something that *can* be said about anyone in particular from the perspective of procreative decision-making, because there is as yet no one in particular whose life is at issue. The claim that a life would be such as no one should have to live it is different from the claims that a person already living should stop or should never have gotten started. The difference is precisely that the latter claim is about a particular person to whom we owe respect and for whom, even in imagination, we can feel human sympathy, whereas the former is merely about a description that should go unsatisfied. Lives that should be lived by the particular people who are actually living them may well be such as shouldn't be lived in abstraction from their being lived by anyone in particular.

Returning now to the non-identity problem, I want to repeat my agreement with Weinberg's view that it isn't a problem for deontologists—or, as I would prefer to put it, for the only well-developed deontological theory, namely, Kant's. I think that Kantians can steer clear of problems about future persons. That said, I think they still have to explain how they manage to do it.

After all, the version of the Categorical Imperative most applicable to procreation, the Formula of Humanity, mandates respect for persons, whereas the agent of procreation must put his or her maxim to the test of the Imperative before there is any person to respect. How can wrongly creating a person manifest a lack of respect for that not-yet-existing person, and how can refraining from creating a person manifest respect for a person who will never exist?

The Kantian answer to this question is that respect is not in the first instance an attitude toward individuals. To take a mundane example, not flushing the toilet is disrespectful to the next person who will use it, even if the toilet is in a public restroom and the identity of the next user is not only unknown but indeterminate. Clearly, the obligation to the next person is *de dicto*, and so the immediate target of respect must be a description, not an individual: it's an obligation to (quote, unquote) the next person, and only by way of that description to the person who ends up being next.

This interpretation is supported by Kant's language in stating the Formula of Humanity. What he says is that the respect owed to a person is respect for humanity *in* that person. I think that this form of respect can also be paid to humanity in the abstract without being targeted at its embodiment in a particular instance. An individual can therefore intercept moral respect or disrespect that wasn't aimed specifically at him. The next user of the toilet cannot be personally disrespected, but personhood can be disrespected, and the next user will end up at the receiving end of that disrespect.

Similarly, future generations may intercept disrespect we show for personhood by letting climate change take its course. Failing to prevent wide-scale flooding, famine, forced migration, and social unrest is disrespectful of human aims, which will be thwarted, and human capacities, which will be stunted. It's irrelevant that the subjects of those thwarted aims and stunted capacities won't be the same as the people whose aims and capacities would have flourished in the alternative.

We can now think about our obligations to future generations without reaching untoward conclusions, repugnant or otherwise. The question becomes: What kind of circumstances does the dignity of personhood require us to provide for whatever instances of personhood we will end up creating? Or, more pointedly, what circumstances must we be able to provide for instances of personhood in order for creating them to be permissible? And that question is the one to which Weinberg devotes the second half of her book.

Weinberg's answer to this question is also Kantian—or, at least, neo-Kantian, in that it is modeled on Rawls's hypothetical contract between parties designing their society from behind a veil of ignorance as to what positions in that society they will occupy. For Weinberg, what the veil obscures, specifically, is whether one will be a prospective parent or an actual offspring, that is, whether one will be an adult who could procreate or a child who has been created.

As Weinberg notes, Parfit declined to apply the Rawlsian model to the case of procreation, but only because he assumed that the parties behind the veil would have to be prospective parents and *prospective* offspring—that is, adults who could procreate and children who could be created but do not yet exist. And then their negotiations would have to pit the costs and benefits of parenthood against the costs and benefits of existence itself, which would seem either incoherent or at least unfair (assuming existence to be a good thing on balance, though as I mentioned at the outset, Weinberg herself doesn't assume so). Weinberg's solution is not to discard the Rawlsian model but to apply it more coherently and equitably, by assuming that the negotiation behind the veil of ignorance would involve parties who could end up either as prospective parents or *actual* children. And her argument for this solution initially struck me as compelling: she argues that the main costs facing the former parties are the costs of forgoing parenthood, whereas there are no costs to forgoing existence.

When I first read Weinberg's application of the Rawlsian thought experiment to particular problematic cases, I found her conclusions highly plausible. They include the conclusion that the level of risk that one may impose on a child in creating it tends to decrease in inverse proportion to the number of one's existing offspring. Because the risks of conditions such as Down syndrome increase with parental age past thirty-five, those who already have children by that age should view the permissibility of further procreation as diminishing rapidly—more rapidly than it would if the child in question would be their first. The reason is that the cost to parents of forgoing an additional child is lower

than the cost of forgoing parenthood altogether, and so the parties behind the veil of ignorance would not accept as much risk attached to the possibility of being the additional child in return for the possible benefit of being the parent; conversely, they would accept greater risk attached to the possibility of being a first child in return for avoiding the possibility of being childless. That initially sounded right to me. So did Weinberg's conclusion that the permissibility of procreation evaporates as the size of one's brood approaches ten. Too many things could go wrong in a child's life to justify increasing one's offspring by a small fraction, and nothing can go wrong in the life of a child who doesn't exist.

Nevertheless, I worry about Weinberg's decision to allow the offspring in the Rawlsian negotiation to be represented by a party who will be an actual, existing child. One cause for worry is our reluctance to say that existing children should not have been born, even if we would have said *ex ante* that their parents should not have children. Admittedly, the causes of this reluctance, which I mentioned a moment ago, are not present behind the veil of ignorance. The offsprings' representative in the original position, not knowing which child he will be or which life will be his, could not have an attachment to them. Yet he would still know that there is a particular person out there beyond the veil, and that he, the dummy offspring, will soon become particularized as that person. I suspect that our reluctance to pass sentences of nonexistence on real individuals, whether pre- or post-natally, will skew the result of the thought experiment.

On further reflection, then, I'm not sure that I agree with Weinberg that the parents' interest in having children should weigh in the balance against the risks that life would pose to a possible child. Of course, people shouldn't have children if they don't want to be parents (I'll get to that issue in a moment), and so their wanting to be parents removes a moral obstacle to their procreating. But can it counterbalance other obstacles consisting in the hazards for the child they create?

I am tempted to think that when it comes to creating a human life, there is no balance of pros and cons. There is personhood, or humanity, and there are the preconditions for its potential to be fully realized. Short of those preconditions, procreation is impermissible; granted those preconditions, there may still be moral obstacles—an intention not to parent the resulting child is one—but they aren't weights in a scale that takes goods and ills for the child into account on the other side. Or so I am tempted to think at the moment.

Weinberg believes, as I do, that donating gametes or embryos to strangers is wrong. The typical sperm donor is, if anything, worse than a deadbeat dad, because he deliberately procreates with the intention of abandoning his child—indeed, with the child already pre-abandoned—whereas the typical deadbeat dad didn't intend to procreate, or initially intended to parent the child and changed his mind only after the decision to create it was irrevocable.

This negative judgment on gamete donation depends on the view that the biological tie between biological parent

and child is morally significant, and that the parental obligations entailed by that tie cannot be transferred at will. They can, of course, be transferred under the sort of exigent circumstances that lead parents to give up a child for adoption—an existing child with needs that the biological parents are unable to fulfill. If the parents had deliberately conceived the child with the intention of giving it up for adoption—say, because the mother wanted the health benefits of pregnancy without the fuss of parenthood—we would regard them with horror. It is beyond me why people don't feel the same about binders full of sperm donors, complete with their photos and SAT scores. No matter how altruistic the motives of donors with regard to the potential recipients, they are still creating children with the intention that they grow up apart from their father and half siblings, and in ignorance of half their ancestry, all of which many donor-conceived children regard as life-damaging deprivations that they need never have suffered, because they need never have been conceived.<sup>3</sup>

My view is that these admittedly harsh moral judgments need to be justified in terms of the significance of biological ties. Weinberg's judgments on the subject are less harsh, or at least expressed less harshly, but I think they stand in need of the same justification. Why do donor-conceived children feel abandoned or adrift if their merely custodial parent is just as loving and giving as any parent, and more so than their unknown biological parent would have been? More importantly, are they justified in their feelings, or are they the victims of a culture that unduly valorizes or even fetishizes the biological family?

One common approach to questions like these is to consult social-scientific data about the development, mental health, and careers of donor-conceived children. If they score just as well on these measures as other children, we are supposed to conclude that they were not disadvantaged by the absence of their biological parents, and that their unhappiness is therefore misplaced.

But I believe that the measurable components of well-being do not exhaust the phenomenon, do not even include some of its most significant components. People can grow up to be intelligent and healthy and successful while still being profoundly unhappy, and not in a way that gets reported as clinical depression. I think that being severed from one's biological roots can lead to an existential unhappiness that no one should have to suffer, other things being equal (as they are not in cases of adoption). When children ask "Where did I come from?" they are looking for the point of connection between their own existence and the world of other existing things; they are looking for what anchors them to the material world. They may also be looking for an explanation of what they are like, and although it offends right-thinking people to say so, the fact is that their genetic inheritance has determined what they are like to a significant extent—not just their physical appearance but aspects of their mentality and personality that must be central to their sense of identity if they are to understand themselves at all. And even understanding their physical appearance is no small matter. Those of us to whom the mirror shows a face like the ones that hovered lovingly

over our cribs may not appreciate the difficulty of feeling alienated from one's own body.

Weinberg rightly treats the relationship of biological parenthood as a personal relationship carrying duties that, like some promissory duties, cannot be transferred to others. But this is the aspect of her motivational principle that needs justification, in my view. I would say that the biological tie between parent and child is personal in this sense because it is nonelective. There are two people who are responsible for your existence and cannot escape that responsibility, 'til death do you part. What they owe you, they can never escape owing, and likewise for what you owe them. If you have read the children's book *Runaway Bunny*, you have glimpsed the sense of security that comes from that inescapable bond, a security that is important to children, and (I would add) not only to them.

This is not the occasion for me to defend these admittedly controversial claims. I raise them only to give a rough outline of something that is missing, in my view, from Weinberg's defense of her positions on adoption and donor conception.

Weinberg defends those positions with the first of her two principles of procreative permissibility. The first principle requires that procreators be motivated at least partly by an intention to love and care for their offspring. Obviously, I endorse this requirement, but I think that the requirement itself stands in need of justification. Why not a requirement that procreators be motivated by an intention that their offspring be loved by someone, possibly someone selected by responsible technologists who ensure that the gametes in their care go to good homes? Why the requirement to love and care for one's offspring in person?

I don't see how to answer this question without delving into the significance of biological ties, unpopular though the topic may be. I'm not suggesting that Weinberg shies away from unpopular topics—not she!—but we are now in territory where the lack of ideological diversity in academia begins to be felt, and that problem is worth mentioning when discussing a book that is so forthright on controversial topics.

Finally, a controversial topic that Weinberg touches on but doesn't discuss. I'd like to hear more on this topic in her plainspoken and sensible style.

Weinberg briefly remarks on the importance of marriage as a precondition of procreation. Hurrah for marriage, I say—two cheers at least. But why marriage? The marriage was recently settled by the Supreme Court produced a lot of words on the topic, but most of them were motivated by agendas having to do with adult sexuality. Reference to the interests of children were frequent but superficial, to my way of thinking. Yes, children should have two parents who are in a committed relationship, but what difference does the marital commitment make in that relationship, and how does it benefit a child? Weinberg apparently thinks it does, and I'd like to hear more.

By now I have said many things that may have offended members of the audience. Some of you may be single parents, I assume; some may have intended to be single parents from the very beginning; some may have children with disabilities or Down syndrome. Please remember that my views do not lead to the conclusion that particular children should not have been born. I've never met a child who shouldn't have been born, and I have known some severely disabled children. If a child isn't conceived, there is no particular child who isn't conceived, hence no personal identity that is disrespected. All there is, I believe, is humanity in the abstract, which goes without an additional instance, possibly because of our respect for humanity itself.

#### NOTES

1. R. Jay Wallace, *The View From Here: On Affirmation, Attachment and the Limits of Regret* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).
2. See my paper "Persons in Prospect," especially Part III, "Love and Nonexistence," reprinted in *Beyond Price: Essays on Birth and Death* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2015), <https://www.openbookpublishers.com/reader/349#page/126/>.
3. For a recent survey of donor-conceived adults, see <https://www.wereadonorconceived.com/guides/survey-results/>.

## Contraception and Religious Freedom: A Philosophical Analysis of Zubik v. Burwell

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### I. BURWELL V. HOBBY LOBBY STORES AND ZUBIK V. BURWELL

Health-care professionals and institutions have sometimes objected, on grounds of conscience, to participation in medical therapies to which patients are legally entitled. Recently, the US Supreme Court has heard two cases brought by conscientious objectors to participation in prescription contraceptive medications, devices, and services—i.e., birth control products and procedures routinely used for family planning, which range from contraceptive pills and emergency contraception to hormone injections and implants, intrauterine devices and tubal ligation. Until very recently, the most common objections to contraception on the basis of conscience have involved *individual* religious objectors, usually physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and other health-care providers. A pharmacist, for example, who objects to contraception on conscience grounds might try to talk the customer out of using the treatment, deliberately delay the product until the point when it ceases to be effective, and even destroy prescriptions for contraceptives so that the customers cannot obtain them elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

But *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores*, a case decided by the US Supreme Court in 2014, famously involved a non-medical, for-profit corporation that objected on the basis of religious reasons to any participation in contraceptive coverage for

its employees. The owners of Hobby Lobby Stores opposed a mandate of the so-called ACA (the 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act) requiring that employers include in their employees' health-care plans cost-free coverage for contraception. On the plaintiff's view, that mandate imposed a substantial burden on their religious freedom, something protected by the federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 (RFRA). Given the RFRA, accommodations for religious objectors to a government's provision must not place substantial burdens on their religious liberty unless the government can show that it has compelling interests in enforcing the challenged provision—interests that are such that they cannot be satisfied by less restrictive means. But the Court found for Hobby Lobby Stores, determining the introduction of accommodations for religious objectors to the ACA mandate on contraceptives that were consistent with the RFRA.

*Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores* heralded what appears to be the rise of religious objection to facilitating contraception by for-profit, non-medical corporations. The parallel case that concerns me here, *Zubik v. Burwell*, indicates a similar trend among religious nonprofits. This action was brought by some Roman Catholic groups whose aim was to obtain an expansion of existing accommodations for religious objectors to the ACA mandate of contraceptives. They included David Zubik himself, the Bishop of Pittsburgh, and an international congregation of women known as the Little Sisters of the Poor (hereafter, "the Zubik plaintiffs"). To this effect, they initiated litigation against Sylvia Burwell in her capacity of Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS). At the center of their litigation was whether compliance with existing accommodations for religious objectors amounted to a substantial burden on the plaintiffs' religious liberty, as protected by the RFRA.

On March 29, 2016, a divided Supreme Court reached what was widely regarded as a compromise: it ordered both parties to submit briefs addressing the questions of

Whether and how contraceptive coverage may be obtained by petitioners' employees through petitioner's insurance companies, but in a way that does not require any involvement of petitioners beyond their own decision to provide health insurance without contraceptive coverage to their employees.

In practice, this decision had the consequence that the Zubik plaintiffs needed no compliance with existent provisions for religious objectors to the ACA mandate on contraceptive coverage, but could instead directly inform their insurers that they did not wish to pay for the coverage. The insurer would then notify the government, which would establish an alternative provision of cost-free contraceptives to employees, making it clear that it was not their employers' health plan that was picking up the costs. In an interesting further development, some Evangelicals and Mormons (who ordinarily regard themselves as religious objectors to abortion but *not* to contraception) came out in support of the Zubik plaintiffs, perhaps because of fear that the 2010 health-care law in the US could slide into having similar mandates for employers' coverage of abortion, physician-

assisted suicide, or any other medical interventions that they do find objectionable on religious grounds.

## II. RELIGIOUS OBJECTION TO THE ACA MANDATE ON CONTRACEPTIVE COVERAGE

By 2014, the Obama Administration's accommodations for religious objectors to the ACA mandate on contraceptive coverage required objectors to either file a form or write a letter notifying the government of their intention to be exempted on grounds of conscience.<sup>2</sup> The government would then arrange contraceptive coverage directly with the objectors' insurers at no cost to the employees, thus guaranteeing compliance with the ACA mandate for free access to contraception.<sup>3</sup> For the Zubik plaintiffs, however, filling out a form or writing a letter stating their status of religious objectors to contraception counted *per se* as a substantial burden on their religious freedom. But as I argue next, determining whether that was, in fact, a plausible contention requires weighing in the following considerations.

First, it is not obvious that the Zubik plaintiffs could consistently appeal to their religious freedom as the grounds for their lawsuit against the HHS. To do so, their objection against collaboration with the ACA mandate on contraceptives must be based on strictly religious grounds. But it can easily be shown that it was not so based, for their objections to contraception are familiar from the mainstream Catholic theologians' reasons against not only contraception but also beginning-of-life interventions such as abortion, in-vitro fertilization, and preimplantation genetic diagnosis. Prominent among those reasons is a Sanctity-of-Life argument based on Aquinas's view that human life and procreation are absolute values. If they are, then any action that prevents procreation or destroys life is morally impermissible except when it can be morally justified by appeal to the doctrine of double effect. Consistent with this argument is the Natural Law theorist's view that the value of human life arises through the order of nature. Within that order, the morally permissible sexual act is an act of conjugal love aiming at reproduction, something that conflicts with contraception.<sup>4</sup> According to the official stance of the Roman Catholic Church on contraception, which Pope John Paul II outlined in his 1995 encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*, contraception "contradicts the full truth of the sexual act as the proper expression of conjugal love" and it is therefore "opposed to the virtue of chastity in marriage."<sup>5</sup>

If this analysis is correct, it follows that the Zubik plaintiffs do not qualify as strictly religious objectors, since their objection to the ACA mandate on contraceptives is based on fundamentally *moral* grounds that are essentially *secular* and can be traced to Aquinas's Natural Law theory. As a result, it falls instead into the category of *conscientious* objection to a medical service, where

An objection qualifies as being based on conscience just in case it is based on beliefs that are essential to the objector's identity and moral integrity.<sup>6</sup>

Surely, as commonly agreed, conscientious objectors are a protected group in democratic societies. But there is little room now for supporting the Zubik plaintiffs' claim that existing accommodations to the ACA mandate on contraceptives amount to a substantial burden on their religious freedom.

## III. DIRTY-HANDS ARGUMENTS IN REPRODUCTIVE CARE

Furthermore, it can be argued that in a liberal democracy, conscientious objectors' protected status must be qualified in certain ways, since they need to be balanced with what is fair for all concerned. For one thing, since the US Supreme Court's 1965 decision in *Griswold v. Connecticut*, women in America are legally entitled to contraception as a method of birth control. Similarly lawful is early abortion since the Court's 1973 decision in *Roe v. Wade*. From the Zubik plaintiffs' perspective, absent grounds for invoking a legal argument premised on the RFRA's protection of objectors' religious freedom, the best reason against participation in the legal practice of contraception is a moral argument based on the unfairness of making conscientious objectors to contraceptives facilitate that very service. But such a "Dirty Hands" argument would be weak for more than one reason. For one thing, their refusal to comply with the mandate on contraceptives seems unfair to the substantial majority of people in America, religious and secular alike, who generally comply with the reasonable demands of their government even in matters about which some disagree on moral grounds, such as funding abortion or capital punishment with their tax dollars. Compare a parallel argument offered in an attempt to render morally permissible the 1976 Hyde Amendment, a provision aimed at restricting the use of public funding for abortions.<sup>7</sup> According to bioethicist David DeGrazia, the Hyde Amendment is morally justified on the grounds that paying for the procedure is unfair to abortion critics. "That women have the right to terminate pregnancy," writes DeGrazia, "does not mean the public has to pay for abortion."<sup>8</sup> On his view, since there is a substantial minority of abortion critics who desire to avoid "dirty hands" (i.e., collaboration with the practice), it is unfair to use their tax money for something they oppose.

Yet this argument fails in a way that illustrates what's wrong with the Dirty-Hands argument against compliance with the ACA mandate on contraceptive coverage by conscientious objectors. For although at first DeGrazia appears to have offered a good moral reason for the Hyde Amendment (viz., the unfairness to abortion critics in using public funds to pay for abortion), that reason cannot withstand scrutiny. After all, on a number of plausible conceptions of distributive justice, in a liberal democracy residents have not only a legal but also a moral duty to fund the apparatus of government through taxes, even in situations where they do not endorse and may even oppose the causes being pursued with their tax dollars.<sup>9</sup> This moral duty holds unless the law is unjust in ways that can justify individual or collective acts of civil disobedience. In the absence of such grounds, socially responsible reformists should limit their objection to working toward changing public opinion so that they may eventually elect leaders capable

of carrying out more congenial agendas. In the meantime, they should comply with the reasonable provisions of their democratically elected officials.

Consider a related scenario: it is a widely acknowledged fact that many Americans are opposed on moral grounds to their states' practice of executions as punishment for certain crimes. Yet their tax dollars are used to fund executions routinely. But would it be right for them to refuse to pay taxes? It seems not. A willingness to live in a liberal democracy typically requires compliance with commonly accepted rules, which in turn suggests that they should be willing to finance their government's decisions, including those that they actively criticize on moral grounds. Responsible reformists would work toward creating the conditions for a change in the government's policies they oppose, but would do so within the framework of existing laws and institutions. By analogy, the use of federal funding for abortions seems not unfair to those who morally object to abortion in the typical case.<sup>10</sup> But if the use of public funds for abortion or capital punishment is not unfair to those who object to these practices, then it is not unfair to corporations, whether for-profits or nonprofits, to be required to provide free contraceptive coverage for their employees through their insurers.

#### IV. THE UPSHOT

What, now, shall we make of the Zubik plaintiffs' contention that compliance with informing the government of their conscientious objection to providing such coverage amounts to a substantial burden on their religious freedom? Given the considerations above, there is more than one problem facing this contention. First, the plaintiffs' deep philosophical reasons for objecting to the ACA mandate on contraceptive coverage fail to qualify as *strictly religious*. In fact, they appear quite secular. If so, the plaintiffs have no grounds for invoking the protections to religious freedom afforded by the RFRA. Furthermore, the weakness of a Dirty-Hands argument, their best argument for a conscience-based objection to participation in contraceptive coverage for their employees, has been exposed by analogy with DeGrazia's failed attempt to support restrictions on the use of public funds for abortion. In either case, it hardly seems unfair that conscientious objectors be required to comply with what democratically elected officials regard as a reasonable health-care provision. The inevitable conclusion is that the Supreme Court was too quick in seeking a "compromise" with the Zubik plaintiffs.

#### NOTES

1. A case in point is that of Neil T. Noesen, a weekend pharmacist at the K-mart in Menomonie, Wisconsin, who on a Saturday in 2002 refused a refill of a prescription for contraceptive pills on file at that pharmacy. Noesen, acting on what he said were his religious beliefs, not only refused to dispense the contraceptives but also refused to inform the customer where she might obtain them. Since she needed to reassume the cycle of pills on the following day, she approached a Wal-Mart pharmacist, who was willing to dispense them. Yet Noesen did not authorize the transfer of her prescription. Ultimately, his superior at the K-mart, who had been unaware of Noesen's conscience-based objection to contraceptives, dispensed the pills one day after the customer was supposed to resume taking them. The Wisconsin Pharmacy Examining Board later issued a reprimand to Noesen. For more on this case, see ACLU, "Wisconsin Court Upholds Discipline of a Pharmacist Who Refused to Fill Birth Control Pill Prescription."

2. For more on this exemption, see "45 CFR 147.131 – Exemption and Accommodations in Connection with Coverage of Preventive Health Services," *Legal Information Institute*, Cornell University Law School, <https://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/45/147.131>.
3. T. Jost, "Zubik v. Burwell Oral Arguments: Under Contraceptive Coverage Accommodation, Conscientious Objectors or Collaborators?"
4. Note that a non-absolutist Sanctity-of-Life doctrine is not committed to the moral wrongness of contraception or abortion. Such a doctrine can be found, for example, in Ronald Dworkin's *Life's Dominion* (pages 34 ff.). The standard source for an absolutist Sanctity-of-Life doctrine is Thomas Aquinas's Natural Law theory. This theory entails that human reproduction should be promoted always except when the action hindering or destroying it (e.g., contraception and abortion) can be justified by the principle of double effect. Since in most cases contraception is used for family planning, in most cases it is unjustifiable by that principle.
5. See also May, "Begetting vs. Making Babies," and Catholic News Agency, "What Did Pope Francis Actually Say about Contraception?"
6. M.R. Wilclair, *Conscientious Objection in Health Care: An Ethical Analysis*.
7. In 1976, Illinois Congressman Henry Hyde proposed an amendment to the annual appropriations bill forbidding the use of federal tax dollars to pay for abortions, except in cases of rape, incest, or threat to the woman's life. The so-called Hyde Amendment was passed by Congress and became law in the same year. In 1980, it withstood a challenge to its constitutionality in *Harris v. McRae*. The US Supreme Court ruled that its constitutionality rested on the 'due process' clause of the 14th Amendment.
8. David DeGrazia, *Creation Ethics: Reproduction, Genetics, and Quality of Life*, 51.
9. Conceptions of justice in health care that can be used to support this conclusion include two accounts offered in the context of the access-to-health-care debate, Norman Daniels's 1981 fair-equality of opportunity account and Allen Buchanan's 1984 pluralistic account, and the utilitarian conception fueling Julian Savulescu's 2006 critique of conscientious objection in medicine.
10. The typical abortion is the early elective abortion rendered legal in America in 1973 by the US Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade*. Many Americans in fact support this legal-permission model, even those opposed to abortion on moral grounds. Gallup polls consistently suggest that only a minority (19 percent) of Americans favor making abortion illegal in all circumstances. By contrast, 29 percent favor having the practice legal in all circumstances, while the rest favor having it legal under certain circumstances. See Gallup, "Americans' Attitudes Toward Abortion Unchanged."

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## Medical Ethics and Harvesting Non-Vital Human Organs from Healthy Donors<sup>1</sup>

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Much has been written for and against the *sale* of human organs for transplant. On that subject, I shall be silent. I shall also be silent on the subject of harvesting human organs just before an otherwise inevitable death or just after. Nor shall I say anything about harvesting a human organ under circumstances that might be coercive. My concern is the harvesting of non-vital human organs freely donated by a well-informed, competent donor, with years of life ahead, for example, a physically healthy, mentally competent, middle-aged man who, after much reading and many discussions with family, friends, social workers, and physicians, offers one of his kidneys for immediate use because he wants to prevent his sister dying of kidney failure.

My thesis is that such harvesting *should* be a violation of medical ethics. Such harvesting *should* be unethical even if it helps both to save the life of an individual patient and to reduce the overall death rate. It should be unethical because it endangers, or actually harms, the health of the person whose organ is harvested, "the donor," without offering that person any medical benefit in return.

I said *should* be unethical, not *is* unethical, because I am presenting an argument for a change in medical ethics, not reporting the state of medical ethics today. I will explain later why I do not think I am simply reporting the state of medical ethics today.

I do not expect the argument presented here to convince everyone of its conclusion. Indeed, I would not be surprised

if many found it no more plausible than Zeno's proof that Achilles cannot catch the tortoise. What I expect, or at least hope, is that the argument will convince everyone reading it to rethink the unique relation that typically exists between the harvesting physician and the living organ donor. What is the donor to the physician? What is the physician to the donor?

But first, some definitions.

### IMPORTANT TERMS

By "human organ" I mean any part of the human body that the body will *not* replace once the part has been removed. A human organ does not regenerate. By this definition, blood, sperm, and similar bodily fluids are not organs. The body will soon replace them (as long as it is not dead or dying). The same is true for hair, fingernails, and the like, provided the "roots" are left. On the other hand, kidneys, corneas, lungs, faces, and the like *are* human organs. For now, they can only be replaced surgically, if at all. The human body will not regenerate them.

An organ is "vital" if it is necessary for a life to continue. Human organs can be "vital," like the heart, or "non-vital," like a cornea. Some organs, like the kidneys or skin, are vital if harvested altogether, but non-vital if only some lesser unit (such as one kidney or a small patch of skin) is harvested. My focus here will be the harvesting of *non-vital* organs because they are the harder case for my purpose. To harvest a non-vital human organ from a living human's body is merely to mutilate the body, that is, to weaken its defenses to disease, to leave scars, or otherwise to make the body in question less healthy. Of course, harvesting most human organs, such as a kidney or lung, from a living body involves major surgery, and all but the most minor surgery itself risks injury or death whatever its purpose, a fact that any surgeon must consider before agreeing to operate. Nonetheless, to harvest a *vital* organ from a living donor (without replacing it) is to kill the donor outright—an act much harder to defend.

By "ethics" I mean neither ordinary morality nor moral theory. Ordinary morality may be said to consist of those standards of conduct (rules, principles, ideals, and the like) that all reasonable persons (at their most reasonable) would want all others to follow even if everyone else following those standards would mean having to do the same.<sup>2</sup> Among moral standards are "Don't lie"; "Keep your promises"; and "Help the needy." Ordinary morality applies to "everyone"—or, at least, to everyone reasonable enough to follow the standards consciously.

In contrast, "ethics," as I shall use that term, refers only to those morally binding standards that apply to members of a group just because they are members of that group (a "group" being any number of reasonable persons less than everyone). Business ethics applies to people in business and no one else; computer ethics, to people while using computers and no one else; and engineering ethics, to engineers and no one else. Ethics (in this sense) always includes standards that exceed morality's minimum. Standards that just meet morality's minimum just are moral standards. Standards that fall below that minimum are



not ethics (as I shall use the term). There are no “terrorist ethics” or “torturer’s ethics”—except with scare quotes to signal irony or analogy.

