

ANAMNESIS

REMEMBERING OUR FUTURES

THE SELECTED PROCEEDINGS OF
THE 6TH ANNUAL NORTH GEORGIA
STUDENT PHILOSOPHY
CONFERENCE

Edited by:
Justin Downey
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North Georgia Philosophy Studies
A Division of the Georgia Philosophy Series



Published by North Georgia Philosophy Studies: A Division of the Georgia Philosophy Series in association with the Philosophy Student Association at Kennesaw State University and Luxor Press, a division of Luxor Media Group, Inc.

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ISBN 10: 1-891948-11-3

ISBN 13: 978-1891948114

Title: Anamnesis

Editors: Downey, Norton, Staton, and Jones

15 14 13 12 11

5 4 3 2 1

Cover Image: Mike Valdez

Typesetting: Tyler Maxwell

Typeset in 11pt Adobe Garamond Pro

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PREFACE

In 1999 and at the age of nineteen, I attended my first philosophy class on a whim at Kennesaw State University. Owing to personal reasons, I needed to withdraw, but my philosophy professor was the only teacher who I called to inform I wouldn't be back. Nine years later, I found myself begging Dr. Jones to have his dean override his already full class. The calling to learn and learn well became my foremost focus. Since I was raised in a family with two Baptist preachers and protégés on the rise, I had many questions about the truth I was being taught and whether my accustomed way of living was the path I wished to follow.

Through my involvement with the Philosophy Student Association (PSA), I came to realize that it doesn't matter what you believe, the real way to practice being is to BE. We will always grow and learn, but to be proactive during this process is to dance the soul's sacred dance. To be able to share that dance with many outstanding and intelligent individuals is truly a blessing that has helped shape my future way to live, that is, the way I've always imagined myself living.

I had absolutely no idea what I was getting myself into over a year ago when I accepted the challenge to revive the Philosophy Student Association from its subsequent lethargy resulting from its supernova as the consistently best student organization on campus. I had not even attended a meeting, and certainly knew that I had some really big shoes to fill! This group has contributed to the success of so many students in their pursuit of knowledge and truth as a way of life. I believed that what the PSAers were doing was far too important to come to such an abrupt end. Even the sacred notebook that referenced our group's history and steps to achieve excellence was taken and never returned. To my amazement, a simple call out to the PSA community was warmly welcomed. With a little magic and time well spent, the group not only survived, but began to flourish once again!

When asked to be the chair of this year's *North Georgia Student Philosophy Conference*, I was honored. At times, I confess I had doubts I could pull off something so imposing in scope, but armed with some confidence I knew I could succeed. Three weeks before the conference was scheduled to take place, we had only a handful of submissions, and things were looking rather grim. Refusing to give up, I kept working to make things happen as well as trying to keep my PSA family hopeful. To my amazement, we managed to surpass our target number for submissions, and it was clear the conference was going to take place whether we

were ready for it or not.

This year we were fortunate to have such a distinguished keynote speaker, Dr. Thomas Kasulis from The Ohio State University. I had the pleasure of getting lost, having coffee, and eating dinner with this wonderful man as well as hearing his lecture on *Ethics as Responsiveness: Some Theories from Japanese Philosophy*. His lecture was extremely relevant to the dynamics of how this conference played out. In the Western World, we seem to have an integrity based sense of self. We want to succeed and be recognized as individuals. Although we come together as a group, we still leave as single individuals. The Eastern World, however, has more of an intimacy based sense of self. In this sense of self, everything resonates together and becomes a part of a harmonious being that overlaps into each other's sense of self; such a self does not break apart. This intimacy sense of self was our experience at the conference. Such an experience will never leave me, and I hope to use the knowledge I've gained from this journey throughout my life.

Not only have I met some of the greatest living philosophers this past year through our lecture series (*The Mike Ryan Lecture Series*), I have met friends for life. I even had the opportunity of engaging discussions with the philosopher, Joel Kupperman (who was one of the Whiz Kids of the 1950's T.V. show) and poet, actor, and musician Saul Williams. But some of my cherished relationships are with the exceptional upcoming writers and thinkers who participated in the NGSPC 2009. Moreover, being the proud recipient of the PSA's most prestigious award, *The Spirit of the Conference 2009 Award*, is something I will always cherish. I only accepted this award because the PSA wanted and insisted on giving it to me. Simply stated, I just put aside some time to give blood to an organization in need and that might not have continued without my donation. Nonetheless, if I did not have the support and follow through of this family, the conference would not have been so successful and this selected proceedings would never have come into the light of being.

To all of those who worked with me this year, THANK YOU for helping me "oil the hinge." You were, and remain, the source of my motivation. If it weren't for each of you, the PSA and philosophy at Kennesaw State would not exist. Here's to an unforgettable year!

— Marie Norton

PREFACE

When, several weeks after sending out a call for papers, we on the conference organizing board had received a scant three submissions to *Anamnesis*, I naturally felt disappointed. We met to seriously consider calling off the event just as another stroke of fate had forced us to do the year before. It was bad news for us, certainly, but bad news also for those who, under other circumstances, would come and open up to their fellow students. As a presenter at the fourth and fifth annual conferences, I had come to know firsthand what fun it was for students to share their work with one another, and how quickly and easily the nervousness and intimidation traced upon the faces of the neophytes metamorphosed into excitement and pleasure. Students who would otherwise come — but now might never get to — wouldn't know what they were missing.

The very next night, to my complete astonishment, fifteen new submissions awaited us. They arrived all at once, apparently having waited to surprise us just when all seemed lost. Fate was not entirely against us, after all, and proved willing to make a counter-stroke to the one it had made a year prior. Good news for all these interested students looking to attend, and unexpected good news for us as well — but for me a bit unnerving at the same time. The only fully active member of the Philosophy Student Association at KSU to have any ties with the previous years' conferences (or, for that matter, with anything PSA-related, the others of my generation having already flown off to the farther corners of Georgia and the world), I began to see more clearly that, for lack of anyone more suited or experienced, I was the one being looked to as a knowledgeable authority on how to plan and host a conference. I, the most socially avoidant person I know, a knowledgeable authority in a matter of social gathering. The notion was utterly ridiculous! But there are shadow aspects to each of our characters, aspects that, lying dormant, are ready to manifest under the proper circumstances.

Don't get me wrong. I cannot claim by any stretch to have done the most work in bringing *Anamnesis* to fruition. I was not the most indispensable agent in orchestrating all the complexities, big and small, to pull everything together. My cohorts Cody Staton (PSA President), Dr. David Jones (our guiding presence), and the indefatigable Marie Norton (who more than earned her official award for Spirit of the Conference), all did just as much as I did — and no doubt more. Still, without breaking past the boundary of propriety and humility, I recognized the importance of my duties, the foremost of which was acting as our contact with the students, making sure they understood all the little details, requirements, and

updates. I received from them messages of unease, sometimes even of apprehension. What exactly would be the format of presentation? Would the audience be very big? Were there to be moderators to ensure civility, or should presenters plan to cower behind the neatly printed pages of their papers in order to avoid being pelted with rotten fruits or blunt projectiles? Many of these students, I realized, were attending their very first conference, and were understandably anxious. And it was I who was to calm them, to assure them that, yes, in the end, everything would be fine — enjoyable, even — if only they would believe the promises, sent via email, from a man they'd never seen and about whom they knew absolutely nothing. That most actually did show up the day of the conference at least means they weren't overtaken by their uneasiness. Hopefully, my assuring words had some soothing effect on those who felt nervous.

Indeed, until we actually saw people coming through the door on Friday morning and asking to register, we still really hadn't been sure whether there would be a conference or not. At least, I hadn't been sure. One plans and organizes the procession of events, arranges and schedules the panels, but ultimately one must simply trust, or hope, that somebody will appear. In all my dealings with the participants before the conference, easing their worries, I had also been wrestling with my own. I really had no idea how to plan a conference, even though I was the sole link to the previous conferences; I was just winging it as much as the students, going through a second round of the kind of uncertainty experienced (and overcome) years before when I first attended the NGSPC as an undergraduate presenter. If I ever came across as a legitimate authority to anyone — to my companions in crime on the planning board or to those I sought to reassure into coming — it was purely an act. In the absence of a real authority, invent one. Pretend to be one. And trust, like the participants who arrived that Friday at sunrise, that everything will more or less work out.

It is quite rewarding when one's trust is confirmed.

The main reason why I could trust, though, was again, Cody Staton, Marie Norton, and Dr. David Jones. They were the authorities behind my authority. The whole enterprise was, as they surely know, exhausting, frustrating, uncertain, but also interesting — enjoyable, even.

Once our guests began presenting, we knew they were in good hands. Our keynote speaker, Dr. Thomas Kasulis, did an exemplary job of guiding and illuminating conversation during and after each panel session. Thanks go to him as well for making the conference what it was.

I'm proud to say that I believe our guests from all over Georgia and beyond Georgia had a pleasant and exciting time. And that alone makes it worthwhile.

— Justin Downey

PREFACE

The time had come, I thought, to remember the past and the wonderful relationships that can only occur between teachers and students. The time had come, I thought, to remember the past and how those students somehow found me, somehow rescued me from my karmic malaise of ending up in the wrong place, which in itself was an unexpected consequence of a series of events that put me out there in the vast reaches of higher education. The time had come, so I thought, to let go of those wonderful times that make lives meaningful, authentic, and worth living. My students of the Philosophy Student Association were now all gone; they had all gone forth to other shores; students move on, while professors just stay on. Staying on without them would be lonely, but there was plenty of work in the queue to keep me busy for the years to come; sometimes my students of the past made certain I didn't attend to all of my professional commitments. They were demanding, did so much: the first student philosophy conference ever in the State of Georgia with an accompanying selected proceedings from each conference (*Beyond the Box*, *InterPlay*, *The Fool*, *The Exquisite Corpse*, and *Quinta Essentia*), a world class lecture series (which was named after one of my deceased students, Mike Ryan), a student lecture series to present and discuss their own work and ideas, the online journal *OtherWise*, and then there was the newsletter *Sophia* and reading groups, film groups, and just gatherings to talk and do philosophy. They delivered all of these wonderful phenomena and more to their campus and community.

Who could not be proud of these young men and women? Some have even moved on to graduate school and are now working on Ph.D.'s! Is this not the mission of the institution in which I teach? These students who did so much, and continue to do so in their lives, emerged from the margins, often times from some rather dire situations, and have succeeded in so many ways. The question of mission is not a rhetorical one as the reader may suspect. These students arrived, succeeded to transform the intellectual environment of their institution and did so without much recognition, and certainly without any celebration of their accomplishments.

In the past, there was at least the prospect of making the appeal to quality education and we enjoyed the financial support from a succession of deans, and for that we were always grateful. Our conferences were extraordinary experiences for participants, speakers, and professors joining us from the outside who attended in support of their students. Parents came to celebrate their sons and daughters

and boyfriends, girlfriends, and partners came to support their loved ones as did friends for the sake of friendship and admiration. Even one of my colleagues would show up after a week's work and offer students his responses to their work. But after the fifth conference, *Quinta Essentia* (the essence of five), we had come to an end, or so I thought.

The one notable failure of my glorious students of the past was not to take inter-generationality as seriously as they should. They became so close with each other it appeared to others they were closed. This perception was inaccurate as so many appearances are, but it did present a real challenge. There was virtually no one left when they cast their sails for other shores. There were, of course, some attempts to reconstitute the PSA's previous successes, but the student leadership was just not in place, not strong enough. The Confucian principles that made us so extraordinary were now viewed as too prosaic and not individualistic enough—Ayn Rand had made a comeback! I shrugged (but not along with Atlas), we struggled together, and then it all died until Marie Norton applied her CPR techniques and breathed some life back into the PSA, and a second life is always amazingly different from the first. PSA was reborn, and Marie was its savior.

Although I needed to redirect my plans, which mostly focused on finishing up some of those aforementioned projects in the queue, the PSA call became so audible again. In many ways, the call had that selfsame similar and distant despair in it I had heard before. Even though Student Life was always supportive of the PSA, I soon realized the new environment in the College would never engender my students' efforts even in the same diminished fashion of the past. I still tried, nevertheless, but after a year there was simply no more support, financial or otherwise. We would need to go at it alone. To this day, I remain perplexed how such student impressiveness can be ignored by administrators and professors and how the celebration of the mediocre can occur so easily and naturally and supplant real accomplishment. Notwithstanding this "desert of the real," we were back on track again thanks to Marie's efforts, Cody Staton emerged as the new PSA President and along with Cody, Justin Downey, who had been helping all along as a senior advisor of sorts, came forward to assist breathing air into the lungs of the reviving PSA. Others came on the scene to help with our efforts throughout the year and organize our fifth conference, *Anamensis: Remembering Our Futures*. I think especially of Johan Andren and Jordan Galehan. Tammy Ortagus and Rebecca Greenhill, long time friends of Marie made the food service possible. And as any good Confucian realizes, when people come forward and volunteer their talents, time, and energies something good is bound to happen. This Selected Proceedings is just one manifestation of that good.

As Augustine realized in his *Confessions*, memory makes present the story of our lives and re-imagines the past as a "great field or a spacious palace, a storehouse for countless images of all kinds." This spacious palace of the memory makes a meaningful future a possibility. I can once again express my deep gratitude to

my students who have allowed me to travel through that spacious palace of the memory and how they have rescued me once again from the *desert of the real*. Like those images of the past in Augustine's "inner chamber, vast and unbounded," the gathering of images of the past are now, once again, *ad manum posita*. I have returned to the joy of realizing how blessed, albeit a different kind of blessing than Augustine's, I am to have these students remind me of what I tend to forget; they have placed me once again in the moment where I can remember our futures with them.

— David Jones

ANAMNESIS: REMEMBERING OUR FUTURES

INTRODUCTION

The North Georgia Student Philosophy Conference (NGSPC) has flourished as student interest has risen throughout the last six years. Perhaps no other environment has served such a healthy role as the creative springboard for so many students. As Plato tells us in the *Republic*, a healthy environment is necessary for the young to prosper. The principal core of the conference, the Philosophy Student Association (PSA), has always sought to instill an attitude of excellence and a commitment to camaraderie among philosophy students. Sadly, the effort to sustain PSA as a creative organization had waned considerably in the last year. This was not from any outward forces, though many have existed, but rather, this collapse was from within—we had experienced the last wave of graduations from the founders of the PSA who had built the PSA as one of the most active student organizations in the country. In 2009, the PSA sought a rebirth and new sense of identity. Thus, this year's conference is dedicated to those individuals who have instilled in PSA a mantra of success. This year's conference is a direct result by those members whose vision and insight has encouraged PSA look to the future. It is for this reason we have chosen the word Anamnesis to honor the spirit of PSA. As Plato reminds us in the *Meno*, the future has been there with us all along; we only need to remember our futures. This is the very point we wish to draw from Plato—finding meaningfulness in relationships is not through a mere semblance of sophistic rhetoric, the kind of pithy humdrum that academics herald, or scholars laud—which are altogether grotesque—but is done through thoughtful responsiveness to the other. *Anamnesis* thus offers the revival of the kindred spirit, the pursuit of *arete* in common. As an affront to such banal and negative attitudes, because it is us who despise such weak character, the PSA has sought to enshrine the memory of past brethren in this year's conference.

The PSA is not a community composed of discrete *I*s. The students, as well as a supporting professor, have engendered a supporting and stimulating forum. The breadth of the PSA community is extended to all who have contributed to the 6th NGSPC. Moreover, the PSA is the nexus of a group whose intimate relationships foster the creative conditions necessary for the NGSPC. To reiterate Dr. Thomas Kasulis in his keynote address, *Ethics as Responsiveness: Japanese Philosophy*, looking inward we see that our group's relationship is the overlap between I and You. What this means is that You and I are not separate — we are defined in relational terms that he refers to as intimacy. Each and every individual not only defines the group in their individual way, but looking sincerely at each

individual reveals the traits of the community. Nevertheless, this does not mean we are not different from each other as the topics of the NGSPC 2009 Selected Proceedings suggest. As such, this book does not have one common theme, but the quality of work displayed by participants at the conference imparts a high level of quality. Unfortunately, so much of students' work is shuffled amid the throng of mediocrity in contemporary academia (and admittedly we have faced our own variety of this at Kennesaw State), but it is comforting to know that excellence is pursued at its highest level at the NGSPC; only through such a commitment to excellence are the endeavors of students made possible.

Possibility—and perhaps more appropriately, *possible worlds*—is the subject of the first entrée of *Anamnesis* in Peter Ahumada's "Modal Realism: Lewis' Little Worlds vs. Concept 51," which received the award in the *Best Graduate Paper* category. The *Best Undergraduate Paper* was William David Hasek's "Invidious Coherencies: Davidson and Identity Politics," which evokes a similar theme to Ahumada's paper, that is, our descriptions of objects have a profound effect on how we identify ourselves. Defining humanity is indeed an important aspect of philosophy and "Fanon Contra Foucault: Two Theories of Oppression in the Discourse of Postmodern Resistance" by Christopher Eby elaborates such a theme. This theme is also displayed in the *Best Continental Paper*, "Nietzsche and Derrida Alone in a Room with Yellow Wallpaper" by Benjamin Norris. Norris is unrelenting, which conveys a sincere respect for irony given that his topic is truth; an elusive and often subject to categorize. Another feature of the panel on "Definitions and Indefinitions of Humanity" was Rhett Greenfield's "Getting Clear About Human Nature." Employing Rousseau's questions about what exactly humanity is and is not, Greenfield provides an analysis of human nature based on the deeds and actions of humanity. Owing to the excellent panel by Clemson students, no other philosopher was given as much attention as Aristotle. I think Aristotle would have been proud—if only he had these students combing the beaches of Greece instead of Alexander's troops! Perhaps Noah Welsh's "Aristotelian Dynamics" could have revealed that what Aristotle lacked was not ingenuity, but calculus. Jimmy Maners' "Aristotle on Friendship: The Importance of Friendship within the Flourishing Life" elucidates that the virtuous life is not lived in solitude, but the community and the individual can best promote virtue when in connection with other virtuous people.

The recipient of *Best Creative Paper* was "The Return of the Philosopher King" by Stephanie Onofri. In her paper, she questions Plato's motivations and seeks an alternative reading of the purpose of philosophy. Perhaps no other paper sought such an invigorating and alternate reading of philosophical texts as that of Jason Carter's "Philosophy in Relation to Death: Plato's Reoccupation of the Greek Poetic-Religious Tradition in *The Republic*," which argues that the *Republic* must be considered in its socio-political and historical context. Through such measures, the Republic was a means of offering a resolution to, or at least, assuaging the

fear of death. Concluding this year's proceedings is a robust offering, Jared Culver interrogates the validity of a law's utility in "Concerning Natural Law's Explanations and Claims of Authority."

The papers included in this volume are only possible because of the laborious efforts of Marie Norton, the spirit of the conference and the recipient of the *Spirit of the Conference Award*. As Socrates tells us in the *Crito*, the right kind of zeal is always most valuable and indispensable. Her passion for philosophy is paralleled by her thoughtful attention to others. Not to be overlooked is Justin Downey, who helped rescue PSA from its stagnation owing to the numerous graduations we faced and lack of institutional support except for Student Life and SABAC for our lecture series, the *Mike Ryan Lecture Series*. To both, we are very grateful. In large part, the PSA is indebted to the participants of the conference, for they provided interesting and insightful panels. We also like to thank our guest speaker, Dr. Thomas Kasulis, as well as the visiting professors, especially Drs. Todd May of Clemson and James Winchester of Georgia College and State University who have been consistent and long time supporters of the NGSPC.

Finally, I extend a great deal of gratitude to my fellow PSA'ers, most notably Jordan Galehan and Johan Andren, for enlivening this year's conference. Most especially, the PSA is grateful to our teacher, Dr. David Jones, for awakening our spirits and guiding our restless intentions. Nietzsche tells us that only a true master "takes all things seriously only in relation to his students—even himself" (Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, pt.4, 63). Such a statement is no mere harangue, curt and clipped to make it easily accessible. However my gratitude is summarized, it will only fall short of its intended desire. Therefore, I say, "thank you," to everyone who helped the PSA this year.

— Cody Staton

MODAL REALISM: LEWIS' LITTLE WORLDS VS. CONCEPT 51

Peter Abumada

David Lewis could be right, and he could be wrong. Either case is possible. There could be an infinite number of causally disjoint spacetimes out there, including one where a person who looks like Nixon was not a crook. Godzilla could be battling the Smog Monster somewhere. But the proposal seems outlandish. It does not follow from any scientific principles of simplicity and elegance, yet, not possessing a ready list of these principles, it would be unseemly for me to engage in debate on this point. I can only say, in passing, that it sounds like the worst explanation I have ever heard.¹ I give it a blank stare.

The current paper is *not* about whether Lewis is right about plentitude. He could be right, and he could be wrong. The full universe could be one way, and it could be another. I admit his scheme is possibly true. I hope he admits my own guess about the physics of everything to be possibly true, as well. It is interesting to speculate about all this, but—we must be clear!—we are dealing with the subject of cosmology.

I *do* think there are an infinite number of disjoint spacetimes out there.² I read Alan Guth's book, *The Inflationary Universe*, and he muses about an infinitude of universes spawned from tiny vacuum fluctuation. He writes, "If inflation is correct, then the inflationary mechanism is responsible for the creation of essentially all the matter and energy in the universe. The theory also implies that the observed universe is only a minute fraction of the entire universe, and it strongly suggests that there are perhaps an infinite number of other universes that are completely disconnected from our own."³ Everything I know about cosmology, I know from Alan Guth. So, if I am right about the cosmological state of everything, then there are an infinite number of realms out there completely disconnected from our own.

1 For a clever and insightful deflation of the presumed merits of believing in plentitude, please see Alan Stairs, "Review Essay: On the Plurality of Worlds," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 49 (1988): 333-52.

2 I must reject Rosenberg's position that the notion of spatiotemporally disconnected spacetimes is ungraspable, found in Alexander Rosenberg, "Is Lewis's 'Genuine Modal Realism' Magical Too?" *Mind* 98 (1989): 411-421. It is a difficult concept, perhaps, these completely disconnected universes, but not ungraspable.

3 Alan Guth, *The Inflationary Universe* (Reading, Massachusetts: Perseus Books, 1997), 15.

But I could be wrong. (I could be right, though.) Either case is a possibility to consider. My own view of these infinitely many causally distinct spacetime realms (CDSRs)—it should be strenuously pointed out—does not imply an uncountable infinity of donkeys, nor anything remotely approaching plenitude. I do not even think these realms have different natural laws. The cosmological view I am proposing is quite distinct from Lewis'. And it is possible we both are wrong. There might be only one CDSR, after all.

We are discussing cosmology: the physics of the way everything is. Anyone who enters this discipline had better be ready to argue with Alan Guth because it is a discipline that competes with physics. By and large, that argumentative spirit has fallen out of fashion since Galileo's *Dialogues Concerning the Two Chief World Systems* in 1631 since no one wants to assume the role of Simplicius. No one wants to be called a fool.

I do not even consider statements about the cosmology of everything, which are possibly true and possibly false, to constitute philosophy. There are educated guesses. There are uneducated guesses. And that is just about that.

I happen to think David Lewis' cosmological vision is utterly foolish. I'll go so far as to say it is crazy. The pope, whom Galileo mocked in Simplicius, had a better vision. There, I said it: David Lewis' cosmology is just crazy.

But, by my own lights, I have said nothing philosophical. I do not think that insulting people who believe they have invisible friends or who believe there are thousands of unicorns living in China is a philosophical pastime. It used to be, of course. It was four hundred years ago, but it is not so today. Believe whatever you will! You might believe there is an invisible teddy bear that calls himself Frankie, running the world. I cannot stop you. And I suppose I should not even try, since it *is* possible you are correct. I do not think it likely, but it is possible. There might be Chinese unicorns. There might be CDSR plenitude. But, then again, there might not be.

I believe the only *philosophical* question revolves around the issue of analyzing possibility. I do not believe it can be analyzed. One can, of course, provide synonyms. One can say that by the phrase "alternative possibilities" I mean for you to consider counterfactual ways everything could be. But, really, we appear to be substituting one intuitively core predicate for another. If you don't understand what I am getting at with one of these predicates, you won't get what I am driving at with the other. Possibility might be a brute notion.

It certainly seems so to me, but Lewis says that if one retreats to such a view, then one is not playing the game.

The game, he says, is to analyze the notion of possibility. What do I talk about when I discuss possibility? What have I been talking about when I have been talking about possibility? For I have used the idea several times already in the present essay! What have I said?

I said, first off, that Lewis could possibly be right about the cosmological

structure of everything physical and that he could possibly be wrong about it. What I intended when I wrote the first line of the essay was to say:

- (1) It is possible David Lewis' cosmology of logically complete CDSR's is true and it is possible David Lewis' cosmology of logically complete CDSR's is false.

I am now going to employ a ' \diamond ' for my notion of possibility to simplify my own statement. Thus, I say:

- (2) \diamond (Logically complete CDSR's exist) & \diamond (Logically complete CDSR's do not exist)

I hope you do not disagree. At least, you didn't when you first began reading this essay. You did not yell, "Rubbish!" and drop it in the bin.

Now, let me simplify my own statement by introducing a ' \neg ' and introducing the symbol ' C_{DL} ' to stand for Lewis' opinion about the cosmological nature of the way everything is. He disagrees with Guth and me. He claims:

C_{DL} = There are countless other CDSR's that, all together, are logically complete.

Hence, my own statement becomes:

- (3) $\diamond C_{DL}$ & $\diamond \neg C_{DL}$.

I hope, still, you do not disagree with it. I hope you continue to agree with me that it is possible Lewis is right and that it is quite possible he is wrong. Surely the latter is a possibility, because it is possible Guth is right, after all.

If you agree with me, now, then you must *not* be using the word 'possibility' in the manner Lewis says you are. For he says a statement about what is 'possible' can be reduced to a statement about the existence of a CDSR wherein the sub-statement holds. However, obviously, proposition (3) cannot be so reduced. It cannot be expressed as: "There is a causally distinct spacetime realm somewhere out there in which C_{DL} holds true, and so forth." — because such a statement is utter and complete nonsense! Lewis' cosmological assertion, C_{DL} , holds true of the grandest universe in general, if it holds at all. It cannot logically be true within a single CDSR.

