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Each year the Society awards the title 'Best Paper' to one participant. This year's best paper is *Falsity in Physicalism*, by Chelsea Ruxer of the University of Evansville.

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**Anna King:**

**"They Will Do What Is Best, and Will Not Violate, but Preserve, the Natural Relation of the Sexes:" Problems with Secured Boundaries for Women in Book V of *Republic***

In recent decades with the rise of the feminist movement within academia, critics have fixed their eyes on Plato's treatment of women. Book V, in which Plato directs conversation towards the role of women and family within the kallipolis (or 'best city'), has been perused with the proverbial fine-toothed comb by feminist scholars in attempts to determine "whether feminism can legitimately claim Plato as part of its heritage" (Forde 1997, 657). That Plato put forth a notion to dissolve the family unit as well as eradicate any distinctions that limit women from serving in the same professions as men has been interpreted as both radical and misogynistic.

Julia Annas is one of many feminists who refuse to agree that *Republic* is the precursor to modern radical feminist concepts-- such as the dispelling of the nuclear family so as to free women from the restraints of domesticity. "Plato's grounds for the proposal are so different from the modern ones that he is in no sense a forerunner to them," Annas claims (1976, 307). Modern sentiments of female equality and equal opportunity do not find a foothold within *Republic*. Plato's proposal is not meant to be interpreted as altruistic or ahead of its time. Instead, the proposal is a deceptive portraiture of communal interests disguised as female liberation.

Like Annas, Susan Moller Okin believes that Plato was not interested in fairness or equality when he wrote *Republic*. Okin writes "neither equality nor liberty nor justice in the sense of fairness were values for Plato" (1977, 346). However, Okin believes Plato's claim was "one of the very few instances in the history of thought when the biological implications of femaleness have been clearly separated from all convention," and commends Plato's "bold suggestions" and "radical proposal[s]" (1977, 358, 368). One cannot doubt that Plato's utmost concern was securing happiness for the greatest number of individuals in his ideal city. "Can there be any greater evil than discord and distraction and plurality where unity ought to reign? or any greater good than the bond of unity?" Socrates queries (Plato 2004, 462b). Yet, though it is generally conceded by feminist critics that Plato was interested in unity, they disagree whether Plato's Book V provides women with the opportunity to rise beyond their second-class status as wives and mothers.

As I have begun to outline, stark contrasts exist within feminist criticisms of *Republic*, and I believe a percentage of these debates have ensued because some have attempted the difficult task of demarcating clearly what Plato thought about women's rights. Whether

discussing a classic work like *Republic* or a contemporary children's novel, we fall short of our responsibilities as feminist critics if we spin in circles, attempting only to distinguish authorial intention. Whether Plato the individual truly believed in a patriarchal utopia or modern notions of gender equality is nearly impossible to determine. As Plato himself notes:

In the written word there is necessarily much that is playful, and . . . no written discourse, whether in meter or in prose, deserves to be treated very seriously (and this applies also to the recitations of the rhapsodes, delivered to sway people's minds, without opportunity for questioning and teaching). (Plato 1994, 277e)

However, determining Plato's beliefs is not the concern of my paper. We should redirect our attention instead to the text, foregoing the tedious job of picking through snippets that deceptively appear to bring us to the ultimate truth regarding Plato's personal views on women and family. Instead of attempting to distinguish what Plato believed about women, we will study the consequences of what would follow if we examine his philosophies strictly by textual analysis. Instead of studying the State in attempts to decide what Plato thought, we should use *Republic* to determine what actions we as feminists must take now to secure an emancipated tomorrow. I argue that within *Republic*, while many of Plato's ideals might suggest a completely liberated State, his theories still continue to limit and reduce women, and by examining the consequences of creating an ideal city utilizing Plato's ideology of women in *Republic*, we may gain a clearer understanding of how we as feminists do (and do not) wish to direct our own futures.

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Book V opens with Socrates preparing to describe four malformations of the soul. As he is about to begin, Adeimantus interrupts on behalf of the group and beseeches Socrates to "tell us something about the family life of your citizens" (Plato 2004, 449d). Socrates had mentioned women and children as governed by "the general principle that friends have all things in common" in Book IV, and his comment so intrigued the company that Socrates is pressed to explain himself (423e). Socrates recalls his previous illustration of the watchdog. "Are not dogs divided into he's and she's, or do they both share equally in hunting and in keeping watch and in the other duties of dogs?" he asks (451d). Socrates elaborates by pointing out both male and female beasts share in the same responsibilities, the only difference between the two being that "males are stronger and the females weaker" (451e). Concomitant to the suggestion that women are to share equally in traditionally male responsibilities, Socrates notes that women "must have the same nurture and education" (451e). When the company protests that women, because they possess different natures, cannot equally share "in the actions of men" (452e-453a), Socrates responds with the observation that "women bearing and men begetting children . . . does not amount to a proof that a woman differs from a man in the sort of education she should receive" (454d-e). Socrates then proceeds to explain that women could also serve as guardians for the State, and that monogamy, matrimony, and the family unit should be abolished in the interests of selective breeding "the best of either sex . . . united with the best" (459d). Socrates concludes his discussion by summarizing:

You agree then, I said, that men and women are to have a common way of life such as we have described--a common education, common children; and they are

to watch over the citizens in common whether abiding in the city or going out to war; they are to keep watch together, and to hunt together like dogs, and always and in all things, as far as they are able, women are to share with the men? And in doing so, they will do what is best, and will not violate, but preserve, the natural relation of the sexes? (466c-d)

Adeimantus assents, and the discussion veers towards matters of war, slavery, philosopher kings, and the Forms, or immaterial realities after which particular, tangible entities are somehow modeled, and to which these latter realities owe their existence.

