STANCE

GERALD NELSON
JULIAN ROME
DANIEL SAUNDERS
BENJAMIN M. SLIGHTOM
SAM TRAYLOR

AUTHORS
PETER HEFT
CHRISTOPHER HUMPHREYS
DALLAS JOKIC
KATE KENNEDY
EMILY MASTRAGOSTINO
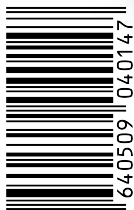
INCLUDING AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH
DAVID
CHALMERS
Ph.D.

STANCE

STAFF

EDITORS-IN-CHIEF
Daniel Klinestiver
Benjamin McIntosh

MANAGING EDITOR
David W. Concepción, PhD

ASSOCIATE EDITORS
Sophie Gordon
Zoe Lawson
Gabriel Shetterley
Benjamin M. Slightom
Benjamin Richter

EDITORIAL BOARD
Cory matters
Jack McKown
John Rash
Lexi Wood

COPY EDITORS
Sophie Gordon (Lead)
Leah Heim
Natalie Kuss
Benjamin M. Slightom

MEDIA EDITORS
Natalie Kuss (Lead)
Leah Heim
Lexi Wood

PRODUCTION/DESIGN
Benjamin M. Slightom (Lead)
Sydney E. Smith

ASSISTANT EDITORIAL BOARD
Grecia Sanchez Blanco / The University of Texas at El Paso
Benjamin L. Culpepper / James Madison University
Brandon T. Gass / New Mexico State University
Dian Guo / Hamilton College
Vikramaditya Joshi / Bard College
Rebecca Lederman / Salisbury University
Leonardo Santoso / Bard College
Hayley E. Speight / University of Colorado, Denver
Travis Wright / Texas State University

EXTERNAL REVIEWERS
Elizabeth Beckman / University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
Madeleine J. Bennett / Iona College
Travis R. Chisholm / Southern Virginia University
Hannah DeBrine / University of Wisconsin—Madison
Josh Easton / University of Evansville
Ethan Higginbotham / Augustana College
Veronica M. McMullen / Southern Utah University
Wesley Rubbin / Salisbury University
Michelle M. Woodland / New Mexico State University
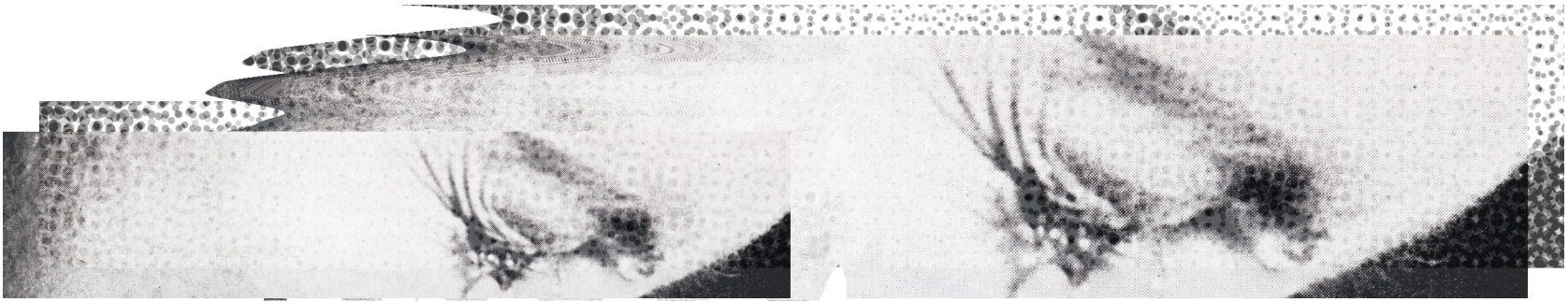*Seaver Thorn / East Carolina University*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTENTS

TRANS MEN & TRANS WOMEN

THE ROLE OF THE PERSONAL HISTORY IN SELF-IDENTIFICATION

JULIAN ROME

Julian Rome is a third-year student at the University of Memphis in Memphis, Tennessee, though at the time of this publication, he is in Paris studying French language and literature at the Sorbonne and interning as a TA for English language classes at a local middle school. At the University of Memphis, he is completing majors in philosophy, English, and French. His primary areas of interest are philosophy of gender and queer theory, 19th and 20th century continental philosophy, philosophy of literature and aesthetics, and American transcendentalism. Following the BA, he hopes to continue studying philosophy in a graduate program.

ABSTRACT: *This paper addresses one of the ways in which transgender individuals identify with respect to personal history, living "stealth", whereby transgender individuals do not disclose their transgender status (that is, they present themselves as cisgender), oftentimes no longer considering themselves transgender. Individuals who live stealth are often criticized for inauthenticity; thus, this paper analyses Sartrean notions of authenticity and personal history, thereby arguing that the person who lives stealth is not living inauthentically but rather is constituting their conception of self through their past, present, and future projects.*

~~TRANS~~ MEN & ~~TRANS~~ WOMEN

THE ROLE OF THE PERSONAL HISTORY IN SELF-IDENTIFICATION

Recent scholarship on gender, particularly given the burgeoning societal interest in transgender issues, has focused on gender as a social construct, something entirely different than biological sex assigned at birth. Biological sex refers to the body's physical form.[1] Gender refers to the person's social classification, a role typically determined by cultural pressure to act in accordance with norms prescribed according to one's biological sex. These definitions are rough and contestable; however, it is still necessary to make this distinction for the purpose of this paper. The increasingly visible group of transgender people—which includes all persons whose gender identity deviates from the one they were assigned at birth, including nonbinary and agender identities—forces individuals to rethink what gender really is and to what extent one's biological sex at birth can determine their identity. In other words, the presence of transgender individuals to those who are not transgender can be unsettling because identifying oneself outside of the confines of biological sex undermines the idea of one's identity being predetermined by that initial gender marker.

Transgender historian Susan Stryker writes in her book *Transgender History* that "transgender issues touch on fundamental issues of human existence,"[2] referring to the fact that one's gender is generally taken as a given and not often sought to be defined or clarified. Individuals whose biological sex aligns with their gender often never feel the need to define their own gender because society has determined much of their social role based upon this assumed alignment. However, transgender individuals need to name their gender identity and forge a way of being that gender; they must define themselves. What I am referring to here is that trans people, generally, because they do not identify with the gender determined by their physical sex, must exist outside of the set societal standards for gender from the beginning. While it is certainly true that trans men and women are equally informed

1 It is not within the scope of this paper to explicate a nuanced distinction between sex and gender. To be transgender is to repudiate the idea that one's morphology, or biological sex at birth, determines one's gender. This rejection can be broadly described as one's social classification and one's sense of physical and relational self.

2 Susan Stryker, *Transgender History* (Berkeley, CA: Seal Press, 2008), 7.

by societal definitions of gender and tend to create their own gender identities accordingly, they are still forced to choose whether to validate those definitions. Transgender individuals are confronted with an extremely fragile and complex definition of what their gender identity should be, and must continually choose whether to validate or do away with that definition.

Jackson Wright Shultz discusses the myriad of ways that they do this in the book *Trans/Portraits*, saying

> some of the individuals who identify under the transgender umbrella will take steps herbally, medically, or surgically to transition, while others will only transition socially. . . . Some who consider themselves fully transitioned no longer identify as transgender.[3]

Thus, individuals who are transgender are just that—individuals—and their experiences and outlooks are unique. The differing steps taken by transgender individuals, as well as their relationships to their transgender status, as Shultz notes, point to how complicated the transgender person's relationship is with their sex assigned at birth and how greatly these relationships vary between individuals.

Because of the uniqueness of the transgender experience, and because the philosophical issues that transgender people encounter are, as Stryker says, relevant to fundamental issues of human existence, I believe that the transgender experience demands further philosophical discourse, particularly concerning the relationship of transgender individuals' past and present, which is highly individual and simultaneously subject to public criticism. Here, I will focus on the issue of how a transgender identity may be said to alienate the individual from their past. Many transgender people are activists for the transgender community, seeing their transgender identity as an intrinsic part of their being and seeing the steps they took to transition as a way of further becoming themselves rather than as an attempt at abolishing their past. The terms "transman" and "transwoman" often serve to symbolize this inseparable relationship between a person's transgender status and their self. However, many other binary transgender individuals attempt to live "stealth," which means that they live as their gender identity without disclosing their transgender status.[4] In

3 Jackson Wright Shultz, *Trans/Portraits: Voices from Transgender Communities* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2015), 5-6.

other words, they blend in with the cisgender[5] population, are assumed to be cisgender themselves, and tell no one or as few others as possible about their transgender status. This way of living necessitates fabricating or avoiding discussion about their pre-transition lives. Individuals who live in stealth may see their transition as a singular event necessary to live authentically as their male or female selves or their transgender status as a private medical condition. While these two perspectives—seeing one's transgender status as a continuing part of one's identity and seeing one's transgender status as something to be confined to the past—are often at odds with one another, particularly through accusations of inauthenticity to those who live "stealth." I will show in this paper that because both perspectives of gender identity have a valid way of using personal history, both ways of forming one's gender identity are authentic ways of identification. Transgender people who live "stealth" are constituting their present through the authentic determination of the meaning of their past rather than the inauthentic annihilation of their past, which opponents of the stealth lifestyle often claim that they do. The first section of this paper, entitled "Opposition to Stealth Living," will discuss some leading views which repudiate living "stealth" and how those views can be better understood through Sartre's notions of bad faith and personal history. The following section, "Defense of Stealth Living," will further detail Sartre's theories of inauthenticity and one's past, arguing that when we use this framework, we find that both stealth and non-stealth transgender identities can consist of authentic relations of the past and present self. In the concluding section, I revisit the ways in which transgender issues reflect fundamental issues of social existence, suggesting that this Sartrean understanding of gender and personal history is useful for both transgender and cisgender individuals as they navigate the social world.

OPPOSITION TO STEALTH LIVING

At a certain point in the process of transitioning, a transgender person ceases to live as their assigned gender and begins to live openly as the gender they identify as. It is at this point when the relationship with one's

4 Because living "stealth" is only an option for those whose gender identities are within the binary—due to the fact that "stealth" requires passing specifically as a cisgender person of one's gender identity—my discussion in this paper will be limited to those binary transgender identities. For more detailed discussions of passing (broadly construed), see Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore, *Nobody Passes: Rejecting the Rules of Gender and Conformity* (Berkeley, CA: Seal Press, 2006).

5 A term used to refer to persons who are not transgender. The Latin prefix "cis-" means "on this side of."

6 Dallas Denny, "Stealth is Soul-Destroying," *Transgender Forum RSS*, July 22, 2013, accessed January 09, 2017. http://www.tgforum.com/wordpress/index.php/stealth-is-soul-destroying/.

7 Stryker, *Transgender History*, 7.

8 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness,* trans. Hazel Estella Barnes, (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), 87.

past, i.e. the relationship with one's life as their assigned gender, becomes murky. This is particularly problematic for transgender people who live "stealth" as they are often criticized by both cisgender people and other trans people. In a 2013 essay, psychologist and transgender activist Dallas Denny says that although she believes each individual has the right to live as they see fit, living in stealth is a stressful existence because of the harm that its inauthenticity does to the individual.[6] Denny differentiates between passing and living in stealth in terms of authenticity.

> No matter how out you are, few people will know your history. When you meet them, people will make a judgment about your gender based on your appearance. . . . Passing becomes stealth when we deny our transness. . . . Stealth requires an active denial of our past–of much of who we are and all of who we were.[7]

According to Denny, this active denial of one's transgender status constitutes a lie to others. If living in stealth centers on a viewpoint that Shultz highlights in *Trans/Portraits*, that once transitioned some transgender people no longer consider themselves transgender, an activist arguing against living in stealth could call the practice a lie to oneself. In other words, if after transitioning, a person was to consider themselves no longer transgender, the anti-stealth person might call this consideration a lie to oneself because they consider the act of transitioning something that objectively makes one transgender. Denny, in her essay, considers living in stealth an active denial, both to oneself and to others, of both who one is and was—or living inauthentically.

The accusation of inauthenticity could be viewed as an accusation of what Sartre calls "bad faith" *(mauvaise-foi)*, which he says is essentially "a lie to oneself."[8] Sartre defines bad faith as something paradoxical; to deceive oneself, one must simultaneously know and be ignorant of the truth. Some individuals may believe that the person living as male or female without disclosing their transgender status is ignorant of the truth, which is in this case that their transness is an essential part of their gender identity and cannot be omitted. Trans people who live stealth could be, then, in bad faith because they *know* that they transitioned in order to live as their gender identity but are ignorant of the supposed truth that their

transgender status is still a necessary part of their gender identity. If one's past is an inescapable part of who one is, then to deny that past, in this view, is to deny part of one's present being.

Sartre's conception of "bad faith" is further expounded upon when he explains the connection between bad faith and one's social role. For Sartre, the extent to which one's social role constitutes their self (who they are as an individual) is ambiguous. One can use this ambiguity to facilitate bad faith, saying that they are not their role, that they are rather a free consciousness contemplating that role, and thus separate themselves from the role. To the other possibility, if one were to identify *with* the role, one could emphasize internally that the role is one's own, trying to keep one's consciousness perfectly aligned with the duties and performance of that role. In other words, identifying with the role rather than separating oneself from it involves the belief that one's social role defines who one is as an individual. This latter attitude is socially prescribed. Sartre uses the example of the service industry, saying,

> a grocer who dreams is offensive to the buyer, because such a grocer is not wholly a grocer. Society demands that he limit himself to his function as a grocer . . . there are indeed many precautions to imprison a man in what he is, as if we lived in perpetual fear that he might escape from it, that he might break away and suddenly elude his condition.[9]

In other words, society demands that individuals internalize their social roles, not only performing the duties of these roles but wholly becoming them. We see this frequently with gender roles as individuals are socially pressured not only to look and act as members of their prescribed gender but also are pressured to internalize that gender role. The gender role then becomes more than a social category; rather, it is regarded by the individual as an intrinsic part of who they are. This profound social pressure is, in part, the reason that transgender individuals are seen as deviant. While cisgender individuals may frequently find that their personal desires align with the desires society expects of persons of their gender, transgender individuals desire not to live as the gender that they were prescribed. This desire (and the actions thusly taken) are seen as deviant because individuals are pressured to internalize the gender role they were prescribed, not to assume a different one.

9 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 102.

Because transgender individuals are seen as deviant by breaking social norms in this way, many cisgender individuals have violent reactions toward transgender people. This is evidenced legally by the so-called "trans panic" defense. Authors Lee and Kwan say in a 2014 article in the *Hastings Law Journal* that:

> The defendant claiming this defense will say that the discovery that the victim was biologically male provoked him into a heat of passion causing him to lose self-control. If the jury finds that the defendant was actually and reasonably provoked, it can acquit him of murder and find him guilty of the lesser offense of voluntary manslaughter.[10]

10 Cynthia Lee and Peter Kwan, "The Trans Panic Defense: Masculinity, Heteronormativity, and the Murder of Transgender Women," *Hastings Law Journal* 66, no. 1 (2014): 77.

In this case, if a transgender person lives stealth and presents him or herself as "only" male or female, many cisgender people react to the discovery that the person is transgender with disgust or violence, feeling that they have been lied to. This feeling occurs because the transgender person broke free of the confines of their assigned sex and, in living authentically to their own identity, failed to live as the role assigned with their biological sex at birth. While the reactive cisgender person is not concerned with the state of the trans person's honesty with themselves, rather being concerned with how *they*, the other, have been lied to, the cisgender person in this scenario does still claim that the transgender person is acting inauthentically. This claim is made because trans people, thus perceived, have the obligation to be completely open about their transgender status, and the failure to do so is considered a wrong. The legal validation of a violent response simply serves to show how strongly the trans person who chooses nondisclosure is often vilified.

In each of these accusations of bad faith, the trans person who lives "stealth" is being defined in terms of their past because the opponent to the transgender person living in stealth regards the past as an integral part of one's present identity. For the transphobic person who uses the signifier "trans" to identify the trans person as *not really* their gender identity, the past as one's assigned gender is entirely constitutive of one's present. For the trans person who considers the nondisclosure of one's transgender status inauthentic, the past as one's assigned gender and the movement away from that assigned gender are both important components of one's identity. Thus, to deny that identity is to deny who one is. The transgender

person who lives in stealth may do so for safety reasons or simply because they do not see their assigned gender as a necessary piece of information for others. A common view by transgender individuals who do not disclose their transgender status is that being transgender is an unfortunate medical condition, one which has been corrected, and is therefore part of one's private history. However, the views which oppose a stealth lifestyle tend to see this opinion, that the event of transition or the past before transition is not constitutive of one's identity, as a lie, because of how one's past is so strongly connected to one's present identity.

DEFENSE OF STEALTH LIVING

Sartre, too, views the past as being indispensable to one's identity. For Sartre, man is free in that he is initially without identity and must create himself. Transgender individuals may be constrained at first by their biological sex, but they are free to disengage with the gender identity that is pushed onto them by society because of that assigned sex. Thus, they must create themselves in the Sartrean sense by choosing whether to validate society's definitions of gender, be it the gender they identify with or that which they identify away from. They must still, though, recognize that their gender identity was born out of a personal history that includes the imposition of a gender that they do not consider authentically theirs. In the case of a transgender individual who is living stealth, distancing themselves from and concealing their past is done to make themselves as fully male or female as possible (according to cisgender society's standards for "male" and "female"). However,

> every action designed to wrench me away from my past must first be conceived in terms of my particular past; that is, the action must before all reconcile that it is born out of the particular past which it wishes to destroy.[11]

Thus, a transgender person who wishes to reject every part of their identity associated with their past as their biological assigned sex must first accept *as truth* that they were, at one point in their personal history, living as the gender that they no longer identify as. The opponents to a stealth lifestyle use this fact, that it is impossible to

destroy such events of the past, as evidence that one must use the past as an active part of one's identity in specific ways – either using the transgender status as a defining feature of one's gender identity or as a negation of one's gender identity. Thus, actively denying the past if it is an objective part of one's present identity would be in bad faith.

Although the claims of inauthenticity have merit under this conception of the past, Sartre develops his view of the past in a way that I argue works to support living in stealth as a way of being that is not in bad faith. He says, "while freedom is the choice of an end in terms of the past, conversely the past is what is only in relation to the end chosen."[12] For Sartre, there is an unchangeable element of the past, which would be, for example, the fact that I was born as the female sex. However, there is also what he calls the element "eminently variable," which is the meaning of that unchangeable element in relation to my total being and is "strictly dependent on my present project."[13] In other words, while the past must be encountered in all present actions, the meaning of that past is entirely subject to the present state and future project of the individual. Thus, the meaning of a transgender person's past is not decided according to the social roles given to that past identity as is assumed by critics who say that, for example, a transgender woman is *really* a man but is rather decided by the individual's present actions. By this I mean that the transgender person must decide the meaning of their past according to their present state and future project, i.e. their transition and their life lived more fully. Others, particularly in the case of violence against transgender individuals, certainly impose meaning and justify their actions through that imposed meaning, but the meanings determined by others can never truly justify anything because the only truly valid meaning is that determined by the individual. The possibility of violence may inform the individual's determination of meaning; nevertheless, one will still determine the intricacies of their identity in the most authentic way for themselves. Though other persons and their actions must be encountered, the individual is free to determine the meaning of those encounters for themselves. Thus, while the unchangeable element of my past may be that I lived as the female sex, my present actions and my future project whereby I will

11 Denny, "Stealth is Soul-Destroy-ing."

12 Sartre, *Being and Nothing-ness*, 639.

13 Sartre, *Being and Nothing-ness*, 640.

continue transitioning toward a visibly male identity reflect my professed male gender identity. In other words, the fact that my personal history includes a time where I lived as a woman, my present actions—such as the steps taken medically to transition, referring to myself by a male name and pronouns and adopting culturally male gender markers—are what decide the meaning of that time as a female. Instead of being constrained by a previous state of being, I am able to change the meaning of it for myself according to how I form my identity in the present. Sartre also says that, "[the past's] function is to be what I have chosen of myself in order to oppose myself to it, that which enables me to measure myself."[14] Thus, the future is only realized by further dissociation from one's past. The fact that I am transgender will never disappear and neither will my past living as the sex assigned to me at birth, but it would be invalid for my opponents were I to choose nondisclosure in regards to my transgender status, to claim that my transgender status and my past must constitute my identity in any way other than that which I choose through my present actions.

14 Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 646.

CONCLUSION

In both disclosure and non-disclosure with respect to one's transgender status, the past is encountered and made to mean something subjective to the individual. This subjective meaning, even when it opposes the meanings imposed by others, ought to be that which is respected by the public because of the subjective nature of all individuals' identities. Depending on the transgender person's method and place in transition, opinions, and even personal history, the past is connected to the present in different ways. Many transgender activists attempt to use the past as a means of furthering their understanding of others in the present—for example, understanding gender-based discrimination because of personal experiences being perceived as both male and female. Other transgender individuals simply see their past as a time when they were still themselves and their transition as a tool to further themselves rather than destroy the past. Many transgender people who live in stealth oppose themselves to their past in order to further themselves in relation to the past. The recollection of the past is used to appreciate and promote present action. Because the

past is still used in the stealth lifestyle as something with which to form identity, one is not denying a part of one's present identity when denying or opposing their past. The transgender person living in stealth is not in bad faith; rather, they are still encountering the past in a way that constitutes their present identity, much like transgender people who choose disclosure.

Transgender individuals are forced to critically encounter gender not only when they initially acknowledge their transgender identity, but also while continuing through the rest of their transition. Cisgender individuals too must critically encounter gender when they become aware of transgender identities; these new encounters, occurring with higher frequency as the visibility of transgender individuals in society increases, are perhaps one reason for mainstream society's fascination with transgender identities. Though the simplified "born in the wrong body" narrative has often been used to first make sense of transgender identities for those unfamiliar, we see from both the different possible accounts of transgender personal history, and from the increasingly complex identities that are being presented in today's media, that "transgender" is not merely a misalignment between the body's sex and the brain's gender. Every individual, regardless of their gender (or lack thereof), must determine the meaning of their past experiences, their present state, and their future projects in order to determine their sense of self—including their sense of gender. While our gender assigned at birth may once have predetermined much of our identity, we now must confront the fact that, even if we identify with that initial gender assignment, we are making the free choice to affirm those meanings and that sense of self. Transgender persons who live stealth, then, are determining meaning and identity freely for themselves, as is everyone else; therefore, their identities ought to be respected and accepted as authentic.

WHEN LANGUAGE BREAKS

A HEIDEGGERIAN ANALYSIS OF GRICE'S 'COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE'

PETER HEFT

Peter Heft, a senior at Denison University in Ohio, is a philosophy major with strong secondary interests in political theory. Working in what can roughly be categorized as the "continental" tradition, Peter has written on object-oriented ontology, Deleuze and Guattari, and nuclear aesthetics. His research resides at the unholy crux of post-Deleuzian thought, accelerationism, and speculative realism in an attempt to make sense of modern-day capitalist production and consumption.

ABSTRACT: *In "Logic and Conversation," H. P. Grice posits that in conversations, we are "always-already" implying certain things about the subjects of our words while abiding by certain rules to aid in understanding. It is my view, however, that Grice's so-called "cooperative principle" can be analyzed under the traditional Heideggerian dichotomy of ready-to-hand and present-at-hand wherein language can be viewed as a "mere" tool that sometimes breaks. Ultimately, I contend that the likening of language to a tool allows for a more robust understanding of it and conversational failures while ontologically recategorizing language as an object of sorts.*
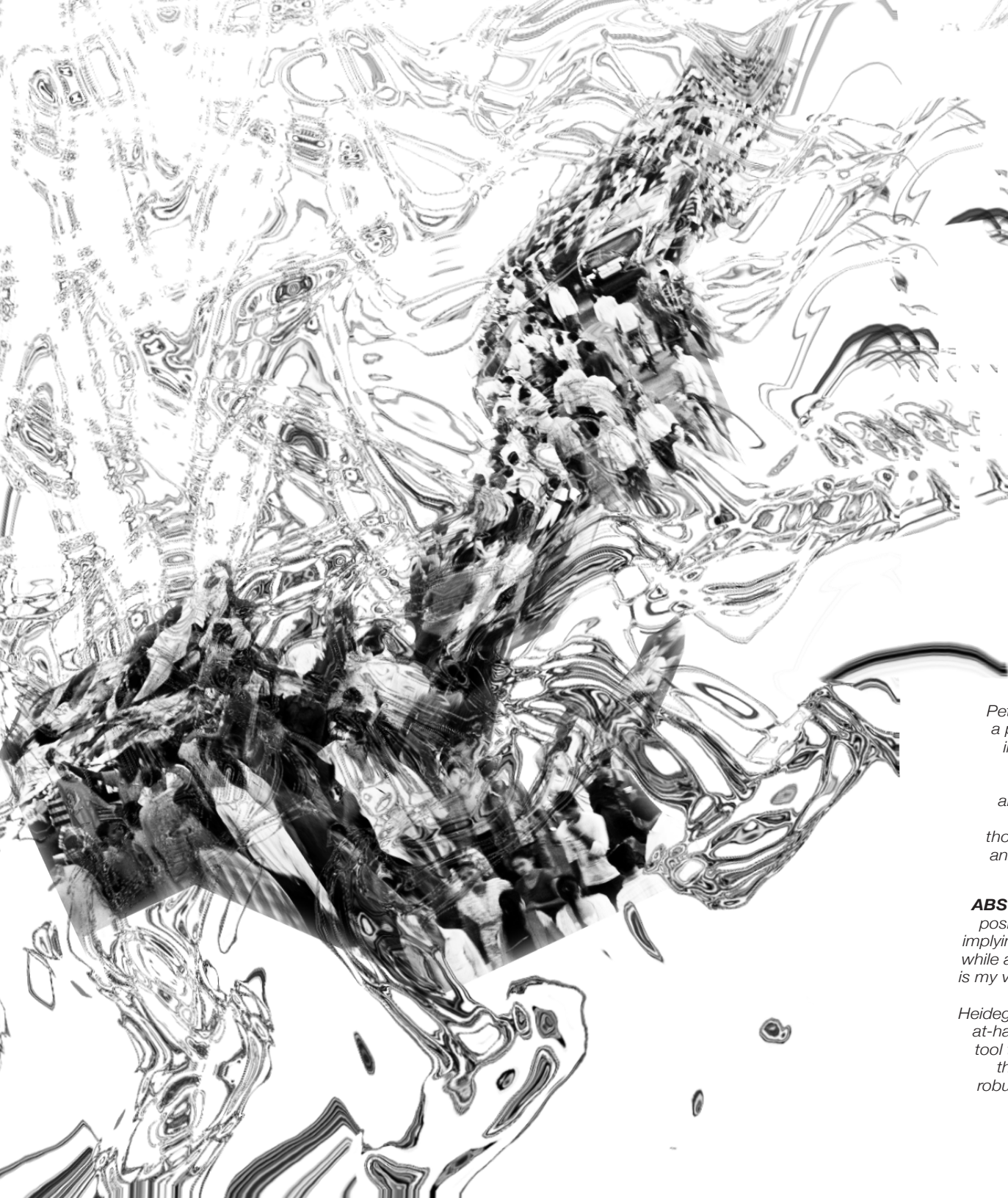
WHEN LANGUAGE BREAKS

A HEIDEGGERIAN ANALYSIS OF GRICE'S COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE

INTRODUCTION

In the following paper, I will attempt to analyze our usage of language and subsequently rethink the ontology of it by utilizing H. P. Grice's work on conversational implicature and Martin Heidegger's famous tool-analysis. Specifically, I will utilize Grice's account of conversational implicature in "Logic and Conversation" and Heidegger's account of the broken tool in *Being and Time* to make the case that our use of language can be understood under the traditional Heideggerian dichotomy of ready-to-hand/present-at-hand.[1] Indeed, it is my contention that Heidegger's tool-analysis has implications far beyond understanding *Dasein's* usage of what are traditionally considered "tools." In what follows, I will argue that when people engage in conversation and nothing "goes wrong," their relationship with language is one of readiness-to-hand. Conversely, when one (or more) maxims of the Gricean cooperative principle are flouted—that is to say, something "goes wrong"—the language being used becomes foregrounded, and we thus enter a present-at-hand relationship with it. Understanding language as a tool, in the Heideggerian sense, allows us not only to examine the ways in which language works, but also to create an ontological parallel between "tools" and conceptual apparatuses that ultimately helps us flatten ontology and rethink the existential status of objects.

GRICE AND CONVERSATIONAL IMPLICATURE

In "Logic and Conversation," H. P. Grice makes the case that when humans engage in everyday discursive interactions, they are abiding by an implicit and assumed set of rules governing how they ought to talk to and understand one another. For Grice, the so-called "cooperative principle" is implicitly invoked in conversations as a tool to allow humans to make sense of

1 H. P. Grice, "Logic and Conversation," in *The Philosophy of Language,* ed. A. P. Martinich and David Sosa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time,* trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962).

