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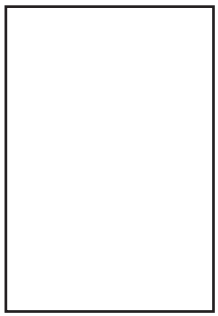
Contents

The Principle of Sufficient Reason and Free Will

ABSTRACT: I examine Leibniz's version of the Principle of Sufficient Reason with respect to free will, paying particular attention to Peter van Inwagen's argument that this principle leads to determinism. Ultimately I conclude that Leibniz's formulation is incompatible with free will. I then discuss a reformulation of the Principle of Sufficient Reason endorsed by Alexander Pruss that, I argue, manages to both retain the strength of Leibniz's formulation and remain consistent with free will.



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For many philosophers, the soundness of certain Cosmological arguments, particularly the Argument from Contingency, rises and falls with the Principle of Sufficient Reason. Therefore, if we wish to progress the debate over such arguments, an examination of this principle will prove beneficial. To be clear, I will not be offering a positive argument for the Principle of Sufficient Reason—rather I will assess whether or not this principle is consistent with our intuitions concerning free will.

For the purposes of this paper, I will presuppose the existence of free will. Therefore, if any principle can be shown to be logically incompatible with free will, it will be considered fallacious in some way and in need of revision. My attempt is to evaluate whether or not there is a formulation of the Principle of Sufficient Reason that is both strong enough to bolster Cosmological arguments and an epistemically viable option for philosophers who are committed to affirming free will. With this in mind, I will discuss an influential argument offered by Peter van Inwagen that claims that the Principle of Sufficient Reason entails determinism.

With respect to Van Inwagen's objection, I will argue two main points. First, I will demonstrate that the Principle of Sufficient Reason, as espoused by Leibniz, logically

entails determinism. Second, I will present a reformulation of the Principle of Sufficient Reason endorsed by Alexander Pruss. I will argue that this reformulation is logically compatible with free will and provides effectively the same support as Leibniz's Principle of Sufficient Reason for arguments in the field of philosophy of religion.

Leibniz's Principle of Sufficient Reason

In *The Monadology*, Leibniz lays out the Principle of Sufficient Reason as follows: "we hold that there can be no fact real or existing, no statement true, unless there be a sufficient reason why it should be so and not otherwise, although these reasons usually cannot be known by us."[1] Leibniz's Principle of Sufficient Reason (LPSR) is incompatible with the existence of brute facts—facts that have no explanation whatsoever; every true proposition must have a sufficient reason for why it is true. In order to get a full understanding of what LPSR entails we must unpack the term 'sufficient reason'.

Q is a sufficient reason for P if and only if Q explains why P is just so and not otherwise (keep in mind that Q may be a conjunct constructed of multiple propositions). Thus, no coherent question may be asked about why P is just so and not otherwise that is not already answered by Q—for then Q would require an additional proposition to explain P and Q would not be, by itself, a *sufficient* reason for P.

Note that Leibniz requires a sufficient reason to not only explain why a proposition is just so but also to explain why it is not otherwise. This second qualification implies that a sufficient reason explains more than why P *probably* happened, but rather why P *did* happen.

For example, imagine that there is a lottery with one million white balls and one green ball. When the lottery is conducted, a white ball is selected. It is not acceptable to say that the sufficient reason for the selection of a white ball, as opposed to a green ball, is that the odds of selecting a white ball were much higher. Although tremendous odds may have been in favor of one side, there remained a real possibility that a green ball could be selected, and therefore we have not, by referencing odds alone, answered fully why a white ball was selected as opposed to a green ball.

Jordan Howard Sobel notes, "A *sufficient reason* would not merely *incline to*, but would *necessitate*, what it would explain…Otherwise one could want a reason why it had operated to its full effect, since what only inclines leaves open the *possibility* that that to which it inclines should fail to take place."[2] There cannot be any question why P *actually* occurred (as opposed to why P *probably* occurred) given sufficient reason Q. Therefore, a sufficient reason, as defined by Leibniz, must *necessitate* what it explains.

It is clear from this conclusion that the entailment principle holds for LPSR. The entailment principle states that if Q explains P, then Q entails P. By 'entails' I mean that P is a logically necessary consequence of Q. Thus, we may say that Q serves as a deductive reason for P.[3] Furthermore, the terms 'sufficient reason'

1. Gottfried Wilhem Leibniz, *The Monadology* (New York: Forgotten Books, 1898), 32.
2. Jordan Howard Sobel, Logic and Theism: Arguments For and Against Beliefs in God (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 211.

and 'explanation' will be used interchangeably throughout this paper. Hence, saying that Q explains P is synonymous with saying that Q is the sufficient reason for P. With these considerations in mind, we may proceed to the objections offered against LPSR.

LPSR and Determinism

Many philosophers agree that LPSR is incompatible with free will. The debate between free will and determinism will not be entertained in this paper; rather, I will assume that any principle that eliminates free will is unacceptable. An argument to this end is typically presented in the form of a *reductio ad absurdum*, which assumes LPSR to be true and then proceeds to demonstrate how the principle entails determinism. Peter van Inwagen offers an influential argument of this nature. If Van Inwagen succeeds in demonstrating that LPSR is incompatible with free will, then we must reject LPSR.

Peter van Inwagen begins by making two claims about the nature of contingent propositions:

(1) A contingent proposition cannot explain itself.

(2) A contingent proposition cannot be explained by a necessary proposition.[4]

Remember that the exacting definition of sufficient reason in LPSR locks us into affirming the entailment principle. With this in mind, we can see that in order for a contingent proposition to explain itself, it must logically entail itself. However, if a proposition logically entails itself, then the proposition is not contingent, but necessary. Thus, (1) appears to be true.

In the same way, any proposition that is logically entailed by a necessary proposition is itself necessarily true. In other words, if a conclusion is deductively drawn from necessarily true premises, then the conclusion is necessarily true. Therefore, (2) is also true—no contingent proposition can be explained by a necessary proposition.

Having established this, Van Inwagen has us imagine that there is a Big Conjunctive Contingent Fact (BCCF) that is a conjunction of all true contingent propositions.[5] Bear in mind that every true contingent proposition is included in the BCCF and that the BCCF is itself contingent. Also, the sufficient reason for the BCCF must explain every part of the conjunct. According to LPSR, the BCCF must have such an explanation—let us call this explanation G. Now the question becomes, is G contingent or necessary?

It follows from (2) that G cannot be necessary, for no necessary proposition can explain a contingent proposition and the BCCF is by definition contingent. Therefore G must be a contingent proposition. However, if G is a contingent proposition, then it is a part of the BCCF. Since any explanation of the BCCF must explain every part of it, then G must explain itself.

This, however, is impossible according to (1), which states that no contingent proposition can explain itself. Hence, we are left with only two options: accept that the BCCF has no sufficient reason and LPSR is false, or conclude that the BCCF does not exist because there are

3. Ibid.
4. Peter van Inwagen, *An Essay on Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 202-204.
5. Ibid.

no contingent propositions and thus, eliminate free will. If we assume that banishing free will is unacceptable, then our only option is to admit that at least one proposition does not have a sufficient reason (as defined by Leibniz) and that LPSR is false.

This conclusion becomes clearer upon further examination. Remember that a sufficient reason under LPSR serves as a deductive reason for whatever it explains. The conclusion of a valid deductive argument may only be false if one of its premises is false. Thus, it is logically impossible for any conclusion that deductively follows from necessarily true premises to be false. This means that any proposition that is explained by necessary propositions is itself necessarily true.[6] It is impossible for contingent propositions—including those that describe free choices—to be explained by necessary propositions. Since an infinite regress of contingent propositions is incompatible with LPSR, the only alternative left is determinism.

To better understand how this argument affects the application of LPSR, I will elaborate on an example taken from Quentin Smith.[7] Smith asks us to examine the actual world, W. For our purposes, there is no relevant distinction between W and the BCCF discussed by van Inwagen—it is a maximal proposition containing all true conjuncts about the actual world. Bear in mind that in order for free will to exist, W must be contingent.

Now let us assume for the sake of argument that the sufficient reason for W is the proposition 'God creates W'. Is this proposition necessary or contingent? If 'God creates W' is necessary, then every part of W—including the choices of persons—is also necessary. Since this is unacceptably deterministic, we are committed to affirming that 'God creates W' is contingent. According to LPSR, we must now ask for an explanation of why God created W as opposed to some other world or no world at all.

It is clear that we will just end up applying the same reasoning over and over again. The explanation cannot be necessary, for then everything that follows from it must also be necessary, but if the explanation is contingent, then we must ask for yet another explanation. We may keep giving contingent explanations *ad infinitum*, but eventually we must either come to one that is necessary or admit that there is no further explanation. Even the existence of an infinite regress of explanations would require its own explanation under LPSR. Since it is unacceptable for us to end in a necessary proposition, LPSR must be false.

What remains of the Principle of Sufficient Reason?

We have just seen that LPSR entails determinism and is consequently unacceptable. However, must we now throw the Principle of Sufficient Reason out the window? The answer is no. There is a tremendous amount of inductive evidence to support some kind of Principle of Sufficient Reason.

In fact, one could argue that we have the largest amount of inductive evidence possible since no one has ever experienced anything that had no cause or explanation. Furthermore, the intuition that everything must have a cause or explanation is being constantly confirmed.

6. Sobel, 217.
7. Quentin Smith, "A Defense of A Principle of Sufficient Reason," *Metaphilosophy* 26, no. 1 & 2 (1995): 97-106.

Richard Taylor goes as far as to say that the Principle of Sufficient Reason is a presupposition of reason—it is something that "people, whether they ever reflect upon it or not, seem more or less to presuppose."[8] Given these factors, it is most reasonable to conclude that some formulation of the Principle of Sufficient Reason holds true, even if Leibniz's formulation clearly fails.

Rather than throwing out this principle completely, the best course of action is to reformulate LPSR into the strongest Principle of Sufficient Reason that does not lead to determinism. I will not argue in this paper that we should adopt this principle; instead, I will argue that there is a formulation of the Principle of Sufficient Reason that remains an epistemically viable option for those who are committed to affirming the existence of free will. Let us call this new formulation simply the Principle of Sufficient Reason (PSR).

Ideally, PSR would eliminate the possibility of brute facts. There are several weak versions of the Principle of Sufficient Reason that are compatible with brute facts but are still useful in arguments such as the Argument from Contingency and various Cosmological Arguments.[9] Many philosophers such as William Lane Craig[10], William Rowe[11], and Quentin Smith[12] have discussed such formulations. However, if we were able to achieve the elimination of brute facts along with the preservation of free will, we would have a formulation that, for all intents and purposes, carries the same weight as Leibniz's original formulation.

Alexander Pruss, in his book, The Principle of Sufficient Reason, offers one such formulation[13]:

(PSR) All contingent facts must have explanarions.

Pruss' formulation is like Leibniz's in that it requires every true proposition to have an explanation—a sufficient reason—for why it is so. However, a key component is absent from PSR that was present in LPSR, namely, the qualification that the sufficient reason must explain *why it is not otherwise*. Recall that this qualification is the reason why a sufficient reason under Leibniz must necessitate what it explains. Thus, the absence of such a requirement in Pruss' formulation means that there is a significant difference between what qualifies as a sufficient reason under PSR and LPSR.

While sufficient reason under LPSR may accurately be interpreted as a logically sufficient reason, Pruss' formulation uses the term in a much less demanding sense. Pruss explains, "*sufficient reason* needs to be understood not as 'necessitating reason' but as 'sufficient explanation,' where we understand that a causal account is always sufficiently explanatory, even when indeterministic."[14] Hence, if you have named the cause of the event, then you have sufficiently explained it.

With this new definition of 'sufficient reason' we may reexamine claims (1) and (2) of Van Inwagen's argument. Both of these claims are essential to the success of Van Inwagen's objection, therefore, if either claim is false for PSR,

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8. Richard Taylor, *Metaphysics* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1992).
9. Such formulations typically only require a sufficient reason *for the existence of any being* rather than a sufficient reason for *any positive fact whatsoever*.
10. William Lane Craig, "The Cosmological Argument," in *The Rationality of Theism*, ed, Paul Copan and Paul K. Moser (London: Routledge, 2003), 114-115.
11. William Rowe, "The Cosmological Argument," *Nous* 5, no. 1 (1971): 56.
12. Smith, "A Defense of a Principle of Sufficient Reason," 97-106.
13. Alexander R. Pruss, *The Principle of Sufficient Reason* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

the objection fails and PSR is compatible with free will. Although there is formidable reasoning for why we should reject both of these claims, ultimately it is only necessary that we reject one claim in order to adequately defend PSR.

The truth of (2)—a contingent proposition cannot be explained by a necessary proposition—is determined by whether or not we affirm the entailment principle, i.e. if Q explains P, then Q entails P. If the entailment principle holds, then in order for a necessary truth to explain a proposition, it would have to logically entail that proposition, and any proposition that is logically entailed by a necessary truth must itself be necessary. Thus, no contingent proposition may be explained by a necessary proposition. However, if we reject the entailment principle, then there is no reason why a contingent proposition may not be explained by a necessary proposition.

In order to reject the entailment principle for PSR we must provide an example of an explanation that serves as a satisfactory explanation under PSR *and* is indeterministic—an explanation in which Q explains P but the existence of Q is logically compatible with the non-existence of P. Examples of this nature are not difficult to find. For instance, having flipped the light switch is a satisfactory explanation for the lights turning on under PSR. However, we can certainly imagine a situation in which the light switch is flipped but the lights do not come on—perhaps there was no power or the light bulbs had burned out. This example is a situation in which Q (flipping the light switch) explains P (the lights come on) but the existence of Q (the switch is flipped) is compatible with the non-existence of P (the lights do not come on). This being the case, we may reject the entailment principle for PSR and consequently, reject (2).

The entailment principle also determines the truth of (1)—a contingent proposition cannot explain itself. The argument in support of (1) stated that in order for a proposition to explain itself, it must logically entail itself, but any proposition that logically entails itself is necessary. Therefore, no contingent proposition can explain itself. This line of reasoning clearly presupposes the entailment principle. As we have already seen, it is not necessary under PSR that an explanation entail what it explains, thus, a proposition may explain itself without logically entailing itself. Consequently, there does not appear to be any good reason why a contingent proposition cannot explain itself, given the less demanding definition of 'explanation' used for PSR. It is at least logically possible for a self-explanatory contingent proposition to exist.

Pruss offers an example of what he views to be a self-explanatory contingent proposition.[15] A proposition is self-explanatory when you cannot understand the proposition without also understanding the explanation for why it is true. Pruss argues that free actions in a Jamesian libertarian view are both contingent and self-explanatory in this sense. For instance, the proposition 'God freely chose A for R' fully explains why God freely chose A for R. The fact that God freely chose means that He was not forced to extend his will in one direction or another, but rather the He freely chose to extend his will in the direction of A. In this way, simply understanding the proposition 'God freely chose A for R' gives you enough information to determine the explanation of the proposition—namely, it was a free act on the part of God, and He freely chose to extend it in the direction of A.

14. Ibid, 185.
15. Ibid, 122-138.

Not every free action, however, qualifies as a self-explanatory contingent proposition. For example, take the proposition 'John freely chose A for R'. While we have an explanation for why John freely chose A for R in the fact that it was a free choice, the proposition is not fully self-explanatory.

In order to be a self-explanatory proposition there may be no fact about the proposition that is not already explained by the proposition itself. Asserted as a part of the proposition 'John freely chose A for R' is the fact 'John exists', and the explanation of this fact is not contained within the proposition 'John freely chose A for R'. Since John is a finite being, his existence is contingent and we must look outside of him—to his parents for example—to find the sufficient reason for his existence. The explanation for John's existence is not contained within the proposition 'John freely chose A for R'; therefore, the proposition is not self-explanatory.

At least one kind of proposition can bypass such problems, and that is the free action of a necessary being.[16] A necessary being exists in every possible world; therefore, the explanation of such a being's existence is contained within the concept of a necessary being. Given the traditional theistic conception of God as a necessary being, the fact 'God exists' is sufficiently explained by the proposition 'God freely chose A for R'—understood within the concept of God is His necessary existence. Through the free action of a necessary being, Pruss has provided us with an example of a self-explanatory contingent proposition and grounds for rejecting (1).

It appears we might have good reasons to find both claims (1) and (2) false for PSR. Bear in mind that it is only necessary to show that *either* (1) *or* (2) is false—not that both are false. As a result, it is reasonable to conclude that Van Inwagen's objection fails to show that PSR is incompatible with free will. I have not provided, nor tried to provide, an extensive positive case for why we should accept PSR. What I have tried to do is to demonstrate that PSR does not logically entail determinism. In this way, PSR—a considerably strong version of the Principle of Sufficient Reason, given that it eliminates the possibility of brute facts—remains a viable option for philosophers to consider.

The Significance of PSR

Contemporary discussions involving the Principle of Sufficient Reason are often found in the field of philosophy of religion. Specifically, the Principle of Sufficient Reason becomes applicable in various Cosmological arguments including the Argument from Contingency. The main significance of PSR as opposed to other formulations is that it remains strong enough to support arguments for the existence of God. Pruss explains, "as applied to the Big Conjunctive Contingent Fact…the principle shows the existence of a necessarily existing being that is the first cause."[17] Thus, we now have a formulation of the Principle of Sufficient Reason that is compatible with free will and still retains its value with respect to traditional arguments for the existence of God.

16. There is a heated debated between philosophers as to whether the concept of a necessary being is logically coherent. However, most agree that if it is *possible* for a necessary being to exist, then a necessary being *must* exist. Therefore, if it were the case that a necessary being made a free choice, the explanation of that being's existence could be a *priori* demonstrated from the very concept of the necessary being.
17. Ibid, 185.

Possibility, Novelty, and Creativity

ABSTRACT: This is a work in progress. I am trying to develop an account of possibility that is consistent with the changing world of our experience. Possibility is often viewed as something that has the same form as actuality, minus existence. Or it is taken that what a possibility is, is a (re)combination of the elements of actuality. Neither of these views of possibility can countenance radical novelty. Using Bergson and Whitehead, I begin to construct an account of possibility compatible with genuine novelty.

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The Problem

Genuine novelty is the introduction and creation of new things, relations, and affections in the world. Human experience constantly confronts us with novelty in surprising, intimate ways (spotting new freckles, a great cup of hot chocolate, budding flowers) and in more time-extended, sweeping ways (the invention of the automobile, the Little Ice Age, the development of *Homo sapiens*). Yet things are the same; the novel always contains what has already been as a component, but with some modification.

When doing metaphysics, I want to take this aspect of human experience seriously. I do not want to make the world of human experience secondary to some ineffable realm. Because our experience is an aspect of the real world, an account of novelty must acknowledge that the novel things that emerge in the course of events are *genuine*. That is, they are metaphysically significant and ontologically real. I want to construct a metaphysic that accommodates

pervasive change and novelty, one that accommodates radical novelty.

This is, however, a drastic change from much contemporary metaphysical work.[1] The way change is dealt with metaphysically often renders our most intimate interactions and feelings an unimportant component of reality, if it is considered at all. Thus, the reworking of many fundamental notions is required in order to make sense of the ideas of change and novelty.

One of these notions is possibility. Commonly held notions of possibility, such as an existence-less form (a possible object – a plaid apple, for example), or possibility as a rearrangement of the elements of actuality (taking what actually exists and putting it in new combinations – horse + horn = unicorn), drain all significance from the notion of novelty.