So, if I say it is possible there might exist only twelve CDSR's in the grander universe, and you agree with me that it *is* possible, then neither you nor I are employing the word 'possibility' in the manner Lewis claims we are. Neither of us is using the word 'possible' in a manner consistent with Lewis' analysis.

There is nothing wrong with that! Contrariwise, if someone *does* use the word 'possibility' consistent with the dictates of Lewis, then I have no problems with

him or her. I will not quibble with you for a word.

However, I will quibble with you for a concept. For if you *do* use the word ‘possibility’ in the manner of Lewis then how do you express the concept of alternate ways that everything in toto could have been? Do you call them ‘shpossibilities’? Really, I would like to know!

David Lewis calls them “possibilities of a grander sort — not differences between the worlds, but other ways that the grand world, the totality that includes all my little worlds, might have been.”⁴

Well, here is an interesting concept, surely! So, let’s apply a number to the concept expressed in the sentence above. Let us call it concept # 51. The number is unimportant. Correct? It is just a number, right? So, let us talk about concept 51, if we may, about the ways that everything might have been. Let us talk about these counterfactual situations, since that is the name Kripke gives them.

Strictly speaking, of course, one (and precisely one) of these situations (or possibilities of a grander sort or shpossibilities or whatever) is *not* counterfactual. It is factual that the entire world is the way it is. Nonetheless, all the rest of the ways, the ways the entire grand world is *not*, are indeed counterfactual.

So what about concept 51? What can we say about it? Indeed, are we permitted to say anything about it, at all?

Lewis, on a strong reading, might be asserting that we are not allowed to broach concept 51. It is not permitted to be thought. It is not allowed. Such a reading is untenable, however. It would be highly ironic because Lewis’ own writings contain a description of concept 51. The quote above spells it out exactly. Lewis is thinking about it, so why are we not permitted to think about it? Kripke thinks about it all the time, obviously, and he gave us the phrase ‘possible world’ to begin with.

The weaker reading of Lewis is a description of usage. It is a statement that the English language is being used, for the moment, in a particular way. It is the statement that anyone who uses the word ‘possibility’ is talking about various causally distinct spacetime realms.

Now, statements about usage are peculiar. Uniformity of English usage is notoriously elusive. There are always a few poor kids in the slums of Cleveland who are upsetting the usage apple cart. Once you try to make a weak linguistic claim, you find yourself worrying what the man on the street has in mind when he uses a word. When he says, “that’s so fat!,” what does he mean?

Lewis does engage in this sort of discussion. He claims that when the common sense man on the street speaks of remote possibilities, he is thinking about something other than all those things spatiotemporally related to us. That may well be, but this fact doesn’t help us in the slightest because by hypothesis the man on the street also has the view that there is just a single CDSR. One cannot go on to conclude, as Lewis does, that the man on the street is *in fact* speaking

4 David Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, Ltd., 1986), 100.

about remote CDSR's when he talks of possibilities, because, also by hypothesis, such things are furthest from his mind. One cannot really invoke the common sense man on the street's views, at all. And the mere fact that Lewis engages in such musings reveals he has the weaker thesis to propound.

He is telling us the concept we do in fact summon whenever we speak of 'possibility,' and he tells us it is not concept 51.

Yet the fallacy here is that Lewis cannot tell us how to talk. He cannot tell Kripke how he should use the phrase 'possible worlds'. Nor can he tell me what concept I should invoke with the number 51, nor how you should speak, either. He can tell us how we *do* speak, but—if he intends to do that!—he probably ought to have engaged in a great deal of tedious fieldwork designed to answer an empirical question. Kripke, for one, says Lewis has completely misrepresented what he, Kripke, is talking about. Lewis has provided an utterly "misguided picture."⁵ And Kripke thinks the phrase 'possible worlds' is to blame. He says we "should just *drop* this phrase and use some other expression, say 'counterfactual situation,' which might be less misleading."⁶ Kripke clearly is envisioning the concept of counterfactual situations of the entire grand universe itself, and he is using the \diamond operator to abbreviate such things.

I speak the way Kripke does, obviously, and, if you had little difficulty reading the first few pages of my essay, then at least some of the time you do, too. I obviously use the word 'possibilities' to designate the entities under contemplation in concept 51.

Moreover, those entities are obviously not CDSR's.

Now, there is nothing stopping Lewis from talking the way he does. There is nothing that can stop David Lewis from talking about the objects he chooses to consider with the words he chooses to employ. But the same thing holds true for me.

Lewis is allowed to employ the word 'actual' to discuss the causally distinct spacetime realm of which he is a part. I am allowed to use the word 'actual' to refer to the entire non-counterfactual grand world.

Lewis is allowed to use the phrase 'possible world' to mention and differentiate among each of these causally distinct spacetime realms that he thinks are out there. I am allowed to call them CDSR's. I am even allowed to call them 'dizzers', which I shall from now on. And I am further allowed to use the phrase 'possible worlds' to describe the entities under consideration in concept 51.

Lewis is allowed to call each of his little worlds, as he termed them, a 'possibility'. I am allowed use the word 'possibility' to describe each one of the alternate ways the entire grand universe might (actually or counterfactually) be.

Who is to stop either of us? And what of substance could possibly be gained

5 Saul Kripke, "Identity and Necessity," in *Identity and Individuation*, ed. Milton K. Munitz (New York: New York University Press, 1971), 397.

6 Ibid.

in the effort? I could understand him perfectly. He could understand me. What could possibly be gained by fighting about or altering the alphanumeric strings by which we label these concepts?

I say—absolutely nothing! It is obvious to me that no substantive matter could ever turn on the choices we make about the alphanumeric strings to employ.

Lewis says otherwise. He says, “It is a mere matter of terminology whether to use ‘actual’ and ‘world’ as I do; but it does matter.”⁷

A starker disagreement could not be set forth. All I can say is that if you are the sort of person who believes that writing ‘colour’ instead of ‘color’ could change the substance of a single philosophic truth, then you are being illogical. And, on pages 99, 100 and 101 of *On the Plurality of Worlds*, we find a nest and nexus of illogical statements. The overriding problem found here is that Lewis fails to see that some statements are analytical with respect to one version of language, while other statements are analytical with respect to another version of language, and that it is highly misleading to call any choice to speak one language or another a thesis. He doesn’t seem to realize that analyticity is concentrated wherever we choose to put it.

No matter what your words are, I do not see how you can long do without concept 51. Suppose you were a mite, and you lived on a dog, and the dog was so large (and you were so small!) that there was no way you could ever leave this dog. It comprises your entire known universe. It circumscribes all you could ever hope to cause. Neither you, nor your friends, nor any of your descendents will ever affect (or be affected by) anything beyond the dog.

Cannot you imagine whether or not there are other dogs out there? Cannot you imagine these possibilities? Are there twelve dogs in the grander world? Are there a hundred? The possibilities are endless, aren’t they?

Perhaps the run of the mill mites cannot imagine anything exists beyond their dog. Perhaps they call the dog, “the world.” Or even the “actual world.” But you are an intellectual. Cannot you wonder and worry about how many dogs there are, of what sort they might be, and how they are distributed through a larger, grander space? Cannot you consider these possibilities?

If another mite intellectual accosts you and declares there are an infinite number of dogs out there and furthermore that when the mite on the street talks about possibilities he is talking about these other dogs, wouldn’t you just be confused? Wouldn’t you say that there might possibly be an infinite number of dogs out there, but there might possibly be only twelve? Wouldn’t you say that you do not know what the mite on the street is thinking, but you do know that you yourself have a different concept in mind?

And let’s suppose there are a million such dogs on Venus. Venus is a cloudy planet, and the dogs have never gazed at the stars. In fact, most dogs think their planet is all there is. Their very best cosmologist thinks other planets are out

⁷ Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds*, 100.

there, billions and billions of them, but nobody reads his work. One dog thinks the existence of another planet is logically impossible. Magical, he calls it.

A philosopher dog comes along and says he, too, is convinced there are other planets beyond the clouds. He thinks they are hanging out there, one after another, in a rigidly ordered array. Each globe is separated from its nearest neighbor by one *million* miles of empty space. You can't get to the next planet, however. No dog can run or jump that far. But they are out there.

The dog on the street knows nothing of all this. But you are an intellectual dog, and you think it is possible there are billions and billions of planets. You even think it likely. You also admit it is possible they are set in a rigidly ordered array, as the philosopher demands, but you really do not think it is the case. The philosopher says the dog on the street is referring to these ordered planets whenever he uses the utterance 'possibility.' And you say that might well be so, but that when *you* talk of what is possible you have in mind something different. You have in mind the endlessly irregular ways that all planets (and all kinds of debris) might be scattered throughout a larger universe.

You are contemplating the ways the grand world, the totality that includes these little planets, might have been. Or might in fact be, for that matter. For it is very cloudy on Venus, after all. You are contemplating possibilities. Most of them are counterfactual, but one is factual. You do not know which the last one is, precisely. You do not know which of these grand possibilities lies beyond the clouds. But you are thinking about it and all these others, nonetheless. For you, possibility concerns not the far reaches of space, but rather *alternatives* to the way things in space are (or rather might be, since you really don't know how things are). You are considering alternatives to the way everything in the grandest world of all—the way *everything* is—and it is your choice of language to call them 'possibilities.'

You might say all this. Could you be wrong? I do not see how you could be wrong. You might be considering concept 51, and you might well use the word 'possibility' to do so.

Really, how can one avoid concept 51 for long? And if one does not avoid it, what shall one call it?

Lewis must be, at least implicitly, making the stronger, irrational claim that one cannot talk about concept 51, about the alternate ways that everything might be. If so, we can only expose the irrationality.

For consider the problem of epistemic possibility. Surely, Lewis admits it is possible I left my favorite button at home. Now, you might not have a favorite button, but I do, and, last I saw it, it was bright yellow. I do not remember whether I saw it at home last, or at work, or in Boston, or in Philadelphia. I do not really know where this little button is! But it was a durable little button, and I believe it is here on planet Earth somewhere. Indeed, I strongly suspect it is nestled amid my belongings at home.

What do we do with epistemic possibility? I claim it is part of concept 51. There are all these possibilities, you see, and I do not know which one in fact obtains. However, what is *Lewis* going to do with epistemic possibility?

It is an insuperable difficulty. If you try to put this into Lewis' account, you confront two sentences:

- (4) It is possible my button is at home.
and
(5) It is possible my button is here at the office.

According to Lewis, in sentence (4), I am saying there exists a dizzer where a person, who looks like me, has a house wherein a yellow button is hid. In sentence (5), meanwhile, I am saying there exists a dizzer where a person who looks like me is working in an office wherein a yellow button is hid.

But, suppose I assert both (4) and (5) together, which I most certainly do. According to Lewis, I am now saying there is a dizzer where a person who looks like me is at the office while his yellow button is at home, and there is another dizzer where another person who looks like me is at his office with a yellow button. According to Lewis' account, these are distinct people.

He does not rule out that one of these people who look like me is, in fact, me. However, he *does* rule out that both of them are.

And that is precisely what I am *not* saying! I am saying there is a possibility that *I* am in a world where there is a yellow button at home, *and* there is also a possibility that *I* am in a world where the yellow button is in the office.

Lewis has no words to describe this. Let him postulate as many dizzers as he may. Let him postulate as many counterparts of me, throughout the entire grandeur of everything that exists. He cannot explore epistemic possibility. That is, he cannot subsequently go through each of these versions of the grand state of everything that exists to consider all the different versions there might now be. For, among these people who look very much like me, there is the possibility that one person—in that dizzer over there!—seated in the room with a yellow button *is* me. And there is the possibility that a counterpart—in that dizzer over yonder!—seated in an office, while his button lies at home, *is* me. And there is the possibility that still another counterpart—in yet another dizzer!—seated in an office while his button is back in Boston *is* me, too. And there is a possibility that a dizzer with a counterpart seated in an office while his button is in Philadelphia *is* me, as well. There are all these possibilities. One of them has got to be me.

You see, one can certainly imagine the plenum of Lewis' little worlds. Suppose it true. Suppose there are counterparts galore populating such a grand scheme. One must superadd something further to say just which of these counterparts is myself. Each of these superadditions creates a completely different reality. For it is entirely different whether *I* am the one who dies on Thursday or not. It is an

entirely different grand reality if *I* am the one in an office with a button or not. It is entirely different whether Obama is bombing France while I am writing these words or no.

Each assignment of my identity to a different little dizzer is a different grand world. Each one is a radically different state of affairs. Each one is an interesting and distinct possibility. Each one is a different version of what we are considering in concept 51.

Is Lewis going to backtrack and say these are not possibilities? Is he going to say they are *sh*possibilities? And that he would really rather not talk about them? Really, what is he going to call them? How is he going to avoid concept 51? How can any intellectual avoid concept 51, if she is at all an inquisitive mind?

Of all the strange things ever purveyed in philosophy, one of the strangest has been David Lewis' account of possibility. I do not understand how things have gone on so long. It is either a contingent claim about language use, in which case it is simply a false characterization of the way Kripke and I speak, along with who knows how many others, or it is an irrational claim about what I am permitted to contemplate. It certainly does not hold up in the face of epistemic possibility.

The most generous thing you can say about it is that it is an awkward manner of constraining my speech to concepts I find entirely uninteresting. For, really, one cannot rationally maintain that I *cannot* think about the alternative ways that everything in the grandest scheme (of all that exists) might be. Or might not be. I can certainly think about Lewis' cosmology. I can think it very likely false. And I can call the object of these contemplations 'possibilities.'

And I *do*. I think about these things all the time. I do not see how a serious intellectual can avoid the contemplation of concept 51. Moreover, I do not see why a serious intellectual would ever be interested in talking much about Lewis' little worlds, except in a combative paper, such as this one. For concept 51 is the interesting concept. I am interested in just where my yellow button is. I am interested in precisely which dizzer *I* am located and in whether or not it is the only dizzer in the entire grand scheme of everything. I am interested in all these possibilities. I call them possibilities, anyway, and if David Lewis does not, there is really nothing much more to say.

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THE INVIDIOUS COHERENCIES: DAVIDSON AND IDENTITY POLITICS

Will Hasek

“Reason has always existed, only not always in reasonable form.”-Karl Marx

Donald Davidson’s infamous defense of anomalous monism¹ is inspired by Kant’s comments in *The Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals* about the compatibility of freedom and causal determinism. For Kant, our moral autonomy is born out of the solution of this antinomy. Humans are capable of recognizing their “will as a special kind of efficient causality that applies to us insofar as we are rational, corresponding to the physical necessity which regulates the motion of objects.”² Davidson’s interests are far more mundane – his questions are about phenomena that fail to fall under a law, not grander topics like self-rule. To my knowledge Davidson never explores the effects of self-description on agency, and perhaps with good reason. Kant’s ethical project depends on a larger epistemological framework set forth in the *Critique of Pure Reason* that analyzes all our knowledge in terms of *a priori* categories. Davidson, being far less inclined to talk of the transcendental, would likely treat questions about self-description as psychological, not philosophical. Nevertheless, his philosophy of action has important implications for political theory, and insofar as our understanding of politics is structured by social identity, it will concern questions about how we describe ourselves and those around us. In this paper I would like to use Davidson’s work on intention and linguistics, along with Social Identity Theory, to show how our descriptive practices inform our understanding of political agency, and how logic can be used in public discourse about identity.

The essay will proceed in three parts. The first is a quick overview of Davidson’s philosophy of action. In the second I apply Davidson’s analysis of intention to groups and use it to characterize collective intentionality. I argue that we can give the same account of intention for both collectives and individuals, but that the ways in which we ascribe reasons for action to each differentiate the explanatory role intention plays in the two cases. Furthermore, this difference prevents us

1 I.e., the position that mental events are nomologically irreducible to, but nevertheless caused by, physical events.

2 Immanuel Kant, “Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals,” in *Great Books of the Western World: Kant*. Vol. 42, ed. Robert Maynard Hutchins and Mortimer J. Adler (Chicago, London, Toronto: William Benton, 1952), 279.

from logically inferring anything about the reasons individuals have for action from the reasons the collectives they belong to act. The third part draws on the research done by psychologists Stephan Reicher and Leonie Huddy in the field of Social Identity theory to develop an account of how individuals “identify” with a social group. I argue that we can use this research to supplement Davidson’s coherence theory of meaning to show how logic has a role in shaping our cultural conversation about social identity.

I. Davidson on Action and Intention

Davidson’s work in the philosophy of action began with *Actions, Reasons and Causes* where he argued that causal explanations of behavior can be offered by looking at the reasons the agent had for acting. The intention with which an action is carried out is logically related to the agent’s pro-attitudes and beliefs. The latter is a judgment that a particular kind of action is desirable, and the former is a judgment that a particular action is of the desired type.³ We can use these to form a syllogism:

Major: Actions of type Y are desirable.

Minor: X is an action of type Y.

Conclusion: X is desirable.⁴

Together these constitute the primary reason for which an action was consummated, and therefore causally explain it.

While this may seem obvious we must keep in mind that Davidson was writing in opposition to one of the most popular schools of thought in the mid 20th century, Ordinary Language philosophy. More than one Oxonian argues that we need not invoke traditional concepts like intention to explain the action of others because their explanatory power ultimately rests on the linguistic practices of everyday language. Instead of looking for a cause, they advocated that we look for the context in which it makes sense to speak of “intentions.” The problem is that contextualizing intention in terms of ordinary language can give us multiple reasons for a particular action. Ostensibly the agent valued the action they performed more than the alternatives, therefore we need to assign greater weight to the reason with which the action in question was performed and only an analysis that takes intention seriously can accomplish this⁵. Philosophers like Stuart Hampshire, Anthony Kenny and A. I. Melden have objected that logical relations cannot be causal; rationalizing an action is just a way of describing one

³ Donald Davidson, “Actions, Reasons, and Causes,” in *The Essential Davidson*, ed. Ernie Lepore and Kirk Ludwig (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 23.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 29.

event, while causality requires a relation between distinct events. Davidson is puzzled by this objection - why does a logical explanation collapse effect into cause? Why does “explanation by redescription exclude causal explanation?”⁶ The skeptic has assumed too much in the attempt to escape the burden of proof.

In *Intending* Davidson modifies his account in the light of unfulfilled intentions. It seems inappropriate to characterize an unfulfilled intention in terms of a particular belief, since beliefs, for Davidson, are judgments that a particular action falls into a class and, in this case, there was no action in question.⁷ On the other hand intentions are more specific than desires, since desires are prima facie evaluative judgments about the desirability of a certain *type* of action, whereas intentions, in order to have any *possible* connection with action, have to be less equivocal.⁸ Davidson concludes that intentions are best represented as unconditional judgments that may or may not result from a process of practical reasoning. This means that rationalizing an action does not depend on finding a direct logical connection between intentions and a primary reason, but rather, looking for coherence between the unconditional judgment and the agent’s total beliefs about the future.⁹

II. The One and The Many

Davidson’s common sense account of intention has a second advantage over Ordinary Language philosophy that he himself didn’t seem to appreciate. Notice that we are just as comfortable using words like “intention,” “action,” “belief,” “reason,” “desire,” etc. when examining the behavior of groups as we are when our primary concern is a single individual. To simply dissolve these terms into their linguistic context may differentiate the two uses, but this treatment ignores the fact that contexts exist where we apply terms that are only intelligible in reference to collectives to individual human beings i.e. stereotyping. By adding an explanatory function to these words, as Davidson does, we can differentiate the descriptive roles they play when used in reference to groups and individuals. In this section I would like to expand on this point, and argue that collective intentionality cannot be logically decomposed into statements about individuals belonging to the group.

Assuming we no longer find radical contextualization palatable we need a way of interpreting “collective intention” which doesn’t accord undue philosophical reverence to superficial descriptive parity. Nothing hangs on the concept of intention itself; whether we are talking about a group or a single individual it

6 Ibid., 31-2.

7 Donald Davidson, “Intending,” in *The Essential Davidson*, 128-32.

8 Ibid., 132-4.

9 Ibid., 135-7.

will always be an unconditional judgment. Of course when we are talking about collective intention, that unconditional judgment is distributed across the members of the group, but that's inconsequential since it performs the same explanatory function no matter how it's parceled out. What we must note is that this coincidence in intention doesn't imply a corresponding affinity between the reasons of the individual agents. In other words, actions in the case of collectivities can be causally explained and rationalized by multiple primary reasons, while in the case of individuals only one will satisfy the causal relation.

If we take Davidson's later views on intention seriously then this treatment will not be entirely satisfying. *Intending* conjectured that intentions will perform the same explanatory function even when they lack a logical connection to the processes of reasoning which lead to them. But, *Intending* also argued that the reasons for which an action is performed must fit within a rational (which for Davidson means coherent) framework. A multiplicity of primary reasons implies that not all those reasons will be compatible; some may even be contradictory. Explanations of collective action can accept that incompatible reasons may support the same sorts of unconditional judgments, but action on the basis of mutually incompatible reasons is unintelligible in the case of individuals. Therefore, the reasons an individual has for an action have different consistency requirements than collectives.

Can we treat collectives as agents? The answer is sometimes: only when we don't have strict consistency requirements, and we are talking about an action undertaken by multiple individuals. So, for example, when we want to look at the purchasing decisions of a particular social demographic we can separate the subjects under study into groups based on their decisions and treat the groups as agents – as long as we don't posit a shared, coherent, rational shopping plan (a rather far-flung possibility I might add).

This sort of treatment is not uncommon in political discussion, where we separate people into groups, and anticipate their political decision-making by examining their social identity. Insofar as those social identities stand for sets of beliefs and pro-attitudes they form the background against which the actions of the group are contextualized. Furthermore, the way we use social identities in our average way of speaking can also include explicit intentions, and therefore causally explain the actions of the group. Our issue with stereotyping is dissolved, since the consistency requirements, which apply when we are talking about actions, beliefs, desires and intentions in the case of groups are logically distinct from similar requirements that we apply to individuals. There is no way of deductively inferring anything from the way we use social identity terms with reference to collectives to the way we should employ the same term with reference to individuals who aligns themselves with the group.

III. Toward Cultural Conversation

Stephan Reicher and Leonie Huddy both advance arguments against reductive analyses of Social identity. In Reicher's *The Context of Social Identity: Domination, Resistance, and Change*¹⁰ the main offenders are research programs, which reduce social identity to inborn drives and psychophysical processes. Huddy takes a different route in *From Social to Political Identity: A Critical Examination of Social Identity Theory* targeting any research, which fails to account for "identity choice and gradations in identity strength."¹¹ They both fault Social Identity theorists who fail to recognize that social identities rest at the intersection of culture, language and history and conclude by offering similar research agendas which emphasize the radically contextual nature of social identity.

The initial plausibility of reductive theories results from researchers' tendency to devote all their attention on cases of barbarity and atrocity. The biased data set that informs this type of research universalizes oppressive behavior, and inevitably ends in a search for some biological imperative, which could explain ubiquitous cruelty¹². Reicher notes that truculence is not the norm, statistically speaking. For every case of genocide we can cite many more of negotiation and cultural conversation, which avoid bloodshed.¹³ Research oriented by this paradigm tends to treat all social differentiation as discriminatory and antisocial, consequently ignoring the myriad cases where it has served to affirm and strengthen altruism.¹⁴ Huddy similarly criticizes social identity researchers for "paying considerable attention to the existence of simple group boundaries while ignoring their internal meaning."¹⁵ He acknowledges that some of the later work in self-categorization has remedied this by exploring how motivational factors shape the way categories are applied. Nevertheless self-categorization research had tended to treat identity as something externally proscribed, rather than a phenomenon where personal choice plays a large role.¹⁶ If, Huddy argues, Social Identity theory is to have any relevance for political science and philosophy, then it will have to examine the ways in which our choice of identity depends on pre-existing personality traits,¹⁷ the way in which our choice of identity is constrained by permeability and ambiguity of group boundaries¹⁸ and the discrepancies between the meaning

10 Stephen Reicher, "The Context of Social Identity: Domination, Resistance, and Change," *Political Psychology* 25, no. 6 (2004).

11 Leonie Huddy, "From Social to Political Identity: A Critical Examination of Social Identity Theory," *Political Psychology* 22, no. 1 (2001), 131.

12 Reicher, "Context of Social Identity," 922.

13 *Ibid.*, 923-4.

14 *Ibid.*, 930.

15 Huddy, "From Social to Political Identity," 130.

16 *Ibid.*, 132-4

17 *Ibid.*, 139.

18 *Ibid.*, 141.

of an identity for in-groups and out-groups.¹⁹

Both Reicher and Huddy's articles end with a list of dimensions, which should shape future research in social identity theory. Since both are very similar, and I am constrained by space I will only cite Huddy's:

1. Valence of group membership – the status and permeability of group identity.
2. Prototypes and typical social characteristics – Research seems to suggest that one of the strongest factors shaping identity is the existence of a prototype or model, which individual members approximate. “An in-depth analysis of a group prototype should help to uncover the existing basis of similarity that drives group identity and the kinds of people who are most and least likely to adopt group identity.”²⁰
3. Core values – common set of virtues and desires.
4. Characteristics of common out-groups – the negative definition of an in-group not only indicates its boundaries, but adds content to the meaning of the identity for the in-group.