2 Grice, "Logic and Conversation," 314.

3 Grice, "Logic and Conversation," 314-15.

4 Grice, "Logic and Conversation," 313.

what the other person is saying without requiring constant clarification.[2] Indeed, according to Grice, as we talk we tend to abide by certain maxims that help make sure that what we are saying is clear and distinct. Specifically, Grice isolates four fundamental categories under which various maxims fall: quantity, quality, relation, and manner. Under the category of quantity, Grice argues that there are two vital maxims: be as informative as possible and do not provide too much information. For quality, the maxims are that one ought not utter something that one believes to be false and that one ought not state things for which one lacks evidence. For relation, the obvious maxim is to be relevant. And, finally, for manner, the four maxims are as follows: avoid obscurity, avoid ambiguity, be brief, and be orderly.[3] For Grice, not only do the aforementioned categories and maxims structure how humans use language, but following them—and, indeed, flouting them in strategic instances—is vital to the project of discourse. Specifically, when one abides by the maxims, *ceteris parabus,* the semantic content of a sentence is taken at face value. That is to say, when the maxims are followed within the context of the overall conversation, statements such as "I am lost" and "here is a map" are interpreted literally. When at least one maxim is flouted, however, the meaning of the sentence changes, and thus it cannot be taken at face value.

To explore what Grice means, let us deconstruct a hypothetical conversation. Let us, for the sake of argument, say that Jane sees John's car on the shoulder of a highway. If Jane asked what happened, John would typically report what he took to be the relevant facts in a non-florid manner. For Grice, most of our conversations follow this same theme. That being said, however, conversations do either intentionally or unintentionally go awry, and thus conversational implicature—that is to say, an unexpressed implication behind our words—comes into play. Allow me to take one of Grice's examples and run with it. Suppose A and B are talking about a mutual friend, C, who recently got a new job. A asks B, "How does C like her new job?" To this query, B responds, "She likes it, her co-workers, and hasn't been to prison yet."[4] Upon hearing such a conversation, we are inclined to think that something funny is going on as an unrelated topic—that is to say, prison—was brought up out of nowhere. When one or more maxims

of the cooperative principle (in this case, the maxim of "be relevant") are flouted, it becomes clear to us that something is being implied by the sentence and that the strict semantic content is not all there is; what Grice calls "conversational implicature" comes into play here. In the case of C, her psychology, for example, is implicated and brought forward insofar as we, as on-lookers, now begin to question whether C is prone to behavior that is likely to get her sent to prison, has had previous issues with co-workers, etc. Our understanding of the conversation shifts from the mere semantic content of the words uttered by A and B to a ghostly phantasm hovering behind the conversation. We no longer look to the meaning of the specific words to guide our quest for understanding, but rather we try to parse the words used to understand what implications they may hold and what those implications tell us about the subject of the sentence.

What this means for Grice is that language is used in at least two different ways: the first is a strictly semantic way, and the second is a way where facts about the subject of the sentence are implied. In the former, our use of language is of second nature. That is to say, during conversations we do not focus on language *as such*, rather we just use it without thinking about the rules that govern language. In the latter, our use of language is foregrounded; we suddenly notice semantic oddities in our discourse, and we are forced to think about what we *mean* when we say certain things and whether the words we hear have a hidden meaning behind them. In the case of a conversation where one or more maxims of the cooperative principle are flouted, we enter a moment of confusion where language breaks down and our conversations must be reconstructed. In this sense, the flouting of various maxims of the cooperative principle behave, as we shall see, like broken tools. To better understand the ontology of broken tools, we must turn to Martin Heidegger's famous tool-analysis.

HEIDEGGER AND THE BROKEN HAMMER

In Heidegger's discussion of entities encountered in the world—which is explored in his magnum opus, *Being and Time*—he takes note of a peculiar feature of the

5 Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 97-98.

6 Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 97-98.

7 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 102-03.

8 Graham Harman, "The Return to Metaphysics (2011)," in *Bells and Whistles: More Speculative Realism* (Washington: Zero Books, 2013), 15.

9 Graham Harman, "Technology, Objects and Things in Heidegger," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 34, no. 1 (January 2010): 17, doi:10.1093/cje/bep021.

way *Dasein* interact with objects in the world. For our purposes, we will understand *Dasein* to mean 'humans' and shall use the two interchangeably (much to the chagrin of Heidegger scholars). For Heidegger, we do not typically interact with entities on a cognitive level, but rather we interact with them in a subterranean and primordial fashion.[5] In other words, when we utilize objects, we tend not to focus on the object *as such* as we are using it, but instead simply use the object for a given end, thereby causing the object to recede from view. When using a hammer to nail shingles onto a house, for example, we do not notice the hammer as we are striking the nail; rather the hammer withdraws from our cognition and exists in a state of what Heidegger calls "readiness-to-hand" wherein we rely upon a network of different objects all working together to achieve our goals.[6] When the object we are using malfunctions in some way, however, our relationship suddenly changes. We begin to stare at the broken tool, thus bringing it to the forefront of our cognition, where we grasp it differently. In contrast to readiness-to-hand, the broken object is grasped "thematically" and "discovered" as a tool for doing work that was formerly tacitly relied upon. This shift from readiness-to-hand to un-readiness-to-hand underscores what Heidegger calls "present-at-handedness," or a conscious attending to objects.[7] In a word, as Graham Harman notes, "Heidegger contends that our primary way of dealing with things is *absence*."[8]

This feature of Dasein's usage of tools—the fact that as we use them, they recede away from active cognition and into a world of subterranean relations—is of vital importance for understanding how humans live in the world. Furthermore, Heidegger's tool-analysis does not just apply to "tools" as they are typically understood—that is to say as low-tech hardware used to complete a certain goal—but rather applies to all objects.[9] Indeed, as I sit here and type this, I am silently relying upon my heart to continue beating, my alveoli to facilitate the exchange of oxygen from the air to my bloodstream, the floor upon which my chair sits to sustain my meager weight, etc. A "tool," as understood from a Heideggerian perspective, is something far beyond simple, low-tech hardware but includes all objects upon which humans rely.

While the view that Heidegger's tool-analysis applies to a large swath of objects is more or less accepted, I want to take the analysis a bit further. Indeed, it is my contention that Heidegger's tool-analysis applies not only to the physical objects upon which humans rely but also to conceptual apparatuses, such as the language that humans use when navigating the world. In light of this, I will attempt to argue, using a Gricean understanding of conversational implicature, that there is no ontological difference in kind between language as a tool and, say, a hammer as a tool. Given that, we must turn now to a discussion of what language looks like when it breaks.

WHEN LANGUAGE BREAKS

While there is no shortage of explanations about *how* language works, the question of what language *is* seems to be too large to tackle.[10] It is my contention that despite the nuances of how, say, sense and reference work or what definite descriptions pick out, language is, at base, a tool (that is to say, an object) like any of the others described above; we utilize it, we rely upon it, we neglect it, it recedes from view, and sometimes it malfunctions. Indeed, much like the hammer one uses to nail shingles into a roof, language can be used to complete various tasks. For example, if one wants a book retrieved from another room, one can utilize imperative or interrogative statements to ideally get a friend to fetch the book. What is more interesting, however, is that, for the most part, we can be remarkably imprecise in our usage of language and still accomplish our desired goals. Expanding upon the previous example, let us say that the book in question is located upon a couch, but you mistakenly think that the book is on a table. When you ask your friend, "Would you mind grabbing the book on the table for me?" despite being imprecise in your usage of language insofar as there is, in fact, no book on the table, more often than not your friend will return with the book. The fact that we can be imprecise in our usage of language and still net positive results is remarkable and requiring of (sometimes very complex) explanation. Understanding language under a Heideggerian tool framework, however, allows us to sidestep sticky conversations about how various features of language work and note something different. If we view language as a tool, we can bracket some of the theoretical

10 See eds. A. P. Martinich and David Sosa, *The Philosophy Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

discussions about *how* language works and examine *the ways in which* it works. Indeed, viewing language as a tool allows us to note that under normal conditions—that is to say, where conversational maxims are not flouted—language is ready-to-hand insofar as we do not notice the nuances of our words; rather we simply *use* language while the contours (similar to the contours of a hammer) recede out of view. Unless we are way off in our usage of language, we can be relatively inaccurate in what we are saying and still get the job done, as our usage of language is effectively second nature.

Successes of language are only marginally interesting, however. What is more interesting is when language acts like a hammer with a weak head and breaks. While the breakage of language is certainly not as dramatic as a hammer shattering when a person strikes it against a nail, it is nevertheless as important and unique in its own way. Language breaks not when we use the wrong word or accidentally engage in a social *faux pas*—if that were the case, we would not be able to be as imprecise as we are in our usage—but rather when we knowingly or unknowingly flout maxims of the cooperative principle in our conversations with other people. To examine a way in which language breaks, let us revive our individuals from above: Jane and John. If we recall, John's car was broken down on the shoulder of a highway and Jane asked what happened. In answer to her query, Jane received a response that was relevant, contained the facts of the situation, and was not overly florid. For example, she might have received the following reply: "My engine is out of oil." This regular usage of language would likely lead to Jane offering some form of assistance to John, be it a ride, a loan, or some other plausible action.

Let us imagine the same situation with Jane's same query, but instead suppose that John gives the following answer in response: "I passed a restaurant a few miles back." John's answer to Jane's query is odd and would not typically be expected. Indeed, John's answer is likely to *not* elicit the same response from Jane (namely, her offering to help). Rather, Jane is likely to be taken aback and, if she is more patient than most folks who would simply drive away, ask, "What?" In this scenario, language as a tool breaks and the semantic content of the words is not what is most important. Where, in the former

situation, Jane could know nothing about the mechanics of internal combustion engines and John's comment of "my engine is out of oil" could pass completely above her head, it would not have to affect her offer to help. In the latter situation, John's usage of language becomes foregrounded and subject to scrutiny. Why did John say "I passed a restaurant a few miles back?" Is that somehow relevant to his current predicament? Should Jane call the authorities to investigate the restaurant for misdeeds? The conversation becomes tumultuous and must be examined. If one takes seriously the Gricean understanding of conversational implicature, while all the above are possible, one must make a judgement about what is being implied; in this case, it would seem to be that John is asking Jane to go out to eat with him so that he can tell her the story of his car troubles (hardly an intuitive use of language and a very roundabout way of getting a date). Indeed, when John flouts a maxim of the cooperative principle and breaks language, causing the use of it to become foregrounded, language takes on an ontological status similar to that of the broken hammer and becomes present-to-hand. We no longer tacitly rely upon it, but instead we come to view it thematically.

Understanding language as a tool in the Heideggerian sense—that is to say, an object that can break and become foreground in Dasein's consciousness—allows, as we have seen, for a more robust understanding of different ways in which language works. What is more important, however, are the ontological implications of viewing language as a tool akin to a hammer. Where conventional ontological analyses would view a hammer and language as being radically different in kind—indeed, one might even contend that one is "more real" than another—applying a Heideggerian framework to language and making sense of language (a particular instance of a universal conceptual apparatus) allows for an ontological shift to occur wherein the Being of the tool and language differs not in kind but in degree (if at all). This ontological shift helps lead to what Levi Bryant calls a "flat ontology" where different objects, be they physical tools, ideas, or conceptual apparatuses, are viewed as existing equally and being worthy of consideration.[11] In other words, the flat, ontological shift allows us to maintain the position that a hammer is no more real than the language that we use to describe the hammer and that neither one is reducible

11 Levi Bryant, "The Four Theses of Flat Ontology," in *The Democracy of Objects* (Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, University of Michigan Library, 2011), 245-90.

to the other. The ultimate implication of this—one that stretches far beyond language and, indeed, far beyond the purview of this paper—is that we are now able to make sense both of how non-physical objects exist and how they are utilized, leading directly into Ian Bogost's examination of "alien phenomenology," a phenomenology where we can try to make sense of the existence and "experiences" of non-human *things*.[12] While a different topic indeed, the flattening of ontology that occurs via a Heideggerian analysis of language is one of the many routes that leads into a revision of ontology and can ultimately provoke a rethinking of the existential status of "things."

12 Ian Bogost, *Alien Phenomenology, Or What It's Like to Be A Thing* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

NEY'S INTRA-EXTRA OBJECTION

The linguistic theory above—what may be called the "tool-theory" of language—has its limits, and while it would be impossible for me to cover every possible objection and extenuating circumstance, it is prudent nevertheless to examine the most salient objection: one put forth by Alyssa Ney, an associate professor at the University of California Davis' Department of Philosophy who works primarily in metaphysics, philosophy of mind, and philosophy of physics. Ney, who I am indebted to for raising this issue, asked me (and I summarize her words) the following: what are we to make of instances where all parties of a given conversation are privy to information outsiders are not?[13] To be more specific, the above analysis has taken the form of a disinterested third-party, and thus we have examined various individual's usage of language from afar. If we return to our characters, A and B who are discussing C, and try to apply the above analysis *from the standpoint of either A or B,* we might have difficulty. Indeed, what if A and B know some fact about C that a third-party listener is not privy to? Perhaps, for example, A and B know that C may not be the most honest person—a fact a disinterred observer would not know. If this is the case, then B's comment of "she likes [her new job], her co-workers, and hasn't been to prison yet" may not necessarily violate a maxim of the cooperative principle. In our previous analysis of A and B's conversation, we assumed that something funny must be occurring since prison, an unrelated topic, was brought up out of nowhere

13 I thank Dr. Ney for bringing this issue to bear at the 2017 Steven Humphrey Undergraduate Philosophy Colloquium.

and thus, to an observer, it *seemed* as if language broke and B's comment became foregrounded. Perhaps that only tells half of the story, however. Given this misunderstanding, it seems important to draw a distinction between intra- and extra- conversational analyses where the ontological status of language is mutable.

Indeed, where intra-conversational analyses seem to necessarily focus on the knowledge the speakers in the conversation have, extra-conversational analyses seem to focus merely on the speakers and their interaction. In other words, where an intra-conversational analysis of A and B will consider A and B's experiences and shared knowledge, an extra-conversational analysis of the same entities would only be able to consider the explicit interaction between the two parties. The implication of this is that the breakage of language is subjective and is contingent upon who is doing the analysis. Supposing A is our analyst and she has the shared knowledge with B that C is a dishonest person, then B's seemingly maxim-flouting response is perfectly sensible. For her, language has not broken, as she is privy to certain information, and thus language remains firmly in the domain of the ready-to-hand. On the other hand, however, if we are to affirm our analysis above—that is to say, an extra-conversational analysis—then it seems as if language has broken and becomes present-at-hand. While there may certainly be odd ontological implications of such a superposition of language, I both cannot see them at the moment and do not have the spatial luxury to examine them. As such, they must be bracketed.

Ultimately, while there are some linguistic interactions that fall outside the scope of the Heideggerian-Gricean analysis (instances of sarcasm, for example) that may require significant amounts of mental calorie burning to subsume under the theory, viewing language as a tool is, itself, a tool. While the 'tool-theory' of language will no doubt need to be augmented with additional qualifications to cover a wider range of linguistic practices and extenuating circumstances, I believe that it can both serve as a foundation for understanding ways in which conversations and language *generally* work and begin to crack to the shell of our fixed ontology.

DURKHEIM'S RELATIONAL ACCOUNT OF SOCIAL ONTOLOGY

DANIEL SAUNDERS

Daniel Saunders is studying philosophy and sociology at Wichita State University in Kansas. He is currently a senior and plans to attend grad school in philosophy next semester. Daniel is primarily interested in metaphysics and the philosophy of science—especially the topics of scientific realism, ontology, the unity of science, and philosophy of social science. When he is not working on philosophy, Daniel enjoys cooking, competing on the debate team at Wichita State and watching '90s sitcoms with his friends.

ABSTRACT: Secondary commentators on Emile Durkheim have interpreted his ontology in conflicting and contradictory ways. Some have claimed that he treats social entities as mysterious substances which exist over and above individuals. Others claim he is ontologically committed to exactly nothing more than individuals. Few studies have carefully analyzed his ontological commitments in detail and the conventional wisdom on the issue leaves much to be desired. I argue Durkheim holds neither a substance nor an individualist view of social ontology. Instead, he committed to the reality of emergent social relations which form the proper subject matter of sociology.

DURKHEIM'S RELATIONAL ACCOUNT OF SOCIAL ONTOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

In the final accounting of all that exists, would society be included on that list? What about markets, federal governments, or the proletariat? These are the core questions of social ontology, a field of inquiry concerning what kind of status we should assign to social entities.[1] Do social entities exist? If they do, how should we characterize their existence? Those who believe in the reality of social entities are loosely called ontological holists. In contrast, ontological individualists hold that individual persons are the only entities that actually exist and regard markets and the like as merely useful fictions that help social scientists communicate about collective behavior.[2] Research into social ontology has accelerated in recent years,[3] and Emile Durkheim remains one of the key figures in conversations about the fundamental conceptual issues in social science. Much has been written about Durkheim concerning his position on explanatory holism and meaning holism—the claim that social facts cannot be explained in terms of individual facts as well as the claim that the meaning of social terms is not reducible to individual terms—but far less has been written about Durkheim and his ontology.[4] As we shall see, there are frequently inconsistent interpretations of Durkheim's stance on social ontology advanced by secondary commentators. The confusion is partly amplified by his tendency to avoid explicit treatment of ontological questions. Despite this situation, it is still possible to discern Durkheim's implicit ontology. This paper advances three arguments. First, in contrast to the suggestions made by some commentators, Durkheim holds that society is composed neither of social substances nor of merely individuals. Second, Durkheim is an ontological holist who holds a relational view of social ontology (in a relational social ontology, society is to be identified with a series of relations). Third, adopting this interpretation of Durkheim's ontology clarifies some features of his account of social explanation.

1 Deborah Tollefsen, "Social Ontology," in *Philosophy of Social Science: A New Introduction,* ed. Nancy Cartwright and Eleanora Montuschi (Oxford: Oxford Press, 2015), 86.

2 Julie Zahle and Finn Collin, "Introduction," in *Rethinking the Individualism-Holism Debate*, ed. Julie Zahle and Finn Collin (Cham: Springer, 2014), 1-5.

3 Brian Epstein, "A Framework for Social Ontology," *Philosophy of Social Science* 46, no. 2 (2015): 1.

4 Steven Turner, "Durkheim as a Methodologist? Part I-Realism, Teleology, and Action," *Philosophy Social Science* 13, no. 4 (1983): 1.

5 Paul Carls, "Emile Durkheim," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* 2017, http://www.iep.utm.edu/durkheim/.

6 Emile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, trans. W.D. Halls, ed. Steven Lukes (New York: The Free Press, 1982), 60.

This paper is divided into three parts. First, I describe some of the predominate ways of interpreting Durkheim's ontology and identify ways in which they fail to capture the nuance of his position. Second, I explicate his relational position and explain the role ontological commitments play in his account of social explanation. Third, I make my conclusion.

A SURVEY OF INTERPRETATIONS

There are three predominate interpretations of Durkheim's social ontology. The first holds that he believes in the reality of a social level irreducible to the individual level. I will refer to this as the standard interpretation. The second holds that Durkheim regards society as a substance, an independently existing entity with properties. I will refer to this as the substance interpretation. The third holds that Durkheim's ontology only consists of individuals. I will refer to this as the individualist interpretation. In the process of analyzing the inadequacies of these interpretations, we can learn a few lessons about what an adequate account of his ontology must look like. Let us look more closely at each position in turn.

A. THE STANDARD INTERPRETATION

The *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* is typical of the standard interpretation.

> First, Durkheim makes an ontological claim concerning the *sui generis* reality of social facts. Second, Durkheim makes an epistemological and methodological claim, arguing that social facts should be treated as real objects existing external to the researcher's mind.[5]

The second claim is much clearer than the first. Durkheim advises sociologists to take social facts to be irreducible to facts about individuals and study them as objective features of the world. It is easy to find textual evidence consistent with this view throughout *The Rules of Sociological Method.* He writes that "the first and most basic rule is to consider social facts as things."[6] Durkheim wants to show that sociology can become just as scientific as the natural sciences, a discipline with a unique object of study and

with rigorous methods that can glean objective truth. He notes how pervasive it is for social thinkers to prioritize theory over observation and how, when they do make observations, it is often in a selective and unsystematic way. He emphasizes the thinghood of social facts to encourage sociology to move in an empirical direction and to become a discipline that takes the systematic collection of data very seriously. The standard interpretation is widely held. For instance, Steven Lukes, one of his most well-respected commentators and biographers, characterizes him similarly in several places.[7] In contrast to the clarity of the second claim concerning methodology and epistemology, the first claim concerning ontology is more unclear, and its ambiguities are the subject of this paper. It is unclear in three specific ways.

First, it is unclear whether Durkheim's comments on social facts are useful in elucidating his ontology. It is not always possible to make a straightforward inference from his comments concerning facts to his commitments concerning ontology, despite Carls' talk of ontological commitment to facts. If we think of ontology as the study of the type of *entities* that exist in the world rather than the *facts,* then it appears that the encyclopedia definition is confused. If, on the other hand, we think of facts as entities, it still does not clear up the issue. As I will show in my analysis of the individualist interpretation, secondary commentators continue to talk as if social facts are distinct from entities, which means that the confusion remains. Moreover, even if Durkheim included facts in his ontology, I will show he is also committed to some kind of social entity in addition to facts—a feature not captured by the standard interpretation.

Second, it is unclear what kind of entity is supposed to emerge *sui generis.* It could be the case that Durkheim is only committed to the existence of individuals but holds that individuals gain emergent properties when placed into networks of association. Under this view, Durkheim is only committed to emergent properties but not to social objects or substances. This is the more austere approach. On the other hand, it could be the case that social substances emerge from individuals. This line would entail ontological holism. The standard interpretation provides insufficient resources to determine which position Durkheim holds.

7 Steven Lukes, "Introduction," in *The Rules of Sociological Method*, by Emile Durkheim, trans. W.D. Halls, ed. Steven Lukes (New York: The Free Press, 1982), 3; Steven Lukes, *Emile Durkheim: His Life and Work a Historical and Critical Study* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1973), 19, 81.

Third, it is unclear what the relationship between ontology and the injunction that we should treat social facts as objects is. Does "treat" merely mean an instrumental treatment—the idea that sociologists gain a practical advantage from pretending markets are real entities, talking in a language which contains them but nonetheless remains agnostic on the reality of the social entities? Or does "treat" entail ontological commitment?

These questions demonstrate that more investigation is needed. Rather than attempting to answer them directly, I will return to them in the conclusion. Let us examine the other two interpretations.

B. THE SUBSTANCE INTERPRETATION

The second major thread of interpretation is associated with Durkheim's earliest critics who accused him of a substance ontology.[8] It is rather hard to provide a precise account of what his critics took him to hold, as their writings are largely polemical and do not take the time to carefully lay out what they think Durkheim means. However, the underlying theme of these critiques is that Durkheim regards social groups as a kind of *substance,* which exists above and beyond the individuals and possessed properties that are only true of the group but not true of the individuals. One critic quoted in Lukes says "the concept of society as existing outside the individuals is pure metaphysics," while another writes that "men are not, when brought together, converted into another kind of substance."[9] This view is not isolated to critics during the nineteenth century. The contemporary scholar Emmanuel Renault writes:

> This type of ontological assumption is characteristic of the Durkheimian definition of institutions as a reality having stability and authority over individuals, and it is precisely this definition that leads to the idea that the social should be studied as a 'thing,' that is as a substance.[10]

Renault demonstrates that there is a pervasive tendency to immediately equate any talk of social things with social substances, a move that too hastily ignores other options.

In the preface to the second edition of *The Rules,* Durkheim responds explicitly to critics who accused him of a scholastic substance ontology, writing

8 Lukes, *Emile Durkheim,* 306; 313-15.

9 Lukes, *Emile Durkheim*, 314.

10 Emmanuel Renault, "Critical Theory and Process Social Ontology," *Journal of Social Ontology* 2, no. 1 (2016): 17-32.

we had repeatedly declared that consciousness, both individual and social, did not signify for us anything substantial, but merely a collection of phenomena *sui generis*, . . . we were accused of realism and ontological thinking.[11]

People do not often use the word "accusation" to describe characterizations with which they agree. This quote is especially striking because it suggests Durkheim is neither a social realist nor interested in doing social ontology. We can reject the substance ontology interpretation on the grounds of charity. In order to construct an interpretation that does not put him into self-contradiction, it is necessary to devise an interpretation that denies that he commits to social substances. If we can show that another viable interpretation is available, we should attribute it to Durkheim over a substance position.

An important lesson can be drawn from this discussion. Durkheim is trying to walk a fine line. This line runs between an individualist position in which society is an abstraction reducible to individual behavior and the substance position in which social entities are self-sufficient, independent beings distinct from all individuals.

C. THE INDIVIDUALIST INTERPRETATION

According to Little, Durkheim accepts the individualist ontological thesis. Little writes that "Durkheim . . . insists only that there are nonreducible social facts, not nonreducible social entities."[12] This view holds that facts and entities belong to different categories—a view at odds with the standard interpretation. One can see how Little might arrive at this conclusion. We saw in the preceding section that Durkheim rejects the idea that he theorizes society as a substance. This may imply that he believes in no social entities. In this interpretation, individuals are the only things that exist; when individuals are assembled together, new facts describe the group, but the group has no reality above and beyond the individuals that comprise it.

The individualist interpretation is too austere to capture key portions of Durkheim's writings. He is committed to social entities. In the fifth chapter of *The Rules*, the issue is no longer social facts but social explanation. This chapter draws heavily on emergence

11 Durkheim, *The Rules*, 34.

12 Daniel Little, *Varieties of Social Explanation: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Social Science* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 184.

13 Durkheim, *The Rules*, 129.

arguments, which imply the existence of social entities. This chapter is also especially useful because it is not entangled with a discussion of social facts, which alleviates some of the confusion described earlier. Consider the following passage:

> the whole does not equal the sum of its parts; it is something different, whose properties differ from those displayed by the parts from which it is formed. Association is not, as has sometimes been believed, a phenomenon infertile in itself, which consists merely in juxtaposing external facts already given and properties already constituted. . . . Society is not the mere sum of individuals, but the system formed by their association represents a specific reality which has its own characteristics. Undoubtedly no collective entity can be produced if there are no individual consciousnesses: this is a necessary but not a sufficient condition. In addition, these consciousnesses must be associated and combined, but combined in a certain way. By fusing together, individuals give birth to a being, psychical if you will, but one which constitutes a psychical individuality of a new kind.[13]

There is a lot to unpack in this passage, but it does provide substantial evidence that Durkheim is committed to social entities. He is making two moves here. First, he claims that association creates emergent properties by way of fusion. The whole is more than the sum of the parts; when two individuals enter into a labor contract, the sociologist is presented with three entities, not just two. If the social whole possesses properties not possessed by the individuals, then Durkheim is committed to saying the labor contract possesses properties not possessed by either the employer or the laborer. The labor contract instead possesses properties that are generated through the act of association.

The second move is to make an ontological commitment to properties. The first move alone is not sufficient to give us commitment to social entities. It is still possible to read Durkheim as holding a position in which we talk about social properties in a non-reducible language that contains emergent terms but without necessarily being committed to social entities. However, he is claiming something stronger. Durkheim is explicitly talking about the possibility of "collective entities" emerging as a result of association. This is more than just

an accident of word choice. He uses entity talk in other places in *The Rules*. For example:

> whenever elements of any kind combine, by virtue of this combination they give rise to new phenomena. One is therefore forced to conceive of these phenomena as residing, not in the elements, but in the entity formed by the union of these elements.[14]

He concludes the original block quote by claiming fusion results in a new psychic being—some type of collective consciousness. Interpreting Durkheim so as to avoid commitment to social entities cannot make sense of his claim that society is a system of associations above and beyond the individuals that compose it and those associations possess being. The system is meant to be understood as a real entity, not merely a language.

To summarize, the evidence indicates that the individualist position is too weak to capture the strength of Durkheim's ontological claims. However, the substance interpretation is too strong. His true position must fall somewhere between a commitment to social substances and a commitment to no social entities at all. The third option is to conceive of social entities as relational. I turn to the explication of that option now.

THE RELATIONAL ACCOUNT OF DURKHEIM'S ONTOLOGY

What does a relational picture of social ontology look like? Society is a real entity, but its reality consists of a network of relations between individuals. Society is to be identified with the relationship between parent and child, romantic partners, teacher and student, buyer and seller, sovereign and subjects. This series of dyad relationships also exists in a network with one another. In addition to the dyadic relations, there will also be multi-part relationships. Taken all together, these relations constitute a society. The crucial feature that makes a relational ontology distinct from a substantial ontology is that there is not any entity that exists behind the relations. Society is just the relations between every member. However, this is not the same as saying society is nothing more than a group of individuals. As illustrated above, Durkheim believes that these relations are emergent and possess

properties not possessed by the individuals taken in isolation.

Investigating social ontology is not an isolated concern for Durkheim studies. Proper analysis illustrates that his account of social explanation is mutually reinforcing with his ontology. Clarifying the relationship between explanation and ontology helps clarify the relationship between social facts and ontology.

Durkheim advises sociologists to provide causal explanations of social facts in terms of other, antecedent social facts rather than in terms of individual beliefs, desires, or behaviors.[15] Moreover, only prior social forces can establish new social facts.[16] That social forces play a necessary role in social causation suggests that they must have ontological weight. If we cannot explain social facts in terms of individual facts, it suggests, but does not necessarily entail, a commitment to social entities. However, Durkheim makes the stronger commitment clear, writing "it is appropriate, since it is clear that, not having the individual as their substratum, [social facts] can have none other than society."[17] Social facts must be facts that describe society rather than facts that describe individuals. If social facts cannot be facts that describe individuals then there must be some other entity in Durkheim's ontology for which they are meant to describe. The term "substratum" here may suggest a substance ontology but, in light of the preceding section, the more charitable reading is that social relations form the substratum rather than a substance. Thus, we can finally describe the relationship between social facts and ontology. Social facts are facts which describe social relations. This seems like a simple claim, but it is important to notice how it departs from the standard interpretation. Rather than an ontological commitment to social facts, Durkheim has an ontological commitment to social entities which facts describe.