In this paper, I attempt to revise our notion of possibility using Bergson and Whitehead's ideas by creating a picture that does not entail possible objects, but allows for a creative actuality and radical novelty. This modified view of possibility will provide a basis for understanding higher, more complex and coordinated forms of novelty.

Possible as Less than the Actual

A common view of possibility takes the possible to be less than the actual. That is, the possible has the same detailed form as the actual, but is lacking a crucial element of concreteness – existence.These existence-less forms are *possibilia*, or possible objects.[2] For example, if it is possible for me to get my hair cut a certain way, that possible haircut remains in its peculiar state of ideal being until I do in fact get my hair cut that way. Then the possibility becomes an actuality.

There is a passage from the possible to the actual; everything actual was preceded by possibility. Existence sweeps forward and fills in forms. Because possibility is less than actuality, it is in some sense prior to actuality, and thus the capability exists, in principle, to know and examine possibilities long before they become actualities. Because novel features of new events are, in principle, knowable beforehand, the features are not novel-in-themselves.

If this is the case, what is novelty? Novelty in actuality could only be the actualization itself. If the form precedes its realization, what is novel about the realization other than the fact that it is now actual? Nothing is wrong with including the newness of existence as an aspect of novelty, but merely adding existence to a form does not capture the idea of genuine novelty. Both the strange stick figure I drew this morning and the invention of the digital camera would, in this view, be novel in the same way: they both now exist, and the fact of existence is the only aspect of novelty. If all novel things are novel in the same way, there is nothing really novel about them; the novelty of uniqueness immediately grows stale. If possibility is really less than the actual and simply filled in with existence, novelty is a sterile concept.

Something more is meant by novelty, however. The novelty of something is more than its mere existence; it is also fresh. There is the air of 'nothing has been quite like this' – it is the novelty

1. I am referring to roughly the last fifty or sixty years in the analytic tradition, including philosophers such as W.V.O. Quine, Saul Kripke, Roderick Chisholm, David Lewis, and so on, though issues concerning novelty and change have been around for much longer.

2. This characterization of possibility applies to talk about possible worlds. Possible worlds and the possibilia inhabiting them are existence-less forms. Even David Lewis's extreme realism about possible worlds fits in rather well here; in this

of vibrancy.[3] Bare existence does not capture this. The concreteness of this particular *occurrence* (existence) in the world must be appealed to, but to get to that point, this understanding of possibility must be rejected.

The Combinatorial View of Possibility

Combinatorialism is a theory of possibility that views the possible as less than the actual, but does not view possibilities as ideally preexistent. It takes the possible to be a rearrangement of what is actual.[4] If what is actual (real) in the world can be combined or recombined in some way – any way – that recombination is a possibility. There can be novel combinations—combinations that have not ever had an instantiation. Novel combinations add more than mere existence; through the newness of arrangement they add a quality of 'nothing is quite like this.'

In fact, every moment and alteration of objects and events heralds a novel combination. A particular handbag is the first and only handbag that is that particular combination of elements which is just like it is. Novel combinations abound in the world. Thus a combinatorial view of possibility seems to give us a doctrine of *pervasive genuine novelty*, or radical novelty.

Though leading toward explaining radical novelty, there are some shortfalls in combinatorialism. Because possibility is defined in terms of actuality, it is not possible for new actuality to exist. Indeed, in this view, actuality takes on many of the characteristics of Parmenidean *being*: what is actual now is what was actual before and what will be actual later. Only arrangement changes.

This denies full actuality to things-in-combination, like desks and apples, which constitute the entirety of our experienced lives. Thus possibility is still less than actuality, and the critiques of ideally preexistent possibility (predictability, immediate staleness, etc.) will apply as well, though perhaps in slightly modified forms.

In addition, an aspect of a strong doctrine of metaphysical novelty (radical novelty) is that new actualities come into existence; ontology itself changes. Combinatorial possibility holds that there is some ontological level that does not change but merely shifts, and this level takes the name actuality. Thus, novelty only appears at the levels in which the elements of actuality are rearranged. Combinatorial possibility gives us a notion of novelty for experience, but at the expense of the reality of our experienced world. This makes novelty superficial. For a deep, radical novelty, we must find a different model of possibility, keeping in mind the insights of the combinatorial view.

Possible as More than the Actual

If possibility were to have ideal form preceding reality, the possible would have existed through all time, awaiting its realization, allowing itself to be foreseen, and thus extinguishing any life in the notion of novelty. Henri Bergson believes

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3. Nicholas Rescher, *Process Metaphysics: An Introduction to Process Philosophy* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996): 75.
4. cf. D.M. Armstrong, *A Combinatorial Theory of Possibility* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

that speaking of possibility as a form without concrete existence involves a fundamental conflation of two distinct senses of possibility. In one sense, possibility is less than and precedes actuality only in the sense that some event is not-impossible.[5] Something is not impossible if there is no contradiction in it occurring. This is a negative statement and attributes no definite form to what is possible, but merely gives a condition for realization. Though the combinatorial theory of possibility falls short of accommodating novelty, it gives an insightful image of what we can conceptualize as non-impossibilities.

Possibility as an ideal form, on the other hand, actually presupposes actuality and adds to it; it is actuality in its every detail plus the mental act of recognizing it. As such, it cannot come prior to actuality. By conflating possibility as 'not-impossible' and possibility as 'ideal form or *possibilia*', one can arrive at the conclusion that *possibilia* have all the descriptive characteristics of actuality and can be predicted or known before occurring.

Think for a moment about *Hamlet*. For that exact play to be possible, Shakespeare himself is needed in the exact circumstances under which the play was written. The details are of supreme importance. For *Hamlet* to have taken on the character it did, the person writing it must have thought, felt, and experienced what Shakespeare did; that is, Shakespeare and his society are necessary, as are the conditions for that society, *et cetera*. Every bit of the actuality of *Hamlet* and the actuality it presupposes must be contained within the ideal form of *Hamlet*. Thus the possibility of *Hamlet*, taken as an ideal possibility, requires the existence of *Hamlet*.[6] To characterize *Hamlet* in all its detail would be to invent it. If such a characterization existed prior to Shakespeare's writing *Hamlet*, if Shakespeare merely recognized the "*Hamlet*-form", Shakespeare did not really invent *Hamlet*. The novelty of *Hamlet* is lost, as is Shakespeare's creative genius.

Bearing the above in mind, to preserve novelty, we must hold that the possible precedes the actual only if possible is taken to mean not-impossible. Possibility as an ideal form occurs retroactively to actuality. This reworking of the idea of possibility has created space for an account of novelty.

The novel still has conditions, however. The first is that what is novel is, at the time of its actualization, not impossible; that is, the actuality of what does exist cannot conspire against the coming into being of the novel thing. It is necessary for novelty to be not-impossible, but is that sufficient? At first blush, no. In a deeper sense, however, it is; more must be extracted from the notion of not-impossible.

Conditions of Novelty

The notion of radical novelty, if true, entails that novelty is continuously produced throughout the universe. Every new moment of existence is radically novel, an extension of the past, mixed with new and unforeseen flavors. Though it is an incomplete order, there is an order underlying the pulse of the universe. If something radically

5. Henri Bergson, "The Possible and the Real," in *Key Writings: Henri Bergson*, ed. Kieth Ansell Pearson and John Mullarkey, 223-232 (New York: Continuum, 2002): 230.
6. Ibid: 230 (including the *Hamlet* example).

new is, prior to its actualization, something simply not-impossible, what carries forward recognizable order into the future? If every moment of existence contains a radically new element and there are no conditions on this element other than its non-impossibility, what keeps the undeniable pattern of events from swerving wildly and completely?

Something being not-impossible assures a limited accord with the past. On the face of it (taking into account only contemporaneous occasions of actuality), the sudden and rapid degeneration of a hunk of gold into powder does not seem impossible – there are no physical impediments, and so on—but that occurrence fails to take into account the propagation of modes of order throughout successive occasions of existence.

The weight of the past bears on the possibility (non-impossibility) of the future. For this to be the case, a definite transmission of affective force from present existence to future existence is required.[7] The affective forces of an occasion of existence are those elements that are felt by consequent occasions of existence. The parts of an existence that are transmitted from past to future are the dominant features of the experience of that existence. An experience is comprised of elements that have some effect, or alter the character of, the experiencer. It is components of the experience that are transferred, not the experience itself; it is the power of an element in experience that is transferred. An occasion of existence that is affected by an affective force is different than it would have been otherwise.

The basic character of the future is the character given by the present, and thus the past. The modifications to this character are a result of the introduction of radically novel elements. However, the modifications must not be excluded by the current characteristics dominant in actuality, including modifications dominant for a stretch of actuality.

There is a major objection to this line of thought; it commits itself to saying that novelty issues from nothingness (*ex nihilo*). This is absurd, even if it is correct that the weight of actuality sets exclusion conditions on novelty. Novelty obviously cannot come from 'the weight of actuality'; novelty is supposed to introduce foreign elements into actuality, and actuality cannot provide what it does not have. Novelty also cannot derive from a formed possibility, as in exists only after and in virtue of the fullness of actuality. If the actual cannot beget the novel, and if possibility in any strong or ideal sense is a consequent, not an antecedent, of actuality, then novelty must come from nothing.

Novelty, or what is called novelty, seems to require some measure of conformity to the past, but how can we actuality place limits on *nothing*? Even if something could come from nothing, there is no reason why limits or conditions could be placed on such a something – it is generated completely external to actuality and its influence. Thus novelty *ex nihilo* would have no regard for any order, and this is clearly not something that can be said of everything, possibly anything, radical novelty is intended to apply to.

This objection may seem intractable, but it turns on a muddled notion of 'nothing'. By clarifying the notion of nothing, the seeming impossibility

7. For example, consider a glass resting on a table; throughout successive moments it continues to sit on the table because the table contributes a force to that glass's experiences, so it does not move downward.

of the emergence of novelty ex nihilo and the influence of actuality on such nothingness will vanish.

Nothing as Everything

Similar to the confusion between two distinct senses of possibility, there is confusion between two distinct senses of nothing. The first, most basic way of using the word 'nothing' means 'the absence of what we are seeking.' The other sense of 'nothing' means, roughly, 'absolute emptiness.' We do not experience absolute emptiness, however. There are always limitations and contours. Emptiness, as we experience it, is a substitution of one thing for another (a 'ring' for 'some air'), with the suppression of one end of the substitution. This is the only way we mean emptiness. Absolute emptiness is a universal substitution and suppression of all the elements of our experience. As Henri Bergson put it:

> In other words, this so-called representation of absolute emptiness is, in reality, that of universal fullness in a mind which leaps indefinitely from part to part, with the fixed resolution never to consider anything but the emptiness of its dissatisfaction instead of the fullness of things. All of which amounts to saying that the idea of Nothing, when it is not that of a single word, implies as much matter as the idea of All, with, in addition, an operation of thought.[8]

When considering emptiness, we seek nothing and are satisfied by nothing, turning a blind eye to everything. We think we know what absolute emptiness could be, but ignore the fact that simply through *considering* we consider something, thus ignoring the "fullness of things" which confronts us.[9] Thus, like the notion of possibility, the notion of nothingness itself contains the whole of actuality with the addition of a particular mode of thought.

These considerations wholly alter the criticism leveled against creation ex nihilo. Creation ex nihilo is really creation ex omnibus; it is creation from everything. The entire universe is conspiring, in its way, to the creation of every fact of existence. But phrasing it creation ex nihilo still bears a purpose. The most salient feature of creation, captured by the word 'nothing' is its indeterminacy—its impenetrability to perfect foresight or complete characterization.

'Nothing' also captures the reach beyond actuality better than 'everything.' That which is indeterminate must lie beyond established fact. Thus the reach is beyond actuality. Novelty is an issue of the universe's creative process, from which it pulls new affective elements into determination. One cannot 'see' or determine precisely from whence novelty springs. Novelty is issued from the infinitude of everything, overwhelming and yet indeterminate, yielding it the name nothing.

We could leave it here, saying that novelty is the result of the universe's mutual determination of some indeterminacy. But a person could still ask: What is 'everything' such that it leaps beyond actuality into indeterminacy? By affirming indeterminacy as an aspect of

8. Bergson, "The Possible and the Real": 229-30.

9. c.f. Malebranche: "To think of nothing and not to think at all, to perceive nothing and not to perceive at all, are the same thing."
Nicholas Malebranche, *Dialogue between a Christian Philosopher and a Chinese Philosopher on the Existence and Nature of God*, trans. Dominick A. Iorio (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1980): 67.

everything, it is something, not nothing (which seems merely to indicate the ineffable character of the indeterminate). Leaving a description of the indeterminate as simply, 'that which is not impossible' seems like premature mysticism.

But the indeterminate *is* 'that which is not impossible', provided it is understood the right way. There is only so far one can probe the character of the genuinely indeterminate, 'that which is not impossible.' As a preliminary step, Alfred North Whitehead's doctrine of Eternal Objects can be viewed as a positive partial rendering of creation *ex nihilo*.

The Indeterminate: Eternal Objects

To best describe how eternal objects can be viewed as the indeterminate source of novelty, a better idea is needed of what an eternal object is. Reference to objects involves "reference to a realm of entities which transcend that immediate occasion in that they have analogous or different connections with other occasions of experience."[10] Thus, an object is that which can recur in separate occasions of experience.

What defines an object and gives it its character is the affective tone[11] that it contributes to the overall occasion of experience. The more abstract one gets in isolating these contributions of affective tone, the broader the perceived potential connection with other occasions of experience. 'Rug' is more abstract and thus more broadly applicable than 'green rug next to the desk'. This realm of abstracted objects capable of broad ingression into occasions of experience can be termed the realm of eternal objects, or ideal entities.

This realm can also be characterized as potentialities for actuality. The realm of ideal entities is infinitely large – there is nowhere actuality cannot go, that creativity cannot reach This infinitude is the indeterminacy. It is the indeterminateness of specific realizations of these ideal entities that keep these possibilities from being ideally pre-existent; that is, no specific arrangement of eternal objects exists prior to actualization. When something happens, it is new. How indeterminacy accomplishes this and how the realm of ideal entities is indeterminate will soon become clearer.

First, ideal entities are indeterminate due to their necessary reference beyond themselves. They are possibilities for actuality, so they necessarily refer to definite actualities. Also, they do not ingress into actuality singly; ideal entities are related to all other ideal entities based on potentiality of joined realization. The relations an ideal entity bears to other ideal entities and to occasions of actuality are parts of its essence, as is the peculiar character of that ideal entity. The way 'red' stands in regard to other ideal entities and to realizations of actuality are part of its essence, as is the affective tone peculiar to it.[12] Because ideal entities are infinite, one can not give an exhaustive account of the essence of 'red.'

There is always the ingression of some hierarchical set of ideal entities into a new occasion of actuality. The sets, and thus the hierarchies, are

10. Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1925): 227.
11. An affective tone is similar to an affective force, described earlier. The affective tone of an object or an occasion of experience is the set of affective forces it contributes to other occasions of experience.
12. These two aspects seem to be co-determined.

undetermined prior to ingression, e.g. unformed. Formation occurs during actualization, so the realm of ideal entities is indeterminate as to what complex affective tone ingresses into occasions of experience. When Whitehead calls the realm of ideal entities "numberless"[13], he means both that its membership is infinite, and that it is indeterminate and thus uncountable and able to be referred to only as a whole, that the realm of ideal entities is both a multiplicity and a unity.

The realm of ideal entities could be thought of as a membrane with knots of affective energy. There is no definite structure to the membrane prior to actualization. In actualization, the ideal entities are graded with respect to their relevance and contribution to that occasion, forming the hierarchical structure of the set of ideal entities.[14] Thereby, the realm of ideal entities is a 'something' in 'everything,' but is 'nothing' until its ingression into actuality.

Therefore possibility in the form of ideal entities has genuine 'universal fullness' while retaining indeterminacy prior to actualization. It is in the creation of definiteness out of infinitude – in the process of actualization – where novelty can be found.

Novelty: The Issue of Infinitude

During the process of actualization, the weight of the past and its transmission of affective character determines what is not-impossible for the new occasion. This is an initial limitation on what set of ideal entities can ingress into that occasion; there must be some conformity with the prevailing affective tone. The definite set that ingresses into the new actuality is novel. It is a novel, complex affective tone, and it is one that did not exist prior to its ingression.

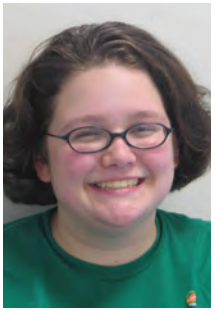
This novel tone interacts with the old tone, generating a third, novel tone at the perishing of that occasion of existence. Thus, what is novel is a new affective tone of experience. From this, it follows that every occasion of existence is novel. Each is created in the process whereby new sets of ideal entities merge with the old; radical novelty is every moment of existence. From the infinitude of ideal entities, novelty is produced due to a generation of finitude from the infinite. A novel finite determination is created from what exists in infinitude. Actuality is this finitude; its definiteness generates the individuality requisite for the agglomeration of affective experience.

It has been shown that the notion of possibility, properly construed, can cohere with the doctrine of perpetual radical novelty. The creative advance of nature does not need to be relegated to a lesser order of reality, and this is important for any attempt at a comprehensive and meaningful metaphysic.

13. Alfred North Whitehead, *Modes of Thought* (New York: The Free Press, 1968): 167.
14. Gradation of ideal entities refers to the hierarchical ordering of ideal entities based on the contribution they make to the character of an occasion of experience. The more an ideal entity contributes of its character, the higher it sits in the hierarchy. This captures the idea that some ideal entities are a more salient fact in some occasions of experience than in others; some experiences are much more 'red' (or 'bright,' or 'joyous'…) than others.

Population Control: Financial Incentives, Freedom and the Question of Coercion

ABSTRACT: The planet's swiftly growing population coupled with the lack of food security and the degradation of natural resources has caused many demographers to worry about the ramifications of unchecked population growth while many philosophers worry about the ethical issues surrounding the methods of population control. Therefore, I intend to argue a system of encouraging a decrease in personal fertility rate via financial incentives offers a solution that is both viable and not morally reprehensible.



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Introduction

As the global population climbs swiftly toward seven billion, concerns have risen regarding whether the planet can healthily sustain an ever-increasing population—and for good reason. From an environmental perspective, the earth simply cannot support the burgeoning numbers. This can be perceived when one considers the lasting effects of the Green Revolution; methods that have succeeded in creating the food surplus that the planet and its inhabitants enjoy have also succeeded in degrading many natural systems to a point at which it is no longer certain if they will recover, or will even continue to produce the food the world depends on at current levels into a foreseeable future.[1]

Emboldened by this odious fact and others, many have set out to formulate an ideal method to curb population growth. Those who advocate population control fall into two camps: doomsdayers and cautious optimists. Doomsdayers like Garrett Hardin advocate strict social sanctions on procreative rights. Though intended to end the population crisis with an urgency well suited to its namesake, these limitations on personal freedoms bother more people than just the average libertarian. Furthermore, aggressive and coercive strategies

1. Paul Roberts, *The End of Food* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2008), xxi.

of population control tend not to pan out in the long run, as those repressed try to assert their freedoms and skirt the policies.[2]

At the other end of the spectrum lie the cautious optimists such as philosopher Clark Wolf, who seek to curb population growth while maintaining personal freedoms through the use of social incentives, such as educational and economic opportunities and an increase in social security. Although this option may seem like a reasonable solution, experience shows that relying strictly on voluntary methods has been only minimally successful and slow going, especially when the preferred family size remains higher than the necessary replacement rate.[3]

Therefore, I intend to argue for a solution that is a compromise between these two extremes: using financial incentives to encourage a decrease in fertility, making smaller families more appealing, and increasing social programs. As a method of population control, this solution ensures individual freedoms while achieving the desired goal of population stabilization or even decrease.