Thus far, *Republic* has largely focused upon men: the pursuits of men, virtue and vice displayed by men, and justice as it pertains to men. Wendy Brown notes that within the text, “[Plato] does not reject or cast aside the traditional masculine virtues of the Greeks—temperance, courage, wisdom, and justice” (1988, 598). Justice, if historically considered as masculine conceit,<sup>1</sup> is appropriately the focus of *Republic*. As is fitting by the standards of the ancient Greeks, the dialogue about justice takes place between men. The book itself was written by a man. No feminine voices are present to speak on behalf of the women whose fates are being decided by the musings of these patriarchs. The absence of any female character allows the men to move in circles, debating and arguing in the stead of the women about whom they speak. Annas comments, “Nothing at all is said about whether...[women] will lead more satisfactory lives as Guardians than as house-bound drudges” (1976, 311).<sup>2</sup> Without the benefit of objections from women, the men bicker a little, nod in agreement, and proceed unaware of how practical the new roles for women in the ideal city truly are. Annas further comments on the omission by observing that “There is nothing in *Republic* V that one could apply to the question of women's rights; the matter is simply not raised” (1976, 313). Without women present to voice dissent, the men are unable to consider whether the lifestyle they are proposing is acceptable, either morally or sensibly, for the women who must conform to it.

Conversely, neither are women present to affirm the positive qualities of their new responsibilities. The possibility exists that women could have agreed with Plato and perhaps outlined reasons why his thoughts on women in the State were promising. Socrates and the others continue delineating sexual, marital, and childbirth practices without the input of those most affected—women. Socrates, who ironically claims to have learned much from *female* philosophers,<sup>3</sup> is still guilty of creating a reality that has not been thoroughly discussed with women.

As Socrates and his cohorts do not listen to the opinions of those directly affected by their new policies, they are blissfully uninformed and thus unequipped to know whether the new roles of women will unify the State. No doubt Plato would have dismissed such

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<sup>1</sup> In Greek, “justice” is a feminized abstract concept. Wendy Brown has written an excellent article, “‘Supposing Truth Were a Woman...’ Plato’s Subversion of Masculine Discourse,” about using a feminine term to define a masculine conceit.

<sup>2</sup> Similarly in *Symposium*, love is discussed without the presence of women. However, Socrates does explain that he owes his understanding of love to the priestess Diotima.

<sup>3</sup> He claims in *Symposium* that Diotima, a priestess, taught him about love. Aspasia and Perictione are others who are said to have contributed to Socrates' education.

concerns-- his cause was to make inhabitants of the State unified, not happy. Socrates replies to Adeimantus, "our aim in founding the State was not the disproportionate happiness of any one class, but the greatest happiness of the whole" (Plato 2004, 419a). Inculcating the population with the idea that unity of interests is to be valued above all would not have been such a difficult task-- little doubt can exist that these dogmas could have been successfully implemented. Yet, for whom will the ideal city be perfect if founded upon mantras of blind obedience and blissful ignorance?

Notice that these first real conversations on women arise because the interlocutors are curious about the abolishment of domesticity. Already, a clear association is created between women and the home, an association that has grown almost inseparable from women throughout time. Though we might wish to dismiss this as historical reality, we should consider what implications follow when attempting to construct arguments around such pre-existing ideologies. "War and politics were regarded . . . as the exclusive business of men," explains Catherine McKeen (2006, 527).<sup>4</sup> Women therefore, are left the industry of the home; and Plato draws on this state of affairs throughout Book V when delineating his "community of women and children" (Plato 2004, 449d). Socrates says, "Well, and may we not say that our guardians are the best of our citizens...And will not their wives be the best women...Can there be anything better for the interests of the State than that the men and women of a state should be as good as possible?" (456d-e). Clearly, gymnastics, music, and education are all used as grooming techniques to equip some women to serve as eugenic partners, not to become actualized citizens.

Socrates urges the rest of the population to practice this eugenic partnership when he says, "You, who are their legislator, having selected the men, will now select the women and give them to them" (458c). Here, just as women have functioned as commodities to be exchanged,<sup>5</sup> we learn that these "liberated" women (and men) have been deceived about the nature of their participation in "certain festivals... [that] bring together the brides and bridegrooms" (459d). During these sexual festivals, Socrates schemes to "invent some ingenious kind of lots" rigged to allow alpha males and females to copulate (459d-460a). Women are thus being manipulated into arrangements that necessitate reproduction with partners deemed most suitable by those believed to know how best to direct a woman's future. The concept is not such a far cry from arranged marriages. According to Annas, the problem lies in the disparity between Plato's motives and those of contemporary feminists. "Plato wants to abolish [the nuclear family] in the interests of an authoritarian state," writes Annas; "Modern radical feminists want to abolish it in the interests of greater self-realization on the part of individuals" (1976, 319). As women are ushered away from familial obligations --a move that some critics argue could bring a woman's self-actualization into fruition-- we should note that attempts to prod women into enhancement are not an extension of respect. "Plato is not interested in the rights of women, nor in freeing women (or men) from the bonds of the family. What he is passionately interested in is the prospect of a unified and stable state," explains Annas (1976, 320).

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<sup>4</sup> During the Golden Age of Athens, many citizens held particular contempt for Pericles because he often sought and used the advice of his mistress, Aspasia, during governmental affairs.

<sup>5</sup> Luce Irigaray's "Women on the Market" is a great example of women functioning as commodity.

Socrates claims that unity requires each "to [mind] one's own business" (Coby 2003, 37). Absurdity is readily apparent in strictly using sex to determine occupation. If we use anatomy when determining specialization, then the "*polis* will require women to specialize in childbirth and pregnancy," writes Catherine McKeen, "and will require men to specialize in begetting children. A *polis* that required men and women to specialize in this way would not be capable of supplying basic needs and could not survive" (2006, 533-34). Plato is not suggesting that childbirth or child making are suitable professions, he is merely noting that using sexual roles is insufficient method to limit potential.<sup>6</sup> Instead of mistakenly relying on sex or gender to determine which profession an individual must assume, we should consider individual talents and dispositions. The fallacy in using biological differences as a method of sorting professions is illustrated in the example of the hairy and bald cobblers (Plato 2004, 454c). Further, as McKeen puts forth, "full-time private household management is not an occupation in which one can specialize in the *kallipolis*. Pregnancy and childbirth, by their very natures, are not technical specialties" (2006, 540). Compartmentalizing all women into domesticated status is a disservice not only to the woman but also to the community she might enrich. Yet, we should also consider the drawback of Plato's plan to catalog citizens based solely upon professions.