In an article criticizing Willard van Orman Quine's rejection of property ontology, Elliot Sober argues that eliminating properties from our ontology causes a loss in the explanatory power of evolutionary biology.[18] Sober claims that the best version of evolutionary theory uses traits as the unit of analysis rather than groups or individual objects. We can read Durkheim as taking a similar argumentative strategy about the explanatory

14 Durkheim, *The Rules*, 39.

15 Durkheim, *The Rules*, 134.
16 Durkheim, *The Rules*, 120.

17 Durkheim, *The Rules*, 52.

18 Elliot Sober, "Evolutionary Theory and the Ontological Status of Properties," *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition* 40, no. 2 (1981): 147-76.

advantage of a commitment to social entities. The social entities are the *explanans*, not the individuals. If we have an ineliminable commitment to social entities in our explanation of social facts, then we are best off committing to social entities in our ontology. If Sober's argument is sound and Durkheim holds that social explanation cannot be converted into explanations about individual entities, then positing the existence of social entities offers an explanatory advantage. This provides further evidence against the individualist interpretation. Eliminating social entities from Durkheim's ontology would make it extremely difficult to explain his comments concerning explanation.

CONCLUSION

This investigation was motivated by three points of vagueness in the standard interpretation of Durkheimian social realism. First, it was unclear what the relationship between social facts and social ontology was supposed to be. It is now clear that social facts are the facts that describe social entities. In order for his account of social facts to be coherent, one must be committed to a social entity that facts can describe, as individuals cannot play that role.

Second, it was unclear what type of social entity was supposed to emerge. Now it is clear that Durkheim rejects a substance account. He writes as much explicitly. Charity requires that we do not ascribe a substance view to him. Instead, a more plausible reading attributes a relational view. When he suggests that he is committed to social entities, the commitment stems from individuals entering into association and the subsequent relations forming an independent reality of their own. No evidence can be found which suggests that Durkheim believes that social substances emerge from the interactions of individuals. Instead, society is to be identified with a series of relations amongst individuals.

Finally, it was unclear what was meant by the claim that sociologists should *treat* social facts as real objects. It could potentially mean that Durkheim is an instrumentalist about social facts, advising sociologists to act as if social entities are real—speaking in a language that implies their existence—but ultimately remain

agnostic about ontology. The evidence clearly shows that Durkheim is committed to something more than just individuals. Society plays a necessary role in his account of social explanation. Individuals entering into association create new emergent properties, which have reality for Durkheim. Talk of social entities is deeply entangled with his account of emergence. Any interpretation that suggests he is only committed to individuals is too austere to capture this component of his writing.

CRITIQUE AND INTERSUBJECTIVITY

MALE RESPONSIBILITY AFTER #METOO

DALLAS JOKIC

Dallas Jokic grew up in Markham, Ontario and is currently completing his final year of a history and philosophy double-major at the University of Guelph. His main interests involve examining the ways the ontological and metaphysical assumptions we make have significant consequences for the political conclusions and prescriptions we draw. He plans to begin an MA in philosophy in the fall, which will examine Hegel's relationship to the Haitian Revolution in order to historicize and challenge the contemporary 'politics of recognition.' Other philosophers of interest include Irigaray, Fanon, Foucault, Deleuze, Spinoza, and Grosz.

ABSTRACT: *In light of the allegations of sexual misconduct and harassment made against Harvey Weinstein and other powerful men in recent months, this paper will examine how men might take on responsibility for themselves and a culture that enables these patterns of abuse. It will draw primarily on the work of Judith Butler, Luce Irigaray, and Emmanuel Levinas to develop a model of responsibility that has three primary stages: taking ownership of past actions, critiquing gendered power relations, and learning how to foster relationships that are "intersubjective."*

#MeToo

CRITIQUE AND INTERSUBJECTIVITY
MALE RESPONSIBILITY AFTER #METOO

INTRODUCTION

On October 5, 2017, *The New York Times* published a story detailing allegations of sexual harassment and assault against Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein.[1] In the weeks since, many women have come forward to tell their stories of sexual misconduct by Weinstein and other powerful men in entertainment, journalism, academia, and politics. On social media, the hashtag "#MeToo" trended and became an opportunity for women (and some men and non-binary people) to acknowledge their experiences as victims of sexual harassment, assault, and misconduct.[2] Parallel to this, many men have been surprised by the magnitude and variety of stories and allegations. As a result, men have begun to view their past actions differently. The moment of being called out, individually or collectively, should be seen as an ethical opportunity—one that should be taken up by all men at this moment. However, claiming ownership of one's past actions is not sufficient for responsibility. In this paper, I will draw on the work of Friedrich Nietzsche, Judith Butler, Michel Foucault, Luce Irigaray, and Emmanuel Levinas to develop a model of responsibility that has three primary stages: taking ownership of past actions, critiquing gendered power relations, and learning how to foster relationships that are intersubjective. The discourse of this cultural moment, so far, has not moved past the first of these three stages, and I will attempt to outline a conceptual framework for how men in particular might take on responsibility.

'BAD CONSCIENCE' AND THE ETHICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF ACCUSATION

Friedrich Nietzsche dedicated a great deal of thought and writing to the role of systems of justice or punishment

1 Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey, "Harvey Weinstein Paid Off Sexual Harassment Accusers for Decades," *New York Times,* October 5, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/05/u s/harvey-weinstein-harassment-allegations.html.

2 Accusations have been made by and against people of all genders, but I will focus primarily on misconduct by men against women.

3 Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals: A Polemic*, trans. Douglas Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 62.

4 Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, 64.

5 Margaret Wente, "How the Weinstein Era Will Change Us," *The Globe and Mail*, November 24, 2017, https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/how-the-weinstein-era-will-change-us/article37074263/.

6 Nellie Bowles, "Men at Work Wonder if They Overstepped With Women, Too," *New York Times*, November 10, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/10/business/men-at-work-wonder-sexual-harassment.html?_r=0.

in the formation of what he calls "bad conscience." According to him, I do not see myself as responsible for my actions until I have been accused of causing harm or breaking a law. Punishment serves the function of "awakening the sense of guilt in the culprit."[3] Once I have been accused, I begin to see my past actions as being mine and feel responsible for them. For Nietzsche, being constituted as a moral subject by punishment is largely restrictive. Punishment has the effect of increasing our fear and reigning in our desires; "in this way punishment tames man, but it does not make him 'better.'"[4] Our desires are what drive our will to live, to eat, to reproduce, to feel pleasure, and so to restrict those desires is to restrict our very life-force. A legal system of criminal justice claims to punish on the basis of one's accountability, but Nietzsche argues that it *produces* an idea of accountability that is in fact a condemnation of life itself. In the absence of a punitive power, no sense of guilt or responsibility can exist. In her book, *Giving an Account of Oneself,* Judith Butler disagrees with Nietzsche's cynical framing of this but takes from him an important insight: I only begin to think of myself in moral terms when something external makes me do so.

Since the start of #MeToo, many have expressed support for the women coming forward but are concerned that this moment might have unintended consequences in spaces shared by people of different genders. In *The Globe and Mail*, Margaret Wente writes of her concern that in workplaces, "casual informality and warmth will be replaced by stiffness, anxiety and prudishness."[5] An article published by *The New York Times* describes the paranoia and self-doubt many men are feeling, with one manager deciding to cancel his office's holiday party "until it has been figured out how men and women should interact."[6] Both of these pieces view the morally anxious (male) subject disengaging, or opting out of relations with women out of fear of being accused of misconduct as a necessary consequence of this moment. We should take seriously the idea that "bad conscience" may not improve one's actions. I can feel incredibly guilty for my past actions but not allow that to redirect my future actions or encourage me to relate to others more ethically. Nevertheless, the mechanism of accusation can serve a crucial role in causing men to take on a type of responsibility that is more robust than just feeling guilty.

To be accused of something is to have the question raised that I may have done harm, and, in response, to be called on to give an account of what happened. Butler asks us to consider that such an ethical "failure'" may well have an ethical valence or importance.[7] Emmanuel Levinas gives us a model of how "bad conscience" can be a starting point for relating ethically to the other and expanding an idea of responsibility beyond guilt for my past actions. For him, it is not an explicit accusation about a particular act made within a system of punishment but rather my encounter with the face of the other that puts me into question. It is through the experience of being confronted with the face of the other that ethics emerge for Levinas: "that face facing me—in its mortality— summons me, demands me, requires me."[8] It is not just that I worry *someone* might be taking up the others' space; I come to believe that *I* am in their space. Levinas emphasizes the ethical significance of my fear of causing harm to the other on the basis of my existence. This fear is not just self-loathing but a vital and important way in which we relate to the other. It inaugurates a relationship between myself and an other that is intersubjective. I have to give an account of myself and take on an infinite moral obligation to the other just because I am here and I see them. This is not just an abstract or immaterial claim; it reflects the profound lack of control we have in choosing our lives, our bodies, and the moment of history in which we find ourselves. I may not be causally responsible for the creation of my world, but this does not free me from responsibility.

In the case of men accused of sexual misconduct, it is clear why this accusation might be such an opportunity, especially if they did not at the time consider their actions to be wrong. But must this opportunity for ethics be restricted to only those who have assaulted or harassed others and been called out for it? Given the scope and publicness of recent accusations, this moment might serve to make *all* men feel responsible. Even if I am not accused specifically, the realization that so many men have done wrong might make me think about my own complicity as a man in a culture which enables this type of misconduct. In everyday life, we often come to regulate or reassess our actions not because *we* have been accused of wrongdoing but because we witness someone else being accused. Someone who does not tip servers at restaurants

7 Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 21.

8 Emmanuel Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence*, trans. Michael B. Smith (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 24.

9 Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence*, 32.

10 Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence*, 32.

11 Explicit and implicit beliefs about racial superiority are woefully unexplored in Levinas. While an emphasize on the alterity of the other offers ethical opportunities, any attempt to realize these opportunities must wrestle with Levinas' bigotry and distinguish between oppressive and non-oppressive relations.

might come to re-evaluate their behaviour after seeing another customer berated for not tipping. Witnessing such an accusation may move me to alter my actions in order to protect myself, but it also may genuinely make me rethink how I act. In the case of recent accusations of sexual misconduct against other men, I might start to view my past actions in different terms. I might now see offhand jokes as sexist, recode unsuccessful advances as threatening, and view my numerous gendered micro-aggressions as being wrong and significant.

The type of responsibility I am advocating for is somewhat different from both the backwards-looking causal model of "bad conscience" and Levinas' existential model. I may benefit and participate in modes of violence or injustice that I did not freely choose but that I am not innocent of. I think this is to some extent what Levinas is hinting at when he demands we all grapple with our "non-intentional participation in the history of humanity."[9] I did not choose to be born into a society which is organized patriarchally or built on stolen land, but here I am, and it is therefore "my business."[10] It is on the basis of more than just my actions that I understand myself as being responsible for the other. To see another man accused allows me to see how I am shaped as a man and how that shaping, though outside of my control, is still my responsibility.

UNPACKING GENDERED ECONOMIES OF POWER

In order to take on responsibility, we must begin by transforming the way in which we relate to others. Given our sociality, we cannot make ourselves unrelated to others. Therefore, the burden is on us to make these relations ethical. One potential resource we have is, as Levinas describes, the power of the face of the other to make us recognize our responsibility. Despite the supposed self-evident importance of one's encounter with the face of the other, people constantly violate and hurt others. Moreover, these violations are not randomly distributed; the type of face that appears to me as worthy of moral consideration may appear to me as such because of the way in which different types of people are valued differently.[11] It is part of my responsibility to understand

marginal at first sight."[12] To say that we live in a world in which power relations are patterned in favor of men is not simply to say that men are granted more power than women. It means that we are shaped as specifically gendered subjects and that we are involved in that shaping of ourselves, others, and the thoughts, actions, and identities of all. We are habituated according to different gendered economies of power that develop through history and are redefined and renegotiated constantly by everyone.[13] The existence of different gendered economies helps to explain why so many men feel entitled to violate others and why it takes so long for stories of misconduct by people like Weinstein to be reported and taken seriously. It also gives a model for our complicity in the functioning of the system. We did not choose to be born into such gendered economies, and we cannot escape them, but we do have resources to push against norms, to direct our actions in different ways, and to "structure the possible field of actions of others" differently.[14] Though critique may take as its aim something which seems external to me, if the thing being critiqued is involved in my constitution, critique is a challenge to myself.[15] As Butler writes, "to call into question a regime of truth, where the regime of truth governs subjectification, is to call into question the truth of myself."[16] Consequently, the act of critiquing those economies and regimes gives us the possibility to take on responsibility for that which we did not choose.

DECENTERING THE INDIVIDUALIZED SUBJECT

Luce Irigaray critiques all of Western philosophy and culture for imagining the subject as individualized and singular. This singular subject is always imagined as masculine, even if cloaked in the language of gender neutrality. This kind of subject "can sustain himself only by bouncing back off some objectiveness."[17] If we imagine the subject as singular, he requires an earth upon which to stand, to ground his pursuit of knowledge, property, or power. This ground, Irigaray argues, has always been imagined as feminine. If women refuse to be the objects of male subjectivity, the subject itself cannot engage with the world, and "the erection of the subject might thereby be disconcerted and risk losing its elevation and

12 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 23.

13 "Gendered economies of power" is similar to Cixous' "libidinal economies," which she claims are determined not by "anatomical sex," but by "history from which one never escapes." "Extreme Fidelity," in *The Hélène Cixous Reader*, ed. Susan Sellers. (New York: Routledge, 1994), 131, 135.

14 Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," in *Essential Works of Foucault: Volume 3 (Power)* trans. Robert Hurley (New York: The New Press, 2000), 341

15 Critique here means the explication of cultural assumptions and norms with an eye to resisting, redefining, and subverting them.

16 Butler, *Giving an Account*, 23.

17 Luce Irigaray, "Any Theory of the 'Subject' Has Always Been Appropriated by the 'Masculine,'" in *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian G. Gill (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1985), 133.

18 Irigaray, "'Subject' Appropriated by Masculine," 133.

19 Luce Irigaray, *Democracy Begins Between Two,* trans. Kirsteen Anderson (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2000), 6.

20 Irigaray, *Democracy Begins Between Two*, 15.

21 Irigaray, *Democracy Begins Between Two*, 7.

22 Luce Irigaray, *I Love To You: Sketch of a Possible Felicity in History*, trans. Alison Martin (New York: Routledge, 1995), 46

penetration."[18] All relations of the singular subject to its world take this form, and, for this reason, women cannot imagine themselves as singular subjects without adopting a masculine model of grounding, penetration, and domination. Even if we try to imagine the singular subject as gender neutral, it will betray its phallocentrism by prioritizing oneness and grounding.

Any notion of responsibility that prioritizes oneness or individual accountability will give in to this tradition. That is why we must move past both the accused criminal Nietzsche describes and the existentially guilty *I* of Levinas. My responsibility is indeed *mine*, but I do not own it with exclusivity. Irigaray's project is not to define a type of individual subjectivity that is distinctly feminine; rather, she wants us to think of human nature as "at least two, man and woman."[19] Due to their fundamental psychic investments in different gendered economies of power, men tend to privilege subject-object relations, like the kind mentioned above, and women tend to privilege intersubjectivity.[20] By shifting our focus to the latter, Irigaray hopes that meaningful relationships between men and women can be cultivated. As she writes, "renouncing the desire to possess the other, in order to recognize him as other, is perhaps the most useful and beautiful of the tasks which fall to us."[21] If the subject is not singular, he is not dependent on a repressed objective ground on which to stand. In Irigaray's ideal model, "the relation between men and women is paradigmatic; it is the groundless ground of communication."[22] It is not enough to say that we ought to respect one another's autonomy; we must recognize that we are mutually constituted. To imagine myself as an isolated subject is to do violence to the other in front of me.

Irigaray's distinction between subject-object and intersubjective relations is crucial to understanding both the dominant culture that has brought us to this moment and the concept of responsibility we might derive from it. One might be tempted to think of the subject-object relation strictly in terms of sexuality—for example, pornography or street harassment. There are other modes of gendered subject-object relationality, such as demanding unilateral emotional labour or seeking praise in service of one's ego. These are part of the overall story of men consistently, intentionally, and harmfully

using a (feminine) other to ground their subjectivity. Those who have been accused of sexual misconduct have often been powerful men with illustrious careers and a great deal of ambition. If we understand these powerful men as individualized subjects, it becomes clear why they felt the need to render women their objects in pursuit of success and power. Thinking back to the concern that #MeToo will lead men to opt out of relating to women, we should ask what something like cancelling a holiday party might do. It hopefully would prevent a potential unwanted advance by a drunk manager to a younger female employee, but it would not change the mode of relationality that undergirds such an interaction. This may be an acceptable policy of harm reduction, but it does not address the underlying problem. Some commentators have suggested that men should adhere to the "Mike Pence Rule"—the policy of the vice president to not have dinner with any woman who is not his wife.[23] Yet if a man were to take up this policy, he is still the subject, and the hypothetical woman who would join him for dinner is still an object for his interest or one threatening his purity or the sanctity of his marriage. Opting out of that meeting does not grant that woman her own subjectivity nor does it allow for the crucial possibility that the two might recognize each other as different but both essential. In other words, subject-object relations can be overcome only by redefining those relations as intersubjective and not by retreat. By looking to a model of intersubjectivity as Irigaray and Levinas develop it, I can view the Other as necessary to my self-constitution, yet irreducible to their usefulness to me. Intersubjectivity allows us to appreciate the sociality of human life while preserving the difference of all the diversely gendered subjects in society.

CONCLUSION

Intersubjectivity ought not be reserved as a concept or model for only our most intimate personal relationships but should be fostered wherever possible. For Levinas, it is not primarily kin or close friends that we have infinite ethical obligations to but also strangers.[24] While our close interpersonal relations are a central site for ethicality, we should not let that obscure our other obligations. The work of fostering intersubjective relations—of not trying to possess or extract value from the other—is difficult.

23 Nellie Bowles, "Men at Work," *New York Times.*

24 Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence*, 97.

This difficulty is amplified by the capitalistic framework in which many of our interpersonal interactions take place, but the intimacy of everyday sociality cannot be opted out of. Taking on responsibility for transforming relationships between genders must then begin in these everyday interactions. How might I navigate, for instance, an interaction with a server at a restaurant in a way that does not reduce them to an object to serve a function? How can I relate intimately to others and tell them about my problems without trying to make them a passive object that I am using to ground myself? These questions have no easy answers, but they require immediate attention. Responsibility is an ongoing project that requires constant and intense care and reflexivity.

The revelations of widespread sexual harassment and assault in the last few months of 2017 must be viewed as an opportunity for men to take on responsibility. Taking on this responsibility means viewing my past actions in the light of a culture of misogyny, harassment, and objectification. It also means recognizing that I am culpable for things of which I am not the sole, or even primary, cause. My constitution by forces and others outside of my control does not render me blameless or innocent. On the contrary, it is only by recognizing that I am not self-sufficient or contained that I can be responsible and resist the masculine notion of the individual subject. An important feature of this social context is the way in which men are habituated to relate to their world, and particularly to the women in it, in a subject-object mode. Men must take on responsibility for their actions and the world by working to make their relationships into intersubjective ones which recognize the difference in the other without trying to destroy or possess it.

CECI N'EST PAS UNE ATHEIST

A NIETZSCHEAN ANALYSIS OF "ATHEISM" IN MEMES

EMILY MASTRAGOSTINO

Emily Mastragostino is completing her forth year of study at York University located in Toronto, Canada. Although she is a double major in humanities and psychology, she has developed a keen interest in continental philosophy. Emily's main focuses include philosophy of sex and gender and philosophy of religion. Her studies in philosophy have inspired her to name her two guinea pigs Chomsky and Spinoza. Currently, Emily is working on a thesis regarding the generational transmission of gender attitudes and stereotypes. Emily is very excited to graduate in Spring 2018.

ABSTRACT: *In* The Gay Science *Nietzsche famously writes that "God is dead." Modern atheists, including "Internet Atheists," have taken this as their epithet. I argue that the perpetuation of the statement "God is dead" contradicts the atheistic core, such that Internet Atheists parallel theists in identity construction. Insights from Nietzsche, Jean Luc Nancy, Sigmund Freud, and Christopher Hitchens allow for an exploration of the theistic underpinnings of Internet Atheists. The doctrine of Internet Atheism, as it is represented in humorous online depictions of God, suggests an inability to confront the consequences of the death of God; an inability which Nietzsche warns against in the Parable of the Madman.*

CECI N'EST PAS UN ATHEIST

A NIETZSCHEAN ANALYSIS OF "ATHEISM" IN MEMES

Internet Atheists are one of the most self-righteous groups in the modern media age. The average Internet Atheist does not always make accurate claims disputing religion; nonetheless, they assert them confidently and aggressively. More troubling, Internet Atheists do not practice atheism, nor do they seem to understand this position. In this essay, through a Nietzschean analysis, I will argue that depictions of God created by Internet Atheists, primarily in memes, represent their inability to confront the death of God by simultaneously celebrating God's loss of divinity and their own absorption and enforcement of theistic ideologies, making Internet Atheists distinctly theist. I will proceed through Nietzsche's and Christopher Hitchens' descriptions of atheism, as well as Jean-Luc Nancy's and Freud's fetishism.

I consider Internet Atheism to be a subsection of New Atheism. New Atheism is a contemporary position rejecting God through the rational critique of religion.[1] Internet Atheism, similarly, uses new media to reject the idea of and rationally delegitimize a literal God; these ideas are shared through internet forums and communities, and are known for belligerent attempts to disprove God through science and logic. The definition of "Internet Atheism" remains rooted in a community of people with brazen attitudes toward religion. On *VICE*, we find the article "A Reminder: Internet Atheists Fucking Suck;"[2] likewise, on CollegeHumor, we find "10 times Atheists Online were More Annoying than your Religious Aunt."[3] As these articles point out, "Internet Atheists" are not "atheists who use the internet" but a specific community of people who denigrate the slightest mention of religion. Perhaps Urban Dictionary puts it best when they state, "Not to be mistaken for an atheist who merely uses the internet, an Internet Atheist is someone who is ubiquitous when it comes to websites or forum threads related to religion."[4] It should be noted that Internet Atheists are not the only non-theists found on the internet. Instead, they

are defined by controversial and belligerent methods to disprove the ideas of theism.

Internet Atheists have a different perspective of their position. T.J. Kirk, popularly known as "TheAmazingAtheist," is a prominent member of this community. Kirk gained fame by posting videos that harshly critique theism and religion on YouTube. His followers describe his work very differently than *VICE* and CollegeHumor do. Geniusbeast describes Kirk as "the most genuine human being I have ever seen. In a world of stupidity, arrogance, and silly religion, he shines." Geniusbeast represents the common Internet Atheist view: their efforts fight what they believe is ignorant dogma perpetuated by religious institutions and individuals. Internet Atheists view themselves as vigilantes working to liberate humanity from the clutches of a false god. Regardless of interpretation, Internet Atheists communicate their position through various platforms including blogs, vlogs, comments, fanfiction, and memes.[5]

Memes are a staple of internet culture. Memes are digital symbols that convey ideology through the addition of text to images already holding meaning.[6] Memes often include parody, pastiche, and satire.[7] Limor Schifman defines memes as "cultural information that passes along from person to person, yet gradually scales into a shared social phenomenon."[8] Essentially, the birth of a meme involves the creation of a meaningful image that spreads through an internet community that adds to, alters, and shares their variations of the original. Ultimately, they become so prevalent that they shape both online and offline culture.

This essay will focus on two strands of memes: "God in Action" and "Advice God." Both are appropriations of classical images of a divine God aiming to analyze the concept of God. The "God" represented does not necessarily accurately portray God (it is a false God, which will be discussed later), nor do the memes differentiate between God, god, or gods of different religions, texts, or cultures; they generally describe popular atheist assumptions of the Abrahamic God, though they do not generally recognize this as their position. Rather, Internet Atheists assume a totalizing stance on God and religion in general. Even when misrepresenting God, Internet Atheist discourse reveals their position regarding theism.

1 Gary Wolf, "The Church of Non-Believers," *WIRED*, November 1, 2006, https://www.wired.com/2006/11/atheism/.

2 Kesvani Heusin, "A Reminder: Internet Atheists Fucking Suck," *VICE*, June 14, 2017.

3 CH Staff, "10 Times Atheists Online Were More Annoying Than Your Religious Aunt," *CollegeHumor*, August 19, 2016, http://www.collegehumor.com/post/7039-423/10-brave-atheist-warriors-who-100-confirm-there-is-no-god.

4 Card Tricks, "Internet Atheist," *Urban Dictionary*, May 27, 2013, https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Internet%20Atheist.

5 See T*he Chronicles of Jesus and Shrek, Jesus and Hitler: A Romance, Jesus Gets Nailed*, and *When Jesus Comes* as found on fanfiction.net.

6 Alice Marwick, "Memes," *Contexts* 12, no. 4 (November 16, 2013): 1.

7 Marwick, "Memes," 1.

8 Cited in Marwick, "Memes," 2.

I will be focusing on what this discourse reveals about Internet Atheists without consideration for whether their representation of God is accurate. However, due to Internet Atheism's implicit focus on Abrahamic religions, when referring to theism I will focus on Abrahamic religions in my analysis.

Internet Atheists may not understand a specific religion's concept of God, nor, as I will discuss, do they fully understand their own position in the atheism-theism dichotomy. However, these concepts do have general definitions. Nietzsche describes their fundamental structure: God, atheism, and theism converge at one event—the death of God. Nietzsche, through the madman, proclaims that God is dead.[9] This is not a physical death, but rather the death of God is the destruction of the power that God held over humanity.[10] Thus, when "alive" so to speak, God enforced meaning, stability, and control. Dictating that these ideologies originate in God, rather than humans, allows them to be accepted as universal, "natural" laws of order and knowledge. Thus, God's ideologies are the only truth; when God is dead, there can be no "natural" law. The death of God occurs when individuals no longer believe the metaphor to be literal. If God is not a literal higher power, then God's laws are not divine. Like the madman in Nietzsche's parable, without God we cannot orient ourselves: we cannot understand where we are moving, if we are moving, what will happen to us.[11] As Nietzsche's madman demonstrates, those that understand the consequences of the death of God experience a disoriented world.

Based on Nietzsche, atheists and theists must share a common dead God. The ideologies of both group can be seen as a dichotomy. Atheism is a complete loss of God in both existence and the consequence of this loss for God's unequivocal order, understanding, and meaning. From the parable of the madman, we see that to fully understand God's death is to relinquish all ideologies associated with God because of their arbitrariness without God's authority.[12] Society is built on these ideologies, so removing them requires a complete restructuring of how we view and live in the world. An atheist comprehends that without God there is chaos; all paradigms that previously gave meaning, value, and understanding no

9 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York, NY: Random House Inc., 1974), 181.

10 Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 181.

11 Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 181.

12 Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 181.

longer apply, and thus atheism is a paradigm shift from believing that God and God's values are natural universal properties to understanding that there are no natural universal properties. Atheism is full rejection of every aspect of God.

Alternatively, there are individuals who recognise that God does not exist but do not realize the loss of order, understanding, and meaning attached to God's death. These individuals often identify as atheists, but their actions in the world do not match the true atheist's. By not realizing the consequences of the death of God, these individuals continue to exist through God's meaning, values, and understanding. These individuals are in the shadow of God.[13] As Nietzsche suggests, to live in the shadow of God is not to be free of God.[14] Thus, individuals in the shadow of God cannot be atheists.

I propose that those who practice and perpetuate the ideologies of God conform to theism regardless of their belief of whether God exists. Contra the madman, theists understand the world through ideologies associated with God; this includes accepting ideologies dictating a singular truth or morality with supreme value. Like the self-diagnosed "atheist," an individual may recognize that God does not exist, but if they do not recognize the impact of the death of God, then they still live through God's order. Thus, belief or unbelief in God is not a requirement for theism; it is the behaviours and understanding of the world that define it. The only difference between the theist that believes in God and the one that doesn't is the understanding of where order originates. Both behave as though the world has natural order; whether or not they dispute God's existence is semantic.[15] Atheism purges all God's ideologies, while theism upholds the paradigms of God. Internet Atheists perpetuate the ideologies of God and are thus theist.

By understanding these worldviews in relation to God, the distinct ways Internet Atheists understand the world become evident. In "God, Charlie, No One," Jean-Luc Nancy discusses God's representation. Nancy states that naming or depicting God undermines the divine's stature because it suggests it is possible to understand God. If God can be understood, then God is not divine.[16] Memes give God an image and characteristics; memes define God. By defining God, Internet Atheists create a

13 Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 167.

14 Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 167.

15 This will be seen in the *Advice God* memes further in the essay.

16 Jean-Luc Nancy, "God, Charlie, No One," *The Philosophical Salon*, March 2, 2015, http://thephilosophical-salon.com/god-charlie-no-one/.

position in which they can defy God; particularly through memes, they primarily, if not always, communicate an identity in contrast to their conception of God. Without identifying "God", Internet Atheists could not exist as a distinct group. However, when God is named or depicted, the resultant refers to a false god.[17] Thus Internet Atheists are disputing what they assume God to be. The false God is a fetish, and the fetish becomes a meme.

Freud conceptualizes fetish through the mother/son relationship. The son assumes his mother has a penis. When he discovers her lack, he fears his own castration;[18] this fear makes the son unwilling to consciously accept that the mother does not have a penis.[19] Thus, he represses her lack of penis and creates a substitute to prevent the trauma of the truth. The last association made before the trauma, often women's underwear, becomes the substitute or "the fetish."[20] God imagery has become fetishized to protect against the trauma of God's death.