The term “medical ethics” currently has at least three senses. In one, it refers to standards that apply to anyone working in medicine, including nurses, osteopaths, biologists, and even hospital administrators. In another sense, “medical ethics” refers to the special standards that apply to physicians (MDs) and no one else. It is the ethics of physicians (including surgeons), their profession’s ethics. I shall hereafter understand “medical ethics” in this second (professional-ethics) sense, reserving “biomedical ethics” for the first. In this second sense, medical ethics consists of those morally binding standards of conduct (rules, principles, ideals, and the like) that all reasonable physicians (at their most reasonable) want all other physicians to follow even if their following those standards would mean having to do the same. The Code of Ethics of the American Medical Association (AMA) is (in large part at least) a statement of medical ethics in this second sense. There is little in it about which physicians disagree, whether they are members of the AMA or not. In contrast, the Hippocratic Oath is not a statement of medical ethics: many physicians today, especially at their most reasonable, disagree with much in the Oath (everything from the prohibition of surgery to the invocation of ancient gods such as Apollo and Aesculapius).<sup>3</sup>

Moral theory is the attempt to understand morality, including ethics, as a reasonable undertaking. Those who study that part of moral theory concerned with medical ethics or biomedical ethics often refer to what they do, their theorizing, as “medical ethics.” This is a third sense of “medical ethics,” one I shall avoid here for the sake of clarity.

## MEDICAL ETHICS OF HARVESTING FROM HEALTHY DONORS

The AMA’s Code of Ethics now has an entire chapter devoted to the procurement and transplanting of bodily organs (Chapter 6). A few sentences are relevant to our subject. Let us begin with three of these in Opinion 6.2.1:

Transplantation offers hope to patients with organ failure. As in all patient-physician relationships, the physician’s primary concern must be the well-being of the patient. However, organ transplantation is also unique in that it involves two patients, donor and recipient, both of whose interests must be protected.<sup>4</sup>

While much in these three sentences seems right, there is a paradox at its center. On the one hand, according to the second sentence, the physician’s *primary* concern when transplanting an organ must be *the* patient’s well-being (as if there were one, and only one, patient). On the other hand, the third sentence asserts that organ transplantation is “unique” in having “two patients,” the donor as well as the recipient, both of whose interests must be “primary” (or, at least, “protected”).

Transplanting is probably not unique in being a medical relationship having two patients. There is (arguably) at least one other such relationship (even if “patient” is understood strictly), that is, the relationship existing when one physician tends to a pregnant woman during childbirth. The physician then seems to have two patients, the child as well as the pregnant woman. A more serious objection to the claim of uniqueness is that the harvesting physician often, perhaps even typically, has only one patient (in this strict sense at least). Indeed, another Opinion (6.1.1) seems to make one-patient-at-a-time the standard arrangement during transplantation:

Physicians who participate in donation of nonvital organs and tissues by a living individual should: . . .  
b) Avoid conflicts of interest by ensuring that the health care team treating the prospective donor is as independent as possible from the health care team treating the prospective transplant recipient.

So, it seems, no physician directly involved in transplanting an organ should have more than one patient at a time (the donor or recipient but not both). The physician who (in some sense) has more than one patient (such as a physician coordinating the harvesting team with the transplant team) should have no patient before her. In this respect, an organ transplant seems like a few other medical relationships, such as triage, where there is (in a special sense) more than one patient.

There is also a question about what “primary” means in 6.2.1. How can the well-being of both donor and recipient be primary? If “primary” means what it usually means in the AMA’s Code of Ethics, the donor’s well-being seems to be decidedly secondary (even if the donor has a physician of his own). What the donor should expect from the harvesting physician is no more harm than necessary for the organ’s removal, not a medical benefit. The donor is less like a patient than like a subject of medical research, someone who freely contributes to medicine’s goal without medical benefit. But there is also at least one important difference between what justifies the risks that research subjects bear and what justifies the risks organ donors bear. On those rare occasion when research subjects risk death or injury, they do it for a public good, medical knowledge. An organ donor routinely risks death or injury for a private good, the benefit of the recipient. Indeed, the donor willingly suffers mutilation. In this respect at least, the relationship of physician to donor may be unique: the harvesting physician is knowingly harming the person under her knife for the sake of another.

Before 2012, the World Medical Association (WMA) also accepted the two-patient conception of transplantation (but without any claim for the uniqueness of having two patients at the same time): “The primary obligation of physicians is to their individual patients, whether they [the patients] are potential donors or recipients of transplanted organs.”<sup>5</sup> The WMA abandoned the two-patient conception of transplantation in 2012.<sup>6</sup>

Clearly, the two-patient conception of transplantation is inadequate—perhaps, even incoherent. What alternatives

might there be? The Declaration of Istanbul provides one.<sup>7</sup> Technically, the Declaration is the work of *biomedical ethics*, not *medical ethics*, since it is the work of a meeting of “150 representatives of scientific and medical bodies from around the world, government officials, social scientists, and ethicists,” not merely a meeting of physicians or medical bodies. Nonetheless, the Declaration is more careful in its use of “patient” than the AMA is. The Declaration *never* uses “patient” to refer to the donor of an organ, only to refer to its recipient. Indeed, it says (Proposals): “The act of donation should be regarded as heroic and honored as such by representatives of the government and civil society.” An act is heroic when it does great good for another at considerable cost (or at least considerable risk) to the agent. Saving a drowning child by throwing her a rope and pulling her to safety is (typically) not heroic, just a good deed; in contrast, swimming through shark-infested waters to save the child is heroic.

While we can acknowledge the heroism of living donors—if willing, competent, and informed—we must also acknowledge that such heroism is, as such, not part of the physician-patient relationship. A physician may be heroic, but patients seek relief from suffering. One who seeks only to sacrifice is not a patient. So we must ask what, if anything, justifies a *physician* harvesting organs from a healthy donor. The obvious answer is the *medical* good done, that is, saving the life or improving the health of the recipient. But a moment’s thought reveals that medical good can only be half an answer. Physicians must not forget their profession, especially the limits it is reasonable to impose on the way they serve a patient’s health.

### THE PROFESSION OF MEDICINE

The relationship between physician and patient is, of course, not simply a matter of “First, do no harm” and then contribute to the patient’s health. Physicians routinely harm patients without any contribution to health, for example, when they do cosmetic surgery, such as a breast enlargement or “nose job,” to improve the appearance of a healthy person.<sup>8</sup> What justifies such surgery, even though it weakens the tissue or structure amended, is not the patient’s health but the satisfaction of an esthetic desire that would otherwise go unsatisfied or be satisfied by people substantially less qualified to operate on the body (such as cosmetologists or tattooists). Much the same can be said of abortion, except where the (physical or mental) health of the mother is at stake. Pregnancy as such is not a disease. In abortion, the physician sometimes risks harm to the patient without *medical* benefit to patient or fetus. The AMA’s Code of Ethics no longer prohibits such abortions. Thus, in some cases today, medical ethics allows physicians to do medical harm for a non-medical benefit.<sup>9</sup>

Typically, that non-medical benefit is a service to the patient’s overall “autonomy.” No doubt, service to the patient’s overall autonomy also contributes to the willingness of physicians to harvest non-vital organs from competent living donors who freely ask it. The importance of such autonomy can be seen in all four documents we have examined (the AMA Code of Ethics, the two WMA Statements, and the Istanbul Declaration). All four include elaborate procedures to ensure that *donors* are both well-

informed and competent when they allow non-vital organs to be harvested from their healthy bodies. We might then expect all four documents to *exclude* minors from being donors, since (by definition) minors lack full autonomy. Not so. Both the AMA Code (6.1.1.g) and the two WMA Statements allow minors to donate an organ “under exceptional circumstances.”<sup>10</sup> The Istanbul Declaration is silent about minors but does expressly recommend avoiding practices that “induce vulnerable individuals or groups (such as illiterate and impoverished persons, undocumented immigrants, prisoners, and political or economic refugees)” to donate organs (Principle 6.c). Presumably, minors should also count as “vulnerable individuals.” So the Istanbul Declaration (speaking for biomedical ethics rather than medical ethics) seems to disagree, however implicitly, with the medical documents about allowing minors to be donors—at least under exceptional circumstances.

Nonetheless, the willingness of both the AMA and the WMA to allow minors to be organ donors, if only in exceptional circumstances, at least suggests that autonomy is not the only relevant factor to be considered. What others might there be? Certainly, there is the desire of physicians to benefit those in need of medical assistance, that is, patients who need a transplant for health or life. The physical similarity between ordinary surgery and removal of an organ for transplant also seems relevant. Perhaps a third factor is that physicians feel that minors are sometimes mature enough to make the heroic sacrifice autonomously, especially if the legal guardian agrees and the minor has an emotional connection with the intended recipient. The AMA must have balanced many competing factors to reach today’s standard for organ donation.

Such balancing would explain why the AMA seems to disagree with the WMA about donation by adults who are mentally incompetent. (Hard cases often divide even the most reasonable members of a group.) The AMA offers no procedure for donation by mentally incompetent adults but does not prohibit it. The WMA now flatly prohibits the mentally incompetent to donate. However, before 2012, it treated minors and incompetent adults the same:

minors or mentally incompetent persons should not be considered as potential living donors except in extraordinary circumstances and in accordance with ethics committee review or established protocols. (F.11)

Plainly, physicians find both donation by minors and donation by mentally incompetent adults to be hard cases. They should find them hard, since in neither case can physicians (without considerable ingenuity) claim to be serving the donor’s autonomy. In both cases, they seem to be risking the health of a non-autonomous non-patient to improve the health of one or more patients.

### CONCLUSION

I am a philosopher, not a physician; so, as I understand medical ethics, I can only advise those who authoritatively decide questions of medical ethics, not actually know what is ethical for them. My job is to help physicians to be as reasonable as possible when they jointly decide the

question on which I advise. Being reasonable includes avoiding inconsistency, paying attention to facts, especially those not in controversy, and so on. Here is my advice on the harvesting of non-vital organs from healthy, living donors.

There are temptations to help others that should be refused, for example, when a government asks a physician to provide medical assistance during torture or a patient wants a healthy arm amputated because his body-image does not include the arm.<sup>11</sup> The harvesting of non-vital organs from living minors or incompetent adults seems to belong to this category, a temptation to be refused. Without an appeal to the donor's autonomy, the argument for allowing surgeons to mutilate those under their knife for the benefit of others seems too weak. But even if we assume that the donor is a competent adult, physicians should not (it seems to me) mutilate a healthy person, however willing, just to benefit another. That is too much like amputating the healthy arm of a patient merely because she would rather have it amputated than revise her body-image or live with dissonance between body and body-image. The surgery does not serve the (physical or mental) health of the person under the knife but some non-medical interest. Therefore, it should be unethical for physicians to harvest the non-vital organs of living donors, however willing, competent, and informed the donors are. The AMA Code of Ethics and WMA Statement should be so amended.

The argument just made may seem "paternalistic," that is, physicians may seem to be preempting a decision properly belonging to the patient in order to protect the patient. I agree that the analogue, refusing to amputate a healthy arm to satisfy body-image, may sometimes arise from medical paternalism, but I must deny it. Physicians may have many reasons for refusing to amputate a healthy arm. Some of these are not paternalistic, for example, that they consider such an amputation a poor use of their time or skill. The refusal of physicians to harvest a non-vital organ from a healthy donor may arise from the same non-paternalistic motive. The person seeking to be a donor may have a right—indeed, a fundamental human right—to make the donation in question. But no physician has a natural duty to harvest the organ in question just because someone wants it harvested, nor should physicians have a professional obligation to do such a thing. If physicians agree that they should not amputate a person's healthy arm to satisfy that person's body-image, they should agree as well that physicians should not harvest a non-vital body organ from a healthy donor.

Since this is an argument from analogy, reasonable physicians may disagree about how strong an argument it is, especially since the strength of the argument depends on how close they consider the analogy between harvesting a non-vital organ from a healthy, living donor and amputating a healthy arm from a competent adult who asks it. Yet, the strength of the argument does not lie in the analogy alone. There is also an implicit argument concerning who physicians should count as a patient.

Insofar as "patient" is understood to be one who seeks *medical* benefit for himself, neither the would-be amputee

nor the would-be living donor is a patient, strictly speaking, just an unqualified candidate for the status of patient.<sup>12</sup> Surgery on such a person would therefore be foreign to medicine. If the purpose of surgery should be medical benefit to the person under the knife—or, to allow for cosmetic surgery, abortion, and the like, some other contribution to that person's well-being—someone who sacrifices his welfare for the medical benefit of another is not a patient but a victim, much like Iphigenia at Aulis, sacrificed to bring wind so that the Greeks could carry destruction to Troy.

But even if a healthy, living, would-be donor is a patient, strictly speaking, say, because he seeks the physician's help insofar as she is a physician, what he seeks is still not medical assistance, strictly speaking. It is almost as if (but not quite as if) he asked the physician to harvest *all* his organs for the medical benefit of others. Such an operation would cause his death. Medical ethics should, physicians agree, not allow a physician to do as such a patient asks even though he has freely given his informed consent, the physician has the skill, and society would benefit overall from the net savings in lives.<sup>13</sup> How does the harvesting of non-vital organs from willing, competent adults, even if fully informed, differ *enough* from harvesting all the organs from a healthy donor to make it reasonable to allow the harvesting of non-vital organs from a healthy, living donor?

The problem here is not that the would-be donor is acting irrationally. To ask to have all one's organs harvested and thrown away would be irrational, the waste of a life, but to ask to have them all harvested for a net savings in human lives is not irrational, merely extremely altruistic. The problem is that physicians have not organized to provide social good as such but to make a specific contribution to the social good, roughly, to cure the sick, comfort the dying, and protect the healthy from disease—and to do that one patient at a time. Physicians have had trouble with letting hopeless patients die precisely because letting them die is uncomfortably close to killing them—and killing patients is not something physicians (at least at their most reasonable) want to allow other physicians to do—or, indeed, to do themselves.

I do not claim that physicians could not reorganize medicine to pursue the social good more directly—as, for example, public health does, though even public health does not aim for the social good as such but only for a healthy population. Public health has nothing to say about the social good insofar as the social good concerns finance, general education, esthetics, or the like.

What I do claim is that physicians are unlikely to reorganize to serve the social good more directly anytime soon. And, therefore, for reasons of consistency, they should avoid harvesting non-vital human organs from healthy, living donors to help the sick, just as they now avoid harvesting vital organs for the same reason. For the physician, a patient should be someone who seeks medical benefit for herself—or at least a benefit similar to medical benefit, such as in cosmetic surgery or elective abortion. Someone who asks a physician to help her sacrifice herself for the

medical benefit of another is too unlike a patient to count as one even by strong analogy.

NOTES

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2. Bernard Gert, *A New Justification of the Moral Rules* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1988).
3. Hippocratic Oath, <http://ethics.iit.edu/ecodes/node/4220> (accessed August 8, 2017). This is (more or less) the original. There are, of course, many modern versions with some or all the objectionable parts edited out. But the existence of many different modern versions is itself evidence that the original is not a statement of modern medical ethics.
4. American Medical Association, *Code of Ethics*, <https://www.ama-assn.org/delivering-care/ama-code-medical-ethics> (accessed July 28, 2017). For the sake of focus, I shall say nothing here about the claim that “the physician’s primary concern must be the well-being of the patient,” though that is another provision needing revision. The physician’s primary concern should be the health or medical well-being of the patient. The physician’s primary concern should *not* include the patient’s financial well-being, political career, opportunities to buy ancient artifacts, or any other such non-medical contribution to the patient’s well-being (except where the interest affects health, of course).
5. B.1, WMA Statement on Human Organ Donation and Transplantation, adopted by the 52nd WMA General Assembly, Edinburgh, Scotland, October 2000, revised by the 57th WMA General Assembly, Pilanesberg, South Africa, October 2006, and rescinded at the 65th WMA General Assembly, Durban, South Africa, October 2014, <https://www.wma.net/policies-post/wma-statement-on-human-organ-donation-and-transplantation/> (accessed September 1, 2017). I could find nothing to explain why the statement was rescinded in 2014—or why the WMA adopted its new statement two years before.
6. World Medical Association Statement on Organ and Tissue Donation (October 2012), <https://www.wma.net/policies-post/wma-statement-on-organ-and-tissue-donation/> (accessed September 1, 2017).
7. The Declaration of Istanbul on Organ Trafficking and Transplant Tourism (2008), <http://www.declarationofistanbul.org/> (accessed September 1, 2017).
8. For a long list of ways in which physicians may (more or less) ethically do harm, see my “The State’s Dr. Death: What’s Unethical about Physicians Helping at Executions?” *Social Theory and Practice* 21 (Spring 1995): 31–60.
9. Though the AMA Code is now silent on abortion, the history of that silence makes it clear that abortion remains a difficult subject for medical ethics.
10. The current WMA Statement limits the “special circumstances” to when the “minor” is “competent,” not noticing that minors are, by definition, not competent—at least as the law defines “minor” and “competent.”
11. Though the (recently revised) AMA Code no longer mentions torture, the AMA’s position seems to be that it still does not allow physicians to attend torture sessions because of how “patient” is defined. See, for example, <https://wire.ama-assn.org/delivering-care/torture-coercive-interrogations-and-physicians> (accessed September 16, 2017). In contrast, the AMA has (as far as I know) no position on amputation to satisfy body image. Nevertheless, physicians I have asked about this example uniformly say physicians should not amputate. They seem to distinguish such cases from sex-change operations, which they regard as professionally proper, because they regard the patient’s longstanding and extreme unhappiness with the

pre-operation body to be a mental, or even physical, illness. From that perspective, the harder case is not sex-change but cosmetic surgery for mere esthetic reasons. Perhaps here, what is important is the low risk of death or serious injury if a physician rather than a cosmetologist, tattoo artist, or the like were to perform the surgery.

12. Compare AMA Opinion 1.11: “A patient-physician relationship exists when a physician serves a patient’s medical needs.” The Opinion goes on to list three exceptions to this definition, none of which are relevant here.
13. My thanks to Thomas Fisher for helping me distinguish this issue from the one above.

## Philosophical Difficulties of Mind Uploading as a Medical Technology

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### INTRODUCTION

Futurist Arthur Clarke is known, amongst other things, for having proposed three principles of prediction regarding future technologies. The third of those principles states that any technology sufficiently advanced is indistinguishable from magic.<sup>1</sup> It is important not to misinterpret this principle. Clarke was a rationalist, and he did not mean to validate sorcerers and magicians. But he did trust that the power of science may be such that, eventually, there would be technologies so impressive that they would end up resembling many of the marvels claimed by science; the difference, of course, would be that science would provide a rational support for its proposals.

Physicians and health-care professionals are aware that no matter how much they may improve living conditions and contribute to well-being, ultimately, health care is a war that will be lost. The medical profession is imbued with an understanding of the finality and inevitability of death. This naturally creates a universal sense of anxiety, as has been consistently documented in philosophical reflection<sup>2</sup> and psychological experiments.<sup>3</sup> Yet, precisely as a result of these anxieties, most of the major religions try to circumvent the finality and inevitability of death by promising some form of immortality.

Rationally speaking, there seems to be no support for such religious promises. But perhaps Clarke’s third principle is relevant in this regard, for it is not altogether irrational to believe that, in the not-too-distant future, science will offer technologies indistinguishable from the ancient promises of science and religion. In this regard, the promises about immortality are emblematic. For the past couple of decades, researchers and scholars have been discussing the possibility that science may deliver the religious hope for eternal life.

This trend, generally known as transhumanism, is growing in popularity amongst biomedical scientists and health-care professionals.<sup>4</sup> If the prospects become realized, we may be hopeful that, in the future, there may come into existence a number of technologies that may allow human

beings to suspend death indefinitely and, in a sense, be immortal. These prospects, of course, are entirely theoretical, and plenty of justified criticisms have been leveled against proposed technologies as too optimistic.<sup>5</sup> Yet, these prospects should still warrant philosophical consideration, for if they do become a reality, both patients and health-care practitioners will have to reflect about the implications.

### (1) THE PROSPECT OF MIND UPLOADING

One of the transhumanist proposals is cryonics, the preservation of corpses in low temperatures. Although it is not a technology that purports to bring persons back to life, it does purport to conserve them until some future technology might be capable of resuscitating dead bodies.<sup>6</sup> If, indeed, such technology were ever developed, we would need to revise the physiological criterion for death. For if brain death is a physiological point of no return and the very definition of death (as it is widely accepted under the Harvard criterion of death), then bodies that are currently cryogenically preserved and will be brought back to life were not truly dead after all.

Most scientists are skeptical of the prospect of resuscitating already dead people, but some are more enthusiastic about the prospect of indefinitely procrastinating death by stopping the aging processes. Aubrey De Grey has proposed some strategies for engineered negligible senescence: their goal is to identify the mechanisms accountable for aging, and attempt to stop, or even reverse them, for instance, by cell repair.<sup>7</sup> Some of these strategies involve genetic manipulation and nanotechnology.

Even if it were not possible to revert aging via biochemical mechanisms or through nanotechnological repairing, perhaps no biological solution is needed. Instead, immortality could be achieved by substituting organic tissue with synthetic tissue. In such a manner, artificial organs could be designed, and these may replace deteriorated natural organs. Therefore, with designed synthetic organs that carry out the same functions, the parts that constitute the human body could be constantly regenerated, and with that, aging could be stopped altogether.<sup>8</sup>

In this technological project, human beings would replace their organs with artificially designed parts. And the hope for eternal life would be to eventually become a machine that, inasmuch as it is made up of parts not subject to the same type of biodegradation as organic parts, could continue to exist indefinitely.

Science fiction literature has explored this concept extensively. Science fiction authors refer to this concept as a cyborg, a hypothetical organism made up of artificially designed parts. Ever since, cyborgs have been proposed as a hopeful route to immortality. Futurist Raymund Kurzweil, for example, proposes that our best prospect of overcoming death is that we become cyborgs.<sup>9</sup>

But the key philosophical question is, would a cyborg still be a human being? Can we legitimately consider human an entity that is made up of synthetic pieces? As a matter of fact, cyborgs already exist. Roughly speaking, a pirate with

a wooden leg was already a cyborg. And ever since, the development of prostheses in various fields of medicine has dramatically expanded.<sup>10</sup> In all those cases, an artificial creation has replaced a natural part in the human body.

Obviously, one replacement does not alter human identity. A patient with a prosthetic leg has not ceased being a human being because a prosthesis forms part of her body. But if one prosthesis does not make a difference between a human being and a non-human being, then neither would two, three, or four prostheses. Yet, if we gradually substitute organs with prostheses, when would the human being become a machine altogether?

This brings forth a consideration of the so-called sorites paradox. This paradox, first proposed by Eubulides,<sup>11</sup> is concerned with the vagueness of terms. When joining two grains of sand, is that a heap? Of course not. What about three grains? Again, no. But, if we keep adding grains, eventually, we'll be in the presence of a heap. The paradox is about determining at what specific point a non-heap becomes a heap. Historically, philosophers have not provided a clear and unanimous solution to this paradox.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps we should assume a tough solution: human beings are already machines the moment one particular artificial prosthesis or implant is added, and therefore, to fully become cyborgs would not be a major change in our constitution.

As a corollary of becoming cyborgs, enthusiasts of immortality technologies have explored the concept of "mind uploading"<sup>13</sup> as another strategy to achieve immortality. Mind uploading is about transferring mental contents from the brain to a non-organic device, most likely a very sophisticated computer. Under this concept, the death of the brain does not imply the death of the person, for the mental contents of the person would be safeguarded in a computer.

The goal of this project is to create a complete emulation of a person's brain. Once the brain is completely modeled, mental contents would be reproduced. If we assume a materialist conception of the brain,<sup>14</sup> then we come to the conclusion that mental contents arise as a result of the physical activity of neuronal circuitry. In such a manner, by emulating neuronal interaction, mental activity can also be emulated. Therefore, even if the brain dies, its contents may be preserved, because these contents are emulated in a machine that reproduces the information hosted by the brain.

The designers of this technological prospect assume that the mind is analogous to software residing in hardware, and its contents can be transferred and reproduced in other machines. Software is stored in hardware, but a "backup copy" can be stored in another piece of hardware, in case the original hardware fails or is destroyed. If the original hardware is destroyed, this does not imply the destruction of the software, as long as it has been safeguarded in another machine. Likewise, the brain may host the mind, but if a backup copy of the mind is created in a computer, the death of the brain will not imply the death of the mental contents, because it can still be recovered with the backup copy.

The creation of a backup copy would be achieved by artificially emulating the same patterns that neurons establish when generating mental contents. Proponents have devised various hypothetical methods to achieve such purposes. First, the brain of the dead person could be cryogenically preserved, and then it could be thinly sliced. This would allow the formulation of a detailed analysis of neuronal circuitry, and taking this as a model, an artificial copy could then be created. Inasmuch as the brain is emulated, the mind would also be emulated.

Another method has also been proposed in which a map of the brain could be created. Current brain imaging techniques offer a very general image of the brain, but enthusiasts cherish the hope that, in the future, new radiological technologies could create images so detailed that they may allow a thorough emulation of the brain.<sup>15</sup> Perhaps an invasive nanotechnological procedure could be used; microscopic cameras could be introduced deep within the brain so as to register in detail neurological activity, and based on the recollected information, the whole brain could be reconstructed.

For now, there is greater concern in conceiving an artificial machine that may have the capacity to store the large volume of data, and to emulate the complexity of the human brain. In 2005, for example, the Blue Brain project was launched; its purpose is the creation of a computer that may emulate the brain of a less complex mammal.<sup>16</sup> So far, with a vast storage capacity, the Blue Brain project has only been able to emulate a few seconds of neuronal activity in the brain of a mammal. Yet, if we admit Moore's Law (i.e., technology has been growing at an exponential rate),<sup>17</sup> then perhaps in the not-too-distant future, this limitation will be overcome.

Thus, under the project of mind uploading, human beings would submit our brains to be emulated by machines. Our brains, made up of organic tissue, would eventually die. But hypothetically, inasmuch as we will have been careful enough to make backup copies in artificial brains, the death of our brains does not imply the end of our existence, for we will continue to live with our minds uploaded in machines. In other words, we will have become robots, and will continue our existence with an entirely synthetic brain. Every time the synthetic materials of the machine that hosts our mind need substitution or repairs, the mental content could be stored in a new backup copy. In such a manner, we could achieve immortality: in a sense, we would have no need to die, because every time the host of our mind becomes deteriorated, our mental contents could be transported to a new machine.

Science fiction has notoriously explored this possibility. Perhaps the most emblematic example is that of the film *Avatar*: in this movie, human beings have the possibility of creating their own avatars, i.e., robots to which conscience can be transferred.

The hypothetical technology of mind uploading implicitly carries a series of philosophical assumptions regarding the nature of the mind that need to be addressed. The mind-uploading project rests upon a functionalist understanding

of the mind.<sup>18</sup> According to this view, the mind is not an immaterial substance (i.e., the soul); but the mind is not identical to the brain either (the conventional materialist view). Instead, the brain is identical to the functions that the brain generates, but that could also be fulfilled in another physical structure.

According to this view, if a machine managed to emulate the patterns or the functions of the brain, then it will have generated mental activity. In that scenario, the aspirations of Artificial Intelligence are fulfilled: inasmuch as the constitution of the brain is not the brain, but rather, the function of the brain (or any other object that may emulate it) develops, then the enthusiasts of Artificial Intelligence esteem that at least it is possible to create a machine that has the same mental functions of human beings.

In that regard, the project of mind uploading is basically a derivative of Artificial Intelligence. This project aspires to create a machine that has the same mental functions of persons. The goal of mind uploading is to exhaustively emulate the functions of specific brains to the point that such emulation allows identifying the machine with the person whose brain was emulated.

## 2. PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Apart from its technical difficulties, the project of mind uploading faces a deeper philosophical objection. It is questionable up to what degree we may affirm that a machine may actually have a mind; in other words, could a machine ever be a person? This issue has been widely discussed by philosophers, and a field of its own has arisen as a result, the Philosophy of Artificial Intelligence. The first thinker to formally ask whether Artificial Intelligence could ever be on par with natural intelligence (i.e., if a machine could ever be conscious) was the great mathematician Alan Turing.

Turing is famous, amongst other things, for having designed a model of a machine that would manipulate and interpret symbols, and from that task, it could follow algorithms in various degrees of complexity. Ever since, Turing and his followers estimated that intelligence, whether natural or artificial, is basically about the interpretation and manipulation of symbols. Once the fundamental mechanism of intelligence is known, intelligence could eventually be emulated in a machine. Nevertheless, many critics argue that there is a series of mental functions that machines will never be able to perform, and according to their view, this is enough to distinguish natural intelligence from artificial intelligence.

The first of these alleged limitations is the ability to think rationally. But if we understand "rational thinking" as the capacity to solve problems on the basis of effective decisions, then it is obvious that machines do think rationally. A computer is capable of solving complex logical and mathematical problems with astonishing speed. There does not seem to be a justification by which these functions cannot be called "rational thinking."

It is also argued that a machine would never be creative.<sup>19</sup> But again, this is highly questionable. There are computers that, with sophisticated programming, may develop visual and acoustic artistic creations. Anticipating this objection, Turing himself clarified the meaning of “creativity,” and he defined it as the capacity to take us by surprise.<sup>20</sup> In that sense, in order to examine whether or not a machine can be creative, we must ask whether or not it can surprise us. Turing was hopeful that a computer with enough storage capacity can exhibit enough behaviors that go contrary to our expectations to be called “creative.”

Other critics of Artificial Intelligence claim that a machine will never have a capacity for self-reflection; in other words, it will always lack a sense of self, as opposed to human beings. But, once again, Turing and his followers have disputed this. According to Turing’s followers, it is perfectly viable to elaborate an algorithmic program that allows the machine to report its own internal states. This seems to be a sufficient criterion to affirm that a machine can indeed have an inner sense of reflection.