Financial Incentives

As Bernard Berelson has remarked, money proves to be a very powerful motivator.[4] In the realm of population control, money can be used as motivation in a variety of ways. Therefore, what is intended by my use of the phrase "financial incentives" needs to be clarified. Traditionally, the most common kind of financial incentives used in family planning programs have been small payments, often one time, to persons who undergo sterilization or choose to participate in some other form of birth control.[5] These are not the type of financial incentives I intend to recommend.

Rather, I think financial incentives in the form of income tax credits for individuals who choose to limit their family size, or incentives in the broader category of those which improve welfare both on an individual and community level, would be a better motivation to curb family size. In theory, both types of incentives serve to use money as a motivator to make small families ideal. The income tax credit incentive would achieve this end by transforming the current pro-natalist tax system to one that is more neutral.[6] This could be accomplished by offering a credit for the first, or even second, child but by cancelling credits for children that exceed this number.

Although this form of income tax credit incentive would be more applicable in the highly structured tax systems that exist in the West, the second form of incentives—those that are welfare oriented— exist in a variety of forms in both developing and more developed countries. The 1960s and 1970s saw an increase in population control programs, many of which utilized monetary incentives, especially of the latter form discussed above.

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2. Clark Wolf, "Population and the Environment," in *Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application*, ed. Louis P. Pojman and Paul Pojman (Belmont: Thomson Wadsworth, 2008), 439.
3. Garret Hardin, "2. Multiple Paths to Population Control," *Family Planning Perspectives* 2.3 (1970): 26.
4. Bernard Berelson, "An Evaluation of the Effects of Population Control Programs," Studies in Family Planning 5.1 (1974): 2.
5. Judith Jacobsen, *Promoting Population Stabilization: Incentives for Small Families* (Washington: Worldwatch Institute, 1983), 7.
6. Edward Pohlman, *Incentives and Compensations in Birth Planning* (Chapel Hill: Carolina Population Center, 1971), 48.

Two programs in developing countries, the "Taiwan Educational Bond Scheme" and the "Tamil Nadu Tea Estate Program," proved to be both successful and improve welfare, although this welfare was directed more toward the individual families participating in the program rather than society as a whole. Both programs involved setting up a savings account for families or women enrolled, and continuance in the program was dependent on their reduced fertility.

For Taiwanese parents, the account, which was intended to pay for the education of two children through high school, would be halved upon the birth of a third child and cancelled if a fourth child was born. In Tamil Nadu, the account would be forfeited upon the birth of a fifth child. Even with these severe penalties, both programs were successful. In Taiwan, 75% of eligible women enrolled and contraception practice rose from 19 to 31%. In the first ten months of the Tamil Nadu program only two pregnancies were reported of the 90% of eligible women who chose to participate.[7]

One example of such a program in a Western nation, the United States, was the "Children's Opportunity Money and Environment" ("COME") program. With regard to the "COME" program, the government would use money not spent on children because a family had limited its size in allocations that would benefit those adults who chose not be parents. The cost of such incentives for the government and society is minimal when compared to the money saved per woman choosing not to have a child: in 1965 North Carolina, an average "avoided birth" would save society around $3,187.[8]

Not only do programs like "COME" help encourage a decrease in fertility rates, they save society money, which can be used to fund other things, such as social programs. In the "Taiwan Educational Bond Scheme" and the "Tamil Nadu Tea Estate Program," this money is not given to the state, but is instead given directly to the citizen with the intent to improve welfare. This illustrated especially well through the Taiwanese program which was meant to increase educational opportunities for future generations.

Further, according to Judith Jacobsen, when considering the two kinds of programs with incentives that improve welfare, the intent behind these incentives can be understood not only as the lowering of fertility but also increasing wealth:

> The first [individual] involves periodic payments to an account or fund for people who limit their families. Payments can take the form of old-age pensions, life insurance, education funds and the like, and are collected in the future, when people have succeeded in having a small family. The second kind of program rewards whole communities with development projects that raise incomes as fertility in the community falls.[9]

Unlike the traditional form of incentives, which offer compensation to those who choose to become sterilized or participate in other forms of birth control, these more innovative incentives that promote general welfare reward persons for changes in behavior. From this perspective of understanding these incentives as rewards, one can begin to appreciate them not only as

7. Berelson, "An Evaluation," 6.
8. Pohlman, *Incentives and Compensations*, 47-51.
9. Jacobsen, *Promoting Population Stabilization*, 14.

freedom enhancing versus freedom limiting, but also as a means to foster social change.

Freedom

When considering individual freedoms with regard to reproductive rights, one can view the system of incentives that offers rewards as a freedom's enhancement rather than the limitation of simple compensation:

> …unlike one-time payments, rewards are made for behavior over a long period of time that requires deliberate thought, avoiding the last-minute pressure that can be present in one-time payments. Thus, deferred payment programs pose less risk of unfair influence.[10]

The more traditional forms of incentives are often accused of being coercive, especially in a psychological sense; a person may feel forced by the financial incentive to make a rash choice, without being fully aware of what he/she is agreeing to and how it will affect him/her. These circumstances may exacerbate a sense of exploitation where a person's poverty is dire and the compensation is comparatively great.[11]

This trend is further illustrated by incidents of sterilization regret. In a 1989 study of women in Sri Lanka who underwent voluntary sterilization between the years of 1980 and 1983 and were compensated for the procedure, 14% regretted the procedure, and of those who regretted the procedure, 85% regretted it because they wanted more children.[12]

These results are not only telling in relation to the possible coercive nature of certain methods of incentives to reduce fertility but also in showing that, even with the emphasis on reduced fertility through birth control, the underlying issue related to the world's population problem—that the ideal family size exceeds the size needed for population stabilization[13]—still remains. To exacerbate the problem further, the ideal family size does not match up with the actual number of children born—the reality usually exceeds the ideal: according to a 1990 survey of 48 developing nations, the estimated "wanted" total fertility rate was 3.8, more than a child less than the actual total fertility rate of 5.0.[14] Even though birth control and family planning initiatives have been put into action, there is no social change. The traditional mindset which favors larger families remains, although it has been pushed aside.

On the other hand, the systems that offer rewards foster social change in the form of modified behavior, i.e. smaller family size. Further, the money goes to the individual or her community in the form of funding for social programs[15] mentioned above—much like those that the cautious optimists would favor from the start. Wolf advocates that the best way to reduce fertility is to foster development, especially in poorer countries.[16] Berelson would agree with Wolf's assessment but would also express concern about the implementation of developmental policies:

10. Ibid
11. Ibid., 10.
12. Dennis Hapugalle et al, "Sterilization Regret in Sri Lanka: A Retrospective Study," *International Family Planning Perspectives* 15.1 (1989): 22, 27.
13. Hardin, "2. Multiple Paths," 24; Jacobsen, *Promoting Population Stabilization*, 6.
14. Hardin, "2. Multiple Paths," 24; Jacobsen, *Promoting Population Stabilization*, 6.
15. Jacobsen, *Promoting Population Stabilization*, 14.

> The institutional factors are so "large" that they are not moved quickly or easily…"The point is less that such measures are uncertain of success, than that they cannot be achieved: the policies are reasonably clear, their early implementation is impossible." Thus it is relatively easy to prescribe for a lower birth rate in India and inordinately hard to achieve it in that way.[17]

However, a program utilizing financial incentives would be more than just a prescription for development—it would hasten the process. This is especially true of programs that seek to improve welfare, as one of the benefits of the incentives is increased wealth available for reinvestment in the community.

Furthermore, Jacobsen lists pensions, life insurance, and education as where money collected in welfare programs go,[18] all of which correspond to at least one of the three collaborative measures for fertility reduction that Wolf lists. These measures involve an increased opportunity cost to have children:

> 1. Efforts to expand women's educational opportunities.
> […]
> 3. Since the need for old-age security is a prime incentive to have children in most developing countries, institutions that increase the economic security of the elderly remove an important destructive incentive to have children.[19]

Financial incentives which exist to promote welfare not only decrease fertility in and of themselves, but because they can encourage social change and social programs, they can also instigate the beginnings of development, creating a cycle which will further reduce fertility and continue to feed off of itself.

Criticism of Financial Incentives

Garrett Hardin would be rather critical of my argument, especially concerning the viability of tax credits as an incentive. This is evident in the second stage of the method he suggested to reduce fertility in the United States in the 1970s—one that is not exploitive but at the same time is not explicitly dependent on voluntary methods. Here, Hardin proposed a modification of income tax laws, but not because they have any viability as a financial incentive for either the citizen or the state:

> [Modifying the income tax law] won't save the nation money any more than it will serve as an economic incentive for parents to have less children. Such tax laws would, however, have a symbolic effect: They will indicate that the nation doesn't want parents to have more than two children….[20]

He does not view the financial incentive method concerning taxes practical in any way, he only mentions it as a secondary, symbolic incentive. For him, using tax credit incentives to decrease fertility does not make sense, but using social pressures does.

16. Wolf, "Population and the Environment," 440.
17. Berelson, "An Evaluation," 4.
18. Jacobsen, *Promoting Population Stabilization*, 14.
19. Wolf, "Population and the Environment," 439.
20. Hardin, "2. Multiple Paths," 26.

Coercion

Besides orchestrating social pressure, another criticism of coercion can be raised. There is a fine line between offer and threat, and in the realm of reproductive rights it seems all the more narrow. Hardin, showing his true colors as a doomsayer, admits that if it is deemed necessary to solve the problem of overpopulation, he would not have a problem using coercion in the form of non-voluntary methods.[21] Berelson describes the doomsayer's assessment as such: …in response to the perceived crisis, [doom-sayers] consider that childbearing is not a right but a privilege to be conferred or not by the state—to be managed, like death control, for the good of all.[22] This assessment is very similar to Hugh LaFollette's assertion that parents should be licensed, although the aims of both differ. LaFollette's main aim in licensing parents would be to end the mistreatment of children; population control would prove a fortunate side effect of such a policy.[23] Even so, for the time being, Hardin believes that voluntary and therefore non-coercive methods should be the primary ones.[24]

Bonnie Steinbock reminds the reader that society cannot function without some degree of coercion: the system of taxation that a nation depends on for revenue or the required immunizations that protect the health of the public are both instances of coercion. Further, Berelson notes that coercion is accepted for two of the three major transitions that fuel demographic growth, mortality and migration, but not the third, fertility. He remarks that citizens rely on the state to maintain public health standards and monitor immigration for the common good but do not depend on or even seek the state's judgment when it comes to how many children a family should have, even though logically these limitations would be analogous to bans on bigamy.[25]

In some ways, any form of incentive that makes a person consider an alternative that she had not considered before can be viewed as coercive, even if it proves to enhance rather than hinder a person's rights.[26] Even so, Steinbock remains incredibly vigilant about the dangers of exploitation: "[…]focusing entirely on whether programs like those to encourage contraception are coercive may mask other important objections to such programs, such as their targeting of vulnerable groups, creating and reinforcing inequality."[27]

It is important to realize that coercion does have a place in how society functions but, at the same time, exploitation does not. This is definitely a challenge in the realm of population control as it is predominantly poorer countries with higher rates of fertility that are being studied and acted upon by Western demographers and ethicists. It also proves to be a pertinent observation when one considers the "encouraging development" method of population control, especially if tied

21. Ibid.
22. Berelson, "An Evaluation," 3.
23. Hugh LaFollette, "Licensing Parents," in *Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application*, ed. Louis P. Pojman (Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2005), 395.
24. Hardin, "2. Multiple Paths," 26.
25. Berelson, "An Evaluation," 3.
26. Bonnie Steinbock, "Coercion and long-term contraceptives." Hastings Center Report 25.1 (1995): S19. Academic Search Premier. EBSCO. Reinert-Alumni Memorial Library, Omaha, NE. 11 Dec. 2008. https://login.cuhsl.creighton.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=9502217612&loginpage=login.asp&site=ehost-live.
27. Steinbock, "Coercion."

in with financial incentives to speed up said development: with accelerated development comes the accelerated and exacerbated problems of development. These problems include disrupting existing cultures and social systems, the problems of crowding and slums that are associated with urbanization as well as an overall increase in consumption.[28] These disadvantages are important to recognize and plan for accordingly, and it needs to be decided how they compare to the advantages created by population control.

In the grand scheme of things, all members of society—regardless of their place in the cosmic food chain—should be able to influence each other for the benefits of everyone in that society. This is how society is designed to function, with its members providing a system of checks and balances in the form of influence. How this model will weather the current, swiftly moving trend toward globalization and the melding of many different societies and cultures that it entails is, unfortunately, a subject for another paper.

Conclusion

Hardin, Steinbock, Berelson and Claudia Mills bring up challenging points, especially those concerning the real role of tax incentives and the role of coercion and its place in population control efforts. First, Hardin's comments regarding the fact that tax incentives are not financially viable and are only symbolic bring up a good point, even though I disagree with the idea that the tax incentives have no financial effect. I believe it is the financial incentive for the state and individual that encourages these programs to be put in place at all. In addition, these financial incentives can prove to encourage social change. Therefore, these incentives can also be symbolic. The way financial incentives are used regarding population control efforts can act as a herald of what changes lie just beyond the horizon.

Coercion presents a stickier issue. When I first began this paper, I interpreted coercion as exploitation. And, as Steinbock reminds the reader, exploitation is something dangerous and to be avoided. Now, coercion has taken on new light as a necessary tool in the viable functioning of society. I agree with Hardin that, as long as possible, we should avoid depending strictly on coercive methods because of the unfortunate trend of their abuse. At the same time, however, it does not seem like any form of population control can be accomplished without coercion in some form.

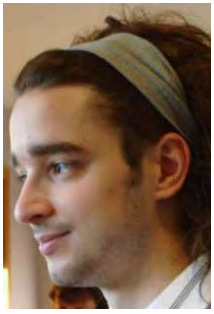
As a method of encouraging population control, the use of financial incentives to make smaller families more appealing, as well as encouraging social change, would reduce population more quickly without the problems associated with strictly repressive and potentially exploitive anti-natalist policies. Coercion, understood as non-voluntary but also non-exploitive, may be necessary in order to really bring population growth rates under control through the use of financial incentives, which is not strictly viewed as a doomsdayer approach.

This approach may prevent the solid guarantee of the protection of individual freedoms, but the loss of a few freedoms would only occur so that a world would be guaranteed for future generations, especially generations that do not lie too far off. More importantly, coercion in this manner highlights that the only way population control will be achieved is through international cooperation—global citizens holding each other accountable in order to attain a better home for us all.

28. Margaret Pabst Battin, "Population Policies, Strategies for Fertility Control in," in *Encyclopedia of Bioethics*, Ed. Stephen Post. Vol. 4, (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), 2096.

Weighing Solutions to the Lottery Puzzle

ABSTRACT: The lottery puzzle can elicit strong intuitions in favour of scepticism, according to which we ordinary language-users speak falsely about knowledge with shocking regularity. Various contextualist and invariantist responses to the puzzle attempt to avoid this unwelcome result and preserve the competence of ordinary speakers. I will argue that these solutions can be successful only if they respect intuitions of a certain kind, and proceed to judge competing solutions by this criterion.



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1 The Puzzle

We normally take ourselves and others as knowing many and varied propositions. I know that I will graduate in June. I also know that if I will graduate in June, then I will not suffer a fatal and unexpected illness in the meantime. Considerations such as these give rise to the following puzzling argument: for some subject S, ordinary proposition O, and lottery proposition L.[1] O is a proposition that we would ordinarily take ourselves to know (e.g. the proposition that S will graduate in June, or that S's car is parked outside) and whose truth entails the truth of L. However, while belief in L is both true and justified, we would not ordinarily take ourselves to know that L (e.g. that S will not suffer a fatal and unexpected illness in the meantime, or that S's car has not been stolen):

1. These terms come from John Hawthorn, *Knowledge and Lotteries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003): 5. The lottery proposition is so-called because in early versions of the puzzle, this role was played by the proposition that *S will not win the lottery*.

1)S knows that O
2)If S knows that O, then S knows that L

3)S knows that L[2]

The first premise is intuitively true. We do know such ordinary things as what people will be doing in a few months time and where their cars are parked. The second premise follows from S's knowledge that if O then L, along with a closure principle such as the general principle that if S knows both that P, and that if P then Q, then S is at least in a position to infer, and therefore come to know, that Q. In some cases the inference from P to Q might be complicated enough that we doubt whether S could actually perform it, but given the simple nature of the inference from O to L, there seems nothing to stop S from expanding their knowledge.

Through apparently sound reasoning from seemingly acceptable premises, we arrive at the intuitively unacceptable conclusion that S knows that L. The puzzle is interesting because it threatens to undermine our understanding of knowledge by forcing us to scepticism. O is, as stipulated, a proposition that we would ordinarily take ourselves to know, but if knowledge that O requires knowledge that L, which we do not have, then surely we do not in fact have knowledge that O. If such scepticism is correct, then ordinary speakers make false judgements about what is known so regularly as to suggest that they lack competence with 'knows' as it appears in English.

We will consider in turn three broad epistemological theories – *contextualism* in section 2, *interest-relative invariantism* in section 3, and *traditional invariantism* in section 4 – each of which resists the pressure toward scepticism in order to defend the ordinary speaker's competence with 'knows'. During comparison in section 5, I will argue that in order to defend our linguistic competence, certain intuitions must be accepted.

Given that only the traditional invariantist solution accepts these intuitions, it is preferable to the solutions of the contextualist or interest-relative invariantist. Although there is not space to do so here, contextualist, interest-relative invariantist and traditional invariantist solutions to a variety of epistemological problems could be assessed along the same lines, ultimately allowing us to assess the theories themselves.

2. Contextualism

Contextualism is here a linguistic thesis about the meaning of 'knows' in English. The contextualist argues that 'knows' (like 'I', 'here' and 'now') is context-sensitive in that its reference, and therefore the proposition expressed by a sentence containing it, varies depending on the context of its use.

Contextualism will be represented by David Lewis, both because there is not space here to spell out multiple contextualist theories and because Lewis introduces a framework that will be useful throughout our discussion. For Lewis, 'S knows that P' is true in some context, just in case 'S's evidence eliminates every not-P possibility' is also true in that context,[3] where a *not-P possibility* is a possibility in which not-P

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2. Hawthorn, *Knowledge and Lotteries*: 2-3.
3. Adapted from David Lewis, "Elusive Knowledge", *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 74.4 (1996): 551. A contextualist definition should mention, rather than use, 'knows' so as to avoid reference to any specific relation.

obtains – a *counter-possibility* to the proposition that P – and is eliminated by S's evidence just in case the perceptual experience and memories that S would have had were the possibility actual, are not the perceptual experience and memories that S actually has.[4]

Through this definition, Lewis intends 'knows' to inherit the context-sensitivity of 'every'.[5] In its quotidian uses 'every' refers, not to all objects *simpliciter*, but to all objects within some restricted domain. If I direct the sentence 'every glass is empty; time for my round,' to the people at my table, what I have said does not entail that there are no full glasses anywhere in space and time, only that there are no full glasses anywhere on my table.[6] We ignore the glasses behind the bar and those in other pubs and so on, and can do so legitimately; 'every glass' refers only to those glasses that we are not legitimately ignoring. Similarly, 'every not-P possibility' refers only to those not-P possibilities that are not legitimately ignored.[7]

The contextualist element in Lewis's theory is now revealed, for different not-P possibilities are legitimately ignored in different contexts. In a context C, in which the not-P possibility S is being legitimately ignored, 'knows' may refer to a relation that is satisfied by anyone whose evidence eliminates the not-P possibilities Q and R, while in another context C*, which differs from C only in that S is not being legitimately ignored, 'knows' refers to a relation that is satisfied only by those whose evidence eliminates Q, R and S. Lewis offers various rules concerning what can and cannot be legitimately ignored, two of which in particular help us to further understand how context-sensitivity arises in his account. particular help us to further understand how context-sensitivity arises in his account.