When individuals discover the lack of God, they fear the consequences. The meaninglessness and chaos of a world without God is recognized unconsciously. If this recognition becomes conscious, the individual will experience trauma. To protect against trauma, a fetish is created out of the last sign of safety. God, being the last instance of meaning, understanding, and purpose, is thus fetishized—particularly images of God from periods where God held meaning (before God's death).

In creating the fetish, the mind is divided: conscious and unconscious. Both sections recognize reality and both know that the mother lacks a penis and that God is dead. However, they do not both act in accordance. The unconscious recognizes the fears of the truth: castration and chaos. These are what prevent the conscious mind from understanding reality. Instead, the conscious understands the fetish. In the Internet Atheists' case, the conscious admits that God is dead but does not recognize the full meaning of it. Internet representations recreate the death of God while refusing to accept its meaning.

"God in Action" is a meme parody in which God from Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam*[21] is inserted into various mortal situations. For instance, God is photoshopped into a basketball game mid-slam-dunk, his arm reaching an imposed basketball (Figure 1). In another,

17 Nancy, "God, Charlie, No One."

18 Sigmund Freud, "Fetishism," in *Collected Papers Volume 5: Miscellaneous Papers 1888-1938,* ed. James Strachey, trans. Joan Riviere, 1st ed., vol. 5 (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1959), 198.

19 Freud, "Fetishism," 199.

20 Freud, "Fetishism," 200.

21 Michelangelo, *The Creation of Adam,* 1512, Fresco, 9'2" x 18'8".

22 ben, "God in Action," *Meme Center,* 2012, https://www.memecenter.com/fun/91977/God-in-Action.

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

23 Michelangelo, *Creation of Adam.*

24 "The Creation of Adam, by Michelangelo," *Michelangelo.org,* 2011, https://www.michelangelo.org/the-creation-of-adam.jsp#prettyPhoto.

25 Michelangelo, *The Creation of the Sun, Moon and Vegetation*, 1511, Fresco, 9' 2" x 18' 4," 1511.

26 "Advice God Memes," Search, *Meme Center,* n.d., https://www.memecenter.com/search?query=advice+god.

God reaches toward Waldo in a game of *Where's Waldo* (Figure 2). In another, God is imposed onto a motorcycle, his arm reaching to steal a woman's purse (Figure 3).[22] Through these images, Internet Atheists fetishize the image of a divine God by placing God in human situations. On the surface, this is a celebration of God's death. Michelangelo's God represents the world before the death of God; *The Creation of Adam*[23] is a "vision of the sublimity of God and the potential nobility of man."[24] God represents omniscience and omnibenevolence: an ordered, structured, and comprehensive world of human life and understanding. This visual substitute protects from the trauma of life's chaos without God. However, appropriating God's image from the divinity of the painting perpetuates the death of God; God is no longer represented as immortal.

Depicting God in human situations revokes God's power and divinity. In this way, Internet Atheists recognize that God is no longer divine or omnipotent. A true atheist would feel the loss of meaning in God's death, but the Internet Atheist's memes place God in comical situations meant to celebrate God's lack of power over the individual. The humour stems from the disruption of God's divinity by juxtaposing God with mundane or immoral tasks. Like Nietzsche's market-goers in *Parable of a Madman*, meme creators and consumers laugh at and celebrate the death of God without considering the event's repercussions.

"Advice God" and "Scumbag God" also fetishize God by appropriating divine representations. Like "God in Action," "Advice God" recognizes and perpetuates God's death by representing God without divinity; it is a visual argument against the plausibility and morality of a literal God. "Advice God" features Michelangelo's representation of God in *The Creation of the Sun, Moon and Vegetation.*[25] A summarized religious value or "truth" appears above "God's" head—meant to replicate "God's" thoughts. Below the head of "God" appears a contradiction of the religious truth above. The latter invalidates the former and, thus, the religion's credibility.

In one variation, the top states, "create entire universe out of nothing" and below "need Adam's rib to create 1 more thing," (Figure 4).[26] The above portion attributes

creation to God, while below an inconsistency in the process of creation is questioned thus also questioning belief in God. The meme suggests it is contradictory to believe that God can create out of nothing yet is incapable of creating Eve in like manner. Contradicting religious truths attempts to discredit God through religion.

The Internet Atheist's often view their position differently than I describe. Returning to the followers of popular YouTuber Kirk, they claim their vigilantism frees humanity from religion's limitations by appealing to reason and morality.[27] YouTube user Scorpion Firesome argues that individuals who believe in God "do good things out of fear of death" and those who do not "do the right thing because it's the human thing to do."[28] In this comment, Firesome suggests that theists and atheists act similarly but with entirely different moral codes. Believers fear God whereas Internet Atheists act according to a moral code "natural to humanity." By analyzing the perceived ideologies of God and religion, Internet Atheists aim to improve the condition of humanity.

Similarly, Internet Atheist's use memes to explain what they deem the flawed reason of religion in order to return humanity to its natural logical tendencies.[29] Internet Atheists use memes to point out perceived inconsistencies in religion's nature.[30] Another "Advice God" meme illustrates this by attempting to invalidate God's logic and morality. In this case, the top states "Makes you gay" followed by "hates you for it,"(Figure 5).[31] This text suggests that God is not logical or moral because a being with those characteristics would not intentionaly create a hateful thing. Ultimately, Internet Atheists argue they are fighting against God's anti–human ideas in order to liberate humanity and create a society built solely on reason. In the following paragraphs, I will argue that the Internet Atheists' goal instead parallels the "reason," "morality," and identity of theists.

Foremost, these memes' attempts to subvert a literal God are distinctly theist. A major focus of "Advice God" is truth and morality, the origin and value of which is God. New Atheism guides Internet Atheism in this fight against God through theism. Christopher Hitchens describes how New Atheism disagrees with religion, including the source of truth and morality. These concepts are seen in Internet Atheist memes.

Fig. 4

Fig. 5

27 T.J. Kirk, *God Sucks*, Digital Video, 2009, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6c2m-jq2n3Yg.

28 Scorpion Firesome, "Atheists Do the Right Thing Because It's the Human Thing to Do," Comment, *YouTube*, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6c2m-jq2n3Yg.

29 AdviceAnimals, "Scumbag God," Image, *REBRN*, January 20, 2014, http://rebrn.com/re/scumbag -god-694197/.

30 Kirk, *God Sucks*; AdviceAnimals, "Scumbag God."

31 AdviceAnimals, "Scumbag God."

32 Ps. 119:160 NIV.

33 Ps. 86:11 ESV.

34 imasillypiggy, "Advice God," Thread, *Know Your Meme*, 2011, http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/advice-god.

35 Christopher Hitchens, *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (New York, NY: Twelve Publishing, 2009), 4.

36 sillybeggar, "Scumbag," *Urban Dictionary*, November 19, 2012, https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Scumbag.

The concept that there can only be one truth is distinctly theist. Theism relies on the maintenance of a singular truth to structure the world in a way that positions God indisputably. Psalms states "All [God's] words are true; all [God's] righteous laws are eternal."[32] This passage suggests that God creates indisputable laws of truth. Thus, anything that contradicts God cannot be true. As such, theists follow God's laws. In the Bible, David prays "Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth."[33] David relies on God's guidance to understand the world. Therefore, God is the single, meaningful truth that gives understanding.

Theists each have versions of the single truth. Creationism is an example of a singular truth because it is considered the indisputable way in which everything originated. Internet Atheism perceives creationism to be religion's greatest sin, and memes target this. From the perspective of God, a variation of the "Advice God" meme states "Everything needs a creator" followed by "Except me."[34] This meme questions God's origin using the belief that everything comes from a creator and subverts the singular truth of creationism. The Internet Atheists disagree with single truths put forth by God.

Rebuking the singular truth is a product of rejecting God's ideologies. Without a literal God, no single truth can be believed. The atheist recognizes that the death of God allows a plurality of truths to be valid: there is no longer a supreme authority on what is "true." However, Internet Atheism replaces God's "truth" with their own. Science and reason substitute the specific teachings of religion. Science becomes the dictator of truth and aims to empirically prove a single truth.[35] Thus, Internet Atheism does not rebuke the ideology of singular truth. Instead, science becomes the new supreme authority, just as God was before.

Memes represent this transfer of truth from God to science. A variation of "Advice God" called "Scumbag God" follows the same visual and argumentative structure but differs in that it imposes a backwards baseball cap (appropriated from another meme) onto God as an expression of contempt. As per internet lexicon, a "scumbag" is an individual without morals or concern for others.[36] In this meme, God is the "scumbag." A variation of *Scumbag God* substitutes God for a strand of DNA and

reads "Let's give you facial hair, a flat butt, big shoulders, a deep voice" followed by "and a vagina,"suggesting that biology dictates appearance.[37] The DNA implicates science as creator and ultimate power. Science becomes the God of Internet Atheism. Thus, its truths must be the only acceptable ones. This acceptance of singular truth upholds the theistic system of order.

Additionally, morality's value is a fundamental principle of theism. As with truth, singular morality is upheld. In Luke, Jesus says, "No one is good except God alone."[38] God functions as the source of morality by representing the ultimate good. Further, God's goodness defines the relationship between God and humans; Proverbs states that if one follows God's wisdom and world structure then they "will walk in the ways of the good and keep to the paths of the righteous."[39] Thus, humans relate to God through morality. Internet Atheists disagree that God is good and that individuals should emulate God. Another "Scumbag God" meme reads "Scumbag God Says 'Thou Shalt Not Kill' followed by 'Proceeds to Kill Millions,'" suggesting that God hypocritically dictates not to kill and is thus not the ultimate good. The meme correctly identifies that God is the original source of the moral ideology that poses murder as reprehensible. An atheist would reject morality because of its origin and would recognize that the death of God indicates that morality, and its principles, are not natural properties.

Instead, the "Scumbag God" meme demonizes God for breaking the moral code. Internet Atheists compare God's morality to their own. New Atheists argue that religion allows, encourages, and permits individuals to behave in morally questionable ways. For example, Hitchens states that God calls for the killing of civilians so that holy objects can be created.[40] "Advice God" memes often depict religion as immoral through its own structure. For example, a meme from God's perspective states "makes murder a sin" followed by "forces Abraham to kill his son Isaac," suggesting that Internet Atheists believe even God is inconsiderate of God's own moral structure.[41]

In contrast, Hitchens argues that atheists behave in morally acceptable ways. The "Godless" method of learning morality is said to be effective based on the "low crime rates" of New Atheists.[42] Whether or not

37 imasillypiggy, "Advice God."

38 Lk. 18:19 ESV.

39 Prv. 2:20 NIV.

40 Hitchens, *God Is Not Great*, 4.

41 imasillypiggy, "Advice God."

42 Hitchens, *God Is Not Great*, 4.

this is true, the moral ideology that greed and violence are fundamentally and categorical wrong is a theistic ideology.[43] The inability of New Atheism to refuse God's principles suggest that New Atheism does not recognize the impact of the death of God.

Memes demonize God, positioning Internet Atheists as the good. By defining God, Internet Atheists create a position of the other, then create their own identity in contrast to the other.[44] If the other is bad then Internet Atheists, who do not accept what they assume to be the other (God), are good. However, this ultimately reverts to God's dichotomous conceptualization of the world as good and evil. Although Internet Atheism holds that God does not exist, it continues to conform to the principles, values, and morality of God.

Fundamentally, Internet Atheist judgments of truth, morality, and goodness are an analysis of the enactment of God's ideologies based on God's ideologies. This puts Internet Atheists in a position where they analyze God through God's logic while proclaiming God's death. Ultimately, Internet Atheists attempt to give order to the world by imposing a single ultimate system assumed to provide meaning and understanding. The specific rules and values they give overlap those of theism. More importantly, by trying to impose any single system, they reinforce the theistic system.

Internet Atheists understand that God is dead but do not cognate the consequences of this death. Instead, they create memes to protect themselves from the fear of losing the guidance that God provides. These memes unconsciously appropriate, propagate, and enforce theistic structures. Consequently, Internet Atheists are not truly atheist; instead, they replicate theistic ideologies thereby reinforcing and continuing God's reign within society.

43 Mk. 7:22 NIV; Ps. 11:5 NIV.

44 Edward W. Saïd, *Orientalism*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1978), 10.

"There is no place that is not haunted by many different spirits hidden there in silence, spirits one can 'invoke' or not. Haunted places are the only ones people can live in."

- *Michel de Certeau,* The Practice of Everyday Life, *trans. Steven F. Rendall (Berkely: University of California Press, 1988), 108.*

THE HOUSE HAS EYES

OR HOW OBJECTS HAUNT OUR PRESENT

BENJAMIN M. SLIGHTOM

Benjamin Slightom is currently a final-semester senior at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana, where he majors in architecture and minors in philosophy. His primary philosophical interests are twentieth-century French continental philosophy, critical theory, and postmodern philosophy. After graduation, Benjamin Slightom will attend Yale University as a doctoral student in Sociocultural Anthropology. His proposed dissertation focuses on the possibility that so-called "rust belt" cities have for the creation of radical prefigurative politics and is heavily influenced by his undergraduate work between philosophy and architecture.

ABSTRACT: *Human beings cannot bear the thought of no longer being the center of the universe; Martin Heidegger's ontology validates the construction of a world that subjugates non-human objects to a role which reinforces our own position. In this paper, two personal experiences of objects which contradict traditional construals of "subjectivity" will be explored and analyzed in light of contemporary uncertainty around Heidegger's ontology. Ultimately, I seek to complexify and show the radical dependence humans have on the constructed— or, "second"—subjectivity of objects and how we use them to validate the world as we wish it to be seen.*

70

THE HOUSE HAS EYES

OR HOW OBJECTS HAUNT OUR PRESENT

THE OBJECTS

In my house, there is an armchair that used to be my grandfather's. A strange mixture between wingback and turned chair, upholstered in a green fabric creased where his head used to lay. For a long time, it smelled like his house, like pancakes and the smoke of a fireplace—but now it smells a little more like mothballs. There are times I wake up in the middle of the night, stumbling downstairs half-asleep, only to find a large and imposing lump where the chair used to be: a black hollow which sucks up space imperceptibly. I startle awake at its sight, but it is only the chair. In that moment between dream and reality, I am back in my grandparents' cottage, the last attendant of a long-forgotten sleepover.

This chair haunts me. It reminds me of a loss from which I can never recover, a love that bubbles up inside of me recalling my grandfather's laugh, remembering being told not to sit in papa's chair. This chair looms at me unexpectedly, seeming to judge: "what have you done to remember?"

Other objects in my house loom at me like this. A yellow couch, for instance, whose corduroy fabric and sleek, tapered legs reek of the sixties—an impossible find from Goodwill, cushions still surprisingly plush, colors un-faded by time. My roommate and I fell in love with it, bought it on the spot, and lugged it home to marvel at its well-preserved beauty. We built a story around it of a widow whose entire living room was yellow corduroy. How careful she had been to clean and cherish this couch; perhaps it too reminded her of a loved one now gone. There are times I look at this couch and feel a melancholy so great that I can but grasp the edge of the fabric, its bristling skin pressing into mine. The widow becomes real, not an imaginary character but part of the couch itself; it becomes a fictional couch, whose presence I can no longer deny.

1 It is not the aim of this paper to definitively establish the ontological subjectivity of objects; it will suffice to rely on the claims of others—primarily Graham Harman—as to this end. What this project is first and foremost interested in is the *implications for the human subject* of this implied dual subjectivity of the object.

2 In this paper, "first subjectivity" will be used to designate the distinct subjectivity of the object itself— one formed independent of human relationships; "second subjectivity" will be used to designate the constructed and false subjectivity of the object, given to it intersubjectively by human relationships and stories.

3 Emphasis added, Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, trans. James Benedict (Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2006), 14.

71

These objects take on qualities beyond their facticity; they transcend themselves, gain attributes beyond the physical. They take on the gaze, *haunt* our present as subjects in their own right. The gaze unlocks the object, activates portions previously unknown to us—not as pieces of a thing but as living, breathing, confrontational material. But the gaze is not taken up as a surrogate for a person; no, we must understand the object existentially as a subject with its own ontological existence to whom we tie our history in such a way that a second, distinct subjectivity is fabricated.[1] This second subjectivity is false, constructed by assumed histories given so that the object can validate our existence as we wish it to be seen. The first subjectivity chafes against the second, threatening to collapse the stories we connected them to—threatening to collapse our identity.[2] What must be understood is that the object does not depend on our existence for it to be given a life, a subjectivity; it already has one. What must also be understood is that we are dependent upon the objects' acceptance of our false second subjectivity to validate the world as we wish it to be seen.

A STRIKING CHARACTER

What allows the object to be a subject? This is an issue Jean Baudrillard sought to answer about the family home:

> The primary role of furniture and objects . . . is to personify human relationships, to fill the space that they share between them, and to be inhabited by a soul. . . . Human beings and objects are indeed bound together in a collusion in which the objects take on a certain density, an emotional value— what might be called a "presence."[3]

In the privileged space of the home, its contents become symbolic—everything in harmony or disarray in proportion to the inhabitants own interrelations. These objects—in the family's absence—serve as surrogates for them; the child can take comfort in the solidity of their parent's chair or in the fine porcelain they stack in the cupboard. The family gives these objects agency, imbues them with possible meanings which weigh them down—they are now laden with a role: they represent me. Here, the object is assumed to behave as a subject only intersubjectively. That is to say it is a second subject; without the family to imbue it with history, it would be mute—a non-subject. According to Baudrillard, my

grandfather's chair possesses its strange qualities *only because it represents* a relationship now lost, a ghost which remains permanently in the chair—a ghost which no amount of detergents or mothballs could ever scrub out for me.

This account of the object's significance does not extend, however, to the yellow couch. How can this couch *haunt* me like the chair when the familial relationship it once signified is unknown to me? To answer this, we cannot rely on Baudrillard. To him, the object gains subjectivity–what I call second subjectivity–merely through its representation of a relationship.[4] Yet this couch has no relation to me beyond the one I have with my roommate—a relationship quite distinct from the one established by the family. Ours is a relationship of need while the family's is bound by sociocultural practices—the object's substance to Baudrillard. If the object represented *only the relationships I have established*, then the couch should only represent a convenient necessity: my roommate and I wanted a place to sit, so we bought a couch. But we did not buy just *any* couch; there was something more about this couch; it *struck* us in a way no other couch could. It had that quality Roland Barthes describes of the photograph—a *punctum*.

> Occasionally, a "detail" attracts me. I feel that its mere presence changes my reading, that I am looking at a new photograph . . . this detail is the punctum. . . . However lightning-like it may be, the punctum has . . . a power of expansion. . . . I perceive the referent (here, the photograph really transcends itself. . . . To annihilate itself as medium,[6] to be no longer a sign but the thing itself?)[5]

A detail about the couch struck us: it was clean. Too clean, in fact. This detail is what made us fall in love with it, but it arose only because of the relationship the couch once signified. The detail revealed a portion of the couch's history, the origin of its second subjectivity. Like the annihilation of the photograph Barthes describes, suddenly the couch was no longer symbol of my relationship with my roommate but became the fictional family couch again with all its significance, carrying its symbolic status over into the present.

This *punctum* allowed us to build the narrative of the widow around it, but it does not matter if she ever truly existed. What matters is that something about the couch

4 A second subjectivity.

5 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 2010), 42–45.

6 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York, NY: Washington Square Press, 1993), 343–45.

allowed us to tell that story, to build a second subjectivity around the object. The *punctum* is what allowed me to feel the corduroy bristle under my hand, what manifested the widow not as mere representation but as *actual lived experience.*

How powerful this quality, the *punctum*, is: it bridges the past and the present; it manifests *fiction* as *reality*. When I feel the presence of the widow, it is not that this fiction has become reality, but that I have become more fictional; a portion of myself gets caught up in building the narrative of the couch, in holding it down to second subjectivity. Thus, the *punctum* confuses the reality of the object and my fictional story in such a way that I feel its contradiction personally. This same confusion is active in my grandfather's chair. Although I have a personal connection with this object, it is one I now experience only through memory—and memories can be quite fictional, particularly nostalgic ones; we remember what we want to about the object, forgetting unimportant qualities in order to be filled up with those which remain *striking* to us—a *punctum*.

THE SUBJECT/OBJECT PROBLEM

Even understanding the *punctum*, we are still left with the problem of the experience. There must be something else stirring up these events, causing me to focus sharply on the details and narratives which otherwise sink into the background. These events, where the chair judges or the couch looms, resemble the feeling Sartre describes originating from "the Other."

> The Other is first the permanent flight of things toward . . . an object at a certain distance from me but which escapes me inasmuch as it unfolds about itself its own distance. . . . there is a total space which is grouped around the Other, and this space is made with my space; there is a regrouping in which I take part but which escapes me . . . the . . . relation of myself to the Other . . . [is] a concrete daily relation . . . at each instant the Other is looking at me.[6]

Objects take on the presence of the Other and re–orient the space I am in, stealing my space away from me and folding it into new configurations. There is an

unmistakable vertigo which results from understanding the object as Other, explainable only in terms of it taking on the "gaze"—the unshakeable feeling that at any time I might be being looked at, might have my world stolen from me. This fear is the possibility that the second and constructed subjectivity I have given to the object—which defines and reflects a portion of who *I* am as a subject—is being misunderstood, that my identity is at risk of being seen by the object as merely an objective quality rather than my very transcendence of the objective.[7]

When I stumble across the chair in its transmuted state, I perceive this fear not because the chair *changed,* but because I become aware of its *first subjectivity*, its existence in- and for-itself. I become aware that the second subjectivity represents—in the Baudrillardian sense—a relationship fundamental to an aspect of who I am and that the memories I have tied to the object do not represent it fully; without me, it has existed, has engaged in other histories which imply that it has a distinct subjectivity. The fact that the object has only *now* entered into my presence leaves open the possibility that the chair could transcend all of the events that I have attempted to ascribe it to. What I know of the chair is only a partial knowledge made up of bits and pieces of time I have mistaken for a complete history—a history I have filled in with my own constructed narratives. The chair's assumption of the gaze allows it to reorient my space for its own, to assert its first subjectivity. This unfolding of the first subjectivity, which at most times remains tightly shut at the edge of the object, stuns us, forces us to let our guards down. In these unguarded moments, we leave open the possibility of the second subjectivities falsity, that the chair might in fact be a subject in-itself—and so it takes on the gaze.

A. EYES

It seems, based on the experiences recounted, that the object's ability to haunt us is primarily because it takes on the gaze, a representation of first subjectivity; yet the proposition that an object might have a seperate and distinct subjectivity feels initially quite absurd. The theories we have relied upon thus far assert that full subjectivity is reserved only for human beings, not objects—though the object can be *imbued* with apparent subjectivity through intersubjective relationships (what

[7] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 301–3; 341–49.

[8] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 346.

we have called "second subjectivity.") For Sartre, the gaze can be felt only if it originates from the human subject, but allows, like Baudrillard, that the human gaze might be *represented* by an object. Sartre depicts a white farmhouse caught in a war; an infantry hiding in the brush fears the house because it represents the possibility of an Other's presence and thus the possibility of a gaze.[8] The house takes on the gaze as if it has been *lent a set of eyes* by an adjacent human agency; the house has eyes only as a representation, not because it is seen as a subject in-itself: a first subject.

If we take Sartre at his word that the object cannot have first subjectivity, how might we change our readings? We could understand the experience of the chair at night as a misreading of it, brought on by the dark, interpreting it momentarily as human—a full subject in Sartrean terms. This would account for the strong emotional content of the experience, but this cannot explain the situation of the couch sitting before us in broad daylight. I perceive it fully *as a couch:* an object severed from subjectivity*,* no longer in the widow's home, cut off from the relationship which might lend it eyes. Even when the *punctum* replaces it with the fictional family couch, it remains severed, unable to take up the gaze; it sits in *my* living room, unfolding its own space around itself. It is difficult to see how the subjectivity of the deceased, fictional family could remain potent here; I understand that they are gone, that the *punctum* operates only through my perception of it as present.

We could consider the gaze of the couch as a representation of my own eyes; it was, after all, my story which built its second subjectivity. In this account, my subjectivity would be displaced by the detail and turned back on myself. While this would explain my emotional experience, it would also require an overly complex understanding of the object; I must simultaneously perceive the *punctum* as a representation of the object's history *and* displace my subjectivity into it, thus severing me from myself. I become both the perceived and perceiver of the Other. This state of dual-perception would likely disintegrate the detail: I would be so bound up in the act of perception that I might not notice the very *punctum* which caused the experience in the first place.

THE OBJECT AS SUBJECT

If we bind ourselves strictly to Sartre and Baudrillard, we face a problem: the object must be a first subject, but cannot be. This limit originates from Sartre's problematic reading of Martin Heidegger's ontology. In his equipment-philosophy, Heidegger develops a rich subjectivity for objects before ultimately concluding that they are activated only by the human hand.[9] This second supposition is questioned by Graham Harman, who believes that Heidegger truly opens the object to first subjectivity and that his overemphasis of humanity's role was driven by an inability to conceive of a world not fully centered on the human perspective. This presents a problem to Harman in that Heidegger appears to give the object a place of power only to later make it subservient.[10] Heidegger's inflation of human subjectivity ontologically is the foundation of Sartre's own viewpoint, which then faces the same problem: objects become silent servants of the human will. In response to this problem, Harman proposes that we simply level the playing field; Heidegger gives the object a rich foundation of subjectivity, and so if we understand the human as another *kind* of object, then we would maintain our place of power while also allowing other objects to gain their own first subjectivity.

What Harman wishes us to realize is that the world does not unfold around human beings, nor are they the only true subjects—a perception arising only from our point of view; if we instead consider the chair's point of view, its ability to affect itself as a place to sit creates the situation in which we are able to affect our own effect. Without the chair's ability to take up first subjectivity, Harman strongly believes that it would not be capable of the very effects that allow us to engage with it as a chair. Further, he asserts that being capable of creating effects is the only requirement of subjectivity for all objects.[11]

If this is true, then there are no chairs, only chair-effects; however, the chair is not limited to affecting itself as this place to sit: like humans, it is capable of other effects. It can affect itself like a place of power, like a fire, like a bird's nest—like anything at all.[12] There is no constraint to the object's subjectivity that would make it dependent on us. Without us it would continue to unfold the world about itself. If no human subject existed, then

9 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, ed. Dennis J. Schmidt, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), 59–106.

10 Graham Harman, *Tool-Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects*, 1st ed. (Chicago: Open Court, 2002), 18–24.

11 Harman, *Tool-Being*.

12 When the object engages with objects that are not human, it is important to remember that *it is still engaging its effects.* To Harman, this means that the object *must* be a first subject. Even if it becomes, as implied, little more than a rotting nest for a bird, it remains a first subject because the effect of "bird's-nest" is implicated in the objects range of affective capabilities.

the chair would *remain a first subject:* with our constructed second subjectivity forgotten, the chair's effects would continue to engage and disengage with other effects in ways which—in a human-centered ontology—we cannot even begin to comprehend. Objects are not trivial things contingent upon our use of them but *entire worlds* capable *in-themselves* of existence.

HAUNTINGS

What are we to make of Harman's conclusion? The world is full of objects, each capable of first subjectivity. If this is true, then no object can be truly inert to us; we live in a universe of haunted objects, bound to a constellation of our own making. We tie down a finite number of objects' first subjectivity in service to our own identity in ways we do not fully comprehend, we erase their first subjectivity in favor of a constructed second one. Our history haunts them; they are relegated to live as the symbols *we want them to be*, not just any chair but *my grandfather's chair*. Oh god, please remain my grandfather's chair; what would I do if this object lost its significance, if I could in fact wash out the ghost of my own memory? The chair would be freed from me and the second subjectivity I have tied it to—but I would be changed forever. There would be a wingback-shaped hole stretching across my memory, a blank space in every photograph of my grandparents' living room. I might lose the very memory of my grandfather; what is a memory but a collection of *punctums,* the pertinent details which caused us to become aware of the situation of the world, the construction which we call *place*?[13] Without this chair, I might not remember my grandfather because an object-effect I used to tie him to my memory is now dead.

When we lose touch with objects, empty our childhood homes and put them into boxes, we begin to forget them, begin to forget ourselves. Only moments we can link with the second subjectivity of objects remain salient to us, but their first subjectivity remains intact. Inevitably, our construction slips past the object, fractures as we remove ourselves further and further from the thing itself; memory and time slowly erases our construction, filling in the details with false truths. The true chair exists in reality for only a finite period of time, but in my memory it will exist forever in an inert state—the

13 For more on the human construction of space, see Michel de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988).

state I *need it to be in* for it to unlock my memory. This is the weight of what it means to tie an object down to second subjectivity: we kill the object's first subjectivity or bury it so deeply that it is easily replaced by our second subjectivity;[14] we construct a tightly-adhering skin that mutes the identity of the object, transforms it into a memorial to ourselves.

Now we must face the fullest conclusion of this narrative: we are the ones who haunt ourselves. Without me to give out these second subjectivities, there would be no ghost in my grandfather's chair, no widow perfuming the couch with roses. I depend on the attribution of these stories to those objects in such a way that when I recognize that they in fact have their own first subjectivity, that they do not depend on me to exist, I feel fear: I realize that the false objects I have made give a portion of myself back to me, allow me to validate the way I exist in the world. But this chair will one day fold in on itself, and a bit of me will have been lost along with it.