At first glance, classifying citizens to do jobs for which they are naturally suited appears the perfect solution for allocating identity-- utilizing an individual's natural talents, passions, and abilities to foster justice and order. Sex is separated from this argument; instead, professions are determined by what comes most easily to the individual. Yet numerous complications arise. "Justice is a hierarchy, an arrangement of discrete and unequal components into a functional unit," states Patrick Coby (2003, 41). The power structure of the city, though regulated by those Plato deems best suited to each task, is really just a step below a well-oiled feudal system. "When justice is a matter of the performance of one's specific task, justice pays nobody in the city," argues Robert Heinaman (2004, 388). Citizens are indoctrinated to understand that performing individual tasks will benefit the city, which in turn will benefit the good of the individual. However, it is not specified *who* exactly is prescribing these roles and duties given to the members of the population and why profession becomes the strictest means of identity.

"Occupation defines people, it individuates, it confers identity," argues Patrick Coby, "It also causes dependence" (2003, 40). Within the *kallipolis* and within our own era, occupation and gender are of similar architecture: both bestow identity, both are constructed from an outside authority, and both differentiate based on inherited traits that have little or nothing to do with the decisions of the individual. Plato, who is motioning to dismiss all arguments that would not allow women to serve in the same functions as men, is placing women (and men) back into prescribed roles. Only this time "nature," not the social structure of patriarchal Athens, is given credit for assigning the differences.

In attempting to abolish differences created by gender, Plato still creates blatant distinctions. If men will succeed in all feminine endeavors and women could possibly succeed in some masculine pursuits, why bother abolishing separate spheres at all if

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<sup>6</sup> Plato argues that such a lifestyle would produce corruption through indolence in Book IV.

women are better suited to raise children and manage households than men will ever be? Socrates remarks, "Need I waste time in speaking of the art of weaving, and the management of pancakes and preserves, in which womankind does really appear to be great, and in which for her to be beaten by a man is of all things most absurd?" (Plato 2004, 455c). Here, a condescending attitude is clear. Though Plato allows women to move beyond the domestic sphere, he places little importance on the affairs of women and home as a whole.

With such a negative disposition towards his contemporary females before women have even attempted to become philosopher queens, Plato might squelch the ambitions of the very women he is attempting to liberate. These few charismatic and intelligent individuals suited for ruling who do exist are clearly meant to serve the needs of the people and decline their own pursuits for the sake of the community, much the same as women who have been prodded and stunted into the limited role of wife and mother simply for the good of her family. The state then is functioning much like one huge family in which participants all mimic the functions of an uncomplaining housewife sacrificing for those she loves as she neglects other pursuits. Wendy Brown expounds by comparing Socrates to a nurturing feminine figure. She notes, "[Socrates] recasts the political entity, Athens, as a familial body to which he feels obligation, indeed a profound familial obligation" (1988, 610). Like the loving Socrates who cares for Athens, the philosopher queen (or king) at the helm of the ideal city is not much different from a mother.

The notion of a philosopher queen existing at all raises further speculations. To what extent will a woman truly have the opportunity to rule the kallipolis if its founders clearly agree that "all the pursuits of men are the pursuits of women, but in all of them a woman is inferior to men"? (Plato 2004, 455d-e). "It is essential that natural capacities for military services and rulership in women be identified and nurtured, for eugenic reasons," argues McKeen, who thinks that such allowances are made only in efforts to breed selectively within the population (2006, 544). The likelihood that woman will rule at all is slim, simply by margin of percentages. If philosophers are the best the city has to offer, and if women are always inferior to men in every endeavor, then "the Guardian female or the philosopher queen would be a rare bird indeed" (McKeen 2006, 536).

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Alleviating the burden of the nuclear family, erasing differences between the sexes, and allowing women to assume positions of power implies that a problem resides within the make-up of Athens-- Plato is aware that society is functioning as less than ideal. If satire reveals absurdities, then utopia reveals social failings. Yet utopias exist free of the minor problems that plague us in reality, and it is only when we put these societies into effect that we see the imperfections within the design. With innumerable complications from many confounding variables, it is nearly impossible to foresee all potential problems. Plato himself dooms the city to failure in Book VII, though he attributes the decline to errors in breeding. Centuries after the publication of *Republic*, we feminists are still raising concerns about the structure of Plato's kallipolis-- Socrates ends the discussion uncertain whether his proposals will be the most effective answer to founding the ideal city:

Is it possible for anything to be accomplished in deed as it is in word...Or is it inevitable that what is done falls short of what is said in attaining truth, even though this is not generally thought to be the case?...Then you must not insist upon my proving that the actual state will in every respect coincide with the ideal. (Plato 2004, 472d-473a)

With so much room for error, to construct the ideal from flawed realities, even by admission of its founder seems a self-defeating task. Inevitably, problems will arise that continue to echo the vices of the present as we have witnessed within *Republic*. The absence of women to voice concerns about Plato's ideal city is reason enough to doubt its ideal character. The problematic assigning of professions is another arena in which Plato should have reconsidered identity. The unlikelihood that a woman will ever truly ascend to the throne to rule as a philosopher queen is another pressing veracity stemming from the dialogue. With all of the troubles arising from the construction an ideal city, why bother to constructing an ideal city at all?

Essentially, utopianism can supply imagination for those who do not have any capacity to visualize a different world. Constructing a world by which we openly recognize the ills of society can move us towards the heart of theorizing-- speculating about what could follow. By removing the manacles of gender, perhaps we could open a new world in which women might dare to consider an existence beyond the limitations of time-worn domesticity. If we depart from defining a person by what she can do, biologically or by talent, then perhaps we could better know ourselves and, in turn, better know our world.