As a corollary of the previous objection, critics of Artificial Intelligence have also pointed out that a machine can never have emotions.<sup>21</sup> This is perhaps the most common objection: according to this view, machines may be able to think rationally and even be creative, but they will never have feelings. Yet again, this objection is questionable. It seems possible to build a machine that, depending on the stimuli that it gets, expresses emotions. In that sense, if the machine is insulted, it could express words of sadness; if it is praised, it could express words of joy, and so on.

Other critics claim that a machine will never have free will. Inasmuch as a machine runs with algorithms, it is determined to behave according to its previous determination. And, that being the case, then the machine has no autonomy. However, it is doubtful that even human beings have free will,<sup>22</sup> for very much as machines, it seems our behavior is already determined by the laws of nature. Some philosophers consider it possible to be determined and free at the same time,<sup>23</sup> but then, if that compatibilism applies to human beings, it should also apply to machines: a computer could be determined and free at the same time. At any rate, a machine would need a vast storage and complexity capacity in order to consider that, even if the computer’s decisions have been previously programmed, they come from a previous examination of the situation.

Be that as it may, in light of the objections according to which machines will never be able to elaborate mental functions that we human beings have, Turing proposed a test so that one day (hopefully, in the not-too-distant future), we will determine whether or not a machine is conscious. This test is delightfully simple. A person engages in two written conversations: one with a computer, the other one with another human being. However, the person does not know beforehand who is who. If, after engaging in both conversations, the person is not able to distinguish who is the human and who is the computer, then we will have to admit that the machine is as conscious as the other two human beings.

Turing proposed this test in the mid-twentieth century. Given the great advances that were taking place in the area of cybernetics, Turing predicted that, in just a few decades, machines would pass the test. However, his predictions have not come true. So far, no machine has passed the Turing test.<sup>24</sup>

Computers have managed to easily perform functions that human beings do not master, such as storing enormous volumes of data, or elaborating complex calculations. Furthermore, in the early days of Artificial Intelligence, skeptics doubted that someday a machine could defeat a human rival in chess. However, in 1997, the Deep Blue computer defeated Gary Kasparov.<sup>25</sup> Yet, no machine has been able to fool an interlocutor, and thus pass the Turing Test.

While it is true that computers may be able to master high functions, they have difficulties emulating mental functions that human beings master from early infancy. For example, computers are not able to properly understand language twists. Isaac Asimov’s *I, Robot* features a number of stories where machines erroneously follow commands due to their inability to understand irony, sarcasm, etc.

The advances of Artificial Intelligence have turned out to be slower than initially expected, but that does not rule out that, sometime in the future, computers may be able to master the functions that currently are not able to perform. If that day comes, then the prospect for mind uploading may have a higher probability of coming to be real.

Nevertheless, some philosophers have claimed that, even if a computer passed the Turing test, that would not be proof that a machine can be conscious. These critics believe that, at most, a machine would give the appearance of thinking, but that does not imply it is really doing so. Suppose someone expresses kind words to a computer, and the computer replies, “I love you.” According to the critics’ argument, a machine may display signs of an internal state as love, without actually feeling love.

The most emblematic of Artificial Intelligence’s philosophical critics is John Searle. He is famous for proposing a thought experiment that, in his view, erodes the hopes that someday, a machine will be conscious. The experiment is as follows: suppose a person is inside a room with a door. From the outside, this person receives papers with questions in the Chinese language. The person inside the room does not know Chinese, but has a huge manual that gives instructions about how to respond to the questions.

In such a manner, for example, the manual stipulates that a question with a particular ideograph be responded to with some other specific ideograph, and so on. If the manual is properly followed, the person inside the room could have a fluid conversation without necessarily understanding the conversation itself. From the outside, an observer could get the impression that the person inside does know the Chinese language. But in fact, such person does not know the Chinese language; she is only following the instructions of a manual.

According to Searle, something similar goes on with Artificial Intelligence. If a machine passes the Turing Test, it would give the impression of being conscious. But, very much as the person that gives the impression of speaking Chinese when in fact she does not, the machine could give the appearance of having consciousness, when in fact it is just running an algorithm. The crucial thing, in Searle's view, is to acknowledge that Artificial Intelligence may develop syntax (how to structure symbols for mental functioning), but not semantics (what symbols really mean).<sup>26</sup>

Searle's objection is interesting, but it does not seem totally persuasive. Searle suggests that the external appearance of having consciousness is not a guarantee of actually being conscious, and for that reason, the fact that a computer seems intelligent does not imply that it is actually conscious. But Searle's argument could easily be applied to human beings: strictly speaking, just because a person screams when she is hit in the face does not imply that the person is truly conscious. As a reply to this argument, behaviorists propose that, at most, we can only aspire to observe behaviors or the external manifestation of mental contents, but not the mental contents themselves.<sup>27</sup> And by observing other people's behaviors, we may suppose that, underneath those behaviors, there is consciousness.

In that sense, when a person screams upon being hit in the face, we assume that person is in pain. In rigor, we cannot know if, indeed, underneath that scream there is pain, or if the person is just an automaton that is following some algorithm. In the same manner, whenever a machine exhibits advanced signs of reasoning (or creativity, or emotions), we may safely assume that, indeed, the machine is conscious. Therefore, there seems to be no reason to assume that persons do have minds but machines do not.

### 3. MIND UPLOADING AND THE PROBLEM OF IDENTITY

A second major philosophical problem that comes up with the prospect of mind uploading is as follows: even if we admit that a brain-emulating machine may indeed be conscious (as discussed above), can we legitimately affirm that such a machine is identical to the person whose mental contents were transferred? This raises the problem of personal identity, i.e., under what criteria can a person be considered the same in different moments?

If we assume the soul criterion of identity (i.e., a person retains her identity if and only if she retains the same soul),<sup>28</sup> then mind uploading would not guarantee immortality. If we assume that the soul is not identical to the mind (and this is a very ambiguous topic amongst those who accept the existence of the soul), then the machine would not be identical to the original person. For, even if the machine had the same mental contents as the original person, it would not have the same soul, and inasmuch as the soul would be considered the constitutive element of the person, then the machine would not be identical to the person.

Furthermore, if we assume the body criterion of identity (i.e., a person retains her identity if and only if she retains her same body),<sup>29</sup> then, again, mind uploading would not

guarantee immortality either. For even if mental contents are emulated in a machine, this machine would not preserve the original body of the person, and hence, it would not be identical to the original person.

However, the body criterion faces some notorious difficulties. Upon transferring the mental contents, the emulating machine will acquire a sense of self indistinguishable from the self of the original person. And in that sense, the continuity of the body seems irrelevant; the truly relevant aspect seems to be a psychological criterion. This is intuitively supported by a famous thought experiment proposed by John Locke:<sup>30</sup> if a cobbler one day wakes up with the memories of a prince, and the prince wakes up with the memories of the cobbler, who would be who? Locke argued (pace intuition) that the cobbler would be the person with the memories of the cobbler, even if he wakes up in the palace.

In mind uploading, the machine would preserve all the memories, fears, desires, knowledge, etc. that the original person had. Therefore, it seems proper to consider that the machine would be the person herself. If the original person committed a crime, then it seems reasonable to believe that the machine with the uploaded mind should be punished, for that machine is conscious of the acts of the original person.

As mentioned above, those who uphold the project of mind uploading accept (at least implicitly) a functionalist understanding of the mind. If we were to use another terminology, we could say that a person could be understood as a pattern of neuronal organization. Therefore, wherever this pattern is generated, the original person continues to exist. It is irrelevant whether it is in a brain made up of organic matter, or a machine made up of synthetic material; the important issue is the pattern that such an object generates. In that sense, even with a different body (or, for that matter, with an artificial brain), the person would continue to exist, and hence, immortality would be guaranteed.

But if we accept this reasoning, a new problem arises. In the same manner that one person's mind can be uploaded in a machine, it could also be uploaded in two, three, or a thousand machines. And if many machines coexist, even with the same mental contents, then it is not intelligible how all those machines can be identical to the original person. For, in that case, we would violate the transitivity principle of identity, according to which if A is identical to B, and B is identical to C, then A is identical to C.

Let us suppose that Jack dies and his mind is uploaded to a computer. Apparently, this machine would be Jack himself, as psychological continuity is preserved. Whenever asked about his name, the computer will answer he is Jack, he will produce memories from his childhood, etc. Yet, other machines could very well be uploaded with Jack's brain with the same degree of accuracy. Therefore, those other machines would also have psychological continuity with Jack. But if we assume that all those machines are identical to Jack, then they would have to be identical to each other, due to the principle of transitivity. This is absurd, and as a



result, it seems more reasonable that none of the machines were identical to Jack in the first place. In that case, mind uploading would not guarantee true immortality.

Some philosophers have tried to offer a solution to this problem. Robert Nozick<sup>31</sup> posits the “closest continuer” criterion of identity to tackle this issue. According to this criterion, psychological continuity would be a criterion if and only if there is one candidate for personal continuity. In that case, the computer would indeed be identical to Jack, as long as there is no other computer with the same psychological continuity. Nozick’s solution is ingenious, but ultimately flawed. Personal identity does not rely on external conditions; the existence or inexistence of another machine seems irrelevant when considering whether or not the first machine is identical to Jack.

In this sense, this difficulty regarding the psychological criterion and the understanding of a person as a “mental pattern” seems to support the idea that a person will continue to be herself if and only if she preserves her original brain. Any artificial emulation of the brain would be a replica, but not identical to the original person.

However, there are some counterarguments that could be used by enthusiasts of mind uploading. Derek Parfit proposes that the continuity of the organic brain is not necessary to ensure the preservation of personal identity. Very much as in the other arguments, Parfit presents another thought experiment.<sup>32</sup> Suppose that 1 percent of a person’s brain is replaced with synthetic material. In fact, something very similar is already taking place with neural implants (i.e., artifacts implanted in the brain that allow for the correction of some neurological disorders).<sup>33</sup> Would the person with the brain implant still be the same? Presumably, yes, for a 1 percent substitution of the brain does not alter identity. In fact, some patients have had more than 1 percent of their brains removed, and nobody would argue that they become a different person.<sup>34</sup>

Yet, we may foresee that one who upholds the view that the organic brain is the basis of personal identity will not admit that a 99 percent replacement of the neurons with synthetic material will allow for a preservation of personal identity. But if a 1 percent replacement does not alter personal identity, whereas a 99 percent replacement does, at what point does a person cease to be herself and become another? Once again, we come to terms with the sorites paradox, and there does not seem to be a fully satisfactory response.

In fact, the human body entirely recycles its atoms every ten years. A significant percentage of human beings (at least in modern times) replace some part of their tissue with some synthetic substitute. Once again, this raises the question, if a tooth filling does not alter personal identity, then why wouldn’t it be the same with the synthetic replacement of the brain?

Indeed, if we extend this criterion to the brain, we may say that a totally synthetic brain does preserve identity. But in order to do so, the synthetic brain must be formed as a result of a gradual replacement of the organic brain. Thus,

it would be necessary for each brain cell to be replaced by synthetic cells. At the end, the whole brain will have been replaced, and an entirely new synthetic brain will come up. Inasmuch as the organic brain is gradually replaced by the synthetic brain (and crucially, not just emulated), the problem of duplication would be avoided.

Be that as it may, if there are still doubts about the person with the synthetic brain being identical to the person with the organic brain, then we may recur to another argument posited by Parfit,<sup>35</sup> according to which the preservation of identity is not really relevant when considering the prospects for immortality or for the continuity of existence. In Parfit’s view, there is no precise criterion, and for that reason, what is really relevant is psychological continuity.

Thus, the implication of Parfit’s view is that it would suffice to know that there will be a synthetic brain that will conserve our mental contents. We needn’t worry about whether there will be duplicates. The truly relevant element is that someone will have the same mind as the original person. The idea that identity does not matter is intuitively hard to accept, because it seems to imply that there is no self with a unity of experiences, but rather, a bundle of mental contents.<sup>36</sup> However, for those who are willing to overcome this initial intuitive resistance, Parfit’s view solves many of the philosophical problems that arise with the prospect of mind uploading.

#### NOTES

1. Clarke, *Profiles of the Future*.
2. Becker, *The Denial of Death*.
3. Solomon et al., *The Worm at the Core*.
4. Hall, *The Bioethics of Enhancement*.
5. Livingstone, *Transhumanism: The History of a Dangerous Idea*.
6. Perry, *Forever for All: Moral Philosophy, Cryonics, and the Scientific Prospects for Immortality*.
7. De Grey and Rae, *Ending Aging*.
8. Gray, *Cyborg Citizen: Politics in the Posthuman Age*.
9. Kurzweil, *Age of Spiritual Machines: When Computers Exceed Human Intelligence*.
10. Clark, *Natural-born Cyborgs: Minds, Technologies, and the Future of Human Intelligence*.
11. Williamson, *Vagueness*.
12. Olin, *Paradox*.
13. Movarec, *Robot: Mere Machine to Transcendent Mind*; Minsky, *The Emotion Machine: Commonsense Thinking, Artificial Intelligence, and the Future of the Human Mind*.
14. Dennett, *Brainstorms: Philosophical Essays on Mind and Psychology*.
15. Bostrom, *Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies*.
16. Gibb, *The Rough Guide to the Brain*.
17. Mody, *The Long Arm of Moore’s Law: Microelectronics and American Science*.
18. Crumley, *A Brief Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind*, 99.
19. Whitby, *Reflections on Artificial Intelligence*.
20. Turing, “Computing Machinery and Intelligence.”
21. DeLancey, *Passionate Engines: What Emotions Reveal about Mind and Artificial Intelligence*.

22. Harris, *Free Will*.
23. Dennett, *Elbow Room: The Varieties of Free Will Worth Wanting*.
24. Gazzaniga, *Human*, 362.
25. Hsu, *Behind Deep Blue: Building the Computer that Defeated the World Chess Champion*.
26. Searle, *Minds, Brains, and Science*, 34.
27. Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*.
28. Swinburne, *The Evolution of the Soul*.
29. Noonan, *Personal Identity*.
30. Daly, *An Introduction to Philosophical Methods*, 125.
31. Noonan 2004, 128.
32. Parfit, "Divided Minds and the Nature of Persons," 312.
33. Kurzweil, *Age of Spiritual Machines: When Computers Exceed Human Intelligence*.
34. Freberg, *Discovering Biological Psychology*, 376.
35. Parfit, "Divided Minds and the Nature of Persons."
36. Duddy, *Mind, Self, and Identity*, 164.

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## BOOK REVIEW

### *A Review of Michael Boylan's Teaching Ethics with Three Philosophical Novels*

Michael Boylan (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2017). ISBN 978-3-319-55710-6.

Reviewed by Wanda Teays

MOUNT SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY

Talk about a complete package: Michael Boylan's new book, *Teaching Ethics with Three Philosophical Novels*, is a veritable Bento box. It's got theory in one compartment. Literature in another. And an appendix section for classroom use.

For those teaching Ethics, Philosophy of Literature, or the Humanities, Boylan's text has many qualities. For one thing, students as well as faculty will appreciate its accessibility along with in-depth discussions that are both challenging and philosophically interesting. That it has the basics for an entire course is a significant benefit. To say the least, Boylan has done a great deal to lift the load of preparation off the instructors' shoulders. Given Boylan's history of publications and years of experience in the classroom, he has much to bring to this enterprise.

The book is well organized. It starts with an overview of Boylan's own work on Ethics and Personhood—highly

regarded here and abroad—followed by a succinct presentation of the three major ethical theories—Virtue Ethics, Utilitarianism, and Deontology. This constitutes the first section of the text. This approach is both pedagogically and philosophically sound. Laying the groundwork with ethical theory helps students see the value of conceptual frameworks in doing philosophy. It also helps dismantle the notion that opinions are on par with reasoned argument. That said, the book allows for the flexibility to prioritize the literature and integrate ethical theory so the two areas work in conjunction. It also allows for the inclusion of more and/or different ethical theory, should instructors wish for a wider theoretical base from which to draw.

The second and largest section of the book consists of three of Boylan’s own novels: *Rainbow Curve*, *To The Promised Land*, and *Naked Reverse*. Instructors may opt to include additional fiction, but Boylan’s choice of three novels allows for a gradual and more civilized pace.

As anyone knows who has taught Applied Ethics using literature, case studies, or films, students generally respond with considerable enthusiasm. The novels bring the issues to life—a vehicle to understanding ethical theory and making the abstract more concrete. In a word—*relatability*. Boylan’s approach encourages students to become engaged with the stories, to connect with the characters, and to reflect on the ideas and values expressed as the plot unfolds.

The last section of the book is an appendix with such handy tools as a sample syllabus, course requirements, and a group project. Here we see an effective way to structure a course using this text. We also see the value of restricting the required reading—limiting the number of novels to three. Boylan balances the course reading and lectures with the inclusion of student (group) presentations across the semester. Not only does this ensure student participation with clear guidelines about the expectations, it also affirms the value—and centrality—of dialogue. For those who want to know if they are successful in *teaching* ethics, Boylan’s text may be just what you need.

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## POEM

### *The Fat Ladies Sing*

Felicia Nimue Ackerman

**BROWN UNIVERSITY**

Originally appeared in *The Los Angeles Times*. Reprinted here with permission.

We revel in our candy bars  
And cookies, cake, and pie.  
That vegetables taste wonderful  
Is one humongous lie.

But now we face admonishment.  
Our size sets off a fuss.  
The war against obesity  
Includes a war on us.

We know our girth is plentiful,  
But listen to our voice.  
When thinking of our corpulence,  
Why can’t you be pro-choice?



APA NEWSLETTER ON

# Philosophy and the Black Experience

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STEPHEN C. FERGUSON II AND DWAYNE TUNSTALL, CO-EDITORS

VOLUME 18 | NUMBER 1 | FALL 2018

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## FROM THE EDITORS

Stephen C. Ferguson II  
NORTH CAROLINA A&T STATE UNIVERSITY

Dwayne Tunstall  
GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

With this issue, we would like to introduce a new feature of the newsletter, "Footnotes to History." For the last thirty years, there has been an explosion of Black philosophical writings on the philosophical canon, a development that parallels the explosion of writings about Black history and Black literature. The first stage of this project has generally taken on the character of unveiling the "whiteness" of the philosophical canon. They reject the historical exclusion of Black philosophers from the philosophical canon. Many Black philosophers have offered illuminating discussions of the racial biases lurking in the theories of canonical philosophers from Plato to David Hume to John Rawls. Yet, this dialectical moment has become stuck in the moment of negation. The time has come to recover the lost voices of past Black philosophers. Canon revision entails rediscovering the philosophical ideas developed by past Black philosophers. It should not be lost on the reader that what was Negro History Week, which Dr. Carter G. Woodson popularized and is now known as Black History Month, emerged as a solution to the neglect of the contributions that Blacks have made to US history. The history of African American philosophy provides us and future generations with philosophical ideas from past Black philosophers that are relevant to addressing current and future philosophical issues. One can even say that the *future* of African American philosophy rests on a recovery of the *history* of African American philosophy. In any case, as William R. Jones warned so many years ago, if we ignore the African American philosophical tradition, philosophy in the United States and elsewhere will continue to march under the banner of "FOR WHITES ONLY."

"Footnotes to History" will provide a brief biography of past Black philosophers and a selection of their writings. Hopefully, this will be the spark that starts a prairie fire. The first "Footnotes to History" is on Charles A. Frye (1946–1994).

We are excited to devote most of this issue to a book symposium on Alfred Frankowski's timely book, *The Post-Racial Limits of Memorialization: Toward a Political Sense of Mourning* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015). The articles in this symposium originated as commentaries

delivered at an "Author Meets Critics" session on Alfred Frankowski's *The Post-Racial Limits of Memorialization* during the 2017 American Society for Aesthetics conference in New Orleans, LA.

Noëlle McAfee's article, "Reading Alfred Frankowski's *The Post-Racial Limits of Memorialization*," begins by analyzing a few of the key terms in the book's title: "post-racial," "limits of memorialization," and "toward a political sense of mourning." Then, she offers a Freudian account of what Frankowski calls *post-racial memorials*. She contends that these memorials can be understood as melancholic memorials. As such they do not and cannot facilitate our grieving of racial violence committed against Black people in the United States. Rather, they actively prevent us from mourning racial violence, whether that violence occurred in the past or is occurring now. McAfee interprets Frankowski as contending that what we need, instead, are memorials that facilitate the work of mourning. These memorials would facilitate the grieving process by all parties affected by the losses caused by racial violence, namely, all of us.

In "Common Sense and Racial Sensibility: Three Conversations on *The Post-Racial Limits of Memorialization*," Michael L. Thomas conducts three conversations relevant to understanding the central motif of Frankowski's book. The first conversation is a continuation of an exchange between Thomas and Frankowski in the *Syndicate* symposium on Frankowski's *Post-Racial Limits of Memorialization*. He analyzes Frankowski's Cassandra Complex using James Baldwin's concept of the "sense of reality." Baldwin's concept lets us see that there are at least two distinct sensibilities in the United States: a white (racial) sensibility and Black (racial) sensibility. The white sensibility depends on people feeling that they are innocent of the racial violence committed in the past and in the present and that the American Dream is available to everyone. The Black sensibility, on the other hand, is one in which Black people feel as though they cannot escape being potential and actual victims of racial violence even as they live in a supposedly post-racial context. Thomas contends that rather than simply accept the existence of two distinct sensibilities based on the absurdities of a post-racial context (that is, a context in which racial violence is regarded as part of our dark past even though Black people are still victims of racial violence), perhaps we should explore those moments when both Black and white people have had a shared sense of reality to lay the groundwork for a shared aesthetic sensibility. In the second conversation, Thomas explores how the Kantian notion of common sense, as interpreted by Frankowski and Monique Roelof, can be rehabilitated and used to form a shared sensibility

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between Black people and white people. In the third conversation, Thomas discusses Jerrod Carmichael's HBO comedy special, *8*, to illustrate the possibility of forming a shared sensibility between Black people and white people in a post-racial context.

In "Politicizing Aesthetics May Not Be Enough: On Alfred Frankowski's *The Post-Racial Limits of Memorialization*," Dwayne A. Tunstall raises three concerns about Frankowski's project. Tunstall's first concern stems from Frankowski's notion of the political sense of mourning. He questions whether mourning has any political relevance beyond "motivating some people to create memorials to racial injustices in the past so that others can be reminded not to inflict racial violence on marginalized racial groups today" (see p. 10 below). Tunstall's second concern involves Frankowski's apparent rejection of a "recognition politics," or a "politics of recognition," for contemporary Black people—namely, a politics in which US Blacks need to be recognized by non-Black allies with more political power than they possess to pursue their political interests effectively. Tunstall admits that a politics of recognition may not be a better strategy or tactic for confronting racial violence against Black people than a strategy aimed to transforming mourning the loss of Black lives due to racial violence into political action"; nevertheless, he contends that Black people collectively are not in a position to abandon a politics of recognition right now. Tunstall's third concern is that some segments of the US Black population will not consider Frankowski's racial realism and philosophical pessimism about the Black condition as accurate descriptions of their current condition.

In "Post-Racial Limits, Silence, and Discursive Violence: A Reply," Frankowski addresses the issues and concerns raised in McAfee's, Thomas's, and Tunstall's articles. He also briefly explains how *The Post-Racial Limits of Memorialization* was initially written to be a work of anxiety. The anxiety central to the book results from the continued and often neglected racial violence committed against Black people in a post-racial (that is, post-racialized) context. Yet, the post-racial discourse in the United States also masks the racialized dimension of the Trump administration's immigration policy and other policies that harm vulnerable communities. This current state of affairs has led Frankowski to regard his book as a work of agitation. He hopes that readers become uncomfortable with how post-racial discourse functions as a political strategy to divert our attention from the reality of racial violence against Black people and other vulnerable populations in the United States. He also calls for us to form a multiracial and multiethnic community dedicated to confronting anti-Black violence despite how unlikely we are to succeed in our efforts to build such a community without it succumbing to the very post-racial discourse that obscures present-day violence against Black people and other vulnerable populations.

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## SUBMISSION GUIDELINES AND INFORMATION

The *APA Newsletter on Philosophy and the Black Experience* is published by the committee on the status of Black philosophers. Authors are encouraged to submit original articles and book reviews on any topic in philosophy that makes a contribution to philosophy and the black experience broadly construed. The editors welcome submissions written from any philosophical tradition, as long as they make a contribution to philosophy and the black experience broadly construed. The editors especially welcome submissions dealing with philosophical issues and problems in African American and Africana philosophy.

All article submissions should be between 10 and 20 pages (double spaced) in length, and book reviews should be between 5 and 7 pages (double spaced) in length. All submissions must follow the APA guidelines for gender-neutral language and *The Chicago Manual of Style* formatting. All submissions should be accompanied by a short biography of the author. Please send submissions electronically to [apa.pbe.newsletter@gmail.com](mailto:apa.pbe.newsletter@gmail.com).

### DEADLINES

Fall issues: May 1

Spring issues: December 1

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### FORMATTING GUIDELINES

- The *APA Newsletters* adhere to *The Chicago Manual of Style*.
- Use as little formatting as possible. Details like page numbers, headers, footers, and columns will be added later. Use tabs instead of multiple spaces for indenting. Use *italics* instead of underlining. Use an "em dash" (—) instead of a double hyphen (--).
- Use endnotes instead of footnotes. Examples of proper endnote style:

John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 90.

See Sally Haslanger, "Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them To Be?" *Noûs* 34 (2000): 31–55.

## FOOTNOTES TO HISTORY

### *Charles A. Frye (1946–1994)*

Born in Washington, DC, on March 18, 1946, Charles Anthony Frye attended Howard University in Washington, where he received a bachelor's degree in political science in 1968 and a master's degree in African studies in 1970.

He was professor and core coordinator in philosophy at the Banneker Honors College at Prairie View A&M University. As the former chair of Black Studies at Hampshire College, he founded *The New England Journal of Black Studies*. Frye also served as the director of the Center for African and African American Studies at Southern University at New Orleans (SUNO).

In 1976 he received a doctorate from the University of Pittsburgh. His dissertation, "The Impact of Black Studies on the Undergraduate Curricula of English and Selected Social Sciences at Three Universities," was later published as *Toward a Philosophy of Black Studies* in 1978.

Charles Frye worked in the areas of African philosophy and African American studies. He also studied how arcane African rituals became entwined with Christianity.

Over his twenty-five-year career, Dr. Frye not only taught at Prairie View A&M University, Hampshire College, and Southern University at New Orleans, but also at Howard University, Northeastern University, the City College of New York, and the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

He died of cancer on October 8, 1994, at the age of forty-eight. His papers are currently held at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Books Division in New York City.

#### SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

*African Ethical Development*. New Orleans, LA: [Charles Frye], 1980.

"Black Studies: Definition and Administrative Model." *Western Journal of Black Studies* 1, no. 2 (1977): 93–97.

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## ARTICLES

### *Reading Alfred Frankowski's The Post-Racial Limits of Memorialization*

Noëlle McAfee

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Before offering a commentary on Alfred Frankowski's sublimely monumental book, *The Post-Racial Limits of Memorialization: Toward a Political Sense of Mourning*, let me first share my reading of it by taking up the key elements of its title. I will then offer a Freudian account of the melancholic aspects of the very memorial culture that Frankowski describes without ever using the word *melancholia*.

#### POST-RACIAL

The term *post-racial* occurs throughout the book as a modifier for all manner of matters: *post-racial discourse*, *post-racial politics*, *post-racial society*, *post-racial violence*, *post-racial memorialization*, and *post-racial memory*; yet, it is never taken at face value. Rather, in every use of the term, Frankowski sets it in italics. While he does not comment upon the typography, the meaning becomes clear: *post-raciality* is not a fact but a trope, one used to hide the reality of ongoing racism, a trope that attempts to erase what needs to be remembered. Its use always marks a contradiction: "The contradictions of *post-raciality* are clear," Frankowski writes. "The bodies of the racialized are prefigured in their exploitation and create the material symbols that hold up a society that appears to be *post-race* and yet are politically thoroughly racist" (9). The effect of this contradiction is material; it leads to "a transition of meaning, in which violence is learned, adapted to, and framed out of thought both in terms of what counts as knowledge and whose lives count as world-historical" (9).

"*Post-racial discourse*," he writes, "is always already implied within the ways we represent oppression and implicit in how we perceive and come to know both the oppression of the past and the oppression of the present" (107). Usually this is by way of depicting past oppression as over and reconciled and by neglecting ongoing phenomena of oppression. The past is neatly relegated, the present context neglected.

#### LIMITS OF MEMORIALIZATION

Whenever memorials, however well-meaning, are erected in an attempt to reconcile with the past, to announce that things are better now, to provide closure, memorialization itself becomes *post-racialized*. Frankowski points to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial in Washington, DC, unveiled in 2012, as the first *post-racial memorial*. It is so, Frankowski writes, in its attempt to situate racism safely in the past, calling for a forgetting of the many struggles to

which white society was and continues to be un-empathetic (2-3). Memorial culture attempts to both address and evade violence, but it attempts closure too neatly and too soon.

In Frankowski's compelling account, memorials fail when they attempt tidy representations and reconciliations of a violent racist past because "[their] representations function to both aestheticize the out-moded content, while depoliticizing its context" (39). Such a memorial attempts to halt memory in its tracks. It announces an achievement, an overcoming, and a time to heal old wounds. Pure representation offers a path toward reconciliation: this is what happened, with this memorialization we signal peace, and now racism is no more.

The alternative is to find a way to memorialize that does not evade or disavow ongoing troubles. Frankowski finds the key to this in Kant's theory of the Sublime. Unlike the Beautiful, which "is a movement away from tension and toward illumination" (72), the Sublime unsettles: it is a "diremptive force" that "unsettles us [so] that we present to ourselves that which outstrips our ability of representation" (89). Where the Beautiful becomes silent in relation to the Sublime, Frankowski follows the thread of silence to "develop further . . . a political sense of mourning" (89). Where there is silence, there needs to be questioning, reconfiguration, and tarrying with what is unsettling, uneasy, and incomplete.