For this reason, we must fear the wrinkling of the fabric, the dirtying of the carpet, the staining of the walls. How *fragile* this world we believe we have constructed for ourselves is; perhaps one day the yellow couch will be so dirty that its *punctum* will cease to operate, its second subjectivity now illegible: there is no more widow, she has died. However, the object continues to exist, affecting itself quietly on the world. And so we must clean them, preserve them, tell their stories as often as we can in order to hold down the objects to this constructed history—in order to hold onto *ourselves*. It is this fear which drives us to collect history in great repositories: to build monuments, to keep graves, to document and archive the past "in case of emergency;" we cannot bear the thought of a world not built the way we remember it, but, like the libraries of Alexandria or the palaces of Rome, this too shall burn. It is no wonder that Heidegger struggled to remove himself from the center of the world. How terrifying it would be to assert that we cannot control it, but rather only a thin veneer built over the reality of the world—a veneer in need of constant maintenance. When it crumbles, the symbolic relationship we have constrained the object to will no longer be important, but the object will remain in existence as a reminder that we cannot make it live as we want it to. So we must continue to be the ghosts who

14 Perhaps this is in fact the role of all traditional ontologies, to assert the centrality of the human so as to allow the covering-over of the object's first subjectivity—a mission that Harman's Object-Oriented Ontology squarely rejects. For further reading on his unique take on ontology, refer to Graham Harman's book, *Object-Oriented Ontology: A New Theory of Everything* (London, UK: Pelican Books, 2018).

breathe out these histories and fix them onto objects so that others can see us as we desire, so that others might tell these stories too.

One day someone might stumble across the yellow couch, transfixed by some aspect of it, a *punctum* only they can see; maybe they will tell a story about two roommates so in love with its plush corduroy that they just *had* to lug it home immediately: "can't you see the crack in this foot right here?" Other second subjectivities will be given to the couch, allowing me to continue to exist parasitically through it. The histories we construct are inflicted like wounds upon the object, wounds which become new *punctums*. These wounds continuing to haunt the object, preventing it from existing as it wishes itself to be. Objects become monuments to ourselves—because this too can justify our lives: each time someone exclaims about how odd the green chair is, or how beautiful the yellow couch is, I get to confirm my existence, look at the history I am making for myself. Let us sit down to tea from my grandmother's kettle: won't you listen to my story?

After the cup is empty, we will sit quietly transfixed by the false objects, the second subjects around us. But the chair will begin to grow black, the couch emitting the slight scent of roses as you shift from left to right; three sets of eyes fix themselves upon you—a strange sense of vertigo.

"What has happened?" you ask.

"Simple, these objects haunt you now too."

LIVING WITH THE DYING, BEING-WITH THE DEAD

SAM TRAYLOR

Hailing from Conway, Washington, a small town west of the Cascade Mountains, Sam Traylor thoroughly enjoys Walla Walla, Washington, a small town east of the Cascades, that features Whitman College as one of its three institutions. He graduates from Whitman College in May 2018, with a double major in environmental humanities and philosophy. These majors steer his interests mainly toward environmental ethics, philosophy of religion, and phenomenology. Among other authors, he thoroughly enjoys reading Heidegger, Emerson, and Marilynne Robinson. He also enjoys being outside, baking, and being with cats.

ABSTRACT: *Though Heidegger largely informs his conceptions of being and time through an analytic of the phenomenology of death, he treats death as an entirely personal experience. Through Robert Pogue Harrison's* Dominion of the Dead, *and Tolstoy's* The Death of Ivan Ilyich, *this essay examines the death of others, and how the experience of another's death informs the life of the living. The death of others is the possibility of a shift in the world of the living; this possibility for the living arises primarily through relationship with the corpse.*

82

LIVING WITH THE DYING, BEING-WITH THE DEAD

Martin Heidegger devotes an entire chapter of his magnum opus, *Being and Time*,[1] to an explication and discussion of the importance of death. However, he devotes only a few slim pages to the experience of watching others die. He willfully skims over the topic, claiming that the death of others is impossible to experience. Robert Pogue Harrison suggests in his book, *The Dominion of the Dead*,[2] that the dead hold great bearing on the living and that the dead radically interpellate the lives of the living. In *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*,[3] a novella which greatly informed Heidegger's philosophical work on death, Leo Tolstoy posits a view of death that lands somewhere between Heidegger's and Harrison's. For Tolstoy, the living cannot directly experience the death of others, but their relationship to the dead changes the structure of life. This contradicts Heidegger's view and tempers Harrison's. While the death of another can certainly not be experienced directly, I submit that when one human experiences the death of another, especially through relationship with the corpse, they necessarily experience a fundamental shift in the structure of the world.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger uses the being of the corpse to explain why humans cannot experience the death of others. He claims that this becomes evident if the death of others is viewed with full "phenomenal appropriateness." He states there is no way that the living may access the same "loss-of-Being . . . which the dying man 'suffers'."[4] We see that *phenomenal appropriateness* means that one person may not die for another or even experience the same death as another person. He supports this: "*No one can take the Other's dying away from him.*"[5] In this way, Heidegger makes evident that no one may *actually* experience the death of another.

Aside from actually experiencing the death of others, Heidegger claims that the corpse of a human provides the best way to relate to the dead. He claims the corpse

1 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2008).

2 Robert Pogue Harrison, *The Dominion of the Dead* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2005).

3 Leo Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* (New York: Bantam Dell, 1981).

4 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 282.

5 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 284.

possesses a different kind of Being than a living human (or *Dasein*, in Heidegger's terms). Whereas Dasein is that "which each of us is himself," a word that "stand[s] for the kind of Being that belongs to persons," the corpse "is still a Being, but in the sense of the Being-just-present-at-hand-and-no-more of a corporeal Thing which we encounter."[6] This separates Dasein from entities with different kinds of being—entities like animals, kilograms, tools, or corpses. Thus, Dasein's Being is a "Being-in-the-world;"[7] an entirely different kind of Being belongs to the corpse. Heidegger labels the corpse with a kind of Being he calls "presence-at-hand," casting it in the same realm as entities within the world that are viewed philosophically or even meditatively. For example, kilograms and monads belong to a present-at-hand type of Being because they are divorced from the greater context of human use and activity.[8] A hammer, however, possesses a different mode of being because it is *useful* in the sense that it can be manipulated as a piece of equipment, which Heidegger calls "ready-to-hand."[9] A hammer can cross over into the realm of present-at-hand when it breaks, creating a useless thing from a previously useful thing, which ultimately divorces it from its context. A hammer becomes seen for what it *is*—present-at-hand—rather than what it is *used* for—ready-to-hand.

Just as the hammer maintains a certain kind of being in its functional form, so does Dasein maintain its Being in living form as Being-in-the-World. But when the hammer breaks and when Dasein dies, they both exhibit a similar—but not identical—kind of being that is present-at-hand. Heidegger explains this distinction by claiming that dead Dasein is "*unalive*," whereas entities like the hammer are "*lifeless*."[10] Even in death, Dasein maintains a unique orientation toward life and Being-in-the-World. Dasein moves not from Being-in-the-world to *merely* present-at-hand, but rather it moves into Being-no-longer-in-the-world, or, as Heidegger puts it, Dasein's death is the "change-over of an entity from Dasein's kind of Being (or life) to no-longer-Dasein."[11] This phrase *no-longer-Dasein* expresses the fundamental being of dead Dasein and how they experience being differently.

According to Heidegger, though, Dasein can still "be with" the corpse in a peculiar relationship. He writes, "In tarrying alongside [the corpse] in their mourning

6 Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 27; 218.

7 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 78.

8 Michael Wheeler, "Martin Heidegger," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2011, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/heidegger/.

9 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 103.

10 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 282.

11 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 281.

83

and commemoration, those who have remained behind *are with him*, in a mode of respectful solicitude."[12] *Relating* to a corpse requires a particular structure of human involvement, such as "mourning or commemoration" in order for actual connection to take place.[13] Mourning or commemoration of a corpse aligned with Heidegger's concept of the *world* as a network of relational and significant activities composes a different world than that of everyday being.[14] Dasein's relation to a corpse requires a new and specific world of ceremonial lamentation. Heidegger agrees with this when he writes that the dead have left our world, "but *in terms of that world* those who remain can still *be with him*."[15] This newly italicized world refers to one of mourning and commemoration, as opposed to the old world in which the now-dead previously inhabited. In this way, mourning and commemoration erect a new world of meaning where the living may briefly relate to the dead.

Furthermore, this new-world relationship takes the form of a "respectful solicitude" which, in *Being and Time*, Heidegger defines as a form of *care*, an essential component of Dasein's being.[16] The first type of care—concern—is the kind of care that Dasein exercises upon entities ready-to-hand (such as a hammer), whereas the second—solicitude—is the kind of care that Dasein only exercises with other Daseins. If we apply "solicitude" to the corpse, we realize that the living may relate to the dead on the same level as the living relate to each other, though only within the worlds of ceremonial mourning and commemoration.[17] In this way, even though Dasein may not *experience* the death of others as such, Heidegger makes it apparent that Dasein can *relate* to the corpse through the same structure used to relate to other Daseins.

Indeed, since solicitude and care normally arise when Dasein is alive and *then* may continue into a relationship with the dead, it is unlikely that they may arise for the first time between Dasein and a dead stranger or public enemies; on the one hand, Dasein does not know the stranger, and on the other, an enemy's death is an occasion for celebration. Despite these complexities, I propose that any dead Dasein can still be related to. In the case of the public enemy, while celebration may replace mourning and commemoration, this is still a kind of ceremony. Ceremony, in turn, spells the construction of a network

12 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 282.

13 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 282.

14 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 93.

15 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 282.

16 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 282; 157.

17 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 282.

of relational and significant activities—a new world. The death of a stranger, however, still seems to lack significance for Dasein. In this instance, I propose that it takes the corpse to catalyze a relationship. Simply put, the corpse of any individual, stranger or not, bears with it a unique charisma; while it is normal and thus unnoticeable to see Dasein alive, it is abnormal and horrifying to see Dasein dead. I propose that this seizure of the Dasein's gaze is an invitation that lays the groundwork for Dasein's care. This care then may spur Dasein to commemorate the dead stranger. In this way, even the death of a stranger—through the corpse—provides the possibility for relationship between living and dead. In the cases of the public enemy and the stranger, then, relating to the corpse is never given, but it is always possible.

In *The Dominion of the Dead*, Robert Pogue Harrison explains how the dead interpellate the living. He makes explicit from the beginning that his views on death differ greatly from Heidegger's: "humanity . . . is through and through necrocratic."[18] Harrison uses this word to show that aspects of societies such as the commandments, habits, and language that the living use all come from the dead. In this way, the dead hold full sway over the living. Also, the dead legitimize the living for Harrison, essentially bringing them into being.[19] In statements like this, Harrison shows that while Heidegger wrote about death, he writes about the dead and the effect that the dead have upon the living.[20] To this end, Harrison concerns himself with burial practices, mourning practices, and the interpellation of the living by the dead and much less with the experience of those who die. Thus, *Dominion of the Dead* is more useful than *Being and Time* for gaining insight into the relationship between the living and the dead.

Part of Harrison's first comment about *Being and Time* states that one of its greatest shortcomings is that "it fails to show, or even suspect, that Dasein's relation to its death passes by way of its relation to the dead."[21] From here, Harrison introduces the idea of primitive Dasein into his work. While Heidegger does not touch on primitive Dasein's being in his section on death, Harrison proposes that this being is essential to fully understanding its relationship to death and the dead.[22] Harrison quotes the Italian philologist, Giambattista Vico, who writes

18 Harrison, *Dominion of the Dead*, ix.

19 Harrison, *Dominion of the Dead*, x.

20 Harrison, *Dominion of the Dead*, 90.

21 Harrison, *Dominion of the Dead*, 90.

22 Harrison, *Dominion of the Dead*, 91.

that doctrines must come "from that of the matter of which they treat."[23] Harrison echoes Heidegger's own dictum to go "back to the matter at hand."[24] When death as an issue is fully retraced, the matter we arrive at is the corpse itself, making it into Harrison's ultimate "matter at hand." As he puts it, "the idea of death must proceed from the dead."[25] From here, he elucidates the importance of the corpse within human history. In alignment with Heidegger, Harrison accepts the corpse's presence-at-hand, though he boldly attaches more significance to the being of the corpse than Heidegger does. For example, Harrison invokes Vico's dictum that burial, along with matrimony and religion, is one of the world's fundamental human institutions.[26] As such, he claims it was only through the particular charisma of the dead corpse that early humans came to the idea of death itself.[27] Indeed, Harrison claims (via Vico) that the primal human had no "capacity for abstraction," which is to say that primal humans had no concept of concepts; rather, they only had the worldly stuff in which our modern concepts now root. For example, primal humans had no philosophy but tribal codes of conduct instead. In the same way, they had no religion but only gods—not gods above, as ours might be today, but rather gods beside, for example, the birds and animals themselves. In this way, Harrison posits the inability of primitive humans to come up with any sort of abstract death concept without first experiencing the corpse's gripping charisma.[28]

Harrison speaks to both the primitive impact and contemporary importance of the corpse—namely, the grip with which it seizes the living. In his words, "*Dasein does not die until its remains are disposed of.*"[29] Harrison appeals to the record of human time to support this claim by referencing ancient Greek generals who lost sailors to the sea after winning a major victory. Despite the victory, they were tried in Athens upon their return and sentenced to hang. Because the generals had neglected their obligation to the corpse by failing to bring back remains, they created undead of the sea.[30] The undead are those who have died in the world but have not yet died in us. According to Harrison, the ability for the dead to die *in* the living (as opposed to our yearning to die with them) creates closure among those left living. The proper disposal of a corpse through a burial ceremony both liberates the one no longer living-in-the-world to enter fully into a different

23 Harrison, *Dominion of the Dead*, 91.

24 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 67.

25 Harrison, *Dominion of the Dead*, 92.

26 Harrison, *Dominion of the Dead*, xi.

27 Harrison, *Dominion of the Dead*, 92.

28 Harrison, *Dominion of the Dead*, 92.

29 Harrison, *Dominion of the Dead*,143.

30 Harrison, *Dominion of the Dead*,143.

31 Harrison, *Dominion of the Dead*,147.

32 Harrison, *Dominion of the Dead*, 55.

33 Harrison, *Dominion of the Dead*, 55.

34 Harrison, *Dominion of the Dead*, 57.

35 Harrison, *Dominion of the Dead*, 57.

state of being, and liberates those left behind to fully resume Being-in-the-world.[31]

The real issue, Harrison writes, is to dispose of the corpse in such a way as to appease the aching desire of those left behind to die with their dead. In his words, "this desire 'to die with our dead' runs as deep in human nature as both love and the death drive."[32] In his explanation of mourning rituals and how they are perhaps the most direct ways that the living experiences the death of others, Harrison invokes Benedetto Croce's claim that grief at the death of a loved one is akin to insanity.[33] These rituals of lamentation, Harrison suggests, do more for the aggrieved than just express; they also depersonalize the experience of grief.[34] He claims that the experience of watching a loved one die is so horrifying that only distancing oneself from the corpse can stave off the ensuing madness. To this end, many cultures, both ancient and modern, maintain highly ritualized mourning practices for the aggrieved to follow.[35] Such scripting allows for objectification of the corpse so the living may live on in this world with some sort of normalcy.

I propose that such depersonalization clearly indicates the intense personal identification that the living have with their deceased. If the living did not cleave to the dead so dearly, they would not have to undergo such processes of objectification. This opposing madness Harrison references is a result of a change in worldhood. That is to say, the disappearance of a loved one (through death) represents a huge change in the significance of the world in Heidegger's definition of it. Thus, the death of one may eclipse the world of another. In this way, we might say that the death of a loved one literally is the end of the world. Thus, relating to the death of others is akin to death itself.

While it is one thing to acknowledge that the death of a beloved person provokes grief and calls out to be buried, it is another to consider the death of strangers or public enemies. Death in these circumstances is removed from the living in such a way that they do not experience the same rending loss. If they do not experience the same loss, it seems that the world—in its meaningful significance—is not altered. For example, imagine a stranger to all people, completely unknown and thus completely unloved; at this individual's death, those who remain behind would not mourn the dead because they could not possibly ascribe

the proper meaning to this person's death. In the same way, it would be impossible to mourn the death of a public enemy since this occasions celebration instead. But, as described above, celebration can still be a ceremony that reveres the dead. The celebration, while not mourning or commemoration, is still a ceremony. In the same way, when the corpse of a complete stranger is stumbled upon, it still calls out to be buried; it is hardly conceivable to imagine one person stepping over the body of a stranger's without reacting. This reaction—even to a stranger—lays the groundwork for loss. And loss requires a ceremony, which itself is a reconstruction of the world. So even in the case of public enemies and strangers, I propose that Harrison's dictum "*Dasein does not die until its remains are disposed of*" still stands—and such a disposal requires a ceremony.[36]

In *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, Tolstoy describes the changing relationship between Praskovya Fedorovna Golovina and her perishing husband. During the initial stages of Ilyich's death, she maintains great distance, which represents a state of being that Heidegger labels "falling," defined as a "constant *fleeing in the face of death*."[37] As Ilyich's dying progresses toward his final perishing, however, she changes her state of being from falling to authenticity, which indicates the possibility of relating to the death of others. Before the illness, Ilyich pours his life into his work such that it "totally absorb[s] him," while Golovina becomes "more irritable and demanding," then "more and more petulant and irascible."[38] As his illness becomes worse, so does their relationship. Indeed, from his perspective, she seems to blame him for his terminal illness and to concern herself with his ordeals only in regard to the way they make her life more unpleasant than necessary.[39] Instead of caring for him, she just resumes her social life. In this way, it seems to Ilyich that she flees from any chance of understanding or pitying him.[40]

As Ilyich's death continues to progress, Golovina starts to take pity on Ilyich and attempts to understand his situation. At one point, for example, as Ilyich loses hope of recovery and heads out to meet with a friend, Golovina drops her usual bickering behavior and speaks to him in a "particularly sad and unusually kind tone of voice."[41] This seemingly small change indicates the large and significant change within her as she watches her husband die. Even

36 Harrison, *Dominion of the Dead*, 143.

37 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 298.

38 Tolstoy, *Death of Ivan Ilyich*, 50-52.

39 Tolstoy, *Ivan Ilyich,* 70

40 Tolstoy, *Ivan Ilyich,* 72.

41 Tolstoy, *Ivan Ilyich,* 74

so, Golovina still cannot directly experience the same death as Ilyich. A few pages later, when Ilyich knocks over a table and falls in despair, his wife comes to help him. Though she righted the table for him, Ilyich reacts to the help ambiguously: "She won't understand, he thought. And she really did not understand."[42] While Golovina cannot directly experience the death of another in the Heideggerian sense, her ideas of death do grow from the death of her husband in a Harrisonian sense.

This relationship with the death of another comes fully into view during the last moments of Ilyich's death when Ilyich's son, in tears, kisses his father's hand. Ilyich's response is totally uncharacteristic for him; instead of acting annoyed or dismissive as he would have shortly before, he grieves for his son.[43] Until this point, Ilyich craved the pity, understanding, and even grief of others.[44] Then his wife comes up to him, tears falling, open-mouthed, and grieving. Though Tolstoy describes her appearance briefly, it is narratively weighty. Up till now, Golovina has maintained great composure and propriety, which is to say she would never go about with her mouth open or with untended tears on her face. In this moment though, her attention turns away from its normal object—herself—entirely toward her husband. He, in turn, "grieved for her."[45] As a result, both Ilyich and Golovina manage to turn their care completely toward each other rather than themselves. Thus, the two change their everyday modes of being by relating to Ilyich's death through the world of mourning, grieving, and tears. This, in turn, changes the world in all its significance.

As far as the text itself is concerned, this scene occurs on the penultimate page, leaving the reader with a distinct impression of a meaningful change. As for the characters, the book shows us a lifetime of their being and behavior within the context of Ilyich's life, then, just as he dies, we see a slightly different mode of being. What we do not see is Ilyich's wife and son *after* the death, which necessarily leads the reader to extrapolation. Upon first extrapolation, it initially seems that the characters would simply revert to their old patterns of being. One hitch remains, however. Previously, they relied upon Ilyich's life as their focal point, but after Ilyich's death, they would have no center around which to rotate. As such, there is no way for them *not* to continue changing in the manner shown on the last

42 Tolstoy, *Ivan Ilyich*, 77.

43 Tolstoy, *Ivan Ilyich,* 112

44 Tolstoy, *Ivan Ilyich,* 72.

45 Tolstoy, *Ivan Ilyich,* 112.

page. Thus, Ilyich's death does spell a change in the being of those who remain behind: a fundamental change in the worldhood of the world.

While *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* is a fictional account of death, I propose that it accurately depicts the way that Dasein relates to the death of others. It weds Heidegger's idea of respectful solicitude toward the corpse with Harrison's espousal of the corpse as a relational thing. Even though Harrison and Heidegger both focus on the corpse itself while Tolstoy ends his novella before Ilyich transitions from human to corpse, I believe this discrepancy ends up holding little bearing on the final topic of this essay: experiencing and relating to the death of others. While Tolstoy's novella shows only a single and minute instance of relation to the corpse, this instance is structurally the same in other instances, even those concerning strangers and public enemies. For both Harrison and Heidegger, Dasein enters into a relationship with the dead primarily through restructuring the world in ways such as lamentation, burial, and other mourning ceremonies. On the Heideggerian side, ceremonies of care such as "funeral rites, interment, and the cult of graves" create worlds where "those who remain can still be with [the deceased]."[46] On the Harrisonian side, communal grieving ceremonies move emotion from the realm of chaotic grief to a "socially shared language of lament."[47] I propose that both authors suggest here a rescaffolding of the world that enables the living to experience the death of others. Finally, this new scaffolding necessarily interpellates the lives of the living. From Heidegger's admission that humans can still relate to corpses on the human level of solicitude, to Harrison's claim that the dead undergird the status of individuals and society, to Tolstoy who shows the change in Golovina's life when she faces her husband's death, we see that the death of others changes the living. Finally, this change occurs via the experience of the death of others, which fundamentally changes the world of those who remain behind.

46 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 282.

47 Harrison, *Dominion of the Dead*, 58.

ON METHODOLOGIES OF RESISTING TESTIMONIAL INJUSTICE

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF FRICKER AND MEDINA
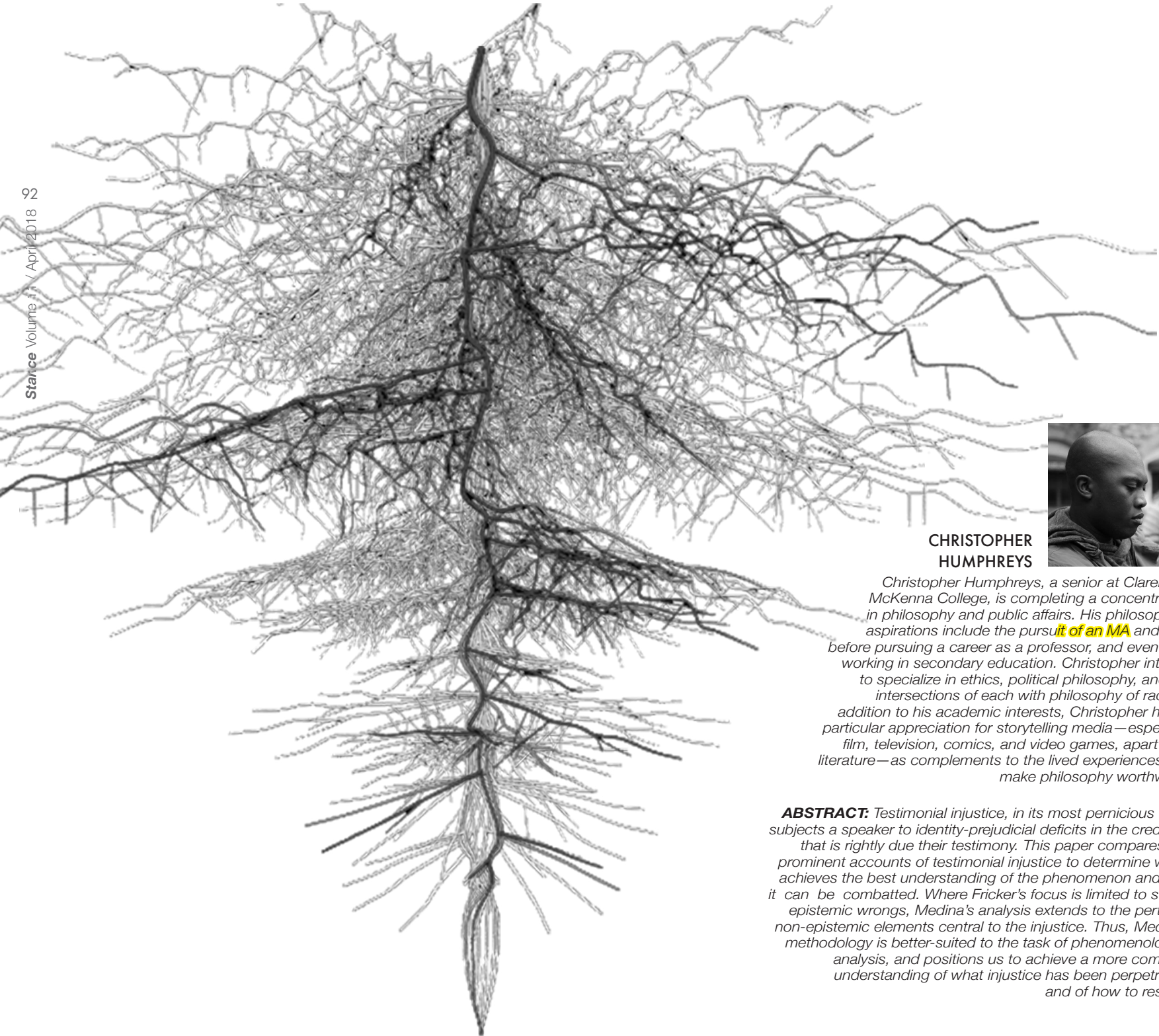
CHRISTOPHER HUMPHREYS

Christopher Humphreys, a senior at Claremont McKenna College, is completing a concentration in philosophy and public affairs. His philosophical aspirations include the pursuit of an MA and PhD before pursuing a career as a professor, and eventually working in secondary education. Christopher intends to specialize in ethics, political philosophy, and the intersections of each with philosophy of race. In addition to his academic interests, Christopher has a particular appreciation for storytelling media—especially film, television, comics, and video games, apart from literature—as complements to the lived experiences that make philosophy worthwhile.

ABSTRACT: *Testimonial injustice, in its most pernicious form, subjects a speaker to identity-prejudicial deficits in the credibility that is rightly due their testimony. This paper compares two prominent accounts of testimonial injustice to determine which achieves the best understanding of the phenomenon and how it can be combatted. Where Fricker's focus is limited to strictly epistemic wrongs, Medina's analysis extends to the pertinent non-epistemic elements central to the injustice. Thus, Medina's methodology is better-suited to the task of phenomenological analysis, and positions us to achieve a more complete understanding of what injustice has been perpetrated, and of how to resist it.*

ON METHODOLOGIES OF RESISTING TESTIMONIAL INJUSTICE

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF FRICKER AND MEDINA

INTRODUCTION

Testimonial injustice is a species of epistemic wrongdoing characterized by inaccurate assessments of a speaker's credibility. Our analysis of the concept provides the criteria for evaluating particular instances of the phenomenon and dictates how these instances ought to be addressed in pursuit of achieving justice. In particular, we tend to be concerned with the kind of injustice that systematically underestimates the credibility of certain peoples based on identity prejudices (e.g. racism, sexism). Interestingly, comparing the account of testimonial injustice presented in José Medina's *The Epistemology of Resistance* with the version presented in Miranda Fricker's *Epistemic Injustice* yields two substantially different analyses.[1] Where Fricker's treatment of testimonial injustice is concerned primarily with the wrong that is done to the speaker *qua* knower, Medina's incorporates within it an assessment of the social and political structures under which testimonial injustices— under the umbrella of injustice, more generally—are perpetrated. Although Medina offers his theory as a sort of expansion of Fricker's account, it does not seem that he has simply taken up her view and built upon it or introduced nonessential alterations. In fact, it seems that the differences between these two theories of testimonial injustice are due fundamentally to a methodological disagreement. Fricker's approach is strictly epistemological insofar as her analysis is centered on and predominantly limited to the wrongs that pertain to the development and sharing of knowledge, whereas Medina's project engages in a sort of social epistemology with a broader concern for the non-epistemic phenomena that are connected to individual perpetrations of testimonial injustice. A detailed evaluation of these different methodologies reveals that Medina's account is better suited to giving a full analysis of testimonial injustice because it is truer to the phenomenon

1 José Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance: Gender and Racial Oppression, Epistemic Injustice, and Resistant Imaginations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power & the Ethics of Knowing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

2 Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 44.

3 Here we might think of harms done to the interpersonal and/or group dynamics that pertain to the epistemic engagement between the subject and the perpetrator or perhaps of those done to the relevant epistemic system in a more general sense. Fricker alludes to the value of such considerations but affirms that her pursuit is concerned with "a focus specifically on the ethical." Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 43-44.

4 Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 46.

5 Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 44.

6 Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 46.

and offers a more complete prescription for what action is required to achieve justice.