The Rule of Belief states that we cannot properly ignore possibilities to which the subject gives, or ought to give, a sufficiently high degree of belief. What counts as a 'sufficiently high degree of belief' in a particular context depends on how much is at stake, i.e. on the possible consequences of a knowledge attribution in that context.[9] the possible consequences of a knowledge attribution in that context.

When Cal tells me in the pub that he saw Joe pick a wallet up off the street, I may truly say 'Cal knows that Joe stole the wallet'. When sitting on Joe's jury, however, this sentence may no longer be truly asserted. In the relaxed context of the pub, we may legitimately ignore the possibility that Joe picked up the wallet in order to hand it in to the police, which Cal does not find likely in the slightest. In the strict context of a court, however, even such a low level of belief may be sufficient to bar us from legitimately ignoring this possibility. The Rule of Attention states that we do not properly ignore those possibilities that we are not actually ignoring. No matter how far-fetched and otherwise irrelevant a not-P

3. Adapted from David Lewis, "Elusive Knowledge", *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 74.4 (1996): 551. A contextualist definition should mention, rather than use, 'knows' so as to avoid reference to any specific relation.
4. Lewis, "Elusive Knowledge": 553.
5. Although the context-sensitivity of 'every' may not be as uncontroversial as Lewis makes out, we can grant it for the sake of illustration. Contextualism can be expressed without reliance on 'every'.
6. Of course I might say more than this. If my round includes our friends on another table, then 'every glass' might include theirs as well, but in that case we are still working with a restricted domain.
7. Lewis, "Elusive Knowledge": 553.
8. Ibid: 555.
9. Ibid: 556.

possibility is, as long as we are attending to the possibility in a context, then it is not properly ignored in that context.[10]

In a contextualist solution to the puzzle, 1) is true, as S's evidence eliminates all possibilities inconsistent with O, given that we are legitimately ignoring various far-fetched possibilities such as car thieves and unexpected illnesses. The second premise raises one of these far-fetched possibilities explicitly, which through the Rule of Attention can no longer be properly ignored. 'Knows' in 2) therefore expresses a different relation from that expressed by the same word in 1), a relation that holds between S and O only if S's evidence eliminates every possibility in which not-O obtains, including the possibility that not-L (e.g. that it is not the case that S will not suffer a fatal and unexpected illness in the meantime).

In the context of 2), if 'S knows that O' is true, then S's evidence eliminates every counter-possibility to the proposition that L, in which case 'S knows that L' is also true. The conditional of 2) is therefore true. However, S's evidence does not eliminate the possibility that Not-L. As we cannot legitimately ignore this possibility, neither 'S knows that O', nor 'S knows that L', is true in this context. The counter-intuitive premise 3) is therefore false.

3. Interest-Relative Invariantism

Invariantism is the denial of contextualism, the linguistic thesis that 'knows' refers, in English, to the same relation in all contexts. The thesis that whether or not a subject knows that p depends on "practical facts about the subject's environment," is distinctive of interest-relative invariantism (IRI).[11] Facts about S, such as S's evidence and beliefs, clearly determine whether or not S knows that P, but the interest-relative invariantist adds to the list facts about S's interests that are normally considered epistemically irrelevant, i.e. irrelevant to the question of whether or not S satisfies the knows-relation.

Different versions of IRI identify different facts about S's environment as epistemically relevant, but I will assume that the interest-relative invariantist may appeal to any of those facts about S's situation that the contextualist appeals to, such as the possibilities they are attending to and what is at stake in their context.

IRI can be framed in similar terms to contextualism: S knows that P just in case S's evidence eliminates every not-P possibility that is not legitimately ignored given S's practical situation. The domain restriction for 'every', which was contextually determined in Lewis's definition, is specified explicitly. In this definition 'knows' has no context-sensitivity. Whether or not S knows that P does depend on the not-P possibilities that may legitimately be ignored, but these depend only on epistemically relevant facts about S's situation, not also on merely contextual facts.

How the interest-relative invariantist will respond to the puzzle depends on whether S is attributor in addition to subject. Assume S is going through the argument, making first-person knowledge attributions. The interest-relative invariantist solves the puzzle similarly to the contextualist. 1) is true, given that O is of no particular importance to S's practical interests,

10. Ibid: 559.
11. Jason Stanley, *Knowledge and Practical Interests* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005): 85.

and that we may, therefore, legitimately ignore various counter-possibilities to O, such as the possibility that not-L. As 2) raises L explicitly, not-L is no longer legitimately ignored. 2) is therefore true, for if S knows that O, S's evidence eliminates the possibility that not-L, in which case S also knows that L. 3), however, is false; S's evidence is consistent with the possibility that not-L, and therefore S knows neither that O, nor that L.

Consider what is perhaps the most natural reading of the puzzle as formulated above—that S is subject but not attributor. Unbeknownst to S, we are going through the argument, ascribing him or her knowledge in the third-person. Again assuming that S's environment is such that we may legitimately ignore certain possibilities, 1) is true. In the first-person case the raising of a previously ignored possibility in 2) affects S's environment in such a way that the possibility is no longer legitimately ignorable. In the third-person case, however, S's situation is in no way affected when the attributor reaches premise 2). Here is a hint at another solution to the puzzle. As we have assumed that S knows that O, his/her situation is such that the possibility that not-L can be legitimately ignored. If this is so, then S's evidence also eliminates every counter-possibility to the proposition that L that cannot legitimately be ignored. S therefore knows that L.

But if S knows that L, why does 3) strike us as absurd? Hawthorn explains that we are disposed to "overproject"[12] our standards onto others, without considering those set by their practical situation. When we, the attributors, consider premise 2), our situation is such that we can neither ignore the possibility that not-L, nor know that L. Although S remains unaffected by the change in our situation, we project our standards on to S, blinding us to the truth of 3).

4. Traditional Invariantism

As shown previously, invariantism, the denial of contextualism, is the linguistic thesis that the English word 'knows' expresses a single relation in all contexts of use. What I call traditional invariantism contrasts with interest-relative invariantism. Its distinctive thesis is that whether or not S knows that P is in no part determined by facts about S's practical environment.

Harman and Sherman suggest an additional thesis through which the traditional invariantist can respond to the puzzle, namely that knowledge "can and usually does rest on assumptions one justifiably takes for granted without knowing them to be true."[13] Harman and Sherman defend this thesis as an acceptable way to reconcile our judgements that, while we know ordinary, but not lottery, propositions, the truth of the former rests on the truth of the latter. Typically we can only know ordinary propositions by taking for granted various lottery propositions, but such assumption does not amount to full belief, let alone knowledge.[14]

The traditional invariantist can build Harman and Sherman's thesis in to their definition of

12. Hawthorn, *Knowledge and Lotteries*: 163. Hawthorn says that we "overproject our own lack of knowledge" onto others. This fits the current case, but is inferior to the version in the body of the text, which applies also in cases where an attributor has very high standards but still knows that L. See Stanley, *Knowledge and Practical Interests*: 99-101.
13. Gilbert Harman and Brett Sherman, "Knowledge, Assumptions, Lotteries", *Philosophical Issues* 14 (2004): 492.

knowledge, which can in turn be framed in Lewis's terms: S knows that p just in case S's evidence eliminates every not-P possibility whose negation S does not justifiably take for granted. All invariantists allow that 'knows' expresses the same relation in all contexts of use, and that whether this relation holds is determined by facts about the subject, but our traditional invariantist includes facts about the subject's assumptions among these epistemically relevant facts.

Armed with Harman and Sherman's thesis, the traditional invariantist is ready to respond to the puzzle. 1) is true; S knows that O but only because they are justifiably taking for granted that L, not-L being a possibility inconsistent with O that S's evidence does not eliminate. Because L is an assumption on which knowledge of O rests, 2) is false. The traditional invariantist must deny the closure principle from which 2) follows; that generally, if S knows both that P and that if P then Q, then S is in a position to know that Q. The consequent may be a proposition that S takes for granted in order to know the antecedent, and one cannot come to know the truth of a proposition simply by taking it for granted.[15] The traditional invariantist need not, and should not, deny closure wholesale. One can often come to know that Q from ones knowledge that P and that if P then Q, but not in cases where Q is assumed in order to know that P.

Hawthorn objects that "denial of closure interacts disastrously with the thesis that knowledge is the norm of assertion."[16] Many find appeal in the principle that one is warranted in asserting that P at time T, if and only if one knows that P at T. Those who reject the unqualified closure principle but accept the knowledge norm of assertion will, in some cases, deem both P and if P then Q assertable, but Q unassertable, which Hawthorn argues can lead to odd conversations. For example:

> 'Do you agree that you will graduate in June?'
> – *'Yes'*
>
> 'Do you agree that if you will graduate in June, then you will not suffer a fatal and unexpected illness in the meantime?'
> – *'Yes'*
>
> 'Then surely you agree that you will not suffer a fatal and unexpected illness in the meantime?'
> – *'Absolutely not!'*

This is indeed a peculiar conversation but it is not one that the traditional invariantist can be forced into, even while accepting Harman and Sherman's thesis and operating under the knowledge norm of assertion, because a natural and legitimate answer to the final question is 'Yes'. To know that you will graduate in June, one must assume that you will not suffer a fatal and unexpected illness in the meantime. While this assumption is not itself known, and so, through the knowledge norm of assertion, cannot legitimately be *asserted*, it may still be legitimately *agreed* to.[17]

Making an outright, unpressured assertion implies that one has reason for the assertion beyond mere opinion. While this may also be true for some cases of agreement,[18] in the case above, nothing suggests that one is being called

14. Ibid: 494.
15. Ibid.
16. Hawthorn, *Knowledge and Lotteries*: 39.
17. Harman and Sherman, "Knowledge, Assumptions, Lotteries": 496-497.

upon for anything more than simple opinion, expressed either by agreement or disagreement. Without reason to think it false, and with nothing important hinging on its truth, there seems no reason to disagree with such a natural assumption.

Hawthorn might hope to construct a parallel case where our traditional invariantist asserts both that P, and that if P then Q, but refuses to assert that Q. These hopes cannot be realised, however, because for any clearly unknown – and therefore unassertable – consequent, the corresponding antecedent and conditional are not assertable in the same breath. When assertion that q recommends to one's audience belief in a proposition that one does not know oneself, one cannot properly assert that Q. For the same reason P and if P then Q are unassertable together; in asserting both of these propositions, one equally recommends the unknown conclusion that Q to one's audience.

5. Comparison

The contextualist and interest-relative invariantist solutions to the puzzle might claim superiority over that of the traditional invariantist solution on the grounds that both of the former accept the truth of 2), while the latter rejects 2) and the closure principle from which it follows. Hawthorn expresses concern about such "revisionary" proposals.[19] This concern is one that I share.

Some constraint on rejected intuitions is needed, lest theories grow totally detached from practice, but we must be careful about the constraint that we impose. One clearly unsatisfactory constraint is that solutions to the puzzle must respect all pre-theoretical intuitions.[20] The argument from 1) and 2) to 3) is puzzling precisely because it proceeds from intuitively acceptable premises and assumptions, by intuitively acceptable reasoning, to an intuitively unacceptable conclusion – something intuitive has to go, whether it is the closure principle required to motivate 2), the invariance of the 'knows' relation, or the falsity of 3).

Each solution aims to avoid scepticism and thereby maintain that ordinary speakers have a competence with 'knows' sufficient for making true and uncontroversial knowledge attributions and denials. A speaker may be said to possess this competence by virtue of having certain intuitions. One whose intuitions consider a wide range of obviously true knowledge attributions false, for example, could only be judged to have an incomplete grasp of 'knows' as it is used in English. In order to respect the competence of ordinary speakers, therefore, solutions to the puzzle must respect those intuitions required for this competence.

I propose a rough constraint that preserves these intuitions while permitting the rejection of those that result from previous acceptance of theory or general philosophising. Solutions to the puzzle must be such that they make intuitively acceptable the rejection of any pre-theoretical intuitions rejected. Acceptance of philosophical theory does not instantly, if ever, destroy linguistic competence, as evidenced

18. A ranking Government official asked 'Do you agree with the rumours that world war will break out in two days?' should have more than opinion to support their agreement. This is due to their position of authority and the high stakes of the situation, both of which must be absent in the case above if it is to succeed as an objection to closure denial.

19. Hawthorn, *Knowledge and Lotteries*: 38.

20. I use 'pre-theoretical' to express a relative notion. What is pre-theoretical with respect to one theory may be post-theoretical with respect to another. I do not imply, therefore, that there are any absolutely pre-theoretical intuitions.

by the generally acceptable behaviour of philosophers in ordinary conversation. Intuitions resulting from this competence are therefore secure enough to survive theorising, while those easily destroyed by acceptance of epistemological theory are likely the result of previous theorising.

Our traditional invariantist abides by this constraint, for once we accept that knowledge rests on assumptions (itself a highly intuitive thesis), the closure principle mentioned at the outset, which allows one to derive knowledge that P from the assumption that P, clearly over-generalises. Its lack of resilience to theory indicates that this intuition itself comes from doing epistemology, which is substantiated by the difficulty with which non-philosophers assent to it.[21]

The other solutions, however, fall afoul of our constraint. The contextualist rejects the intuition that 'knows' expresses an invariant relation, but, as Lewis demonstrates,[22] contextualists often find themselves, both in conversation and in print, unable to avoid use/mention fallacies, indicating that this intuition shows no sign of subsidence, and stems from linguistic competence.

IRI rejects our intuition that 3) is false in third-person cases. This pre-theoretical intuition is explained by the projection of our raised evidential standards onto S. Even after we accept our propensity to "overproject", however, 3) remains intuitively false. This intuition regarding the truth of a simple knowledge attribution very plausibly stems from our linguistic competence, and is therefore the kind of intuition that theory should respect.

Both contextualist and interest-relative invariantist solutions to the puzzle fail to satisfy the constraint on possible solutions outlined above, which in response to Hawthorn's worry, filters out overly revisionary theories and restricts the extent to which they may reject pre-theoretical intuitions— particularly those arising from our clear linguistic competence. One would have to assess their responses to a variety of problems in order to evaluate the theories themselves, but regarding this particular puzzle, as only the traditional invariantist solution can satisfy the important constraint above, it is superior to the solutions offered by the other two theories.

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21. This is of course a hypothesis, unconfirmed by rigorous experimentation, but non-philosophers who make no pretence are usually puzzled by the generality of the closure principle discussed in this essay (even once they understand the notation), finding individual instances of closure much more acceptable.

22. See Lewis, "Elusive Knowledge": 566. Lewis wants it to remain open which knowledge-relation is referred to when he talks about things "we used to know". In his own theory, however, Lewis refers to some particular relation, determined by the context of use.

The Strength of Relationships

ABSTRACT: I endeavor to show that Descartes' attribute-mode distinction cannot be characterized in terms of the determinable-determinate relation. I identify the latter's formal and modal properties in order to determine whether the former shares them, which ultimately shows distinctness. I then indicate which property accounts for the differences. I conclude that the relation that unites modes under an attribute is weaker than that which groups determinates under some determinable, respectively, the relations of inherence and incompatibility.

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Philosophers, including Edwin Curley,[1] Anthony Kenny[2], and R.S. Woolhouse[3] have been trying to formally characterize Descartes' attribute-mode distinction for centuries. Throughout the years, many such proposals have been made. Somewhat recently, two characterizations have been particularly attractive, namely, the mode as trope characterization[4] and the attribute and mode as determinable and determinate characterization.[5] The latter, more popular approach is the topic of this essay.

It is my purpose to present the determinable-determinate relation and ascertain definitely whether it characterizes the relation between Descartes' attributes and their respective and modal properties. I then take a detour through the features of Descartes' attribute-mode distinction, and later contrast these with the relation between determinables and determinates in order to see whether their properties differ.

1. Edwin Curley, *Descartes Against the Skeptics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978): 11.
2. Anthony Kenny, *Descartes* (New York: Random House, 1968): 66.
3. R. S. Woolhouse, *Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz: The Concept of Substance in Seventeenth Century Metaphysics* (New York: Routledge, 1993):18, 26, note 3.
4. D. C. Williams, "On the Elements of Being," *Review of Metaphysics 7* (1953): 186-192 .
5. Arthur N. Prior, "Determinables, Determinates, and Determinants (Part I)," *Mind* 58.229 (1949): 7, 17.

According to The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Johnson introduces the distinction between determinables and determinates as such:

> I propose to call such terms as colour and shape determinables in relation to such terms as red and circular, which will be called determinates.[6]

Color is a determinable of red and circle is a determinate of shape. Immediately, a noteworthy property is apparent: the determinate contains more information than the determinable. In other words, the determinate precludes a set of possibilities greater than that precluded by the determinable.

Consequently, when predicated of some object, the determinate describes the object more precisely than its corresponding determinable because the determinate leaves less ways in which the object could vary. For instance, if on the one hand an object O is said to be colored, then all possible colors may describe O; on the other hand, if O is said to be red, then only a proper subset of all possible colors may describe O, signifying greater informational content.

This feature entails some formal properties. If P is a determinable of Q, then Q is not a determinable of P, for a determinable by definition leaves possibilities open that its determinates rule out. Therefore, a determinable cannot restrict the range of possibilities for one of its determinates, since the information it provides is the same regardless of whether one construes the relata as a determinable or as a determinate. To state the concept briefly, the determinable-determinate relation is asymmetric.

One other property observable at this juncture is irreflexivity. In other words, a determinable cannot be a determinable of itself and neither can a determinate be a determinate of itself.[7] This is because the set of possibilities the determinate/determinable entails cannot restrict itself. The information provided would be held constant as both the determinate and the determinable; otherwise, the principle of uniform substitution would be violated and the relation would generate contradictions.[8] Furthermore, it follows from the above that if O has a determinate Q, then it is necessarily the case that O has the determinable of Q because Q must contain the information of its determinable.

Determinates are grouped under a determinable, not because they share a certain property, but because of a "special kind of difference"[9] that distinguishes one from another, such as the case with the grouping of red, blue and yellow under the determinable color. In other words, "the determinates under a given determinable are united, not as possessors of a common character, but as a set of terms of a particular relation."[10]

This particular difference is special in relation to determinates of different determinables because the determinates under one determinable cannot describe the same object at the same time. For instance, a car cannot be both completely red

6. David H. Sanford, "Determinates vs. Determinables," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (27 October 2006) http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/determinate-determinables (20 October 2009).
7. I would like to make clear that this does not entail reflexivity (or symmetry) because Descartes is only construing thought and extension as modes insofar as a parcel of substance is capable of change, not the attribute itself, be it thought or extension, that constitutes its nature and essence.
8. Robert Goldblatt, *Logics of Time and Computation* (Stanford: CSLI Lecture Notes, 1992): 5.
9. Sanford
10. Prior, 11.

and completely blue simultaneously. Among the determinates of a determinable, there is incompatibility. Modally speaking, it is necessarily the case that two determinates under the same determinable cannot describe the same part of an object at the same time.