One of the several examples Frankowski offers of this sort of memorial is Billie Holiday's haunting song "Strange Fruit":

Southern trees bear strange fruit  
 Blood on the leaves and blood at the root  
 Black bodies swinging in the southern breeze  
 Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees

Pastoral scene of the gallant South  
 The bulging eyes and the twisted mouth  
 Scent of magnolias, sweet and fresh  
 Then the sudden smell of burning flesh!

Here is fruit for the crows to pluck  
 For the rain to gather, for the wind to suck  
 For the sun to rot, for the trees to drop  
 Here is a strange and bitter crop.<sup>1</sup>

Holiday's musical memorial, Frankowski writes, "serves to remember exactly what is being displaced in the space of memory" (51). It is not set in the exact past of the lynching, but in the aftermath of the lynching that takes place in the song's present. "Here is the fruit for the crows to pluck." Uncannily, here it still is indeed, too often relegated to a history too easily unnoticed, packed away, *post-racialized*. Billie Holiday's musical memorial opens up the past to haunt the present.

### TOWARD A POLITICAL SENSE OF MOURNING

The words of the subtitle, "toward a political sense of mourning," recur throughout the book. By *mourning*, Frankowski has something specific in mind: "[W]e keep our practices of resistance alive by suspending the idea that mourning will bring about resolution—instead we focus on

living within and living through our context" (107), which means "taking up action against those conditions that mark those lives as always already dead to begin with" (108).

As he closes the book, Frankowski suggests that mourning is political in that it is a way to "rethink our strategies, our agency, and our practical relations to concrete forms of oppression" (108). "It is not merely an intervention," he writes, "but a way of rethinking the texture of our life and the activity of our position" (108). Mourning begins to look like forgiveness when Frankowski writes that it allows us "to reclaim our political agency by accepting how every person, as a result of our contemporary existential condition, is entangled in processes that produce oppression toward others and result in our own identity as an object of oppression itself" (109).

### MELANCHOLIC MEMORIALS

So now I turn to my own thoughts on the text, which I have to admit are haunted by Freud, who makes his appearance in a few passages but is otherwise hardly present. I find it curious that in a book on the political work of mourning, especially given what Frankowski notes are recurrent *failures* to mourn, the word *melancholia* never appears. There is the shadow of despair; there is sorrow and neglect, but there is no mention of what Freud referred to in his essay on mourning and melancholia as the shadow of the object:

Thus the shadow of the object fell upon the ego, and the latter could henceforth be judged by a special agency, as though it were an object, the forsaken object. In this way an object-loss was transformed into an ego-loss and the conflict between the ego and the loved person into a cleavage between the critical activity of the ego and the ego as altered by identification.<sup>2</sup>

Where in mourning, the libido is de-catheted from the lost object and finds new objects, in melancholia the libido withdraws into the ego, which undergoes an identification with the lost object. The libido is no longer object seeking; it has withdrawn, and with it the shadow of the lost object, where residual ambivalence, unfinished business, engulfs the ego, which then can never be done with the lost object, whose long shadow diminishes the ego's self-regard. Where true mourning allows for a process of grieving, melancholia forestalls grief and nurtures grievances and self-hatred.

I tread cautiously in connecting this Freudian account of mourning and melancholia to the issues Frankowski takes up; and, frankly, I worry that a facile comparison could go badly: that some might call for those who have been wounded to stop nurturing their grievances and move on. That would be a terrible reading. Moreover, a comparison is unwieldy because there does not seem to be a neat parallel: it is not clear that there is a particular lost object for which mourning is called. We have an idea of who suffers a loss but not exactly of what has been lost. The lost object seems to have no name. There is neglect and its sign—longing—but naming the lost object seems impossible. Sometimes all we have is silence.

“The Sublime and mourning are ways of articulating life in relation to the unreconcilability of something coming to an end and still living on at the same time” (92). There are ample signs of the crime, including all those collected in the curious museum of racist artifacts, but what they conjure up is only disorienting, like figures of the sublime that Frankowski describes toward the end of the book, objects that show how Blacks had been depicted and objects that still show how these motifs are still at play (88), making sensible what is unrepresentable (93):

The museum does not work like memory so much as it plays off of allegorical modes of silencing. And silence too needs to be thought of in more ways that link it to the activity of resistance, the activity of contextualizing violence and what is lost in our collective past and collective sense of our present. For something to go silent does not mean that there is merely a nonexistent content or a passive content at lay. Silence may also be that orientation toward that which all of the content, all of the words, fail to appropriate. (88)

Of course, while we may not be able to point to a lost object or some particular internalization of its loss, there have been grave losses, traumas, and wounds: the slave trade, the Middle Passage, families torn apart, loved ones murdered and terrorized, Jim Crow, all anti-Black racism that continues to this day, have robbed, killed, destroyed, stolen from Blacks. As Frankowski argues throughout the book, these all call for mourning. But throughout the book, I was frustrated by the absence of any specificity about what exactly has to be mourned or when it would be done. Frankowski seems to be calling for perennial mourning, which lies on the border between Freud’s mourning and melancholia. Where the mourner finds new attachments and the melancholic will not grieve old ones, the perennial mourner continues both to hold on to and to grieve its losses. I am not sure if there is a good way out of this quandary. So long as racism stays in the present, then mourning must remain perennial and unfinished.

And as for the absent word, *melancholia*, maybe its avatar is *post-racialization*. Perhaps melancholia is not being nursed by those oppressed who fail to grieve but by *post-racial discourses* that announce no need to grieve. Perhaps what is melancholic are not oppressed peoples but whole cultures that encrypt loss in memorial tombs. My way of putting it fits well with Frankowski’s. Recall his account of the MLK memorial as a *post-racial* memorial that attempts to erase any need to grieve. It attempts to situate racism safely in the past, calling for a forgetting of the many struggles to which white society was and continues to be un-empathetic (2-3). In attempting to both address and evade violence, it seeks closure too neatly and too soon. Such memorials cast a melancholic shadow, disavowing any need for grieving. The work of mourning, then, is a work that needs to be undertaken by all affected, on all sides of the ledgers of loss.

This brings me to a question I had throughout the book: Who is the “we” that Frankowski invokes on nearly every page? Throughout the text, the author calls on the reader

to take up the project, using the pronoun “we”—but I never was sure whom the “we” scooped up. In the final pages, Frankowski begins to answer it: “We are oppressed/oppressing subjects, and as such we need to take the oppression of others as matters that imply our own fate” (108). For Frankowski, this involves “suspending the progressive cultural narrative around issues of our cultural violence” (108). (I would like for him to address what he means here.) He points to a “shared neurosis when it comes to issues of racism” (might this be melancholia?) that can be ameliorated by taking up “the task of reconfiguring our own activity . . . as a practice of *living with* ourselves and others and *living through* our context” (108).

All of us in this we, Frankowski further suggests, whites and Blacks, oppressors as well as the oppressed, are collectively afflicted by the neurosis of racism. Might this be melancholia? Working through what gives rise to this neurosis involves the work of mourning, which seems to mean, though he never exactly says this, getting over idealizations of there being saints and sinners, evil and its overcoming, reconciliation and closure. And instead of erecting melancholia memorials, we need to remember in a way that *decrypts* our collective and internal tombs of loss.

#### NOTES

1. Billie Holiday, “Strange Fruit,” recorded April 20, 1939, track 1 of 20th Century Masters – *The Best of Billie Holiday: The Millennium Collection*, Universal, 2002, iTunes.
2. Sigmund Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia” (1917), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIV (1914–1916): On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works*, ed. and trans. by James Strachey (London, UK: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1957), 249.

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## *Common Sense and Racial Sensibility: Three Conversations on The Post Racial Limits of Memorialization*

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Al Frankowski’s *The Post-Racial Limits of Memorialization: Towards a Political Sense of Mourning* is a crucial source for thinking about the role of aesthetics in our attempts to address the fissures in sensibility across racial lines and inside racial groups. I’d like to use this space to engage with Frankowski’s work through a series of conversations that aim at a wider sense of racialization as an aesthetic process. What I hope to show is that thinking in terms of aesthetics helps generate a field for creating concepts that allow us to address what it means to find a shared sensibility of the persistence of racial violence in what’s called our “post-racial” context. It also sets some conditions on scholarship to avoid pitfalls created by what Monique Roelofs has called processes of aesthetic racialization and racialized aestheticization.



## CONVERSATION 1: FRANKOWSKI AND I IN SYNDICATE

The context for this discussion is a short exchange between Frankowski and me in a symposium on his book in *Syndicate*.<sup>1</sup> In this discussion, I attempted to wrap my head around the Cassandra Complex through an analysis of the opening to Du Bois's *Souls of Black Folk*:

Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question: unasked by some through feelings of delicacy; by others through the difficulty of rightly framing it. All, nevertheless, flutter round it. They approach me in a half-hesitant sort of way, eye me curiously or compassionately, and then, instead of saying directly, How does it feel to be a problem? they say, I know an excellent colored man in my town; or, I fought at Mechanicsville; or, Do not these Southern outrages make your blood boil? At these I smile, or am interested, or reduce the boiling to a simmer, as the occasion may require. To the real question, How does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word.<sup>2</sup>

In this scene, Du Bois provides us with a division between two worlds. These worlds are divided by distinctly racialized modes of experience, which are characterized by differences in sensibility. For Du Bois, the "problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line" insofar as the dichotomization of racial relations into Black and white veils experience. Outside of the veil, white gazes can see the horror of race without sensing the violence involved in being racialized. Inside the veil, one is left to wrestle with being seen by the outer world as the embodiment of a problem: an object of uncertainty, compassion, or violence, but rarely, if ever, a subject to be addressed.

"The real question" is unasked because Du Bois's interlocutors actively refuse to sense discomfort that would make it addressable. They react, instead, through displacing the problem by denying its psychological, historical, and spatial presence in their context. The first interlocutor uses contacts with members of Du Bois's identity group to assert his innocence. The second appeals to participation in a previous struggle to claim he's paid his dues. They both indicate their roles as allies while denying the experience of their ally. The third speaker distances the place of racism, isolating it to the South as opposed to, presumably, the North. Thus, Du Bois is effectively silenced, visible in his blackness, but invisible as a moral agent. He manages the discomfort generated by his presence, but is left alone with his "strange experience," which the other world can sense but can't address.

This reading of being a problem parallels Frankowski's Cassandra Complex, an aesthetic complex of relations and denials that numb our sense of violence in our shared reality through the feeling that it is "unthinkable because it is too distant in the past or too opaque in the present to understand."<sup>3</sup> In Du Bois's encounters, the white responses to his presence deny the interpersonal racism is in play, displace it from the present to the Civil War past, and isolate it away in the South, leaving the Yankees innocent of any

wrongdoing. This sensual displacement of violence from the present context marks racialized others as "killable" since the conditions leading to their deaths are not directly confronted.<sup>4</sup> The inability to address the problem, and thus Du Bois's own experience, means they do not treat him as subject to moral concern. In Kantian terms, they understand and have an anti-racist maxim in place, but lack the will to make it a moral duty. Thus, I pose the idea that we require a broader sense of the social aesthetics of race to develop forms of sensibility that can enable a sense of the racial violence that characterizes our present.

In response to my essay in *Syndicate*, Frankowski raises two important concerns when moving from this contextual frame to a broader social aesthetics:

- 1) The move to a broader social aesthetics must address Black vulnerability, white criticality, and indifference in order to highlight present practices that continue the history of racist violence.
- 2) It should maintain the connection between aesthetics and epistemology in the process of pleading innocence and shielding white sensibilities from aesthetic violence.<sup>5</sup>

I want to take up these two points in the following conversations by shifting the field of play. Going forward, I want to experiment with James Baldwin's concept of the "sense of reality" as the sensual plane where the distinction between people's lifeworlds takes place. The sense of reality, Baldwin says, is where our preconceptual ideological assumptions form an epistemic distinction between valid and invalid experiential testimony. It's what compels "[t]he white South African, southern sharecropper, or Alabama sheriff to believe that when they face the Negro that this woman, this man, this child I must be insane to attack the system to which he owes his entire identity."<sup>6</sup> White sensibility, in order to maintain its innocence in the face of racial violence, holds to the dream that these struggles are identical to their own projects of eventual progress and prosperity. The American Dream or, simply "The Dream" in Ta-Nehesi Coates's formulation, creates an imaginative space to abstract away from the violence felt in the present by entering into the fantasy of a perfected future.<sup>7</sup> For Black Americans, the persistence of this dream can serve as a reminder that they are isolated in this context of violence that their allies cannot see hiding in plain sight. Post-race is our most recent manifestation of this uncritical sensibility. In post-racial contexts, racial violence is recognized but displaced by the veil of race, inhibiting the ability to address how it feels to be a problem.

Thinking with Frankowski, let's explore whether this notion of the sense of reality opens a way of seeing the limits of racial sensibility and using these limits to identify forms of shared sensibility that can move from the isolation of recognition to relations of moral concern. If post-racial contexts isolate the reality of racial violence to the worlds of people of color, one response would be to develop a shared sense of reality that makes the pervasiveness and intensity of racialized violence sensible in a way that makes the absurdity of post-racialism sensible. These moments

of shared sensibility may allow us to develop the capacity to cultivate moral concern, laying the groundwork for genuine allyship and responses to the persistence of racist oppression.

## CONVERSATION 2: FRANKOWSKI AND ROELOFS ON "COMMON SENSE"

In *Post-Racial Limits of Memorialization*, Frankowski's analysis provides an account of the resonance between post-racial and racist sensibilities. In his contrast between Kant and Fanon, Frankowski illustrates that Kant's aesthetic reinforces white aesthetic supremacy by tying the pleasure taken in beauty to the expansion of one's own representation to the level of a shared social world.<sup>8</sup> In other words, the more a particular type of sensibility asserts itself as dominant, the greater level of pleasure taken by the one who holds that sensibility. As Monique Roelofs demonstrates in "Racialization as an Aesthetic Production,"<sup>9</sup> Kant follows Hume in aestheticizing whiteness by a process of aesthetic racialization that mobilizes the taste of the white male bourgeois subject as the criterion for the beautiful. In addition, as Frankowski illustrates, Kant produces a form of racialized aestheticization that justifies the expansion of the white (aesthetic) lifeworld as a civilizational project. Civilization relies on the expanding dominance of a sense of beauty felt by white sensibility, making it a white supremacist project. What Roelofs adds to Frankowski's account of Kant's aesthetics is that Kant invokes common sense as a maker for the universality of this particular sensibility among rational agents who participate in civilized society. Thus, beauty as felt by the white male bourgeois subjects is not only universal; it should also be intuitive to everyone regardless of one's race or ethnicity if you've learned to sense things in the right way. In post-racial terms, the problem with racism is that you still see race. The problem with a Kantian post-racial aesthetic, both in terms of its logical and its aesthetic sensibility, is that it presumes that one can solve racial violence and injustice without directly addressing it.

This reading of Kant, along with Baldwin, shows how post-racial contexts make it common sense that racism exists, while simultaneously inhibiting a common sense of the violence at work in our present context. Resistance to sensing the racialized violence in post-racial contexts is a defense mechanism against sensing the discord present in the harmonious view many people want to hold of their reality. When Baldwin says of white Americans that "they don't know and they don't want to know" about the experience of Black Americans, he's gesturing to the fact that knowing the experience of Black Americans means sensing the reality of this violence and sensing the reality of this violence is impossible without breaking the pleasure tied to the security of believing in American justice. The "American Dream," whether a marker for a return to a glorious past or a post-racial future, requires a universal sense that things are going to be great or can be great again. Knowing racial violence means disturbing this sense of reality, accepting the justification of dissenting experiences, and denying American innocence. It means waking up from the dream.

The connection between the epistemic and the aesthetic points to alternative forms of common sense that owe their force to the contrast of shared situations with different forms of sensibility. In Baldwin's analysis, there's the common sense of the southern sheriff and sharecropper that treats African Americans critiques of US social and political life as ignorant and counterintuitive. Dave Chappelle invokes another form of racialized common sense in his *Saturday Night Live* monologue where he claims that he's not surprised that Donald Trump won the 2016 presidential election because "he knows the Whites."<sup>10</sup> Here, Chappelle decentralizes the common sense of American citizens, media, and polls, who were certain that Donald Trump could not become president. As a counterexample to this supposed common sense of American citizens, he uses the common sense of a historically informed black understanding of American politics. His use of humor accentuates the subversion of conventional wisdom (read: white conventions of the contractual enlightenment type). I would add that America has seen this same dynamic play out before in Louisiana. The 1991 Louisiana gubernatorial election pitted career politician Edwin Edwards against (former) Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan David Duke. While Edwards won 61 percent to 38 percent, it's worth noting that in the general primary Duke beat out the incumbent Republican candidate, Buddy Roemer, 31 percent to 26 percent. These moments are indicators of the persistence of white supremacist ideals in the political discourse of American conservatism. If anyone remembers the Tea Party backlash that accompanied Obama's election, they've seen this side of America before.

This notion of racialized forms of common sense maps divisions in our national sense of reality. Following Gillian Johns, we can say that Chappelle's comedy articulates a point of discord in the desired harmony of American innocence, pointing to an alternative form of common sense that sees and feels what the veil of race disarticulates.<sup>11</sup> The path toward a shared sensibility requires a manner of making sense that, to be epistemically honest, must include the discord at work in our patterns of beauty to develop an honest account for the violence at work in our context.<sup>12</sup>

## CONVERSATION 3: SHARED SENSIBILITY?

What tools do we have at our disposal for a social aesthetics that accepts the discord at work behind harmony and moves from differentiated modes of common sense to a shared sensibility? Frankowski's political sense of mourning provides one method of approach insofar as it aims to reanimate our sense of the historical violence which persists in the present. The challenge of mourning is that, if Frankowski is right about the Cassandra complex, there's a large-scale aesthetic project required to make violence sensible in the right way. Chappelle's comedy gives us one path. By invoking discord and violence as a form of knowledge, he gives a polite "we told you so" to innocent American sensibilities. He plays a game of truth that uses humor as a vehicle to make sense outside of white common sense. At the same time, this doesn't necessarily lead to shared understanding. The one-sided nature of Chappelle's use of common sense maintains the gulf between forms of sensibility, claiming complicity

to one side without invoking the patterns at work in the other.

A similar problem is at work in narratives of white self-criticism which, as Roelofs notes, “pass[es] off . . . whiteness as more self-critical than it can be”<sup>13</sup> in their self-aestheticization. (I should note that we can say the same of Blackness in some situations. One can be WOKE without waking from the dream.) In Suzy Hansen’s “Unlearning the Myth of American Innocence,” for example, we hear how she came to see the ideological sense of reality developed in her childhood in the 1980s once she goes abroad to Turkey.<sup>14</sup> Through her conversations with her Turkish guides, her attitude shifts from bemusement to understanding at their conspiratorial thinking about their government. She sees the degree to which she takes the American progressive narrative for granted, forcing her to rethink her position of privilege—kind of.<sup>15</sup> The story ends with her acknowledging her *potential* complicity as a journalist in perpetuating narratives that justify American violence abroad. Acknowledging that innocence is a myth and recognizing the chinks in America’s armor still don’t get someone to the point of altering sensibility.

Based on Hansen’s self-reported conversations with her Turkish guides, we can say that this instance of racial reflection falls back into the trap of innocence. Hansen recognizes the problem only to dismiss it. The consolation at the end of the narrative produces the pleasure of universalizing her own perspective on the matter, using an epistemology of ignorance to purify her sense of reality. Here, the question is if it’s possible to move from recognition to a shared sense of the reality of the history of systematic violence against racialized people in the United States. What I’ve hoped to show is that this requires us to acknowledge that our common sense is limited. Addressing this discord requires accepting the reality of the experience of marginalized groups. This mode of address may lead to the rejection of the experience of others (for example, sadistic racist ignorance), self-flagellation engaged by well-meaning white Americans (commonly called white guilt), or progressive innocence (for example, neoliberal theories of diversity), though the alt-right shows that it’s more complicated than this tripartite structure shows.<sup>16</sup>

As a closing remark, I want to offer a comedic strategy used by Jerrod Carmichael in his recent comedy special, 8. In the middle of the performance, he breaks an extended pause with the following:

“It’s exhausting being Black . . .

“It’s a lotta fucking work.”

“I mean . . . sure. It looks fun. Especially when we’re like dancing . . . flying through the air dunking on somebody . . .

“It’s amazing . . . but . . .”

“It’s a burden, right? I mean, every fucking day.”

He looks at a Black audience member with two white men to his right and a white woman to his left:

“You’re here with white people.”

He points at the woman:

“You’re here with her?”

“Explain that to your grandma.”

Everyone laughs uncomfortably:

“Explain that to her [gestures to his friend].”

“Is your grandma alive?”

“Exactly, if she was alive, [gestures to the woman] you’d be a secret.”

Is this a moment of shared sensibility? I think it’s at least an opportunity. Carmichael’s joke works the same way for white Americans. If certain parents, grandparents, and other acquaintances are in play, your Black partner is a secret. The racial symmetry of this problem opens a space for seeing identical patterns of racialized social relations at work with a different sense of reality on either side of the division. It is not a moment of shared sensibility, but it is a space that’s full of material to tease out the similarities and differences for a sense of reality that captures the contrast between identity positions. Thus, it may be possible to say that we share a field of feeling but have different senses of reality due to divisions in our common sense. Bridging these gaps between political lifeworlds requires us to develop moments and sites of a common, differentiated sense of reality.

#### NOTES

1. Michael Thomas, “Being A Problem: Aesthetic Violence and the Politics of Recognition,” in *Syndicate Philosophy*, symposia on *The Post-Racial Limits of Memorialization: Toward a Political Sense of Mourning* by Alfred Frankowski, ed. and with an introduction by Lissa Skitolsky (Cascade Books, May 22, 2017), <https://syndicate.network/symposia/philosophy/the-post-racial-limits-of-memorialization/>, accessed June 24, 2018.
2. W. E. B. Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 7.
3. Alfred Frankowski, *The Post-Racial Limits of Memorialization: Towards a Political Sense of Mourning* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015), 66.
4. *Ibid.*, 81.
5. Alfred Frankowski, “The Cassandra Complex and the Aesthetics of Social Death,” in *Syndicate Philosophy*, symposia on *The Post-Racial Limits of Memorialization: Toward a Political Sense of Mourning* by Alfred Frankowski, ed. and with an introduction by Lissa Skitolsky (Cascade Books, May 22, 2017), <https://syndicate.network/symposia/philosophy/the-post-racial-limits-of-memorialization/>, accessed June 24, 2018.
6. James Baldwin, “The American Dream and the American Negro,” in *New York Times*, March 7, 1965, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, *The New York Times* (1851–2004): SM32.
7. Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me* (New York, NY: Spiegel and Grau, 2015).
8. Frankowski, *The Post-Racial Limits of Memorialization*, 70–71.

9. Monique Roelofs, "Racialization as an Aesthetic Production: What Does the Aesthetic Do for Whiteness and Blackness and Vice Versa?," in *White on White/Black on Black*, ed. George Yancy (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), 83–124.
10. David Chapelle, "Monologue," *Saturday Night Live*, NBC, November 12, 2016, <http://www.nbc.com/saturday-night-live/video/dave-chappelle-standup-monologue/3424955?snl=1>.
11. Gillian Johns, "Humor (Theory) and the (Articulate) Surprise of Race," presentation at "Exploring Truth and Beauty in Worlds of Color," sponsored by the American Society for Aesthetics, Oberlin, OH, September 29–30, 2017.
12. A wider sense of social aesthetics must include, as Johns, quoting Ralph Waldo Ellison says, "the good music that came from the bell of old Bad Air's horn."
13. Roelofs, "Racialization as an Aesthetic Production," 112.
14. Suzy Hansen, "Unlearning the Myth of American Innocence," *The Guardian*, August 7, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/aug/08/unlearning-the-myth-of-american-innocence>, accessed June 24, 2018.
15. As Hansen writes in "Unlearning the Myth of American Innocence," "During that night of conspiracy theories, Emre had alleged, as foreigners often did, that I was a spy. The information that I was collecting as a journalist, Emre said, was really being used for something else. As an American emissary in the wider world, writing about foreigners, governments, economies partaking in some larger system and scheme of things, I was an agent somehow. Emre lived in the American world as a foreigner, as someone less powerful, as someone for whom one newspaper article could mean war, or one misplaced opinion could mean an intervention by the International Monetary Fund. My attitude, my prejudice, my lack of generosity could be entirely false, inaccurate or damaging, but would be taken for truth by the newspapers and magazines I wrote for, thus shaping perceptions of Turkey for ever.  

"Years later, an American journalist told me he loved working for a major newspaper because the White House read it, because he could 'influence policy'. Emre had told me how likely it was I would screw this up. He was saying to me: first, spy, do no harm."
16. Following Lorde and others, my sense is that this openness requires an intersectional understanding of the places in which our localized notions of common sense diverge from a shared sense of the whole and teasing out those differences in experience that form limits to sensibility across identity categories.

Emmett Till, *The Untold Story of Emmett Lewis Till*, could condemn the lynching of Emmett Till, but could not depict his fate or the fate of his family in terms other than ones of grief and tragedy. We are denied the right to mourn his death publicly, and in the present.

Second, post-racial discourse forecloses the possibility of demanding that our fellow citizens and residents take seriously their complicity in the deaths of Black people. Post-racial discourse discourages people from identifying too closely with the victims of state-sanctioned violence against Black people, of the victims of police brutality, of the victims of extra-judicial killings of Black people by white Americans. We are denied the right to challenge what Cheryl I. Harris and Devon W. Carbado call the *black criminality frame*, the epistemic frame under which law enforcement officers and extra-judicial surveillance officers (e.g., Neighborhood Watch volunteers) are allowed to presume that certain ethnic and racial groups (at least when these groups are located in certain geographical areas, e.g., inner-city neighborhoods and gated communities) are criminals or at least dangerous until proven otherwise. This can explain why President Obama wasn't afforded the right to identify with Trayvon Martin, a seventeen-year-old African American, in his brief response to the George Zimmerman verdict on July 19, 2013. George Zimmerman, a then twenty-eight-year-old neighborhood watch captain, could profile Martin as "a suspicious person," follow him as he walked in the gated community where his father and fiancée stayed in Florida, and then confront him without just cause. Within a post-racial context, a seventeen-year-old African American male has to be depicted as an angelic, extraordinary person before people are considered justified in expressing their outrage at his death. We cannot depict him as a normal teenager who was defiant against a suspicious stranger who demanded that he justify his very presence in the gated community where his father stayed. Nor can we voice the problems with a Florida police department's initial acceptance of Zimmerman's claim of self-defense.

We can combine these two problems with post-racial discourse this way: While we can condemn past acts of racial violence, we are not allowed to acknowledge publicly how the present brutalization of young Black people in an anti-Black society is a necessary component of the status quo. Post-racial discourse does not provide us with the practices and language required to talk about post-racial violence without remaining complicit in it, without accepting the institutions, attitudes, and practices that do violence to certain people. These evasions of racial violence are commonplace in a society where people are expected to speak about race using post-racial discourse.

Frankowski proposes a way to silence post-racial discourse and to disclose the vulnerability of Black bodies to racial violence even in a post-racial context—namely, "the *politicization of aesthetics* through a political sense of mourning."<sup>2</sup> In a post-racial context, memorials to commemorate Black sufferings and achievements would resist the tendency to de-racialize contemporary racial violence against Black people. They would also resist efforts to distance ourselves from our collective complicity in such

## Politicizing Aesthetics May Not Be Enough: On Alfred Frankowski's *The Post-Racial Limits of Memorialization*

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In *The Post-Racial Limits of Memorialization: Toward a Political Sense of Mourning*, Alfred Frankowski identifies what I consider to be the two main problems with post-racial discourse for Black people in the United States. First, post-racial discourse downplays the violent acts committed against Black people precisely because they are racially Black, reinterprets those acts so that they are viewed as having non-racial causes and occurring in non-racial circumstances, or neglects that such acts happen at all. When we speak of *racial violence* in a contemporary US context at all, we are allowed to remember, recognize, or represent acts of racial violence in public as tragic events that occurred in the past or as anomalies or aberration if they occur today.<sup>1</sup> For example, the 2004 documentary on

acts, given that we often willingly reap the benefits from the sociopolitical and economic system that was built on the enslavement of Africans, the genocide of Indigenous peoples, the exploitation of poor and working class laborers and prisoners, the economic and military dominance over the Americas, as well as condoned legal segregation, the internment camps for Japanese Americans living on the West Coast during the Second World War, etc. Memorials commemorating how Black people survived and overcame past racial injustices ought to be objects that initiate the public mourning process over those past injustices, but not in an attempt to reconcile our nation's past with our present conditions. Nor would those memorials function as places where people can mourn our past injustices together and then forget about those injustices as we collectively move forward to a better, post-racial future. Post-racial memorials created by artists guided by a political sense of mourning would be places where we can reimagine our political options, as well as our race-inflected political lifeworlds, in such a way that we can mourn but not neglect or forget about the state-sanctioned violence against marginalized groups, particularly Black people living in an anti-Black (as well as a misogynistic, sexist, xenophobic, jingoistic, ableist, transphobic) society. These memorials may even motivate some people to engage in activism against police brutality and other state-tolerated and sanctioned acts of racial violence against Black people. This orientation is compatible with the racial realism and philosophical pessimism Frankowski briefly discussed in the concluding chapter of his book.

Despite my sympathies with Frankowski's project, I have three concerns about it.