© *Proceedings of the Southeast Philosophy Congress, Volume 1, 2008 George Charles Allen, In defense of the circular and contradictory nature of Descartes' Meditations and an exegesis of the mind-problem, pp. 8-15.*

**George Charles Allen:**

**In Defense of the Circular and Contradictory Nature of Descartes' Meditations and an Exegesis of the Mind-Body Problem**

*What does your soul have? Recall, recollect yourself interiorly.  
I do not ask that one puts faith in what I am going to say:  
do not accept anything, if you have not found it in yourself.*  
- St Augustine

FATHER OF MODERN philosophy, René Descartes (1596–1650), philosopher, mathematician and man of letters, was born in the town of La Haye—later renamed Descartes in his honor—and published his most well-known work in 1641, the *Meditationes De Prima Philosophia: In qua Dei existentia, & animæ humanæ à corpore distinctio, demonstratur*, which was preceded by his *Discours de la Méthode*, published in 1637, serving in part as a sketch of his philosophical ideas and the foundation of his so-called methodological skepticism. Descartes attended the college of La Flèche where he received a thorough scholastic education, the rigid method of learning and philosophizing—and, some would say, of logic chopping—which was widely employed during the Middle Ages. Unsatisfied with this education, first-class though it may have been, there came a point in Descartes' life when he decided to start *de novo* by stripping away all previous knowledge and opinions he held; and strictly by his own reasoning would embark upon a quest for certainty. As he relates at the beginning of the first meditation,

...I realized how numerous were the false opinions that in my youth I had taken to be true, and thus how doubtful were all those that I had subsequently built upon them. And thus I realized that once in my life I had to raze everything to the ground and begin again from the original foundations, if I wanted to establish anything firm and lasting in the sciences.<sup>1</sup>

Descartes is repudiated, more often than not, for his style which is generally claimed to be contradictory, *circulus in probando* and verbose; and also for setting a seemingly impossible goal for himself—i.e., to rid himself of all previously held knowledge and opinions—which is an admirable attempt, a grandiose idea, and perhaps only a trifle likely. Many comparisons have been made between St Augustine (AD 354–430)—the “founder” of medieval philosophy—and Descartes regarding the method they introduced

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<sup>1</sup> Ariew, Roger and Eric Watkins, *Modern Philosophy: An Anthology of Primary Sources* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1998), 27. Hereafter noted as MP.

of turning within one's self in order to find Truth (and presumably God).<sup>2</sup> I mention St Augustine, for there is another striking similarity to point out—that is, their *restless quest* for Certainty and Truth. When reading the *Confessions* of Augustine, one is awed by his zeal for inquiry; but with Augustine, one is often dismayed to find, after a lengthy discourse, no 'system' of philosophy and, oft times, that no satisfactory conclusion is reached.<sup>3</sup> Rather, one is left in suspense while the wanderlust of Augustine's Mind continues. It is this wanderlust of the Mind which is most intriguing, and I daresay the essence behind the *Meditations* and which may, perhaps, account for the seeming verbosity of his style which is so often carped about. As Bertrand Russell once wrote, and of which I am inclined to agree,

Descartes writes, not as a teacher, but as a discoverer and explorer, anxious to communicate what he has found. *His style is easy and unpedantic, addressed to intelligent men of the world rather than to pupils...* There is in Descartes an unresolved dualism between what he learnt from contemporary science and the scholasticism that he had been taught at La Flèche. *This led him into inconsistencies, but it also made him more rich in fruitful ideas than any completely logical philosopher could have been. Consistency might have made him merely the founder of a new scholasticism, whereas inconsistency made him the source of two important but divergent schools of philosophy.* [And] the most fruitful philosophies have contained glaring inconsistencies, but for that very reason have been partially true.<sup>4</sup> (my emphasis)

Or as Emerson keenly observed, "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesman and philosophers and divines. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do." In any case I make this point because I am convinced it is not a widely recognized *quality* by those who first approach the *Meditations*—and I think an

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<sup>2</sup> Descartes' *Meditations* is an attempt to lead us "to the knowledge of our mind and of God," which is strikingly similar to Augustine's prayer in the *Confessions* "O God, let me know myself; let me know You." For an excellent and illuminating systematic study of Descartes' relationship to St Augustine and the Augustinian tradition, I recommend a book by Stephen Menn, *Descartes and Augustine* (Cambridge University Press, 2002). Another book to read is Ludger Hölscher's *The Reality of the Mind*, (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), a careful systematic and comparative exegesis of Augustine's doctrines (or passages) regarding the mind-body problem.

<sup>3</sup> For instance, in Book XI of the *Confessions*, Augustine discoursing upon Time asks, "What *is* this time? If no one asks me, I know; if I want to explain it to a questioner, I do not know" and thus we are left wondering. Furthermore, it is not unlike the Platonic tradition wherein one often finds the *Dialogues* to end in utter inconclusiveness. They are, indeed, *aporematic* in nature—that is, they do not end with a satisfactory conclusion and the characters often give the appearance of being puzzled and confused, moreso than when they began.

<sup>4</sup> Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1945), 558.

approach such as this would inspire a less hostile reaction on the part of many students when they first read the treatise. Students, upon their first encounter, I have found, simply reject Descartes as a circumlocutory wind-bag. I argue, however, that some principle of charity and an open mind is necessary.

The long-view of the *Meditations* is that of a man taking everything he knows and submitting it to the severest doubt possible—methodological skepticism. M I – VI, then, is his way of taking these previous assumptions, doubting their verity by picking them apart as one would take apart a watch, for instance, carefully marking where each of the pieces belong in their proper order and discovering the contents one by one. By the time we arrive at M VI, the watch is carefully put back together once again, only this time with a deeper understanding of how it all fits together and operates. Thus, in M II, the mind is separated from the body, only to be rejoined once again in M VI.