Huddy's own contention is that shades of meaning develop as a result of an individual's proximity to the prototype of the identity.²¹ The preeminent role of contextual factors suggests that new research is needed to see how identities become stable and maintain themselves through time.²²

Huddy's prototype theory can be combined with the view adumbrated in the first half of this essay to show how Social Identity labels go beyond technical sets of beliefs and pro-attitudes to form unit of cultural meaning with which individuals can “identify”. The weakness of a technical treatment of “identification” should be clear. Beyond the fact that the technical sense of Social Identity terms is limited and artificial from the individuals standpoint, it's simply unrealistic to claim that someone who “identifies” with a social group is publicly endorsing that a significant portion of the beliefs and attitudes ascribed to a social group represent the their own. Perhaps such things do happen, but it seems odd to me that someone would take on an identity *merely* to provide their peers with a schema for explaining their actions. Moreover, what would count as a significant portion is ambiguous, not to mention the possibility that there doesn't exist any “significant” proportion, which doesn't embrace mutually incompatible beliefs and pro-attitudes. Our picture becomes much more organic if an agent who “identifies” with a certain social identity can be analyzed as one who has a pro-attitude favoring the sorts of actions the group's prototype would engage in.²³ This enriches our initial account

19 Ibid., 143.

20 Ibid., 144.

21 Ibid., 146.

22 Ibid., 148.

23 One might think that, if we use a proto-type to analyze social identity the inconsistency

since the prototype forms the basis for a collective analysis of pro-attitudes and beliefs by giving us an anchor point for investigation of orthodox and divergent movements within the social identity group.²⁴

Given the historical conditioning and situational valence of social identities, the logically minded philosopher may feel herself excluded from discussion of its political and ethical ramifications. Arguments that hold that the formal relations that obtain between propositions could adequately captures the complexity of the psychological and cultural factors that form the basis of identity are not forthcoming. The stringency of logic seems to require the logician to “presuppose certain categories and category relations as the basis of human action”, which is the very type of “useless theory”²⁵ Reicher and Huddy have shown to be untenable. One might think that comparative judgments, the sort made by groups to highlight their differential features, would be more propitious. Since the content of our terms is fixed by the descriptive practices of the group making the comparison, the logicians’ job is to limn the syntactic structure of sentences that report to make such judgments. Ignoring the fact that this procedure would arbitrarily fix the context in which the comparative judgment was made, the separation of the grammatical and definitional ignores the fact that comparative judgments, in the case of social identity, tend to amplify the meaning of the terms being compared.²⁶ Derrida recognizes that the semantic content of our terms anticipates and obliquely references the sorts of comparative judgments in which they will be employed:

These oppositions have meaning only after the possibility of the trace. The “unmotivatedness” of the sign requires a synthesis in which the completely other is announce as such – without any simplicity, any identity, any resemblance or continuity – within what is not it.²⁷

of a social group’s primary reasons would never become an issue. After all if everyone is basing their decisions on what a model would do where could contradiction creep in? This isn’t a problem for two reasons. First, there is nothing to suggest that two people might belong to the same group who identify with different proto-types. For example, we would not say that, of two African-Americans, one who identifies with Malcom X and the other with Dr. King, that one of them isn’t actually an African-American. Second, Huddy’s proto-type theory is not a complete characterization of social identity – given the massive number of contextual factors; there are plenty of places for contingency to introduce incoherence into a collective’s total set of beliefs.

24 In other words, the proto-type or (proto-types) can be interpreted as providing a set of beliefs and pro-attitudes, as long as we realize this interpretation is purposefully narrow and that there are important aspects of social identity which go beyond this technical rendering.

25 Reicher, “Context of Social Identity,” 942.

26 Ibid., 936.

27 Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, (corrected edition) 1997), 47.

This anticipation of meaning is irreducible to abstract the syntax of such judgments from the meaning of the terms in consideration is to arrogate neutrality or “unmotivatedness.”

I think that the approaches outlined above are destined for frustration and failure to find some object or form in the world, which corresponds to the syntactic structure of logic. Like any other formalized language, logic isn't objectively valid *a priori*—its usefulness depends on its ability to give us a coherent and pragmatic picture of the world around us. Instead of looking for facts, the logically minded philosopher should look at the way in which logic can be used to analyze and shape our public discourse on the relation between social groups.

Recall that the argument in the first half of this paper differentiated individuals by the greater consistency requirements that hold of their reasons. Davidson only touches on the nature of this consistency in his earlier work, but his later essays explore the topic in more depth. In *A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge* Davidson argues we are only capable of justifying beliefs by reference to other beliefs, not something trustworthy and foundational standing outside the interdependent system of beliefs.²⁸ From this he concludes “that a correct understanding of the speech, beliefs, desires, intentions, and other propositional attitudes of a person leads to the conclusion that most of a person's beliefs must be true, and so there is a legitimate presumption that any one of them, if it coheres with most of the rest, is true.”²⁹ This means that our discourse on identity has to begin with the understanding that most of our beliefs are shared, and on the whole true (though the fact that we are discussing social identity presupposes that at least some of our beliefs with respect to the topic are untrue, or at least unsatisfying from a social perspective). While extending the principle of charity may seem obvious, it's rarely carried out in practice, given the preponderance of cases where two conflicting groups characterize each other as completely irrational, that is to say, possessors of an incoherent set of beliefs. Not only does this stymie discussion, it leads each party to underestimate the degree to which the identity of the other is ingrained in a coherent system of beliefs about the world. In short, respect and charity limits the scope of discussions of identity to a manageable level, as well as throwing the particular beliefs in question into relief without dismissing the other entirely.

Compromise and negotiation depend on developing a dual-coherency between the descriptions one agent offers of an out-group and the descriptions members of the out-group would offer of themselves. In other words, negotiation depends on finding some way of characterizing each other that is consistent with the majority of each party's beliefs. It's clear that such dual-coherencies will be hard to come by, since the larger the number of beliefs a description must cohere

²⁸ Donald Davidson, “A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge,” in *The Essential Davidson*, 228.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 232.

with, the more limited in scope the description must be. Logic, being the study of inference patterns and implication will be extremely useful for making such negotiation possible because we can use it to effectively delimit the smallest set of beliefs that each group possesses amenable to compromise. A bit like counting the structural supports in a building we want to demolish. Moreover, we have not necessarily failed if logic reveals no “weak” points - the intransigence of a group’s belief system shows that out-groups cannot challenge them through conversation. In this case we would need a revolution, which I mean in the Marxist sense—a modification of the conditions of a mutually shared environment which make those aspects of identity salient.

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FANON'S POST-COLONIAL SUBJECT AS FOUCAULDIAN PRISONER

Chris Eby

As two of the twentieth century's most important theorists of social structure and political revolution, of power investiture and critical humanism, Michel Foucault and Frantz Fanon have separately had the effect of galvanizing particular ideologies—poststructuralist political theory and African anti-colonialism, respectively—to recognize the hierarchical socio-political constraints to which their theories (and any theory in general) must be subjected. As an indictment of the modern reformer's focus on rehabilitation of the incarcerated, *Discipline and Punish* is overwhelmingly concerned with the body of the condemned and the power relations underlying its condemnation, with the history of ideas and practices undergirding notions of penality. Indeed, the “disciplines” use the word “prison” to designate a new technological power over the body, yet this subjection finds expression in areas other than the penal system. For Foucault, every socially undesirable group—the poor, sick, insane, incarcerated, and uneducated—is the focus of a misplaced humanism that deems it necessary to create institutions—low-income housing, hospitals, asylums, prisons, and schools—that attempt to create “a diagram of a power that acts by means of a general visibility” but alleviate these problems only in the psyche of those possessing the constituting power. Prison is merely the most visible facet of this larger “carceral system” which builds for its constituents what Jeremy Bentham called a panoptic society, perpetually ensuring the presence of social undesirables.¹

While Foucault's enterprise was geared strictly toward French and European society, Fanon directed *The Wretched of the Earth* to the Algerians with whom he sympathized. Yet both books contain implications for any society predicated on the dominance of the few at the expense of the many. Addressing the problems inherent in African post-colonial leadership, Fanon shows that colonialism is

1 For more on Foucault and Bentham, see: Anne Brunon-Ernst, “When Foucault Reads Bentham,” *Conference Papers—Law and Society* (2007): 12-32. Brunon-Ernst argues that Foucault's understanding of Bentham extends beyond concepts of surveillance, centering instead on the idea of governance. I would like to extend her claim further; the social constructivism of governance constitutes a space in which the negative and positive dimensions of power coagulate. As both Fanon and Ghandi have clearly stated, technologies of domination work through the individual acting on himself—another form of coercion.

structured so as to ensure the continued failure of the colonized, for it is only then that the colonizer feels necessary, legitimate, human. In the same way that Foucault's "disciplines" employ language as a power structure, the Fanonian colonizer attempts to institute his language as the prevailing structure of communication within the colony—precisely what happened with Arabic in North Africa. The animalization of the Algerians by their French suitors is, in fact, an expression of the psychological necessity of those invested with power to self-legitimate; in order to shoulder Kipling's "white man's burden," the colonizer must adopt a sense of purpose underlying their exploitation identical to that adopted by the powerful in Foucault's reckoning: to save undesirables from their savage selves and to carry out according to a transcendent or higher purpose the full utilization of the unrealized human and environmental potential of a people and their domain(s).

I want to argue that Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* and Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, each philosopher's cornerstone work on the dehumanization of those subjected to oppressive power relations, can, if read contrapuntally, enhance any understanding of the books that would be achieved by a univocal reading of one or the other.² I contend that Fanon's post-colonial subject can be best understood in light of Foucault's work on society's prisoners and that these two undesirable subjects are in fact related inextricably. More specifically, I will attempt to show that the ontological classification of man as machine (man-the-machine) in *Discipline and Punish* is ultimately the same condition necessary for the Western colonizer to dehumanize the native subject, a process Fanon describes in detail in his chapter "On Violence." Foucault's argument that discipline creates "docile bodies" perfectly suited to function within the system of politics and warfare of the modern industrial age is, I want to conclude, entirely consistent with Fanon's exploration of the colonial system as an oppressive force soliciting a similar dependence of a subject on a system, of colonizer on colonialism.

In his ubiquitously quoted and often misunderstood chapter entitled "On Violence," Fanon formulates a contemporary and non-systematic adaptation of the just war hypothesis—one bottomed on the self-reconstitution of the animalized African subject—by modifying its presuppositions of moral jurisdiction and legislation in order to address injustices perpetrated through a new form of warfare: violent, capitalistic colonialism. Implicit in any such theory is the augmented possibility for generalizing labels and misnomers of which Fanon has received an

² I know of no scholarship that has attempted this task. First, a disclaimer: Although I will stress several similarities between the two thinkers, it is important to keep in mind their profound differences. For instance, there is no dialectical moment in Foucault's work like there is in Fanon's; Fanon's ultimate faith in the reconstitution of the self through violence against an oppressor stands at odds with Foucault's aversion to a necessary historical dialectic (Many thanks to Todd May for inspiring this particular example). In the words of Mark Bevir: "Foucault vehemently rejected the idea of an autonomous subject, that is, of the subject as its own foundation...of some sort of necessary historical dialectic...culminating with the realization of such a subject." See Mark Bevir, "Foucault, Power, and Institutions," *Political Studies* 47 (1999): 354.

unwarranted share.³ These claims to Fanon's bloodthirstiness and hypocrisy have unfortunately been vivified and exacerbated thanks to Jean-Paul Sartre's preface to the book, in which the existentialist mischaracterizes what he attempts to sell, attributing to Fanon an endorsement of "murderous rampage" as an expression of "the collective unconscious of the colonized;" Sartre classifies the status of killing a European in *The Wretched of the Earth* as that of "killing two birds with one stone, eliminating in one go oppressor and oppressed."⁴ Although genuine in his support for Fanon, Sartre's claims are inconsistent with Fanon's own. As a physician at an Algerian hospital during the 1950s, Fanon was acutely aware of the inherent danger and volatility of using violence as a panacea for the evils of colonialism; indeed, the chapter "Colonial War and Mental Disorders" demonstrates the author's familiarity with the pervasive effects of colonial violence on both victim and perpetrator. Despite this ostensible similarity to Hannah Arendt (and her thesis that violence begets violence), Fanon's discussion of the uses and abuses of violence throughout his book shares more in common with Foucault's analysis of the philosophico-historical trends of torture, punishment, and imprisonment in the latter's *Discipline and Punish*. Torture of the body is subordinated to the dehumanization of the soul, yet the two are linked in a matrix comprising a vicious system whereby the body of the condemned becomes invisible, locked away in a cell or interrogation room, in favor of a more visible paternalism of punishment as a certainty. The colonized populace eventually becomes inured to the spectacle or the example, dehumanized instead by the certainty of punishment and continued occupation, surveillance, and subjugation.

Fanon's defense of what I call the "violent retaliation justification" is predicated first on the ethical dehumanization of the post-colonial subject; in fact, this is the sine qua non of the Algerian struggle. The post-colonial subject himself is the first theater of control, for "it is the colonist who *fabricated* and *continues to fabricate* the colonized subject," reducing him to a state of animality, of thinghood.⁵ Only "through the very process of liberation" does "the 'thing' colonized become a man," for the colonist is a Manichean oppressor, turning "the colonized into a kind of quintessence of evil."⁶ The native is not only something other than human as a result of his inferiority, but, due to the inherent need of the colonizer to self-legitimate, is also deemed unethical and immoral; the colonizer must deny the natives' ability to act ethically in order to give legitimacy to his gilded cadre of paternalistic ethics. "The native," Fanon writes, "is declared impervious to ethics, representing...the negation of values...with the customs of the colonized

3 Critics of Fanon inevitably undertake two tasks: a merging of Fanon's poststructuralist and postcolonial aspects (see the work of Homi Bhabha), and a global theory of colonial power and liberation (championed by Edward Said). For more, see Ewa Ziarek, "Fanon's Counterculture of Modernity," *Parallax* 8 (2002): 1.

4 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 2004), lii-lv.

5 *Ibid.*, 2.

6 *Ibid.*, 2, 6.

as the very mark of this depravity...In plain talk, he is reduced to the state of an animal.”⁷ The forces of colonialism use the commonplace internecine feuds within African nations to support such claims of innate savagery and animality in the African. The misdirected violence of the subjected people is, however, the result of an overexposure to violence and a confusion of identity.⁸ Foucault speaks to this in *Discipline and Punish*, stating that such internecine violence “is certainly related to a general attitude to death...to the ravages of disease and hunger, the periodic massacres...the formidable child mortality rate, the precariousness of the bio-economic balances—all this made death familiar and gave rise to practices intended to integrate it, to make it acceptable.”⁹ Only through such moral self-elevation does the colonizer or oppressor feel necessary, only through hammering “into the heads of the indigenous population” can the colonist make the natives believe “that if he were to leave they would regress into barbarism, degradation, and bestiality.”¹⁰ In *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche sums up brilliantly the self-elevation of new political powers through violence and degradation, otherwise philosophizing through another type of hammering: “a [political] creation... needs enemies more than it needs friends; only in opposition does it feel that it is necessary, only in opposition does it become necessary.”¹¹ In truth, the morality of the native has been attenuated and even confiscated because of colonialism; “The colonized subject,” Fanon writes, “has never heard of ‘human dignity.’ All he has ever seen on his land is that he can be arrested, beaten, and starved with impunity; and no sermonizer on morals, no priest has ever stepped in to bear the blows in his place or share his head. For the colonized, to be a moralist quite plainly means silencing the arrogance of the colonist, breaking his spiral of violence.”¹²

Yet the colonized subject is not dehumanized solely through violence and physical subjugation, as Sartre would have us believe, but rather through an ongoing process whereby the masterminds of colonialism exploit both native and colonist to maximize capital accumulation. This process of exploitation is often non-overt, non-corporeal, and non-traditional. Foucault identifies the forms its agents take:

7 Ibid., 7.

8 I hold firmly to this position, namely that internecine feuds are the expected outcome of the colonial system, a misdirected retaliation against the closest scapegoat the colonized people has: its own parties, clans, and tribes. In other words, such violence is the result of colonialism, a reaction against its oppressive forces. For an opposing viewpoint, see Halford Fairchild, “Frantz Fanon’s *Wretched of the Earth* in Contemporary Perspective,” *Journal of Black Studies* 25 (1994): 191-200. He incorrectly posits this internecine violence as inherent to Africa’s history of the slave trade and the divisions it caused amongst local groups and peoples. This explanation fails to take into account the veracity of the civil violence in Algeria that resulted from colonial circumstances, such as massacres like the one at Philippeville in 1955 and French edicts like Lacoste’s creation of urban and rural militias in 1956.

9 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Vintage, 1995), 54-55.

10 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 149.

11 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 22.

12 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 9.

those with power and oversight—rehabilitators, xenophobic scientists, military bureaucracy, doctors, wardens, and ultimately political figures. By seeking to treat all patients, soldiers, or students as uniform cases in a standardized handbook or procedure, members of these professions serve to standardize and mechanize man in order to better survey and exploit him, “to carry out a supervision... both general and individual: to observe the worker’s presence and application, and the quality of his work; to compare workers with one another, to classify them according to their skill and speed; to follow successive stages of the production process.”¹³ Fanon is entirely cognizant of these forces of control, for they are the very means colonialism employs to accomplish its capitalistic ends. No area of the culture of the colonized is left unaltered: “the colonized intellectual proves that he has assimilated the colonizer’s culture.”¹⁴ The ultimate goal of colonialism (and any enterprise) is not the destruction of its workforce but the maximization of its production. Ultimate maximization of this workforce would include the correct cultivation of their progeny; attempting to form Foucault’s “docile bodies,” the powers of control would ideally produce “a body that may be subjected, used, transformed, and improved,” a controllable, inured, and productive worker.¹⁵ Although often necessary to secure the subjugation of a populace, violence is only a tool of the ultimate enemy: for Fanon, this enemy is the system of colonialism. Violence, however, was first employed against the native population, singularly used to withdraw from them their humanity. Violent retaliation, thus, is justified as the only means available, the only method not governed or controlled by the power relations of colonial society, by what Césaire called a “thousand-year old oppression,” to secure the colonial subject’s objective: reconstitution or de-animalization of the subject.¹⁶

Within the chapter “On Violence,” Fanon, despite arguing for the necessity of self-reconstitution, radically critiques individualism and identity, perhaps more vehemently than any 20th century philosopher save Foucault (or perhaps Deleuze).¹⁷ Fanon strikes an intimate balance between the two

13 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 145.

14 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 15.

15 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 136.

16 For more on the connection between the works of Fanon and Césaire, see: Robert Bernasconi, “The Assumption of Negritude,” *Parallax* 8 (2002): 69-83. Here, Bernasconi argues, soundly in my opinion, that revolutionary retreats into Black self-consciousness are not a regression into a mythical Black past but a refusal to renounce the possibilities of an open-ended future. Fanon supports Césaire’s reclamation of the culture stolen by European imperialism, of the wealth, food, music, and labor Europe’s colonizing powers gleaned from Africa. Even if he remained locked in the past, Fanon saw Césaire as an inspiration for the future.

17 In Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), the author establishes Fanon as a local thinker who refuses to collapse the binary opposition between the global and the local. As such, Gilroy mentions that Fanon, in critiquing individuality, applies his polemics only to the postcolonial context. While I applaud Gilroy’s recognition of Fanon’s anti-individualism, I extend Fanon’s critique beyond the colonial context because I view Fanon as a thinker who overwhelmingly preoccupies himself with

positions Foucault delineates: individualization in those subjected to a system of discipline and in members of the higher echelons of power. In a disciplinary regime, “individualization is ‘descending;’ as power become more anonymous and more functional, those on whom it is exercised tend to be more strongly individualized...the child is more individualized than the adult, the patient more than the healthy man.”¹⁸ The individual and knowledge about him belong to the means of production, the means of surveillance, and the means of punishment. For Foucault, the individual is constituted by the dominant power relations of a society; the individual becomes the functioning atom of a *polis*. Old power was once what was seen and shown, but disciplinary (or colonial) power is exercised through invisibility, all the while making its subjects more visible, more “individual.” Being constantly seen keeps the individual subjected.¹⁹ Fanon maintains a similar position—that individuals are constituted by and serve the purposes of the stronger—to demonstrate the ways in which colonialism uses irrelevant concepts and values as fuel for oppression. “Those values which seemed to ennoble the soul prove worthless because they have nothing in common with the real-life struggle in which the people are engaged. And first among them is individualism.”²⁰ One of the chief victims of the individualism prejudice is the colonized intellectual, who, as a result of his intermediary position between the native population and the colonizing power, is perhaps the closest analog of Foucault’s prisoner of discipline. Indeed, the individuality of the intellectual, the force of his ideas, and the following he might accrue as a member of the native populace keep him visible, manipulable, and non-threatening. Guilty of rubbing elbows with the colonialist bourgeoisie, the colonized intellectual believes in the primacy of individual identity and self-determination. He is told to be a voice of the people, a link between the suffering masses and those powerful few who pretend to value the well-being of the indigenous population. In becoming a visible mouthpiece of the people, the intellectual becomes a cog in the colonial machine, for he owes his success and originality to the colonial system and can be used as an example of the merit of colonialism. Fanon recognizes, however, that the identity of any colonized and dehumanized subject is illusory and detrimental to the anti-colonial cause. Colonial powers endorse individuality as an expression of one’s unique race, religion, or lifestyle; indeed, occupying powers encourage their subordinates to express their identity through these media while denying them their humanity, which Fanon considers to be the only significant variable the global implications of his thought.

18 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 193.

19 Again, we notice a difference between the two thinkers. For Foucault, no aspect of identity is free from the manipulation of those invested with power. For Fanon, humanity as an aspect (even if the only aspect) of identity is free from any such control. For Foucault, “the subject is not a rational agent thinking and acting under its own self-imposed and self-created commands. The subject is a product of social structures, epistemes, discourses, or something else of the sort.” See Mark Bevir, “Foucault, Power, and Institutions,” 347.

20 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 11.

of individuality. The more visible the expression of these facets of identity, the less susceptible to revolution is the established order. Using race, religion, and behavior to define oneself is ultimately worthless, serving only the interests of the colonists: race is a distinction created by the majority as a means of taxonomy, subordination, and control; religion makes the subject “accept the devastation decreed by God” with an unshakable fatalism; behavior is an inaccurate arbiter of true identity, as it is something conditioned in the weak by the powerful (i.e. the natives’ internecine violence instead of revolutionary violence).²¹ At bottom, only humanity is an acceptable aspect of identity, and must be reclaimed as such through the only effectual method in the lexicon of the colonized: violence.

An informed reading of Fanon would also attribute his endorsement of violent self-reconstitution to its unique ability to unite disparate peoples in search of a common goal—self-determination—against a common enemy—the colonizer—who is the agent of the system of colonialism that has mechanized society through compartmentalization, standardization, and capitalization of society’s industry and infrastructure.²² “The violence of the colonized...unifies the people. By its very structure colonialism is separatist and regionalist...Violence in its practice is totalizing and national.”²³ Colonialism reinforces old divisions and creates new ones; it stirs up enmity amongst tribal groups and divides a country against itself socio-economically by enabling a “specific sector to grow relatively wealthy, while the rest of the colony continues, or rather sinks, into underdevelopment and poverty,” and subdivides the system of government and patronage to a miniscule scale.²⁴ To maximize capital accumulation, colonialism necessarily mechanizes labor to the lowest common denominator, implements the latest specialized industrial developments, and subdivides measurements of capital and time; colonial exploitation and its inherent capitalism are guilty of extending employer-like control over a native population. Turning to Foucault, we see a similar process used by those invested with disciplinary power. Disciplinary machinery, those power imbalances used to manipulate and control the subject, require the “art of distributions,” “control of activity,” “the organization of geneses,” and “the composition of forces” in order to compartmentalize and mechanize colonial society; “the meticulousness of the regulations, the fussiness of the inspections, the supervision of the smallest fragment of life and of the body” are all part and parcel of colonial society’s compartmentalizing and mechanizing.²⁵ Time is

21 *Ibid.*, 18.

22 For such an uninformed reading, see Lou Turner, “(e)Racing the Ego: Sartre, Modernity, and Fanon’s Theory of Consciousness,” *Parallax* 8 (2002): 46-53. In it, Turner argues that Fanon uses Sartre’s philosophy, in particular, his rejection of the transcendental ego, to overcome the white racist ego and the lived experience of the black. While Fanon would support this dual overcoming, attributing Fanon’s theories of postcolonial resistance (delivered through a critique of identity) to Sartre’s existentialist humanism seems inane.

23 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 51.

24 *Ibid.*, 106.

25 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 140.

extensively subdivided into separate and adjusted threads and capitalized to serve the means of usury; increased visibility over an increased amount of evaluation periods maximizes efficiency and profit, making men into machines, setting their operation, enhancing their efficiency, gaining complete control over their operation and standardizing the process of their termination. “Temporal dispersal,” Foucault writes, “is brought together to produce a profit, thus mastering a duration that would otherwise elude one’s grasp Power is articulated directly onto time; it assures its control and guarantees its use.”²⁶ Indeed, discipline and control have become the art of composing volatile forces to obtain an efficient machine.

Fanon’s endorsement of violence is not the result of faith in the ultimate fairness of *quid pro quo* or “an eye for an eye;” rather, Fanon realizes that violence is the sole means available for the colonized to reconstitute the self through regaining humanity. As Foucault recognizes, the mechanization of labor and of the people, the reduction of thinking subject to automatism, is a pervasive force that resists action through state-mandated means, which presuppose the inferiority of the post-colonial subject. “Between colonial violence and the insidious violence in which the modern world is steeped, there is a kind of complicit correlation, a homogeneity. The colonized have adapted to this atmosphere. For once they are in tune with their time.”²⁷ Self-actualization and political actualization can only take place in the colonial context through violence due to the panopticon in which the subject is imprisoned.

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²⁶ Ibid., 160.

²⁷ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 40.

NIETZSCHE AND DERRIDA ALONE IN A ROOM WITH YELLOW PAPER

Benjamin Norris

Nietzsche has been called many things, but not often a feminist. Of course, he is not a feminist in the typical sense, but certain aspects of his thought have been similarly expressed in different feminist pieces of literature and theory. Nietzsche's refusal to search for the universal essence of truth has trickled down in to the many anti-essentialist theories. Anti-essentialist theory has done much in recognizing the way that universalized essences have a negative effect on bodies and societies alike. The attack on essentialism has raised many difficult questions concerning the possibility of transcending essentialism. The goal of this paper is to consider Nietzsche's elusive, non-essentialist epistemology in conjunction with the Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story *The Yellow Wallpaper*. Nietzsche uses woman as a symbol for the illusiveness of truth and Derrida's *Spurs: Nietzsche's Style* is also an important work on this issue so it will be referred to throughout the course of this paper in order to bring Nietzsche and Gilman's work closer together. The goal of this cross consideration between Nietzsche, Derrida and Gilman is three fold; (a) To understand why essentialism can be harmful, (b) to discuss the relationship between void and essence, and (c) to emphasize the role multiplicity plays in combating the negative effects of essentialism.