My first concern is that I am not confident that mourning should be expected to do anything political beyond motivating some people to create memorials to racial injustices in the past so that others can be reminded not to inflict racial violence on marginalized racial groups today. Memorials may invoke a sense of sensibility in its visitors, reminding them that the horrors of past racial violence still haunt our living present but cannot be exorcized from our communities. These horrors remain present to us and shape who we are, along with how and where we live with others (or fail to live with others). What else can the political sense of mourning accomplish other than reminding us that the legacy of racial violence is our social and cultural inheritance and that we are responsible for either carrying it forward or actively resisting it? In other words, is it enough to contend that the political sense of mourning "has the potential to be reconfigured as fundamentally an interruption, and [ . . . ] it is this sense in memorializations that are politically powerful to the extent that they make the present strange"?<sup>3</sup>

My second concern stems from Frankowski's view that recognition politics is not and cannot be a viable option for Black people to improve their material and social conditions in the United States. No Black community in the US is self-sufficient enough to eschew the politics of recognition as they work to improve their collective economic and social conditions. As the third largest racial/ethnic group in the United States, the Black population is

still dependent on some non-Black citizens recognizing their grievances against state-sanctioned and tolerated racial violence as legitimate ones. They are also dependent on the willingness of non-Black allies to form political coalitions with them strong enough to pressure legislators and legislatures to pass legislation to protect marginalized racial groups from police brutality and other unjust police actions. Can Black communities afford to adopt the political sense of mourning as a viable strategy or tactic for challenging anti-Black racism in government policies and people's everyday practices in a post-racial context? I am doubtful that this is the case. Seeking political recognition may not be a better strategy or tactic for challenging anti-Black racism in government policies and people's everyday practices in a post-racial context. Nevertheless, it is a more realistic approach than eschewing recognition altogether, at least given the US's current demographics.

Third, I can imagine the Black proponents of the American Dream responding to Frankowski's racial realism and philosophical pessimism this way:

This is America, where chromosomal predestination must be challenged by individual achievement. This is America, where a third Founding (taking Lincoln's promise at Gettysburg as the second) was achieved in the civil-rights movement and the momentous passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The inclusive promise of *We the People* was finally delivered to all peoples in this country. America has always been a place of regeneration, renewal, and self-examination, a place where peoplehood is not a given or a smug achievement but, rather, a long and continuous aspiration.<sup>4</sup>

These are the words of Jason Hill, who is a representative of the Black optimist idealist. He believes that any remaining problems facing Black people involve personal responsibility and a culture of poverty, not institutional racism. He is legion. He may grow more representative of Black immigrant sentiment in the US, as the Black immigrant population is estimated to increase from 3.8 million (8.7 percent of the total Black population in 2013, or roughly 1 in 11 Black Americans) to 16.5 percent of the total Black population (1 in 6 Black Americans) in 2060.<sup>5</sup> They will arrive in a post-racial context, listening to people speaking in the language of post-racial discourse. Some of them may be disinclined to identify with the struggles of African Americans who are descendants of enslaved Africans and free Africans in the US during slavery and of Black Americans in the US during Jim Crow. How would "the *politicization of aesthetics* through a political sense of mourning"<sup>6</sup> work for Black Americans who immigrated to the US for educational and economic reasons after the Jim Crow era? Why would they view the racial violence of the Jim Crow era as part of their history as residents and citizens of the United States? Why would they identify with African Americans whose ancestors were not immigrants in the classic sense, but were either enslaved or free during the antebellum period or lived through the Jim Crow era?

NOTES

1. See Alfred Frankowski, *The Post-Racial Limits of Memorialization: Toward a Political Sense of Mourning* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015), 77–78.
2. *Ibid.*, 108.
3. Alfred Frankowski, “The Cassandra Complex and the Aesthetics of Social Death,” in *Syndicate Philosophy*, symposia on *The Post-Racial Limits of Memorialization: Toward a Political Sense of Mourning* by Alfred Frankowski, ed. and with an introduction by Lissa Skitolsky, May 15, 2017, accessed April 15, 2018, <https://syndicate.network/symposia/philosophy/the-post-racial-limits-of-memorialization/>.
4. Jason D. Hill, “An Open Letter to Ta-Nehisi Coates: The Dream Is Real,” *Commentary Magazine*, September 13, 2017, accessed October 8, 2018, <https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/open-letter-ta-nehisi-coates/>.
5. See Christina M. Greer, *Black Ethnics: Race, Immigration, and the Pursuit of the American Dream* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 25, 140; see also Nielsen Company, *Increasingly Affluent, Educated and Diverse: African-American Consumers—The Untold Story* (2015), 12.
6. Frankowski, *The Post-Racial Limits of Memorialization*, 108.

*Post-Racial Limits, Silence, and Discursive Violence: A Reply*

Alfred Frankowski

SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY, CARBONDALE

*The Post-Racial Limits of Memorialization: Toward a Political Sense of Mourning* was intended to be a work of anxiety. Although I hope it continues in this line, given the contemporary political situation of anti-Black and anti-immigrant racism in the US, I also hope the ideas that set up this book are taken as a form of agitation. I hope it continues to agitate by making the uncomfortable present appear in reference to the political violence of the past that has never really gone away. I also hope we can see how important this agitation continues to be in the present.

As I was working out the details of my reply to the thoughtful articles in this issue, I was also obsessively following the news and thinking about how this country is trying (again) to deal with its explicit violence against vulnerable communities, a violence that appears at the intersection between a discourse on national identity centering around secure borders and discourse on human rights and the uses and abuses of political power.<sup>1</sup> I was struck by thoughts of how these policies are legal and the absence of any specter of illegality. I was struck by how the language of immigration was being employed and withdrawn, depending on whether there were sentiments for or against the policies. This is not simply a discourse about who is granted asylum, citizenship, or who is punished or excluded; nor is it only a discourse expressing the frailty of whiteness or white anxiety over an identity crisis;<sup>2</sup> rather, the discourse is sharply determined by a race discourse that does not appear as such aesthetically, and is marked by not only a lack of representation or appearing but a lack of sense. The current administration’s commitment to open, visible, and declarative political violence against racialized and invisible communities has served as both a memory

and repetition of this formative violence. But the shock that accompanies the “tough” immigration policy of separating children from parents is a decay of, if not a complete failure of, our collective political sensibility. What we have to confront in all of this is the possibility that despite the sensibility that accompanies protests and outrages—and no matter how the administration responds—the US continues to traumatize vulnerable populations and does so in a *post-racializing* register.

The articles in this issue by Noëlle McAfee, Michael Thomas, and Dwayne Tunstall have already presented a number of questions provoked by the book. In my reply, I would like to follow up on the questions presented from a slightly different angle and from the standpoint of agitation.

In *The Post-Racial Limits of Memorialization*, I attempted to disentangle the aesthetic critique from the political critique of this political moment, without excusing the violence that contemporary political discourse seemed to conceal or distance itself from. What is the use of aesthetic critique? How does it relate to political discourse? In what way does this relation connect to what we see on a concrete level? While our political discourse is global and focused on expansion, and thus is marked by how much of the globe and global histories we can touch and influence—and conversely be influenced by—aesthetically we are engaged in developing this political discourse by way of something different altogether. The more visible, the more on display, the more declarations to *never forget* that appear, the more all of these expressions get taken up as something distant—which is another way of saying that they are disarticulated in their articulation. The differences between the aesthetic critique and the political critique is striking, and set out the ground of *post-racial claims*. But in this context, the *post-racial* is thought of as a type of failure or limit. As Tunstall points out, a *post-racial discourse* is a type of silencing of the aesthetic, or a making un-sensible the violence directed towards Blacks as *violence*. It is in following up on this thought that McAfee points out that what *post-racial discourse* names is a discursive contradiction. *Post-racial discourse* exists in the failure of race-discourse in so many ways. Yet how we fail to speak and think about racism as a form of political violence in our speaking and thinking about racism makes the problem of silence and discursive contradictions not only about what can or cannot be said, but also about what histories, peoples, questions, and concepts appear as present, as known, and do so, in the same moment, without impact or any sense of meaning. For example, in the book I argue that the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial, *The Stone of Hope*, is the first *post-racial* memorial. It is a *post-racial memorial* because it represents a past that is not finished, but in the memorialization of King’s image, the history of anti-Black racism is taken up in a discourse of pastness, aligned with founding fathers, and part of the rich fabric of the US. Yet, the words from King’s speeches seem to constitute a unique analysis of the moral and political challenges of today. This in-betweenness, or this contradictoriness, is important because it is through this that the memorial becomes a site of *post-racialization* whereby the monument is both interruption and continua at the same time. Not only does this reveal the violence of the *post-racial* through an aesthetic critique as a type of

displacement and silencing, but it shows us that the *post-raciality* is violence, and it is so as part of contemporary sensibility.

The *post-racial limits* of memorialization, then, are about emphasizing violence that is relational to our context. We cannot understand America without engaging its anti-Black structure any more than we could understand colonialism without reference to anti-Black practices that brought Chattel slavery into the world.<sup>3</sup> The problem is not that we know little of these events or relations, but rather that we know them too well; we know them and know them in such a way that to see them as something present does not make sense. In this way, *post-racial discourse* is not just contradictory, it is neurotic. But this makes Tunstall's question concerning whether or not memorials can be the interruption we need both urgent and complicated given our shared *post-racial context*. It is complicated because we need to understand the hermeneutical challenge imposed on us by the post-racialization of the memorial. While memorials to the history of anti-Black violence operate as interventions, as interruptions, and as moments of shared justice, they do so in a *post-racial context* that is predicated on understanding them only to ensure that their political violence does not make sense. After all, there is a difference between an intervention that is tolerated and an intervention that challenges the terms of our present political world itself. This is the question that the Equal Justice Initiative's (EJI) *National Memorial for Peace and Justice*, which opened in the spring of 2018 in Montgomery, Alabama, has to navigate, and the problem is not solely with the memorial or the act of memorialization. The *Memorial for Peace and Justice* stands as the nation's first and only memorial to this country's history of lynching. Much of the anticipation and anxiety around this memorial is whether or not the memorial will be the interruption we need. Aesthetically, the memorial is powerful in how it is constructed out of hanging pillars that identify the county and the names of people who were determined to be lynched. A number of pillars have "unnamed" persons identified as well, marking the silence that continues.

Tunstall's question hits right at the nerve of the conjunction between aesthetic critique and political discourse that I have been thematizing as *post-racial*. The memorial is undeniably powerful and will likely remain a significant marker for Black communities, and especially so for those who can trace their histories within the country's practices of lynching violence. On the week of its opening, a number of news articles and outlets ran segments on the memorial, interviewing both Brian Stevenson, one of the lawyers for the EJI, and others who are connected to this history. As wonderful as the opening of this memorial is, the press surrounding the opening of such a traumatic history was eerily similar. The stories often began by framing the memorial as a confrontation with a moment in America's dark past. *PBS NewsHour* and NPR ran stories detailing the memorial and EJI's task to confront our dark history of racism in order to heal. These discursive practices are banal and perverse at the same time. They set the memorial as a representation of a past that has been silenced and therefore positioned the general public in the present as the ones who can address this past. While the segments

represented lynching as one of the details of history, it ran against the most incisive elements of the EJI's own research, which shows lynching was no detail, but a fully developed and extremely public system. And more disturbingly, as the segments focused on this unfortunate racism, they did little to name it as what it was, namely, anti-Black terrorism—nor did they make it appear as what it continues to be: a political agenda of anti-Black terrorism. By discursively displacing the memorial in this way, it makes no sense to link these memorials to the uptick in explicit white supremacist violence, the re-emergence of explicit lynching, the immigration/refugee policies, and the continual political violence exerted in plain view. These all have deep roots in the history of lynching, and yet *post-racialization* makes this appear as a Black issue or issues pertaining to a particular group. I do not want to deny the significance of the particularity of this, but to make something a *Black issue* in an *anti-Black context* is to make it only the concern of a particular group, and therefore it is of no real importance—or what amounts to the same thing: it appears as a problem whose general or universal importance makes no sense.

If the representational limit of the memorial is that the representation *is its silence*, then we are still left with the question as to whether the memorial can be more than its silence. Can we understand our anti-Black context as part of the silence that issues from the limits of a memorial silence? Moreover, given that the analysis of the Cassandra complex poses a social pathological dis-ordering of the sensible, can we know the difference between a silence that is complicit with post-racial formations and a silence that can disrupt this sensibility itself?

In this line of thought I take Michael Thomas's example to heart, because in his interpretation of it he does not suspend the idea of critical interventions that, while not being directly interruptive, achieve something of a confrontation with our discursive contradictions and modes of silencing composing and revealing the Cassandra complex. Thomas's article points out the role that comedy plays in animating not only dialogue that is silenced, but the affective import of the silences themselves. He illustrates this in the unspoken elements of a comedy routine performed by Jerrod Carmichael. Carmichael asks the audience, why must Black people get over things so quickly?! He illustrates this through some banter and uncomfortable conversation with the audience, but it is not just funny because it is absurd to say we should get over the murder of Michael Brown, but we will never forget 9/11; it reveals an unspoken way that the statements, taken separately, make sense. When Carmichael turns to an interracial couple in the audience, it is an aesthetic shock to find Carmichael noting that she would be a secret if his grandmother were alive. Thomas argues that this humor exploits the contradictory discourse and silences of the Cassandra complex. It exploits the anti-Black context, as a sensibility and as a form of knowing, that is necessarily displaced in *post-racial discourse* and quite possibly embodied in the couple's relationship, a disquiet that Thomas illustrates as a confrontation with reality in Baldwin. Thomas points out the importance of the "You would be a secret" line because it draws into question not only that we have a shared sensibility around silence,

but also what that shared sensibility means. Moreover, this line is not located in the past, as in, “you would be a secret if this were the 1940s”—it is, you would be a secret if she were alive today. I think there is something to the fact that Carmichael is bringing a melancholy moment onto the stage in that in their recognition of the secret, in some sense, they are both and their relationship is still a secret. It is just a secret *post-racialized*, and thus insofar as it is retained as part of the public. Maybe the more unsettling point is that in an anti-Black society, progress is not only marked by how visible its anti-Black political violence is, but also in what ways it disfigures interpersonal relationships from the social to the family to the embodied, a disfigurement that cannot help but turn the interior inside out, if not in terms of representation, then in terms of practices.

Post-racialization is a structural name for a set of practices that conceal the political violence of racism we live through. In line with this, McAfee points out the resonances of this analysis with psychoanalytic understandings of mourning, but not only with reference to Freud. Much like Freud, I am emphasizing the complete questioning of meaning undergone in keeping loss personal and present. But there are significant differences and differences as to what questions are kept present and what this means. The articulation of loss in Freud is itself a marking of a negative relationality, a marking of silence that places the ego, or one’s place in the world, in question. This tells us something essential about the difference between psychoanalytic understandings of pathology and the task of thinking anti-Blackness as the context of our discursive practices. In psychoanalytical theory, we must assume a subjectivity, a representability, and an individuality that has never been materially present in modernity for Black thought or subjects, and what this assumed subject is saying is only made to say exactly what our discursive practices can’t understand. Yet she must say it in a way that it can be understood, and said in such a way that everyone else knows that what is said has been understood as something known all along. That is, the psychoanalytic focus on mourning is set up to engage in a set of discursive practices within a horizon of its own possibilities, practices that conceal what we know and don’t know, and to conceal it in such a way that what is said we have known and deny reality or even the knowability of reality. Knowing and not knowing is consummate not only with a sense of what one sees or the process of un-seeing, but rather the entire pattern of coordinated aesthetics, that is, a pathology of the sensible.<sup>4</sup> Yet, unlike psychoanalysis, the problem is not the resolving of the community so much as unsettling it. The *post-racial limits* of memorialization are indeed limits. They put resolution in question, no matter how critical the analysis.

I would further argue that the practice of mourning in a political sense is a practice of agitation that is *not for the sake* of some goal or end. It may be very close to what McAfee describes in terms of a melancholy politics, one more focused on the hermeneutical stakes of interrogating the violence that determines the present as opposed to resolving the past and projecting the future. But our task, it seems, requires the emphasis of just this difference as a difference that is alienated in the *post-racial discourse* and appears only as a limit in front of which thinking and

speaking appear dumb or without sense. These limits are not just the foreground for understanding a political sense of mourning, but they also set the stage for mourning to be thought of again as a limit. This limit is clearly being agitated in the question as to whether or not groups that do not share a history of Jim Crow, a history of the anti-Black structures embedded in the roots of this country, need to mourn racialized violence against Black people in the US. What does mourning or any part of this analysis mean to them? After all, as Tunstall points out, Jason Hill and proponents of Hill’s view might argue that the anti-Black violence I am insisting upon is merely a result of tribalism or some other cynical view of the political.<sup>5</sup> There is nothing freakish about this position on its face. It makes sense. So the question remains as to what is required to reduce concrete realities, experiences of violence and systematic death, to nonsense. It seems to me that the violence that targets Blacks must be literally *seen* as incidental, unfortunate, and, maybe most of all, historical, but it does not make sense as a defining structure of our contemporary political moment. By reason, then, the talk that Ta-Nehisi Coates has with his son or any of the talks that Black parents have with their Black children about surviving anti-Black violence in this country does not make sense as anything other than a cynical philosophical interpretation or folk conception of the world. It is this *not making sense* that is exactly what is at stake in naming *post-racial discourse* as a strategy and a political agenda. What does not make sense *is* the confrontation of anti-Black violence as a present, political structure and not just a historical fact. And it is this point that makes the mourning that I am calling for about the formation of community generating from a confrontation with anti-Black violence as opposed to formations that seek to be universal by reducing, avoiding, or minimizing the significance of this violence, locally and globally.

My point throughout this reply has been to emphasize the need to draw into question the limits of the sensible in race discourse. I think in the present conditions where US administrations’ commitment to ultimately racist ideologies results in human rights catastrophes, we need to think the concrete particular as a universal; in other words, we need to take critical strides to understand what our discourse puts into play, and distinctly what it puts out of play, as politics. But that is the question the Cassandra complex continues to pose to us collectively, and a question it also poses to itself. As McAfee noted, the “we” in the book appears determinate, and yet it is continually configured in an indeterminate way. I hope the indeterminate we of this text continues to appear as an agitation. I hope it agitates the ways our identifying and thinking do not bind our commitments to actions that bring a just world into view. The questions we are confronted with in this book are not just who is addressed in it, but also what it means for the limits of racial discourse itself to be distinctly not in question for those of us who are dislocated in our confrontation with *post-racial violence*.

#### NOTES

1. See Seyla Benhabib’s “The Right to Have Rights: Hannah Arendt on the Contradictions of the Nation-State” and “The Law of Peoples, Distributive Justice, and Migration,” in *The Rights of Others: Aliens, Residents, and Citizens* (Cambridge, UK:



Cambridge University Press, 2004); and Eddy Souffrant's *Global Development Ethics: A Critique of Global Capitalism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2018).

2. See Linda Alcoff, *The Future of Whiteness* (Brooklyn, NY: Polity, 2015). Also see Alison Bailey, "'White Talk' as a Barrier to Understanding the Problem with Whiteness," in *White Self-Criticality beyond Anti-Racism: How Does It Feel to Be a White Problem?*, ed. George Yancy (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015), 37–56.
3. Frantz Fanon, "Racism and Culture," in *Toward the African Revolution: Political Essays*, trans. Haakon Chevalier, 29–44 (New York: Grove Press, 1967). Also see Edouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1997). Many scholars have argued that colonialism and slavery are part of the same historical and political foundation of the modern world, but Glissant argues that the experience of Western modernity is aesthetically tied to the experience of the slave ship, meaning it is the experience of capture, displacement, enslavement that informs our sensibility through and through.
4. See Judith Butler, "Endangered/Endangering: Schematic Racism and White Paranoia," in *Reading Rodney King/Reading Urban Uprising*, ed. Robert Gooding-Williams (New York: Routledge, 1993), 15–22. Alexis Shotwell offers a comparative analysis of this in her essay, "Unforgetting as a Collective Tactic," in *White Self-Criticality beyond Anti-Racism: How Does It Feel to Be a White Problem?*, ed. George Yancy (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015), 57–68.
5. For a direct reference to Hill's arguments, see Jason Hill, *Beyond Blood Identities: Post-Humanity in the Twenty-First Century* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009).

**Alfred Frankowski** is assistant professor in the Department of Philosophy and African and Africana Studies at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. His research is in nineteenth and twentieth century European philosophy, aesthetics, critical race theory, post-colonialism, and genocide studies. He is author of *The Post-Racial Limits of Memorialization: Toward a Political Philosophy of Mourning* (2015) and co-editor of *Rethinking Genocide in Africa and the African Diaspora* (forthcoming, 2019). His current projects concern with decolonialism and genocide, and lynching and architecture.

**Michael L. Thomas** is an assistant professor of philosophy at Susquehanna University. He holds a doctorate from the John U. Ned Committee on Social Thought. Professor Thomas's research focuses on social aesthetics, the role that aesthetic processes play in the structure of human social relations. He teaches courses in the history of philosophy, logic, and the philosophy of race.

**Dwayne A. Tunstall** is an associate professor of philosophy at Grand Valley State University and co-editor of the *APA Newsletter on Philosophy and the Black Experience*. He is also the non-Peirce editor of *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*. He is the author of two monographs: *Yes, But Not Quite: Encountering Josiah Royce's Ethico-Religious Insight* (2009) and *Doing Philosophy Personally: Thinking about Metaphysics, Theism, and Antiracism* (2013). He co-edited (with Coeli Fitzpatrick) a volume on Orientalist Writers for *The Dictionary of Literary Biography* (2012).

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## CONTRIBUTORS

**Noëlle McAfee** is a professor of philosophy and the director of the Psychoanalytic Studies Program at Emory University. She is also the co-editor of the *Kettering Review*, published by the Kettering Foundation, and an editor of the feminist section of the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Her books include *Democracy and the Political Unconscious* (Columbia 2008); *Julia Kristeva* (Routledge 2003); *Habermas, Kristeva, and Citizenship* (Cornell 2000); and the co-edited anthology *Democratizing Deliberation*. She is also the author of numerous articles, book chapters, and a new book manuscript entitled *Fear of Breakdown: Politics and the Work of Mourning*. Her current project is an intellectual biography of the late political theorist Benjamin R. Barber.



APA NEWSLETTER ON

# Philosophy in Two-Year Colleges

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THOMAS URBAN, EDITOR

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## FROM THE EDITOR

Thomas Urban

RETIRED PROFESSOR, HOUSTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE

It is with great pleasure that I announce the appointment of a new editor for the *Newsletter on Philosophy in Two-Year Colleges*, Aaron R. Champene, PhD. Professor Champene is a tenured faculty member at St. Louis Community College, Meramec. A past member of the APA Two-Year Colleges Committee, and divisional panel participant, he is also active in the organization of the AAPT/CTP (American Association of Philosophy Teachers/Committee on Teaching Philosophy) "Teaching Hub" at the APA Central Division meetings. He received his doctorate degree from the University of Arkansas in 2009, with an AOS in epistemology.

This issue of the newsletter is limited to a message from Two-Year Colleges Committee Chair Richard Legum. What readers will find is essentially an outline of issues and concerns that Professor Legum believes match up with the core purposes of the committee, many of which have served as the basis of divisional panel discussions over the past decade, and all of which present ongoing challenges to those who see philosophy as an integral part of a two-year college education. As an outline, the hope is that readers will submit their comments and suggestions for future publication, and discussion at our three 2019 divisional gatherings.

Finally, my thanks to all of the authors who have contributed to make this newsletter a reality, and also to our editorial board and committee members, past and present, for the unwavering support they have given me.

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## ARTICLE

### *Issues and Concerns in Philosophy at Two-Year Colleges*

Richard Legum

KINGSBOROUGH COLLEGE (CUNY)

*The APA Committee on Philosophy in Two Year Colleges oversees activities of the association related to the teaching of philosophy at two-year and junior colleges and initiates efforts to encourage and improve teaching in such institutions. It prepares periodic reports to the board and*

*to the members of the association. The committee seeks to encourage cooperation between philosophers, other teachers in the humanities, and administrators in planning and evaluating instructional programs and in identifying appropriate qualifications for teaching philosophy in two-year institutions, while at the same time advising graduate departments of philosophy concerning ways of preparing philosophers to teach most effectively in a junior college setting. (<https://www.apaonline.org/group/twoyear>)*

Given the preceding charge and with an aim to be effective, the Two-Year Colleges Committee must continually identify and review the key issues and concerns that present over the course of every year, and identify activities and goals to be undertaken to address these issues and concerns. In hopes of increasing the effectiveness of the committee's activities, I will begin by highlighting the importance of the committee to the APA's role of promoting the philosophy profession. In particular, I will argue that philosophy in two-year colleges is becoming increasingly important given (i) the overall declining enrollments in colleges and universities, (ii) the increase in the number of students beginning their college educations at community colleges, and (iii) the increasing importance of two-year college philosophy professors to the APA.

As our major activity at the APA meetings concerns providing advice to job seekers and their advisors, I highlight various issues concerning the two-year college philosophy job market. I outline the goals and objectives of the sessions that we plan on sponsoring at the 2019 APA meetings of the three divisions.

Finally, I outline the five issues or areas of concern that I propose for consideration by the committee in 2018–2019. They are as follows:

1. attracting highly qualified philosophers to two-year college job openings;
  2. establishing proposed requirements for credentials for these positions;
  3. creating an ongoing annual summer institute for addressing pedagogical, curriculum, and research for two-year philosophy professors and job candidates;
  4. proposing recommendations for community college philosophy programs, philosophy course learning outcomes, and assessment of courses and programs; and
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5. increasing the value of APA membership for two-year college philosophy faculty members.

I propose these activities and issues for the consideration of the members of the APA Committee on Philosophy in Two Year Colleges, former committee members, and other interested parties. I encourage you to reach out to me with your comments, suggestions, and additions, including the identification of other issues on which the committee should focus.

### THE APA AND PHILOSOPHY IN TWO-YEAR COLLEGES

As the organization of professional philosophers in America, the APA rightly concerns itself with the *status of the profession*. We philosophers may believe that studying philosophy is intrinsically good, perhaps the *summum bonum*. If pressed to defend this claim, we may invoke the Socratic dictum that the unexamined life is not worth living. However, without a continuing stream of students, we will not have a profession. This challenge is pressing as we are in a period of declining college enrollment.

While overall college enrollment is declining, the number of students opting to begin their college education at community colleges rather than four-year colleges is increasing. Many (if not most) community colleges offer courses in philosophy. However, it is not uncommon for these philosophy courses to be taught by instructors who are members of the clergy lacking a degree and any formal training in philosophy or by instructors with degrees in history, political science, English, literature, etc. In times when jobs for new PhDs in philosophy are few and far between (i.e., for at least the last forty years), it is in the interest of the APA to have the philosophy openings at two-year colleges filled with especially well-qualified individuals completing their graduate degrees in philosophy.

With growing financial pressures, colleges and universities are increasingly considering closing philosophy and other humanities departments. No doubt this is due, at least in part, to the overall decline in college enrollment, as well as the growing sentiment in America that a college education should result in marketable skills. Creating an interest and demand for studying philosophy is, therefore, necessary for the continuing existence of the philosophy profession. We need to expand college students' interest in taking philosophy courses. Faculty members lacking academic credentials in philosophy will not generate this interest in the study of philosophy.

Finally, many two-year college philosophy professors are not members of the APA. It is in the APA's interest to maintain a connection with these philosophers to entice them to become members of the APA. We need to do a better job of building and maintaining their relationship to the APA.

### THE TWO-YEAR COLLEGE PHILOSOPHY JOB MARKET

Many, if not most, seekers of jobs in philosophy are not even aware that teaching philosophy at two-year colleges is a viable option. Even those who are aware and interested encounter significant stumbling blocks in pursuing and landing these jobs. These include (i) a lack of understanding of this job market, (ii) perceptions of some graduate programs' faculty members that these are not *real* jobs worthy of *their* graduates, and (iii) a lack of understanding of the keys to successfully getting and keeping a job in such a position.

A primary objective of the APA Committee on Philosophy in Two-Year Colleges is to bridge this information gap. For the last several years we have sponsored panel discussions at the APA's annual meetings to provide a forum to disseminate this information to job seekers and to assist both job seekers and graduate department placement officers in understanding the ins and outs of the two-year college philosophy job market.

### PHILOSOPHY IN TWO-YEAR COLLEGES COMMITTEE SESSIONS PLANNED FOR THE 2019 APA MEETINGS

For the last several years the Philosophy in Two-Year Colleges Committee sponsored sessions at the annual APA divisional meetings for two-year college philosophy position seekers and their advisors. These sessions focused on the following topics:

- informing the recipients of graduate degrees in philosophy about the alternative of pursuing a career as a philosophy professor at a community college;
- presenting a high-level understanding of the background, training, and experience that would qualify one for such a position;
- providing "how to" advice concerning
  - identifying open positions in philosophy at two-year colleges;
  - the materials one needs to prepare to apply for such positions;
  - navigating the application, selection, and final negotiation process of obtaining teaching positions in philosophy at two-year colleges;
  - reappointment, tenure, and promotion for two-year college philosophy professors; and
- explaining the vital role philosophy courses play in a two-year college education.

## AREAS OF FOCUS FOR APA COMMITTEE ON PHILOSOPHY IN TWO-YEAR COLLEGES IN 2018–2019?

I would like to suggest that the APA Committee on Philosophy in Two-Year Colleges consider focusing its work for 2018–2019 on the following areas:

### 1. *Attracting Qualified Philosophers as Two-Year College Philosophy Professors*

The committee should continue its outreach to graduate students and graduate department placement officers to help them understand the two-year college philosophy market by:

- a. Continuing to sponsor sessions on this topic at all of the divisional meetings focusing on:
  - the rewards and challenges of teaching philosophy at a two-year college,
  - how to find open philosophy positions in two-year colleges,
  - the application and hiring-decision process at two-year colleges,
  - the required and desired qualifications for these positions, and
  - the career prospects for adjuncts and full-timers, including reappointment and tenure, teaching load, and salary.
- b. Developing documentation to outline the process to be incorporated with the documents compiled by the APA Committee on Academic Career Opportunities and Placement. While our input was solicited for incorporation in updated versions of these documents, we held off on providing our specific feedback. The reason for this was that incorporating the required changes would have required major modifications to the documents which the Academic Career Committee had completed. We were concerned that this feedback would delay the other committee's completion of these much needed documents. We should re-engage in this process.
- c. Initiating sessions, perhaps webinars, for providing information to graduate program placement officers and chairs on the hiring process at two-year colleges and to answer questions related to the process.
- d. Developing a pool of two-year college professors to provide advice and counsel to job seekers and graduate departments in the preparation of dossiers and CVs specifically tailored for two-year college positions. This may include mock job interviews and teaching demonstrations.