In the course of the *Meditations* the question arises of the relationship between the mind and body, discussed primarily in both the second and sixth meditations of the treatise. In the second, Descartes articulates a position which seems to establish a radical mind-body dualism—later called Cartesian Dualism—which states,

I am not that concatenation of members we call the human body. Neither am I some subtle air infused into these members, nor a wind, nor a fire, nor a vapor, nor a breath, nor anything I devise myself. For I have supposed these things to be nothing.<sup>5</sup>

A problem occurs, however, in the sixth meditation when he seems to flatly contradict this statement by way of the following passage:

By means of these sensations of pain, hunger, thirst and so on, nature also teaches me that I am present in my body not merely in the way a sailor is present in a ship, but that I am most tightly joined and, so to speak commingled with it, so much so that I and the body constitute one single thing.<sup>6</sup>

The following is an elucidation of Descartes' development of the mind-body relationship, with an attempt at explaining the differences between M II and VI, while seeking to understand the seeming contradiction, the "glaring inconsistencies," of these two passages and how they may in fact be interpreted and reconciled.

Aforementioned, Descartes' philosophy took a subjective turn wherein he distrusted everything he learned via formal education. The beginning of Descartes' *Meditations* is where he comes to terms with his doubtful knowledge and proposes to find some way to clear his mind of all falsity and build his new knowledge (Truth), derived from methodological skepticism, upon a solid foundation. By the conclusion of the first, and beginning of the second, meditation, Descartes is so fraught with doubt that he describes

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<sup>5</sup> MP, 31.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 51.

himself feeling as though he were caught in a great whirlpool being knocked about and unable to find a firm footing in any certainty. But try he must. By the end of the first paragraph of the second meditation, Descartes resolves to himself:

Archimedes sought but one firm and immovable point in order to move the entire earth from one place to another. Just so, great things are also to be hoped for if I succeed in finding *just one thing, however slight, that is certain and unshaken.*<sup>7</sup>

*Cogito, ergo sum*—I think, therefore I am. This is the Archimedean point from which Descartes rebuilds his knowledge of the world. The title of meditation two, *De natura mentis humanae: quod ipsa sit notior quam corpus*, tells us that the mind can be better known than the body. Why is this? Descartes asserts that “everything I see is false.” The objects of sense perception, the body, sky, earth, and so forth do not necessarily exist. But he must exist in order to doubt his own existence, and even if there were “some deceiver who is supremely powerful and supremely sly and who is always deliberately deceiving...” he must, indeed, exist—this he cannot doubt, and even when he is doubting it, he must exist to doubt his existence. The next step, then, if it is determined he exists regardless of all other doubt, is to ask then what, exactly, is he?

Descartes contemplates what his body is. He defines the body in meditation two as,

all that is capable of being bounded by some shape, of being enclosed in a place, and filling up a space in such a way as to exclude any other body from it; of being perceived by touch, sight, hearing, taste, or smell.<sup>8</sup>

Many of these things, Descartes claims—i.e., touching, tasting, smelling—cannot take place without a body; so he then asks, what about thinking? For how long can one think, and by thinking alone actually exist?—until one ceases to think. But what if his ‘body’ ceases to exist before this? Can thinking take place with the absence of a body? This we cannot know for certain. It is here, however, that Descartes makes a sharp dichotomy regarding the soul—understood as being mind—and the body. The body is an extended entity that takes up space and is rather mechanistic in nature, whereas the mind is non-extended substance that takes up no space whatever. Descartes is, then, a *res cogitans*, that is a *thinking thing*. According to Descartes, we can know the mind with certainty, but the body’s existence can be doubted; and the two, apparently, are not subtly infused together. In his *Discourse* he states:

I thence concluded that I was a substance whose whole essence or nature consists only in thinking, and which, that it may exist, has need of no place, nor is dependent on any material thing; so that “I,” that is to say, the mind by which I am what I am, is wholly distinct from the body, and is

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 31.

even more easily known than the latter, and is such, although the latter were not, it would still continue to be all that it is.<sup>9</sup>

At this point in the meditations, the mind must be able to indubitably exist without the body. There exists a physical, mechanistic entity which extends in space and exists in time, is divisible, is not conscious and of which various laws are discernible—i.e., the body. The second substance, then, is the spiritual or mental, of which is not extended in space and which is not divisible, and is conscious and capable of performing conscious acts, viz. thinking, doubting, willing and so forth.

Before we leave the second meditation, there is one more observation worth mentioning, which concerns Descartes' observance of a piece of wax fresh from the hive. He makes an initial observation of it using his senses and describes the wax and its physical state to the reader. As he moves the wax closer to the fire, its physical properties begin to change, but Descartes states it is indeed still the same piece of wax as before. He then proposes that the wax itself cannot be the same as its sensible properties, since these sensible properties can change while the wax stays the same. He proposes to remove from the formal definition of wax all physical properties by which it is known, and states that what remains is "extended, flexible and mutable." He claims that by images and senses alone he cannot ascertain what this physical object is, but instead it is determined by the mind through reason. The point being that judgment and reason are needed, for the senses are apt to deceive and be unreliable and only "bodies can be cognized by understanding alone... [and that] though there may be error in my judgment, I could not thus be apprehending it without a mind that is human." Thus it is better to know through the mind than through the senses.

This dualism is a necessary step in the re-evaluation—the dissembling of the watch—of previous assumptions, and in trying to discern that one, indubitable truth which cannot be refuted. In this distinction of mind-body, Descartes also claims "the mind easily distinguishes what belongs to it, that is, to an intellectual nature, from what things belong to the body."

In the sixth meditation, we are told "the mind is proved to be really distinct from the body, even though the mind is shown to be so closely joined to that body that it forms a single unit with it." Descartes begins by exploring "the difference between imagination and pure intellection." This distinction is the key to understanding meditation six. He claims that if he wished, he could imagine, clearly and distinctly, a figure with three sides—i.e., a triangle— but if he wished to do the same with a chiliagon—a thousand-sided figure—he could not, in fact, distinctly perceive with his imagination all the sides of the figure. The intellect, however, is capable of performing this task and concludes that the intellect and imagination must be different from one another; the intellect, of course, being the stronger and more accurate.