Nietzsche follows his pronouncement at the beginning of *Beyond Good and Evil* "supposing truth is a woman," with a critique of the philosophical approaches of his predecessors. Nietzsche criticizes the dogmatic pursuit of truth when he writes, "the gruesome seriousness, the clumsy obtrusiveness with which they have usually approached truth so far have been awkward and very improper methods for winning a woman's heart."¹ Nietzsche has transposed his entire discussion of truth at this point into a relationship between woman and man in the game of seduction. We must first notice Nietzsche's condemnation of dogmatic methodology. The two things he dismisses are seriousness and obtrusiveness. These are not qualities of proper seduction. In light of the dogmatist's seriousness and clumsiness, Nietzsche tells us, "she [truth] has not allowed herself to be won."² Nietzsche has painted a picture of a woman too good to be won over simply by

1 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 1.

2 *Ibid.*, 1.

force and seriousness. She has evaded the best efforts of her suitors because she is dissatisfied with their efforts. “Science offends the modesty of all real women. It makes them feel as if one wanted to peep under their skin – yet worse, under their dress and finery.”³ Once again, Nietzsche is showing the humiliating nature of current scientific inquiry. Man searches for truth and is unable to respect truth at the same time. The process that was designed to bring man closer to truth does nothing but push truth further away from man. If truth is a woman, what is it in woman that relates to/resembles truth? Why does Nietzsche make this connection and what implications does it have in regards to truth and Nietzsche’s philosophy as a whole?

Nietzsche writes much about profundity, depth, and masks. In section 40 of *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche writes, “Whatever is profound loves masks; what is most profound even hates image and parable.”⁴ The profound is closely connected with the mask here. Nietzsche continues, “Every profound spirit needs a mask: even more, around every profound spirit a mask is growing continuously, owing to the constantly false, namely shallow, interpretation of every word, every step, every sign of life he gives.”⁵ That which is profound does not just love masks, but requires them. In *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche writes, “Man thinks woman profound – why? Because he can never fathom her depths. Woman is not even shallow.”⁶ Derrida picks up the question of woman and truth in Nietzsche’s work and in reference to the depths of woman. He writes,

There is no such thing as the essence of woman because woman averts, she is averted of herself. Out of the depths, endless and unfathomable, she engulfs and distorts all vestige of essentiality, of identity, of property. And the philosophical discourse, blinded, founders on these shoals and is hurled down these depthless depths to its ruin. There is no such thing as the truth of woman, but it is because of that abysmal divergence of the truth, because that untruth is ‘truth.’ Woman is but one name for that untruth of truth.⁷

Now all the ideas/symbols of truth, illusion, woman, depth, masks and profundity are drawn together in the dialectic between truth and untruth. “Truth” is represented as “endless and unfathomable” and as such, “truth” can never be naked. It requires a mask. What is “true” expresses itself as an illusion *necessarily*. In the conventional understanding, a mask conceals an identity. “Truth” is always concealed and its identity is far more complicated than the face the literal mask

3 Ibid., 87.

4 Ibid., 50.

5 Ibid., 51.

6 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2008), 4.

7 Jacques Derrida, *Spurs: Nietzsche’s Styles* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 51.

covers. We must apply this very idea to even Nietzsche's own writings. He claims that truth is often represented as untruth. If we take this to be "true" it drastically shifts our understanding of what Nietzsche is actually "saying." In his footnote to *Beyond Good and Evil* Walter Kaufman writes, "This section [40] is obviously of great importance for the student of Nietzsche: it suggests plainly that the surface meaning noted by superficial browsers often masks Nietzsche's real meaning, which in extreme cases may approximate the opposite of what the words might suggest to readers."⁸ Now we can begin to see how Nietzsche's enigmatic and often labyrinthine presentation of his ideas actually reflects his conception of "truth" as a whole. Truth is perspective, truth is illusive and truth expresses itself through a multitude of disguises.

An important idea to draw out of Derrida's reading of Nietzsche is the concept of distance. Derrida argues that distance is a prerequisite for truth. In reference to Nietzsche's use of hyphenation Derrida writes, "The play of silhouettes which is created here by the hyphen's pirouette serves as a sort of warning to us to keep our distance from these multifarious veils and their shadowy dream of death."⁹ The idea here is that truth naked or "unmasked" is like an abyss, and without distance the observer is swallowed by the abyss. Once again, "Out of the depths, endless and unfathomable, she engulfs and distorts all vestige of essentiality, of identity, of property. The philosophical discourse, blinded, founders on these shoals and is hurled down these depthless depths to its ruin."¹⁰ The idea is that the distance between, let us say man and woman, is like the infinite abyss that is necessary for the process of seduction. Knowledge seduces in the way lovers seduce each other. Distance here is necessary; you cannot be seduced by what you already have. Derrida's argument becomes far more complicated when we realize that woman also embodies the abyss of distance.

Derrida writes, "Perhaps woman is not some thing which announces itself from a distance, at a distance from some other thing. In this manner it would not be a matter of retreat and approach. Perhaps woman – a non-identity, a non-figure, a simulacrum – is distance's very chasm, the out-distancing of distance, the intervals cadence, the distance itself if we could still say such a thing, distance *itself*."¹¹ Derrida continues this argument by saying, "There is no such thing as the essence of woman because woman averts, she is averted of her self."¹² If woman is constituted of distance itself, the eternal unnamable abyss, she is without a definable essence. She knows not of herself because she is turned away from herself. Woman *is* non-identity because how can you characterize distance? Void is indescribable. This is why distance *from* distance is necessary. This is why the profound must always wear a mask. To eliminate the distance is to become

8 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 51.

9 Jacques Derrida, *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*, 49.

10 *Ibid.*, 51.

11 *Ibid.*, 49.

12 *Ibid.*, 51.

engulfed by it. Nietzsche writes, “And when you look long into an abyss, the abyss looks into you.”¹³

In order to move toward the connections between Nietzsche’s theory of truth and Gilman’s articulation of pro/proto-feminist views, it is important to analyze the way that Derrida’s reading of Nietzsche is a response to the 70’s wave of feminism. In an article titled “‘Women’ in *Spurs* and Nineties Feminism” Jane Gallop makes very insightful connections between Derrida’s re-reading of Nietzsche in *Spurs* and the 90’s anti-essentialist backlash against many of the ideas within 70’s feminist theory. Gallop notes that, “Woman in *Spurs* is figured as insistently plural. Derrida, through Nietzsche, criticizes feminisms desire for a singular concept of woman.”¹⁴ This can be drawn back to Nietzsche’s supposition –and “what then?” If there is no such thing as the essence of woman and truth is like a woman, then there is no essence of truth. But we must realize that Derrida does not say that there are no women. Woman does not exist as a universal concept. By emphasizing the multitude of expressions of women, “the feminine” and the impossible depths one would have to descend in order to form a cohesive, universal concept of woman, Derrida effectively dismisses any form of essentialist construct for women and the feminine. Gallop writes, “Derrida’s celebration of the women who cannot be taken is, to be sure, an affirmation of what slips away from our inept attempts to pin her down and name her.”¹⁵

Let us now move directly into Gilman’s short story *The Yellow Wallpaper*. The 1892 story is a first person account of a woman who is locked up in a room for a summer where her husband attempts to give her the rest cure because he believes she is suffering from “temporary nervous depression – a slight hysterical tendency.”¹⁶ In isolation, the heroine of the story delves deeper and deeper into herself through her writing and her interactions with the room that becomes her cell. The writer of the account we receive is very mysterious because she is never formally named in the story. In one of the final sentences of the story she writes, “I’ve got out at last’ said I, ‘in spite of you and Jane.”¹⁷ This is the only mention of any character named Jane. Throughout the story she, the narrator, *is* nameless. Perhaps her namelessness is intended to show us that what she is called has no bearing on who she is. She evades her name and in that way she seems to evade herself. For the purpose of this paper I will refer to her as Jane in order to make the argument more lucid.

We can consider the relationship between Jane and her husband as very similar to the relationship between truth—the-woman and the men who pry and prod her in an attempt to divulge her secrets. Jane describes her husband as, “practical

13 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 89.

14 Jane Gallop, “‘Women’ in *Spurs* and Nineties Feminism, *Dialectics* 25, no. 2 (1995): 127.

15 *Ibid.*, 132.

16 Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper* (New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1998),

17 *Ibid.*, 58.

in the extreme. He has no patience with faith, an intense horror of superstition, and he scoffs openly at any talk of things not to be felt and seen and put down in figures.”¹⁸ We must not forget Nietzsche, “Science offends the modesty of all real women. It makes them feel as if one wanted to peep under their skin – yet worse, under their dress and finery.”¹⁹ Throughout *The Yellow Wallpaper*, Jane’s separation from John continues to get worse. Jane tells us that, “John does not know how much I really suffer. He know there is no *reason* to suffer, and that satisfies him.”²⁰ Through the use of *reason* (note the italics), John increases the distance between him and his wife. Her condition is not necessarily one that can be understood in strict rational terms. Distance is a form of protection. We stray away from what is threatening. John distances himself from his wife by rationalizing her depression and in coming to this “Truth” he has actually just stepped further from his wife. Derrida writes, “Not only for protection (the most obvious advantage) against the spell of her fascination, but also by way of succumbing to it, that distance (which is lacking) *is necessary*.”²¹ Once again we have found an example of how a “truth” is often simply a mask for something that evades “Truth” eternally.

Another significant symbol in the story is the wallpaper itself, as the title would suggest. The yellow wallpaper masks the walls of the room that Jane is trapped in. Throughout the story, Jane forms a strange bond with the wallpaper. Why is this? In what ways does Jane see herself reflected in the wallpaper? In order to answer these questions, lets start at the beginning of the story. After telling the reader a little bit about her relationship with John and her “treatment,” Jane moves on to a thorough description of her room. Jane writes, “The paint and paper look as if a boys’ school had used it. It is stripped off – the paper – in great patches all around the head of my bed, as far as I can reach, and in great place on the other side of the room low down. I never saw worse paper in my life.”²² The paper forms a mask for the walls of the room, but it is incomplete and unfitting. Even if the paper covered all of the walls, it would remain appalling. But the walls of such a house cannot remain bare. In *Twilight of the Idols* Nietzsche writes, “Man created woman – out of what? Out of a rib of his god? – of his “ideal.”²³ Jane cannot not fit this “ideal” and is consequently labeled to be unstable and in need of treatment. Even though John attempts to downplay the seriousness of Jane’s condition, he also thinks she is in some way sick. The walls of the room can be considered in a similar light. A wall cannot stand naked. Through painting and finishing a wall becomes the “ideal.” The main significance of this lies in the fact that the walls *surround* Jane. The walls form her environment and obviously dominate her thoughts. In the end of the story, we must ask ourselves what Jane was really fascinated with. Was

18 *Ibid.*, 41.

19 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 87.

20 Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, 44.

21 Jacques Derrida, *Spurs: Nietzsche’s Styles*, 49.

22 Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, 43.

23 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2008), 2.

it the wallpaper, or what lies beneath? Is she fascinated by the mask or the mirror?

What does lie beneath the wallpaper? In many ways the wallpaper reflects Jane's unconscious. Jane does not sleep much. Instead of sleeping, she stares at her wallpaper, trying to de-code it. One night while watching the wallpaper in the moonlight Jane discovers that, "The front pattern *does* move – and no wonder! The woman behind shakes it! Sometimes I think that there are a great many women behind, and sometime only one, and she crawls around fast, and her crawling shakes it all over."²⁴ First we must note that Jane makes use of both *woman* and *women*. Singular and plural. The woman/women in the paper are crawling, forever in the position of an infant. She/they is/are not allowed to stand on her/their feet. This crawling shakes the wallpaper, the veil that hangs over the truth. Derrida writes, "'Truth' can only be a surface. But the blushing movement of that truth which is not suspended in quotation marks casts a modest veil over such a surface. Only through such a veil which thus falls over it could "truth become truth, profound, indecent, desirable."²⁵ We must realize that the women that move the veil on the wall are simply shadows, phantasms, silhouettes. As Derrida suggests, the play of silhouettes on the walls at night serve as a warning. Keep your distance. What would happen if all of the shadowy women stood up? The walls can barely contain the force of their crawling.

At the end of Gilman's short story, Jane reaches her breaking point. After much analysis and debate Jane decides to tear the paper off the walls. This happens on the very last day of her treatment. Jane retells her actions on her last night, "As soon as it was moonlight and that poor thing began to crawl and shake the pattern, I got up and ran to help her. I pulled and she shook, I shook and she pulled, and before morning we had peeled off yards of paper."²⁶ We must note how Jane uses the pronoun "we." Tearing down the paper is a joint process. She must work with the phantasm on the paper in order to tear the paper down. If we look at Jane's actions and not the motivations for her actions, she is simply tearing down wallpaper. She is literally stripping the wall bare and exposing it. She penetrates the veil of distance in order to free the shadows that rest on the paper. She is freeing the illusion from the surface that it is projected on.

What happens once the paper is off the walls? John enters the room in the morning while Jane is finishing her remodeling. Jane says "'I've got out at last" said I, "in spite of you and Jane. And I've pulled off most of the paper, so you can't put me back!' Now why should the man have fainted? But he did, and right across my path by the wall, so that I had to creep over him every time!"²⁷ Jane now identifies herself with the paper, or perhaps the woman trapped on the paper, completely. *She* has gotten out. *She* cannot be put back. She has seen past the paper. She has seen what it does to the shadows. She has seen what lies

24 Ibid., 55.

25 Jacques Derrida, *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*, 59.

26 Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, 56.

27 Ibid., 58.

underneath. She is celebrating the rooms “liberation,” but John faints. He cannot handle the scene, but why? John sees not only the walls naked, but his wife as well. She no longer wears any mask. She embodies her a-rational impulses and lives *as herself*. She has “gotten out at last” and she is thus no longer the “Truth” (capital “t”) John placed upon her. She has not yet begun creating truths (lower case “t”, plural) for herself but she confronts the prison of “Truth” placed upon her. Jane’s mental break down represents a leveling rejection of the identity placed upon her. This both decimates her sanity and the identity John forces her to assume. She has not created a new identity for herself yet but she has created a space/surface to begin the process of “true” individuation.

Just as there is no such thing as totality of women that equals the universal woman, there is, for Nietzsche, no totality of truths that equal a universal Truth. Derrida writes, “All the emblems, all the shafts and allurements that Nietzsche found in woman, her seductive distance, her captivating inaccessibility, the ever – veiled promise of her provocative transcendence, the *Entfernung* [German – distance or removal], these all belong properly to a history of truth by way of the history of an error.”²⁸ Just as Jane needs the shaking of the woman on the wall in order to pull the paper down and expose the naked wall, truth needs to intertwine with untruth in order to drive the so called “history of truth” forward. Nietzsche writes, “To recognize untruth as a condition of life – that certainly means resisting accustomed value feelings in a dangerous way; and a philosophy that risks this would by that token alone place itself beyond good and evil.”²⁹

One major issue with the comparison between woman and truth found in Nietzsche and Derrida is that of a romanticized equivocation of woman and truth. This claim seems to overlook the fact that the only thing that is being connected between truth and woman is the depth, abyss and lack of essence of both. What connects the concept of truth and woman for Nietzsche and Derrida is the way they both resist any form of equivocation to anything. Depth cannot be related to anything other than depth, distance cannot be defined. The romantic element in Nietzsche and Derrida seems to be an effort to transcend base empiricism and Nietzsche’s controversial simile between truth and woman attempts to do the same thing.

At the very end of *The Yellow Wallpaper*, we are left with a very striking image. Jane is tearing the paper off the walls while stepping over her husband’s limp body. She never finishes tearing down all of the wallpaper in the room before the story ends. Gilman leaves Jane eternally circling the room tearing the veils of the walls and stepping over her husband who, as a result of his shock, cannot assist Jane in her task or even look at the bare walls. The only thing that helps Jane expose the walls is the shadow of the woman, the illusion. We can never know Truth, we can only gaze upon the masks it wears from a distance. Some masks seem to be

28 Jacques Derrida, *Spurs: Nietzsche’s Styles*, 89.

29 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 12.

more expressive, or perhaps transparent is a better word, than others but all masks for the profound necessarily hide what is behind. The profundity that requires a mask, the distance that must be respected through distance never appears naked. This is why the unknown is so seductive. There is no *reason* why the distance cannot be crossed, why Truth/woman cannot be named because both concepts lie beyond the boundaries of reason.

Near the end of *Spurs*, Derrida leaves the reader with a rather unsettling question, “What if Nietzsche himself meant to say nothing, or at least not much of anything, or anything whatever? Then again, what if Nietzsche was only pretending to say something?”³⁰ Would this even contradict Nietzsche? Nietzsche recognizes that “truth” itself is illusive by nature. In a sense he is able to choose the masks he wears. In saying “yes” to untruth Nietzsche opens up the possibilities for an a-rational theory of truth. Because he does not try to pin down exactly what constitutes a complete idea or the universal Truth that illuminates the good, Nietzsche is able to recognize some form of life itself and not just rational theories that surround life. Gillman’s *The Yellow Wallpaper* provides an embodied example of the consequences of refusing to recognize untruth. Jane as women is lost behind the social construction of the concept woman. By connecting Truth (capital “t”) to woman Nietzsche is able to avoid essentializing both women and truth. In this way Nietzsche’s philosophy truly points toward the future.

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30 Jacques Derrida, *Spurs: Nietzsche’s Styles*, 125-126.

GETTING CLEAR ABOUT HUMAN NATURE

Rhett Greenfield

I. Introduction

Human nature is a difficult philosophical concept. To say that humanity inevitably takes an interest in itself is a claim that already presumes some truths about what we are. The converse, the idea that our behavior is infinitely plastic, also already presumes something about our self's and our capabilities. For this reason, we may be bound to make claims about human nature. But there are serious reasons to doubt the possibility of such knowledge. First, wherever humans are living and making claims about human nature, they do so in situations internal to a culture. The possibility of acquiring knowledge about our self is complicated by the fact that our methods of inquiry are subject to both the contingencies of culture and the subjectivity of the investigators. Besides this "epistemic burden," various conceptions of human nature have been used repressively and the very idea of "human nature" may be reactionary or oppressive. Racism, sexism, and the statements of totalitarian governments are a few examples of claims regarding human nature that have been used to justify violence and domination. One might argue that such forms of oppression just got human nature all wrong, but, insofar as there is any immutable aspect of human existence, something about our self is posited as a static truth. This is rarely minimal or banal.

I argue that we are bound to make claims about human nature, but such claims must begin with recognition of humanity's essential dynamism. This dynamism is foundational to a thin conception of human nature which identifies said nature as lying within the movements and structural components of a changing historical process. Human nature is both an inescapable attachment to material and social needs and, on the other hand, the freedom—as individuals living within cultures—to shape and rearrange the relations between those needs. I advance a theory of human nature in terms of needs and the actions we take to fulfill or satisfy them, ultimately suggesting that this is a subject always open to some amount of inquiry.

To develop this theory, I draw upon an earlier conception of human nature offered by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who recognizes various difficulties with reaching an accurate and justified account of human nature, but who nevertheless proceeds

to advance his own theories on the subject.

A cursory familiarity with the themes of Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* might suggest that Rousseau considers the collective formation of society to be nothing more than a burden upon man's natural isolation and freedom. Culture represents the continual corruption of man's natural state, with the natural state in turn representing the proper form of human social organization. Although Rousseau's social contract theory does use the state of nature to illuminate what he takes to be man's current fallen and unequal state, Rousseau is a more complicated thinker than such treatment portrays him. In the preface to the *Discourse*, he immediately expresses his awareness of the difficulty involved in reaching an accurate picture of our nature:

And how will man be successful in seeing himself as nature formed him, through all the changes that the succession of time and things must have produced in his original constitution, and in separating what he derives from his own wherewithal from what circumstances his progress have added to or changed in his primitive state?¹

Rousseau's presentation of the problem explicitly acknowledges the possibility of imposing social contingencies upon the essence of humanity. However, Rousseau falls short of abandoning the idea of human nature. He merely indicates the difficulty of reaching an accurate account of and rejects certain attempts to provide such an account. Thus, Rousseau clearly acknowledges that specifying human nature is problematic, but then offers his own theory.

In the following sections, I explain how Rousseau develops his ideas on human nature. I then utilize Rousseau ideas to develop a thin account of human nature.

II. Rousseau and Human Nature

Rousseau struggled against the supposedly divine role of the French monarch by appealing to a "state of nature." Describing this original natural state allowed him to establish a theoretical model of how society would have originally formed and then juxtapose that model against the social actualities of his time, revealing them as contrary to a happy political arrangement. Rousseau objected to *ideological* and *contingent* attempts to uncover human nature, yet he presents his own portrait of humanity within the *Discourse*.

Rousseau may think this acceptable because he adopts a unique "meditative" method ostensibly allowing him to achieve an intuitive grasp of mankind's nature:

Leaving aside therefore all scientific books which teach us only to see

¹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992), 10-11.

men as they have made themselves, and *meditating* on the first and most simple operations of the human soul, I believe I perceive in it two principles that are *prior to reason* [...] [and from which] all the rules of natural right appear to me to flow.²

What develops from this meditation is nuanced. While it is true that Rousseau claims it is through society that man becomes “weak, fearful, and servile,” this individualism carries some important qualifications.³ Rousseau actually identifies the “happiest and most durable epoch” of human history with a stage that lies intermediate to the state of nature and society’s decline into the “petulant activity [...] of egocentrism.” This form of society is designated as that of “savages,” and is different from the “primitive state,” or the state of nature.⁴ At this point, humans have formed nations of shared customs, established families, developed speech, acquired an appreciation for beauty, and developed a concern for public esteem that leads to both civility and vengeance/punishment.⁵ All “subsequent progress” from this savage state represents “so many steps toward the perfection of the individual” in appearance, but is in fact the “decay of the species.”⁶

Rousseau’s concerns about society are centered not on the limitation of individual freedom itself, but society’s tendency to obscure or alter our former instinctual reaction to the pain of both ourselves and others. As society and reason increase our interdependency *in fact*, they simultaneously mask that dependency:

[...] although man had previously been free and independent, we find him, so to speak, subject, by virtue of a multitude of fresh needs, to all of nature and particularly to his fellowmen, whose slave in a sense he becomes even in becoming their master; rich, he needs their services; poor, he needs their help.⁷

Rousseau also condemns this interdependence because it gives rise to industry and leads to the rational/productive aspects of man’s existence drowning out more sentimental forms of human association:

[...] as soon as one man realized that it was useful for a single individual to have provisions for two, equality disappeared, property came into existence, labor became necessary. Vast forests were transformed into smiling fields which had to be watered with men’s sweat, and in which slavery and misery were

2 Ibid., 13-14. Ellipsis and emphasis mine.

3 Ibid., 29-30, 23.

4 Ibid., 50.

5 Ibid., 47-49.

6 Ibid., 50.

7 Ibid., 54

soon seen to germinate and grow with the crops.⁸

When Rousseau refers to the horrors of interdependence, he is not talking about communal living and reliance on others so much as patterns of shared, specialized, mechanized activity.⁹ Rousseau refers to this as “reason rendered active.”¹⁰ As man’s biological development grants him higher thought, a culture of sentiment and localized usage of the land becomes replaced by a culture of reason oriented primarily towards material acquisition. Culture serves to direct calculative reason towards exploitation because of man’s existence as an embodied being with needs:

As long as men were content with the rustic huts, as long as they were limited to making their clothing out of skins sewn together with thorns or fish bones, adorning themselves with feathers and shells [...] as long as they applied themselves exclusively to tasks that did not require the cooperation of several hands, they lived as free, healthy, good and happy as they could in accordance with their nature; and they continued to enjoy among themselves the sweet rewards of independent intercourse. [...] as soon as one man realized it was useful for a single individual to have provisions for two, equality disappeared.¹¹

This eventually creates a cycle of possession and dominance over the earth, eventually leading to the dominance of some people over others.

Rousseau sees reason as not only unable to aid in the discovery of human nature, but as a source of sorrow when embedded within a culture that takes such reason to be the primary mode of interacting with the world and one another. The capacity for calculative reason is designated as a natural result of man’s biological development, but its combination with social dependence and the need for the esteem of others creates an amplified social/rational consciousness that is unnatural and corrosive. Reason—not social dependence—is the aspect of this combination which Rousseau attacks most forcefully. He attacks it because he thinks it leads to suffocation and isolation. It is reason that “turns man in upon himself [...] isolat[ing] him and [it is] what moves him to say in secret, at the sight of a suffering man, ‘Perish if you will; I am safe and sound.’”¹² But as the unifying force that leads to humanity banding together into groups and eventually forming small societies, reason can be beneficial as well.

Rousseau is more equivocal in his evaluation of culture. Because the savage state

8 *Ibid.*, 51.

9 *Ibid.*, 51.

10 *Ibid.*, 53.

11 *Ibid.*, 51.

12 *Ibid.*, 37.

of social organization (as opposed to the primitive state) is treated as ideal, it is clear that Rousseau sees society as admitting of at least some substantive good. Above all, society is cast in terms of dependency. As people gathered, they came to “look at the others and to want to be looked at [...] [and realized] that public esteem had a value.”¹³ Rousseau seems to believe that as long as this dependency is recognized and controlled by natural human sentiment and compassion, it is a good. Society is desirable over the natural state, but should remain as close to such a state as possible while still retaining the benefits engendered by its differentiation. This entails that society uses reason to utilize resources in order to transcend the state of nature, but subordinates reason to natural sentiment.

This brings us to Rousseau’s depiction of human nature. His pre-rational meditation on humanity’s essential being leads to two theses: (1) we are concerned with our own “well-being and self-preservation”, and (2) we have an equal “natural repugnance” for the suffering of other creatures, namely human beings.¹⁴ Human nature is linked to our material bodies as a desire to avoid pain and an empathetic understanding of pain in other bodies. Fragility, conceived primarily in terms of a need to sustain our own existence, is the factor Rousseau deems responsible for the genesis of reason. We begin as simply “animal[s] limited at first to pure sensations [...] [b]ut difficulties soon presented themselves [...] [and] it was necessary to learn to overcome them.” This leads to “bodily exercises” that train humanity in overcoming the threats of the material, natural environment.¹⁵ With the growth of societies as well as this capacity for instrumental reason, a system of complex labor relations develops. This system represents a form of displaced consciousness that begins to see the body solely as a tool for gathering and maintaining resources.¹⁶ Calculative reason focuses human efforts on the control and manipulation of material bodies, leading to a reconceptualization of humanity as independent subjects possessing objects. The impetus behind the creation of this system, the body’s original state of connection to the earth and its vulnerability in the face of this connection, is consequently lost. Our nature is animal, sensory, and constrained by biological needs in a vital sense, but gets confused as something rational, independent, and immaterial.