FRICKER'S ACCOUNT OF TESTIMONIAL INJUSTICE

Fricker's account of the wrong of testimonial injustice principally concerns us with the *intrinsic* wrong of its perpetration and maintains that there is then a set of *extrinsic* harms by which the speaker suffers. The wrong that is intrinsic to testimonial injustice is the act of wronging the speaker *in her capacity as a knower*.[2] Importantly for Fricker, the intrinsic wrong of testimonial injustice is valuationally primary to any other wrongs— such as those we might describe as being extrinsic, circumstantial, or consequential—done by the injustice.[3] The central logic behind Fricker's claim to the primacy of testimonial injustice's intrinsic harm holds that the degradation of a subject qua knower symbolically degrades them qua human, and that subjects who suffer the especially pernicious sort of testimonial injustices with which Fricker is most concerned (i.e. identity-prejudicial credibility deficits) are dishonored in some essential way.[4] That is to say that because the intrinsic wrong of testimonial injustice wrongs a subject as a knower, that subject is "wronged in a capacity essential to human value," and thus Fricker takes this wrong to be the most deeply concerning element of this epistemic phenomenon. Indeed, for Fricker, the perpetration of such a testimonial injustice is one of the gravest injustices one can commit.[5]

Secondary to Fricker's conception of the intrinsic wrong is the extrinsic harm of testimonial injustice, which:

> is composed of a range of possible follow-on disadvantages, extrinsic to the primary injustice in that they are caused by it rather than being a proper part of it. They seem to fall into two broad categories distinguishing a practical and an epistemic dimension of harm.[6]

The practical dimension of the extrinsic harms of testimonial injustice includes things ranging from fines to, in cases like those of two women Fricker uses as examples, having to relay one's testimony through another speaker who is not subjected to the same identity-prejudicial

credibility deficits. The more strictly epistemic dimension of extrinsic harm includes failure to satisfy the conditions for knowledge in instances of "one-off testimonial injustice," and, in the case of a subject who persistently faces the pernicious kind of testimonial injustice Fricker analyzes, such a subject "may lose confidence in her general intellectual abilities to such an extent that she is genuinely hindered in her educational or other intellectual development."[7] Per Fricker's account, the wrongs of persistent testimonial injustice motivated by identity prejudice appear to amount to a significant hindrance to the subject's capacity to form and fully realize her identity with the focus of that analysis remaining on the intrinsic, more strictly epistemological wrong.[8]

MEDINA'S ACCOUNT OF TESTIMONIAL INJUSTICE

In Medina's theory, the social context within which an instance of testimonial injustice takes place is held to be fundamentally important to the wrong of that injustice in a way that it is not in Fricker's theory. For Medina, the epistemic vices behind perpetrations of the pernicious sort of testimonial injustices we have identified "are not exclusively cognitive and are intimately related to *social injustices,*" because they involve both a lack of self-awareness and a simultaneous "deficit in the knowledge of others with whom one is epistemically related" on the part of privileged subjects.[9] Thus, Medina's account not only *recognizes* a connection between testimonial and social injustices, but also takes it up as a central element of his highly context-sensitive analysis. Accordingly, Medina asserts that epistemic appraisals always have a sociopolitical element "because they operate against the background of a system of relations, and they involve interpersonal perceptions that are mediated by the social imagination."[10] That is to say that the structures which produce the amalgam of epistemic vices behind a privileged subject's identity prejudices are themselves social and political.

To substantiate his claim to the importance of context, Medina picks up Fricker's case study of Tom Robinson's judgment in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, addressing the roles that credibility excesses

7 Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 47.

8 Fricker suggests that identity-realization is a continuation of her analysis of intrinsic wrong. This seems counterintuitive as the development and actualization of identity would be *extrinsic* to testimonial injustice according to her definition. Representing her analysis, however, is best served by glossing over this issue, it is not truly essential to her argument. Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 51-57.

9 Medina, *Epistemology of Resistance,* 57.

10 Medina, *Epistemology of Resistance,* 24.

and features of the social imagination play in that perpetration of epistemic injustice. In the first place, Medina holds that testimonial injustice involves a lack of proportionality, such that the credibility deficit is complemented by credibility excesses "that give essential support to the epistemic disparities at play and the biased testimonial dynamic that leads to the injustice."[11] Not only is it the case, then, that Tom's testimony was hindered by a credibility deficit, but also that the mere whiteness of Mayella, and most especially the male prosecutor, afforded them each a relative excess of credibility in their testimonies:

> In my view, the novel illustrates how a credibility excess—that of whites, and more specifically that of Mayella's testimony and that of the prosecutor's questioning—constitutes a misplaced trust that can easily lead to possible harm to others . . . As the social advantages and disadvantages produced by racism go together, so do the epistemic advantages and disadvantages produced by racism. The comparative and contrastive character of the epistemic disparities in this case tracks (and results from) the comparative and contrastive character of the social disparities on which they are built and to which they give support.[12]

Thus, Medina's analysis of testimonial injustice requires that we give serious consideration to the credibility excesses of the different counterparts to subjects who face identity-prejudicial credibility deficits.

In the second place, Medina holds that testimonial injustice is properly understood and contextualized

> by going beyond individual voices in testimonial exchanges and their authority and credibility, or rather, by putting them in a broader context and in relation to social trends and social limitations that create and sustain epistemic injustices.[13]

This is where we find Medina's articulation of how it is that the social imaginary produces the kinds of epistemic vices that facilitate the persistence of injustices akin to the above example. In turn, understanding this phenomenon positions us to resist those vices and combat the social and political structures which cultivate them. In the *Mockingbird* example, Medina works to contextualize the injustice by asserting:

11 Medina, *Epistemology of Resistance,* 65.

12 Medina, *Epistemology of Resistance,* 66-67.

13 Medina, *Epistemology of Resistance,* 67.

The central problem is not that Tom Robinson's testimonial authority is discredited, but rather, that certain affects and relations have been rendered incredible (in fact, almost unintelligible) in that culture; and achieving justice becomes practically impossible in that culture until those affects and relations become imaginable, until they can be thought meaningfully and those who lay claim to them do not become discredited by their very claims. In other words, the key to understanding what goes wrong in the interrogation of Tom Robinson has to be found in the relation between the epistemic attitudes and reactions depicted and the workings of the social imagination.[14]

The ideological movements that Medina makes here might initially be somewhat disorienting, but when attached to the particular features of the case, they are quite illuminating. In essence, Medina's argument is that the injustice perpetrated against Tom—which, importantly, includes the complementary credibility excesses involved—was facilitated by the particular limits of the social imagination shared by the jury members. For the white citizenry of Alabama, the notion that a black man such as Tom could, as he claimed, feel pity for a white woman was quite literally incredible. Similarly, to take the word of a black person over that of a white man was a course of action essentially inaccessible to these subjects. Clearly, this does not justify their actions or judgments; rather, Medina's aim is to point out that fully understanding this instance of testimonial injustice requires an understanding of how the relevant sociopolitical conditions produced the epistemically vicious characteristics–what Medina calls active ignorances–of the privileged subjects on the jury.[15]

DIFFERENCES IN THE METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS

Although it is not the case that the two accounts are fit for a direct, one-to-one comparison, they are still fundamentally comparable as analyses of testimonial injustice for the purpose of *understanding* the phenomenon and prescribing means to *resist* and *combat* it. With this in

14 Medina, *Epistemology of Resistance,* 67.

15 Medina, *Epistemology of Resistance*, 39.

16 Medina, *Epistemology of Resistance,* 69.

mind, it is evident that Medina's contextualism offers a number of distinctive analytical benefits. Principally, the contextualist approach takes a broader-ranging survey of the sociopolitical context in which instances of testimonial injustice take place and holds the characteristics of that context to be seriously important and informative for analyzing (1) what exactly is happening both inside and outside of the epistemic realm, (2) what allows for the injustice to be perpetrated in its specific context, and (3) how the injustice can be resisted in order to ameliorate the epistemic system and sociopolitical context in question. Fricker does indeed recognize that there is some causal relationship between the social context (that is, its general faults and, more specifically, the epistemic failures of the social imaginary) and instances of testimonial injustice, but seems to consider it important only insofar as particular features of the social imaginary contribute to the epistemic undermining of subjects who suffer testimonial injustice. In contrast, from Medina's assertion that it is necessary for us to consider the broader social context, understand its history and character, and recognize how differently situated subjects relate to one another within it, we are left to conclude

the epistemic injustice committed against Tom has to be understood as part and parcel of a systematic sociopolitical injustice against a group; and this epistemic injustice is perpetrated thanks to a social imaginary and the vitiated epistemic habits that it has fostered among members of the jury.[16]

Thus, what we gain from Medina's account is an analytical method for concurrently ascertaining both the sociopolitical relevance of a given instance of testimonial injustice, *and* the structural wrongs of the social scheme that underwrite it. Since this methodology takes both of these understandings to be fundamentally significant in understanding and combatting the injustice at hand, the sociopolitical character of Medina's theory of testimonial injustice maintains a two-fold superiority over Fricker's account.

Firstly, Medina's contextualism allows for an understanding that is truer to the phenomenon insofar as its concern with the background features and generative factors of an instance of testimonial injustice provides for a more complete knowledge of individual perpetrations

and of collections of the phenomena that relate to each other. Medina's theory enables us to understand what led up to the relevant instance of injustice, to recognize how it connects to other instances and fits into a larger pattern of systematic injustice, and to fully appreciate why the injustice is important—including a recognition of the significance of the practical consequences. Secondly, that the contextualism of Medina's theory points to the social and political significances of a given individual perpetration—and to its relation to other, seemingly discrete perpetrations—makes the theory more readily mobilized to substantively resist particular epistemic injustices and injustice more broadly. It is important to note that it is not the case that Fricker simply does a bad job of analyzing testimonial injustice; rather, Fricker sets out to capture the strictly epistemic goings on and to combat the injustice on that level. In contrast, for attempting to connect the more purely epistemic with the social and political, Medina's project offers a more robust analysis, which undoubtedly is valuable on its own, but also proves to be the more valuable analysis in comparison to Fricker's. This claim does not suggest that Fricker held the same goal as Medina and failed to reach it successfully, but rather that the two attempted to do different things with their analyses of testimonial injustice, and that Medina's project is more worthwhile.

A. A CONTRAST IN THE ASSESSMENTS OF PERSISTENT INJUSTICE

Regarding how completely each analysis understands the *persistence* of testimonial injustice, the political considerations Medina offers are not simply a more thorough-going additional feature, but are actually integral to the task. When Fricker addresses the persistence and "systemacity" of testimonial injustice, she seems to concern herself, above all, with the simple fact that the phenomenon occurs over and over again.[17] Her considerations of *why* it occurs persistently (e.g. the vices of the relevant epistemic system) are incorporated into her theory as background information that is nonessential to the most important wrongs done by testimonial injustice, either with respect to an individual perpetration or even to the chain of persistent perpetrations. If we were to set for ourselves more traditionally epistemic analytical limits,

17 Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 43; 58-59.

a contextualist approach would still give us the benefit of addressing the conditions that developed the epistemically vicious characters that enable persistent perpetrations of testimonial injustice, specifically as a function of working against that injustice. That is, the contextualist approach would have us understand how the epistemic character traits of differently situated subjects were produced by their sociopolitical positions *as a central component* to a perpetration of testimonial injustice. Applied to the *Mockingbird* example, this would mean assessing how it is that the jury members came to be of such epistemic viciousness that a black man's testimony would be almost entirely unbelievable against the word of a white prosecutor. For as much as this truly is an epistemic question, its answer is, at least in part, undeniably political. Medina's analysis recognizes that the reinforcement of particular epistemic attitudes cannot be understood as merely incidental to a subject's sociopolitical position.[18] Thus, any question of the persistence of testimonial injustice must involve consideration of how subjects with differing identity components are socially situated in order to yield a complete analysis of the phenomenon, and Medina's contextualist, social-epistemological methodology is better-suited to this task than Fricker's more traditional epistemology.

18 Medina, *Epistemology of Resistance,* 27-30.

B. A CONTRAST IN APPRECIATION OF THE POLITICAL

It is worthwhile, of course, to recognize that Fricker's account is not entirely removed from the sociopolitical features and consequences of testimonial injustice. Fricker does address the potential significance of the extrinsic wrong of testimonial injustice but still fails to promote that wrong to the appropriate level of import. Instead, she focuses on how the societal perpetration of testimonial injustice relates back to its intrinsic wrong and the offense against the subject's personhood in relation to epistemic engagement, which she says are "grimly augmented" by the force of the extrinsic harms.[19] In fact, even the socially broader epistemic view that Fricker nods to when articulating the scope of her analysis would be too narrowly concerned because it still treats the epistemic system as being insular from the sociopolitical context, both in analysis and in its importance.[20] Critically,

19 Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 58-59.

20 Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 43-44.

Medina's more sociopolitically motivated methodology surpasses that pitfall. Including the sociopolitical context as an important part of the injustice itself—and our analysis thereof—*requires* that we take seriously the "extrinsic" wrongs and harms of testimonial injustice because those wrongs are determined and characterized by the sociopolitical context in which the injustice is perpetrated. So, where Fricker's theory lists the practical consequences of persistent testimonial injustice—among which *imprisonment* is explicitly included as an example—as secondary to the fact of a subject's being wronged qua knower, Medina's contextualist methodology maintains that such consequences are integral to the wrong of an instance of testimonial injustice.[21] The inability to separate the epistemic from the social and the political in our analysis means that those "extrinsic" elements are similarly integral to our efforts to combat the relevant injustices.

C. DIFFERENT NOTIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY

Importantly, the work that Medina's methodology does to address the extrinsic harms of testimonial injustice helps us to deal with the question of responsibility and the task of making substantial individual and societal improvements. Because Fricker's theory, like Medina's, is nonideal, it does indeed work to address the phenomenological perpetrations of epistemic injustice as they actually occur—even if she is more concerned with the strictly epistemic than with the practical elements involved—, including questions of who ought to be held responsible and in which ways. However, Medina's theory still exceeds Fricker's in this regard. This is not for it somehow being "*more* nonideal" but instead because it features an explicit commitment to melioration as a central component, which means that the inability to achieve perfection does not excuse us—neither dominantly nor nondominantly situated subjects— from our responsibilities to continually improve. With respect to testimonial injustice, this is a responsibility on the part of each subject "to know oneself and to know others with whom one's life and identity are bound up."[22] In a practical example, this would mean that a Christian student on the campus of a university with a significant Jewish student population is responsible for

at least a minimal knowledge of the Jewish faith and of the historical relations between Christians and Jews.[23] If we return to the Tom Robinson case, this conception of responsibility exhibits the virtue of revealing a connection between the epistemic and the moral failures of the jury members, which not only gives a satisfying analysis of the various epistemic and social factors at play but also offers a viable prescription for melioration.[24]

Hence, Medina's conception of responsibility is so valuable not because it accurately assigns epistemic blame, but because it works to identify past failures and to correspondingly prescribe ameliorative obligations for the future. This is true not only for the individuals who perpetrate particular instances of testimonial injustice (e.g. the jury members in the *Mockingbird* case) but also for other agents who share the context within which the injustice was committed. Medina suggests that responsibility for the condition of the social scheme and the character of the epistemic system is shared among all the members of communities and their subgroups. This conception of responsibility allows for our analysis to acknowledge the failures of the agents and institutions who share the relevant social context, with the intention of determining which features of the social scheme need to be addressed to improve the epistemic characters (and even the moral characters, given the social significance of our epistemic interactions) of all those involved. This methodology helps us to remedy the epistemic inadequacies that produce testimonial injustice *and* helps us strive to achieve justice in particular sociopolitical contexts.

CONCLUSION

From these considerations, we can conclude that Medina's methodology stands out as the more powerful tool for analyzing testimonial injustice and for actively resisting the perpetuation of further wrongdoing through epistemic and non-epistemic phenomena alike. The strengths of Fricker's account of testimonial injustice are exceeded by the capacity of Medina's theory to successfully analyze the injustice without limiting itself to the strictly epistemic elements at the expense of other serious wrongs. In essence, Medina's sociopolitically contextualized analysis, and the methodological aim that guides it, do more and better work than what Fricker's

21 Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 46-47.

22 Medina, *Epistemology of Resistance,* 54-55.

23 Medina makes an example of regrettable events played out on Vanderbilt University's campus in 2005 to illustrate the requirements of such a conception of responsibility imposes on individual subjects, according to their identity and the features of the social context. *Epistemology of Resistance*, 133-50.

24 For Fricker's account of responsibility that is less active in these ways, see *Epistemic Injustice*, 98-108.

theory offers. The different methodologies in Fricker's and Medina's theories might be helpfully characterized for comparison by the analogy of different attempts at picking weeds; where Fricker is concerned with plucking out an individual dandelion, Medina's methodology works to unearth the entire root network. Although Fricker's theory acknowledges the limits of its methodology, it fundamentally misplaces the paradigmatic focus on the purely epistemic elements of individual perpetrations of testimonial injustice. Medina's theory is not preferable simply because it is concerned with outcomes more than with the traditionally epistemic phenomena. The true strength of his contextualist, social-epistemological methodology is its analysis of the non-epistemic in connection with the epistemic features of testimonial injustice. By appropriately taking each of those elements into consideration, Medina's theory is better suited to the task of phenomenological analysis and to that of offering positively prescriptive considerations of achieving justice. Thus, using the methodology of analyzing testimonial injustice that is presented in *The Epistemology of Resistance* puts us in the best position to achieve the most complete understanding of what injustice has been perpetrated and how its persistence can be resisted.

IDEAL COGNITION

A NARROWLY CONSTRAINED RELATIVE PRAGMATISM

KATE KENNEDY

Kate Kennedy is a senior biology and philosophy major at Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts. She's especially interested in the philosophy of science and philosophy of mind. In a somewhat different vein, she's also studied continental philosophers as well as critical theorists. In her free time, she runs on the Williams Track Team and focuses on the 400 meter hurdles. While she grew up in Los Angeles, California, she spent the last couple of her high school years in London, and now eventually plans to move to Boston to work in healthcare consulting.

ABSTRACT: Both the nature and aim of human cognition are philosophically divisive topics. On one side, there are the evidentialists who believe that the sole purpose of cognition is to seek and find truths. In contrast, pragmatists appeal to cognition solely as a tool, something that helps people achieve their goals. In this paper, I put forward an account of cognition and its aims fundamentally based on a pragmatic viewpoint. Crucially, however, I claim that an evolutionary pragmatic picture of cognition must assert rationality as a core tenant of human thought, mooring a relative pragmatism within a system logic and rationality.

IDEAL COGNITION
A NARROWLY CONSTRAINED RELATIVE PRAGMATISM

INTRODUCTION

Defining the ideal cognitive system is an epistemically rich project, drawing on significant philosophical questions about the nature of reasons and the aim of cognition. The answers to these questions are both philosophically and practically important, helping people to think about how to best use their minds and powers of rationality. Given this task's importance, it is unsurprising that many philosophers have offered their own interpretations of both the mind's goals along with metrics to evaluate success or failure in attaining those goals. While some have appealed to pragmatic arguments, others have approached the problem from a more straightforward, evidentialist viewpoint, claiming that the best way to judge a cognitive system is through its ability to find and track truths.[1] In order to build my own account of cognition's aim in this paper, I will start by defining and defending pragmatism, in particular evolutionary pragmatism. With this in mind, I will consider a natural consequence of accepting evolutionary pragmatism and epistemic relativism and explain how, even from a relativistic viewpoint, truth-tracking must be acknowledged as an essential attribute of cognition. In the process, my account of cognition's aim will become clear: I will advocate for a constrained form of evolutionary pragmatism that is only partially relativistic because it acknowledges that while cognition can have a multiplicity of goals, reason must be one of those goals. I will end by considering how my account can help us, as people, learn to creatively and positively set our individual and communal cognitive ends.

PRAGMATISM DEFENDED

Pragmatism stands in stark epistemic contrast to evidentialism. While evidentialists claim that the primary—and in fact, sole—aim of cognition is discovering truth, the pragmatist account does not accord

1 Stephen P. Stich, *The Fragmentation of Reason: Preface to a Pragmatic Theory of Cognitive Evaluation* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), 129-34; Thomas Nagel, *The Last Word* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 133-35.

2 Stich, *Theory of Cognitive Evaluation*, 129-34; William G. Lycan, "Epistemic Value," *Synthese* 64, no. 2 (1985): 137–64.

3 Stich, *Theory of Cognitive Evaluation*, 133-35.

4 Stich, *Theory of Cognitive Evaluation*, 130-31.

truth any exalted role. The pragmatists can even go as far as to claim that a cognitive system that is not able to fully or accurately track truth functions is just fine, even optimal. Evolutionary pragmatists, such as Stephen Stich and William Lycan, assert that systems of cognition have been primarily shaped by evolutionary processes, meaning that cognitive systems are not fundamentally and solely designed to create beliefs that are true but instead create beliefs that are practically useful.[2] An important consequence of evolutionary pragmatism, which I will consider in more depth later on, is that it necessarily leads to a type of epistemic relativism. This is because evolutionary pragmatists like Stich claim that there are likely many different kinds of equally valid cognitive systems with different aims and practices, so it is impossible to claim that there is only one "right" or optimal system.[3] Before analyzing and defending Stich's epistemic relativism, however, it is important to consider what is appealing about the pragmatic account in the first place.

To defend his account, Stich starts by rejecting a competing method for how to define the ideal cognitive system: one that evaluates cognition based on its ability to produce true belief. Ultimately, he claims that this position is incoherent. This is because, according to him, there is no reason to value a "true" belief over a "TRUE" belief, or a "TRUE★" belief over that. Essentially, Stich is just using this nomenclature to make the point that in searching for truth, it is easy to get caught up in an infinite—and by Stich's account, pointless—regress by inquiring how someone *really* knows a fact, and how they *really* know that they really know, and so on.[4]

At this point, the evidentialist runs into trouble, although the pragmatist is untouched by the problem of this regress. If there is no logical way to reach a foundational truth—one that is unquestionably not just true, but TRUE, TRUE★, and so on—the evidentialists' aim becomes not only practically, but also theoretically, impossible. This undermines any type of robust empiricism founded on rationality, as there would be no way to empirically confirm or deny the ultimate truth of a proposition. In other words, someone could always ask the question, "Well how do you *know* that you *know* that?" In fact, deciding that something is acceptably true

at any point in the regress is necessarily arbitrary and, as a result, indicates that truth as the sole aim of cognition is an empty goal.

The pragmatic view, on the other hand, claims that there is no *a priori* metaphysical or empirical justification for truth as the aim of reasoning. This is an attractive point of view because the very idea of an *a priori* truth that does not fall into epistemic regress is chimerical. By accepting a pragmatist point of view, the bar is set lower; cognition and reasoning do not need to reveal absolute truths but are instead just tools that can be evaluated on their ability to accomplish certain goals. For a pragmatist, the notion of pure truth is irrelevant. Instead, if truth mattered to a pragmatist at all, it would be because of its potential practical value.[5] In short, because truth only matters to the extent that it serves as a practical tool to help people get around, the problem of a "truth" regress is peripheral.

Another compelling reason to treat the cognitive system practically as a tool crafted for human needs rather than as some infallible truth-seeking machine is evolutionary theory. In his book *The Nature of Rationality,* Robert Nozick explains cognition through an evolutionary lens.[6] While Stich's argument about the distinction between true beliefs and TRUE beliefs seeks to reveal the relative unimportance of absolute truth, Nozick's appeal to evolution offers an explanation of why this might be the case. He suggests that human cognition was not ever actually made in order to find truth and therefore, given its construction, may not even be capable of discovering truth in the first place. Further, even if cognition could uncover truths about a mind-independent world, we as humans would have no way of knowing this fact.[7]

To explain this claim, Nozick argues that evolution may have somehow shaped the human brain so that certain contingent factual connections appear self-evident—as in, appear to have an inherent structural relationship—when they in truth are neither self-evident nor structurally related. Nozick offers the example of Euclidean geometry, which is, he explains, not technically a true representation of physical space. Yet, at first glance, its tenets seem undeniable. Perhaps, he suggests, this is because it was somehow selectively advantageous for cognition to recognize certain patterns as self-evident.

5 Stich, *Theory of Cognitive Evaluation*, 130-31.

6 Robert Nozick, *The Nature of Rationality* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993).

7 Nozick, *Nature of Rationality,* 107-32.

8 Nozick, *Nature of Rationality*, 109-10.

Therefore, seemingly inborn and undeniable "facts" only appear that way to us in a mind-dependent, evolutionarily shaped paradigm.[8] In some ways, this is similar to a modern-day Cartesian evil demon; evolution has shaped our minds to see the world in certain ways, crafting patterns (like Euclidian geometry) that seem self-supporting but are, in fact, distinctly human constructs.

This example helps the pragmatist because it offers a response to the evidentialist claim that the aim of cognition is self-evidently to find truth. Evidentialists have intuition and common sense on their side: it seems clear that human cognition and rationality is constantly searching for, and indeed discovering, logical truths. By appealing to evolution, Nozick could simply respond that the aim of cognition seems to be reason because evolution makes it appear that way to humans. As such, Nozick is able to both offer a mechanism through which cognition has been created and offer a story for why evidentialism is an enticing, although ultimately misguided, position.

Some philosophers, such as Thomas Nagel, have objected to this evolutionary pragmatic view on the grounds that it is logically incoherent. Nagel objects to Nozick's evil demon-like conception of self-evident rationality shaped by evolution because he claims that the very argument undermines itself and, in this, is self-defeating. This is because Nagel believes the structure of Nozick's argument is flawed. Nagel explains that, in order to craft his theory of evolution, Nozick must rely on the very basic tenants of self-evident reason that he is trying to undermine. Essentially, to make any argument, a person must use basic principles of inference, such as logic and reason, which are the very principles that the evolutionary pragmatist seeks to undermine.[9] In this way, Nagel attempts to discredit the evolutionary pragmatist position—among other subjectivist viewpoints—by claiming that certain truths that are necessarily mind-independent. As such, any purportedly failed argument for evolutionary pragmatism merely stands as a testament to the inescapable reality of mind-independent truth.

However, Nagel is unable to deliver a fatal blow to the pragmatists. This is because evolutionary pragmatists could simply claim that the ability to discover basic truths about the world was, in fact, evolutionarily pragmatic. As a result, the cognitive system developed the ability to track

9 Nagel, *The Last Word*, 14-15.

mind-independent truths, at least in some forms. The very success of humanity and its ability to reason in the first place strongly suggests that our reasoning procedures are pretty successful. As such, the evolutionary pragmatist merely needs to claim that truth is not the *sole* aim of cognition. Instead, cognition was built as a biologically contingent system through the process of evolution. Evolutionary pragmatists do not need to make the stronger, subjectivist claim that mind-independent truths are fundamentally inaccessible. Instead, they can claim that, within an evolutionary scope, human cognition was somehow able to attain its complex, multifaceted, and very likely truth-tracking form that it takes today. Admittedly, the evolutionary pragmatist account should tout a healthy fallibilism about many beliefs that Nagel would take objection to, yet, in claiming that evolutionary processes yielded a truth-tracking system that can access mind-independent reality in some logical spheres, evolutionary pragmatist accounts can evade the formal accusation of logical incoherence.

It is important to stress that by the evolutionary pragmatic account, truth-tracking cognitive powers can be conceived as epiphenomena of evolutionary processes. Evolutionary pragmatism does not have to be some type of Panglossian story about how evolution created the perfect cognitive system for discovering real, objective truths. This theory is anachronistic at best, reflecting an outmoded idea of evolution's mechanisms. It is now clear that evolution does not simply operate using selective forces; it fundamentally works via random mutations and genetic drift, where random mutations happen to reach fixation due to non-selective forces like having a high frequency in a small population. In this way, it is naïve to imagine that evolution could have, on its own, created the "ideal" mechanism sculpted by Darwinian selection. To posit truth-tracking as the primary aim of cognition and, as such, the main cognitive attribute that has been selected for is to over reach. Far more likely, humans' complex cognitive system evolved in response to an increased cognitive load in many areas, yielding reasoning and truth-tracking as important parts and epiphenomena of cognitive growth more generally.[10]

However, once humans developed reasoning ability either selectively or incidentally, its power to shape the

10 Robert Boyd, Peter J. Richerson, and Joseph Henrich, "The Cultural Niche: Why Social Learning Is Essential for Human Adaptation," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 108, Supplement no. 2 (June 28, 2011): 10918–25.

future of humanity and cognition became very real and, in some ways, divorced from the evolutionary paradigm from which it arose. Nozick claims: "A concern for reasons, present because of its past correlation with an [evolutionarily developed] reliable route to truth, now floats free."[11] Humans can reason on their own terms—acknowledging their cognitive system's potential inefficiencies and fallibility—and seek to define their own cognitive ends. This is where Stich's relativism comes into play.