Moreover, being related by incompatibility is sufficient and necessary for determinates under a single determinable.[11] Therefore, "for any given determinate, there is only one determinable to which it can belong."[12] Given that incompatibility is necessary and sufficient to relate the determinates under a single determinable, all determinates would be grouped under a unique determinable, and as such, would preclude the possibility of those determinates belonging to any other determinable. As a consequence, it is necessarily the case that if O has a determinate, then O has the corresponding determinable. Johnson adds, "any one determinable is a literal *summum genus* not subsumable under any higher genus; the absolute determinate is a literal *infima* species under which no other determinable is subsumable."[13]

One other formal property of the relation is transitivity. If P is a determinable of Q and Q is a determinable of R, then P is a determinable of R. For instance, color is a determinable of blue and a determinable of navy blue, which is a determinate of blue.[14] Johnson attributes another property to the relation, namely that, if a determinable Q is predicated of O, then O must "be characterized in certain definite respect."[15] In other words, if O is colored, then, essentially, O has a definite color, namely a determinate of color. The referent of O must be, in actuality, characterized in terms of determinates if O is said to have a determinable.[16]

Before comparing the properties ascribed to the attribute-mode relation by Descartes with those evinced by the determinable-determinate relation, I will take a tour through the relevant aspects of Descartes' philosophy. Descartes believed there were two principal properties that characterized the whole of "whatever we perceive"[17] — thought and extension.

Thought constitutes the nature and essence of thinking substance and extension that of corporeal substance.[18] He called these *primary attributes*. Attributes are the properties that "always remain unchanged," such as color, shape, conation, intellection and sensation.[19]

For instance, some modes of extension and thought are, respectively, flavor, fragrance, shape, sound and color, and imagining, doubting, understanding, affirming and perceiving.[20] A particular state of a mode can be thought to be

11. Ibid.
12. Sanford.
13. Ibid.
14. Keep in mind that determinates do not have to be absolute and that a determinable is not a genus because it does not differentiate its members by conjoining an independent property, as happens when "man" is distinguished from other animals by conjoining animality with rationality, but by incompatibility alone.
15. Prior, 17.
16. Notice this property plus transitivity entails that a determinable P, when predicated of O, will, of necessity, determine its *absolute* determinate.
17. Anthony Kenny, eds. and trans. 1984. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, vols. I-III*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.): 114.
18. Kenny, I: 210.
19. Kenny, I: 211-212.
20. Kenny, II: 19-21.

the accidental properties of the Cartesian substances; in other words, properties it currently has but could do without. Descartes also makes clear that he believes the relation between thought and its modes and that between extension and its own are analogous.[21] Consequently, whatever characterization I end up with for one would have to characterize the other.

I will select the more obscure of the two relations, namely that between thought and its modes, in an attempt to cover any possible disanalogies with the determinable-determinate relation that might not result from considering the corporeal counterpart alone. Indeed, Johnson draws many examples to illustrate his distinction from properties that Descartes would characterize as referring to extension.

An attribute is less informative when predicated of an object O than any of its modes would be if predicate of O. In other words, the property of *being thought* entails the possibility of being any of its modes, and the property of being a particular mode M entails the attribute *thought* and the actuality of M[22], thereby rendering the latter more informative. Therefore, the attribute-mode relation is asymmetric because a mode predicated of O eliminates at least one possibility more than an attribute would and consequently the inverse cannot hold. Moreover, irreflexivity is a property because the arguments of the relation are incompatible. An attribute is a property that precludes the possibility of change with respect to the attribute, but not with respect to its mode.[23]

Modes are grouped under their respective attributes because an assertion that O has M must refer to O's primary attribute in order to be intelligible.[24] For instance, doubt cannot be understood independently of thought. It might seem as though we are straying from Johnson, but as Prior' property states, if a determinable P is predicated of O, then O must have a determinate of P, which entails that "[a subject's] being determinable in certain ways[…] is presupposed in every genuine characterization of it, an assertion that[…] is thus determinable[…] would have for its predicate something which cannot really be separated from the subject in order to be predicated of it,"[25] which is precisely the property that Descartes ascribes to the attribute-mode relation.

In Cartesian terms, if O has M, then O has attribute A as well. This property was evidently presupposed by Descartes when he said, "whatever we find in the mind is simply one of the various modes of thinking."[26] As a consequence, if O is a doubt, then O is a thought, which is the first modal property I attributed to the determinable-determinate relation. Essentially, if O has a determinate (a mode), then O has the determinable (the attribute).

The second modal property I mentioned, however, is not so easily identified in Descartes' metaphysical motley. This property states that it is necessarily the case that two determinates under one determinable are incompatible. Descartes refers to motion and shape as modes

21. Rene Descartes, "Descartes' Reply (to Arnauld's Second Letter)," in *On True and False Ideas with Arnauld's New Objections to Descartes' Meditations and Descartes' Replies* , ed. Elmar Kremer (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990): 194.
22. Kenny, I: 210-211.
23. Kenny, I: 211-212.
24. Kenny, I: 210-211.
25. Descartes, 18.
26. Kenny, I: 210.

of extension[27] and these are clearly compatible. However, Descartes refers to imagination and sensory perception as modes of thought,[28] which are incompatible.

Perhaps incompatibility does not play a role in the attribute-mode relation; yet, in a reply to Arnauld's Second Letter of the "New Objections," Descartes asserts that "by thought I do not mean something universal which includes all modes of thinking, but rather a particular nature which receives all those modes, just as extension is a nature which receives all shapes."[29] However, in the same paragraph, Descartes explains the "just as extension . . . differs very much from the various shapes *or modes* of extension which it assumes, so also thought, or thinking nature, . . . is far different than this or that act of thinking [emphasis added]."[30]

Descartes may be equating shape and mode, so I continue to think that incompatibility does not do much, if any, of the grunt-work for the attribute-mode relation. Moreover, Descartes says, "we are able to arrive at knowledge of one mode apart from another, and *vice versa*, whereas we cannot know either apart from the substance in which they both inhere."[31] This is Descartes' second modal distinction. According to Descartes, this is knowledge we can only acquire via the perception of the modes themselves.[32]

In other words, we do not need to search for similarity or difference between modes in order to know either; we only need to know the primary attribute of the substance in which they inhere. To know or understand the attribute-mode relation, the incompatibility plays absolutely no role; whereas for the determinable-determinate relation, incompatibility is required in order to set which unique determinable determinates stand under. Two modes under one attribute may or may not describe the same part of an object at the same time.

Furthermore, in a trivial sense, supposing thought and extension were determinables, transitivity would not hold. This is because the attributes would be literal *summum genus* and modes absolute determinates in that they are literal *infima* species. In his reply to Arnauld's "New Objection," Descartes characterizes modes as the instances of thought or extension, specifically as particular acts of thinking and particular "shapes" of extension. Therefore, transitivity is not possible because there would not be a third term to which the relation may transfer. For example, if A is a determinable of B, then B is a determinable of nothing else because it would be an absolute determinate. As mentioned, it would not be transitive, but only for trivial reasons.

The determinable-determinate relation differs from the attribute-mode relation in that incompatibility of modes plays no role in determining which attribute the modes are grouped under. The relation that determines the membership of a mode to a certain attribute is that of inherence. In other words, a mode M is related to an attribute A, if and only if M is unintelligible, without presupposing that A characterizes the substance of which M is a mode.

This property is evinced by the determinable-determinate relation, formally as the transitivity

27. Kenny, I: 214.
28. Kenny, II: 54.
29. Descartes, 194.
30. Ibid.
31, Kenny, I: 214.
32. Kenny, II: 156.

relation, and modally as the property that if P is predicated of O, then it is necessarily the case that O has the determinable of P. Where the relations diverge is at the point Johnson introduces a stronger property which entails the relation of inherence: if O has a determinable Q, then O necessarily has a determinate of Q (the third modal property I mentioned).

As a consequence, for any determinable Q predicated of O, there is only one determinate P that describes O accurately at a given time—its corresponding absolute determinate. Only one P can describe O completely at the time of predication, namely the incompatibility requirement. Therefore, the only difference is the strength of the relation that determines the determinates of a determinable versus that which determines the attribute to which a mode refers; the former is stronger than the latter. Crucially, then, the relations are differentiated in virtue of the relationship between the determinates being stronger than the relationship between modes.

Relational Obligations

Defending a Non-Voluntarist Argument for Special Responsibilities

ABSTRACT: This paper attempts to demonstrate that special responsibilities exist as a necessary and fundamental component of relationships. It seeks to show that, while special responsibilities may be superseded by other relevant concerns, they remain absolute. The paper attempts to demonstrate further that, even in cases of repugnant conclusion, special responsibilities exhibit a residual nature. It argues that such obligations are not always voluntary entered, but nevertheless represent prima facie duties to those parties involved.

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A special responsibility is an obligation[1] that arises from a special relationship one has with a particular person, such as the special responsibility a parent has to see to the well-being of his or her children.[2] Let us grant for our purposes that such special responsibilities exist. The existence of such special responsibilities assumes that special relationships, by their very nature, will inevitably produce preferential considerations and obligations that should be taken as relevant to any discussion of moral consequence.[3] Further, it may be said that in most instances, acting on inclinations to such preferential treatment is acting in fulfillment of a moral duty.[4]

1. It should be noted at the outset that throughout the duration of this paper I will use the terms 'special obligations' and 'special responsibilities' as being synonymous with one another.
2. Jeske, Diane. *Special Obligations*. (2002.) http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/special-obligations/ (accessed 11 2009). Revised 2008.
3. A belief in Special Responsibilities does not stand in opposition to the contention that all persons are, in fact, equal and share the same inherent value and rights afforded to them as a consequence of their personhood. Rather, it holds that obligations can be created by the bonds of close relationships and those subsequent obligations should be considered morally relevant in determining any ethical decisions where they apply.
4. Friedman, M. *Ethics , 101* (4), 818-835.

Among those who grant that special responsibilities exist, there are two different conceptions concerning the origin of such obligations. Voluntarists hold that special responsibilities only arise as a consequence of voluntarily entered agreements (i.e. contractual obligations). Non-Voluntarists, meanwhile, hold that special responsibilities are not restricted to relationships of an exclusively voluntary nature, but can extend to non-voluntary relationships as well (i.e. familial ties).

In this paper, I will argue in favor of the non-voluntarist position, as formulated by Samuel Scheffler. I will apply a modified version of W.D. Ross' conception of *prima facie* duties[5] to special relationships, in order to argue for their residual nature even in cases of repugnant conclusions. Finally, I will argue that by accepting the existence of non-derivative special responsibilities—obligations based upon the inherent nature of the relationship in question as legitimate concerns in moral decision-making—non-voluntarists make more adequate accommodation of our most basic, deeply and firmly held moral intuitions than do the contrasting explanations presented by voluntarists.

II.

Voluntarists contend that special responsibilities are only legitimate if they are entered into voluntarily and are subject to the consent of the parties involved.[6] A practical consequence of this contention is that this would preclude obligations that hold us especially responsible for persons with whom we share communal bonds or familial ties. These persons would have weightier consideration in moral evaluations.

For example, no one would reasonably expect that in the absence of justifiable conditions, a child has no special responsibility to obey the commands of their parents over the commands of others simply on the grounds that their relationship is not of a voluntary nature. Voluntarists attempt to justify this restriction by contending that it would be unfair for special responsibilities to be imposed on individuals who have otherwise done nothing to incur them. They contend that such an imposition would be counter to our autonomy and right to self-determination.[7]

However, a person's autonomy is generally constrained by moral norms that guide how we should treat others.[8] For example, it is not

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5. *Prima facie* duties (*at first face; on its first appearance*) are principles within the moderate objectivist moral theory of W.D. Ross. Within Ross' system, they are valid rules of action that one should generally adhere to, but that, in the case of moral conflict, may be overridden by another moral principle. Ross, W. *The Right and the Good*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press.) (2002).

6. Scheffler, S. *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (Summer, 1997), 189-209.

7. The argument against voluntarism's conception of a self based on abstract individualism or the primacy of the individual, is *not that it has produced asocial selves*, but rather that the actualization of beings who can willfully determine the nature of all the relationships that should produce obligations would be metaphysically impossible. Friedman, M. "Feminism and Modern Friendship: Dislocating the Community." *Ethics , 99* (2), (1989): 276.

8. By moral norms, I am here referring to normative conceptions of moral conduct (i.e. do not harm others unnecessarily, treat others as you would have them treat you, etc.). We are generally seen as having obligations to fulfill these normative rules, or natural duties, without appropriate consideration for whether or not they limit our autonomy (which they almost certainly do in most cases). It is my contention that obligations generated as a result of special responsibilities should be viewed in a similar light.

morally permissible to commit rape, even though this normative dictum constrains the autonomy of the would-be rapist. Yet, we still see this rule and other general moral rules as applicable, regardless of whether or not they were agreed upon beforehand by those subject to them.

Voluntarists have a primary concern, namely, if we assume that burdensome obligations can simply be imposed on individuals without their consent, then we would be advocating for a system in which people are fettered to unfairly imposed restrictions on their personal freedoms.[9] However, in *Relationships and Responsibilities*, Samuel Scheffler rightly points out the impracticability of the voluntarist's position in this regard. The voluntarist's assertion, that all responsibilities should only rise out of the voluntary consent of the individual, fails to consider that, to a large extent, the significance of our social relations is not fully under our control.

We are all born into a nexus of social and familial ties that are influential forces in the development of our selfhood. Even if we were to attempt to repudiate these ties later, they represent a formative factor in our lives, which is both inalterable and ultimately inescapable.[10] Thus, if we allow that only voluntary relationships can produce special responsibilities, then the moralvoluntarist does not make adequate accommodation for our intuitive sense of indebtedness to those who represented formative agents in the development of our personhood. Most people would find it odd if I felt no sense of special obligation for those individuals who reared me or provided for me as a child, simply on the grounds that I did not voluntarily enter an agreement for their provision. My indifference, however, would be entirely acceptable according to the voluntarist's position.

III.

In contrast with the voluntarists, Scheffler argues that substantively positive features of a special relationship are the animating features that instantiate any claim of special responsibility. For example, the sense of obligation one feels towards a loving parent would be the feature that substantiates the relational claim to obligation, as opposed to the apparent absence of such a feeling for an abusive parent. Scheffler contends that because responsibilities are derived from substantively positive conditions, the absence of such conditions in a special relationship necessarily implies the absence of special obligations as well.

Scheffler and I agree that some features of actual relationships act to block special responsibilities from arising. However, I disagree with Scheffler with respect to how we cache out those features and with respect to how special responsibilities are blocked from issuing in moral obligations. Scheffler seems to restrict his notion of special responsibilities to only those relationships that we view as personally constructive and edifying. Relationships, which are not of value, he contends, should not have claims of special responsibility.[11]

This is true in the case of an abusive parent. Under normal circumstances, the nature of the relationship would be such that the child might have otherwise been assumed to have an obligation to the parent in question. However, as a consequence of the actions of the parent, it

9. Ibid: 205.
10. Ibid: 204.
11. Ibid: 199.

might be said that the parent has altered the nature of the relationship to the point that it lacks substantive value for the child.

What Scheffler implies here is that while institutions like parenthood have intinsic value, obligations to those relationships are derived also from the nature of the particular relationship itself, not from mere respect for the actual institution.[12] I agree with Scheffler that this distinction is significant when assessing the extent to which we are to hold ourselves and others accountable to the special obligations of relationships. The relative conditions of a relationship are defining factors in how we ultimately perceive our obligations to that relationship, but I reject his dismissal of all familial obligations in cases of abuse.

The difficulty is that Scheffler does not adequately clarify how we are to know when a relationship has substantive value that generates special responsibilities. He points out that those relationships that generate special responsibilities are relationships that are worth valuing, yet, if we want to actually differentiate between those valued relationships that lead to special responsibilities and those non-valued relationships that do not.
In this case, such distinctions become elusive if we are left only with Scheffler's axiom, which in itself seems to be a rather circular means of assessing value. This circularity could ultimately prove to be fatal to Scheffler's broader argument for non-voluntarism if adequate consideration is not given to the means by which distinctions are made between those relationships, producing special responsibilities, and those that do not.

IV.

Let's explore if Scheffler's argument can withstand this objection. If, as implied by Scheffler, special responsibilities can be made void by the conditions of the relationship in question, then justifications for non-chosen special obligations would seem untenable. This is because if you can opt-out of responsibilities to undesirable special relationships (i.e. an abusive parent), then it becomes difficult to justify that any actions generated as a consequence of the nature of a special relationship are in fact obligatory. Non-voluntarism, thus, is faced with a dilemma; either all special relationships result in special obligations (including those with undesirable or repugnant conditions) or there is no reasonable way to distinguish between cases that result in special obligations and cases that do not, which may lead us to accept a reductionist claim like voluntarism or deny that special responsibilities exist at all.

If we are to continue to maintain non-voluntarism as a consistent explanation for special responsibilities, then we must address this concern. I will attempt to lay hold of the second horn of the dilemma and demonstrate that the problem of responsibilities in repugnant cases ceases to be damning to the non-voluntarist's argument if we allow conditions to merely supersede, but not ultimately void, special responsibilities in cases of undesirable conditions. This would mean that special responsibilities generated as a result of the nature of the relationship in question should be seen as applicable *only* to the extent to which they are not overridden by weightier concerns. Thus, I contend that such responsibilities represent *prima facie* duties to be fulfilled in the absence of overriding conditions.[13]

In order to elucidate this claim, it will first be necessary to establish a case in which special obligations are understood to exist only as a consequence of the relationship in question.

12. Ibid: 205.
13. Friedman, 820.

Second, it will be necessary to then demonstrate that these obligations may be trumped by other obligations in a given situation, yet persist as morally relevant concerns despite changing conditions of the relationship in question.

For example, let us say that in the city of Somewhereville, U.S.A, there is a small homeless shelter. On one particularly cold and rainy evening the shelter's director is informed there are two men seeking shelter for the night. Both men arrived at the shelter at the same time, looking disheveled and in need of assistance. However, conditions being what they are on this particular evening, the shelter is already well over its capacity and can only accept one more occupant before they regretfully have to start turning people away. Both men are complete strangers to the director.

All things being considered equal in terms of their relative contributions to society, the director's arbitrary choice of who receives shelter for the evening would have relatively minimal moral significance. However, if we alter the conditions of the scenario such that the director's relationship to the homeless man changes, we observe that our perception of the moral significance of the director's decision will necessarily be altered as well.

Scenario 1

The director learns upon receipt of further information regarding the two respective homeless men that vagabond x is, in fact, the director's long lost biological father. While stunned by this revelation, the doctor feels no immediate obligation to vagabond x as a consequence. After all, the director has never met the man and is, for all practical purposes, a stranger to him.

In the initial formation of this scenario, where the identity of the two homeless vagabonds was unknown to the director, the decision over who ultimately received shelter for the night was, in moral terms, of equal value for the director. However, in scenario 1 where the only qualifying condition is the knowledge of a biological relationship between the director and vagabond x, I would argue that most people would feel an intuitive degree of obligation for special consideration of vagabond x. Further, I believe such an inclination towards preferential consideration for vagabond x, as opposed to vagabond y, would be morally justified.[14]

Scenario 2

The director learns upon receipt of further information regarding the two respective homeless men that vagabond x is, in fact, the director's beloved father. Stunned by this revelation, the director feels immediate obligation for vagabond x as a consequence. After all, the director has a close relationship and abiding familial love for his father.

In scenario 2, the director's inclination toward preferential consideration for vagabond x, as opposed to vagabond y, would also seem justified. The director has an obligation to vagabond x, not only on grounds of their biological connection, but also as a consequence of their close relationship with one another.