In addition to coupling a physiological description of man with a broadly phenomenological picture of physical vulnerability, Rousseau adds two other aspects of human nature: freedom and what he calls “perfectibility.” Freedom is identified with the “power of willing” and is conceived of as a “purely spiritual act” entirely unexplainable by physics.¹⁷ In contrast to the natural world limiting us as a source of threats and the satisfaction of inevitable needs, our nature is also understood as in some sense limitless. Freedom, rather than rationality, is what

13 *Ibid.*, 49.

14 *Ibid.*, 14.

15 *Ibid.*, 45.

16 *Ibid.*, 52-53.

17 *Ibid.*, 25.

distinguishes us from animals, but this freedom is always taken as externalized rather than originating from anything like an immaterial mind. Rousseau contrasts human freedom with animal instinct in the example of pigeons and cats rejecting food that he believes could nourish them, associating freedom with “desiring” and “fearing,” states that rely upon external objects.¹⁸ Reason is a product of freedom just as much as it is a product of fragility. Rousseau directly subordinates reason to freedom by stating that “it is impossible to conceive why someone who had neither desires or fears would go to the bother of reasoning.”¹⁹ Perfectibility, ironically termed, is the human capacity to change and adapt to external circumstances. Since this capacity allows for alterations in behavior through reason and culture—and because perfectibility is held to be “almost unlimited”—it is called “the source of all man’s misfortunes.”²⁰

For Rousseau, human nature is deeply paradoxical, a matter of freedom and simultaneous constraint. The state of nature is depicted as mostly good: people are free, empathetic, largely adapted to the world and capable of tending to their needs by instinct alone. Rousseau’s inclusion of perfectability is the central complicating factor. Perfectability links freedom with reason, thereby suggesting that human freedom itself in the state of nature had the latent potential to morph the human condition into one of enslavement. This is succinctly put in Rousseau’s phrase: “They all ran to chain themselves, in the belief that they secured their liberty.”²¹ This suggests that, to some extent, our nature is precisely the lack of any concrete nature, because perfectibility entails a virtually unlimited number of ways in which humans can exist. As James Miller writes, “the uncertain power of freedom has turned the human being into an animal destined not to contemplate eternal truths, but rather to grapple in ever-changing ways with ever-changing circumstances, in time producing a unique and potentially agonizing *history* [emphasis in original].”²² What Rousseau offers to the dilemma of human nature is an image of our nature as uncertain, malleable, and fused with culture. History “simultaneously realize[s] and pervert[s], reveal[s] and distort[s]” our nature.²³ Rousseau’s evaluation of this propensity for change is ambiguous. It is treated negatively as the source of our downfall and the beginning of inequality, but is positive insofar as it leads to the community found in the savage state. In any case, human nature is intrinsically historical in Rousseau’s account. It is the product of constraint and freedom, the melding of concrete material situations with the ever-present ability to reshape those situations in radically different ways. Human

18 Ibid., 25-26

19 Ibid., 26.

20 Ibid., 26.

21 Ibid., 56. I am aware that this statement does not refer to man in the state of nature, but I think it still expresses an intrinsic potential.

22 James Miller, Introduction to *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, trans. Donald Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992), xv.

23 Ibid., xv.

nature inescapably contains the certainty of our animality and the uncertainty of how that animality is understood and situated within culture. Freedom is the link between nature and culture.

The second important contribution Rousseau makes is that of offering a non-rational/non-discursive method. His meditative method for uncovering the two theses of human nature is questionable, but at least grants an additional option for attempting to understand ourselves which might have otherwise gone unnoticed. Two immediate objections to Rousseau's meditative methodology are that it seems to rely on nothing more than introspection and that it is incomplete. Introspection does not allow of pure, unmediated knowledge and is still subject to the "convenience" charge Rousseau levels against natural law theories. Rousseau may have simply reasoned that the theses were plausible assumptions in light of the social circumstances that surrounded him. If this is true, it is especially troublesome because, according to Rousseau's own philosophy, the society of his time should have corrupted natural sentiment. Secondly, all that is said about the meditation in the *Discourse* itself is that it divulges two principles of human nature that are prior to reason. This is not a sufficient description of the allegedly non-rational methodology employed. The meditation also seems to fly in the face of Rousseau's own elaborate theory of the development and ceaseless modification of human nature because it assumes two essential truths about humanity in its original state.

III. A New Conception of Human Nature

From Rousseau, we gain a rather paradoxical view of human nature as a simultaneous matter of constraint and freedom; human nature is to be found dynamically shifting along that axis. Humans are not to be identified with rationality, but with freedom, which is a force that has developed into how we structure society around our material needs as embodied beings. There is something gripping about the paradox embedded within Rousseau here and this is probably because it reflects the heart of the dilemma: we seem relegated to relying upon an idea of what we are, but yet we have an equal need for some amount of fluid interpretation on the issue—that is, we demand the freedom of shaping what we are. Rousseau is right to see a complicated interchange between society and reason and to locate his more robust account of reason within society. This "robust account of reason" refers to reason as explicitly experienced, emphasized, and self-consciously directed. This is opposed to reason as a mechanical and unreflective recognition of basic spatial properties and the like. Rousseau is also right that knowing our human nature is a non-rational process; that is, it comes before any discursive articulation.²⁴ But Rousseau goes wrong in using a-historical principles

²⁴ Of course, this does not mean that we are unable to discuss our nature discursively after this discovery. This will be addressed in more detail later.

describing psychological dispositions to try to ground his historical account. In fact, these principles often lead him into lapsing into the same kind of idolatry over social contingencies that he set out to challenge. This is most obvious in his unrestrained sexism in describing human mating in the state of nature.²⁵ In other words, he slips up on both the epistemological and sociopolitical difficulties involved in asking about human nature.

One of the important lessons from Rousseau is that we are needful animals, dependent beings within a world of material necessities. But Rousseau also notes the importance of social needs, mainly in his discussion of the need for public esteem that develops within the savage state. Of course, a conception of human nature in terms of needs has to offer some sketch of the content or substance of those needs. Rousseau offers a starting point for spelling out those needs. Our needs are both material and social and the difference between these two types of need can be blurred. This blurring is exemplified in Rousseau's discussion of a societal emphasis upon certain types of material goods as key to the establishment of property. Our nature is dynamic to the extent that social needs can change and they can be oriented around or even accentuate our material needs.

A good example of this is employment. In contemporary American society, most people rely upon having an occupation in order to sustain themselves. For these people, employment is a clear social need. It happens to be a social need because society is organized in such a way that employment is taken as the chief means to obtain one's material needs and a certain portion of one's other social needs. One could even be employed in a line of work that helps to provide others with their own material needs (e.g. agriculture, medicine, construction, etc.) or in a way that one's own material needs are attained by helping others with their social needs (e.g. clinical psychology, social work, education, etc.). Is this to claim that the need for employment is a part of human nature? It might make sense to talk about employment this way, if we understand such talk as implying that our society considers employment something that people should typically have and that it occupies their time and serves as a means to handling their other needs. Employment is considered a part of human nature in the sense that our society sees it as an activity suited to our needs. It must also be added that this does not imply anything *essential* about employment; we could certainly live in a society in which employment is understood to mean something different than receiving a salary from an employer or in which there is nothing that even remotely resembles employment. Furthermore, any particular type of employment must be something an individual participates in and has integrated into their life and their other needs. This helps us begin fleshing out what is meant by saying that human nature is understood in terms of "needs and the actions we take to fulfill those needs," with the actions being social roles and recognizable behaviors.

Our most basic encounter with our needs is in our social actions, or through

25 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, 39-41.

participation in those activities made possible by the society we find ourselves living in. In a certain sense, these activities can be considered quite rational. Continuing with the example of employment, it might be considered highly rational to make one's living as a lawyer, for instance. Part of what makes the activity of participating in court cases rational is that it is widely recognized as useful and is a definite means of making a living. An individual lawyer might consider their profession rational in other ways; maybe it fits with her understanding of social justice or seems a good fit for her personality type. In these ways, being a lawyer just makes sense. But there have surely been societies in which being a lawyer could have never made sense. Viking or Aztec societies may have had some designated social role that functioned in resolving disputes, but they by no means had lawyers. None of this is to assert that lawyers, through simply carrying out their profession, acquire a better understanding of human nature. What I am attempting to illustrate is the character of the relationship between society and reason—as found within Rousseau's *Discourse*—to explain what I consider to be, in some sense, a “non-rational” method for discovering human nature. For Rousseau, reason created society and then society, as an independent phenomenon, exaggerated reason's expression in outward activity. This social “exaggeration,” or a system of social values and practices, is what I want to identify as our non-rational method for determining human nature; just as the absence of Viking lawyers is only made coherent by appeal to Viking social values and practices. We discover human nature in the process of assuming social roles and making sense of them for ourselves in relation to our needs.

This can be understood by examining another part of human nature: our freedom. Freedom is related to our agency as humans, which in turn corresponds with a fundamental uncertainty. Again, Rousseau shows that freedom is not only paradoxical itself, but that it can have paradoxical consequences. To be able to exercise our freedom requires a certain amount of constraint, just as freedom within Rousseau's state of nature is predicated upon a dependency on the material environment; a dependency that is dampened with the beginnings of society and the process of establishing property. Similarly, Rousseau sees our eventual enslavement as a paradoxical consequence of freedom, demonstrating the uncertainty involved in human agency. Freedom and uncertainty allow for not only agency, but a wide range of decisions about who we are and what we should be and do. But this freedom is grounded on a necessary element of both social and material constraint. Constraint limits our agency in three ways: (1) we are only free relative to socially available roles (e.g. no Viking lawyers), (2) we are limited by the material interactions within the roles themselves (e.g. there are certain material resources involved in the practice of being a lawyer), and, (3) only certain roles are materially possible within a given society (e.g. no Viking astronauts). Because our actions rely upon a social context, affirming our nature means we also affirm particular social roles and their relation to our needs. Of

course, if the role is experienced as arbitrary or useless and we find no meaningful action available to us, we feel frustrated and aimless. When we cannot act in a way that makes our lives *materially and socially effective*, we experience ourselves as acting and living contrary to our nature. Understanding our nature is primarily non-rational in the sense that it is gained by *carrying out* the actions themselves and having a cognitive awareness of them secondarily. Philosophy may be vital in clarifying this understanding, but our first awareness of our nature is found through practice.

To finally make our specific needs explicit: our highest need is for engaged action within a role that is simultaneously personal and social. All of our basic needs are things that serve as preconditions for such action. In this category, we would include needs like food, shelter, physical intimacy, a body that allows us to feel comfortable and efficacious, the material resources treated as necessary within a society (e.g. clothing, insurance, transportation, etc.), social intimacy (e.g. the care relationships emphasized by some feminist ethicists), dignity, civil and political rights, etc. All of these are material and social needs necessary for us to function as beings that organize our own particular set of material and social relations.

One possible objection to this portrait of human nature is that it conceives of human nature within a particular social context or society, and therefore it seems too narrow to be a theory about universal human nature. The response to this objection is that the above description of human beings as needful and free social actors assumes at least three universals that apply to all human beings at all times: (1) the existence of material and social needs, (2) some degree of agency and freedom, (3) existence as a social animal within cultural processes. The exact content and specification of these three characteristics will vary, but they will always be applicable. They are sufficiently broad and dynamic so as not to pin us to a static “image” of human nature, and they acknowledge a wide degree of self-determination and the role of mutable social processes. Describing human nature in a way that is less forceful and absolute is the way to resolve the earlier dilemma. We obtain a theory that avoids the oppressive aspects of earlier theories and yet we also retain the ability to make normative claims by fleshing out the content of these universals.

IV. Conclusion

Human nature is freedom in shaping the structure and character of social relations as they pertain to our socio-material needs; a freedom in generating action and giving meaning to that action. Our nature is one that is historical and dynamic, but is also constrained by the same forces that grant it fluidity. This account refuses to hold up a frozen image of what we are, insisting instead that we are to be found within ongoing processes. Other consequences include the

awareness of our dependency and its physical and cultural sources, our freedom in changing the forms in which our dependencies manifest themselves, and the collapse of a hard distinction between individual and collective interest. This view is broad enough not to be oppressive or a source of constraint, yet is detailed enough to ground robust normative theories. It provides a clear picture of the general form of human flourishing and a host of needs implied by this form. We are not only justified in talking about human nature, but *must* do so. The method for resisting stultifying theories of human nature is to point out their incompatibility with the transformative powers of history and culture, not to abandon theories of human nature entirely. Good theorizing about human nature entails describing the changes and conditions of these social powers. Normative theories are then understood as adaptive responses to the ever-shifting content of our dependencies and needs.

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ARISTOTELIAN DYNAMICS

Noah Welsh

The idea of change is a concept that philosophers and physicists both have struggled with for thousands of years. In order to understand change we first examine physical motion, as it is this type of motion with which we are most familiar. J.D. Bernal described the Aristotelian view of motion in his *A History of Classical Physics*: “You threw a spear, the spear penetrated the air, the air was displaced from the front end of the spear, came round to the back end of the spear and pushed it along.”¹ Eventually the spear grew weary of this and dropped to the ground. While this idea is completely ludicrous, it did drive Aristotle to some profound conclusions, such as if a spear were to be moving through a vacuum it would move in a straight line to infinity and thus a vacuum is a logical impossibility.

The real question when examining Aristotle’s model of change is where his models were flawed. If one accepts Aristotle’s empirical methodology, then for all practical purposes Isaac Newton uncovered the truth of the universe. It is only in the most extreme cases that Einstein’s Relativity and Bohr’s Quantum mechanics are visible in the world around us. Newton’s Laws, however, can send men to the moon. To judge by observation, therefore, he reached the truth of the universe, for Aristotle’s project was to explain the appearances.

So what did Aristotle lack that allowed Newton to bring the idea of change to truth? Obviously, a few thousand years of intellectual brewing and different individual mental capabilities made a difference. But conceptually, what is the root of Aristotle’s flaws? The answer lies in the two men’s fundamentally different understandings of the concepts of change. Enter the world of calculus.

What is the now? Aristotle viewed the now as the bisection point between the past and the future. The problem with this view is that it does not properly deal with “nows” of the past and the future. In the modern scientific view, time is viewed as an infinite series of infinitely small increments of time, “nows.” The problem that Aristotle had with this idea is that the mathematics of the time would not allow for any sizable element to be made up of infinitely small pieces. Upon Leibniz’s and Newton’s introductions of calculus, though, all this changed. A very similar problem with pre-calculus mathematics is illustrated in the illogicality of

1 J.D. Bernal, *A History of Classical Physics* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1997), 174.

Zeno's paradox.

Aristotle discusses his conception of the "now" in Book IV of the *Physics*:

Whenever we notice the now as one, neither as before and after nor as the same thing belonging to something before and something after, no time seems to have passed, because there seems to have been no motion. But whenever we notice the before, then we say there is time. For this is what time is: the number of motion in respect to before and after.²

Here Aristotle seems to have a valid point, yet this description seems too concerned with the human perception of time. When a person looks at a differentially small instant, no motion is apparent, as there is nowhere to move within this infinitely small timeframe. This is true just as it is impossible to comprehend positional change within the three dimensional space of an infinitesimally small point. The problem lies not with human perception of time but with the essence of time, or, if you want to take a distinctly post-modern approach, the lack thereof. While Aristotle does bring numbers into his conception of time, he quickly proceeds to classify numbers as either the counted or the countable. He hastily ignores irrational numerology and focuses on the discrete.

The flawed mathematics of Aristotle is most poignantly illustrated in his descriptions of coming to be, the most inherently important form of change, as an individual strives towards some individual purpose. Discussing the musician working to flourish, he remarks, "something becomes musical from being not-musical, and not from just any old way of being not-musical but from being unmusical or from being something (if there is anything) between musical and unmusical." Clearly, there is a difference in musicality of Jimi Hendrix and my own harmonic ineptitude, but certainly there are musicians better than myself who have not reached the level of mastery of this prodigal, LSD-driven genius.

Aristotle suggests that it is possible that some state may exist between the two sides of this musical polarity; however, if this logic applies in cutting between myself and Hendrix, there is no reason that there should not be some musician who lies between this newly posited middle ground musician and Hendrix. We can quickly observe that if we continue to bisect to infinity then there will always be some state of musicality between the two preceding states of musicality, no matter how close the ability level may be. It might be argued that at a certain level the difference in two being musical ability is so fine it does not exist, but such logic is flawed. Just because the human perceptive faculties are unable to distinguish between two states of musicality does not mean some difference does

² Aristotle. *Physics*. translated by Robin Waterfield (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 130.

not exist.

The modern mathematical framework of the universe that arose out of the work of Leibniz and Newton mandates that all fundamentally dynamic entities are subject to the ideas about continuity that arrived with calculus. Now, how does this affect the Aristotelian conception of the universe? Reading any of Aristotle's works quickly leads one to an understanding of the importance of "states." Perhaps this is most notably seen in his ethics as he illustrates the striving of entities to achieve some state of "flourishing." His virtue is also defined as a state of the soul. Aristotle's ethics creates a teleological trajectory that humans must follow in order to achieve this ideal state. The problem here is that there seems to be some odd sense of finality in the desired end of "flourishing."

So how does flourishing exist mathematically? When looking at it as an individual state on a continuously differentiable scale of potential measures of the human condition with respect to the good life, we see that the singular quality of "flourishing" appears to be some discrete point toward the teleologically positive end of the spectrum. This point then either must exist at infinity, suggesting that in order to be "flourishing" a being must be absolutely perfect, or that it is some arbitrary point towards the fundamentally good end of the spectrum, which suggests that there must be an infinite set of human states which are superior to the "flourishing" state. Both of these descriptions are illogical, and thus a new definition of flourish is necessary.

The most logical next step toward defining flourishing along the teleological spectrum is to suggest that it exists within some range. If a being's goodness is greater than or equal to some state of goodness "A," then we may deem that being flourishing. While this description seems to be an improvement upon the finite definition of flourishing, it again ultimately fails. If the scale of goodness is infinitely differentiable (as modern mathematics shows all continuous spectrums are), then some state "B" must lay just outside of the minimum state "A" that qualifies a being as flourishing. While it may be logical for a University to have a distinct cut-off point for SAT scores, it is absurd to think that there is a distinct metaphysical cut-off at which flourishing begins.

Now that we have demonstrated the mathematical ineptitude of Aristotle's basic model, we can begin to define his definition of "flourishing." Flourishing cannot be adequately described as a state without simply being some arbitrary point or particular range in the total range of possible states. Flourishing, then, must be defined as an entity that is purely phenomenological. Nonetheless, even if the state of flourishing is just a man-made description of some condition of the universe, it must represent some idea that does exist at a metaphysical level. Otherwise, the sum of Aristotle's ethics becomes moot.

Even if flourishing does not actually exist, there can still be relevant discussion so long as the spectrum of goodness, in relation to which it is described, does exist. Here it is seen that moral entities must strive for goodness, and the true

essence of flourishing is simply an orientation with respect to the scale. The statement that Mahatma Gandhi is an example of a flourishing being is not a fundamental truth, as it relies on some man-made definition of flourishing. On the other hand, if a basic conception of the good life is accepted, it can logically be stated that Gandhi lies further in the positive flourishing direction than either Joseph Stalin or Adolph Hitler.

So it is seen that proper understanding of continuity does lead to interesting philosophical conclusions when brought into juxtaposition with philosophical conceptions born in an era that was mathematically ruled by Euclid. But these ideas are just beginning to fit together. Continuity is just the groundwork of calculus, and when the next mathematical steps are taken to the derivative, to the integral, or along a few other constructions of calculus, we can take this observation even further. These mathematical creations of the enlightenment are the tools which enable a person to logically navigate the world of continuous entities. Employing these yields a better grasp of Aristotelian phenomenology.

A common complaint regarding Aristotelian philosophy is that while Aristotle gives unfathomably succinct descriptions of the occurrences of the natural world, he does little to explain how these descriptions fit into the metaphysical essence of the Universe. When Occam's razor is used, the sheer complexity of the Aristotelian picture is so vast that his views appear absurd; nonetheless, his descriptions seem strikingly profound. Perhaps calculus can help us remedy the problem.

Suppose a historian is examining the nature of militaristic world control. He can quickly create a list of dominate superpowers across the globe as he moves through the Roman and British Empires, to the Third Reich, and finishes with the present reign of the United States. When a string is listed it is seen for what it is: a list of facts from which no conclusions can be drawn. So what is necessary for the historian in order to analyze the repetitive nature of the turnover of dominant world superpowers? He must examine the continuity of change in this series of rulers. Here the importance of the derivative becomes apparent.

In lay terms, a derivative takes some function, $f(x)$, and creates a new function, $f'(x)$, which is a function of the change in $f(x)$. This historical example may seem odd, as there is no apparent function of $f(x)$ that models the history of world domination (thus it would be impossible to differentiate it creating a function $f'(x)$), yet the same logic can still be used in an empirical fashion in order to model the change of superpowers. Here we see that the application of the logic of calculus helps move the historian from a description of a historical pattern to a description of the nature of historical changes. Now we are one step closer to the essence of this pattern.

Returning to the Aristotelian model of flourishing, we find that this logic becomes still more salient. Humans all seem to have some position with respect to the spectrum of the good life. As indicated previously, any label applied to some level of flourishing is nothing but a piece of Aristotelian phenomenology;

however, these labels are made with reference to some true scale of goodness. By making the intuitive leap equivalent to the taking of a derivative, we can move from a scale of flourishing levels to a scale of movement with respect to the natural teleological orientation.

Take a simple example of physical motion. A football is thrown, and has some position with respect to the three basic spatial dimensions as a function of time. The human mind tends to view the three separate spatial dimensions and the dimension of time as fundamentally unlinked and distinctly separate, but what happens when the derivative is taken? A velocity function is created. Now, what is velocity? It is a relationship between position and time. Time is defined in reference to some chronology; thus, if motion did not exist, whether it be physical or in the form of some coming to be, time would be a logical impossibility. Here the metaphysical interdependence of these entities is necessitated.

Calculus is a tool that helps to consolidate various aspects of the Universe into a more realistic model of the world as we know it, and this makes a huge step toward putting the phenomenological nature of Aristotle's philosophy into perspective. While string theory may in all actuality encapsulate the fundamental nature of the Universe, it is very little help for a person hoping to understand subjects ranging from civil disobedience to the aesthetics of post-modern art. The phenomenology of Aristotle may not do anything to describe the essence of things, but it does a brilliant job in describing an array of conditions that emerge from the true heart of the Universe. Friendship has no essential role in the essence of the Universe, as mankind did not arise until over fifteen billion years after all existence exploded from a singularity; yet, when man did arise, friendship became a model relevant to describing the relationships between these newly emergent beings.

Not only does differentiation provide profound insights into the nature of the world around us, but integration is just as vital in the navigation of a world that often appears to be understandable only through the categorical methodology exemplified in Aristotle's works. Once the derivative is comprehended, the integral is a fairly straightforward concept. It allows the mathematician to make the leap from a function that models some rate of change to a second function that models the net sum of the effects created by the change represented in the previous function. For example, a function that represents a car's velocity can be integrated to obtain a function that will reveal the car's location at any given time for which the velocity function applies. For a distinctly Aristotelian example, if the rate at which a man's efforts are helping him to move his life toward the teleological good is known, this knowledge can be integrated in order to find what the status of this man's life might look like at any point under which this trajectory applies. Here we observe that once a descriptive model of some aspect of change is developed, we can employ integration in order to understand states occurring in this universe, and again the phenomenological methodology can be

brought into play.

Once we comprehend just how Aristotle's philosophy might fit into a modern, calculus-based, scientific framework, the question becomes the following: how might this fit into a modern philosophical viewpoint? The German existentialist philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche is able to give some insight into how this might occur. While his model is fundamentally irrational and devoid of purpose, negating any possibility of a teleological orientation, he makes an effort to shift philosophical thought from a view of a static universe to a more dynamic model. He suggests that reality lies in the "flux" or the "coming to be" of entities in the universe.

Although Aristotle certainly emphasized the importance of his own version of "coming to be," especially insofar as it applies to the struggle of beings to become flourishing, he does not take this quite far enough. He gives a very logical picture of this, saying that "those who discuss nature say that there is motion, because they are constructing a world order and all their study concerns coming to be and perishing, which cannot exist unless there is motion."³ This helps make sense of how Aristotle's phenomenology takes snap shots of various conditions of the universe, and his analysis of "coming to be" simply connects these into a coherent picture of the universe. As always, though, he needs to take one more step forward with this analysis.

An astronomer peers into the heavens, observes our galactic neighbor Proxima Centauri, and records its position relative to our Sun. What use is this? This reveals no truth, giving as it does a static picture of a fundamentally dynamic Universe. The velocity of the twin stars on the other hand shows us how this position will change with respect to time, allowing us to make some profound conclusions such as discovering how fast the Universe is expanding. Now we have dynamic picture with respect to time. But what of the other continuous entities?

When man thinks about dynamics, he naturally thinks of change with respect to time, as time is the only entity we perceive as in motion; here, however, we are deceived. Time is just one of an almost infinitesimally large number of differential qualities; thus, we must examine how all of these dynamic entities change with respect to changes in all other respective entities. Here the realm of multivariable differentiable equations begins.

In summary, Aristotle's phenomenological snap shots of the universe draw some remarkable conclusions about the nature of the world, but his analysis of change seems to be inadequate toward bringing them together into a dynamic model. Many years later, when Newton and Leibniz created what mathematicians almost unanimously consider the most important mathematical discovery of all time, calculus, our ability to create a dynamic model of things changed. All systems in motion can be defined with calculus. Economic profit, projectile

³ Aristotle, *Physics*, 137.

motion, and fluctuations in hermit crab populations, along with the Einstein's conception of the space-time continuum as described in his General Relativity, are all modeled with calculus.