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<sup>9</sup> René Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, (La Salle: Open Court Publishing, 1952), pp. 35-36.

In the following passages, Descartes begins to explore what he is able to perceive using the senses of his body. He observes the various limbs and appendages of the body, how his body can be positively or adversely affected by other outside bodies, and experiences the various appetites such as hunger, thirst, and a variety of emotion. He asks how he is able to feel all these aspects of the body as they seemed to belong to him and he “could never be separated from it in the same way I could be from other bodies.” He concludes, “I had been taught this way by nature.” The larger problem, however, in meditation six seems to be the reconciliation of the body-mind relationship. We understand how thoughts lead to other thoughts and all influence one another; and we understand how bodies may act upon other bodies, and so forth. However, what we do not know is how the Mind acts upon the body.

The fundamental difference being that Descartes the first time believed there to be two distinct elements, body and mind, and that the mind could exist, so long as it was thinking, without the body. He moves from a stance, seemingly, of radical dualism to a type of interactionism—i.e., essentially the mind and body, though being of a different substance all together, work in tight concordance with one another. Descartes knew of a gland called the *pineal* which was located in the brain and to which he ascribed as being the place where the soul resided in the body; and thus from or through this point influenced the rest of the body through a certain type of energy or “vital spirits,” and it is through this idea, and that of interactionism, that he attempted to explain away this metaphysical problem.

There is an interesting passage where Descartes advocates for the primacy of the intellect over that of the senses, despite this tight interconnectedness or ‘commingling’ of the body and mind. It reads as follows:

Accordingly, it is this nature that teaches me to avoid things that produce a sensation of pain and to pursue things that produce a sensation of pleasure, and the like. But it does not appear that nature teaches us to conclude anything, besides these things, from these sense perceptions unless the intellect has first conducted its own inquiry regarding things external to us. For it seems to belong exclusively to the mind, and not to the composite of mind and body, to know the truth in these matters.<sup>10</sup>

Another observation Descartes makes is that, although the entire mind is united to the entire body, if a limb should be amputated, nothing is taken away from the mind nor is the mind affected in any noticeable way, as it still retains its essential characteristics. The arguments here become slightly harder to relate, and it seems that Descartes even begins to lose his footing, so to speak, and his solutions are not very convincing. Essentially, Descartes can use science and his mechanistic view of the physical world in order to explain the workings of the body; however, he must refer the spiritual matters to God, for science is incapable—then as now—of determining where and how this interaction occurs and the limits thereof. He concludes, in his sixth meditation, that God is not a deceiver, that many of his

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<sup>10</sup> MP, 52.

“hyperbolic doubts of the last few days ought to be rejected as ludicrous,” and that

we must confess that the life of man is apt to commit errors regarding particular things, and we must acknowledge the infirmity of our nature.<sup>11</sup>

It is difficult to say how body and mind might coexist. Many Cartesians handled the problem simply by denying it; others, such as Arnold Geulincx (1624-1669) attempted to explain it. Geulincx proposed a theory of two clocks, in which one represented physical reality, and the other mental reality. These two clocks were set simultaneously (by God), so that when one gonged on the hour, the other would seem to have influenced it—an odd theory, indeed. So it would seem that the will was set in sync by God with our physical bodies, so that when I willed to jump off the bridge, my body would simultaneously match my will mechanistically.

Half a millennium later, with the rapid advance of modern science, we are still at a loss when it comes to a solution of the mind-body problem. The only solution I can give regarding the reconciliation of this problem as it stands in Descartes’ writings is to repeat what I said above. Descartes was an intellectual explorer who wrote of his sundry adventures and wished to prove the existence of God and immortality of the soul. In this exploration, however, he was forced to face his own infirmity upon a point which neither he, nor anyone else, could prove. I do not think there is so much an apparent contradiction between the second and sixth meditations. In the second, he had no choice based on the design of his work, to throw the complete existence of the body into doubt, and to trust only in the existence of the intellect. As Descartes clearly said in the *Synopsis*,

The first and principle pre-requisite for knowing that the soul is immortal is that we form a concept of the soul that is as lucid as possible and *utterly distinct* from every concept of a body.<sup>12</sup>

I find it fitting to close here with a quote where Descartes describes the *ultimate goal* of his meditations, which was proven in the sixth. He claims he *never seriously doubted* the existence of material things—and apparently no living being would on practical grounds—and that he did *not* set forth his arguments in the last as being very useful except that,

through a consideration of these arguments, one realizes that they [corporeal objects] are neither so firm nor so evident as the arguments leading us to the knowledge of our mind and of God, so that, of all the things that can be known by the human mind, these latter are the most

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 55

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 26.

certain and the most evident. *Proving this one thing was for me the goal of these Meditations.*<sup>13</sup>

This seems, to my limited and infirm mind, the only reconciliation based upon current reading. Perhaps, on further meditation, a more clear and distinct idea will present itself to me.

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

**Charles Bauch:**

## **Virtue Ethics and Capitalist Power**

### **I: Introduction**

The original and most fundamental account of capitalism exists in Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, wherein he describes a society of self-interested individuals free to accrue capital and engage in economic exchanges so long as certain fundamental rules set out by the government are not breached. This system is called free market theory and it relies essentially upon individual freedom, competition, and ingenuity. Free market theory has often found justification and support by appealing to an acts-centered ethic. The two main approaches are Deontology, which focuses on maxims to judge particular actions, and Utilitarianism, which judges according to the consequences of particular actions. These theories (and the sub-divisions thereof) have both found resonance in the moral grounding of free market capitalism. Utilitarianism sets happiness, well-being, or preference satisfaction as intrinsic goods of human action and posits free market theory as the best means to the procurement of these intrinsic goods. In Deontology, freedom and personal rights are celebrated and the laws which accord with these principles are found most in free societies with many rights for their individuals (i.e., free market societies).