### 2. *Developing Credentialing Requirements for Two-Year Philosophy College Philosophy Instructors*

We should develop recommendations for required credentials for two-year college philosophy instructors and recommendations for assisting instructors lacking those credentials to acquire them. Developing these requirements and providing them to the various regional college accrediting bodies should increase the likelihood that these positions are staffed by qualified philosophers.

### 3. *Creating a Summer Seminar for Present and Aspiring Two-Year College Philosophy Professors*

We should develop an ongoing program of summer institutes to address issues and concerns of two-year college philosophers. Sessions would be devoted to topics like pedagogy, curriculum, and research.

### 4. *Developing a Two-Year Philosophy Program and Course Learning Outcomes and Assessment*

We should develop standards for two-year college philosophy programs. These may include suggestions for course offerings, learning outcomes for philosophy courses and programs, and assessment procedures for courses and programs.

### 5. *Improving Two-Year College Philosophers' Connections with the APA*

A subcommittee should be appointed to investigate methods to better engage two-year philosophy professors in APA activities. Areas to be investigated may include the use of the committee's APA web page, newsletter, and the APA Blog to engage this community.

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## CALL FOR PAPERS

**The APA Committee for Philosophy in Two-Year Colleges invites papers for inclusion in the spring 2019 issue of the *APA Newsletter on Philosophy in Two-Year Colleges*.**

Papers should be devoted to topics of particular interest to two-year and community college faculty, and graduate students who are considering a two-year or community college career path. These include but should not be construed as limited to the following: lower division teaching pedagogy; text and textbook selections including the use of open-access resources; cross-disciplinary initiatives; student demographics and advising; student learning evaluation; program evaluation and program growth initiatives; faculty credentialing and hiring, including concerns for women and minorities, status of adjunct faculty, workload and related issues; faculty scholarship opportunities, research, and writing; and issues dealing with program administration. Co-authored papers are welcome.

All paper submissions should adhere to the following guidelines:

- Deadline: Friday, January 4, 2019
- Papers must be in 12 pt. Times-New Roman font, double-spaced, and should be in the range of 3,000 to 5,000 words, including endnotes. Exceptional papers that fall outside this range may be considered, though this is not guaranteed. Authors are advised to read APA publishing guidelines available on the APA website.
- Authors are advised to pay close attention to all APA formatting restrictions. Submissions that do not conform will be returned to their author(s). Endnotes should follow the Word default using roman numerals to number the notes.
- Papers should be sent to the editor electronically and should contain nothing that identifies either the author(s) or her/his/their institution, including any such references in the endnotes. A separate page with the author's name, title, and full mailing address should also be submitted.

**Submissions should be sent to the Philosophy in Two-Year Colleges Committee newsletter editor at [TwoYearEditor@gmail.com](mailto:TwoYearEditor@gmail.com), by January 4, 2019.**

The editor, serving in the capacity of a disinterested coordinator, will distribute all papers to an editorial committee of current and past Two-Year College Committee members for anonymous review and evaluation. This committee will report its findings to members of the newsletter editorial board. The editorial board will make all publishing decisions based on those anonymously refereed results, and conduct any further anonymous review(s) deemed necessary. The editorial board includes Kristen L. Zbikowski, Hibbing Community College ([kristenzbikowski@hibbing.edu](mailto:kristenzbikowski@hibbing.edu)); Anthony Kreider, Miami-Dade Community College ([akreider@mdc.edu](mailto:akreider@mdc.edu)); Bill Hartmann, St. Louis Community College ([bhartmann@stlcc.edu](mailto:bhartmann@stlcc.edu)); and Rick Repetti, Kingsborough Community College–CUNY ([Rick.Repetti@kbcc.cuny.edu](mailto:Rick.Repetti@kbcc.cuny.edu)).



APA NEWSLETTER ON

# Teaching Philosophy

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TZIPORAH KASACHKOFF AND EUGENE KELLY, CO-EDITORS

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## FROM THE EDITORS

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We welcome our readers to the fall 2018 edition of the *APA Newsletter on Teaching Philosophy*. In this edition, we offer you four articles.

Our first contribution to this edition of the newsletter is a review-essay by Nickolas Pappas, professor at City College and the Graduate School, both of the City University of New York. Professor Pappas reviews a new translation of Aristotle's *Physics* by C. D. C. Reeve. Professor Pappas begins by recalling a word offered to him by one of his undergraduate teachers as he first encountered Aristotle: one only *rereads* Aristotle, because individual works can be properly understood only if one has worked one's way through the larger context of Aristotle's thought. Professor Pappas finds in this little insight the key to the great value of Reeve's new edition. For Reeve takes the trouble to provide the reader with references and links to other works in Aristotle whose presuppositions, arguments, and conceptual analysis provide the larger context needed to understand the present work. In some cases, Reeve cites for the reader in his notes the relevant text from other works of Aristotle. Pappas finds Reeve's introduction complex yet excellent as a piece of philosophical analysis, but suggests that the beginner read it only after having read at least half of the *Physics*. Reeve wisely does not include references to contemporary debates on the *Physics*, for before long they may become obsolete or irrelevant to future discussions. Pappas's reflections on some of Reeve's choices of the English terms he uses to translate Aristotle's Greek show us how very difficult is the work of any translator who wishes to give an English reader a translation and not an interpretation of an ancient work such as this.

Our second paper, "A Teaching-Based Research Assistantship: Why, How, and Results," by Susan Mills of MacEwan University and her research assistant, Kirsty Keys, is guided by the problem of whether it is reasonable to offer teaching assistantships to undergraduate students, and, if so, how might they be funded and conducted. Assuming a positive answer to the first question, Professor Mills sought financial assistance and obtained it from her own department, after having successfully made the case before it for the validity of the project. She then chose an

eager and able senior, Ms. Keys, to do research intended to terminate in an extensive syllabus for a freshman course on knowledge and reality. Eventually, they produced a syllabus for a senior-level course on personal identity. The bulk of the paper is a description of the research strategies they developed together for finding published works on these themes that are diverse but sufficiently coherent in their content to structure student engagement with the material, and are appropriate for the students for whom the course was being designed. These strategies involved indexing, building bridges between works in different but related topics, and the annotations by Ms. Keys of essays from which Professor Mills then made selections for inclusion in the syllabus. The paper concludes with the reading list for the 400-level course—and Professor Mills invites readers of the newsletter to give her feedback that could assist her in future revisions of the syllabus—and a statement by Ms. Keys about the skills she learned and applied while working as Professor Mills's research assistant.

The third contribution, by Christian B. Miller of Wake Forest University, is entitled "Teaching a Summer Seminar: Reflections from Two Weeks on the Philosophy and Psychology of Character in the Summer of 2018." This seminar, for which Professor Miller provides a detailed syllabus, was concerned obliquely with a perennial problem of philosophy: whether virtue or character can be taught. It pursued this ancient question empirically in part by studying persons thought to be morally exemplary by representatives of philosophy, theology, and psychology. The hope was to gain insight into the sources of their moral exemplarity. The broader purpose of the paper, however, is to reflect on the ways of best setting up and conducting a summer seminar. Professor Miller lists some of the challenges to be overcome and the opportunities to be sought after and utilized for maximum effect. He hopes that his reflections will be useful to others who might be contemplating developing a summer seminar at their home colleges. The paper concludes with an appendix containing one of the several handouts he gave to participants in the seminar to guide their researches into the nature and the means of achieving human excellence.

Our fourth paper, "Building Logic Papers from the Ground Up: Helping Introductory Logic Students Write Argument-Based Papers," is by Andy Piker of Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi. Professor Piker provides in his paper a model for students assigned a project in logical analysis. Here students indeed build papers "from the ground up" by passing through the phases of the model: 1) The choice of a topic is left to the students. Some choose a philosophical claim, others a moral or social controversy. 2) Students write

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an argument supporting some conclusion regarding the topic. 3) A counter-argument is constructed. 4) The structure of the arguments is diagrammed, with arrows leading from premises to the conclusions. 5) Students get and give feedback to their arguments from their fellow students. 6) All students receive feedback from the professor. 7) The final paper is written based upon the model.

We always encourage our readers to suggest themselves as reviewers of books and other material (including technological innovations) that they think may be especially good for classroom use. Though the names of books and other materials that we have recently received from publishers for possible review are listed in our **Books Received** section in each edition of the newsletter, reviewers are welcome to suggest material for review that they have used in the classroom and found useful. However, please remember that our publication is devoted to pedagogy and not to theoretical discussions of philosophical issues. This should be borne in mind not only when writing articles for our publication but also when reviewing material for our publication.

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## SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

As always, we warmly encourage our readers to write of their experience as teachers for our publication. We also welcome articles that respond, comment on, or take issue with any of the material that appears within our pages.

The following guidelines for submissions should be followed:

All papers should be sent to the editors electronically. The author's name, the title of the paper and full mailing address should appear on a separate page. *Nothing that identifies the author or his or her institution should appear within the body or within the footnotes/endnotes of the paper.* The title of the paper should appear on the top of the paper itself.

Authors should adhere to the production guidelines that are available from the APA. For example, in writing your paper to disk, *please do not use your word processor's footnote or endnote function; all notes must be added manually at the end of the paper.* This rule is extremely important, for it makes formatting the papers for publication much easier.

All articles submitted to the newsletter are blind-reviewed by the members of the editorial committee as follows:

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## BOOK REVIEW

### *Aristotle, Physics*

Translated with introduction and notes by C. D. C. Reeve. Indianapolis, Hackett Publishing Co., 2018.

Reviewed by Nickolas Pappas

CITY COLLEGE AND THE GRADUATE CENTER, CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

"Well, they say you don't read Aristotle, you re-read him," were William McCulloh's encouraging words to me in 1980, walking across campus.

Professor McCulloh taught classics at Kenyon College, and I was an undergraduate making no headway with the Aristotle I'd been assigned in another course. One day when we crossed paths on campus I spelled out how frustrating the texts were. Aristotle's assertions sounded true enough one by one (I said) but without point or purpose. Why sudden qualifying phrases about motion that only interrupted his line of thinking? Wherefrom a premise about how many "principles" there are, this premise seemingly supplied by Aristotle only to justify his next conclusion?

That Professor McCulloh presented his response to me as an old saw already gave it a calming effect. And the implied recommendation that I read through everything in Aristotle and then settle down to read it all again at least explained how I could understand the corpus, even if that amount of reading went beyond anything I intended to do. In fact, I later grasped how practical and not only reassuring the advice was. Aristotle had thought out his philosophy to enlighten, not to obscure, and the more you keep a sense of its totality in mind the more it will enlighten you.

Aristotle's works on nature in particular draw on one another, both in their methodologies and in their substantive claims. The *Physics* contains his most general account of nature and motion and of what can be contained in theories of nature, but its repeated appeals to observed phenomena coexist with cross-references to other Aristotelian positions. A principle of definition from the logic constrains what is said about the world's elements, as when the differences among categories spelled out in the *Topics* problematizes the Eleatic claim that all things are one. One *what*: substance, quantity, or quality?<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Aristotle's discussions of individual sciences illustrate conclusions

drawn in the *Physics* about causation and motion in the study of nature as such. The *Metaphysics* finds a place for all natural science within the broader treatment of being and substance.

Just as you get the point of someone's arm-swinging in the street when you look more broadly to see the car they're directing into its parking space, so too the announcements and premises that can sound arbitrary in Aristotle turn out to have excellent reasons behind them, which ignorance of the larger context may have prevented you from grasping.

Aristotle's readers face other interpretive obstacles besides the difficulty of keeping the whole philosophy in mind. There is the antiquity of the Greek language, whose syntax and lexicon map only approximately onto modern English, not to mention the peculiarity of Aristotle's own tight, unadorned prose, often ambiguous despite his efforts to be clear and specific.

Then too there are the nature-theorists who preceded Aristotle and whose quandaries and cosmologies he exerts himself to reply to. Throughout the corpus Aristotle considers it his responsibility to solve the difficulties that his predecessors created about nature, and where possible to find the grain of truth that even their benighted theories contain.

The very process of engaging with earlier theories tends not to take place in what we recognize as science today. On Kuhn's story of scientific achievement, the transformation that establishes a new paradigm leads to a consensus whose practitioners dispense with the conceptual quibbles that hampered pre-modern science. I suspect that Aristotle would have found the normalcy of "normal science" unsatisfying for those students of nature who had studied earlier proposals about space, time, matter, and motion, and wanted the past disputes settled as much as they wanted a framework for future inquiry. In this respect the *Physics* reminds us what students of nature had to give up with the change from ancient to modern science. Aristotle hopes to end the difficulties he inherited with a logical and factual framework that permits resolutions to those standing puzzles and that preceding theorists would have understood (and that, if they worked in good faith, they would have accepted). Aristotle is not muzzling his predecessors, in other words, nor rendering their work meaningless as a new scientific paradigm does, but rather giving them something true to say in place of their own misguided conclusions.

Even without turning into a cheerleader for the present, one has to admit that not all the knots that Aristotle sets himself to disentangle are equally compelling. Zeno's paradoxes regarding motion seem contrived but they still get under people's skin. Empedocles raised the possibility of a haphazard nature to be accounted for without teleology; add some assumptions to the view presented under his name and you get natural selection. Needless to say the observable data themselves—about plants and animals, air and water, projectile motion and sun and stars—cover the same natural world that we occupy.<sup>2</sup> In all these cases we are primed to enter Aristotle's discussion.

On the other hand, when reading the *Physics* we are invited to assess the debate over whether "the unlimited" is a substance,<sup>3</sup> and neither answer to that question promises to illuminate our present experience of nature, any more than we can make ourselves care whether Plato or the Hippocratic author is more correct about the cause of epilepsy (more bile than phlegm in the brain, or more phlegm than bile?). Moreover the predecessors Aristotle is replying to are in many cases unknown today, most of their works having disappeared over the centuries. Aristotle's writings on nature sometimes feel more accessible than his ethical and political works but sometimes less so, often depending on whether he is answering questions that modern readers no longer ask or even understand.

The problem of historical context and lost predecessors arises for every historical figure. And every ancient Greek philosopher saddles us with the burdens of reading ancient Greek or its translations. In these respects Aristotle's translator is in the same position as Parmenides', Plato's, or Epictetus's.

By contrast, the difficulty my undergraduate professor had known to address—namely, the challenge of needing to know the entirety of a philosopher's thought—has an acuteness in Aristotle's case that it possesses for few other philosophers. And despite the other virtues of C. D. C. Reeve's new translation of and commentary on the *Physics*, in my opinion its greatest value and a sufficient reason for instructors to assign it is its ability to keep the *Physics* in constant conversation with the rest of the Aristotelian corpus. Serious undergraduates will be spared the disorientation that I experienced during my collegiate look into Aristotle; graduate students in philosophy, whether first coming to Aristotle or already familiar with his thought, will find much to stimulate and feed their understanding as they contextualize the *Physics* among the other works of Aristotle's. In a sense this presentation of the *Physics* lets one read Aristotle even before re-reading him.

Reeve's book is organized as every such translation ought to be, and as many are, with numerous notes that explicate a point, identify linguistic or conceptual difficulties, or refer the reader to something else Aristotle has said. I've been familiar with Reeve's Aristotle for years, since reading his translation of the *Politics* in 1999, and this book demonstrates yet again his facility at relaxing a clenched Aristotelian sentence into natural yet accurate English. What this translation additionally does that I have not seen enough of with Aristotle's works on nature is to reproduce the relevant other passages cited in the notes to the text. Using this book one does not have to track down the part of the *Nicomachean Ethics* or *Metaphysics* that one wants, but finds the words standing by within the pages of this volume.

What Reeve's version of the *Physics* does *not* include is a survey of the secondary literature from scholars today who dispute the sense or logic of individual passages. I think he was right to exclude contemporary debates, and not because of any weakness or unworthiness in them. First of all, this book would have swelled to double its size or more, losing the focus on Aristotle's writings that it now



has. More significantly, some of today's debates will fade away before the need for this book does. Readers coming to the translation in order to know Aristotle's theory of nature would then be sent to obsolete readings and issues. Dated debates would date this book, which in its present form promises to be valuable for some time to come.

Along with the notes of commentary, an introduction of around thirty pages brings students into Aristotle's thought. With emphasis on the *Metaphysics* and the logical treatises from the *Organon*, the introduction seeks to explain the structure of Aristotelian scientific theories and the criteria for different kinds of knowledge. My impression of it is that the introduction works well as philosophy and as scholarship but less well as pedagogy. It might make an off-putting beginning to one's study, except for those already quite knowledgeable about Aristotle. Serious students would be advised to read the introduction after having begun to study the *Physics*, say about halfway through that work, when the context that this section provides can begin to connect with the arguments and specific points that the reader has already worked to understand.

In any case, if one really wants an introduction when beginning the *Physics*, this book already contains such a thing in the form of the notes, especially the notes to the first few chapters. The notes numbered 1–34 tend to be long ones, collectively filling twenty-two pages of this volume in the process of covering Chapters 1–2 of *Physics* Book I, a mere three pages of Aristotle's translated text. These notes reprise some of the topics and discussions that come up in Reeve's introduction but with more direct connection to the sentences in those opening chapters that stop and vex the new reader. Readers should get to know all of Reeve's notes, but these first ones especially.

**Notes.** Some of the notes did leave me wanting more. Quite a lot left me delighted with their depth of explanation and with the range of Aristotelian texts they included in their cross-references. Before giving examples of each, I have to register my only complaint with the form of this book's organization. Although the notes are numbered, corresponding to superscripted numbers in the text of the *Physics*, the notes themselves do not refer to other notes by their numbers. Instead, when the notes refer to other notes, they do so by means of the text to which those other notes are appended; thus "I 2 185a23n." instead of "Note 19," that telltale lower-case "n" telling the reader of the informative note elsewhere.

The rationale for such references is clear enough. When composing a set of notes, identifying them within the notes by number means that any new note interpolated later among the old ones would throw off all the enumeration. The process of compiling such a commentary is rarely linear, involving hundreds of returns to previous passages to take a note out or add a new one. The translator would then have to go back and change all the cross-references to reflect the new enumeration. That is surely an insuperable problem during the composition of a book.

Even so, it might be possible to go back through the notes after the book is complete, taking out each reference to a

note in terms of its chapter and line and replacing that with the note number. Then readers already flipping between the text of the *Physics* and an explanatory note, and finding a reference to another note, can turn to that directly rather than having to make a first stop within the text of the *Physics* and back to the notes. A future printing of this book might try a more direct way of connecting the notes.

As far as the notes' content is concerned, I occasionally wanted to see the translator challenge Aristotle's assumptions more than he did, or to point out where those assumptions fail. For instance, the *Physics* asserts that everything in motion "moves either in a circle, in a straight line, or in a mixture of the two."<sup>4</sup> Does Aristotle need that claim as much as he seems to think he does? Where does it lead him astray, and what motivates his adherence to it?

More consequentially for the history of science, I am struck every time I read the *Physics* by its preliminary sketch of natural selection, perhaps informed (as I said) by Empedocles, which Aristotle puts forward as a rival to his teleological account. (Darwin included this passage, in some editions of *Origin of Species*, as part of his survey of the articulations of natural selection that preceded his.<sup>5</sup>) Aristotle parries the challenge by keeping what happens by coincidence separate from what happens "always or for the most part." Because mutations take place only occasionally, he says they cannot be typical of nature, which proceeds always or for the most part and therefore for a purpose. Darwin would unite chance with regularity by letting the variations that appear in a species then become part of its genetic nature, hence regularities. Then what comes to be by coincidence remains as regularity; at that point, Aristotle's argument would lose an essential premise and random natural changes would undo the defense of teleology (as he saw that they might). Uncharacteristically, Reeve does not guide his reader to see this vulnerability in Aristotle's *Physics* or the point at which Darwin will, as it were, insert his rebuttal.

Students of the figure of the "first mover" in Aristotle might wish for other additional commentaries in connection with VIII 6 and VIII 10, the chapters that try to explain what most fundamentally grounds or causes motion in the universe, which is to say a mover that does not move. The unmoved mover in Book XII of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* inspires all other motion in the universe as objects of love or striving do, thus as that for the sake of which other motion takes place, as a final cause. Maybe some efficient causation enters into the account given in the *Metaphysics*, although it is hard to say exactly how. Things are different in Book VIII of the *Physics*, where the arguments concerning the unmoved mover seem to require that being to provide the first "cause of the change or rest," i.e., to be an efficient cause. The notes do not have to answer the question, given the volume of discussion that this difference between the two texts has already inspired, but they might do more to illustrate the problem for the reader.<sup>6</sup>

I have another kind of wish for more at other points, when the notes give readers all the cross-references within Aristotle they could want, but not references to his predecessors. One obvious example arises at 194a36-b2:

Aristotle distinguishes the craft or *technê* concerned with the use of an object and the *technê* concerned with its production. The blacksmith makes a cobbler's hammer; the cobbler uses it. Reeve's Note 167 connects this distinction to fascinating discussions in *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Metaphysics*, and other Aristotelian writings, but it does not mention the same distinction in Book 10 of Plato's *Republic*, to which this passage can be read as an instructive gloss.<sup>7</sup> Sometimes perhaps the admirable desire to embed the *Physics* in Aristotle's corpus, as this book does, crowds out the project of describing its relationship to earlier thinkers.

I hasten to add what any fair-minded reader will already be thinking—that one can always find topics in a book of this kind that one wishes had received more coverage. Assuming a book of finite length, and even more if we assume a book of limited length—as a translation with notes must be—adding more on any subject means saying less about another one. Finding places where you can wish for more takes scarcely any talent or effort, and nowhere near the talent and effort it takes to make a book such as this one.

The limitation of the “wishing for more” comment is especially clear when there are so many notes in this book that give readers more than they could have thought to ask for. Any short list I come up with will be arbitrary, but I feel compelled to mention: Note 113 explaining the notorious *tode ti* “this-something”; 129 quoting from the *Generation of Animals* to help unsnarl a reference to dogs' coming from horses and the like counterfactual violations of nature; 188 translating and explaining the words for “chance” and “luck” lucidly enough to prevent their being used interchangeably; 364 itemizing the ways in which one thing is said to be “in” another thing according to Aristotle; 458 expanding and explaining a sophisticated argument about “Coriscus” that Aristotle alludes to; 586 explicating the technical term *antistrephein* “conversion,” for which Reeve lays out six uses in Aristotelian logic and cites the relevant passages from Aristotle's *Topics* and *Prior Analytics*. There are nuggets like these throughout the collected notes, all of them contributing to a rounded and detailed sense of Aristotle's writings and methods.

The notes even let you think about why it is that some discussions in the *Physics* strike the philosophical reader of today as lacking in motivation. Now and then Aristotle speaks of a *logikos* difficulty, a “logico-linguistic confusion” as Reeve perfectly translates that phrase, which he discusses in Note 258. Less accurately we might think of the *logikos* difficulty as a conceptual confusion. In any case what Aristotle means is that the incomplete study of nature permits some quandaries that are merely logical or verbal feel more significant than they are. As Note 258 describes such confusions, it reminds us (without speaking of such things overtly) that the *Physics* often addresses questions and puzzles that arose, in antiquity, not from observations but from theories. We might be amused by the answer to a puzzle about why a projectile continues to fly through the air, but at least that answer addresses a worry about projectile motion that observations inspire. When the puzzle being addressed is about whether “the unlimited” can be divided up without ceasing to be unlimited, very

little about the natural world being observed is at stake, for all that someone has dreamt up (and then no doubt been plagued by) the problem.

**Terminology.** Every reviewer discussing a translation of Greek philosophy has to say something about the words chosen to render terms appearing in the original. For students who do not know Greek, who are after all the primary concern of a translation (and the readers most dependent on the translator's choices), these word choices determine the value of the work. Aristotle's terminology should be translated as accurately as possible, so that the English-speaking reader is not led astray or kept at the mercy of an idiosyncratic or tendentious translator. As much as possible a given Greek term should always have a single English equivalent, so that one knows when Aristotle is covering the same topic again. Otherwise it remains for the translator to decide that here the subject remains the same but there it's something else; and then the translation passes an interpretation along even while pretending not to. And (again, as much as possible) where the Greek word covers a range of meanings, its English partner ought to cover the same range, and yet not introduce new senses absent from the original.

Reeve is a seasoned translator whose decisions tend to be both correct in themselves and pedagogically helpful. For *hupokeimenon* he writes “underlying subject,” and the etymological sense in that phrase of something's existing *beneath* a change captures the force of the Greek prefix *hupo-* “under” and also communicates the sense of what persists through change, as Aristotle would have it, as if changes took place on top of a subject. The English is as idiomatic as the Greek.

As needed—again the sign of a practiced translator—the commentary often explains the choice of words, to minimize misleading effects that a choice might have. Note 583 observes that a word rendered “jumps” could just as well be “starts” or “jerks” or “impulses.” For the adjective *kurios*, whose central sense is “dominant, chief,” Reeve uses “strict, control.” This choice taken in a vacuum might lead to confusion, although it is the right sense of the term for the *Physics* passages the word appears in, and Note 262 explains things.

One challenge specific to Aristotle's translators involves the strings of ordinary words that Aristotle occasionally joins in new ways to serve as technical terms. At one time all translations used Latinate terminology, as when *hou heneka*, literally “for-the-sake-of-which,” arrived in English dressed up stiffly as “final cause.” Translators now often preserve that Aristotelian phrase in its literalness; Reeve does too. For similar reasons *ti esti* becomes “what-it-is” in this translation as it is in Greek, and *tode ti* “this something.” The result may look exotic or affected, but this is how Aristotle communicates some of his key concepts.

I only wonder why the tricky *to ti ên einai* should have to have become “essence,” which has been used for years as its translation. The Greek phrase taken word for word comes into English as “the what-it-was-to-be”—a cumbersome and distracting word group to have to use in

informative sentences, but at least more connected than “essence” is with individual words that mean something.<sup>8</sup> English does have many uses for the word “essence” in ordinary contexts (something you can’t say for “final cause”), but some of those instances would lead a reader astray. Almond essence is a perfectly ordinary substance; it’s not the what-it-was-to-be of the almond.

As the history of “essence” in the context should make clear, no real harm will be done by using the word. People have been saying “the essence” for *to ti ên einai* for years without hurting themselves. And other objections I could make to Reeve’s word choices range from the minuscule to the microscopic. In one place for instance *akrotaton* “highest,” a word that Aristotle uses elsewhere to indicate a final or ultimate, is joined with *aition* in a phrase that this book renders “most precise cause.”<sup>9</sup> Despite Reeve’s justification in Note 187, something closer to the literal “highest” could have fit better in this context, e.g., “ultimate cause.”

I have spent some time going back and forth on *automatos* and derivative words, which tend to come out in this translation as “chance” when someone else might speak of what is “spontaneous” or of what happens “of its own accord.” (Physicians sometimes tell patients that a given condition is “idiopathic,” which sounds like a self-protective way for the physician to say “I have no idea why this hit you.” Here too we have what Aristotle would call the *automatos*.) But in all honesty I can’t imagine whose understanding of the *Physics* might have been hampered by the word “chance.” If something happens of its own accord or is idiopathic or spontaneous, that means there is no explanation to be given for the thing’s occurrence. It happens by chance.

Almost without exception, when I found one of Reeve’s English terms potentially confusing or partial, I had a hard time coming up with a better alternative (except possibly for *to ti ên einai*, where not so much the word as the style of translation is at stake). The translation that I most took issue with as I read was “starting-point” for the Greek word *archê*, and there too it’s one thing to object to the term used, a very different matter to improve upon it.

The word *archê* means, among other things, “beginning,” as it does famously in the first sentence of John’s Gospel: “In the *archê* was the *logos*.” The word also implies leadership or governance. The king marched at the front of a column of warriors, as their ruler, in both cases the *archê* being his. By classical times the word, often used in the plural form *archai*, could denote the more abstract concept of a principle or fundamental, and it is with reference to this abstract sense that Aristotle spends pages of the *Physics* asking how many *archai* there might be for the world, and what they are. The *archai* are causes in nature that do not have a cause themselves, or do not in turn have an *archê*.

Reeve’s Note 1 allows for “first principle” as an alternative to “starting-point” but in the translation it is “starting-point” that we keep seeing. The sense of motion and suggestion of abruptness that we find in the English word “start” gives “starting-point” a temporality and even mobility that feels

out of place in some of Aristotle’s sentences. The most famous Aristotelian *archê* might be the one attributed to Thales, namely, water. Did he mean (as Aristotle asks elsewhere) that everything is fed by what is wet?<sup>10</sup> If he did, the relation in question is an ongoing causal dependence, not something that happened once or once upon a time. Thales’ universe did not begin with a start.

One problem with finding the right translation for words about the most basic entities is that English tends to appeal to architectural metaphors when it speaks of dependence: the grounds for your suspicion, the cornerstone of a good breakfast, an argument’s premises or theory’s foundations. Architectural metaphors let us equate what comes temporally first with what goes structurally and spatially beneath, as the lowermost part of the building comes first during construction. The connotations acquired by *archê* equated what comes first temporally with what leads. Thus looking for the just-right counterpart to *archê* requires bridging the difference between *who goes first* and is up ahead commanding, and *what comes first* and is down below supporting.