14. An example from literature can illustrate our propensity toward this belief. If such a consideration is irrelevant, then the tragic element is removed from Oedipus' murder of his father Laius. If the relationship is inconsequential, then it should be seen as having no more moral significance than the death of the other men in Laius' company from Delphi. Sophocles. trans. Robert Fagles. *The Three Theban Plays: Antigone*, *Oedipus the King*, *Oedipus at Colonus*. (New York: Penguin Books, 1984), 206.

Scenario 3

The director learns upon receipt of further information regarding the two respective homeless men that vagabond x is, in fact, the director's biological father. Despite the fact that vagabond x was a loving and attentive father, the director has never felt any emotional bond or sense of obligation to vagabond x. The director is neither stunned by this revelation, nor is he moved emotionally. After all, just because vagabond x feels love towards the director, he does not have to reciprocate.

In scenario 3, however, there would seem to be all of the elements that would normally incline us to assume that a special relationship exists. However, the director's perception of the relationship between himself and his father assumes the voluntarist's conception of special responsibilities. If voluntarism is to be consistent, then the voluntarist is forced to concede in such an instance, that the director's cavalier attitude towards his father would be completely justified. After all, the director did not ask to be loved and cared for by his father and being the recipient of such treatment does not necessarily mean that the director has voluntarily assumed special responsibilities.[15]

Despite my belief that the relative callousness of such a view is self-evident, as it is, Scheffler's formulation of the non-voluntarist argument does not seem to offer a satisfactory alternative in response. This is because his argument offers no reasonable explanation for why the director should have an obligation to a relationship he does not value or see as substantively significant. I propose that the presence of a relationship voluntarily entered or otherwise represents a *prima facie* duty to be fulfilled in the absence of other overriding factors.

In practice, my position would hold that despite the fact the director perceives himself as having no greater obligation to vagabond x in scenario 3 than he would to vagabond x in the original formulation of this scenario, he nevertheless has a *prima facie* duty to offer preferential consideration for those parties to whom he is in relationship. The relative degree of that obligation would then be subject to the conditions of the relationship in question, but the presence of some obligation remains absolute.

Scenario 4

The director learns upon receipt of further information regarding the two homeless men that vagabond x is, in fact, the director's abusive biological father, while vagabond y is the director's beloved stepfather. Stunned by this revelation, the director is faced with a dilemma. While recognizing that moral conventions would normally dictate preferential treatment of one's biological father over the comparable needs of others, the director feels no obligation for vagabond x. After all, vagabond y fulfilled the functional parental role vacated by the director's derelict biological father.

In scenario 4, we are presented with the dilemma created by the possibility of competing claims of special responsibility. In the case of undesirable conditions within a relationship. I believe if overriding conditions are present then it is appropriate to diminish or disregard obligations of less immediate moral significance. This does not mean those obligations have ceased to exist. It simply means they have been overridden by weightier concerns. As such, the director in

15. The absurdity of such indifference toward relationships one ought otherwise to have valued is used as a thematic element in many existential works (i.e. Camus' *L'estranger* or Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*). This literary element relies upon the assumption that such indifference is ultimately unnatural or counterintuitive.

scenario 4 may have an obligation to vagabond x by the virtue of his biological ties, however, the conditions of the relationship have been diminished to the point that his obligations now apply more appropriately to vagabond y. Thus, my view is able to deliver an intuitively appealing verdict without sacrificing the idea that special relationships, in themselves, generate special obligations.

Scenario 5

The director learns upon receipt of further information regarding the two homeless men that vagabond x is, in fact, the director's abusive biological father, while vagabond y is a total stranger. Stunned by this revelation, the director is faced with a dilemma. While recognizing that moral conventions would normally dictate preferential treatment of one's biological father over the comparable needs of others, the director feels no obligation for vagabond x. After all, vagabond x was physically and emotionally abusive to the director.

In scenario 5, we are presented with a dilemma as to how the director should respond to the requests of these two men, one a complete stranger and the other a person at whose hands the director has suffered physical and emotional abuse. In the absence of any other qualifying information, as in scenario 4 where the weightier claims of vagabond y overrode duties to vagabond x, I believe it would be immoral to deny the duty to vagabond x in favor of vagabond y. This is due to the fact that, under normal circumstances, the nature of the relationship would be such that the director would have otherwise been assumed to have an obligation to the vagabond x. However, as a consequence of the actions of vagabond x, it might be said that the he has altered the nature of the relationship to the point that it lacks substantive value for the director, and according to Scheffler, any special obligation.

Conversely, the director has no connection, and certainly no obligation, to vagabond y that should qualify his deferment to vagabond y's needs over those of his biological father. Of course, if substantive information arises, such that the need or worthiness of vagabond y supersedes that of vagabond x, then it might be said that the director may appropriately choose to offer shelter to vagabond y instead of vagabond x. In the absence of such qualifying conditions, I hold that the director stands in a position of obligation (in this instance, based on shared familial ties) to vagabond x that he does not have for vagabond y.

One might object that such fidelity to absolute special responsibilities would imply that we are, in the case of an abusive parent, forced to put ourselves in harm's way by offering aid to our abuser. I reject this protest on the grounds that if we are applying the kind of hierarchy of obligation that I have argued for in this paper, one based on the qualifying conditions and nature of the relationship in question, to special responsibilities, then there would be no conceivable scenario in which an individual would be expected to put the minimum responsibilities for special consideration of their abuser above concerns for their own physical safety or mental well-being. This being said, scenario 5 remains a legitimate example, because it is not implied anywhere in the scenario that the director is in any immediate danger of physical harm.

Further, there is no reason to assume that the director ever has to come into any contact with

vagabond x as a result of his affirmative decision to provide assistance. As for the mental stress imposed on the director by the scenario, the prospect of simply allowing the director's staff to provide minimal support and shelter to the director's biological father would not necessarily represent any greater mental stress for the director than that stress brought about by the simple knowledge of vagabond x's presence in the director's general vicinity.

If however, the undue stress of vagabond x's presence in the shelter constitutes an overwhelming burden on the director's psyche, then concerns for his own mental well-being may be said to trump his erstwhile obligation to his abusive father. If on the other hand he rejects the obligation, not on the grounds of any legitimate regard for his own well-being, but out of simple spite, then this would constitute an immoral disregard for the special responsibility to vagabond x on the part of the director.

V.

In this paper, I have attempted to show how our normative conceptions of special relationships that generate special responsibilities are best accommodated by the argument for non-voluntarism. I have elucidated the counterarguments made on behalf of voluntarism and attempted to demonstrate how these claims are inadequate to accommodate our actual moral feelings and practices with regards to special responsibilities.

However, in accepting Samuel Scheffler's formulation of the argument for non-voluntarism, I felt it was necessary to first address his proposition that special responsibilities could be rendered void by the relative conditions of the relationship in question. I attempted to demonstrate how such a proposition would inevitably lead to circularity and ultimately undermine Scheffler's broader argument in favor of non-voluntarism.

Finally, as a means of overcoming this obstacle to non-voluntarism, I attempted to demonstrate that the problem is surmountable if we view such responsibilities through the lens of W.D. Ross' idea of prima facie duties. This would allow conditions to supersede, but not ultimately void, special responsibilities in cases of undesirable conditions. By viewing special responsibilities as representing prima facie duties to those in special relationships, I argue there would be no contradiction in holding that relative conditions of a relationship can affect the degree to which we are otherwise obligated to adhere to absolute duties in special relationships.

The Skeptic's Language Game:

Does Sextus Empiricus Violate Normal Language Use?

ABSTRACT: This paper seeks to critique Pyrrhonean skepticism by way of language analysis. Linguistic aspects of Pyrrhonism are first examined utilizing the later writing of Wittgenstein. Pyrrhonean language-use is then critiqued using H.P. Grice's concept of implicature to demonstrate shared knowledge between speakers. Finally, a teleological model of communication is sketched using ideas from Jerry Fodor. If the Pyrrhonist denies speaking to communicate mental states, we are justified in questioning why we should listen to what she says.

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Introduction and Preliminaries

Near the end of the introduction to his translation of Sextus Empiricus's *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, Benson Mates considers two charges that are brought against the Pyrrhonean skeptic. The first concerns the plausibility of living as a Pyrrhonist.[1] The second concerns a popular tactic for refuting contemporary skepticism—the charge that skeptics unnecessarily abuse normal language-use and in so doing, make their position nearly unintelligible due to confusion over meaning.

That is, the philosophers of language might say, if we could simply get clear on proper word usage, we would be able to make progress on genuine philosophical problems and discard those pseudo-problems, such as skepticism, that arise as by-products of lazy communication. Mates regards the first charge as a sound way to critique Pyrrhonism, but dismisses the second as too strong a position to take against the skeptic.[2] I believe this second critique is rejected too quickly and that language analysis provides fruitful critiques against the Pyrrhonist.

1. It should be noted that hereafter "Pyrrhonist," "Pyrrhonean skeptic," and "skeptic" will be used interchangeably to designate individuals who hold the same philosophical position.
2. Benson Mates, trans. *The Skeptic Way: Sextus Empiricus's Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996): 85.

I will investigate the language-use charge against Pyrrhonism and suggest that while language analysis may not entirely refute Pyrrhonean skepticism, several tenets of the Pyrrhonean outlook are seriously undermined by this method of analysis. I will begin by employing concepts from the later writing of Wittgenstein as a way to elucidate the Pyrrhonist position concerning language-use. Next, I will attempt to critique the Pyrrhonist by implementing some of the pragmatic principles of conversation described by H.P. Grice. While the first two methods ultimately fall short of rebutting the skeptic, I will finally utilize Jerry Fodor's distinction between "saying" and "meaning" to argue for a teleological model of communication in which normal language users produce utterances for the sake of meaning and communicating the content of their mental states. Through my account, if the Pyrrhonist is unable to admit that his or her linguistic utterances correspond to pre-linguistic mental states, we can justifiably disregard the implications presented by the skeptic.

The Pyrrhonist outlook, or *agōgē*, is characterized by a refusal to commit to knowledge claims about the way things are. The Pyrrhonist is willing to consider several arguments, but opts for a kind of ontological agnosticism. The skeptic states, "what seems to him to be the case and is reporting his *pathos* without belief, not firmly maintaining anything concerning what exists externally."[3]

The assertions are phenomenological reports of what is happening in the mind of the Pyrrhonist, and result most often in a state of *aporia*, or being at a loss. This is the foundation of a central tenet for Pyrrhonism—that of "living by the appearances" and not concerning oneself with the distinction between appearance and reality. It further results in some very particular linguistic behavior on the part of the Pyrrhonist.

The skeptic makes no direct reference to objects, but rather must phrase assertions so as to avoid presupposing an objective reality.[4] Therefore, an assertion concerning the taste of honey cannot take the form of: (1) "The honey seems to me to be sweet," but rather must be worded as: (2) "It appears to me now that the honey is sweet."

Meaning as Use: A Wittgensteinian Approach to Pyrrhonism

The later writings of Ludwig Wittgenstein may serve to clarify some issues concerning language and the difficulties that arise in examining meaning.[5] By implementing some of his concepts, we can gain insight specifically into the linguistic commitments of the Pyrrhonist. In a series of published lectures known as *The Blue Book*, Wittgenstein departed from a camp of philosophers who sought to analyze and prescribe how language should work through the rules of logic. With his previous publication, *Tractatus-Logico Philosophicus*, Wittgenstein thought he had successfully dissolved the perennial problems of philosophy by showing that they were only problems of our misuse of language, and that when our speech deviated too far from the rules of logic, we would end up uttering statements that were devoid of meaning.

This seemed like a promising way to clear up misunderstandings for many who worked within analytic philosophy. But Wittgenstein's project

3. Ibid: 91.

4. Benson Mates, "On Refuting the Skeptic," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* Vol. 58 (1984): 23.

5. It should be noted that I, in no way, intend to equate the philosophical projects of Sextus and Wittgenstein, but rather intend to use concepts from the latter's writing to gain insight into the linguistic aspects of the former.

became frustrated by what Mates calls in his introduction, "the awkward fact that language users do say precisely the kinds of things they allegedly 'can't say,' and they do manage to communicate."[6] That is, communication does not seem to break down due to befuddlements over the logical structures of sentences or the correspondence between a statement and a "picture of reality." Complications like these led Wittgenstein to consider further the meanings of words and to posit a maxim that continued through his later writing—that a word's meaning *is* the way it is *used*.[7] This departure led him to focus more keenly on the social aspect of language, particularly on how meaning is established as a matter of convention.

Early in *The Blue Book*, Wittgenstein comments on the difficulty in explaining the significance of written language. He regards the physical markings that denote words as uninteresting, but notes that the *meaning* communicated by these markings gives them life.[8] This seems clear enough, but it also raises another question: what exactly is meaning? In this line of inquiry, we arrive at the conclusion that meaning must be derived from something extra-linguistic. It cannot be the case, for instance, that one word gets its meaning solely by association with other words. If this were the case, there would be some sort of "empty meaning" passed from word to word in an infinite regress that would get us no closer to its origin.

Wittgenstein's consideration of meaning helps to legitimate the Pyrrhonist's use of language. According to Wittgenstein's account, when we have described how a word is used, we have said all there is to say about its meaning. The whole problem of trying to account for the "essence" of meaning was a false one for Wittgenstein. On philosophers searching for the meaning of words, Wittgenstein wrote, "we are looking for the use of a sign, but we look for it as though it were an object *co-existing* with the sign."[9] The meaning is not another *thing* that somehow exists alongside the word itself, but rather is socially defined by the way in which the word is used.

This functional definition can help us draw a parallel between Wittgenstein's position and the Pyrrhonean tenet of acting by appearances to successfully participate in a linguistic community. Sextus would likely claim that language-use is a cultural norm that he abides by, and that he can successfully engage in language-use by learning the relevant cultural practices. There is no consideration for the Pyrrhonist about what meaning really is; there is only the appearance. All other questions pertaining to a word's meaning result in *epochē*, or suspense of judgment, and the whole question of whether the meaning of the word is identical with its appearance is abandoned.

Perhaps the problem of examining meaning is not a productive endeavor when questioning Sextus, or perhaps it really is a category mistake that has masqueraded as a genuine philosophical complication, as Wittgenstein thought. In either case, the consideration of meaning serves to bolster the skeptic's position and Mates' defense. A Pyrrhonean skeptic would likely point out that the acquisition of meaning in any environment is simply a matter of convention. Even in modern studies of language acquisition,

6. Mates. *The Skeptic Way*: 84.
7. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958): 5.
8. Ibid: 4.
9. Ibid: 5.

there is little evidence that people have trouble correctly using language because of a misconception about meaning.

Furthermore, word meanings do not become problematic unless we make a concerted effort to examine them. We do not necessarily *need* a way to talk about meaning to participate in normal discourse. But, if semantics cannot offer us a way to raise issue with the Pyrrhonist, perhaps concepts borrowed from another linguistic subfield can.

The Pyrrhonist in Conversation: Gricean Pragmatics

Philosopher of language, H.P. Grice, laid out in his essay, "Logic and Conversation," some basic principles for the way conversation must work to be productive. These principles demonstrate shared knowledge between speakers, and this seemingly contradicts the Pyrrhonean tenet of living by the appearances. Grice takes as a pivotal point the idea that conversation happens between two people, presupposing that each is capable of understanding and conveying their thoughts through language.[10] Communication depends on a special kind of cooperation between speakers, and without this mutual effort, the conversation can never get started. Grice states that conversations are "cooperative efforts; and each participant recognizes in them, to some extent, a common purpose or set of purposes."[11] This requires speakers to meet half-way in order to move conversation along. Thus, our question becomes: can the Pyrrhonist live by appearances and successfully participate in conversation?

Grice notes that speakers are regularly able to engage in complex linguistic behaviors that do not always involve making simple propositions. Most notable is his concept of implicature.[12] This describes what often happens in conversation when a speaker implies a meaning that goes beyond the literal reading of his or her utterance. But, what happens within a conversation for the implicature to work? In short, exchanges like these necessitate an assumption of shared knowledge between the two speakers. Grice established the Cooperative Principle[13], and further denoted four general maxims for successful communication. I will restrict myself to dealing with the maxim of Relevance to show how both following and violating this maxim demonstrates shared knowledge between two speakers. If conversation presupposes shared knowledge, then the Pyrrhonist is forced to admit that either he or she *does* have knowledge beyond appearances, or that he or she cannot adequately use language in order to converse.

The maxim of Relevance concerns the kind of information that is appropriate to give in conversation, and Grice notes that this may encompass many different aspects of conversation, such as changes in subject matter.[14] This seems logical enough and we could imagine a naïve speaker assuming that all conversation must necessarily obey this maxim in order to be successful. But any speaker knows that in everyday conversation this maxim is not always followed. In fact, when this maxim is

10. H.P. Grice, "Logic and Conversation," *Syntax and Semantics* Vol. 3 (1975): 167.
11. Ibid: 167.
12. Ibid: 166.
13.Ibid: 167.
14. Ibid: 168.

violated, some interesting insight is given into the complex nature of ordinary language-use.

Let us consider an instance in which this maxim is violated for the purpose of drawing an implicature to see what this can show us about knowledge shared by the participants of the conversation.

> Consider the following brief conversation:
> (1) Sally: What is your opinion on the current healthcare controversy?
> (2) John: It certainly is eating up airtime on television.

Here, we have an instance of an apparent violation of the maxim of Relevance by John. He does not provide information concerning his opinion to adequately answer Sally's question, and instead of directly stating his opinion, John notes another aspect related to Sally's query. This alone is not all that interesting, but what is interesting is what John may be implying by giving such a short answer and violating this maxim.

We may be able to infer from such a short answer that John would rather not talk about heated topics such as the healthcare controversy. Or, John may not be that knowledgeable about the topic, and instead of embarrassing himself in front of Sally, he tries to divert the focus of the conversation elsewhere. This is intriguing, but even more interesting is how John goes about establishing these implications.

For Sally to pick up on John's implication that he does not want to talk about the healthcare controversy, it is necessary for both speakers to share quite a bit of knowledge. First, John must know that Sally will be able to understand that his brief answer is implying that he would like to drop further conversation on the topic. He must assume that Sally is well accustomed to the linguistic practices that are typical of their environment and that she has the cognitive capacity to step beyond the literal meaning of his answer.

At first glance, one might question what television airtime has to do with John's opinion of the controversy over healthcare. The fact that the controversy frequently appears on television says nothing about John's view, but, it is likely that Sally will be able to interpret the implication made by John via his violation of the maxim of Relevance. Even if she is not able to pick up on his motive immediately, further questioning may yield his explicit response that he would rather not talk about it anymore.

This kind of extensive, shared knowledge between speakers poses a serious problem for the Pyrrhonean skeptic. The kinds of normal language practices, such as Grice's implications, which are carried out on a day-to-day basis, invoke a series of presuppositions that are as simple as assuming both speakers know the same language and as complex as assuming that another participant will pick up on what is implied by a statement.

Grice's maxims and speakers' violations of them highlight the complex interplay between two speakers that often happens in normal discourse. Considering Sextus has maxims such as living by the "ordinary regimen of life,"[15] it is not out of the question to assume that any

15. Mates, *The Skeptic Way:* 92.

Pyrrhonist would likewise engage in such linguistic behaviors as violations of the Maxims described by Grice, and that even a Pyrrhonist would need to presuppose certain things to successfully participate in conversation.