The world can be analyzed on two levels: a simple balance represented in a few simple equations, or a system composed of an almost infinitely complex set of smaller systems. Social orders, economic theories, the eukaryotic and prokaryotic sub-types of the carbon-based life forms of this world, the potential intrinsic good of moral entities, Einstein's macroscopic world of Relativity, Bohr's unpredictable microscopic world of Quantum Mechanics, artistic creations, and the mystical realms of psychedelics are just a few aspects of the universe which seemingly emerged out of the abyss. Still, these are just a handful of the intellectual items of deliberation, of one of a few million species, on one of eight planets, in one of a few billion solar systems, in one of a few billion galaxies, in possibly a nearly infinite array of Universes. On the other hand, most modern physicists believe that soon the sum of all existence will lie on the fulcrum of a single equation. Aristotle created a phenomenology that arguably characterized more of the sheer complexity of the universe than any other man in history, and it was not until calculus that this could be molded to fit into simple balance of the true essence of reality.

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ARISTOTLE ON FRIENDSHIP: THE IMPORTANCE OF FRIENDSHIP WITHIN THE FLOURISHING LIFE

Jimmy Maners

Aristotle declares that friends “seem to be the greatest external good.”¹ He devotes one-fifth of his *Nichomachean Ethics* to this single topic of friendship. To begin the inspection of this external good, we need to examine what Greek friendship represents. The Greek word for friendship, *philia*, denotes a wider concept than its English translation. *Philia* implies “a mutual attraction between human beings”² or “a general sociability, a desire to cooperate in shared activity of any sort, from the utilitarian business transaction to the close personal relationships between true friends.”³ When studying Aristotle’s approach towards friendship within the *Nichomachean Ethics* it is important to realize that the modern propensity only to consider close or social companions as friends does not coincide with the Greek *philia*, which encapsulates any familiar acquaintance, including family and business associates. Aristotle insists that friendship is “most necessary for our life.”⁴ Not only is it necessary but it is also intrinsically admirable, “[f]or we praise lovers or friends, and having many friends seems to be a fine thing. Moreover, people think that the same people are good and also friends.”⁵

The significant features of friendship within Aristotle’s view are (1) mutual desire for good or beneficial things and (2) mutual awareness of that mutual desire, resulting in (3) equal exchanges of those things. “Friends must have goodwill to each other, wish goods and be aware of it.”⁶ There are also three kinds of amiable or choice worthy things: the good, the pleasant, and the useful.⁷ These are the reasons people love or befriend another. People who love each other because of the good are complete friends; people who love each other out of pleasure are pleasure friends; people who love each other because of utility are utility friends. Character or virtue friends, who wish good things to one another

1 *Nichomachean Ethics*, 1169b10.

2 David Ross, *Aristotle* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1971), 30.

3 R.G. Mulgan, *Aristotle’s Political Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 14.

4 *Nichomachean Ethics*, 1155a4.

5 *Ibid.*, 1155a29-32.

6 *Ibid.*, 1156a4-5.

7 *Ibid.*, 1155b19.

and exchange them, exemplify complete friendship: “Complete friendship is the friendship of good people similar in virtue, for they wish goods in the same way, to each other insofar as they are good, and they are good in themselves... Now those who wish goods to their friend for their friend’s own sake are friends most of all; for they have this attitude because of the friend himself, not coincidentally.”⁸ Contrastingly, pleasure or utility friends are not friends for their friend’s own sake: “And so those who love for utility or pleasure are fond of a friend because what is good or pleasant for themselves, not insofar as the beloved is who he is, but insofar as he is useful or pleasant.”⁹ Virtuous friends think of themselves and their friends as seekers of virtuous activity. To Aristotle, virtuous friends are true friends while pleasure and utility friends are “friends coincidentally by being similar to virtue friends.”¹⁰ Since the human telos is found in virtuous activity, it would seem that the flourishing person might need virtuous friends to achieve the good life.

After summarizing Aristotle’s concept of friendship, one may ask an important question: Will the flourishing person be so self-sufficient that he will not need friends? It is obvious that the components of Aristotle’s friendship and love are quite different from the components involved with other relationships. It seems as if friendship is an integral part of the flourishing life. One enters friendship not just to be part of a good pursuit, but to feel the intrinsic value of love itself. Similarly, the political life is structured within a social framework; therefore, it seems as if the characteristics of the flourishing life are barely self-sufficient. On the other hand, it appears that friendship, love, and politics are trivial. People can do without these things and still be virtuous. Accordingly, some say that the pursuit of a self-sufficient flourishing requires a solitary life; Aristotle, however, begs to differ.

There are two passages within the *Nicomachean Ethics* that defend Aristotle’s idea of the naturalness of friendship against the idea that self-sufficient solitude is fully flourishing. The first passage speaks solely on the naturalness of friendship: “Members.... human beings most of all, have a natural friendship for each other; that is why we praise friends of humanity. And in our travels we can see how every human being is akin and beloved to a human being.”¹¹ The second passage refers to the naturalness of man as political, and it defends this concept of personal friendship: “Surely it is also absurd to make the blessed person solitary. For no one would choose to have all other goods and yet be alone, since a human being is political, tending by nature to live together with others.”¹² Aristotle is clearly referring to human judgments on the value of friendship. The solitary life is insufficient for a flourishing life because human beings would not find this kind of life commensurable to great value. The solitary view goes against the choices

8 Ibid., 1156b7-11.

9 Ibid., 1156a15-16.

10 Ibid., 1157b4-5.

11 Ibid., 1155a20-23.

12 Ibid., 1169b16-19.

we make and the attitudes we share with regard to a flourishing life. Our political nature surely seems as though it is part of what we are. The solitary life would be less than perfect because it lacks the fundamental nature of friendship. Indeed, it would be hard to call such a life human at all. Aristotle appeals to the nature of our being, and this illustrates how important friendship is to being human. It is a fundamental component of being human, and therefore not having it would seem inhuman. To choose a life without friends is to deviate so far from our nature that one might truthfully say that he would not want to go on with such a life.

To say that friendship and politics exist naturally defends their intrinsic value as components of the human life. If principle X is part of the nature of creature C, then no account of C's life would be complete without the mention of X, and no account of the sort of self-sufficiency appropriate for C could omit X.¹³ The argument that friendship is part of our nature would then rule out that the notion that the solitary life could sustain the flourishing life.

Aristotle clearly shows how friendship is both an instrumental and intrinsic component of the flourishing life. Close personal relationships play vital roles in the development of character and also in furthering education. Parents play important roles in the growth of their children both mentally and physically. Friendships also seem to be an integral part of moral development in several ways. The virtuous friendship seems to be rooted in deep love and respect. Complete friends will effectively shape morality through providing advice and correction, and they also have a tendency to promote certain activities. Virtuous friends are flourishing people and thus participate in flourishing activities. If a friend participates in a certain activity the other will be inclined to share in that activity. When people love each other they want to share abilities and tastes within similar fields. People's lives can be enhanced by having virtuous friendships. Complete friendships are also rooted deeply in respect. These feelings of respect cause friends to want to be more like their virtuous friends. Complete friends should want to imitate and emulate, and these feelings play an important motivating role within society. Shared models of public excellence are greatly enhanced through the love of personal friendships, and this virtuous imitation only increases the goodness within these friends.

Friendship is instrumental to a flourishing life in other ways as well. Friends can be, as it were, powerful resources that help individuals in their pursuits. One can turn to a close friend for help in times of adversity or seek assistance in any project. Sharing also increases the value of the overall friendship. On the other hand, it seems as if it is quite hard for human beings to keep interest and stay engaged in a solitary life. Aristotle says as much, noting that "the solitary person's life is hard, since it is not easy for him to be continuously active all by himself; but in relation to others and in their company it is easier and hence activity will

13 Nussbaum, M.C. *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 351.

be more continuous.”¹⁴ Much enjoyment comes from working along with friends side by side, and it also true that much pleasure of the actual relationship is seen in the work itself. Friends also play a vital role in helping individuals realize and overcome personal faults within themselves. Once people take an open look at their close friends, it may enhance their understanding of their own character and sharpen their judgment.¹⁵ The person an individual uses as a reference needs to be a person similar to himself in character and aspirations, someone they can identify as another self. The virtuous friend is the one who fits such a description.

As the reader has already seen, friendship is not only instrumental to a flourishing life but is an intrinsic part of it as well. For we in fact love others for their own sake, not just for some benefit of our own, and friendship, again, seems necessary to life.¹⁶ Yet it is valuable on its own. Friendship seems to be the greatest of external goods, and the lack of it seems to be a very terrible thing. If lacking friendship is such a terrible thing, how could solitary self sufficiency lead to a fully flourishing life?

From this it appears that Aristotle regards friendship as a necessary component of the flourishing life. But an opponent could offer counter-arguments while also drawing upon Aristotle’s ideas. In Book X 7-8 of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle claims that that the philosophical life and its primary activity of contemplation is even more valuable than the political life and its central ideas of friendship and virtuous activity. For the majority of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle assumes that this kind of solitary self-sufficiency is an irrelevant activity for human beings. Yet his aggrandizement of the contemplative life relies upon the acceptance of solitary self-sufficiency as the criterion of the best human activity.

Two passages in Book X reveal these facts. The first passage compares the contemplative life with the life of ethically virtuous activity:

Moreover, the self-sufficiency we spoke of will be found in study above all. For admittedly the wise person, the just person, and the other virtuous people all need the good things necessary for life. Still, when these are adequately supplied, the just person needs other people as partners and recipients of his just actions; and the same is true of the temperate person and the brave person and each of the others. But the wise person is able, and more able the wiser he is, to study even by himself; and though he presumably does it better with colleagues, even so he is more self-sufficient than any other virtuous person.¹⁷

He is clearly examining the different types of lives along with their different

14 *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1170a6-7.

15 Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, 364

16 *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1155a4.

17 *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1177a27-b1.

central activities. He mentions that no one is completely or permanently self-sufficient, but there is a big difference between those who focus primarily on virtuous activity and those who focus on contemplative activity. Those who focus on virtuous activity are dependent on other people in order to complete virtuous activities, but the contemplator does not need others.

The second passage compares the external resources needed to maintain the ethically virtuous life with those needed for the contemplative life:

Moreover it seems to need external supplies very little, or at any rate less than virtue of character needs them. For grant that they both need necessary goods, and to the same extent, since there will be only a very small difference even though the politician labors more about the body and suchlike. Still there will be a large difference in the activities in each type of virtue. For the generous person will need money for generous actions; and the just person will need it for paying debts...the brave person will need enough power...the temperate person will need freedom to do intemperate actions, if they are to achieve anything that virtue requires...but someone who is studying needs none of these goods, for that activity at least; indeed, for study at least, we might say they are even hindrances.¹⁸

Once again, Aristotle shows that the contemplator and virtuous person are dependent on the necessities of life, but the contemplator in general needs much less. The contemplator needs no external goods for his contemplation. Aristotle claimed earlier that friends are the greatest external goods, and if that is the case, then the contemplator would not require them. Contemplative activity meets the conditions of self-sufficiency.

Secondly, by making friendship a component of the flourishing life, people make themselves more vulnerable to loss. Friendships often cause pain, and pain will almost always lead to a diminished flourishing. Also, through their friendships, people expose themselves to pain and loss that is not their own. If one is to love a friend as he loves his own self, then he is setting himself up for a loss which is not a necessary part of his own life. The solitary contemplator has only his own health, virtue, and success to worry about. A person who loves a friend will suffer because of his friend and become twice as susceptible to the turns of luck and fortune.¹⁹ Aristotle even states that “to say that the fortunes of one’s descendents and friends do not have any impact seems excessively unloving and contrary to what we think.”²⁰

18 *Ibid.*, 1178a23-30, 32-33, and b3-4.

19 Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, 361.

20 *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1101a22.

Aristotle also claims that living together or seeing one's virtuous friends is necessary to maintain flourishing and the complete friendship. Yet there are times when friends are away from each other for extended periods of time. Quite often these absences are necessary or unavoidable, and if these are long absences one can forget the love that was a component of the friendship itself. It seems very possible that a friendship can become disarranged by these absences. And even if two people live together their entire lives, old age can still diminish the relationship. The ravages of old age can be neither predicted nor avoided and old age can bring about losses that can lead to diminution of love. Old age can also transform a complete friendship into a friendship based on utility. Old age is truly unavoidable and has the potential to disrupt and dismantle virtuous friendships. Even if a love is lucky enough to survive old age or any of life's changes, there is always death. Death always comes to some before others, and death almost certainly has the capability of diminishing the survivor's life. Death, one may say, is the ultimate challenge. Not only can it end a virtuous friendship, but it can also wreak havoc on the survivor's life.

Aristotle, however, thinks such arguments present a point only if one thinks that friendships are only means to other solitary goods. If the solitary life had these goods, then it would be a complete life, but no one thinks this way. A life without friends, or other goods for that matter, is seriously incomplete. A life that is incomplete could possibly be not worth living. In Book 1, Aristotle defines the concept of flourishing as complete, good and self-sufficient; however, even his definition of self-sufficiency does not fit the description of solitary self-sufficiency. With regard to the self-sufficiency of the flourishing life, Aristotle writes that "what we count as self-sufficient is not what suffices for a solitary person by himself, living an isolated life, but what suffices also for parents, children, wife, and in general for friends and fellow citizens, since a human being is a naturally political animal."²¹ This flourishing life will also be "choice-worthy and lacking in nothing."²² Friendship, then, will be a part of the flourishing life as well an integral part of its self-sufficiency.

Aristotle uses the idea of solitary self-sufficiency to characterize the central activity of the best life, but he does not use it to characterize the whole of that life. One reason for this is that the flourishing of the contemplator may include or even require more than just contemplative activity, and these other supports for his happiness may include the help or participation of other people. Secondly, even if the flourishing contemplator participates exclusively in contemplative activity, there is no reason to believe that the contemplator, being human and unable to study all the time, will not require other people for the non-contemplative aspects of his life. Regarding the necessities, it is almost impossible for someone to be completely self-sufficient.

²¹ Ibid., 1097b6-11.

²² Ibid., 1097b14-15.

Furthermore, the solitary self-sufficiency of the contemplator seems to be non-human. It seems that friendship and life's external goods are inherent to the human nature. The belief that friendship is such a firm part of our conception of human life illustrates how important love and friendship is to our actual identity. Aristotle's opponent tells an individual to choose the solitary, contemplative life, but this goes completely against our nature. Wishing good to a friend, like one wishes good to himself, is an essential part of virtuous friendship, and this well-wishing requires that the person exist and that he live a life similar to that of the well-wisher. If the solitary life is the greatest good, then one should wish this life of solitude to his friends. It is in a human being's nature to be a social being; thus, the flourishing, solitary contemplator would not be of truly human nature. The well-wishing for a life that is lacking in friendship, therefore, is to wish for the transformation into a different life. Aristotle even claims in Book X that the solitary and contemplative life is "superior to the human level: For someone will live it not insofar as he is a human being, but insofar as he has some divine element in him."²³ The solitary contemplative life is not the human life but the life of a divine being. Aristotle is concerned not with the divine telos but with the human telos. The life without friendship is severely lacking in essential human values. The only way the opponent could respond to Aristotle is to provide his own story of the solitary, contemplative life and try to show how one can flourish within it.

Aristotle would admit that friendship can be painful or depressing, and he would also admit that the death of a friend can be heartbreaking. His account of flourishing takes into account these things, and he admits the flourishing can be diminished by such happenings. At first glance, this seems as if human flourishing is completely left up to externalities outside of one's control; with deeper inspection, though, one can see how fragile the flourishing life actually is because it is composed of things that are intrinsically essential to the human experience. Aristotle points out that "we consider it a virtue in people, if they love their friends equally both present and absent, both living and dead."²⁴ Aristotle's words illustrate how grief and pain are as much a part of the human experience as happiness or pleasure. These characteristics are natural parts of the best human life. Yes, the actualization of pain or grief can diminish a flourishing life, but these emotions are essential to human nature. If no one experienced these emotions then he would not be human. To Aristotle, friendship is quite similar to these emotions. If one never experiences the full array of these emotions in his life, he is not human. If someone is not human, he cannot experience the human's highest good, the flourishing life.

It is quite obvious that Aristotle thinks friendship is a requirement for a flourishing life, yet an opponent could argue that the life of solitary contemplation is the highest good because of its a divine nature. Aristotle presents both of these

23 Ibid., 1177b26-27.

24 *Rhetoric*, 1381b24-26.

ideas in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, but why would he present these ideas if each one did not have merit? He presents the fully contemplative life as a life superior to the human level, yet he also adds that a human being's complete flourishing will be the activity of contemplation. Aristotle holds that solitary contemplation is an important part of the flourishing life, but not the only component. The flourishing life is composed of many elements, and there is no single component that completely defines a flourishing life. It is only when all these components are combined that one can be said to live a flourishing life. A flourishing life is much like an exquisite dish prepared in the kitchen. The dish may be the most wonderful once it is completed, but none of the individual ingredients make the dish what it is. It is when all the ingredients are combined in the proper proportion that the dish can reach its wonderful status. Too much of one ingredient or too little of another would fail to make the dish sufficient. The same is true for the flourishing life, for which both virtuous friendship and solitary contemplative activity are necessary. Too much of one and not enough of the other would cause the life to be not completely flourishing. One man who exemplified the blending of these two components in his life was the "hermit" Trappist monk, Thomas Merton. He sought fully to keep in balance the need for solitude and companionship. He spent much of his later life living in solitude for days at a time, yet he still had a need for friends so he could discuss what he studied and contemplated while living in his solitary self-sufficiency. Merton's lifestyle seems to clearly illustrate how both friendship and contemplative activity play a role within the flourishing life. Merton spent much of his life in secluded hermitages for days at a time, yet he had to return the world and make himself available to his friends as well. On 19 July 1968, Merton noted in his journal, "More than anything I want to find a really quiet, isolated place where no-one knows where I am, where I can get down to the thing I really want to do and need to do from which if necessary, I can come out to help others."²⁵ His words seem to show how it is possible to combine friendship and contemplative activity to help one live the flourishing life.

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²⁵ France, Peter, *Hermits: The Insights of Solitude* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 190.

RETURN OF THE PHILOSOPHER KING

Stephanie Onofri

The purpose of philosophy has ever been to help others open their eyes and look around.¹ Indeed there is no other purpose of value on this earth than service to mankind. Anyone who has labored throughout his life for money, power, or fame will find in the end that their task is reducible to nothing, and that they have wasted a perfectly good life. The philosopher king will return to the cave with no other view than to help those who are like him. He knows that any other will is a false freedom granted by the state for the prisoner's sedation: wealth, fame, and power are creations of the state and nothing more. It is from this lie that the philosopher king seeks to free his fellow man, for the minds of the prisoners have become so dull and witless, so busy with empty tasks that they no longer see their true worth. The state keeps them busy with success and happiness and all the while their better judgment and reason sleep. Man sleeps a deep slumber. Plato's allegory of the cave is significant because it provides a microcosm in which to experiment theory. As the decades go by, we must visit it with a new sense of inquiry, with one eye open to discrimination and another which holds at the very summit of its vision the enlightenment of all mankind. Revisiting the cave with a mind to the modern premise requires first and foremost a sense of discrimination between the interpretive fluff that it has acquired over the years and the elements that still remain valid and useful. Most of what needs be discarded derives from Plato's first mistake: to place pure forms above the immediacy of the senses.² It accounts for a limited critique of language, which in the cave, must be used amply and skillfully by those beings who, having become enlightened, have acquired the skills needed to use the shadows as instruments for truth. This erroneous placement of the empirical also accounts for the misplacement of light as something beyond the cave and the misconception of the soul as a thing which is corruptible by nature. The things that work and that continue to be useful as we revisit the cave time and again are its generic structure and the emphasis that Socrates places on the philosophical education of the prisoner.

1 Plato. *The Republic*, 519c8-d. Socrates states that "...it is our task as founders, then, to compel the best natures to reach the study we said before is the most important, namely to make the ascent and see the good..."

2 Ibid., 517b-d, 611b.

I. FICTION: A Matter of Remembering

Why should Plato end this fervent and meticulous journey into the nature of justice with a poetic fiction about the soul?³ Is it because, somewhere within us, certain fictions resonate as true? Perhaps even an imitation of the truth can lead us back to the place where we started? We started with the soul. The myth of *Er* centers on souls and the soul's choice after life and in before-life. Socrates describes how a soul chooses the life it will live based on the impressions that remain from the previous life. The suffering that the soul will encounter in life results directly from its own choice in the "world beyond." For instance, if a soul has been naïve and never experienced suffering, it will most likely pick a life that seems pleasing, but ends up bringing about intense suffering.⁴ Before the soul comes to Earth, it passes through the river of forgetfulness. It is there that it forgets where it has been and how it has come back into the body. The philosopher, however, knows that the soul is immortal, and therefore she lives a happy life and experiences a happy death and all places in between are also devoid of suffering.⁵ Although this part of the story sounds a little too much like the rant I've heard from fundamentalists knocking at my door at six o'clock in the morning, preaching about the right path that will bring eternal happiness and salvation from suffering, I understand now and see clearly what Socrates has meant all along about the philosopher who has seen the light.

Man must be capable of thinking pure forms through the imagination. To analyze the cave as the state and the men trapped at the bottom as prisoners sensitized beyond the ability to form concepts, and to view the philosopher as being 'above' the state, is an archaic notion. The cave dwellers may never have seen the light, but they have experienced laughter and sorrow, and birth and death, and these stir the souls of both prisoner and philosopher in all the same places. Socrates states that the prisoners are 'like us.' However, this does not merely apply to the universality of human experience. As A.S. Ferguson writes:

The phrase 'like us' must be made taken a little more specifically than of the 'human race at large.' May we not connect it more with a dominant idea in the *Republic*, that men are made like the men they live among and the community to which they belong?⁶

To save the prisoner from the state, we must employ those methods that we would see save us. To see this, we must kindle our imagination and make our reason flexible enough to deviate from its conventional path. We must set aside

³ Ibid., 614b-621d.

⁴ Ibid., 619b-d.

⁵ Ibid., 608d, 611b-c.

⁶ Ferguson, A.S. "Plato's Simile of Light. Part II. The Allegory of the Cave (Continued)," *The Classical Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (1922): 15-28.

the shadow of fiction and regard the thing itself as something to which employ reason for the sake of self-understanding. All fiction functions in the same basic principles, but it differs in its use. I am reminded of the motion picture called "Life is Beautiful," a fiction about a father in a concentration camp in Auschwitz who saves the innocence of his young son by transforming their entire experience into a simple game. *It is a race, the ones that make the most points win a real tank*, says the father to the son. The fiction, which dangerously incorporated comedy as only Roberto Benigni can deliver into this touchy subject, was more successful among holocaust veterans than "Schindler's List," which accurately portrayed the event of the holocaust in all its brutality. Meanwhile, a single suggestive scene in "Life is Beautiful," which left much to the imagination did more to create shock than all of the violence in "Schindler's List" combined! It was just enough and it pleased the Jewish veterans much more, for it portrayed the true human struggle as they remembered it; the moments of truth in their innocence and in their pain, all that which moved at the heart of the tragedy. In short, it uncovered a glimpse into the human soul. This is the kind of fiction that must be encouraged, for even the ones prone to sedation, are moved by its *soul*. This kind of fiction is like a spear that cuts through our conceptual barriers and pierces the soul, that we may at once become conscious of its existence within us. All at once those higher virtues become alive within us; strength, justice, compassion, virtue, courage, and love all become manifest in our deepest recesses, and for a moment, we *are* light.

II. SOUL: The Eternal Carrier of Truth

The flaw of the myth of *Er* concerns the nature of the soul before birth. The ancient Greeks linked the soul to reason and thus entitled it to all the flaws and limitations of discourse and perception. In the famous fiction, the soul still carries with it the impressions from the previous life and chooses the next life out of a great selection according to the impressions it carried over.⁷ The soul chooses that which it couldn't have in the previous life, often without reason: "In his folly and greed he chose it without adequate examination and didn't notice that, among other evils, he was fated to eat his own children as a part of it."⁸ Does the soul not return to its pure form after death? Does it not shed human faculties, those of the senses and of desires, when it sheds the body? Does it not encounter other pure forms, such as justice, virtue, honor, and love? Apart from the notion of the soul as still thinking and desiring, the story of *Er* resembles greatly the concept of Hindu reincarnation. The only essential difference between the myth of *Er* and the Hindu notion of reincarnation lies in the definitions of the soul. While Plato believes that the soul of man encompasses *logos*, the Hindu philosopher recognizes

7 Plato. *The Republic*, 620a-d.

8 *Ibid.*, 619b.

the *logos* as a faculty of humanity and not as eternal.⁹ The *logos* is eternal only insofar as humanity exists. If humanity were to suddenly extinguish itself, the *logos* would die with us, while our souls would move on. According to Socrates, however, the soul can be corrupted by injustice. He states:

Does any of these disintegrate and destroy the soul? Keep your wits about you, and let's not be deceived into thinking that when an unjust and foolish person is caught, he has been destroyed by injustice, which is evil in a soul. Let's think about it this way instead: Just as the body is worn out, destroyed, and brought to the point where it is a body no longer by disease, which is evil in a body, so all the things we mentioned just now reach the point at which they cease to be what they are through their own peculiar evil, which attaches itself to them and is present in them.¹⁰

In other words, just as disease destroys the body to the point where it no longer holds any semblance to a body and no longer carries out its relative functions, the soul can also be destroyed by injustice. To believe that the soul is actually corruptible by nature to the point of its own demise is like saying that truth can *become* untruth, when really it can only be concealed by it, the same way any precious object would accumulate dust if it were neglected for too long. The soul, neglected and forgotten, is like an orphan that wishes to return home to its mother and father. It is the soul in us that seeks, searches, longs and yearns for some greater truth, something higher and deeper than what the state makes readily available. If we search for it, then it stands to reason that some semblance of truth remains impressed in our remote memory. Do we not recognize truth when it crosses our path? Is it not like those spurs of Nietzsche cutting through the mud and muck of un-truth, piercing us with inscrutable certainty?¹¹ Yet, there are still those who would not recognize the truth if it walked right up to them and introduced itself, because they keep their eyes and ears tightly shut out of self-imposed apathy. They are those masochists who, deeming the world dark and unjust out of their own blindness, believe that the soul has become extinct. It is their blindness that does not allow them to see it, for they have pulled their own lids shut and stapled them there. These are the lamenters and complainers, whining everlastingly about the impossibility of justice. Out of their apathy they

9 See, e.g., Swami Venkatesananda, *Vasistha's Yoga* (New York: State University of New York Press 1993); *The Bhagavad Gita: A Walkthrough for Westerners* (Novato, California: New World Library, 2001).