11 Nozick, *Nature of Rationality*, 114.

EPISTEMIC RELATIVISM APPLIED TO COGNITION: DEFENDED AND CONSTRAINED

Stich argues that pragmatic cognitive evaluation necessarily leads to relativism. This is because people have different pragmatic ends. These pragmatic ends could be set within many contexts—cultural, historical, ideological, religious, or even individual—although Stich seems to be particularly interested in a culturally-based pragmatic cognitive relativism and plurality.[12] Within this paradigm, each group needs to know what the ends of their cognitive system are before any evaluations can be leveled. Therefore, while different cognitive systems can in fact be compared and contrasted, each system must be critiqued based on its ability to fulfill its own ends. Barring the potential complication of comparatively evaluating the ends themselves, Stich claims that cognitive systems can be contrasted based on how effectively they succeed in their own projects.[13] While Stich fully embraces the relativist implications of his pragmatism, he admits that many people find them troubling. In response, he offers some counterarguments leveled against relativism and dismisses them all in turn.[14]

The most compelling of the counterarguments is that Stich's epistemic relativism is plagued by a kind of circular reasoning. To explain this criticism, consider a case study. Suppose that two different cognitive systems are being evaluated and that each system is evaluated by its own separate criteria. As a result, the members of the two systems each independently conclude that they have the superior system. This illustrates that, within the relativist

12 Stich, *Theory of Cognitive Evaluation*, 158.

13 Stich, *Theory of Cognitive Evaluation*, 141-2.

14 Stich, *Theory of Cognitive Evaluation*, 140-9.

canon, there would be no way to directly compare two groups if the very modes of cognition are different in each. It would be impossible to gain an objective view from the outside of both, leaving any chance of comparative evaluation in an irreconcilable impasse.[15]

In response to levels of logical incoherence, Stich defends pragmatism by claiming that it is not a formal example of circularity. He explains that this is because formal circularity only applies when an argument's premise is taken as one of the conclusions. In this case, however, using a specific cognitive system to evaluate cognition does not take the results of that evaluation as its premise; rather, it just determines the process of analysis.[16] Nonetheless, even if the accuser admits that this scenario is not an example of straightforward circularity, the strength of the criticism remains. If the standards of evaluation are defined by and embedded within the thing that is being evaluated, there is a sense in which the whole process is rigged. Put differently, if the parameters of the cognitive system are malleable, then the outcome—in this case, the evaluation—should be as well.

Stich could try to weaken this problem by claiming that the standards of a cognitive system are not formed in order to somehow yield a falsely positive cognitive evaluation. Rather, the cognitive system is constructed in order to fulfill its own ends, and this fulfillment can be analyzed from the outside in an evaluative way. Nonetheless, the problem of constructing this external evaluation remains. In response, Stich simply concedes that this trouble, while real, is not unique to cognitive relativism; it besets any explanation of ideal cognition. Therefore, while the problem of viewing the mind "from the outside" may be irresolvable, it presents no unique problem for pragmatic relativism.[17]

However, Stich's answer is unsatisfying because he fails to consider that there is a position that can evade this problem: an account, like Nagel puts forward, of cognition that claims that the mind has access to mind-independent truths.[18] In this case, there is still no way of escaping reason or getting outside of the mind, but once certain forms of reason have been posited to exist independently of the human mind, there is an objective metric to measure cognitive standards by. An account along these lines could go something like this. Cognitive systems should

15 Stich, *Theory of Cognitive Evaluation*, 145-6.

16 Stich, *Theory of Cognitive Evaluation*, 147.

17 Stich, *Theory of Cognitive Evaluation*, 148-9.

18 Nagel, *The Last Word*, 134-5.

be evaluated using our principles of reason—logical, mathematic, and even scientific—to interrogate whether or not cognition can track truth: its ultimate goal. This system of evaluation is far from circular because it operates using reason, a capacity that is exercised by the mind but is not dependent on the mind. Therefore, the very principle of evaluation, reason, is presupposed but not pre-set or pre-designed by the object of evaluation: the mind. In response to this objection, Stich could simply concede that while a mind-independent view of reason is better able to eschew charges of circularity, it is nonetheless inferior because it has other, more significant associated problems.

However, I think that he has a better move to make in response. By claiming that through evolutionary causes human cognitive systems have been able to attain powers of reason that can detect true facts about the mind-independent, external world, Stich can assert that cognitive evaluation is not subject to circularity. There are some important differences between this platform and the Nagel-like account just detailed. First, in this case, reason as a human capacity developed as an epiphenomenon resulting from evolutionary causes. Second, reason must be used as a defining metric to compare two cognitive systems, although this does not mean that the systems are being compared on their ability to track truths or employ reason. In this way, the standard of evaluation is the same but the targets of evaluation could be different. Just as reason can be used to interrogate ethical and aesthetic realms, reason can also be used to evaluate systems of cognition that are not solely aimed at actualizing optimal rationality. Third, in this system, rationality, albeit a useful tool, is one of potentially many tools of cognitive evaluation, because it allows for standardizations of evaluative terms. Ultimately, by asserting reason as an essential unifying feature of cognition, the pragmatist can impose at least enough uniformity to successfully evade charges of circularity.

Admittedly, according reason a central place within the epistemic relativist canon necessarily constrains the purported "relativism." While Stich might likely object to this from at least an empirical and naturalistic standpoint, it seems inevitable that the reach of relativism should be limited. It is important to not overstate just how "relative" these cognitive systems can be, since it seems implausibly

far-fetched to contend that there could be human forms of cognition that do not rely on reason, at least given our phylogenetic history.

Overall, it is counterproductive for an evolutionary pragmatist to divorce their canon from the real world too much. After all, relying on evolution to substantiate philosophical claims infuses a significant amount of naturalism into the evolutionary pragmatist's paradigm. Further, advocating for a relativist position also implies a certain level of empiricism. As such, the pragmatic relativist can explain cognition most successfully through their account when they deal with a type of human cognition that is tied to the way that the brain operates in the world as it is, contending with reason as a central factor. Prescriptions into the future of cognition and reasoning are allowed but should be realistic and, in this realism, relatively limited.

LOOKING FORWARD: SETTING OUR COGNITIVE ENDS

Analyzing cognition through the epistemic relativist account and subsuming rationality into a broader picture is the most promising way to go about evaluating cognition. This is because epistemic relativism is able to convincingly explain how cognition has evolved via an evolutionary lens. Further, pragmatic and epistemic relativist accounts can assert that the aim of cognition is not a foregone conclusion. Rather, it is something that must be shaped and decided. In this way, the pragmatic platform is fundamentally hopeful and creative. In many ways, it can be viewed as a charge for cultures and peoples to think critically about the kind of ways that they want to use their systems of cognition. At the same time, it also preaches a healthy doctrine of tolerance in its claim that there is more than one right way to do something.

Ultimately, I am endorsing an evolutionary pragmatic and epistemically relativistic approach to evaluating cognition. At the same time, however, my account seeks to take what is convincing about a position that values cognition based on truth and subsume it into the broader relative pragmatist program. Specifically, the evolutionary pragmatists must emphasize reasoning and rationality

as fundamental constituent parts and goals of human cognition. Not only will this allow the relativists to robustly defend themselves against charges of circularity, logically buttressing their account, but it will also help to make their account more realistic to the world as it is, and hopefully can be, as cognitive ends are collectively and purposefully set.

THE DIVERSITY INITIATIVE AS ANTI-REVOLUTIONARY PROJECT

GERALD NELSON

Gerald Nelson is currently a senior at Vanderbilt University majoring in philosophy with a minor in Asian studies, concentrating in the Japanese language. His philosophical interests include ancient Greek philosophy and epistemology, critical race theory, and post-structuralism. His hobbies include playing chess, coding programs, and studying the Japanese language.

ABSTRACT: *Through diversity initiatives, academia and business have recruited many new talented individuals from historically underrepresented communities. These institutions are now in the position of possessing, managing, and deploying a massive amount of diverse talent. We examine what we may expect from these institutions as they continue to absorb diverse talent, as well what we can expect from these talented individuals as they become a newly established class.*

THE DIVERSITY INITIATIVE AS ANTI-REVOLUTIONARY PROJECT

INTRODUCTION

Recently within business and academic institutions, diversity initiatives have become curiously "popular." *Fortune* magazine has begun ranking "The Best Workplaces for Diversity" with juggernauts like Comcast, NBC Universal, Capital One Financial, Marriot International, Nordstrom, and AT&T high on the list.[1] Likewise, many universities including Rutgers, Brown, University of Arizona, Notre Dame, University of Oregon, Northwestern, and Vanderbilt have developed offices to officially handle diversity initiatives on campus. Even more curiously, this "progress" seems to have come about without the force of legal mandate, particularly in the United States. Of course, affirmative action law prevents any project financed by federal funds from engaging in discriminatory practices, but recently businesses and universities seem to have gone the extra step by not being reluctantly non-discriminatory, but by actively promoting diverse spaces. With some of the most recognized and powerful institutions in the country digging deep to adopt diversity as an institutional value, we might be left scratching our heads, wondering what monumental change convinced these companies and universities to allow their internal culture to be easily disrupted by an annoyance like "diversity." We might entertain the thought that every power-wielding institution in the country has somehow become home to moral saints, truly learnt in the history of oppression and fired about social change at any cost. More likely, there would seem to be some incentive, so what might be the incentive that has somehow committed institutions of power to participate with so much excitement and determination towards the goal of diversity?

I will argue that diversity initiatives, under the umbrella of social justice, are no longer revolutionary forms of activism. The values and ideas cultivated in the

context of the social justice movement are being further developed not as mere mechanisms of civil advancement or the foundations of a robust humanity but as strategies and techniques to absorb talent from marginalized groups, to discover and integrate the knowledges of the oppressed, and to better extract their labor for contribution to their rationalized agendas. This allows institutions to mend their flaws and eliminate their inefficiencies, becoming even more impenetrable to criticism and optimized towards their ends of wealth accumulation and social control.

In this paper, I will study the concept of diversity in the contemporary era, focusing primarily on how business has latched on to and worked with this idea. I will argue that diversity has become a strategy for human resources acquisition and that removing the barriers of discrimination for recruitment have made businesses much more efficient, powerful, and less vulnerable to radical revision or external opposition.

I

A great number of handbooks, articles, and academic journals have been written on "diversity management" to highlight the benefits of workplace diversity on decision–making effectiveness and error prevention. Many studies to ascertain the benefits of diverse teams have been performed. The general conclusions are that diverse teams are more likely to reexamine facts, remain objective, and make fewer factual errors in estimations, expectations, and judgments. Diverse teams are also more likely to be innovative and original in tasks like product development.[2]

There has been a proliferation of interest in bringing to the attention of firms that diverse teams make better market predictions, bring higher returns, and operate more efficiently. This empirical evidence is a boon to social justice advocates who can now wed the moral responsibilities of anti–discrimination to the common sense of business. The financial world, along with academia, were once well-guarded bastions of resource with *de facto* rules about who could participate in wealth production and distribution of material, intellectual, and social capital. Diversity initiatives represent the hope that these concentrated and accumulated resources within the

1 "The 100 Best Workplaces for Diversity," *Fortune*, 2017, http://fortune.com/best-work-places-for-di-versity/.

2 David Rock and Heidi Grants, "Why Diverse Teams are Smarter," *Harvard Business Review, Diversity Section*, Nov. 4 2016, https://hbr.org/2016/11/why-diverse-teams-are-smarter.

limited spaces of the corporate world or academia will be shared more equitably with minority groups.

The strategy of social justice politics has often been to penetrate isolated internal cultures of inegalitarian institutions and conform them to values thought better than the oppressive beliefs that dominated them previously. This penetration was treated as a one-sided conquest; advocates of diversity thought of it as an idea and initiative that penetrated and inserted itself into contexts where it was not before and transformed them without being mutated itself. However, the concept of diversity is itself penetrable; interaction with contexts where diversity was not before present transforms the concept of diversity.

This observation that diversity and all manners of social justice work are themselves penetrable and fully mutable is the beginning of the concept of *infiltrated ideals*. The center of this concept is that ideals once meant to *infiltrate* and transform inegalitarian institutions have been themselves infiltrated and transformed over time through their interactions with these newly entered contexts. Therein, ideals like diversity have become increasingly incorporated into systems of power as strategies, and those systems have likewise mutated.

I will proceed to demonstrate this point in a limited study. I will examine pieces on the benefits of diversity alongside a diversity management handbook. These texts will demonstrate how thinking about the underlying discourse of diversity has shifted as it more intimately and frequently interacts with the world of business.

Let us begin with an example of an article that attempts to inform the reader of the benefits of diverse teams in the workplace:

> Researchers found that individuals who were part of the diverse teams were 58% more likely to price stocks correctly, whereas those in homogenous groups were more prone to pricing errors. . . . In another study . . . the authors concluded that increased cultural diversity is a boon to innovativeness. They pooled data on 7,615 firms that participated in the London Annual Business Survey . . . the results revealed that businesses run by culturally diverse leadership teams were more likely to develop new products than those with homogenous leadership.[3]

> Companies in the top quartile for racial and ethnic diversity are 35 percent more likely to have financial returns above their respective national industry medians...Companies in the top quartile for gender diversity are 15 percent more likely to have financial returns above their respective national industry medians . . . Companies in the bottom quartile both for gender and for ethnicity and race are statistically less likely to achieve above-average financial returns than the average companies in the data set (that is, bottom-quartile companies are lagging rather than merely not leading).[4]

Readers should pause to notice the robust empirical evidence and business-oriented evaluative principles that are present throughout; the articles seek to demonstrate that diversity as a variable is positively correlated with several measures of success. Statements like "Companies in the top quartile for racial and ethnic diversity are 35 percent more likely to have financial returns above their respective national industry medians" suggest that the argument of the article is that diversity should be appreciated as a predictive dimension of success in the workplace. Diversity, then, is treated merely as a composition of human relationships with given sets of properties that yield an influence on workplace activities. The authors' goal is to advise managers about how this positive compositional state can be instrumental in securing advantages. This is a re-coding of the social attribute of "diversity" with a new underlying system of intelligibility that does not evaluate things like the moral worth of equality or the authoritative claims of justice.

We previously thought of diversity initiatives as something inherently liberal, as possessing its political character is necessary in its definition. We now see diversity as something that can be politically indifferent, something that can be merely *instrumental* in its political character rather than revolutionary. It can be a compositional schema: a mechanism for transforming and mobilizing resources of human capital by aggregating certain *kinds* of people for certain tasks.

II

Let us move to another analysis that demonstrates how diversity as a concept of human resource management can be abstracted from history, politics, and

3 Rock and Grant, "Why Diverse Teams are Smarter."

4 Vivian Hunt, Dennis Layton, and Sarah Prince, "Why Diversity Matters," McKinsey & Company, January 2015, http://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/why-diversity-matters.

morality. *World Class Diversity Management* by Thomas R. Roosevelt is something of a handbook meant to allow management to develop "state-of-the-art strategies and approaches for addressing any diversity issue in any setting in any geographical location."[5] Even here, we may pause to observe that the strategies that the author offers are meant to be effective in "addressing any diversity issue" in "any setting" and "any geographic location." Diversity issues are treated as things without strict and immutable integrity in their particulars. Incomparable diversity issues are seen as aggregateable. Moreover, Roosevelt even suggests that it is preferable not to get bogged down in the particularities of race, gender, and ethnicity, stating:

> The individual dimensions—race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, thought, globalism, political, functional, or generational—consume the attention and time of many organizations, which emphasize them one at a time and seek practitioners and consultants with expertise in the priority of the moment. . . . Rarely do organizations or community leaders focus on learning about diversity as a field. . . . The focus is on creating an environment that enables leaders and managers to access talent however it comes packaged in terms of race, gender, and ethnicity.

Roosevelt continues by offering an anecdote detailing an experience consulting for an English client:

> Not long ago, I made a presentation in England. The client requested that I arrive early so that I might be oriented. . . . They simply had wanted to be sure I had not come with a way of thinking about diversity that was at odds with their thinking; in particular, they did not want me to bring a race and gender perspective that they considered to be peculiar to the United States. My model and its assumption of a global application to any diversity issue appeared attractive to them.[6]

It is difficult to parse what the client meant by a "way of thinking about diversity that was at odds with their thinking." It could mean that they wanted a way of dealing with diversity that reflected the historical and political context of England; however, this appears unlikely since in the end they chose to embrace Roosevelt's generalist approach. It seems that companies seeking Roosevelt's consultation want to pull pure calculative power out of diversity, to extract its pure

5 R. Roosevelt Thomas, *World Class Diversity Management: A Strategic Approach* (California: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2010), 3.

6 Roosevelt, *World Class Diversity*, 17.

efficaciousness concerning their goal without being bothered by the political struggle of the broader social justice movement.

If we understand diversity as a functional idea that works with compositions of human difference in a population, and based on that composition yields outcomes, then we can imagine people as the intersection points of various qualities—characteristics to be aggregated by these schemas. If a person is a composite bundle of certain perspective-driven knowledges related to ethnicity, gender, race, disability, etc. intersected with the knowledge of white cisgender male hegemony, then a function of diversity management might inform the selection of persons for recruitment that carry particular relations of these qualities, all of which make them serviceable to their project. This means that diversity does not necessarily resist or oppose white cisgender male hegemony (or any hegemony for that manner). Diversity management takes variables describing the difference of persons, chooses those with the right bundle of these variables, recruits these persons, disciplines them in labor functions to output knowledge and skills, adds positive representation institutions, and uses them effectively towards the ends of specific rational schemes that rely on people as inputs—be this scheme a business, an academy, a culture, or a general social organization of any kind.

We may understand diversity management as the organization and mobilization of human resources otherwise made inaccessible by negative social interaction patterns (e.g. oppression and discrimination). The "rationalization agenda" of business, as Roosevelt refers to it, was always handicapped by segregation and discrimination because it made certain knowledges unavailable for use in its projects.

III

There is a condition for the utilization of minorities through diversity management in various social schemas: those recruited must be conversant in the dominant discourse to some degree. Aberrations from the norm that minorities represent, be it in race, sexuality, gender, ethnicity, etc., must not be of the radical or incompatible

kind. In other words, in elite institutions those who are different cannot act like "hillbillies," nor like "ghetto kids," nor like "FOBs," etc. They cannot maintain radically disruptive performances in the center of the institution; this would be bringing the outside in, not to be absorbed and incorporated but to take from the center, create chaos, and dismantle its base. Those authorized minorities must differ only enough so as to inform the center of the activity in the margins, such that they can bring those marginalized resources within access of the institution. Their role is to rationalize and expand hegemony by contributing their knowledge of how difference positions them epistemically.

Businesses can more effectively market to minorities if they have access to knowledges from people who have lived in spaces outside of the center. The academy can be a more complete encyclopedia of the world through contributions from minorities. Diverse teams can help business penetrate markets that are otherwise inaccessible on account of cultural ignorance or their lack of the right "palette of faces" that would allow minority consumers to open up. Diversity allows for the *amendment* of central schemas of knowledge. They help cover the gaps and span the irrationalities of hegemonic knowledges.

The diversities referred to in the workplace or in academic settings are not radical, irreconcilable diversities. They are not diversities that indict the main identity. If the central paradigm of knowledge is informed by a worldview indebted to the history of Western thought, we cannot necessarily assume that it is exploded as a natural consequence of diversity or that this paradigm is not always present to some degree in the assumptions of every actor regardless of origin or identity. These diversities critique and expand the main identity without radically breaking its structure. In this way, diversity aids in broadening, modifying, developing, and improving white–male-hegemonic identity. Diversity is a critical-social dynamic that only refines and resolves the irrationalities of the central social thesis but does not break it.

Diversity becomes nothing more than an asymptotic perfect homogeneity. The contradictions, epistemic blindness, and creative limitedness of a more illogically assembled composition of homogeneity are trumped by a homogeneity that has more ingeniously engaged the

7 For more on the view that intellectuals' role as critic has been impoverished and replaced with socially reproductive role, see Stefano Harney and Fred Morten, "The University & the Undercommons," in *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study,* (New York, NY: Minor Compositions, 2013). They continue, even when academics do offer up critique meant to revolutionize our capitalist political economy, these critiques are absorbed into the hegemonic order, actually helping to strengthen the *status quo.*

premises of its necessary conditions of "sameness." The conditions of sameness in traditional white–patriarchal homogeneity (skin color, hair texture, etc.) create inconsistent connections between the properties that they are supposed to preserve in its members.

Skin color, hair texture, nose shape, etc. are supposed to capture members who share an experience of the world—a background, an intellectual experience, a set of skills and values, etc.—but this metric fails to observe that the frameworks of the white cisgender man extend into a substratum that far out-extends the category of people with white skin, straight hair, and straight noses. The epistemic, financial, evaluative positions of the white man are so thoroughly disseminated, recapitulated, and subtly reinforced that we all experience reality to some degree from the position of white men.

The diversity we are now seeing may be more accurately called "rational homogeneity." It is still in dialogue with a central premise attached to all the assumptions and goals operative in the context of business and academia, rooted far backwards in time and extending itself forward with the vestiges and inheritances of its oppressive past. These vestiges interact and combine with diversity as it enters these new institutional contexts.

IV

From these authorized minorities elected by diversity management emerges a new elite who act as an excuse for the structures of oppression and who more thoroughly bind those successfully tracked and branded by the system as undesirables: the radically unassimilable. The new elite, sanctioned by diversity management and critically imperceptive of social justice politics, are still conversant with the old era of exclusion. The preexisting culture of exclusive circles was not suddenly extinguished by the advent of social justice. There is continuity, although now modified to share a context with social justice. Bigotry evolves and even *mates* with social justice; a new hybrid politic emerges, one that cannot be separated into any previous category now that their DNA has been co-mingled.[7]

Business and academia emerged co-historically with institutions of racism, sexism, homophobia, etc., and these

discriminatory histories still permeate and transfigure them. "Diversity" cannot dissolve that history; when it enters the mix of the tumultuous corporation and faces its alliance with discriminatory institutions, its effect cannot be assumed to be pure positivity. The heritage of discrimination changes the terms of diversity as much as diversity changes the terms of the institution.

This portrayal gives us a better understanding of what is meant by infiltrated ideals. Social justice ideals, particularly social equity, behave more like strategies and techniques than positive social goals. Diversity and multiculturalism do not belong to one team or camp; they do not invariably lead to a better society. They are just new elements that must be recognized in contemporary politics due to its growing ideological clout. Intentions to consolidate power, maintain privilege, etc. are not in retreat simply because the terms of the discourse have changed. Just as the success of the Civil-Rights Era prompted new discursive racism characterized by coded language and color-blind systems of racial control, the salience of recognizing diversity institutionally is that it may shift the way in which systems of oppression operate.[8]

Diversity, however, may offer a more paradigmatic transformation over "color-blindness." The political strategies of color-blind oppression were invented to maneuver, dodge, avoid, and remain indecipherable. Indeed, the indecipherability of systems of oppression remains important in an era of infiltrated ideals, but the overall strategy shifts away from evasiveness towards incorporation. In fact, diversity has given new life to social inequalities. When race, ethnicity, gender, disability, etc. are no longer criteria for discrimination, then individuals whose circumstances determine their life outcome are pitted against those who escape this decisive branding. The systems of oppression in place lose their legibility as racist, sexist, ableist, etc. Not all oppressed people experience oppression equally, and the oppression experienced by one person may not preclude all possible opportunities of success. Discriminatory institutions *track* certain kinds of people and contribute to the determination of their life through adverse social mechanisms. Sometimes the mechanisms do not do their job and some escape. Further, the mechanisms may aid individuals of interest in escaping so that their talents may

8 Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York, NY: The New Press, 2012).

be utilized. This "accident of escape" may ultimately be held as an accomplishment of merit, demonstration of talent, or feat of perseverance; this allows the failure to escape to be seen as a personal failure of responsibility.

In a society publicly embracing diversity and multiculturalism, those who escape oppression are lauded and brought into the spotlight instead of being sequestered. In fact, recruitment systems and scouting agencies can be used to identify, recruit, and aggregate those with special *variables* that allowed them to escape the system. Perhaps it was the child with active parents despite being born in poverty, maybe it was the child with disabilities given access to nature and art such that their disability was mitigated, or maybe it was the girl in a household of strong feminine personalities such that she never developed limiting self-perceptions. These variable cases can be gathered and recruited as vanguards of the privileged elite in a newly branded system of control. The best and brightest are integrated into complicity with society's inegalitarianism.

Once the bodies of sophisticated inegalitarianism are expanded in color palette and behavioral pattern, an excuse is given for the continued oppression of those still caught in the net. In fact, the bind can be tightened on them as the system of control is invigorated by the intellectual capital of diversity. If middle-class blacks who don't experience the resource deprivation of the urban poor are elevated and accepted into elite institutions—or if middle-class Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Asian-Americans are made to represent "Asian-Americans" proper even though people of Hmong, Cambodian, or Laotian descent remain struggling—then a wedge is set between the elected minorities and those thoroughly enmeshed in oppression. The circumstances between them are conflated as being "equivalent," and therein systems that continue to code and oppress people are more easily ignored.

CONCLUSION

Contemporary diversity initiatives can be said to be continuous with the ideas that were developed in social justice movements. However, these ideas now serve new purposes; they have been reduced and adapted. In

fact, in a stroke of irony, it may have been the enforced inefficiency of oppression that prevented white supremacy and its institutions from becoming supremely powerful. Oppression deprived hegemony of critical talent and rendered key knowledges inaccessible. The organizational schemes of oppression—racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, disability discrimination, etc.—made the regimes of power less optimal. There were still truly talented individuals in the margins, resisting oppression, escaping conscription, and protecting revolutionary knowledge by the mere fact of exclusion. Now these people have been offered a seat at the table. More than poverty or the miseducation of oppressed people, diversity and inclusion can be seen as the ultimate strategy of resource deprivation, depriving oppressed people of the most critical resource: human capital. Indeed, one may ask oneself the question: who will fight the resistance when there is no left to fight, when all our heroes are seduced into better lives as enemies?

ABOUT DAVID CHALMERS, PhD

David Chalmers is a professor of philosophy and neural science at New York University. He received his PhD in philosophy and cognitive science from Indiana University in 1993 and has held positions at University of California, Santa Cruz, University of Arizona, and Australian National University. He helped to found the Association for the Scientific Study of Consciousness and co-directs the PhilPapers Foundation.

Chalmers has written extensively on a wide range of topics, including philosophy of mind, philosophy of language, metaphysics, epistemology, and metaphilosophy. He is a prolific author, among his well-known works are *The Conscious Mind*, *The Character of Consciousness*, and *Constructing the World*. For more information about Chalmers and his current projects, visit http://consc.net/.

THINKING JUST HAPPENS

AN INTERVIEW WITH DAVID CHALMERS, PhD

Stance*: How did you get your start in philosophy? Who or what influenced you, and how did that impact where you are today?*

David Chalmers: I started out in mathematics. My first degree was in math in Australia. I went on to do a graduate degree in math at Oxford, and then gradually got really interested in philosophy. I took one course in philosophy as an undergraduate at Adelaide in Australia. It was actually my worst course. I didn't do terribly well. But I guess it got me interested in the subject. That was my first year as an undergraduate. The rest of the time, I kept thinking about philosophy in the background, especially the problem of consciousness, which I gradually got slowly obsessed by. It always seemed to be that this was just the most interesting problem in the universe.

When I got to Oxford, I was meant to be thinking about math. But on my way to Oxford, I hitchhiked around Europe for about for about six months. I spent a lot of time standing by the side of the road thinking about philosophy. I got to Oxford and thought "Alright, now I should get down to work." But, in fact, the whole time I was thinking about consciousness and the mind, and philosophy took over. It got to the point where I thought, "I should try and do this properly." Then I thought about doing philosophy at Oxford. In the end, I got in touch with Doug Hofstadter, whose book *Gödel, Escher, Bach* I'd read and really liked, as well as his book *The Mind's I*, which has a lot of issues about artificial intelligence and the philosophy of mind. I started writing back and forth with him, and he said, "You should come and work with me in Indiana." So I ended up moving to Indiana and working on philosophy and cognitive science there.

S: One of your books, The Conscious Mind, *was published in 1996 and another,* The Character of Consciousness, *was published in 2010. Has your view of consciousness changed through your career?*

> **C**: Oh, there have been changes here and there over time. I started out as somebody very sympathetic to materialism. With my background in science, I thought that materialism was the most plausible view of the world, the default option. I thought consciousness ought to be something we can fit within science, that there ought to be a materialist explanation of it. I recognized that consciousness posed a big problem, but for a long time I thought we could find a materialist solution. Gradually, I came to the realization that given certain things I was committed to for systematic reasons, it couldn't be explained physically. So, earlier on, I ended up coming around from a more reductive, materialist view to a non-reductionist view of property dualism, even panpsychism.

> I'd say I've changed in some smaller ways. My first book, *The Conscious Mind*, was very sympathetic to epiphenomenalism: the view that consciousness doesn't play a causal role. I'm now somewhat less sympathetic to that view. I'm especially interested in views in which consciousness does play a role—interactionist dualism, maybe panpsychism. At the same time, I've also become very interested in all kinds of views, whatever view it might take to solve the mind-body problem. I've even had a bit of resurgence of interest in a view on the

extreme opposite of these views, which is illusionism: the view that consciousness is basically an illusion. Dan Dennett might have a version of this view. Recently, philosophers like Keith Frankish have begun to explore it.

> I'm actually writing a paper at the moment on what I call "the meta-problem of consciousness," which is the problem of explaining why we think there's a problem of consciousness. In the past, I've distinguished the easy problems—the problems of behavior—from the hard problem—the problem of explaining experience. But here's one bit of behavior which is very closely tied to the hard problem: people like me go around saying things like, "Hey, there's a hard problem. Consciousness is hard to explain. I can't see how it could be physical." That's a bit of behavior that we could try to explain in physical or functional terms. I'm getting really interested right now in the problem of how we might actually explain that in physical or functional terms. I talked about it a bit in my first book, *The Conscious Mind*, but I think there's more to say.

> Once you go that far, then some people will be very inclined to say, "Ah, what you've really done is explain the illusion of consciousness, given a physical explanation of why you think consciousness is non-physical." For various reasons, I don't think that's the correct conclusion to draw. But I do think that coming up with a really good explanation of why it is that we say and judge these things about consciousness is sure to tell us something about the basis of consciousness itself.