How conversation could happen for a Pyrrhonist may be difficult to see. It is tempting to claim that if the Pyrrhonist regards another person in the conversation as an appearance, then the possibility of communication seems halted. Any kind of Gricean cooperation seems impossible, for the Pyrrhonist would need to grant not only that there is another person present, but also that this person has a mind, can speak the language, and is capable of conveying their thoughts in an intelligible way. Sextus clearly states that to get caught up in the distinction between appearance and reality is precisely what diverts people from achieving happiness.[16] But, for conversation to work, even the Pyrrhonist must make commitments to cooperate in communicating. That is, communication depends at least partially on social contexts and this very idea presupposes other speakers, other minds, and inter-subjectivity.

However tempting this conclusion may be, Sextus has ways to respond. The Pyrrhonean retort will ultimately claim that all aspects of language, like everything under examination by the Pyrrhonist, are simply appearances. How language or conversation works may not even be an interesting question to the Pyrrhonist, and if pursued, would likely lead to the Pyrrhonist's *aporia*, or being at a loss.

We can charge the Pyrrhonist with speaking strangely or even frustrating the normal principles of conversation, but to claim the Pyrrhonist does not know how to use language is simply too strong. Sextus clearly knows how to use language, but is unwilling to theorize about what meaning might be, what language communicates about another person's mind, or how conversation is possible. It may be possible to attempt to critique Pyrrhonism by postulating logical consequences of the Pyrrhonist's mental behavior, but so long as he or she adheres to the split between mental and physical life, the Pyrrhonist will always have a response to such criticisms.

Fodor: Saying and Meaning

In the cases described, the Pyrrhonist has demonstrated that he or she has a way of talking his or her way out of trouble, but I am unsatisfied with these answers. These answers exhibit somewhat sound reasoning, but the Pyrrhonist still presents complications for the philosopher and the layperson. My final attempt at a cogent critique of the skeptic will employ a model of communication that draws a connection between mental states and linguistic utterances. Let us call this the "teleological model."

This model demonstrates the elusive connection between thought and speech that the Pyrrhonist seeks to avoid in order to justifiably divorce her mental life from her actions. Finally, if this model proves convincing, we can justifiably ask, "why does the skeptic talk the way she does and why would we want to talk that way or even listen?"

There are two options for the skeptic under this criticism. Either he or she admits to using

16. Ibid: 93

language as everyone does—as a tool to produce utterances that correspond to pre-linguistic mental states—or rejects this and leaves his or her interlocutor puzzled about the significance of anything the skeptic has said. That is, if the Pyrrhonist openly admits to producing utterances that have no correspondence to his or her mental states, are we not forced to categorize his or her speech as nonsense?

The teleological model of communication relies on mental representations that are made public by language. Two conceptions of meaning arise from this model discussed by philosopher of mind, Jerry Fodor. One version allows us to ask the question, "what does sentence *S* mean?" while the other allows us to ask the parallel question "what do you mean *by* sentence *S*?"[17] In conversation, we often request disambiguation of how a speaker intends to *use* a sentence, not what the sentence itself means. The difference is that one question pertains to the meaning of a piece of linguistic information, while the other is concerned with how accurately a speaker employs a sentence to convey their mental state. The notion that "the act of meaning a thing is distinct from the act of uttering a sentence"[18] allows the skeptic to legitimize his or her claim that Pyrrhonism calls for conformity with social actions, while effecting a great change in one's mental life. But, it is precisely this distinction that lands the Pyrrhonist in antinomy.

"Meaning" seems to be a different act from "saying." We can mean something different from a literal interpretation of a sentence, as evidenced by Grice, and we can ask what you mean *by* a given sentence, thereby presupposing a mental state that is the starting place of meaning, as in the case of Fodor. This model implies a kind of teleology in the act of saying, having some intuitive explanatory power. We utter sentences for the sake of meaning something, and when the meaning is unclear, we ask the speaker to provide more information until we understand the correspondence between the sentence and the mental state.[19]

Even the Pyrrhonist implicitly uses language to express her *agōgē*, thereby following the above model when speaking. The act of saying a state of affairs appears to be a certain way implies a special purpose in talking this way. Speaking in a way so different from normal language-use, the Pyrrhonist likely wishes to create distance between *his or her* meaning and the meaning of common speech. If the Pyrrhonist rejects the above model as positing unnecessary theoretical entities such as "meaning," "mind," and "language," then we are justified in asking what the *purpose* of the skeptic's speech is.

"But," the skeptic's sympathizer might interject, "the Pyrrhonist has a response ready for even *that*!" Of course he or she does. I have shown that the skeptic will always have an answer to these objections. In a way, these responses make sense. However, they are coherent only insofar as they employ a model of "meaning" and "saying" that demonstrates a connection between language and thought. The Pyrrhonist is able to eek his or her way out of the philosophical corners he or she is backed into by appealing to a large set of shared knowledge and by attempting to make clear state of mind through language.

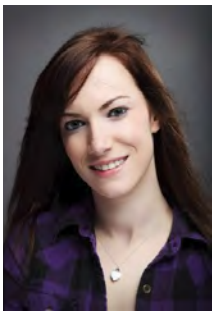
17. Jerry Fodor, "What Do You Mean?" *The Journal of Philosophy* (1960): 499-501.
18. Fodor, 500.
19. Fodor, 501.

We are only able to understand the Pyrrhonist's points by invoking the teleological model of "meaning" and "saying." We keep the *purpose* of a conversation and the function of certain sentences in mind when speaking with someone, and these principles make communication possible.

So, in asking the Pyrrhonist *why* he or she talks as he or she does, we can anticipate a response involving "social norms" and "living by the appearances," but, if the Pyrrhonean skeptic refuses to admit to using language to communicate pre-linguistic content represented in the mind, we do not necessarily need to stay to listen to it.

A Substantive Revision to Firth's Ideal Observer Theory

ABSTRACT: This paper examines Ideal Observer Theory and uses criticisms of it to lay the foundation for a revised theory first suggested by Jonathan Harrison called Ideal Moral Reaction Theory. Harrison's Ideal Moral Reaction Theory stipulates that the being producing an ideal moral reaction be dispassionate. This paper argues for the opposite: an Ideal Moral Reaction must be performed by a passionate being because it provides motivation for action and places ethical decision-making within human grasp.



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In an article titled "Ethical Absolutism and the Ideal Observer," Roderick Firth advocates a theory that has come to be known as the Ideal Observer Theory. Ideal Observer Theory asserts that right and wrong are determined by an ideal observer's reaction to a given act. That is, any act X is morally permissible if an ideal observer would approve of X; conversely, any act Y is morally blameworthy if an ideal observer would disapprove of Y.

In this paper, I examine several of the strengths and weaknesses of Ideal Observer Theory and explain how together, these strengths and weaknesses lay the foundation for a revised version of Ideal Observer Theory which can be termed Ideal Moral Reaction Theory. Although this theory was first suggested by Jonathan Harrison, I make a substantive revision to his conception of the theory when I argue that an individual attempting an ideal moral reaction would be a passionate being, rather than the dispassionate one Harrison suggests. This, I argue, places ethical decision-making within the grasp of human beings and thus makes it a pragmatic concept.

Firth expounds upon several characteristics of an ideal observer. An ideal observer is omniscient with respect to non-ethical facts, omnipercipient, disinterested, dispassionate, consistent, and in other respects, normal.[1] Some of these characteristics require further elucidation.

1. Roderick Firth, "Ethical Absolutism and the Ideal Observer," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (1952): 333-344.

The requirement for omniscience is a weighty one, as it strongly limits who (or what) can act as an ideal observer. Firth argues, however, that "to say that an ideal observer is omniscient is to insure that no limits are put on the kinds or the quality of factual information which are available to influence his ethically significant reactions."[2] That is, according to Firth, an ideal observer must be omniscient so as to avoid being mistaken when making ethical decisions. All relevant facts must be taken into consideration. In order to ensure that all relevant facts *are*, in fact, taken into consideration, Firth prescribes omniscience as a necessary characteristic of an ideal observer.

Firth's requirement for omnipercipience also greatly limits ideal observers, as an omnipercipient being is one that "must be able ... simultaneously to visualize all actual facts, and the consequences of all possible acts in any given situation."[3] That is, as Firth suggests, the ideal observer must have "extraordinary powers of imagination."[4]

Further, Firth argues that the ideal observer must be impartial and that impartiality requires the ideal observer to be both disinterested and dispassionate. He argues that a simple lack of interest in a given situation is not enough to ensure impartiality, thus arguing the ideal observer must also lack the passions that so often infect the thoughts and actions of most human beings.

The ideal observer must also be consistent, meaning that he or she would not react differently to two situations exhibiting the same characteristics. That is, if A = B, the ideal observer would not disapprove of A and simultaneously approve of B.

Finally, Firth asserts that the ideal observer must be, in all other respects, a normal being. By normal, Firth simply means this individual cannot be suffering from a brain tumor or psychological disorder that may skew his or her judgment on ethical matters. All other aspects of this being must be simply normal.

In his article "The Definition of an 'Ideal Observer' Theory in Ethics," Richard Brandt discusses seven reasons why this theory should be considered further. Two of these reasons have implications for the revised Ideal Observer Theory I will later suggest, so it is to these I will now turn. First, Brandt writes that this theory, "explains why our feelings and attitudes – and especially our sympathies – are (and properly are) engaged in ethical reflection, and why moral philosophers have thought that moral experience is distinctively a union of cognition and emotion."[5] That is, this theory explains why we incorporate our feelings and attitudes into ethical decision-making, as this is also what an ideal observer does when making ethical decisions.

Second, Ideal Observer Theory, "explains why we value the advice of knowledgeable, impartial, and consistent persons at times of moral decision, and why we reject previous moral opinions of our own which we think reflect self-interest, inconsistency, or lack of information."[6] That is, most individuals value such things as knowledge, impartiality, and

2. Firth, "Ethical Absolutism," 334.
3. Ibid: 335.
4. Ibid.
5. Richard Brandt, "The Definition of an 'Ideal Observer' Theory in Ethics," Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, Vol. 15, No. 3 (1955): 407.
6. Brandt, "Definition," 407.

consistency in ethical-decision making; conversely, they find lack of knowledge, self-interest, or lack of consistency as characteristics antithetical to objective ethical reflection. Hence, this theory is consistent with what most people pragmatically value in ethical reflection.

Although this theory has its strengths, Ideal Observer Theory has been scrutinized in a variety of ways. In the following pages, I will address three of the problems recognized by philosophers: the problem of omniscience and omnipercipience, the problem of a dispassionate observer, and a problem that I have termed the problem of the lucky guess.

Richard Brandt argues that the characteristics of omniscience and omnipercipience, as deemed necessary by Firth, "eat away at the human characteristics of the ideal observer."[7] Brandt suggests that no human being can successfully achieve ideal observer status if omniscience and omnipercipience are required. This status must be delegated only to a God-like or superhuman being. Consequently, Ideal Observer Theory can do little to help us in making important ethical decisions.

"Relativising the Ideal Observer Theory," an article by Charles Taliaferro, suggests that omniscience (and, it can be assumed, omnipercipience as well) is not metaphysically impossible when he writes, "could not God simply create a human who knew the truth value of all propositions?"[8] That is, it seems metaphysically possible for God to create an omniscient human. Since this is possible, he argues, omniscience and omnipercipience do not present problems for Ideal Observer Theory. This solution, however, is inadequate.

In addition to assuming the existence of God, an assumption not necessary in Ideal Observer Theory, the argument seems to beg the question. That is, given that the problem exists because no known human being exhibits the characteristics of omniscience or omnipercipience, creating a solution by saying that one *could* be created does very little to help us in making practical ethical decisions.

Given that ethics should be concerned with practical elements rather than nearly impossible metaphysical entities, it seems the possibility of the creation of an omniscient and omnipercipient human being does little to actually help us. Since a normal human being cannot achieve omniscience or omnipercipience, it seems inconsequential to suggest that this could occur. Furthermore, common intuition tells us that no normal human being can achieve this status; thus, additional justification for this claim seems unnecessary. It seems the burden of proof is on the individual who claims there *are* human beings who exhibit these qualities, rather than the individual who does not.

Instead of arguing that omniscience and omnipercipience are necessary, Brandt suggests an alternative:

> What a person needs to be vividly conscious of, in judging or reacting to an ethical situation, is simply all those facts vivid awareness of which would make a difference to his ethical reaction to this case if (to use Firth's other qualifications) he were a disinterested, dispassionate but otherwise normal person.[9]

7. Ibid: 409.
8. Charles Taliaferro, "Relativising the Ideal Observer Theory," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (1988): 125.
9. Brandt, "Definition," 410.

Brandt is suggesting that an ideal observer need not be omniscient or omnipercipient, but rather simply exhibit these other Firthian qualities in order to be classified as an ideal observer. This suggestion, however, is also inadequate because it presents a problem which can be called the problem of relevant facts.

The problem can be formulated as follows: if a being is neither omniscient nor omnipercipient, he cannot be sure he is "vividly aware" of all the relevant facts of an ethical situation because his knowledge is limited. He cannot know which facts would make a difference to his ethical reaction unless he is aware of all other non-ethical facts. An individual needs omniscience and omnipercipience in order to ensure that all relevant facts are considered. Without knowing all facts, an ethical decision-maker cannot have this assurance.

Given the problem of omniscience and omnipercipience *and* the problem of relevant facts, we have reached an impasse with regard to Ideal Observer Theory. On the one hand, omniscience and omnipercipience limit an ideal observer to a God-like or superhuman being, thus making the theory impractical in ethical reflection. On the other hand, taking away the omniscience and omnipercipience requirements and instead incorporating the ethically-relevant solution regarding knowledge of facts, exhibits circularity because an individual cannot know he or she has all ethically relevant facts without in fact knowing all facts. It is for this reason that the problem of omniscience and omnipercipience is such a serious problem with no solution yet to solve it.

In the article, "Some Comments on Professor Firth's Ideal Observer Theory," Jonathan Harrison raises the problem of a dispassionate observer when he writes, "a being who had no passions ... would have no moral reactions."[10] A being that had no emotions or sympathies regarding an ethical dilemma would consequently hold no moral reaction to such a dilemma. What, then, would be the cause of this dispassionate observer's reactions? If an ideal observer were completely dispassionate, he or she would not care enough to make a decision regarding an ethical dilemma.

Harrison further argues if, "you allow an ideal observer to have passions, you are faced with the problem of specifying which of his passions may affect his moral reactions, and which may not."[11] What criteria do we have to determine which passions should be accepted as influential in ethical decision-making and which should not?

Thus, it seems we have reached another impasse in regards to Ideal Observer Theory. Arguing that an ideal observer should be dispassionate is problematic because it allows no room for right decision-making, as a dispassionate observer would fail to *want* to make a decision. However, allowing an ideal observer to retain passions is problematic because one must then determine which passions can be allowed in ethical reflection and which would impede objective decision-making.

I have developed a rudimentary solution to the problem of a dispassionate observer, as will be discussed shortly. The problem I have termed "the problem of the lucky guess" is further proof that Ideal Observer Theory needs substantive

10. Jonathan Harrison, "Some Comments on Professor Firth's Ideal Observer Theory," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (1956): 260.
11. Harrison, "Comments," 260.

revisions or additions. Although Firth describes in great detail the characteristics that constitute an ideal observer, he does little to suggest how a non-ideal observer could actually make ethical decisions. The problem of the lucky guess is a problem of practicality. An example can best explain this problem.

Take Ethan, a calm, conscientious, rational decision-maker who has attempted to gain all of the relevant facts of a situation in which ethical reflection is necessary. Now consider Eric, an erratic, irrational, hasty decision-maker who has little knowledge of the facts of a situation. Since Ideal Observer Theory depends only on the reaction of an ideal observer, Eric could just as easily possess the ideal observer's response to an ethical decision as Ethan, despite the fact that Ethan exhibits more rationality and conscientiousness regarding ethical decision-making.

An epistemic "lucky guess" on the ethical implications of a given action could be correct, even though the lucky ethical decision-maker failed to take into consideration those characteristics we deem worthy of consideration, i.e. knowledge of the situation, rationality, consistency, etc. Ultimately, the problem of the lucky guess illustrates that Firthian Ideal Observer Theory gives us no method for determining right action and, consequently, places the epistemic lucky guess on the same level as a guess based in reason and rationality.

What do the problems of omniscience and omnipercipience, the dispassionate observer, and the lucky guess mean for Ideal Observer Theory? As I have suggested, these problems indicate that Firth's theory requires substantive revision. The solution I offer to these problems – and the revision to Ideal Observer Theory I suggest – was first considered by Jonathan Harrison when he wrote that individuals should consider ideal moral reactions as characteristic of correct ethical decisions, as opposed to the concept of an ideal observer. He writes:

> You may simply define 'ideal moral reaction' as one which is disinterested, dispassionate, etc. There is no need for the person who has the ideal reaction to A to be disinterested, dispassionate, and so on, on every occasion on which he experiences a moral reaction. Hence observers who are far from ideal may have ideal moral reactions. Hence the fact that there are no ideal observers would not prevent there being ideal moral reactions, and so statements about 'all ideal reactions' need not be statements about null classes, even if statements about ideal observers are.[12]

Harrison is suggesting that we consider ideal moral reactions to situations, which he argues can be defined as reactions that are disinterested, dispassionate, etc. The point Harrison makes is clear: when we talk of ideal observers, we are not talking about anything that actually exists – that is, unless God or superhuman beings exist, which, as previously discussed, need not be considered. Ideal moral reactions, on the other hand, *could* exist. It is to this concept that I will now turn in an attempt to expound upon Harrison's suggestion.

Harrison argues that an ideal moral reaction would consist of the following requirements:

> (a) It would not be altered by any increase in knowledge or true opinion by the observer whose reaction it is, whether this increase in knowledge or true opinion takes the form of the addition of

12. Harrison, "Comments," 257.

> any one piece of information, or any possible combination of pieces of information.
> (b) To make sure that the class of ideal reactions is not null, I cannot say that the observer who has the reaction has no false beliefs. Instead I shall stipulate that he has no false beliefs which would be such that the removal of any, either severally, or in any combination, alters his reaction.[13]

With (a) and (b), Harrison is attempting to solve the impasse between omniscience and omnipercipience and relevant facts. Rather than having an ethical decision-maker omniscient and omnipercipient, Harrison first suggests that the decision-maker's ethical choice must not be altered by any further information. This avoids the problem that no being can be omniscient or omnipercipient, yet fails to encounter the problem of relevant facts because it does not suggest that one must know what knowledge is relevant or irrelevant. Instead, when making an ethical decision the individual must attempt to gain as much knowledge as possible about the situation – enough to reasonably ensure him or her that the decision would not be altered by further evidence.

Although an individual can never be epistemically certain he or she has attained that level of knowledge, it gives him or her an incentive to seek the facts, and to do so to the extent that his or her knowledge gives an answer *beyond a reasonable doubt*.

Harrison is further by-passing these problems because he accepts that individuals may have false beliefs, which is a fact of human existence, yet something Firth's ideal observer could not possess. This fact simply provides individuals making ethical decisions a further incentive to seek as much knowledge as possible about the situation before making any decision.

Harrison, however, argues an individual making an ethical decision must be disinterested and dispassionate; that is, he argues for the same impartiality that Firth does for his ideal observer. Agreeing with Taliaferro and his suggestion that a dispassionate observer would not make any decision at all, I argue that an individual seeking to attain this type of ideal moral reaction to an ethical situation would, in fact, be allowed passions, as it is something that most human beings have whether they are aware of it or not.