However, some have argued that a simple set of rules or obligations circumscribing the goodness and badness of an action yields an inadequate, unfeasible, inaccurate account of contemporary morality. For example, philosophers like G.E.M. Anscombe have argued that the verbiage of moral obligations used in many acts-centered moral theories does not make sense in the absence of any significant moral law-giver. It is good to note how our methods and ways of doing and talking about philosophy change, often in response to larger social and/or cultural changes. Indeed, the pure freedom of the market which Smith espoused has long since been imposed upon by governmental responses to social demands for business regulation. No longer do the government and its laws facilitate a bare minimum environment for the unrestrained pursuit of individual wealth. Many new factors, like labor and environmental regulations, technological changes and global economies, play a significant part in the decision-making process of the 21<sup>st</sup> century capitalist businessman. Given the relative complexities of modern capitalism and the problems faced by the business leaders of that system, my present inquiry aims at illustrating the advantages of an agent-centered ethic as opposed to an acts-centered ethic in describing the ethics of business and business participants. In addition to the advantages of an agent-centered ethical approach, I wish to outline what such an approach would look like within business ethics and how it could operate.

## II: Acts-Centered vs. Agent-Centered: Two Ways of Viewing Business Ethics

An agent-centered ethic means that ethical considerations or questions are not reached by appealing to a set of rules or actions but rather by an established understanding of how one should be or how one should live, either generally *qua* good human or specifically *qua* good x (where x is some practitioner of a craft or practice) or, ideally, both when the two are compatible. So when a person confronts an ethically difficult situation, the agent-centered approach to ethics seeks not to ask and then deliberate upon what he is obliged to do by referencing some intrinsic or universalizable good(s). Nor does such an approach judge actions as fitting under or upholding this good(s). Instead, the person must consider the excellences or virtues (the Greek word *areté* translates to both) of a man in his position and try to practice those or, more accurately, act as a virtuous man would. Necessarily, one would have learned the excellences (or at least some of them) beforehand in order to apply these practically in particular situations. The more a person is able to act virtuously in particular situations, the more the virtues become dispositions or traits of character for him. This, however, is a very brief introduction to explain how a virtue or agent-centered ethic works and I plan on returning to it later and extending some of its points so as to make them applicable to business ethics.

When we talk about business ethics, who are the moral-agents we are considering? The business leaders, executives, and owners are those to whom this inquiry primarily aims since they make the business decisions which have the greatest effect both within the corporate world and outside of it. Also, those people not in the leadership roles but aspiring to become business leaders are also to be considered. These people could be, but are not limited to, auxiliaries or assistants to a board of directors or any other business decision maker(s), interns, stockholders, investors and even students of business. Therefore, the advantages which a virtue-centered business ethic affords over an acts-centered ethic are relative to these leading persons of business, business proprietors and aspiring business leaders.

Since the Great Depression, the practices and expectations of business leaders have changed. No longer can the primary objective of the executive be reduced to maximizing company profits. Because of new laws, shifting public expectations, and global forces there are now many considerations which a business executive must take into account before making a decision for the company. Situations like moving a company plant to a new location with cheaper labor, deciding how best to manage hazardous waste, finding appropriate places on the assembly line for robotics and humans, and allocating resources for employee benefit packages are just a few of the myriad of new and challenging decisions that corporate executives face. For example, the business executive of a reputable company who is pressured by a local conservation group to give up a small fraction of the company's land or face a harsh public backlash will be hard-pressed to find an adequate solution for this particular problem in the rigidity of deontological prescriptions about private-property rights. Nor can business executives possibly calculate all the consequences of an action given the multiplicity of parties affected, and these parties (workers, the environment, customers) often must be considered since they are protected by laws. Thus, the consequential and deontological approaches to ethical, business decision making both appear to fall short in practicality or at least they do not capture the full picture of considerations and possible effects, particularly in borderline cases.

This amounts to saying that the prescriptive rules of a practice do not fully define that practice. Certainly there should be rules to govern business practices, but these should only set the parameters of that activity. How one is or how good one is in the activity participated in is largely determined by the character or excellence of the person in question. We do not say that someone who knows all the rules to activity x is necessarily good at activity x since the rules cannot adequately address every possible situation or challenge in the activity. Knowing the rules is only half the battle. When the ball is passed to you, you must make decisions that fit within the rules of the game but are not explicit in the rules themselves. This is why the cultivation of virtues or excellences of character (through both learning and practice) is essential to succeeding at any activity. The virtues represent developed abilities within the decision maker to deal with many particular situations. In dealing with any particular situation, the end of virtuous activity will agree with some recognized good, but the means (the virtuous activity itself) to that acknowledged end, are malleable and discernable as being particular to the moral agent. So if the hypothetical end of business activity is to generate profits for the company by obeying governmental rules and maintaining a positive image in the public eye, the business executive would recognize the need to cultivate and maintain certain excellent character traits like courage (to take necessary risks), frugality (to use and manage company funds efficiently), respect (to heed the laws which are in place), wit or friendliness (to stay in favor with the public), and magnanimity (to practice philanthropy in good taste). These all represent mean dispositions of character which would prompt the business executive to perform particular actions according to particular situations, and these actions could not be reduced down to a simple rule or set of rules. Note that I am suggesting here a hypothetical end of business activity and a set of virtues which make good businessmen *qua* businessmen in light of that end. For the time being, I do not mean to assume any one end of business activity except when such an end operates for the sake of an example.