Translators have limited options available to them when dealing with recalcitrant words of this type. The word *archê* is too important to the *Physics* not to be given a specific and informative translation. Should you use different words in different contexts, in this case a temporal term when the beginning seems to come before all other events and objects, and a spatial principle otherwise? It’s true that as native speakers of any language we may freely use a single word in many different ways during a single conversation. But when a translator makes a habit of adapting the words to the context (in service of the “spirit” of the original), the danger increases that each passage will reflect the interpretation peculiar to that translator.

Sticking to the Greek is a last resort. For one or two words in a text a translator might just transliterate the original, counting on readers to learn *ressentiment*, *aufgehoben*, or *logos*. This gambit can be overdone, though. And even where it is done moderately, those untranslated terms bobbing around in the prose add some opacity to the work, certainly diminishing the sense that Aristotle is talking to us.

An expert translator might decide to give up on the hope of communicating the overtones of meaning in the original term and find the English equivalent that best fits all the contexts in a given work. As always an explanatory note for the curious can settle any perplexity. I mentioned Reeve’s treatment of *kurios* in the *Physics*—a less challenging example, no doubt, given that the word does not dominate Aristotle’s text. Where *archê* is concerned one might give up on the sense of first-ness in the word and stick to what the *Physics* is looking for: the fundamentals; priority as grounding. Then we ask what the fundamentals or fundamental principles of the universe are. And yet I can’t be enthusiastic about this approach, which is why I am describing the translator’s challenge more than I am objecting to how Reeve has met that challenge. Switching to “fundamental principles” leaves us a long way from the good literal meaning in *archê*, and because it does it

invites the translator to smuggle an interpretation into the translation. “Fundamental principle” has the washed-out beige hue of very abstract terminology, like “final cause” and “entelechy.” They are not so much invitations to think the wrong thing as they are invitations to think nothing. At least “starting-point” reminds new readers that Aristotle’s question about nature might not correspond exactly to a question the readers themselves might have asked, thus that readers might do well to set aside their own assumptions about nature and work to understand what might be driving Aristotle, embarking on their review and re-reading even while reading him for the first time.

#### NOTES

1. See Aristotle, *Topics* I, 8-9 103b7-25, and its use at *Physics* I, 2 185a21-26; and see Reeve’s Note 18.
2. Aristotle’s biological works have a special freshness in this respect. He describes a cuttlefish he had seen while living on Lesbos, and we can go to Lesbos now and find the same animal, as Armand Marie Leroi has done in *The Lagoon: How Aristotle Invented Science* (New York: Viking Press, 2014).
3. Aristotle, *Physics* III, 4-5.
4. Aristotle, *Physics* VIII, 8 261b28-29.
5. The passage occurs at *Physics* II, 8 198b16-32. The prefatory reference to Aristotle does not appear in Darwin’s first edition, nor in the “new edition” of 1861 prepared for publication in the US. The sixth edition (1873), however, does include a prefatory “sketch of the progress of opinion” on the subject of evolution.
6. Reeve does acknowledge the issue in his Introduction, p. xxxi, but does not propose the path to a solution. I am grateful to Gregory Scott for discussing this interpretive issue with me.
7. See Plato, *Republic*, 10.601c-e.
8. Other renditions of the phrase in English include “the what-it-was-being,” “the what-is-being,” and so on. The finite form of the verb “to be” in this phrase, *ên*, is literally the imperfect past tense, which can be translated either with emphasis on the pastness (hence “was”) or stressing the imperfectness (hence “is”).
9. Aristotle, *Physics* II, 3 195b23.
10. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I, 3 983b18-27.

Following that, I reflect on my own experience working with an undergraduate student research assistant. Different than a typical academic research assistantship, it was a *teaching-based* research assistantship in which the student assisted me with a course design project. The starting point was my use of John Perry’s *Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality* in an introduction to philosophy course that I teach, and the end product was a reading list for a senior-level course on personal identity. Tasked with finding, annotating, and mapping reading materials, the research assistant worked independently and collaboratively with me to develop the reading list that, together, we present in the final section of this paper. She also assisted me with the composition of this paper and contributed her reflections—which appear at the end of the paper—on her experience as a research assistant for a teaching-based research project.

#### WHY

The benefits of student involvement in any field of academic research and scholarly activity are numerous, with the most obvious one being that research-assistant work helps students prepare for a direct path into graduate studies and, from there, into academic careers. Yet, as we know, most of our undergraduate students don’t take that path, and some graduate students don’t either. Would they nonetheless benefit from assisting in research? Absolutely.

In the discipline of philosophy, there are a number of generally beneficial skills that we tend to emphasize when we are called on to answer the question, “What can I do with a degree in X?” Surely all of us who teach philosophy have put analysis, argumentation, and composition on the list of philosophy’s practical values at least once or twice and, indeed, the study of philosophy does have those—and many other—transferrable gains.<sup>1</sup> But as off-putting as it might be to be called on to “sell” our discipline, we should not be cynical about the benefits of studying philosophy. All the same, we should not leave it to our students to figure out how to tap into and realize those benefits in practice, and research assistantships are an opportunity to do just that. By providing students with outlets where they can put their philosophy skills to work outside of the classroom, we can reinforce our answers to that perennial question of philosophy’s practical value with hard products and actionable results as well as an appreciation of the work that it takes to get to those ends. Of course, in addition to all of the benefits to the students, we also stand to benefit from the fact that research assistantships give us access to bright and talented students that can help us with our own research projects.

And yet, there are a number of obstacles to involving students in academic research and scholarly activity. Two in particular are project suitability and funding, and I hope that my recommendation regarding the former helps others make successful cases for the latter.

To begin, I will venture to say that not all research projects are suited to student involvement, especially in philosophy. Rather, it takes the right kind of project to require research assistance, and those projects are not generally found within philosophy, where the nature and scope of research leans

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## ARTICLES

### *A Teaching-Based Research Assistantship: Why, How, and Results*

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As teachers of philosophy, how can we provide research assistant opportunities to our undergraduate students?

This is a question worth answering and—what’s more—acting upon. There are many benefits to student involvement in research, and I cover some of them below. I also consider certain obstacles to involving undergraduate students in academic research.

strongly towards single-authored argumentative papers on theoretical topics. True, there are nonetheless opportunities for students to participate in philosophical research by way of data searching, inputting, annotating, indexing, and so forth, but those opportunities can be scarce and limited for various reasons. At an undergraduate school—like the one that I teach at—those reasons include the demands of higher teaching loads and, correspondingly, lower research activity.<sup>2</sup> However, with a shift in the standard thinking about what constitutes academic research, teaching is not an obstacle but an opportunity for research assistance by undergraduate students.

Simply put, the view that research is distinct from teaching puts an entirely unnecessary restriction on what one may think of as a research assistantship; it limits how we think of research and how we then think of involving students in research. But, in fact, teaching requires research. Among other things, it requires the review and selection of materials, the distillation of texts and the construction of arguments, as well as the development of research questions—all of which are research activities. While the audience is not one's peers and the questions are not designed for field experts, teaching cannot be done in the absence of research, which means that teaching is an opportunity for any teacher to use research assistants.

So, what can we as teachers of philosophy do to provide or increase the research-assistant opportunities to our students? My recommendation is for teaching-based research assistantships. Unlike traditional research assistantships, the research is not for the sake of peer-reviewed publication and its impact is not measured by citations, but it is produced for the purpose of dissemination (in the classroom) and it does have an impact on its audience (of students). But first we, more likely than not, have to advocate for the funds.

In my own case, the obstacle of funding was the obstacle of finding a funding source that recognized teaching-based research as research. In my search, the money for research assistantships that I found was exclusively for the purpose of research that would result in peer-reviewed dissemination. The idea of funding research that would reach its end in the classroom and not in a conference presentation or print publication seemed foreign to most whom I encountered in my search. However, I am very fortunate to have a department chair who enthusiastically supported the idea and helped me conceptualize it and search for funding for it. Moreover, when both of our searches for funding sources came up empty, my department chair was willing to allocate department funds to teaching-based research assistantships within the department. Now, after one successful trial year two years ago, the department funds this type of research assistantship annually, and I was doubly fortunate to receive some of those funds last year in order to hire a student for a teaching-based research project of my own.<sup>3</sup> In what follows, I share my experience of that project.

## HOW

I teach at a four-year undergraduate university where the emphasis is on teaching and where there is tremendous

autonomy in what we teach.<sup>4</sup> A few years ago, I felt compelled to investigate ways of improving my use of Perry's *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality* in my first-year introduction to epistemology and metaphysics course.<sup>5</sup> As things were, I was teaching it as a primary-sources course and had opted to use Perry's *Dialogue* at the end of the course after Descartes's *Meditations*, Berkeley's *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous*, and Plato's *Phaedo*. That reading list was working well, but for various reasons, I came to think that removing Berkeley's *Three Dialogues* and expanding upon Perry's *Dialogue* would be a positive change.<sup>6</sup> With that intention in mind—and with the department's teaching-based research-assistantship application process in place after its initial trial year—I took advantage of the opportunity and the availability of a student I wanted to work with, and I applied.

When I approached Kirsty to seek her interest in working as my research assistant, she was a fourth-year philosophy minor. I had taught her in four courses at the 100- to 300-level, and I knew that the quality of her academic work was impeccable and her work ethic was unimpeachable. As well, from the fact that she always excelled at making sense of my lectures and following my assignment instructions, I was confident that we would be compatible thinkers on a research project. Lucky for me, she was on-board immediately.<sup>7</sup> Her eager enthusiasm and clear understanding of the project right from the start confirmed two things for me. First, there are some undergraduate students who genuinely value and enjoy the work involved in scholarly research. Second, they can be very quick to comprehend a project—especially a teaching-based project—and what they can do to assist. In Kirsty's case, she had studied Perry's *Dialogue* in an introduction to philosophy course taught by an instructor who, like me, did not supplement it with additional readings on personal identity. However, from her subsequent studies in upper-level philosophy courses she had a sense of the breadth and depths of philosophy and, from that, she understood that there was a project to be made out of unpacking the numerous concepts in the dialogue (even if she did not know exactly what they were going into this project) and what those details could add to a student's understanding of Perry's book and of a larger picture of philosophy. She also had good research skills (learned and practiced from doing research-type assignments in her other undergraduate courses, such as literature reviews, article analyses, and research essays): she knew how to review a text for citations to other works relevant to her own project; how to search the library's databases using Boolean operators and other advanced search techniques; how to keep organized research notes; and how to write annotated bibliographies.

In early January 2017 we collaborated on the proposal for the funding application. In it, we explained that the research assistantship would be for the purpose of finding and selecting materials that would enhance the study of Perry's *Dialogue* in my "Introduction to Knowledge and Reality" course. To that end, we would look for texts that informed or illuminated the content of that dialogue. Within that very vast terrain, we had one stipulation—that we use no readers, guidebooks, or any other type of tertiary

texts. This was in keeping with my preference to teach philosophy with an emphasis on direct engagement with the texts studied, as well as with how I had built the rest of the course. As a model for what I wanted to achieve with this teaching-based research project, I had in mind what I already was doing in the course when I drew on my lessons about Descartes's *Meditations* to teach the First Night in Perry's *Dialogue*—only now I aimed to do something like that with Second and Third Nights as well. Just as Descartes is explicitly referenced in the First Night, Locke is mentioned in the Second Night, so selections from Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* were thus an obvious choice for an addition to the course that would complement the dialogue. Indeed, most of the references listed in the footnotes at the end of the dialogue were obvious candidates for enhancing my teaching of the book. However, I did not want to settle on the obvious and standard philosophical works on personal identity before exploring alternatives. Canonical texts were already represented in the course (a Platonic dialogue and Descartes's *Meditations* are required readings in all sections of this course) and the one contemporary text I had included in the course is not *that* contemporary (Perry's *Dialogue* was published in 1978). As well, it was not lost on me or Kirsty that this research project was an opportunity to include works by women philosophers or members of other groups that are traditionally underrepresented in philosophy.

Once the semester was over, Kirsty worked as my research assistant ten hours a week for four weeks. At the start, I provided her with my most recent lecture notes on Perry's *Dialogue* as well as some search tips and strategies, such as using anthologies on personal identity to identify core texts in the area; conducting internet searches to find the professional profiles of contemporary philosophers who you find have written about personal identity—those websites sometimes list publications that would not show up on standard database searches; doing topic or title keyword searches in Google with “syllabus” in them to see what texts other philosophy teachers use along with Perry's *Dialogue* or on the topic of personal identity more generally; reading research findings selectively by first skimming titles, abstracts, and introductions for relevant themes and topics before committing to reading an entire work; and making notes along the way about the relevance and content of what comes up in the search, flagging what is most interesting and excluding what does not meet the criteria.

In her first week, Kirsty reread Perry's *Dialogue*; conducted an online search of course syllabi containing that book; read portions of two classic articles on personal identity that I had recommended on the basis of their prominence in the area; selected and read two items from popular anthologies on personal identity that I lent her; searched Perry's website for his CV and skimmed the list of publications in it; started a reading list of the interesting references and articles that she had collected from these print and web sources; conducted database searches of some of those articles as well as articles responding to them; put books on hold in the university's library; and made a plan of which items she would read next. At the end of the week, she composed an email to me detailing her activities and findings, drawing

conclusions about the relevance and complexity of those findings, and making recommendations based on her assessments. For example, she deemed one article relevant because it shares an argument in common with Perry's *Dialogue* but judged that it was too complex and obscure for an introductory course. As an alternative, she found a reconstruction of that article's argument (in a response article) and suggested excerpting part of it to pair with Perry. Kirsty attached copies of what she had managed to collect in electronic form and sent them to me in an email. Given the momentum of Kirsty's research during the first week, we agreed that she should continue with her reading plan, I would read the articles she had sent me, and we would meet a few days later to draw up a plan for how to proceed.

That first series of events established the pattern of events for the project. Kirsty would source, analyze, and assess materials, noting their bibliographic information, topics and themes, connections with one another, suitability for undergraduate readers, and accessibility through the university's library. She would then compose an email to me that included a detailed account of her activities, a list of her findings (that were suitable for the project), brief notes on the topics and theses of those works, their potential interest to students, and copies—when she could obtain them electronically—of the texts she deemed most interesting for our purposes or important in the field.

Throughout the research process, Kirsty drew upon and honed the research skills that she possessed going into the project and expanded upon those skills by employing the tips and strategies that I offered, the most useful of which were, in her experience, the following: to start by reading the abstracts and introductions of potential materials in order to make efficient assessments about whether or not they were suitable for the project; to take notes on the topics and theses on any text that either was suitable or was notably not (e.g., core texts that were too difficult for undergraduate readers), thereby creating an annotated bibliography in the process; to search the internet for syllabi from relevant courses taught at other universities and, as well as, to search for the CVs of authors in the field, something that was especially useful for finding comprehensive lists of works by authors belonging to underrepresented groups. Along the way, she found that many of the research skills she was using had been learned in her philosophy classes. In particular, she had acquired the analytical skills to read, understand, summarize, and dissect philosophical arguments as well as find contentious points made by the authors of the materials she was looking at, which created openings for responses from other authors. As well, she had learned in her philosophy classes how to see connections between philosophical topics, ideas, theories, and arguments, and this enabled her to appreciate links between different arguments and topics within the broader area of personal identity, allowing her to build on the materials she had already found. Not only did this affirm the usefulness of her studies in philosophy, it showed her how to take the skills she had learned in those classes and use them outside of the classroom.

I used Kirsty's research summaries to flag texts, topics, and themes that seemed exciting or worthwhile to teach

in conjunction with Perry's *Dialogue*. I would then use the authors, topics, or bibliographies of those texts to search for more texts to add to our working list of course materials, which I would then inform her about in email or at our next meeting.

Our meetings were our opportunity to review and discuss the philosophy we were reading, the texts that we were enjoying the most, the ways in which they complemented or contrasted with each other, and how those ways could be turned into a narrative for a course. Although we would discuss questions about the particulars of what we were reading—both of us were learning a lot about the topic of personal identity as we went—we mainly discussed meta-questions aimed at reconciling what we were researching with what I would eventually be teaching. Which of the positions represented in Perry's *Dialogue* were prominent in the contemporary literature on personal identity and how were they dealt with in those works? Should we limit our searches to only standard, well-known texts, or include non-canonical, lesser-known texts and authors? Should we look only for texts that I could assign in their entirety, or would I break from the existing design of the course and assign excerpts? We always ended these meetings with ideas to pursue in the coming week, such as following up on an intriguing footnote, constructing a bridge between two arguments, or continuing on a current track.

Certain problems came to light quickly. One thing we agreed on early was that the scholarship we were reading and enjoying was not freshman-friendly in the way we were aiming for. We worried that assigning these materials in an introductory course would likely result in more confusion than clarity for a student studying Perry's *Dialogue*—let alone philosophy—for the first time. We considered ways to make the articles more digestible (fewer of them, excerpts only, etc.) but were concerned that doing so would add very little to the students' learning beyond what Perry's book and my lectures already accomplish. Kirsty's student perspective was very useful in making this assessment.

So we changed paths: we decided to shift our focus from enhancing one portion of an introductory course on knowledge and reality to designing an entire senior-level course on personal identity. In particular, two courses on the department's list stood out as viable candidates: a 300-level "Studies in the Self" course and a 400-level "Topics in Contemporary Philosophy" seminar. We agreed that either option would be appropriate for the materials we were finding and the direction they were taking us in (and we had even mentioned in our proposal that our research could possibly supply me with content that I could teach in those courses). Our change was also timely: curriculum changes in our department were such that the "Introduction to Knowledge and Reality" course and the "Introduction to Values and Society" course were scheduled to be retired and be replaced by "Introduction to Philosophy: The Examined Life" (so I needed only to teach one more academic year with the course that I currently had).<sup>8</sup>

Our searches—largely spearheaded by Kirsty's research—now had much greater scope and depth. We agreed to still use Perry's *Dialogue* as the launching point, although now

the project wasn't about clarifying it, but, rather, probing and raising questions about points that it touches on. The works referenced explicitly and implicitly in the dialogue were still on our radar, but we were now researching the avenues of critical analysis and argument that have emerged in response to them and, more radically, despite them. This wider scope helped immensely when it came to including works by women philosophers, though we still had difficulty finding or identifying members of other underrepresented groups.<sup>9</sup> It also freed us up to allow the inclusion of more complex texts. We found that a lot of that complexity was a result of authors responding to and building on the theories, themes, thought experiments, and so forth of their predecessors and peers, and Kirsty's annotations in her research summaries—e.g., "In this paper X defends Y against Z's criticism"—were tremendously useful when it came to mapping those connections and grouping texts by topics and themes.

At the halfway point of the project, we laid out a tentative progression of readings. It started with Perry's *Dialogue* to generate interest in and questions about the topic of personal identity. Then it moved to Locke and classic responses to Locke. This provided background for the many references to Locke that occur throughout the philosophical scholarship on personal identity. It also set the stage for reading recent work defending "psychological continuity" views of personal identity. Criticisms of the latter theory led into arguments for "bodily continuity" views of personal identity, and criticisms of both theories led to readings and discussion of ethical and methodological considerations. The outline of the progression of readings was not groundbreaking, but we were excited by the arguments in the texts we had found and the connections among the arguments of the authors of these texts. As we found more materials, we would place them on the map (after consulting with one another via email or in our meetings). Sometimes placing one item on our map would result in our reorganizing others, but the general progression of ideas remained relatively the same throughout these additions and adjustments.

The number of texts was one consideration in this process—we aimed to have enough for two or three texts per week for the duration of a semester, knowing that in an actual semester, texts would have to be cut for other course activities such as tests, writing workshops, and seminar presentations. (Since I did not yet know if I would be teaching the course as a 300-level lecture course or a 400-level seminar, I preferred this flexibility.) Another consideration was how students would gain access to the texts. Perry's edited collection *Personal Identity* contains a number of the core texts referenced in his *Dialogue*, some of which we wanted to include in our course design. Since it could function as one book with multiple assigned readings in it, we decided it would be a worthwhile purchase for students and opted to adopt it for the course. However, that book did not give us anything from the current century or by a woman philosopher or on some of the topics we were intent on including. In selecting one-off articles—which is the majority of what we put into our map of readings—we gave preference to texts that are easily (and economically) accessible through the electronic resources

of our university's library website. That way, students in the course would be gaining familiarity with searching the library's website and databases—and developing a skill that is an asset for future potential research assistants.

## RESULTS

The main results of this teaching-based research project are two-fold. One is the reading list that we mapped, which I am using for a 400-level undergraduate "Topics in Contemporary Philosophy" seminar that I am teaching in fall 2018. That list is provided below. Feedback from readers of this paper is welcome and redesign is anticipated.

John Perry, *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality*<sup>§</sup>

John Locke, Book II Chapter XXVII ("Of Identity and Diversity") in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*<sup>\*§</sup>

Joseph Butler, "Of Personal Identity"<sup>\*\*§</sup>

Derek Parfit, "Personal Identity"<sup>\*\*§</sup>

John Perry, "The Importance of Being Identical"<sup>§</sup>

Jennifer Whiting, "Friends and Future Selves"<sup>§</sup>

Mayra Schechtman, "Personal Identity and the Past"<sup>§</sup>

Sydney Shoemaker, "Personal Identity and Memory"<sup>\*\*</sup>

Anthony Quinton, "The Soul"<sup>\*</sup>

Bernard Williams, "The Self and the Future"<sup>\*\*§</sup>

Meredith W. Michaels, "Persons, Brains, and Bodies"

Andrew Naylor, "Personal Identity Un-Locke-Ed"<sup>§</sup>

Eric Olson, "Is Psychology Relevant to Personal Identity?"<sup>§</sup>

Mark Johnston, "Remnant Persons"

Marya Schechtman, "Personhood and the Practical"<sup>§</sup>

David Shoemaker, "The Stony Metaphysical Heart of Animalism"

Kathleen Wilkes, Chapter 1 ("Thought Experiments") in *Real People: Personal Identity without Thought Experiments*

Tamar Gendler, "Exceptional Persons: on the Limits of Imaginary Cases"<sup>§</sup>

\* These texts are available in *Personal Identity*, edited by John Perry and published by University of California Press (2008).

§ These texts are the ones that I have selected for the "Topics in Contemporary Philosophy" seminar.

At every stage of conducting the research that it took to design this list of readings, the help of a research assistant was tremendously valuable. I state with confidence that the process of getting to this result would not have been as stimulating or productive without that assistance, and I encourage any teacher with the will and a way to hire a student for a teaching-based research assistantship to do so.

The second main result of this teaching-based research project is the set of skills that the research assistant applied, learned, and honed.

In her own words:

I did not think I would conduct research in my undergraduate degree, let alone in philosophy. I hope that giving some insight into the personal learning aspects of my experience will encourage more philosophy professors to engage in this type of education with their students.

There were some things I had already learned during my undergraduate education that helped me get started with the assistantship (which have been mentioned above). Overall, the tasks I completed during the research assistantship, along with Dr. Mills's guidance and advice, let me learn new skills and develop existing ones, including searching for materials using databases; searching for sources with respect to a specific theory; analyzing a source based on predetermined criteria; evaluating a source from a teaching standpoint; summarizing the arguments and theories contained in a source; collaborating with another person on a research project; writing annotated bibliographies; and organizing sources into a logical progression of study. All of the skills I acquired have proven useful to me outside of the research assistantship, as well as outside the discipline of philosophy. My improved ability to locate sources helped me with finding information relevant to projects in a variety of my undergraduate courses and with the initial research to support my future master's thesis project in School and Clinical Child Psychology. As well, my improved ability to summarize sources has led me to construct clearer, more concise papers and arguments in various disciplines including, but not limited to, philosophy. Further, being able to look at sources from an educational perspective has allowed me to communicate my ideas better by teaching me to consider my audience. Being able to analyze texts in terms of their topics and positions, as well as in terms of their strengths and weaknesses, has made me better at picking out relevant sources, and at supporting, arguing against, and, in general, responding to the arguments to be found in these sources. Organizing the sources into a reading list further taught me how to make clear, logical connections between ideas, arguments, and theories, and to do so in a way that builds upon what has already been covered. I have also been



able to transfer these skills outside the scholarly realm and into the practical realm. At work, I have become better at making a case for my proposals and suggestions, as well as collaborating with and educating my colleagues on issues I find important.

I want to conclude with a final, important point. I believe I have clarified the skills-development value the research assistantship had for me and how it opened my eyes to the ways I can use the skills I have gained from studying philosophy. However, it was not simply the opportunity afforded to me that taught me all these things, but rather working as a research assistant to a mentor devoted to the project in all of its aspects.<sup>10</sup> I hope that more educators in the discipline of philosophy will take on research assistants as it will surely enrich student education in this discipline, affirm their students' choice to study philosophy, and give their students the opportunity to take the skills their studies have provided them and use them outside their courses.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We wish to thank the three anonymous reviewers of the *APA Newsletter on Teaching Philosophy* for the helpful feedback that improved this paper and for their enthusiasm for teaching-based research initiatives. We would also like to thank Cyrus Panjvani for his comments and encouragement during the writing process. Above all else, we are exceptionally grateful to Ed Lorkovic, chair of the Humanities Department at MacEwan University, for his support and contributions to the idea of teaching-based research assistantships and for his leadership in bringing the idea into actuality within the department.

#### NOTES

1. Richard Schacht, "Statement on the Major," American Philosophical Association, 1992, <http://www.apaonline.org/page/major>. Accessed 5 July 2017.
2. Linda Jonker and Martin Hicks, "Teaching Loads and Research Outputs of Ontario University Faculty Members: Implications for Productivity and Differentiation," Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO), March 11, 2014, <http://www.heqco.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/FINAL%20Teaching%20Loads%20and%20Research%20Outputs%20ENG.pdf>. Accessed June 8, 2017.
3. The administrative details of the department's teaching-related student research assistantship are straightforward. The department funds up to four forty-hour research assistantships a year on a competitive basis. Most importantly, these are not to be used for teaching assistant positions; they are solely and explicitly for assistance with the research we do pertaining to our teaching. Specifically, the projects receiving assistance must involve either significant course redesign or new course development, and the students providing the research assistance must be enrolled and declared majors or minors in at least one of the Humanities Department's disciplines, Philosophy being one of them. Proposals must include details about the project, including specific tasks and timelines for the research assistant's work as well as a defense of the student's suitability for the project. A small committee of department members vets the proposals.
4. In the case of the philosophy courses where I work, the classes are capped at forty students or fewer, and there are no teaching assistants or graders. Those of us in the professorial ranks all have tripartite (teaching/research/service) workloads with teaching comprising the largest portion, which typically means a 3/3 course load with the majority of those courses at the 200-level or higher. There is a good deal of variety and autonomy in the courses we teach as well as ample opportunity for course design and re-design development. This allows us to teach to our individual research strengths but also to stretch ourselves in the

direction of other areas. There are no prescribed syllabi and very minimal text requirements only at the introductory level.

5. I appreciate Theodore Cooke's case in "Using *Blade Runner* in Your Introduction to Philosophy Course" (*APA Newsletter on Teaching Philosophy* 3, no. 2 [Spring 2004]: 6–9) for using the film *Blade Runner* to help students understand some of the philosophical concepts that are used in Perry's *Dialogue*; however, I was looking for materials that would ground and explicate those concepts more concretely than the film can provide.
6. Among my reasons for revising the course were the following:
  - my principal area of research is early modern philosophy, and so I already teach a number of other courses in which I can introduce students to Berkeley's philosophy;
  - in my study of early modern philosophy I have a particular interest in the concepts of life and death. This has led me to cultivate a research interest in the philosophy of death along with creating a 300-level course on the philosophy of death. Perry's book works as a nice complement to that interest and serves also as a stepping stone to that course;
  - Perry's book also works as a stepping stone to other courses offered by my department, including a brand new 300-level "Studies in the Self" course that was developed for the sake of increased variety and opportunity for the use of new materials;
  - many of the positions represented in Perry's book are to be found in essays, and adding an assortment of essays increases the variety of genres in course reading materials and—importantly—could also increase the diversity and representation in the authors assigned; and
  - students enjoy studying the dialogue and want to know more about the ideas and arguments contained in it.
7. I was exceptionally fortunate to have Kirsty provide me with research assistance on this project. Every success of this teaching-based research project is due in significant part to her outstanding research skills and her impressive abilities to understand, anticipate, and collaborate.
8. Indeed, after the success with this teaching-based research assistantship, I had another research assistant in Summer 2018 help me with research for this new course.
9. Unfortunately, we did not discover the UPDirectory until after concluding this research project.
10. My learning experience would not have been as successful without Dr. Mills's dedication to not only the project at hand, but also to my education. She did not simply give me tasks and ask me to report back, but rather guided me through the best way to approach these tasks by modelling techniques, giving me tips and strategies, and providing me with starting points and materials. Without Dr. Mills's dedication to and passion for education, this opportunity could have been very discouraging for me. Instead, the positive experiences I had during this research assistantship improved my scholarly and non-scholarly work and led me to a decision to pursue graduate studies, which is something I had decided against in the past. In fall 2018, I will begin a master's program in School and Clinical Child Psychology.

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## Teaching a Summer Seminar: Reflections from Two Weeks on the Philosophy and Psychology of Character in the Summer of 2018

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During the summer of 2018, I had the tremendous good fortune to teach a two-week-long summer seminar at Wake Forest University to philosophers and theologians from

the US and UK. In this article, I summarize many of the key details about the seminar. But my ultimate aim is to explore some of the decisions I had to make in planning the event. My hope is that what I learned can be helpful to other philosophers who are thinking about teaching summer seminars in the future.

### 1. BACKGROUND TO THE SEMINAR

The summer seminar was held June 18–28, 2018, with participants staying at a nearby conference center and meeting on the campus of Wake Forest University. The seminar was one of the central activities of [The Beacon Project](#), which is funded by a large grant from the Templeton Religion Trust to study the morally exceptional (moral saints, heroes, and the like) from the perspectives of philosophy, theology, and psychology. I am the philosophy director of the project.