10 Plato. *The Republic*, 609c. In the myth of *Er*, Plato says that all souls cross the river of forgetfulness before they come into this life and it is there that they forget the world beyond.

11 Derrida, Jacques. *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles. Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*. Translated by Barbara Harlow. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978). 55.

problematize even truth. In their misery, they pride themselves and call their calling noble and virtuous. When truly, they are as wicked as those politicians who close their eyes in the face of the suffering of the children of the world...but no! They are even worse, for they have plucked their own eyes out, stumbling dumbly around the cave, problematizing what they do not see. These are so useless that they need no chains, for they have chosen to be oblivious to the truth till the end of their days. It is in them that Soul and Reason sleep the deepest of all slumbers, awaiting patiently the death of the body.

III. LANGUAGE: The Spur

In the realm of the Idea of the Good, at the mouth of the cave, discussion is only possible because language there exists in its purest sense, un-tainted by individual perception or the manipulations of the state. The philosopher is also granted a better view, able to witness the entire marketplace from the mountaintop,¹² in a Nietzschean manner of speaking, illuminated by pure sunlight. The education of the prisoners in the cave cannot begin with “pure forms,” or with any manner of discussion that occurs in the realm of the Idea of the Good. The prisoner would not believe a man who tried to convince him that everything that he has lived up to that point is a lie.¹³ On the contrary, since the sophist education of the state would have taught the prisoner to fear anything other than prescription, the prisoners would be sooner inclined to kill the philosopher than to listen to anything he says. There have been numerous takes on the education of the prisoner of the state. According to A.S. Ferguson, “there is no gradual and decorous initiation step by step, but the violent conversion of a soul well-nigh lost in the City of Destruction.”¹⁴ It would, therefore, be better to start a bloody revolution against the state than to teach and lead the prisoner by the best means. Ferguson’s theory undermines the very foundation of Plato’s philosophical principle of the state. It is necessary to be a good man *and* a good citizen. Although the state functions to fill its own belly, the prisoner would yield his attention to the philosopher king only if he proved to be an exemplary citizen. Further, the prisoner would redirect his gaze toward the opening of the cave only if the philosopher king thinks, speaks, and acts in strict accordance to those higher values and ethics he has come to know in the purity of sunlight.

Socrates proposes that the uneducated citizen must be shown the light in order to understand.¹⁵ He describes the prisoner being physically dragged upward out of the cave by the philosophical educator. However, in turning toward the light, his eyes would need time to adjust. Socrates even says this in 516a:

12 Nietzsche. Nietzsche, Friedrich. “Thus Spoke Zarathustra” In *The Portable Nietzsche*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann. (New York: Viking Press. 1954), Part 1.

13 Plato. *The Republic*, 516a-b, 517d.

14 Ferguson, A.S. “Plato’s Simile of Light.”

15 Plato. *The Republic*, 518c-e, 519a-c.

“And when he came into the light, with the sun filling his eyes, wouldn’t he be unable to see a single of the things now said to be true?” The trick lies in proper education. If the prisoner has been educated correctly, then his vision has been properly re-directed toward the true source of all that is good and correct in the world. Language, however, is a tricky medium. In the cave it is used by those false friends as a means of virtually numbing the mind of the prisoner. If language were a pure medium, untainted by artistic and political interpretations, then the philosophical education of the prisoner would be simple. Since his education has been strictly tied to the motives of the state, his interpretation of language is limited to shadows. It is for this reason that the philosopher king must be able to speak the language of the prisoner in order to communicate the truth. The cave dwellers may never have seen the light, but they have experienced the same emotions and desires as those enlightened souls. It stands to reason then, that the same fictitious methods applied to keep the prisoner asleep can be used as potential triggers of truth. The fictitious myth of *Er* depicts souls in the world beyond as subject to greed and ignorance, even after having abandoned the body. When faced with nearly infinitude of lives to choose from, the first soul picked one that led him into misery. Socrates tells:

In his folly and greed he chose it without adequate examination and didn’t notice that, among other evils, he was fated to eat his own children as part of it. When he examined at leisure, the life he had chosen, however, he beat his breast and bemoaned his choice. And, ignoring the warning of the Speaker, he blamed chance, daimons, or guardian spirits, and everything else for these evils but himself. He was one of those who had come down from heaven, having lived his previous life under an orderly constitution, where he had participated in virtue through habit and without philosophy.¹⁶

Had he received a proper philosophical education, he might have been inclined to choose a life in line with those higher values that we associate with Light. Socrates’ mistake lies in depicting the Idea of the Good as something beyond our selves. If we are to find our own understanding, we must begin to search for the light within ourselves. It is when the philosopher has found the light within his own soul that he is able to distinguish between what is true and what is untrue, what is just and what is unjust. Only then does he become an exemplary citizen *and* man, and only then is he fit to rule his fellow men. If, however, this knowledge of the truth were based in the external world, the philosopher would still be subject to the darkness of the cave for he would not yet understand that without it, he could not look out and recognize the true light. Mere recognition

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 619 b-c.

is not enough. One must become incorruptible.

IV. STRUCTURE OF THE CAVE: Refuting Old Theory

The Cave is structured in such a way that the prisoners cannot see the existential layers that are behind them. While they sit, chained and sedated, the artists behind them imitate the truths in whichever way the state prescribes. The philosopher, who has somehow released himself of his bonds and ventured toward the light, has seen on his path, step-by-step, as though it were unfolding before him in layers, the mechanism of the state. He has seen the tricks of a false light play on the political consciousness of man, constricting his reality to moral falsity and artistic interpretations of the Idea of the Good. The nature of this gradual ascent has been accepted as what Ferguson deems the "ladder theory." In this common theory, the sensible world of the prisoner can evolve to what is true only through critical analysis. He states:

The former conceives the allegory to relate the sensible to the intelligible. The state of prisoners is merely opinion, which can be transformed into knowledge by a gradual critical process leading from the concrete to the ideal. Corresponding to these psychological stages, which are diversely explained, are grades of objects leading to the Good, although the upper and the lower parts are perfectly joined.¹⁷

In other words, the ladder theory would regard the machinery of the state as potential steps toward the Good. It overlooks that this machinery is an invention of the state and using it to gradually ascend still implies the subjectivity of the potential philosopher. In other words, the machinery is still necessary for the prisoner's ascent, and in Ferguson's view, the prisoner cannot be free of the state as long as he is subject to it. The transcendence of the prisoner from the chains of the state would have to happen through the destruction of the machine itself and not by gradual steps toward the light.

Another theory sees the prisoner killing the philosopher king out of mistrust.¹⁸ Because of the limitations of language, both in the cave and in the realm of philosophical discussion, the prisoners would not understand the words of the philosopher, and since the state has taught them to mistrust (or fear) anything other than prescription, they would be inclined to kill him. It is fear that drives one man to kill another in the cave. A state built on fear is not a peaceful state, but a state weakened by mistrust. If the philosopher is to bring prisoners into the light

¹⁷ Ferguson, A.S. "Plato's Simile of Light."

¹⁸ Gurley, Jennifer. "Platonic Paideia." *Philosophy and Literature* Vol. 23, Number 2 October 1999 pp. 351-377. 15 Oct 2008 http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/philosophy_and_literature/v023/23.2gurley.html>

he must believe that, once free, they will not be inclined to violence. It is therefore important, once the prisoner learns of the truth, that he places great value on acquiring the virtues of the good and that they not merely represent a fanciful freedom. If the Idea of the Good were simply a means of escape from the state, then the prisoner could never become enlightened. In the extraordinary event of contemplating the Idea of the Good for first time, the liberated would recognize that “fear of death” has ever been an invention of the state and nothing more.¹⁹ If, however, the prisoner regarded the realm of the good as previously described, as a fancy and not as something to become, then he would become intoxicated with the idea of it, and irrationally sacrifice anything else. He would become blind, like the prisoner who turned too rashly and hurt his eyes. His “fear” would be replaced by error. He would stumble, and babble, and preach, and he would be despised by everyone. Socrates, however, specifies that turning toward the light is the role of a proper philosophical education. He states that souls already possess sight and education is the means by which the sight is re-directed where it ought to look, but it isn’t enough to turn toward the light. If one wishes to see the truth, then he must journey to the mouth of the cave and turn again toward the darkness. Only then can he understand the significance of the state; the light can only be seen in respect to the darkness of the cave. The truth is in the second turning. In this way, the enlightened soul can move freely in all directions since, in turning, it has seen the good for what it truly is. The roles of the state, however, are not strictly tied to a single individual. Even in society, we play all roles. And these personas often act simultaneously without our awareness while we live. The ones who *think* they see the truth are often the ones who are told lies. And often, those who claim to be philosophers are still covered with the dirt, the shells and the seaweed from the ocean, and so we should take what they say as a symptom of their current condition and not as truth.²⁰ It is of these individuals we must be weary, the ones who preach truth without ever having seen truth. The ones who study ardently and spit out what they have read without taking the journey back into their own souls by doubting everything, absolutely everything that they *think* they know.

None of the theories previously mentioned are, however, conducive to the proper philosophical education of the prisoner in the cave: not the sudden destruction of the state nor the sudden turn of the prisoner at the hands of the philosopher. It might perhaps be better if the prisoner were led out of the cave backwards. Would it not be more reasonable to ask of him that on his journey toward the light he continue to face what is familiar? Each step past the machinery would be followed by the immediate realization of its function in relation to the cave, and the prisoner would learn to view the state in all its layers. It would be a less painful transition and a more reasonable one as well. The prisoner would feel

19 Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994. p.78. In the *Leviathan*, Hobbes states: “The passions that incline men to peace are fear of death.”

20 Plato. *The Republic*, 611d-e, 612.

more comfortable and more inclined to oblige the philosophical educator if the journey consisted of slowly backing away, while still facing what is familiar. The prisoner would slowly see the lie. Plato saw the realm of pure forms supersede the role that the senses hold on our understanding of the world around us. He doesn't even assign the senses any role of consequence. He would have the prisoner turn suddenly toward the light and become blinded. In remaining engrossed in the light one does not see it for what it is. So to understand what "light" is, one must recognize it first, nay, *study* it, in all its perversions.

V. ENLIGHTENMENT

It is impossible for an individual to live supremely in the realm of pure forms, separated from the subjective. To know the soul we must place it next to what it is not, for it is within the shell of the untruth of the world that it lives eternally. It is impossible to separate the soul from its covering lest it be in that world beyond this life, for it is through the many beautiful things that it moves and reaches out toward itself from subject to subject. One must not make the mistake of discarding evil and injustice from the study of the soul. Those things also play a part in concealing it and therefore, they must be studied and understood. Socrates states that "to see the soul as it is in truth, we must not study it as it is while it is maimed by its association with the body and other evils—which is what we were doing earlier—but as it is in its pure state, that's how we should study the soul, thoroughly and by means of logical reasoning."²¹ Again Plato places pure form above the tangible. Can anything be known as it is without virtue of its opposite? The philosopher becomes the prisoner when we assume to know what the soul would look like in its purest state. If we have not realized the light within our own souls, then our words are as tainted as those of the manipulations of the state and we would inevitably end up doing what we set out *not* to do: dissecting the "many beautiful things"²² in the world without ever understanding how the soul exists within them. Of what use is studying the soul in abstraction if we do not watch, hear, feel how it manifests in the world? I would rather be a poet, meandering through the reflections and colors and faces of the soul, for there are many who call themselves "philosophers" and believe their speech is pure and true, when in reality it is still covered with the body and the dirt of the world. Again, these are the ones we must be weary of, for they are like dark mystics, shrouding the light in their darkness and corrupting the potential philosophers that surround them with more un-truth. They are conniving and wicked in their thoughts. They claim to love wisdom, but never seek to learn it, for they believe that the study of philosophy is enough to grant them the view from the mouth of

21 Plato. *The Republic*, 611b.

22 Ibid., 476a-c. Plato speaks of those who "opine" as individuals lost in the beautiful objects in which beauty itself manifests, but who cannot perceive beauty in itself. And so, they are unable to know the truth.

the cave, when truly, their vision is as skewed as the prisoner at the very bottom of it, and philosophical scriptures have become their shadows. In their darkened sight, they sit themselves down at the bottom with the rest and make idols of their philosophers and fictions of their telling of wisdom. These ones are as dangerous as the most deceitful of artists and the greediest of politicians because they worship themselves as carriers of truth. They bring no truth, only clever lies, and in their extensive study they enchant others with them. These others in turn regard these wicked ones as superior of intelligence and wit, when truly they are as dim as the coals thrown by the fire. They speak of law and justice, yet they do nothing for the state or its prisoners. They only sit and read and recite what they have read and it is in the cleverness of the recitation, or rather, of the *regurgitation*, that they worship their wickedness and make competition with others who regurgitate well. The extent of their desire is to regurgitate well until the end of their days. These ones are not even at the bottom of the cave, but below it. Like the Underground Man,²³ they peer upward at the world through a crack in the cave floor and whisper their un-truth to the potential philosopher, and in this way, they keep him close to the ground and far from the light. Let us not make the error of mistaking these dry, cold, subterranean beings with those who have cultivated wisdom and virtue within their own selves, for these ones have realized the light within their souls and so they no longer stumble in darkness. These enlightened ones have realized the truth behind the lie, and so they are free even though they live within the state. They are the most exemplary of citizens and the truest of good men. These ones use the shadows as symbols to teach the truth, They understand that fiction has the potential to conjure the truth that existed within us even before our births and that somehow became forgotten in the currents of the river of forgetfulness.

To avoid being corrupted by these underground beings, we must ensure that public discussion leads to enlightenment. Enlightenment can only happen if those who have found their own understanding speak up and share their particular brand of wisdom, acquired from the direct experiential enquiry of the world. It requires the individual to believe that social molds can be broken. Public discussion that *does not* lead to enlightenment is the kind in which social molds are treated as stationary, or pre-ordained by nature. It is a kind that does not seek to change things and therefore, as it spirals deep into the mechanics of the state, it does not reach any useful answers, for the answers are found by applying *new theories* into the world. Far too long do reasonable individuals question stationary molds and speak long and hard without getting anywhere. Only an enlightened individual, who possesses the ability to believe in the higher nature of man, is capable of stirring public discussion toward a level of self-understanding, in which we *see* ourselves as we really are, and not as the shadows depict us.

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PHILOSOPHY IN RELATION TO DEATH: PLATO'S REOCCUPATION OF THE GREEK POETICO-RELIGIOUS TRADITION IN THE REPUBLIC

Jason Carter

The *prima facie* task of devising a central framework for the interpretation of Plato, even if one disregards the nature of Platonic dialectic, Socratic irony, or the nature of the Forms, becomes even more problematic if one takes into account the historical tradition of Plato's unwritten doctrine. This tradition asserts, in line with Plato's disputed *Seventh Letter*, that Plato's best and most explicit thoughts were not written down, but rather discussed orally at the Academy. The nature of the unwritten doctrine has often revolved around a novel interpretation of the "container" in which matter is originally placed as recounted in the *Timaeus*, or the nature of the One, and often the nature of the indefinite Dyad in the *Republic*; however, these interpretations do not account for Plato's fundamental motivations as a thinker.

In line with these attempts to discover the unwritten but overarching principle that motivates Plato's dialogues, I will instead offer an interpretation, which finds Plato attempting, in Hans Blumenberg's term, to "reoccupy" various positions or claims occupied by traditional religious and poetic thought.¹ This interpretation can be given substantial evidence through a close analysis of Plato's masterpiece *The Republic*, in which one can show that Plato seems to offer psychologically motivated positions or answers to these traditional problems rather than merely philosophical ones, which can be seen as the source of his enduring status in philosophical history.

The Republic begins with Socrates and Glaucon traveling "down to the Piraeus" to pray to the goddess Bendis, who is overseer of the underworld.² It is, affirming Eva Brann, a text that begins in a "'descent' to the land beyond," the realm of Hades.³ In affirming the interpretation of a descent into Hades as the first moment of the text, we understand that the first theme announced by Plato is that of *death*. Polemarchus and Cephalus are now introduced, rushing to Socrates to distract him from his and Glaucon's philosophic ascent to the City of the just

1 A deeper discussion of this concept can be found in: Hans Blumenberg, *Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, trans. Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983).

2 *The Republic*, 327a.

3 Eva Brann, *The Music of the Republic: Essays on Socrates' Conversations and Plato's Writings* (Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books), 2004.

soul.⁴ They are instead compelled to enter into the house of Cephalus, where we discover, contrary to our first opinion, that the parties involved are not quite in Hades, rather, they are in between worlds. Cephalus reports that he does not have “strength to travel easily to the City,” a reference, as we will later argue, to having a just soul that would lead him to the best afterlife. Socrates also affirms that the stage is not quite in Hades, for Cephalus is only on the “threshold” of death.⁵ They are in fact εἰς τόπον, in the “region” beyond the world, at the place recorded in the myth of Er as the place where souls are ascending and descending, called to their places by the judges of the world.⁶ It is here that the worry concerning death is introduced. Cephalus, having not yet been judged, says:

When someone begins to face the thought that he is going to die, there comes upon him a troubled fear about things that never used to worry him before. The stories told about the place of the dead, and how those who did injustice here must suffer justice there, were once ridiculous, but now they torture his soul for fear they may be true.⁷

In order to assuage this fear, Cephalus, speaking in the third person, says that one “begins to cast up accounts and consider whether he has ever done any injustice to anyone.”⁸ For, as Er reports at the end of the *Republic*, “the unjust they [the judges] ordered downward and to the left, with tokens on their back signifying all that they had done.”⁹

The fear of death is the primary and fundamental justification for uncovering the nature of justice, and explicitly so, both at the beginning and at the end of *The Republic*. There is connected to this a further problem. By all Greek religious accounts, both literary and poetic, the gods, though inextricably connected to the problem of death, not only do not offer a remedy for this fear, they antagonize it; for if they are unmercifully just, there may be condemnation for all men, but if capricious, as commonly recounted, they also hold the power to condemn the just and unjust alike. Thus, the problem having been set out, a central theme (of many monadic themes) of *The Republic* should be understood as Plato’s performance of what Hans Blumenberg would call a “reoccupation” of a Greek religious solution, which is to say that the *Republic* is best understood as attempting to fill in the vacant place of a religious idea which had become untenable and psychologically unbearable for Plato and perhaps much of the Greek populace, i.e., the story of the gods in their treatment of human souls at death. Plato’s solution, we will find,

4 *The Republic*, 327b.

5 *Ibid.*, 328d-e.

6 *Ibid.*, 613d.

7 *Ibid.*, 330e.

8 *Ibid.*, 330e.

9 *Ibid.*, 614c.

is to tell a story about philosophy bringing about a “well-ordered” soul, which may escape damnation and travail through the exercise and harmonization of its various psychic parts. Yet, this is only the first half of the traditional solution that Plato is attempting to reoccupy.

The fear of being punished at death for injustice Plato then temporarily lays aside in order to focus on the issue of the nature of the just man in Book II. Here, there is the introduction of what I will call the problem of the invisible in the story of the Ring of Gyges.¹⁰ If one were to have the power of being invisible, as Gyges did, would one be just or unjust? The image is powerful and tempting, resonating with concerns about our own natural “goodness” or “badness,” and inviting readers to dwell upon the possibility of acting out all their own fantasies without repercussion. However, since the gods are connected to the concern of justice, their existence must be dealt with in order to circumvent the charge that the wearer of the Ring of Gyges, though invisible, would still be able to be punished for his deeds, for, “surely,” as Socrates says, “it is possible neither to compel the gods nor to escape their notice.”¹¹ Adeimantus meets the challenge, saying that “if there are no gods, or if they have no concern for human affairs, we need not be concerned to escape their notice.”¹² As further support, even if their possible non-existence is not granted, Adeimantus reminds Socrates that one may argue that sacrificial propitiations and religious rites will cleanse them of their injustices before their judgment by the gods.¹³ Where, then, is the justification for being just?

The argument has subtly changed ground. We are no longer dealing with Cephalus’s fear of being punished by the gods for the injustices he may have wrought during life; now we are dealing with the *inability* of religious and mythological poetry to support this fear as an imperative to be just. We now have two central problems that Plato is dealing with in relation to death: the fear of the judgment of the gods in the afterlife and the concern that religious stories are not fearful enough, or, at the least, that they offer the possibility of non-punishment for an unjust life. On both sides of the problem, the solution is not to be found in religious writing or practice, no matter what its nature. It is here that the notion of reoccupation is to be applied.

Socrates’ first move is to introduce his own substitute for the *sight of the gods*, a sight which can see both the visible and the invisible, since this function is essential to the concern of being able to separate out a just from an unjust life. Moreover, the function that attempts to claim the just life as more beneficial, *through the incentive of avoiding punishment*, must also be held fast. Plato will argue for this new faculty of vision through the most brilliant and ambitious conjecture ever made in philosophy – the hypothesis of an intellect able to intuit

10 Ibid., 359d.

11 Ibid., 365e.

12 Ibid., 362d.

13 Ibid., 362b.

invisible structures unavailable to sensory intuition – on the basis that “some things are visible but not intelligible...but the Ideas again are intelligible but not visible.”¹⁴ The existence of this faculty is all the more believable since simple demonstrations such as the “summoner” three-finger example,¹⁵ though not a certain proof, nevertheless indicate the existence of the realm of the intelligible. As a fundamental justification for this hypothesis, the intellect is identified as the same faculty that attains to the objects of knowledge recognized in mathematics and geometry.¹⁶ With this mathematical justification in hand, Socrates’ faculty of intellect, or *διάνοια*, gains its most powerful philosophical status. Not only is this our psychic faculty for apprehending mathematical beings, it is also our mental sight-organ for seeing the whole of the permanent realm of *being and truth*. The incredible power that Plato will eventually extend to this faculty is here only hinted at, since Plato’s immediate concern in the *Republic* is only to find an adequate substitute for the all-seeing eye of the god, which is able to find evidence to condemn men for their injustices. This he finds in the hypothesis of the all-seeing eye of intellectual intuition, which can uncover, even in invisible soul, the truth concerning the wearer of the Ring of Gyges as to whether or not he is benefited by his injustice. This move is Plato’s first in the reoccupation of the problematic solution for distinguishing justice from injustice in Greek religious thought.

As for the second function, in which the moral injunction to do justice is contingent upon a belief in a judicial punishment of the soul *by the gods*, it finds its reoccupation in the function of the *punitive judgment* of intellectual intuition or sight concerning the unjust soul. The unjust soul *punishes itself* by choosing to live in unpleasant disharmony, a verdict reached near the end of Book IX.¹⁷

These solutions by themselves would be enough to merit respect for Plato. However, Plato is more ambitious. He has not dealt with the source of the psychologically unbearable and untenable religious solutions to the human concerns of death and justice. The *source* of man’s fear of the gods, and the source of the idea of beneficial *injustice*, he locates in one place – the style and content of religious poetry. This is, it should be noted, not original to Plato. A fragment from the play *Sisyphus*, written by the uncle of Plato (and one of the most infamous of the Thirty Tyrants), Critias, is one of our earliest examples of a criticism of the religious solution to being just. Critias says:

When the laws prevented men from open deeds of violence but they continued to commit them in secret, I believe that a man of shrewd and subtle mind invented for men the fear of the gods, so that there might be something to frighten the wicked even if they acted, spoke, or thought

14 Ibid., 507b.

15 Ibid., 523c.

16 Ibid., 524d-526c.

17 Ibid., 588a.

in secret. From this motive he introduced the conception of divinity.¹⁸

Considering the closeness in both time and familial relation of Critias to Plato, as well as Plato's insistence on a city's constitution as directly correlated to the individual's knowledge of justice, it is possible to argue that a criticism of Critiasian tyranny would also be a critique of the tyrant's concept of divinity in its connection to justice. This does not indicate much, however, and I will not press the point. Nevertheless, the fact that such an opinion concerning the nonexistence of the gods is even a possibility for someone like Critias in Plato's time is an indication that the traditional religious solution was already becoming untenable.

It is reasonable that Plato, having taken such criticisms to heart, desired to reform not just the unjust man but also the literature which is source of the unjust man's views (be they fearful, as Cephalus finds them, or unbelievable, as Critias does). We should beware of too hastily interpreting Plato, as is commonly done, as condemning poetry *as such* as a category of writing, a move which, if true, not only would make Plato himself at odds with his own literary and poetic modes, but would strike all those save the most unpoetic with justified revulsion. This accusation is simply not justified, or, at the least, it is very misleading. Plato's concerns with poetry are *initially and essentially* connected to what he deems to be *false descriptions of the gods*. It is a lie about the act of Uranus and his son Cronus that is "the first and greatest falsehood" and an "ugly lie," of matters that are "of utmost importance."¹⁹ Plato's justification for asserting that these stories are false is simple: such stories are neither beautiful nor true, and are therefore not healthy for the soul of the human being.²⁰ For this reason, even if they *were* true, they would be better "passed over in silence."²¹ Plato's move is extremely ambitious. He intends to remove what he sees as the pseudo-truths of religious poetry and in their place, on the basis of an *aesthetic experience*, assert a new pattern that teaches that fear of the gods is inhumane and that justice can be preserved on separate ontological and psychological grounds.

When this reoccupation has taken place in religious poetry, Plato seems to think that human fear of the afterlife will be able to be dealt with, since "those terrible and frightening names must also all be cast aside--the 'Wailing Rivers of Cocytus' and 'Hateful Streams of Styx'...and other names of this pattern which make all who hear them shudder."²² This casting out is justified as a consequence of the premise that "it is impossible for evils to derive from gods."²³ There will be no more stories of the horror of the afterlife, and there will be no more gods

18 *The Sophists*, 82 and 243.