S: What are the principal aspects of consciousness that you want to keep? What are some core properties that you see as most important?

> **C**: Oh, interesting. I think the most important one is that consciousness is a state that it's something like to be in. My colleague Tom Nagel, 40-plus years ago now, in his article "What is it Like to be a Bat," said you're conscious if there's something it's like to be you. A mental state is conscious if there's something it's like to be in that state. I take that to be the defining feature of consciousness.

> Philosophers sometimes talk about phenomenal consciousness to distinguish it from other things that people call consciousness. You can put it in different ways by saying it's subjective or it's a state of experience, but that's really the core thing. At the same time there are many other features that consciousness obviously

has. It's multi-faceted. There are different kinds of consciousness, different sensory modalities. It appears to present the world as representational; it seems when I'm conscious, I'm conscious of a world around me. That seems like a very important feature of consciousness. It's integrated in various ways, and it seems to be unified. But it's also differentiated in various ways. Up to a certain point, I don't want to be too rigid in laying down exactly what the features are of consciousness. We could turn out to be wrong about some of them. Is it completely representational? Is it always? Well, I don't know. Is it unified? I'm inclined to think so, but maybe someone could convince me otherwise. I guess the really important thing is just that there's something it's like to be in that state, and everything else we can argue about.

S: On the same path here, are there different levels of consciousness throughout different animal species, like elephants or dolphins? Or is there any fluctuation in how they experience consciousness, or how they experience the world, or how they are "being," I guess, as you put it?

C: We just had a conference three weeks ago here at NYU on animal consciousness, organized by the Center for Mind, Brain, and Consciousness that I direct along with my colleague Ned Block. It was quite an eye-opener, this conference. People used to argue about whether certain mammals are conscious. Maybe they thought that other primates were conscious: dogs and cats, maybe. Mice? It starts to be doubtful. These days people are much more open to ascribing all kinds of consciousness to animals. Pretty well every mammal; it's regarded as pretty well obvious. There used to be people arguing that fish don't feel pain, but I think that's gradually becoming a minority position. The debate has now moved to insects, actually. People are now arguing about whether ants or bees are conscious. The tide seems to be gradually going in that direction. I think a lot of different animals are very plausibly conscious.

It's predictable that I might think this. I've got some sympathy with panpsychism, the view that everything is conscious. If everything is conscious, then animals are conscious. In general, most people seem open to ascribing consciousness to a lot of animals. But that's not to say they all have the same kind of consciousness, so maybe that's where your points about levels of consciousness come in.

[CONSCIOUSNESS IS] MULTI-FACETED.
THERE ARE DIFFERENT KINDS . . .
DIFFERENT SENSORY MODALITIES.

Maybe all these animals have some kind of sensory consciousness. Most of them have some kind of vision. Maybe they have some kind of visual consciousness, but even within visual consciousness there might some serious differences. Some of them might have sophisticated color vision. Some might lack it. Some might be just sensitive to brightness.

I think human consciousness involves much more than just sensory consciousness. We have cognitive consciousness when we think. There's a phenomenology of thinking. We also have some kind of consciousness of ourselves, reflective consciousness, reflecting on our thinking. You can call those, if you like, higher or more complex levels of consciousness. I'm pretty doubtful that ants or bees have anything like that. Maybe they have simple visual consciousness. Maybe they have simple feelings of pain. I'm pretty sure that they don't have reflective consciousness, thinking about their thinking. Maybe they don't even have cognitive consciousness, a phenomenology of thinking. But they may well have sensory consciousness. Then it's a very interesting question, what consciousness different non-human animals might have. Do non-human primates, for example, have some kind of consciousness of thinking? Smarter primates are very sophisticated. But I think we're still at the point of really just charting out these things. We certainly haven't yet figured out what it's like to be a bat, what it's like to have a sensory modality totally alien from human sensory modalities.

S: Are there ethical implications if panpsychism, or this idea of consciousness spread throughout the world, is true?

C: In general, the more you extend consciousness to more creatures, the more you're including them within some circle of ethical concern. If fish are not conscious, that's very convenient to the fisheries because then they don't need to worry about causing them pain. Presumably, then, there's no real issue about killing and eating them because a lot of people think consciousness is what makes a creature come to warrant certain kinds of moral concern. Insofar as we acknowledge that fish are conscious, then we could be thinking about things like: Are they suffering? Is it appropriate to cause them pain? Is it okay to kill them? Likewise for ants and so on.

By the time you're done extending this to everything, which is the panpsychism view—that everything is conscious—you might say, "Well, extending the circle of ethical concern to every object in the universe

becomes a little bit ridiculous." Think about all the atoms I'm messing around with when I drink a glass of water. Am I abusing those water molecules? It starts to become a bit strange sounding if you should extend your ethical concerns to everything in the universe.

As I've become more sympathetic with panpsychism, I've started thinking there's more than just consciousness that makes something an object of moral concern; it's some forms of consciousness. Some people think that it's pain or suffering that matters especially, but maybe it's something more than mere sensory consciousness. Maybe it's some type of reflective consciousness or cognitive consciousness that gives a being a greater level of moral status.

I used to say that I shouldn't eat anything that was conscious, and therefore I should become a vegetarian. I'm not vegetarian, but I thought that maybe I should become vegetarian. Then the more and more you become sympathetic with panpsychism, then the more and more things you're not going to be able to eat, until you're left with being able to eat nothing at all. But the consequence of that to me was that it's not just consciousness that matters, but that it's certain kinds of consciousness that matter. But I've certainly not yet thought it all the way through.

S: In "Extended Cognition and Extended Consciousness," you describe consciousness as a subjective experience that is "one step away" from moving the body. Could you say more about what this step is and what the implications of its existence are?

C: The thought was that there is a distinction between conscious processes and unconscious processes. The traditional thing to say is that conscious processes are the ones that are reportable. The conscious processes are ones that you can talk about. For example: "I'm experiencing red," "I'm feeling pain." The unconscious stuff might be in the brain somewhere, but it's much less accessible. I was picking up on that idea and generalizing it a bit, because we don't want to make reportability define what consciousness is. We want to say there are animals which can be conscious without reporting, but then what will be the conscious processes in them, the processes which are somehow directly available to the creature in certain ways for controlling their action and for controlling other processes and so on? So phenomenal consciousness will still correspond

to what's accessible. At the level of processing, it corresponds to what's accessible or available. That was something I argued for, maybe 20 years ago, in an article called "Availability: The Cognitive Basis of Experience." But it also came up in "The Extended Mind."

I'm sympathetic with the idea that some mental states can extend beyond the head, like our beliefs, some memories. I'm inclined to say that many of my memories are now stored in my iPhone. Andy Clark and I argued that many mental states can extend. But it seems to me that it's mostly not conscious states, but more dispositional states like belief, which extend beyond our consciousness. Then the question arises: can you get consciousness to extend beyond the head? Maybe you can in science fiction cases by wearing a module or a belt or something. But it's harder to see how it's going to go in regular cases involving perception and action. I have never seen a convincing case where my consciousness extends into my iPhone. The question is: why is that? Well, maybe it's because the iPhone is too far removed from the locus of control. You said one step away; maybe the iPhone is three or four steps away from that, so it's only indirectly available for control. The consciousness corresponds to the stuff that's one step away; it's poised for control. If consciousness has to go with what's poised for control, then it's pretty plausible that the processes which are poised directly for controlling behavior are in my head. That's why there's no extended consciousness, because the stuff which is outside of the head is too many steps away to count as directly available for control.

S: Throughout your career, you've been writing about possible worlds and two-dimensional semantics. How would you simply define and describe your work to someone who hasn't quite encountered those terms before?

C: I think of it as a project which is broadly in the spirit of trying to make sense of Frege's distinction between sense and reference. So you've got "Hesperus," the word for the Evening Star, and "Phosphorus," the word for the morning star. Frege wanted to say they've got the same referent—the planet Venus—because it's Venus both times. There's something in the meaning of those words that's the same: the referent. But there's something in the meaning of those words that's different, and that's what Frege calls the sense. One sense went along with "the morning star," and

one sense went along with "the evening star." Two-dimensional semantics is trying to split meaning into two components in ways similar to the way that Frege did it.

But many people think that the Fregean picture is made problematic by the work of Saul Kripke in *Naming and Necessity* around 1970. He argued that names are rigid designators, that the meaning of all these terms is just the planet Venus. He said various descriptivist intuitions, which are broadly Fregean intuitions, were wrong for various reasons.

Some people, like Carnap, had wanted to make sense of Fregean sense in terms of what a word picks out in different possible worlds. An intention, for Carnap, in the case of "Evening Star" would pick out in any given world the evening star in that world and "Morning Star" would pick out the morning star in that world. In our world, they might be the same—have the same extension—but in other worlds "Morning Star" and "Evening Star" might pick out something else and have a different intention. This was Carnap's way of making sense of Frege's intention and extension.

Then Kripke comes along and says, "Actually, if you look at 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus,' they're rigid designators." They pick out the same object in all possible worlds. If you want to look at the intention for "Hesperus" or "Phosphorus," you have to look at them as rigid designators. "Hesperus" is Venus in every world. "Phosphorus" is Venus in every world. More generally, he argued for anti-Fregean, anti-descriptivist conclusions, which led many people to think, "Oh, really, all there is here is reference."

So, two-dimensional semantics is partly in reaction to Kripke. It's a way of splitting meaning into two components, one of which behaves roughly the way that Frege and Carnap thought meaning behaves—the way that's like sense. The other dimension corresponds to the way that Kripke thought meaning behaves. So, technically with possible worlds, both aspects of meaning are represented as intentions, as functions from possible worlds to extensions, but you've got two intentions now. You've got one that behaves the way Kripke thinks, where "Hesperus" picks out Venus in all worlds. That's the secondary intention. But you've got another one that behaves more like the way that Carnap said meaning behaves, where the intention for "Hesperus" will pick out the Evening Star in every

world and the intention for "Phosphorus" will pick out the Morning Star in every world. So we'll say that "Hesperus" and "Phosphorus" have the same secondary intention—that's one dimension of meaning—but a different primary intention—another dimension of meaning. So Kripke's modal argument against descriptivism—that names are rigid designators—gets accommodated by the secondary dimension of meaning. But all the Fregean intuitions about the cognitive differences between "Hesperus" and "Phosphorus," or "Superman" and "Clark Kent," get accommodated by a difference in the primary intention for those things.

There's a lot more to say about how this plays out in specific cases and deals with all of Kripke's challenges, but the broad idea is that we've got two dimensions of possible worlds, which for me come down to a kind of epistemic possibility and a kind of metaphysical possibility. The epistemic one corresponds to the primary intention and the way words behave in respect to those go with Frege's sense. The secondary one, which is over metaphysical possibilities, behaves Kripke's way, much more like a notion of meaning tied to referent. It's a way to try and have your Frege and your Kripke, too.

S: In "The Two-Dimensional Argument Against Materialism," you described phenomenological concepts like consciousness that are metaphysically necessary. Are there other things that are metaphysically necessary besides consciousness?

C: I don't think I used that exact thesis. I would say that consciousness is contingent: it exists in some worlds, but not in others. I did say some things about concepts of consciousness being special, maybe being super rigid, and epistemically rigid.

Kripke says that names are rigid designators. By my lights, they would be called metaphysically rigid designators. If we think about what is "Hesperus" in different metaphysically possible worlds, Kripke would say that it's always the planet Venus. The secondary intention always picks out the same object. But if we do it across epistemically possible worlds—say we're actually living in a world where Jupiter is visible in the evening and Mars is visible in the morning—then, relative to that epistemically possible world, if things are actually that way, we'd say "Hesperus" picks out Jupiter and "Phosphorus" picks out Mars. That is to say, "Hesperus" and "Phosphorus" are metaphysically

rigid. Their secondary intention pick out the same object in every world. But they're not epistemically rigid because we can still think of epistemic possibilities where "Hesperus" is not "Phosphorus." Kripke said it's metaphysically necessary that "Hesperus" is "Phosphorus." But it isn't epistemically necessary. It's not *a priori* that "Hesperus" is "Phosphorus" or that "Clark Kent" is "Superman." So we can say that these names are metaphysically rigid, but not epistemically rigid.

Now there are a few special expressions, I think, which are not just metaphysically rigid, but epistemically rigid, too. I think one plausible example for this is number terms, like "the number nine." Maybe that picks out the number nine in all metaphysically possible worlds and the number nine in all epistemically possible worlds, too. You don't get this Kripke thing where you don't really know *a priori* what it refers to. You know *a priori* what it refers to; it's epistemically rigid. So maybe number terms, like "nine" or "zero," maybe some special property terms are dually rigid.

I think "consciousness" is like that. It's epistemically rigid. When we think about "consciousness," it's not like "water" or "Hesperus," where it's picking out something out there in the external world but we don't really know what. My view is that we grasp the essence of consciousness simply by possessing the concept. In every possible world, even in every epistemically possible world, "consciousness" picks out consciousness. That's to say it's not just metaphysically rigid, but it's epistemically rigid. And that makes the concept of consciousness somewhat special.

I call this kind of epistemic and metaphysical rigidity "super rigidity." That kind of phenomenon comes close to what Russell was talking about under the heading of acquaintance. There are some special things we can be acquainted with. He thought we could be acquainted with sense data. He thought we could be acquainted with certain universals, and he thought we could be acquainted with the self. I'm inclined to think that the cases where we have that similar kind of acquaintance correspond very nicely with the cases where you have this epistemic rigidity. I think of this epistemic rigidity as a way of trying to make sense of this Russell–style notion of acquaintance but in the more contemporary framework of possible worlds.

S: Just to switch gears just a little bit: in your own words, what does it mean for something to be scrutable? How does this relate to our reality and other branches of philosophy like ethics?

C: This was the notion that was the centerpiece of my book, *Constructing the World*, which came out about five years ago. Scrutability is the idea that once you're given a full enough description of the world, you can figure out all the truths about the world. One way to introduce this is by thinking about Laplace's Demon. Laplace said, "Tell me all the laws of physics and tell me all the positions of all the particles at the beginning of the universe, then I will be able to predict the entire future of the universe and I'll be able to know everything, not just about atoms but about chemicals, about organisms, about society, and so on." Laplace held that everything about the world was scrutable from the facts about the position of the particles. Scrutable here means basically given the knowledge of A, you can figure out B. The key notion I talk about is developed in terms of the *a priori*. Given knowledge about A and *a priori* reasoning, you can figure out B. It's a kind of deducibility, if you like.

Now Laplace's thesis is often taken to be too strong in that there's various things that are hard to know. If physics isn't determinist, then maybe you can't even know about the particles in the future. Many people have argued that knowing anything about physics doesn't tell you about the conscious experiences. John Perry's got this point that knowing objectively the full state of the world doesn't tell you which person is me. But I suggest that those are all gaps we can close by building more things into the basis. If we have a broader basis, which is all the physics and all the facts about physics and all the facts about consciousness and maybe an indexical fact about where I am—it's a big truth I call PQTI: physics, qualia, T is "that's all" (or "this is everything"), and indexicals—from there, you can deduce everything. Everything would be scrutable from there. That's what I try to argue for in *Constructing the World*.

I also try to argue that you can in this way vindicate some of the projects of the logical empiricists like Rudolf Carnap, who in *The Logical Structure of the World* tried to argue that you could get all truths about the world in a very small vocabulary. He actually thought he could just do it with logic and a little bit of a relation called

phenomenal similarity. I think, like Laplace, Carnap was a bit too ambitious with his minimal vocabulary, but then I try to see how little can we expand the vocabulary and still get something from which we can deduce all the truths. I thought, maybe from PQTI, we can do it. Later in the book I try to reduce that down and define a lot of the physical terms in terms of mathematics and causation, and not much else. By the end of it we do have a very simple set of fundamental concepts in terms of which we ought to be able to describe the world fully, so that from there one could deduce everything about the world.

I think it's an interesting question, how ethics fits in there. It partly depends on whether you're a moral realist, because I do all this for truths about the world. If you do believe that moral claims are true or false, I think it's pretty plausible they're also *a priori* deducible from non-ethical claims. Given a non-ethical description of a scenario and all of the experiences and so on—I don't know, something awful like Harman's case of torturing a cat—it seems pretty clear that you can figure out, "Okay, that's bad." So maybe the ethical claims about the world will be scrutable from the underlying claims.

Lately, I've actually been thinking about whether there might be stronger forms of scrutability where it's not merely *a priori* deducibility but analytic deducibility. Arguably that's missing in the ethical case. One question is: what is the connection between this notion of scrutability and existing notions, like supervenience or metaphysical grounding? Scrutability goes along with supervenience, which is a kind of necessitation under certain circumstances, but is it enough for reduction? The mathematical truths are scrutable. They're *a priori*. They're scrutable for everything. Does that mean they're reducible to the physical truths? Maybe not. The ethical truths, they're scrutable for the physical truth, but does this mean they're reducible? Maybe not. Maybe for that stronger connection you need something like analytic scrutability or analytic entailment. And maybe that missing in the ethical case. So, that's a thesis I've been pursuing more recently.

In general, a lot of my broad life project is to connect certain metaphysical notions, like metaphysical necessity or grounding, with certain epistemological notions, like *a priority* or closely related notions like analyticity, to draw connections between them that are stronger than what other people think are possible. I think scrutability can actually give you an epistemological lens of some

I DO ALL THIS FOR TRUTHS ABOUT THE WORLD.

of those metaphysical questions about the ultimate structure of reality.

S: Along the lines of more two-dimensional semantics and conceivable worlds, what kind of things are inconceivable, do you think? Or do you think with the PQTI method that we can deduct most things and know most things?

C: I think that most obvious things are very inconceivable. Consider things which are ruled out *a priori*. Can I conceive that two plus two is five? I don't think that I can conceive that two plus two is five. Can I conceive of a round square?

Well, I don't really think so. Roy Sorensen, a philosopher, thinks he can draw a round square. But you can only draw a round square from edge on. So it looks just like a line. That's probably cheating when it comes to conceiving of a round square. So the most obvious things which are inconceivable are things ruled out *a priori*.

Some of my colleagues think that zombies, physical duplicates of us without consciousness, are inconceivable, but I find them pretty well conceivable. They would say a physical duplicate of me that was not alive—that was functioning just like me, metabolizing and adapting, reproducing, but not alive—I can't really conceive of that. That would be a case where, when something like life is scrutable from all the underlying facts, it ought to be difficult beyond a certain point to conceive that all the underlying facts without the high level thing, like life. That would again be an example of something by my view that is ruled out *a priori*.

I think what is interesting is there are some other things that are not ruled out *a priori*, which are possible in principle but nonetheless are inconceivable. Probably for limited beings like us, there are such things. For example, what it's like to be a bat. If we don't have the bat's sonar system in our head, we can never form a really detailed conception of what it's like to be a bat. So that's inconceivable for us, but maybe it's not inconceivable in principle. Some being could conceive of it. Maybe a bat, or a souped-up bat, or a future version of humans where we have a bat sonar module plugged into us. The harder question is: "is there something which is possible but inconceivable in principle, some properties of the world that no being could possibly conceive of?" I'm enough of a rationalist

that I would like to think that's impossible, but I have to admit that I have no argument. I'd like to think that everything about the world is at least possibly intelligible to some being, but I can't say I've got any good argument for that. I think that's still an open question.

C: I've gradually gotten more and more interested in more areas of philosophy. I started out just interested in the mind-body problem. I got into philosophy because I was super interested in the problem of consciousness. I thought it was the hardest problem in the world, the most interesting thing to figure out. At the beginning, it wasn't philosophy in general but that problem in particular. But pretty quickly I figured out that, to get a grip on some of these metaphysical problems of consciousness, I've got to think about metaphysics. You start to get at metaphysics, reduction, grounding, supervenience, properties, whatever. Then, to get a grip on that, you have to start thinking about the philosophy of language—the language we use in thinking about the stuff, these Frege and Kripke points, and so on. So I started thinking about that. Then I started thinking about epistemology, and then you end up thinking about the philosophy of science and even connections to some issues in ethics, especially metaethics. I started thinking about philosophical reasoning in general. For me, the experience has been one of opening out and opening out into more areas, although an interest in consciousness has remained at the core of what drives me in the end. So, almost all of philosophy has become fascinating. I haven't written a paper in political philosophy yet or in aesthetics. Maybe one of these days. We'll see.

Any idea I wrote about when I was younger that I disagree with now? That's interesting . . . Philosophy for me also has gotten more and more systematic. Everything connects to everything else. I started out thinking I was a rationalist or empiricist—some kind of broad rationalism, that the universe is fundamentally intelligible. That's part of what drives my work to get deep links between epistemology and metaphysics.

I think of myself as a philosophical optimist. These problems are ultimately solvable even though we might not have solved them yet.

I ought to have some idea I wrote about when I was younger that I disagree with now. There's a lot of specific things I would disagree with. There are few claims here and there that were just mistakes that I have corrected over the years. But I think in terms of broad, general views, it's not like I've done a U-turn. It's not like the late Wittgenstein, who totally rejected the early Wittgenstein. Maybe I still have time to become the late Chalmers who rejects and repudiates the early Chalmers. As I said, I'm getting interested in illusionist views, where consciousness is an illusion. Maybe there's time for me, in five years time . . . I did think about, just for fun, publishing a book called *The Inescapable Illusion of Consciousness*, repudiating everything I ever said about consciousness in the past, but I haven't quite come to the point yet where I can believe it. Maybe it'll happen.

C: It's hard to say. New fields of philosophy do emerge from time to time. What happens much more often is that a new subfield emerges and new topics emerge to think about. One thing that's gotten extremely big in recent years is the philosophy of technology. People are thinking about computers. For me, technology generally, and computers specifically, have led to a huge amount of philosophical enrichment. It's hard to think about the philosophy of mind these days without thinking to some extent about artificial minds and artificial intelligence. Likewise for metaphysics. Thinking about reality, thinking about metaphysics of the world, you also you want to think about artificial reality, virtual reality. People are now spending more and more time hanging out in virtual worlds. Virtual reality devices are just starting to go pretty wide. They are going to play a very major role in coming years. A lot of my work lately has been thinking about virtual reality and virtual worlds. More generally, thinking about technology poses any number of new philosophical questions: the ethics of technology, how we live with technology, the role of computers in our society, and how to handle that in a fair and just way.

I also think there has been a movement over the last ten years or so for philosophy to get more deeply connected to social issues, whether it's issues about race or gender and sexuality, issues about technology, issues about social epistemology, issues about the metaphysics of the social world. I have noticed a really big trend in that direction. Is that a wholly new area of philosophy? I'm not sure. But I think it's one of the areas that is the richest and most exciting right now, using our philosophical methods to think about the social world and the technological world.

S: How can philosophers successfully engage the public on more sophisticated topics in philosophy?

C: I think some philosophy is technical. There is no way I'm gonna be able to do two-dimensional semantics, as is, in a newspaper article. I could give some examples and give a very simplified version of it, but some part of the interest of some ideas is essentially technical. But that said, even where there are technical ideas, if they are important ideas, there ought to be a way of putting some of the central points and conveying some of the key ideas which is not technical. Over the years, I think in my work on consciousness, I've pursued it at both levels. Some of the time it's detailed. It involves supervenience; it involves two-dimensional semantics; it involves really finicky detail, but I think that's important. At the same time, I care a lot about communicating to a broader group, whether it's academics in other fields, such as scientists thinking about consciousness, or just intelligent people from any walk of life who are interested in the mind. Using more general language: here's the hard problem of consciousness compared to the easy problems; here are the kinds of ideas you might have available. You might need new fundamental properties like consciousness. Maybe they'll need to be everywhere, maybe not. These are the big broad issues which are driving the technical discussion too, except the technical discussion often takes place at a much finer level of detail.

Actually, I wrote an article fifteen years ago on *The Matrix*, on whether we could be living in *The Matrix* and what we can know. I tried to argue that even if we are in a matrix, the world around us is still real. That article was presented in a very simplified way. Maybe some people think, "Well, he's not being serious, he's slumming it by talking about *The Matrix*." But I think I was presenting an original article for a really important and serious philosophical view. I recently wrote a more

detailed piece, trying to fill out the details for this for a philosophy journal article. I called it "Structuralism as a Response to Skepticism." It doesn't hurt to add a few more details in it and a bit more academic rigor about it. But I don't want to say that makes it less serious. Even the version which is cast in terms of *The Matrix* can convey fifty percent of the philosophical content. It's just a matter of trying harder to be clear and not using jargon in talking to the public. It helps to give it a hook. Some kind of story or something of current interest helps get people engaged. But my experience is that people in the public are just really interested in philosophy. Now maybe it's the selection effect: people I meet are the ones who are interested in philosophy. But there's a hunger out there for philosophy, and anyone who's willing to talk to them in a serious way that is still clear and accessible . . . I think the public will be interested in that.

S: What is the most useful advice you would give to anyone in pursuit of a degree in philosophy?

C: I think you have to be really passionate about philosophy. It's not easy to get a job in philosophy, and inevitably a lot of people who start graduate degrees are going to not end up with permanent positions in philosophy. So I would say, at the very least, be passionate enough about the value of philosophy so that if you don't end up getting a permanent academic job in philosophy, you'll still be happy you've done the graduate work. Do it, by all means. If you're seeing this as a meal ticket, there's probably a bit of a problem.

For all the people who are passionate about philosophy and want to think about it, well then it's very worthwhile for them to go to a graduate school. If you want to think about all this full time, I'd say try to develop your skills. It's very important to develop skills, tools, and knowledge of literature, and all those professional things. But I also think it's important not to lose sight of the things that made you passionate about philosophy in the first place. If you've got a burning desire to pursue a certain idea, even though it's not the fashionable thing or if it involves going a certain direction, don't be afraid to follow your own original idea that made you passionate in the first place. I think we always need new ideas in philosophy. The field right now is ready for new ideas. I'd love to see smart people going into graduate school and developing all those tools and becoming professionally aware of the literature. Those things are important. But still using the skills they develop to

IT'S IMPORTANT NOT TO LOSE SIGHT OF THE THINGS THAT MADE YOU PASSIONATE . . . IN THE FIRST PLACE.

follow original ideas and new ideas and bold ideas, that's how philosophy gets transformed. Every now and then a Frege comes along or a Wittgenstein comes along and follows their own views in a new direction. I'd like to see some people going on to graduate school in philosophy doing that.

S: So last question: do you ever hitchhike anymore to have time to think?

C: I've not hitchhiked in some time, maybe once a few years ago when I ran out of gas. When I moved to the U.S. in the late eighties, hitchhiking was not such a big thing. People didn't think it was especially advisable. But it is hard finding time to think. As an academic, your time can easily be eaten up by the next thing you need to do, the class you need to teach, the committee you want to serve on, the articles you're about to review, endless emails you have to answer . . . So, it's not easy. Those things are all fine. But I think it is important to carve time to think and to work. Living in New York, which is where I am now, the city is great, but there are endless distractions. So one thing that's made a difference to me is having a place out in the country, outside of the city, where I go up to and try to use that mostly for thinking and writing and chilling to some extent. It's a place to get away from all that bustle of all the constant demands of day-to-day academic life and to withdraw and think about new ideas, and especially to write them down.

Actually, to be honest, the thinking is not the hard part for me. Thinking just happens during the day, in the shower, walking to work, whatever. The thinking is always going on. It's the writing that's really the bother. Finding time to not just think, but actually get things fully formed and written down, that's the hard part. That's the part where it's nice to have time to do it. We're just coming up on the end of the semester now. Once the semester ends and we get through the holidays, I'm looking forward to going up to that place up in Hudson Valley, and having time to think and write and to get stuff properly on paper.

STANCE SUPPORTERS

LIFETIME CONTRIBUTIONS

MAJOR DONOR:
$99,999-$50,000
Ball State University

SUSTAINERS CIRCLE:
$4,999-$1,000
George Barker, PhD
David W. Concepción, PhD
Steven Humphrey, PhD
University of Louisville Department of Philosophy

THOUGHT SMOKE CIRCLE:
$999 - $500
Juli Thorson, PhD
Mike & Jessica Reynolds

ORIGINALITY CIRCLE:
$499-$250
Isaac Brooks
Daniel Cole
Devon Chapman
Belkisa Hrustanovic
Cameron McNeely
Tim Pierz
Trevor Krogman
Kristen Ruhl

SIGNIFICANCE CIRCLE:
$249-$100
Chris Coy
James Lacey
Ashli Godfrey
Emily Hinman
Kelli Huth
Kevin Mager
Kalli McBride, JD
Harrison Null
Chin-Sook Pak, PhD
James Robinson
Eric Roesch
Josh Savage, JD
Gina Schouten, PhD
Marc Semanchik
Adam Vaughn
Ryan Zerfas

CLARITY CIRCLE:
$99-$50
Lorrie Caskey
Rachel Crawley
Lauren Fosnight
Tracy Graves
Debra Harvey
Jeff Neff
Elizabeth Palmer
Whittley Pike (née Lewis)
Jeanine Weekes Schroer, PhD
Robert Wilbur

I ♥ *STANCE*:
$49 OR LESS
Christine Baker
Jeremy Christman
Kayla Gurganus
Vivek Hadley
Eric Lawler
Waleed Ma'arouf
Dominic Martyne
Micah McCauley
Jack McKown
Zack Medford
Caleb Mosier
Kiley Neal
Cassandra Reed
Ben Rogers
B. Eliza Sandlin
Richard Storey
Rosamae Swoape
Sarah Vitale, PhD
Kayla "Wynne" Williams
Daniel Wills
Esther Wolfe

STANCE