For instance, most human beings would cringe at the thought of children being tortured during the Nazi Holocaust. This reaction is passionate, yet does not seem to be an incorrect reaction. Indeed, it seems some level of passion is necessary to make ethical decisions – what matters is that an individual has the right level of passion, a fact which has already been shown to be problematic. How, then, are we to determine what the right level of passion should be?

I argue it is simply human for an individual to feel passions, and since we are talking about humans, rather than some metaphysical ideal observer, this is okay. In fact, given that ethics is entirely about human beings, it seems unwise to develop a theory to the contrary, as the dispassionate observer does. With regard to which passions should be admitted and which should be rejected, I suggest that we simply require that these passions do not cloud the judgment of the ethical decision maker to the extent that he or she would ignore all other facts of the situation at hand. As long as the passions

12. Ibid: 258.

do not hold more sway than a substantial amount of evidence towards the contrary viewpoint, those passions should be admitted in ethical reflection.

How does the concept pf an ideal moral reaction, as opposed to an ideal observer, fare with the problem of the lucky guess? As we can stipulate what it takes to have an ideal moral reaction, we can suggest what steps an individual should take in order to achieve an ideal moral reaction. Consequently, the concept of a lucky guess is no longer as problematic – Ethan, our rational, consistent, knowledgeable decision-maker, would indeed be closer to making an ideal moral judgment than Eric, the erratic, irrational decision maker who could have fared just as well under Ideal Observer Theory.

My contribution to Ideal Moral Reaction Theory is simple: remove the requirement that the reaction be dispassionate, as this requirement is nonsensical because passions are necessary for any reaction to occur. Ultimately, my conception of an ideal moral reaction is one in which an individual is disinterested, rational, has sufficient knowledge of the situation at hand, and would be consistent if the given situation were to arise again. This is superior to the one defended by Harrison because it takes into account human passions that exist whether an individual claims they do or not.

My theory also accounts for the problems of omniscience and omnipercipience by not requiring them, yet accounts for the problem of relevant facts by arguing that an individual must not be persuaded to change his or her opinion by the addition or removal of facts. Further, it does not succumb to the problem of the lucky guess because it pragmatically offers a means for an individual to work towards making an ideal moral decision. This theory also maintains the strengths of ideal observer theory mentioned earlier: it still explains the ways in which our attitudes and passions influence our thinking and explains why we regard individuals who are rational, consistent, and level-headed as better ethical decision-makers.

In this paper, I have reviewed the Ideal Observer Theory provided by Roderick Firth and examined some of the strengths and weaknesses of this theory. I have further argued that, in order to avoid the problems presented by Ideal Observer Theory, we should instead adopt a theory of ideal moral reactions, as first introduced by Jonathan Harrison. In adopting his theory, I have altered the concept of an ideal moral reaction to be one that is passionate, as passions must exist for a reaction to occur at all. The argument is strengthened because it makes ideal moral reactions possible for humans to actually attain.

If Nietzsche Only Knew

ABSTRACT: This paper compares Buddhism with the philosophies of Friedrich Nietzsche and speculates how he would have reacted to Buddhism if he had understood it more accurately. I will focus the discussion on two central philosophies of Buddhism, which Nietzsche misinterpreted: Nirvana and suffering. It will be shown through an examination of selected writings and key philosophies of Nietzsche that if he had a better understanding of Nirvana and suffering then he would have been significantly more favorable towards Buddhism and would have found it to have close similarities to his own beliefs.

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While it is evident that Friedrich Nietzsche misconstrued the philosophies of Buddhism, a topic which remains of interest is how Nietzsche would have reacted to Buddhism with a correct interpretation. The focus of this paper, therefore, is to compare Buddhism with the philosophies of Nietzsche and to show how he would have responded to the particular concepts and beliefs which would have influenced his reaction.

This paper will discuss two central philosophies of Buddhism which Nietzsche misinterpreted: Nirvana and suffering. It will be shown that based on his own philosophies, if Nietzsche had understood Nirvana and suffering correctly, he would have been significantly more favorable towards Buddhism and would have found it to bear close similarity to his own beliefs.

As an introduction to the issue, it is important to understand that during the late 19th century in Europe, Eastern philosophy was still beginning to diffuse into Western language and comprehension. First-hand material had not dispersed throughout Europe and disciplines such as Buddhism were misrepresented through second-hand sources. As a result, incorrect

interpretations inevitably developed in the West during the time of Nietzsche's writing.

Additionally, in *Nietzsche and Buddhism*, Benjamin A. Elman explains that Nietzsche began his introduction to Eastern philosophy under the influence of Schopenhauer, and in a way, was predisposed to react to Buddhism in terms of his close reading of Schopenhauer. Heinrich Dumoulin also confirms this in his work, claiming that "[Nietzsche] owes his understanding of Buddhism entirely to Schopenhauer and to the manner in which he understood Schopenhauer."[1] According to Dumoulin, Schopenhauer did in fact have a considerable influence on the German interpretation of Buddhism; however, it was not very balanced or accurate because of the limited understanding of Eastern philosophy during that time.

In a different work also titled *Nietzsche and Buddhism*, Freny Mistry states, "Nietzsche's interpretations of Buddhism are based on translations and secondary sources then available, the unreliability of which owes not least to the paucity of first-hand material on Buddhism accessible to nineteenth-century Europe."[2] Therefore, it is not to say that Nietzsche simply did not understand the Buddhist principles, but rather that the poor predisposition of his sources combined with his significant influence from Schopenhauer did not allow for precise and thorough interpretations.

The first concept being discussed is that Nietzsche misinterpreted Nirvana. It has been shown through multiple sources that Nirvana in no way implies an extinguishing of the individual as well as that contrary to early Western interpretations. The fruits of Nirvana are intended to be practiced within the surrounding world. Enlightenment is reflected through compassionate engagement with other individuals as opposed to being enjoyed simply for ascetic, self-interested purposes that remove the individual from society and from the conditions of the present reality.

> What is extinguished on the attainment of nirvana is simply that self-centered, self-assertive life to which unenlightened man tends to cling as if it were the highest good and the final security. The truly 'real' is not extinguished when nirvana is reached: rather, the real is then attained.[3]

What has also been clarified is that Buddhism by no means advocates a dogmatic travel of the Noble Eight Fold Path to attain Nirvana. Part of the beauty within the philosophies of Buddhism is that there are multiple ways in which they may be expressed, an aspect that encourages non-harming individuality for each Buddhist.

> In her recent work, Sallie King elaborates this point further:
> The Buddha never asked anyone to believe anything on his authority. On the contrary, he urged people to look into everything they were told, including the teachings of the multiple religious teachers circulating in India at the time; to observe their

1. Heinrich Dumoulin, "Buddhism and Nineteenth-Century German Philosophy," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (1981).
2. Freny Mistry, *Nietzsche and Buddhism*, (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1981): 9.
3. Nancy Ross, Buddhism: *A Way of Life and Thought* (New York: Random House, 1981): 30.

> own lives and mind; and to believe something only when they were convinced of it on the basis of their own personal experiential knowledge.[4]

It is here that one may understand the first significant affinity between Nietzsche and Buddhism, as the idea conveyed in this passage is similar to the genealogical critique that Nietzsche advocated passionately in his own philosophies.

Nirvana can be described as a profound mental state in which individual personalities not only maintain, but also develop to a high and refined level. The individual continues to exist within the present reality, living by the wisdom of their own experience while practicing *kusala*[5] (wholesome acts, thought or speech, or action motivated by compassion, self-discipline and awareness) in society and the surrounding world. The individual lives by values that he or she has created based on his or her understanding of reality, seeing through what is referred to as *maya* in Eastern thought—the illusory conception of the world—and asserting themselves in the direction of their own experiential truths with compassion and awareness.

Nietzsche's response to Buddhism, if he understood Nirvana correctly, would be favorable if one examines the dimensions of the active nihilist—the "increased power of the spirit,"[6] which Nietzsche held as the exemplar figure of a strong individual. The active nihilist in the face of the "death of God" must take the necessary actions to re-create meaning within his or her life. For Nietzsche, this is accomplished through the process of deconstructing, re-imagining and re-creating values that are most fitting to the present reality "as it is."

Through the philosophy of the active nihilist, Nietzsche wanted to show that life is not to be denied but unconditionally affirmed and embraced. He believed that one should engage reality as it is and live according to one's own values as determined by his/ her experience. Active nihilism is not to be considered an end in any way; rather, it is the transitional stage in which the individual accepts that there is no inherent meaning in the universe and proceeds to use that belief to initiate the re-creation of ideals and goals for him or herself. It is from the stage of the active nihilist that an individual may strive for the heights of the supreme free spirit, the *Ubermensch*.

Similar to Nietzsche's active nihilist, Buddhist philosophy advocates that one is to live in the present moment, acknowledging and accepting reality as it is. Buddhism also revolves around the idea of establishing values and truth based on the experience of the individual, transcending the duality conditioning of society (*maya*) and establishing goals for themselves. For Buddhism, those goals reflect compassion and awareness, which are applied to society as to the individual. This may be confirmed by the fact that after the Buddha attained Nirvana, he spent around forty-five years being active and progressively applying his wisdom with compassion and concern for the well-being of those others around him.[7] Nietzsche would certainly agree with Buddhist philosophy on the issue of transcending the conditions of society, or the "herd values,"

4. Sallie B. King, "Socially Engaged Buddhism." (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009): 17.
5. As opposed to *akusala*: unwholesome acts, thought or speech, or action motivated by greed, hostility or delusion.
6. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will To Power* (New York: Random House, 1967): 22.
7. Robert G. Morrison, *Nietzsche and Buddhism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997): 43.

and instead establishing values based on truth acquired from that person's own experience.

Further agreement between Nietzsche and Buddhism can be understood through Nietzsche's belief of the "revaluation of all values [as a] formula for an act of supreme self-examination on the part of humanity."[8] Buddhism is precisely a system of self-examination, which challenges conditioned values. Buddhism does not advocate a constant self-judgment, but rather that one should develop a level of awareness so they may understand which aspects of their thought, word, and action resemble *kusala*, and which still reflect the egocentric *akusala*.

Through the practice of skillful actions, mindfulness, spiritual development, and continual self-mastery based on our awry qualities, the liberation that Buddhism seeks on the path to Nirvana requires strength and discipline. Nietzsche would have been fond of these tenets. Therefore, it seems legitimate to say that he would be favorable to Buddhism in that regard.

The clearest disagreement between Nietzsche and Buddhism which should be identified at this point is that Nietzsche would not have agreed with the Buddhist philosophy of transcending the egocentric attitude. Nietzsche does not express ideas about the individual living as part of the greater whole of humanity, and would not agree with the Buddhist philosophy of viewing oneself as an equal among other sentient beings while still remaining a unique and powerful individual. There not only appears to be a hierarchy in Nietzsche's philosophies of individuality, but there is basically no mention of communalism or harmonious cooperation within a healthily functioning social environment.

Following the stage of active nihilism, Nietzsche advocates the figure of the Ubermensch, exemplified in his work *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Reflecting on Zarathustra in his final work, *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche describes his Ubermensch figure in a very similar manner to the Buddhist who seeks to see through *maya* and engage reality as it is:

> It is here and nowhere else that one must make a start to comprehend what Zarathustra wants: this type of man that he conceives, conceives reality as it is, being strong enough to do so; this type is not estranged or removed from reality but is reality itself and exemplifies all that is terrible and questionable in it.[9]

But what is to follow after one conceives reality as it is or sees through the veil of *maya*? For Buddhism, the fruits of liberation are applied to the surrounding world rather than enjoyed selfishly in an escape to a world of their own, away from the realities of society. In her work, King describes Buddhism as, "a system that supplies wholesome causes and conditions to this process of human change so that we can maximize our opportunity for development in a positive direction," a system which is applied in an individual and social context.[10] Nietzsche similarly recognizes the power of compassion and goodwill in his works. Though it is not the focus of his arguments and does not allude to

8. Friedrich Nietzsche, "Why I Am a Destiny", in *On The Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989): section 1.
9. Friedrich Nietzsche, "Why I Am Destiny", in *On The Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989): section 5.
10. King, 20.

any concrete ideas on human solidarity/social function, this recognition still holds significance in suggesting similarities between his own views and Buddhist philosophy.

In *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche's "monument of rigorous self-discipline" gives recognition to the softer side of human nature and the significance that it may hold. In one passage, Nietzsche describes "[k]indness and love" as "the most curative herbs and agents in human intercourse."[11] In the following passage, he comments on goodwill, stating that "[a]mong the small but endlessly abundant and therefore very effective things that science ought to heed more than the great, rare things, is goodwill." According to Nietzsche, "[g]ood nature, friendliness, and courtesy of the heart are ever-flowing tributaries of the selfless drive and have made much greater contributions to culture than those much more famous expressions of this drive, called pity, charity, and self-sacrifice."[12]

Furthermore, in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche gleefully describes "how Zarathustra descends and says to everyone what is most good-natured! How gently he handles even his antagonists, the priests, and suffers of them *with* them![13] These passages may seem out of place among his other more radical writings, but this may be because in most of his works, Nietzsche focused on criticizing current morals and values and advocating an assertive individual who breaks through them. The "post-assertive" individual, the perfect "free spirit," or "the supreme type of all beings"[14] is reflected through Zarathustra.

It is evident through the character Zarathustra that Nietzsche understood the need to give back to others, a philosophy which is fundamental to Buddhism. In this passage, Zarathustra expresses to his disciples, "you compel all things to come to you and into you, that they may flow back again from your fountain as the gifts of your love," but also warns of those who attempt to take advantage of those who give, that, "sickness speaks from such craving, and invisible degeneration.[15] As shown in this passage, Nietzsche makes a strong distinction between goodwill and pity/charity.

Throughout his works, Nietzsche passionately denounces Christian pity, agreeing with Schopenhauer that, "by means of pity, life is denied and made more worthy of denial."[16] In Buddhism, the compassion is not of pity/charity in the sense that the giver feels superior, or views the recipient as inferior, but the sense of being moved out of love to aid beings who are in need and to care for their welfare as a fellow human being. Pity and compassion may be further distinguished by describing pity as giving not out of love and caring, but out of a sense of obligation or duty. Based on the earlier passages concerning love and goodwill, as well as the words of Zarathustra, Nietzsche would agree with Buddhism in this respect as well.

Another disagreement that arises in relation to the *Ubermensch*/Nirvana figure is who is able, or who should attain this supreme state. Buddhism holds that everyone possesses the Buddha nature, but few are able to unveil it. Naturally,

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11. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984): section 48.
12. Ibid: section 49.
13. Friedrich Nietzsche, "Thus Spoke Zarathustra", in *On The Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989): section 6.
14. Ibid.
15. Friedrich Nietzsche, "On the Gift-Giving Virtue", in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2005): section 1.
16. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Antichrist* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2000): section 7.

few people will desire to pursue this state of being, but nevertheless, Buddhists view the path of liberation open to each and every individual. Nietzsche would agree that such a figure will only be attainable for some, but contrary to Buddhism, he may argue that the higher type should only be for a select few individuals, instead of holding the philosophy of helping everyone attain that stage.

A second concept to discuss is the idea of suffering. Nietzsche describes the experience of suffering as the "ultimate liberator of the spirit" which "make us more profound," and which allow "we [philosophers]...to give birth to our thoughts out of our pain.[17]" As a reaction to the Buddhist philosophy of suffering, most of Nietzsche's beliefs suggest that he would argue by extinguishing the harmful qualities of human behavior, or *akusala*. Buddhists renege on Nietzsche's idea of *amor fati* (love of fate), because they pursue a path leading to the cessation of suffering rather than accepting those experiences as a necessary aspect of the continual transformation of the individual. Nietzsche would argue that one should embrace life by exerting his or her will in the face of continual life suffering and painful obstacles, reveling in all the fate of the present life.

For Nietzsche, one should engage reality as it is and challenge situations of suffering and misfortune by persevering through the experience. However, he also asserted that one should reflect upon the conditions of that suffering so that one might strengthen themselves against future possibilities of similar situations. He states, "[t]he higher man is distinguished from the lower by his fearlessness and his readiness to challenge misfortune."[18] However, challenge may imply that one is not only objectively engaging a misfortunate reality, but that one is using what was learned from past experiences to manage responses to the misfortune. It is in this way that the individual may control reactions fueled by emotions, and while acknowledging and accepting the misfortune, is not as detrimentally affected by misfortune and suffering.

Nietzsche asserts that suffering has great potential for self-transformation, but also suggests in some passages that a strong individual should seek to remove the causes or conditions for misfortune or should alter his perception of that suffering so that he is not. He describes how, "[w]hen a misfortune strikes us, we can overcome it either by removing its causes or else by changing the effect it has on our feelings" and that "[t]he more a person tends to reinterpret and justify, the less will he confront the causes of the misfortune and eliminate them."[19]

Nietzsche may have agreed with Buddhism more than he realized in the way they both perceive misfortune and suffering as an inevitable condition of human existence, maintaining that those experiences hold the potential to be utilized in a transformative and productive way, depending on the reaction of the individual to the experience. A reaction includes the level of reflection that is undertaken regarding the conditions surrounding that suffering, the causes of the suffering, as well as how the individual responds emotionally to the experience.

Although it would appear Nietzsche and Buddhism diverge on the issue of suffering since

17. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (New York: Random House, 1974): 35-36.
18. Friedrich Nietzsche, "Religious Life," *Human, All Too Human* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984): section 108.
19. Ibid: 129

the Four Noble Truths strives for the cessation of suffering through the Eight Fold Path, Nietzsche does in fact show that he is partial to the idea of an individual asserting control of possible misfortune through addressing the roots of suffering with the intention to remove them.

It is not necessarily that Nietzsche maintains that individual growth cannot occur without continually defeating obstacles of hardship and suffering, but that one should engage reality as it is, including the suffering and misfortune. Then one should challenge with
self-discipline and acceptance of the experience. This is very similar to Buddhism in the way Buddhists do not strive to immunize themselves or withdraw from pain and loss, as Nietzsche believed; rather, Buddhists acknowledge and accept *annica*, impermanence, as an inevitable characteristic of human existence.

Buddhists believe that human suffering is rooted within the delusory belief in the fixed or permanent, such as emotions (happiness, fulfillment) or physical objects (people, possessions). When an individual erroneously believes in enduringness, he or she will not accept the fact of impermanence, and as a result experience *dukkha*. *Dukkha* is described as:

> The nonfact between what humans want (unending pleasure and security) and what conditioned existence gives us (a mix of pleasure and pain, plus constant change where we look for some unchanging certainties upon which to base our security).[20]

When removing the causes and conditions of suffering, the individual must detach him or herself from the cravings for constant happiness and fulfilled desires, for permanence in an imperfect and transient world.

Based on his beliefs regarding pleasure and the dangers of too much happiness, Nietzsche would have to agree with the Buddhist philosophy of engaging suffering. Inevitably, there are obstacles to overcome in existence, but similar to Nietzsche, Buddhism attempts to perceive these obstacles not necessarily as inevitable suffering, but as the "awry wheel"; the opportunity for refinement and increased awareness of the individual in relation to the world around them.

For Buddhism, it comes from an alteration of state of mind, understanding and accepting change, loss, and difficulties while practicing *kusala*, skillful actions to influence a healthy environment. Given the discussion presented here, it is evident that Nietzsche would have reacted much more favorably to Buddhism if he had correctly understood the philosophies of Nirvana and suffering.

20. She explains further that "*dukkha* includes all mundane suffering (illness, hunger, fear, and physical and mental pain), but it also goes beyond it to include the fundamental human dis-ease: our inability to be satisfied with life, our constant craving for more and better." King, 20.