19 *The Republic*, 377e-378a.

20 *Ibid.*, 457b.

21 *Ibid.*, 378a.

22 *Ibid.*, 387c.

23 *Ibid.*, 391d.

to fear, at least in connection to their capriciousness or unjustness. Religious poetry is called to account for the function that it has been abusing, namely, to guide the lives of human beings. Of course, we do not today by and large receive our knowledge of justice and the afterlife from Homer and the great poets and rhapsodes of antiquity, but it is essential that we understand, aside from its various mystery religions, that the Greeks did do so. Minimally, Plato seems to *consistently* assert that the Greeks of his time did receive their knowledge of justice and the afterlife from these sources, and a large portion of *The Republic* rests upon this assumption. “But suppose there are gods and they have care for us. *We know or have heard this from nowhere except the songs and genealogies of the poets.*”²⁴ For this reason, once this false divinity-related content is removed, Plato seems to think that religious poetry will be sufficiently reformed.²⁵

In performing this reoccupation, Plato is able to simultaneously give birth to a new vision for philosophy, affirm the benefits of justice, and *justify* religious poetry itself as able to provide hope for an afterlife. Philosophy and religion (once reformed) in the *Republic* are mutually reinforcing solutions to the same set of problems. Religion is supported by philosophy for Plato, because the gods are, literarily speaking, metaphors for (perhaps for Plato identical to) the Forms, which one may infer from the fact that Plato represents Socrates as affirming that all statements about divinity are also applicable to the Forms, and vice versa (which is the reason that qualities such as change, contradictory properties, or imperfection cannot be ascribed either to the gods or to the Forms).²⁶ In *The Republic*, there is in fact no division separating the identity of divine and philosophic entities, *nor divine and philosophic praxis*. These two realms of knowledge and activity are ultimately identical, since Plato finds their existence to be *unified* under a highest principle, which is that all human activities (including poetic writing concerning the gods and philosophic activity) are to mirror their activity according to the pattern of the Good, since, as Socrates says, “the god really is good.”²⁷ We have here in full Plato’s non-skeptical religious and philosophical harmony offered as a means to unburden human beings from their concerns over death while simultaneously compelling them to a life of virtue. What Plato offers to us and to those of his time is a radical philosophical theology.

The Republic ends with the astonishing and quite beautiful Myth of Er, on whose stage the story of the whole, through our hermeneutic, is taking place. It is here that we see Plato’s Form-theodicy most forcefully retold under the guise of myth, a myth which, for Plato’s solution to work, *is to be believed in*, even if many of its details are not certain. Why this myth is to be taken seriously as a statement

24 Ibid., 365e (italics mine).

25 For the purposes of this paper, I am leaving out a much more complicated discussion of Plato’s criticism of style, which is connected to the purpose of imitation and imitation’s connection to the pursuit of truth.

26 Ibid., 381a-d.

27 Ibid., 379a.

about the governance of the afterlife and various world-periods (much more seriously than the cave analogy) is the same as why the faculty of *διάνοια* is meant to be taken seriously: because it is *mathematically supported*. It is a strange fact that myths seem to become more believable when numerical determinacy, especially in the form of exact and large numbers, is added to essential moments in the story. To tell a story and say that the universe began “a long time ago, in ages past” has a remarkably different psychological effect than the assertion that the universe began “13.73 billion years ago.” Whether or not Plato had a secret harmonic or numerological reason for the numerical values attached to his spindles of necessity in the Myth of Er is not to circumvent this point. To add numerical determinacy to a mythical story is to bend one’s psychological motivation towards an assent of belief.

The Myth of Er, then, should be seen as the crowning achievement of *The Republic*. It is here that Plato’s fundamental solutions to the problems of his time – philosophic, poetic, and religious – are brought together. Moreover, it is here we are given a tentative and first exemplar of a fully “reformed” religious myth after having sufficiently banished the last remnants of the faulty poetico-religious tradition from the City. Though the Myth of Er is not quite given as a poem, it is nevertheless given as the standard of a literary pattern to be followed in all writing in that it follows all of Plato’s own literary stipulations for both form and content. It was never the case that Plato wished to banish *all* mythical-poetic writing from his City. Rather, such stories, when produced, were merely to follow the high standards defined by philosophical insight in reference to the nature of the divine realm in order that they might fulfill their function in guiding the lives of human beings in relation to virtue and the gods.²⁸ The essentiality of the Myth of Er to Plato’s philosophical solutions has even more justification when we notice that it is *only* here where, in no uncertain terms, the assertion of universal *access* to the just life is grounded. It is announced that “[n]o fate shall fall to you by lot: you shall choose a fate.”²⁹ And, even more strikingly, for the attainment of this just or unjust life, “God is not responsible.”³⁰ This choice of our own virtue, and therefore our final fate, is, as Socrates says, “the supreme risk for a man.”³¹ For this reason, Plato asserts that our destiny in the world beyond is determined

28 It is tempting to see Plato’s explanation for the banishment of certain types of poetry as merely the arrogant attempt to replace a perceived inferior form of writing with a higher form (i.e. philosophical prose), such as often happens in the history of art when new “movements” or “fashions” occur. I myself find it an interesting and tempting suggestion. However, it is a suggestion that I must reject, for it rests upon the assumption that Plato (not to mention Socrates) was more concerned with a narrowly conceived replacement of an art-form than he was with reforming men and providing solutions to human concerns. Given his active life in politics, I am more inclined to believe that Plato’s concerns are ultimately related to the praxis of man, not to the idea that a certain form of writing, as merely a literary art-form, is “better” than poetry.

29 *Ibid.*, 617d-e.

30 *Ibid.*, 617e.

31 *Ibid.*, 618b.

in this one by our own free pursuit of justice. Were this myth missing from *The Republic*, not only would the foundation of justice as universally accessible be missing, but also the essential parts of Plato's solutions to the problems of justice and the afterlife. For Plato, being just, while sufficient by itself as it benefits the soul in this world, is also *fundamentally a means* to a better afterlife. The two benefits simply cannot be separated, for if they were to be so, then Plato's original solution to the human concern of fearing death and the afterlife, and of being just while on earth, would be evacuated. While the afterlife for Plato is (perhaps metaphorically) only a "journey of a thousand years,"³² this does not undercut his central reasoning for being just, as it raises the possibility of eternal suffering as well both in future lives and in future afterlives.

Plato's reoccupation of the solution to the human concerns of death and justice should now be sufficiently understood. It remains only to comment on our initial and cryptic suggestion as to why Plato's philosophy is not available to philosophy today. This remark is not to say that we do not know what Plato really thought, rather, it is to say that we are in a historical place in which we can no longer believe him, as much as we may want to. We say of Plato's philosophy, along with Glaucon, "I think it is very hard to accept, though in another way hard to reject."³³ Modern philosophy was already forced to reoccupy the Platonic solutions discussed here through its various existentialisms, its elimination of the soul, and its' delimiting of the power of reason, which was extended far beyond its tolerable boundaries even in *The Republic*. Plato's solutions to the problems of his time rely upon the recognition that an account of the gods must be provided for in any Greek philosophical account concerning morality and death. Without this religious content, Platonic philosophy would not have accomplished its reoccupation of Greek religious thought. This reoccupation was in fact successful and is reflected in the massive historical acceptance of Christianity by the Greeks, a Christianity which had from its inception shown itself able to appropriate both Platonic and Neo-Platonic thought into its own self-understanding. Plato's "prelude to the song itself", in reference to the full seeing of the One and the Good, is perhaps, historically speaking, nothing but a laying of the ground of possibility for the introduction of monotheism to the Greeks. However, this historical impetus can no longer carry Plato in our post-Christian philosophical age. At least since the 20th century, philosophical concerns have been by and large divorced from religious ones, and for this reason modern philosophy can no longer accept the content of Plato's religious and philosophic solutions. However, the *functions* of Plato's solutions still operate with full force, even though they themselves have become reoccupied with new content. One can reasonably interpret, for instance, the religious function as operating with the content of some fundamental indeterminacy, be it Kant's *noumena*, Hegel's *Geist*, Husserl's transcendental ego,

32 Ibid., 621d.

33 Ibid., 532d.

Heidegger's *Sein*, continental philosophy's "real", or even analytic philosophy's realm of ideal propositions and numbers. These are the conjectures, which, for a moment, alleviate the psychological burden of seeking after, and once finding, holding on to, the determinate truth. The philosophic function of 'reason', as doubting the sensory in favor of an intellectual intuition is also tacitly at play in much contemporary philosophy, though again, it is still divorced from religious knowledge. However, Plato had a keen eye, and perhaps this is why he describes the Forms and the gods as images of one another. Perhaps, as we have attempted to show, Plato's unwritten doctrine is that philosophical solutions provide answers to religious questions, and that religious solutions provide answers to philosophic ones, for both perspectives have their origin and their ground in the experiences of human life itself, with all its concerns and difficulties.

They described their world to each other, one group weeping and wailing as they remembered how much they had suffered and seen in the journey beneath earth – it was a journey of a thousand years – while those from heaven described delights, and visions unsurpassed in beauty. - Plato (Rep., 615a)

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CONCERNING NATURAL LAW'S EXPLANATIONS AND CLAIMS OF AUTHORITY

Jared Culver

It is my project to explore Natural Law's explanatory power and to account for law's appeal to guiding ethical principles for authority. With this aim in mind, I will use a broad secular version of Natural Law sketched out in an outline by Dr. Norvin Richards. Natural Law must be able to adequately explain the laws and provide plausible authority to justify those laws. To do both of these, Natural Law attempts to provide a foundation of ethical principles. It is not my purpose to pursue how a certain set of ethical principles came to be, and thus I will assume from the outset for the sake of the Natural Law theorist that there exist out there some ethical principles that guide our lives and provide authority over our actions. After all, the real problem for a Natural Law theorist is the application, not the origin, of these principles. In application it will become clear that appeal to ethical principles cannot fully explain or justify law in many areas. As such, it fails at its goal.

We can begin with St. Thomas Aquinas and the matter of how we know ethical principles at all before we examine the outline given by Dr. Richards. This is fundamentally important for any understanding of Natural Law theory, including any potential criticisms of it. Aquinas writes in his *Summa Theologica* that "the natural law is something appointed by reason."¹ This will firmly settle any Natural Law theorist into holding the ethical principles to be knowable *a priori*. Aquinas sets up a logical framework for how we can know the Natural Law. He continues: "Any proposition is said to be self-evident in two ways: first, in itself; secondly, in relation to us. Hence it is that... certain axioms or propositions are universally self-evident to all; and such are those propositions whose terms are known to all."² Reason is a plausible vehicle for knowledge in any case, but especially so in the case of Natural Law. If there are ethical principles it would seem they must be abstract and outside of empirical investigation. There is a problem of agreement here. We could all disagree as to my exact weight, but all disagreement would pass away if I stepped on a scale, so long as we verified that the scale was accurate. Ethical principles are different in that they are abstract concepts. Aquinas claims that reason is equally available to all, but not equally known by all. The Natural

1 *The Summa Theologica*, Q: 94 A: 1.

2 *Ibid.*, Q: 94 A: 2.

Law is knowable in much the same fashion as the Law of Non-Contradiction. Logical syllogisms and self-evident truths cannot be disagreed upon save for lack of knowledge or use of knowledge. This is plausible. Notice, however, the restrictions of self-evident reason. Any critical reader of Descartes knows that such restrictions lead us to very few things we can know indubitably. How will these limits apply to the world? Can all that encompasses the broad phenomenon called law be found in reason and logic?

Now we can move to the secular version of Natural Law sketched by Dr. Richards. His outline begins with the broad assumption that ethical principles exist, guide our lives, and have authority over our actions. It is next understood that complex societies exist and that, as such, to figure out the exact requirements in each particular case will be impossible. It follows that a complex society requires an institution to work out the rules. It does not matter what type of institution and it does not matter how they make the rules, since the ethical principles will determine the authority and value of any law. The original assumption of ethical principles as the authoritative guide precludes the requirement of any institution. In fact, the only need for an institution at all is an appeal to practicality due to the complexity of most societies. This siren call for practicality informs the further point concerning laws that might not have an ethical foundation. If laws exist with no reference point to ethical principles, their authority will derive from the institution that makes the laws. At this point, two problems arise. Firstly, an institution guided by the ethical principles might not be the best guide for rules outside those principles. Some of the ethically neutral laws might be in highly technical fields of interest that might require special knowledge. Secondly, if our laws and institutions derive their authority by derivation from ethical principles, how do any rules outside that scope have authority at all? At this point the Natural Law theorist must posit some secondary authority. If the law derives its authority from ethical principles there can be no authoritative law outside those principles. One way to go about this is to introduce an auxiliary appeal to practicality as authority. In complex societies we need institutions to govern how we live using laws guided by ethical principles with authority to tell us how to live. Given that in complex societies there may be certain laws required that are ethically neutral, it is practical to allow the institution in place to make those. It would still be a secondary authority and much weaker than the original. While ethical principles would be objective and unchanging, the new, ethically neutral laws would rely on practicality, which is subjective and contingent. This authority would be very tenuous at best and leave us in the same trap of shadowy authority for law from which the Natural Law theorist was attempting to rescue us. For if a certain law would derive authority from practicality and practicality is subjective and contingent then the law would be subjective and contingent. Notice as well this requirement's retreat from the logic and reason of Aquinas. A law's measure would be taken in the world. Practicality can not be discovered in a syllogism. One could

also make the case that practicality is an ethical principle in and of itself. This move would require making practicality the only ethical principle. There is no way to square practicality away with other ethical principles for practicality would continuously undermine the others in any given situation. There would be no use for having ethical principles guiding our lives if there is one ethical principle that allows you to circumvent the others in certain cases.

This leads us to see how Natural Law theory's concrete claim of ethical principles does not succeed without introducing an auxiliary hypothesis. The claim that ethical principles provide authority for law was the central assumption which set Natural Law apart. In application we see that it is unable to account for the whole of law with its assumption. The problem of ethically neutral laws must be addressed. Laws about speed limits, using blinkers at turns, and which side of the highway one can drive on are arbitrary. With no reference point to ethical principles, the only appeal can be to practicality. It is simply practical to arrive at some set rules of the road to allow safe travel. You could not safely drive down the road if the side of the street you selected could easily be the same side chosen by a transfer truck coming from the opposite direction. It might be argued that such laws do have an ethical basis. These are safety precautions, after all, and we must be responsible with regard to the lives of others. By choosing to travel by car we place our lives in the hands of others and they in us, and so an ethical principle about respecting and protecting life applies much the same as it would for murder. This ignores the arbitrary nature brought up previously. We could switch the side of the road we drive on much, following the rules established in many European countries, and still be safe. We could raise or lower the speed limit (depending on one's opinion) and still safely navigate the road. It is impossible to suggest that these types of laws derive from ethical principles unless the ethical principles contain the same properties of flexibility, in which case they would fail to be an authoritative guide. If a law could conceivably be radically different than it is now and still serve the same purpose with the same authority then it is hard to fathom that law as being based on an ethical principle. Assuming it does derive from an ethical principle, it surely lacks the authority of the ethical principle if it could be radically different.

This arbitrary flexibility for ethically neutral laws goes further to technical sides of law. One specific example is copyright law. A Natural Law theorist could say that the ethical principles apply here as well. The ethical principle against theft applies to any taking of property, and this can just as easily be intellectual as physical property. However, the lines by which we decide what is copyrightable are arbitrary. In *Feist v. Rural* the Supreme Court ruled that a collection of facts is not copyrightable.³ This went against previous rulings to the contrary. Justice O'Connor writes that originality must be the measure, although she says it is

3 Supreme Court of the U.S., *Feist Publications Inc, v. Rural Tel. Service Co. No. 89-1909* (1991), <http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/scripts/getcase.pl?court=US&vol=499&invol=340>.

a minimum requirement. This in itself is an arbitrary requirement and casts aside the previous “sweat of the brow” requirement. It is difficult to imagine the ethical principle that would apply to these intricacies. Law is line drawing. Theft of intellectual property is not as easy to demarcate and demands a line be drawn. Before *Feist* the requirement for copyrightable material was one of work by a particular author or group. The work could be a collection of facts or an original work, so long as there was work. After *Feist* originality of content became a requirement superceding that of work put in. O’Connor acknowledges even the possibility of a compilation of facts still falling under her requirement of originality. And this is only the beginning of the complexity. For even in copyrightable material there are collections of facts that are not protected even if the overall work is copyrightable. O’Connor, citing past justices, also relies on past precedent to claim that copyright is not enforced to protect authors, but to promote art and science. To which ethical principle will this refer? It is not clear how the line being drawn in this instance could be tied to an ethical principle. Furthermore, if O’Connor and the Supreme Court are to be believed, we are simply promoting progress in art and science with copyright law, and it is hard to find an ethical principle for that premise. Only a pragmatic case for progress could be made in defense of this position. An ethical case for defense of a creator could be made against O’Connor. One could say that in principle we should protect the labor even in cases simply of collection of facts. If an author collects facts it is certainly laborious. Why should others enjoy the fruits of a fact collector’s labors without giving due credit to the original worker? This certainly seems like some kind of unlawful theft of another’s work. If it were so easy to collect facts then there would be no need to lift them from the original collector. It could further be argued that the collector of the facts did create the original list and it is not clear why this does not fit the originality requirement for O’Connor while a compiler’s work does. This is not a law working from a logical, self-evident syllogism; rather, it is a line drawn for the practical reason of promoting progress at the expense of some types of original work – namely, the tedious project of collecting facts. Where would an ethical principle draw the line? Natural Law is not a precise line drawer for the intricacies in the myriad complexities of technical law. The ethical principles will either be stretched beyond their limits or narrowed to such a point that the forest may be missed for the trees. Either way, they cannot be an instrument as the Natural Law theorist requires.

Finally, this problem of ethically neutral laws brings us the problem of explaining their authority and derivation. Outside of ethical principles their authority may simply exist in the ability to enforce them or, as the Richards outline suggests, in the practicality of allowing the ethically guided institution to make them. If the former is correct, Natural Law fails as an explanation because the justification would only be force. Anyone breaking the law would only be wrong insofar as she or he was caught or punished. The problematic matter of

practicality has already been illustrated. It is not clear if practicality is on par with ethical principles or if it is an ethical principle in and of itself. Either way, it is contingent and subjective, making it a poor guideline for the Natural Law theorist in his quest for authority and guidance in law. Now we can turn to the important matter of discovering how ethically neutral laws come to be laws. In the Yogi Berra sense, ethically neutral laws do not derive from ethical principles. Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. writes that “[t]he life of the law has not been logic: it has been experience.”⁴ He also writes that “there are a great many rules which are quite sufficiently accounted for by their manifest good sense, on the other, there are some which can be only understood by reference to the infancy of procedure among German tribes...”⁵ This will place law outside the Aquinas realm of reason. Law, for Holmes, is the work of experience, something akin to trial and error, prejudices of the particular time, and history of a particular people. To understand law, for Holmes, is to understand a myriad of things in the world at the time of the law. One will have to use reason, but reason alone will not solve the riddle of regulation. If one desires to know the reason behind a certain law in a certain land he or she will have to go to that world and discover the habits and prejudices of the natives. You will have to know their past precedents. You will have to know their geography and the special requirements of their society. If, for example, they are an agrarian society, their laws may be geared more toward crop protection and legislation than those of a hunter-gatherer culture. Holmes offers an account of arbitrary laws when he writes that “[t]he customs, beliefs, or needs of a primitive time establish a rule or formula. In the course of centuries the custom... disappears, but the rule remains.”⁶ This is a plausible explanation as to why some laws feel arbitrary. Not only will they actually be arbitrary, but the reason for their actual existence may have passed away long ago, leaving anyone unaware of the history of the law appropriately confused. “The very considerations which judges most rarely mention,” writes Holmes, “are the secret root from which the law draws all the juices of life. I mean, of course, considerations of what is expedient for the community concerned.”⁷ This can explain arbitrary laws. Natural Law is restricted in how it can explain laws. There must be a logical form followed from which laws are made and justified. This leaves out arbitrary laws even though they are staring one in the face. Holmes’ explanation is not restrictive and can plausibly explain any law. The process Holmes pointed out in terms of liability being rooted in revenge in primitive cultures explains what Natural Law theorists claim is a law governed by ethical principles discovered through reason. So Holmes can explain any law through his reasoning. His view has explanatory powers far superior to and can colligate the facts better than Natural Law theory. Recognizing law as something more than a product of reason simply explains more aptly the

4 Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., *The Common Law* (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 2004), 1.

5 *Ibid.*, 1.

6 *Ibid.*, 4.

7 *Ibid.*, 21.

intricacies of law. Of course, there still lies the problem of authority in law. The authority in law will be relative to the accord of the law to criterion listed above in what makes a law. This list includes, but is not limited to, a society's history, prejudices, and current needs. The Natural Law theorist can object, can claim that the arbitrary nature of this is insufficient to justify authority in law; however, he can be countered by his own culpability. For the explanation of authority given above is essentially an appeal to practicality. It is practical to appeal to a society's history, prejudice, and needs for authority of a particular law. This is the same practicality a Natural Law theorist would need as an auxiliary hypothesis or as a general ethical principle to explain their authority in law.

William of Occam's famous principle, later applied by Isaac Newton in his second rule for science in the *Principia*, should be applied here as well. Natural Law is guilty of multiplying entities in explanation of a phenomenon and failing to adequately explain all processes within the phenomenon. Natural Law is too restrictive to apply to law, as evidenced by the inability to explain many facets of said law. Positing ethical principles, while possibly true, does nothing to further an investigation into the nature of law in practice and should be delicately severed from the discussion.

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PROGRAM

ANAMNESIS
REMEMBERING OUR FUTURES

SIXTH ANNUAL NORTH GEORGIA
STUDENT PHILOSOPHY
CONFERENCE

Friday, April 3rd

11:00am - 11:30am	Registration and Refreshments
11:30am - 12:00pm	Opening Ceremonies
12:00pm - 1:30pm	Panel I: Cosmological Inquiries
1:30pm - 1:45pm	Break
1:45pm - 3:15pm	Panel II: Political Speculations
3:15pm - 3:30pm	Break
3:30pm - 4:40pm	Panel III: Social / Postmodern Considerations
4:40pm - 4:55pm	Break
4:55pm - 6:25pm	Panel IV: Definitions and Indefinitions of Humanity
6:30pm - 6:45pm	Break
7:30pm	Reconvence of <i>La Paroquilla</i> Restaurant for Dinner

Saturday, April 4th

8:30am - 9:00am	Registration and Refreshments
9:00am - 10:30am	Panel I: Virtue and Ethics
10:30am - 10:45am	Break
10:45am - 12:15pm	Keynote Address: <i>Ethics as Responsiveness: Some Theories from Japanese Philosophy</i> Dr. Thomas Kasulis, Ohio State University
12:15pm - 1:15pm	Lunch
1:30pm - 3:00pm	Panel II: Human Cultivations
3:00pm - 3:15pm	Break
3:15pm - 4:45pm	Panel III: Religious Sensitivities
4:45pm - 5:00pm	Break
5:00pm - 6:10pm	Panel IV: New Vantage Points and Perspectives
6:45pm - 7:20pm	Awards and Closing Remarks
8:00pm	Reception Off-Campus

2009 NGSPC Panels

Cosmological Inquiries

Peter Ahumada	<i>Modal Realism: Lewis' Little Worlds vs. Concept 51</i>
Noah Welsh	<i>Aristotelian Dynamics</i>
Benjamin W. McCraw	<i>Are All Theistic Arguments Circular?</i>

Political Speculations

Brandon Shaetter Avery	<i>Freedom and the Leader</i>
Mark Smits	<i>Unsanctifying Human Life for the Sake of the Lifeboat</i>
William David Hasek	<i>Invidious Coherencies: Davidson and Identity Politics</i>

Social / Postmodern Considerations

Christopher Eby	<i>Fanon Contra Foucault: Two Theories of Oppression in the Discourse of Postmodern Resistance</i>
Ryland Johnson	<i>Terror and Objective Intelligence</i>

Definitions and Indefinitions of Humanity

Benjamin Norris	<i>Nietzsche and Derrida Alone in a Room with Yellow Wallpaper</i>
Walter Clapp	<i>Partial Freedom and Probabilistic Determinism</i>
Rheet Greenfield	<i>Getting Clear About Human Nature</i>

Virtue and Ethics

Zachary Werkhoven	<i>The Unity of Virtue: A Contemporary Defense of Aristotle's View of Mutuality Reinforcing Moral Virtues</i>
Robert Jewell	<i>Impossible Man</i>
Jared Culver	<i>Concerning Natural Law's Explanations and Claims of Authority</i>

Human Cultivations

Stephanie Onofri	<i>The Return of the Philosopher King</i>
Jimmy Maners	<i>Aristotle on Friendship: The Importance of Friendship within the Flourishing Life</i>
Justin McDaniel	<i>Finding Free Will in Nietzsche</i>

Religious Sensitivities

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| Justin Downey | <i>Archetype as Creative Power:
Examining World-Meaningfulness with
C.G. Jung and Plotinus</i> |
| John G. Raymond | <i>Heidegger's Poet and Zen Buddhism</i> |
| Jason Carter | <i>Philosophy in Relation to Death:
Plato's Reoccupation of the Greek
Poetic-Religious Tradition in
The Republic</i> |

New Vantage Points and Perspectives

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| Cody Staton | <i>Enduring Self: A Metaphysics of
Bergsonian Intuition</i> |
| Taylor Adkins | <i>An Economy of Philosophical
Vocabularies: On Francois Laurelle's
Non-Philosophical Dictionary</i> |

Acknowledgements and Special Thanks

Art's Bagels and More (www.artsbagelsandmore.com)

for their generous contribution of Saturday's breakfast foods.

Ms. Tammy Ortagus

for her much appreciated efforts in helping to coordinate meal arrangements and more.

Mr. Mike Valdez

for his patience and support.

Dr. Joseph Johnson

of the Kennesaw State University faculty for his kind assistance.