The seminar was held immediately before the Beacon Project final conference. Hence participants not only attended the seminar for almost two full weeks, but they also got to go to the two-day conference and hear presentations of new work on the morally exceptional in these three disciplines.

The theme of the seminar was “Character and the Morally Exceptional: Empirical Discoveries and Moral Improvement.” It was guided by the assumption that becoming a virtuous person is one of the central goals of the ethical life, and was organized around two central questions:

Week One: How good of a job are most people today doing in becoming virtuous?

Week Two: Are there any strategies for cultivating the virtues and becoming morally exceptional which can help us to do better?

More specifically, the goal of the first half of the seminar was to draw on empirical research in psychology to see what the makeup of most people’s moral character is today. For instance, do most people have the moral virtues (honesty, courage, temperance, and so forth), the moral vices (dishonesty, cowardice, intemperance, and so forth), or some other kind of character trait intermediate between virtue and vice (which is the view I hold)? Here is the reading list we followed during the first week:

#### MONDAY

**Topic: Conceptual Background on Character Traits**

Miller, Christian. (2014). *Character and Moral Psychology*, chapter one.

**Topic: Formulating and Discussing the Harman/Doris Argument**

Doris, John. (2002). *Lack of Character: Personality and Moral Behavior*. Cambridge:

Cambridge University Press, chapters two, three, four (pg. 62–66), and six.

#### TUESDAY

**Topic: Some Responses to Harman/Doris**

Sabini, J. and M. Silver. (2005). “Lack of Character? Situationism Critiqued.” *Ethics* 115: 535–562.

Sosa, Ernest. (2009). “Situations against Virtues: The Situationist Attack on Virtue Theory,” in *Philosophy of the Social Sciences: Philosophical Theory and Scientific Practice*. Ed. C. Mantzavinos. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 274–290.

Sreenivasan, Gopal. (2002). “Errors about Errors: Virtue Theory and Trait Attribution.” *Mind* 111: 47–68.

Kamtekar, Rachana. (2004). “Situationism and Virtue Ethics on the Content of Our Character.” *Ethics* 114: 458–491.

#### WEDNESDAY

**Topic: Background on the Big Five Approach**

John, O., L. Naumann, and C. Soto. (2008). “Paradigm Shift to the Integrative Big Five Trait Taxonomy: History, Measurement, and Conceptual Issues,” in *Handbook of Personality: Theory and Research*. Third Edition. Ed. O. John., R. Robins, and L. Pervin. New York: The Guilford Press, 114–158.

McCrae, R. and P. Costa. (1987). “The Five-Factor Theory of Personality,” in *Handbook of Personality: Theory and Research*. Third Edition. Ed. O. John., R. Robins, and L. Pervin. New York: The Guilford Press, 159–181.

**Topic: Assessing the Big Five Approach and the Situationist Challenge**

Miller, Christian. *Character and Moral Psychology*, chapter six.

Doris, John. (2002). *Lack of Character: Personality and Moral Behavior*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 67–71.

#### THURSDAY

**Topic: Background on the CAPS Approach**

Mischel, W. and Y. Shoda. (1995). “A Cognitive-Affective System Theory of Personality: Reconceptualizing Situations, Dispositions, Dynamics, and Invariance in Personality Structure.” *Psychological Review* 102: 246–268.

**Topic: Assessing the CAPS Approach and the Situationist Challenge**

Doris, John. (2002). *Lack of Character: Personality and Moral Behavior*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 76–85.

Miller, Christian. *Character and Moral Psychology*, chapter five.

**Topic: The Density Distribution Approach**

Fleeson, W. (2001). “Toward a Structure- and Process-Integrated View of Personality: Traits as Density Distributions

of States." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 80: 1011–1027.

Fleeson, W. and E. Noffle. (2008). "The End of the Person-Situation Debate: An Emerging Synthesis in the Answer to the Consistency Question." *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 2: 1667–1684.

## FRIDAY

**Topic: The Mixed Trait Approach**

Miller, Christian. (2013). *Moral Character: An Empirical Theory*, chapters seven and eight.

**Topic: Assessing the Mixed Trait Approach**

Bates, Tom. (2015). "Mixed Traits and Dispositions: Critical Discussion of Christian Miller, 'Moral Character: An Empirical Theory' and 'Character and Moral Psychology.'" *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 18: 421–424.

Doris, John and Spino, Joseph. (2015). *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*. <https://ndpr.nd.edu/news/character-and-moral-psychology/>

**Topic: A seminar participant's paper in progress**

The second half of the seminar turned to various strategies for trying to bridge what I call the "character gap" between the character we actually have and the virtuous character we should strive to obtain. Developing and justifying such strategies is one of the most underexplored areas of ethics, although in recent years it has gained increased attention. Here we looked at brand new work by several philosophers, some of which had not yet appeared in print:

## SATURDAY

**Topic: Daniel Russell's Recent Work**

Three chapters from Russell's new manuscript, *Doing Better*.

## MONDAY

**Topic: Nancy Snow's Recent Work**

Snow, Nancy. (2009). *Virtue as Social Intelligence: An Empirically Grounded Theory*. Routledge, chapters one and two.

Snow, Nancy. (forthcoming). "From 'Ordinary' Virtue to Aristotelian Virtue," in *The Theory and Practice of Virtue Education*. Ed. T. Harrison and D. Walker. London: Routledge.

## TUESDAY

**Topic: Additional Strategies for Becoming Better**

Alfano, Mark. (2013). *Character as Moral Fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, chapter four.

Webber, Jonathan. (2016). "Instilling Virtue," in *From Personality to Virtue: Essays on the Philosophy of Character*. Ed. A. Masala and J. Webber. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 134–154.

Miller, Christian. (2017). *The Character Gap: How Good Are We?* New York: Oxford University Press, chapter nine.

## WEDNESDAY

**Topic: Alan Wilson's Recent Work**

Wilson, Alan and Christian Miller. (forthcoming). "Virtue Epistemology and Developing Intellectual Virtue," in *Routledge Handbook of Virtue Epistemology*. Ed. Heather Battaly. New York: Routledge.

Wilson, Alan. (forthcoming). "Admiration and the Development on Moral Virtue," in *The Moral Psychology of Admiration*. Ed. A. Grahle and A. Archer. Rowman and Littlefield.

**Topic: Nudging and Moral Exemplars**

Engelen, Bert et al. (2018). "Exemplars and Nudges: Combining Two Strategies for Moral Education." *Journal of Moral Education*. Online First. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03057240.2017.1396966>

## THURSDAY

**Topic: Looking to the Future**

Miller, Christian. "Character and Situationism: New Directions." *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*. Special Issue on New Directions in Character and Virtue. 20 (2017): 459–471.

**Topic: Two seminar participants' papers in progress**

## 2. APPLYING TO THE SEMINAR

Participation was limited to graduate students, post-docs, or faculty who had their PhD for ten years or less. Participants were required to have trained in philosophy or religion/theology, but they could be doing work in any area of these disciplines. A background in virtue ethics or the philosophy of character was definitely not required, and those who had worked extensively on the recent "situationism" debate in philosophy and related issues about the implications of psychological studies for the existence and nature of character were strongly discouraged from applying.

Applicants only had to send a CV and a cover letter with (i) their contact information and (ii) a brief discussion of their interest in and background familiarity with the topics of the seminar. The cover letter could be no longer than two pages, single spaced.

Applications were due seven months before the seminar, and decisions were made a month later. We received over one hundred applications, and I was the one who narrowed them down to the fifteen participants.

## 3. MECHANICS OF THE SEMINAR

The seminar was built into the larger Beacon Project grant proposal, and so by design we were able to cover all the expenses of the participants during the two weeks. We did not, however, pay any honoraria. Our daily meetings would begin at 9 am and go to 12 pm, with a ten-minute break in the middle. Meeting for three hours was never a problem,

as far as I could tell, and indeed some days it felt like we could have gone much longer.

My approach was to avoid lecturing as much as I could. Rather, I wanted to both cover a lot of material during our time together and generate a lot of discussion from the participants. To facilitate both aims, I had a very detailed handout ready to go for each meeting. It would usually be six to eight pages in length, and I would talk through it and invite discussion as we went. I have used this approach in my teaching for fifteen years, and have always found that it works extremely well. One of our handouts from the seminar is included in the Appendix.

After our morning session, we would head over to lunch, and then the participants would have the afternoons free to read for the next day or do other work. We would gather again for dinner, and then the nights were free too. This was the schedule we followed right through to the Beacon Project final conference.

There were two variations from this plan. One was that we took Sunday off, and I organized an optional trip to a local baseball game in the afternoon (about half the group came).

The other is that I invited three leading philosophers working on character to join us in week two. By then, the participants were well versed in the empirical literature on character and were able to go deeper in examining new work by the visitors, who were Daniel Russell (Arizona), Nancy Snow (Oklahoma), and Alan Wilson (Bristol). In all three cases we looked at work that either had just been published this year or was forthcoming or in draft.

For each meeting during the two weeks, participants had about one hundred pages of reading to prepare, so the workload was significant. I put together a course packet for them, and also sent them the first two days' readings a week in advance so that they could be prepared before they arrived.

#### 4. CHALLENGES AND PLEASANT SURPRISES

This was the second time I have taught a summer seminar. (The first was five years earlier.) So I knew an important lesson already: no matter how much you plan ahead of time and try to take care of every imaginable detail, there will always be multiple problems that arise which you had no way of foreseeing. And lo and behold:

- (i) One participant dropped out a month and a half beforehand, and so we had to scramble to find a replacement.
- (ii) I discovered four days beforehand that the only restaurant on campus available for lunch in the summer was going to be closed during the seminar.
- (iii) One of the participants was in a wheelchair, and for two days the elevators in the building where we were meeting were reportedly unavailable due to annual maintenance and inspection.

But at the end of the day, everything got sorted out, and logistically things worked just fine.

A trickier challenge for the seminar leader, I found, was juggling all the organizational details, while also wanting to get to know the participants and have meaningful conversations with them. These interactions can be tough to navigate when trying to also pay for their lunch, or escort the group to various places on campus, or make sure childcare is arranged for participants with kids. I don't have any advice to offer about how to do it, only the reassurance that after a few days groups tend to fall into a routine and can usually take care of themselves.

On the flip side, I had two very pleasant surprises during the seminar. The first, which struck me during the very first meeting, was that everyone was engaged by the material and was very eager to talk about it both during and outside of the seminar time. Discussion was never a problem to generate. If anything, I had to limit it at times just so we would cover everything for the day. During each meeting, all fifteen members of the group would say something, and it was never forced. I asked them to raise their hands so that the more introverted members would have a chance to participate, and this seemed to work well. Also, rather than lecture, I would ask a lot of questions and welcome comments from a variety of perspectives as we moved through that day's handout.

The other pleasant surprise was how well members of the group bonded with each other. As already noted, they consisted of a mixture of graduate students (seven), post-docs (two), and junior faculty (six), with six women and nine men. The majority were married, and of those most had children, although only two participants brought their children with them for the two weeks. By the end of this time, all the participants seemed to have become genuine friends.

What I learned is that, while covering the material and developing a competence in the subject matter are important, at the end of the day what really makes a summer seminar successful is not anything I contribute directly. Rather, it is the bond that is formed amongst the participants themselves.

#### 5. SOME KEY CHOICES TO MAKE IN DESIGNING A SUMMER SEMINAR

I could go on and on about the seminar, but my main goal is to focus on issues and questions that I confronted which may be of relevance to others who are planning future summer seminars. Of course, I recognize that my own experience is only of limited value. Others will have different budgets, different topics, and different learning goals, among other differences. Nevertheless, here are several questions which I hope will be helpful to think through together:

*How detailed should applications be?* I opted for the "less is more" approach. No writing sample. No letters of recommendation. I didn't want to burden letter writers, and I am skeptical of the value of these letters anyway.

A CV told me much of what I wanted to know, especially whether there was evidence of professional involvement and, ideally, a publication record.

*Should there be a requirement that applicants be two years or less post PhD?* I really like this approach. The hope is that many of the participants will be inspired to do work in the given area early on in their careers, which can carry with them for decades to come. Plus, I found it can help to create a rich social dynamic if everyone is roughly the same professional stage.

*Should the focus be on work-in-progress or on discussing important readings?* I have seen summer seminars structured mainly around reading work-in-progress and offering feedback. That is very different from what we did, but of course it is also a good approach to follow in its own right. It all depends on what the instructor's vision is for the seminar. My goal was to help fifteen philosophers and theologians get the training they needed in relevant areas of the psychology and philosophy of character so that they could be well equipped to *start* writing papers in the area (rather than coming to the seminar already knowing the literature well and having papers ready to go).

*Is it worthwhile to bring in outside speakers if there is funding available for them?* Frankly, it depends. Some summer seminars rotate through a series of topics and have outside speakers give a quick overview of each topic. Frequent visitors can be very helpful in that kind of context. For a work-in-progress-type seminar, on the other hand, I see less value in having such visitors.

With the approach I adopted for my seminar, I think the outside speakers were helpful (i) with providing a nice change of pace for the participants, (ii) helping participants network with leading philosophers in the area, and, most importantly, (iii) fostering engagement with the cutting-edge work that was being done at the time by top people. Just be sure to do your homework ahead of time. Is the person a good teacher and dynamic in the classroom? Will he or she be willing to hang out with the participants during the unstructured time? Does this person get defensive when his or her work is criticized, or talk down to non-experts? It is important to know the answers to these questions ahead of time.

*When during the day and for how long should meetings be held?* I find mornings tend to work best, and three hours is a good length. Anything shorter and I begin to worry about whether it is a worthwhile sacrifice on the participant's part to be there. Of course, another approach is to do two shorter, separate meetings each day (say, two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon). The one caution I would offer is to still leave plenty of time for preparing the readings for the next day, as well as for informal conversation and engagement.

*How much reading is realistic to assign?* I probably overdid it with one hundred pages a day. I know that not everyone kept up with that much every day. On the other hand, the handouts were intended to also be useful in providing a lot of relevant detail, so that even those who did not read

a particular article could still follow along. Plus, if an article sounded interesting, there was always the chance to go back to it after the seminar was over.

*How long should the seminar be?* Obviously, this will depend on factors like the budget and the instructor's goals for the seminar. If the aim is mainly to discuss work-in-progress, then two weeks strikes me as too long in most cases. If the approach instead is one of immersion in a given subject area, then ten to fourteen days strikes me as just right. In either case, I would be nervous about going longer than two weeks.

## 6. CONCLUSION

I loved teaching this summer seminar, and judging from the evaluations that were completed on the final day, the participants seemed to find it very rewarding and enjoyable too. Of course, it took a ton of work. I averaged about five hours of sleep a night during the two weeks, not to mention the many hours of preparation in the months leading up to the seminar during which our grant administrator and I tried to sort out all the logistical details.

Looking back, though, it was definitely worth it.

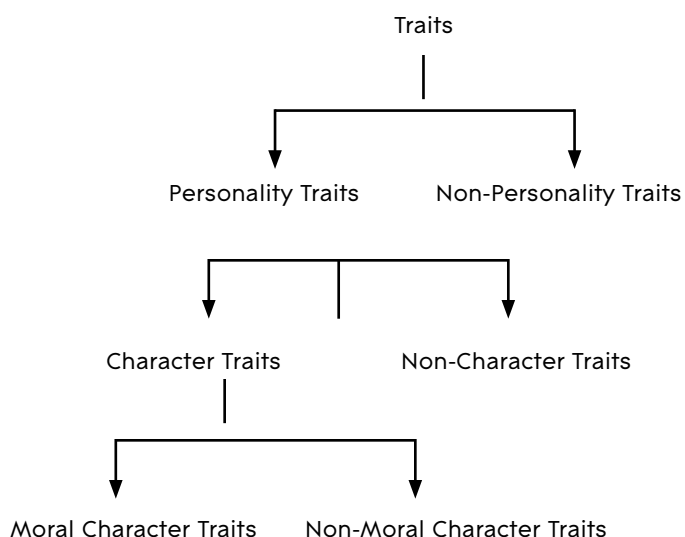
## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## Appendix

Handout from the Beacon Project Summer Seminar First Meeting – June 18, 2018

### CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND ON CHARACTER TRAITS



## PERSONALITY TRAIT

A disposition to form beliefs and/or desires of a certain sort and (in many cases) to act in a certain way, when in conditions relevant to that disposition.

## CHARACTER TRAITS

### One Proposal

A character trait is a personality trait in which the person who possesses it makes a normative judgment of the relevant kind whenever it is exercised.

### Another Proposal

A character trait is a personality trait for which a person who possesses it is (at least to some degree) normatively responsible for doing so.

### A Third Proposal

A character trait is a personality trait for which a person who has it is, in that respect, an appropriate object of normative assessment by the relevant norms.

## SOME FUNCTIONAL ROLES FOR CHARACTER TRAITS

- (a) **Understanding:** Character traits are a basis for understanding ourselves and others by classifying people in various ways which can be important to interpersonal and intrapersonal interaction. When I form an impression of Smith, for instance, my general understanding of him may be framed in terms of character traits and shaped heavily by my perceptions of his honesty, compassion, or generosity. The same could be true, not only about Smith, but about myself as well.
- (b) **Explanation:** Character traits are a basis for (partially) explaining why people act the way that they do. Smith may cheat on tests because he is dishonest (either in general or just dishonest in test-taking situations), whereas Jones may regularly give money to charity because he is compassionate, other things being equal.
- (c) **Prediction:** Character traits are a basis for predicting what a person who has them will likely do in the future. For instance, if I think that Smith is shy, then I can take myself to have a fairly good idea of how he will likely behave in a room full of people at the next work party, other things being equal.
- (d) **Evaluation:** Character traits are a basis for normatively assessing a person. So when I say that Smith is dishonest, I am evaluating him as a person in a negative way, at least in that one respect.
- (e) **Imitation:** Character traits are a basis upon which to imitate another person and cultivate positive traits

while avoiding negative ones. So I might strive to become more compassionate, and model my life after people such as Jesus, Gandhi, Socrates, and Mother Theresa, who are said to have had certain virtuous character traits to a high degree.

## SOME ADDITIONAL FEATURES OF CHARACTER TRAITS

- (1) They come in degrees.
- (2) They have what can be called a "minimal threshold" that has to be met in order to qualify as that particular kind of trait rather than some other.
- (3) They can be consistent in certain ways:
  - Stability
  - Cross-situational consistency

## THE METAPHYSICS OF CHARACTER TRAITS

### Three Rough Options:

#### *The Summary View*

Character trait ascriptions are true or false in virtue of corresponding to *actual patterns* of relevant mental thoughts and bodily action.

#### *The Conditional View*

Character trait ascriptions are true or false in virtue of corresponding to *conditional patterns* of relevant mental thoughts and bodily action.

#### Example:

The ascription "Jones is compassionate" is true if and only if (and because) Jones were to encounter one or more people whom he notices are in need of a moderate amount of help, he would typically attempt to help and do so from a compassionate state of mind.

#### *The Realist View*

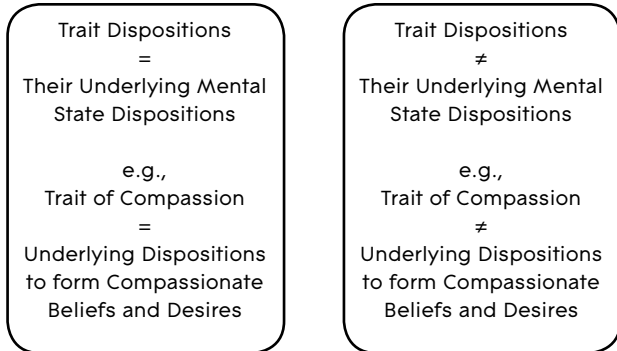
Character trait ascriptions are true or false in virtue of corresponding to actual instantiations of the trait properties.

Example: The ascription "Jones is compassionate" is true if and only if (and because) Jones has in fact instantiated the property of compassion.

Such a property mediates between stimulus events, such as seeing someone in need, and relevant manifestations, such as wanting to help and believing that I (Jones) can help by donating money.

**Question:** What grounds the trait properties?

**Answer:** A character trait disposition which is had by Jones *consists of* some cluster of Jones's relevant interrelated mental state dispositions such that necessarily, if Jones has this cluster of dispositions, then Jones instantiates that character trait as well.



## FORMULATING AND DISCUSSING THE DORIS (AND HARMAN) ARGUMENT

### The Target

A *globalist* conception of character, which is one that accepts the following two theses (I leave aside evaluative integration):

- (1) *Consistency*. Character traits are reliably manifested in trait-relevant behavior across a diversity of trait-relevant eliciting conditions that may vary widely in their conduciveness to the manifestation of the trait in question.
- (2) *Stability*. Character traits are reliably manifested in trait-relevant behaviors over iterated trials of similar trait-relevant eliciting conditions (22).

A *global character trait*, then, is a character trait which exhibits both cross-situational consistency in a wide variety of trait-relevant circumstances, as well as stability in repeated instances of the same kind of trait-relevant circumstances.

### The First Stage of the Argument

First, Doris argues that (my reconstruction):

- (i) If there is widespread possession of the traditional virtues and vices understood as global character traits, then systematic empirical observation using appropriate psychological studies will reveal many people behaving in a certain kind of way.
- (ii) However, systematic empirical observation using appropriate psychological studies fails to reveal that many people act in this kind of way.
- (iii) Therefore, there is not widespread possession of the traditional virtues and vices understood as global character traits.

What is the "certain kind of way"?

*My Interpretation:* A way that is reliably sensitive to the actual moral reasons there are in the relevant situations.

Example: Isen and Levin dime phone-booth study.

Note: This reasoning parallels some of the situationist reasoning used over forty years ago in social psychology. Subtle situational features are capable of having a significant impact on our behavior in ways that are inconsistent with the robust possession of global personality traits. As far as I can see, the key differences from this earlier discussion are twofold: (i) the Harman/Doris reasoning is used to arrive at a conclusion which is specifically focused on the extent to which people have *traditional moral character traits*, as opposed to global personality traits in general, and (ii) this conclusion is then used to assess the plausibility of Aristotelian virtue ethics, and more generally any theory in normative ethics which relies on global character traits.

What *exactly* is the conclusion of the First Stage?

- (i) On metaphysical grounds the properties of *being compassionate* or *being honest* do not exist.
- (ii) No human being has ever had any of the traditional virtues or vices such as courage or compassion, either as a matter of psychological necessity or as a matter of contingent fact.
- (iii) Given the psychological evidence, we are not justified in believing on the basis of that evidence that most people possess the traditional virtues or vices.
- (iv) Given the psychological evidence, we are justified in believing on the basis of that evidence that most people *do not* possess the traditional virtues or vices.

A quick side-note about my view and later this week...

- (v) Given the psychological evidence, we are justified in believing on the basis of that evidence that most people do not possess any global character traits.

### The Second Stage of the Argument

The conclusion in (iv) is supposed to undermine the plausibility of Aristotelian virtue ethics, along with any other theories in ethics which rely on such traits.

But how?

Harman: "this sort of virtue ethics presupposes that there are character traits of the relevant sort, that people differ in what character traits they have, and these traits help to explain differences in the way people behave" (1999: 319).

Doris in his 1998 paper: "Aristotelian virtue ethics, when construed as invoking a generally applicable descriptive

psychology . . . [is] subject to damaging empirical criticism" (520).

Doris in his 2002 book

Question: Are there any arguments connecting (i) the denial of the widespread possession of traditional character traits, to (ii) an assessment of the *truth* of Aristotelian virtue ethics as a normative theory?

## THE STUDIES

Milgram

Darley and Batson

Isen and Levin

Latané and Darley

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## *Building Logic Papers From the Ground Up: Helping Introductory Logic Students Write Argument-Based Papers*

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I teach an Introduction to Logic and Critical Thinking class in which I ask students to write argument-based papers. Writing a paper of this kind is a challenge for which many of them have not been thoroughly prepared. Before they write their papers, therefore, I ask them to complete a series of exercises that includes writing an initial version of the argument that will serve as the basis of their paper, constructing an arrow diagram<sup>1</sup> of that argument to help them organize the paper, and participating in a small group, in-class discussion of their arguments and diagrams. Then I provide them with my own comments on their work, in which I suggest some ways that they might build upon it. This preparatory approach has, I believe, yielded noticeably better results than, for example, simply requiring and commenting upon drafts (an alternative I have often used). I will describe it in more detail below.

Students begin the assignment by deciding upon a topic,<sup>2</sup> and a conclusion that they will support regarding that topic. Next, they write an argument in favor of that conclusion, and a counter-argument (which they may draw upon when asked to come up with objections to their argument in the paper itself). I specify a minimum, but not a maximum, number of premises (usually about eight);<sup>3</sup> encourage them to provide support for premises that are controversial or not obviously true; and ask them to include only premises, conclusions, and premise or conclusion indicators when writing out their arguments.

Once students have written initial versions of their arguments (and counter-arguments), they construct arrow diagrams of them. This helps them understand the structure of their arguments, which in turn helps them

structure their paper—the diagram of their argument serves as a kind of outline. Unlike a standard outline, however, the arrow diagram provides them with a detailed visual representation of argument structure: a logical map or blueprint to guide them in their writing so that their paper reflects and conveys the structure of their argument.

On the day that the arguments and arrow diagrams are due, before students turn in those assignments, I give them an in-class assignment to do in small groups. All of the students discuss their arguments and diagrams with the other members of their group and take notes on the feedback they receive. The discussions engage students in collaborative assessment of their work, and brainstorming about possible revisions and additions. I supply some prompts, in the form of questions such as these: Do any of the premises need to be supported, and if so, how might they be supported? What do you think are the strongest objections that might be raised in response to the premises or conclusions of the arguments? What other comments or suggestions do you have? At the end of the discussions, I collect the arguments, diagrams, and feedback notes—all of which I return when I have added my own feedback.

That feedback varies from student to student, of course. Often, it includes some corrections of the arrow diagrams. It generally consists primarily, though, of suggestions or recommendations for their papers concerning content development or organization. Comments of the first type may 1) focus on ways of strengthening, refining, and filling out the arguments (for instance, by adding sub-arguments as needed, providing data from studies, or drawing upon arguments from philosophical sources); or 2) suggest ways of supplementing the arguments themselves with other appropriate material (e.g., an account of the history and importance of the topic, an explanation of an important distinction, or a discussion of a relevant thought experiment). The organizational remarks may include advice about which bits of content to group together in passages, paragraphs, or sections. That advice is often accompanied by references to the arrow diagrams to explain or support the suggested groupings (I also spend some time in class demonstrating how to use arrow diagrams for guidance when organizing statements into various groupings).

When I return the students' exercises, along with their feedback, I give them their assignment sheet for the paper. The assignment sheet includes instructions concerning paper length, citation of sources, etc. It also specifies that in the introduction to their paper they must i) state the conclusion or thesis they will be supporting and defending; ii) briefly indicate—in no more than two sentences, using keywords—the main reasons they will give for that conclusion; and iii) note that they will be raising (at least two) objections to their argument, and responding to them. A brief introductory outline of this kind gives them a little more organizational guidance as they write their paper.

When students begin working on the paper itself after completing the preparatory process described above, they need not do so empty-handed. As I have indicated, they have a significant basis for their paper in the form of their argument-in-progress, as well as material for their



objections in their counter-argument, structural guidance from their arrow diagram, and developmental suggestions in their student/instructor feedback. They are already well on their way to writing their paper.

#### NOTES

1. My students generally use the argument diagramming method presented in texts such as Lewis Vaughn, *The Power of Critical Thinking: Effective Reasoning About Ordinary and Extraordinary Claims*, 5th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 86–94; and Ronald Munson and Andrew Black, *The Elements of Reasoning*, 7th ed. (Boston: Cengage Learning, 2016), 17–18. I give them the option, though, of using what I refer to as “keyword diagrams,” which are different in only one respect: premises and conclusions are represented in the diagrams by means of keywords rather than numbers. Some students prefer the keyword diagrams because the keywords represent the content of their arguments more directly, making it easier for them to keep that content in mind as they construct and use the diagrams.
2. In the assignment I do not place any restrictions upon the topics students may choose. The choices they make vary widely: they include social and political topics (such as the ever-popular marijuana legalization issue), more personal concerns (e.g., the ethical justifiability of a friend’s or employer’s behavior), philosophical problems (whether God exists, for instance), etc. Once I have read students’ initial arguments, though, I do sometimes suggest that they revise their conclusions or (in rare cases) find new topics. Suggesting a revision would be appropriate if, for instance, the original conclusion is vulnerable to certain counter-examples, but that vulnerability could be avoided by means of a minor modification (such as replacing “in all cases” with “in most cases”). I might recommend coming up with a new topic (and offer to meet to discuss possibilities) if, for example, the original one is so uncontroversial that raising reasonable objections to the student’s position might not be possible.
3. I specify a minimum number of premises for the students’ initial arguments to give them some practice in constructing and diagramming relatively long arguments, and to ensure that they generate a significant amount of material that they may draw from when they are turning their arguments into papers. I recognize, though, that strong arguments may be (and often are) short ones. So I do not specify a minimum number of premises for students to include in the paper itself. Once they have presented and diagrammed their somewhat lengthy arguments in their preparatory work, they may choose to present shorter arguments in their papers.

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## BOOKS RECEIVED

### HACKETT PUBLISHING COMPANY

Reeve, C. D. C. Translation and Introduction: Aristotle, *Physics*.

Reeve, C. D. C. Translation and Notes: Aristotle, *De Anima*.

Dasti, Matthew, and Stephen Phillips. Translation and Explanatory Notes: *The Nyaya-sutra*.

Morrow, David R. *Giving Reasons: A Short Introduction to Critical Thinking*.

Weston, Anthony. *A Rulebook for Arguments*, 5th edition.