In addition to providing a more inclusive and comprehensive approach to business action and its ethical components, an agent-centered ethic seems more efficient than an acts-centered ethic for real life business decision makers. Since virtuous dispositions are to be cultivated, the practice of virtue or excellence becomes habitual and part of the person's character. Thus, time normally spent on calculating or deliberating about one's actions so as to fit under the prescribed rule(s) or obligation(s) is saved. When someone is said to be virtuous, we typically don't admire them for their meticulous deliberation of action. Further, if someone must consistently stop and think about whether or not to take a risk or hold back, we would likely say that such a person is not courageous. Thus, one who is virtuous is partly admired for her ability to act spontaneously and appropriately to given situations. She does virtuous things because she *is* virtuous. The agent-centered ethics encourages a consistent alignment of the person and her character traits with what is good. In doing so, such an ethic yields an efficient and capable businesswoman who is able to think quickly on her feet—a skill necessary for hectic and demanding work environments, and managing a company can often be the paragon of such environments.

The last advantage an agent-centered ethical approach can claim over an acts-centered one exists in the concept of an exemplar. Michael Milde in his article "Legal Ethics: Why Aristotle Might Be Helpful" cites a hierarchy within the legal profession such that senior or distinguished members are often looked to or cited as exemplars when one encounters difficult situations.<sup>1</sup> I

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<sup>1</sup> Milde p.57-58

would like to extend his considerations to include business as another field in which a hierarchy of experienced and exemplary businesspersons exists. As with the legal field, the exemplar of a company or among companies is sought after and exemplified by budding or inexperienced businessmen. Examples of this include the ingenuity and courage of Henry Ford in his use of the newly developed assembly line and the proliferation of his idea and approach to business thereafter. Also Rockefeller's monetary insight and frugality which led to his highly efficient streamlining of corporate ownership practices. Sam Walton's perseverance and charm made Wal-Mart a friendly, inexpensive, and convenient mercantile. These represent general examples of business exemplars but there exist particular exemplars within every field of business.

Further, any instance in which the inexperienced shape their behavior after the excellent exemplar reflects a real hierarchy where the acknowledged excellent sit at the top while the others strive to emulate or be as good as them. Notice too how the exemplars are praised not for their actions alone but rather for how they themselves are or were as good or excellent businessmen. For example, when a novice businessman is trying to become better at his practice, he does not look to the exemplars in his field and seek to copy or scrutinize their every action. Instead, he might reflect upon their actions as a whole and discern a certain trait or excellence of their character which allowed them to act and make the decisions that they did. Only a foolish person would try to isolate the particular actions of the exemplars and then reenact them as best as possible, since those actions must be taken in the context of the particular situation in which they were performed. Therefore, a more manageable approach to the teaching and cultivation of business ethics exists in an agent-centered approach. Such an approach praises a recognized exemplar and motivates others to be in the exemplary disposition where actions alone do not imply virtue, but rather the actions are seen as obvious extensions of some disposition in the virtuous exemplar. "Actions, then, are called just and temperate when they are such as the just or temperate man would do; but it is not the man who does these that is just and temperate, but the man who also does them *as* just and temperate men do them."<sup>2</sup>

### **III: A Good Man at a Good Company: Possible Ends of Business Ethics**

I have discussed at length the merits of applying an agent-centered ethic to the study of business ethics. Since any agent-centered ethic stresses being like a particular type of virtuous person who is good at the practice in question, it would be odd if I did not go on to discuss what such an excellent person would be like relative to business practices. However, this description of a good businessman presupposes an acknowledged purpose, objective, or end of business practices.

It is in the inquiry into an end of business practices that virtue ethics can become a bit shaky. Obviously, any described end would greatly influence what kinds of virtues are necessary for that end. So if the final end of any business's practices is company profit maximization and capital accretion within the bounds of law, some of the virtues could be competitiveness, economic self-interest, and individual assertiveness. These virtues might not carry much moral resonance especially considering the recent social trends aimed at curtailing that minimally restrained, individual pursuit of wealth often resulting in little regard for the externalities that may hurt the community. Further, it is because of these recent restraints on entirely free market practices that the ends or goals of business action have changed drastically and, as illustrated in

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<sup>2</sup> Aristotle p. 35

the previous section, become more complex. What can be inferred, however, is that no matter what the end of the activity prescribed, such a prescription will depend largely on the society or established traditions in which the practice is embedded. But many people find this argument unsatisfying since the good or final end of a practice seems solely up to the social conventions of any place, at any time. The specter of cultural relativism emerges seeking to undermine the reliability and accuracy of any virtue ethics approach and its conclusions.

This has been a problem or at least a source of tension for many virtue ethicists. Even the grandfather of virtue ethics, Aristotle, walks the fine line between universalizable and particular goods. Alasdair MacIntyre notes: “Aristotle thus sets himself the task of giving an account of the good which is at once local and particular—located in...the *polis*—and yet also cosmic and universal. The tension between these poles is felt throughout the argument of the *Ethics*.”<sup>3</sup> However, Aristotle prefaces his argument in *The Nicomachean Ethics* by claiming that the study of ethics is not an exact science: “as our subjects and premises are true generally *but not universally*, we must be content to arrive at conclusions which are only generally true.”<sup>4</sup> This discussion over the exactitude in or source of ethics is too large in scope to be included in this essay. However, what can be derived for such a brief discussion is that some conceptions of an end in a particular practice appear, at least on some level, to accord with a social component which serves to guide this end via expectations, expectations that often place demands on the practice’s end. For example, the expectation on the part of the customer that she will receive reliable parts from a manufacturer shapes that manufacturer’s end, so that the manufacturer will now call something that is reliable a good part, and the manufacturer will value the excellences in his workers which allow the factory to produce reliable parts. Note that the excellence in the production of reliable parts could be a means to a final end of the company which could be the maximization of profits.

The reduction of the good in business activity down to purely technical skills of service or product production as dictated by the community appears inadequate. It is true that any society demands a certain quality of production, but in the course of producing these goods a company may run into dilemmas. Often, the society will demand a quality product x and yet demand that the environment be protected or workers be paid a fair wage even when producing a quality product x is harmful to the environment or could be produced more quickly or cheaply by treating the workers unfairly. Thus if the company’s end is to maximize profits and one effective way to do so is maintaining a good image and relationship with the customers, then the company would be stuck between making a quality product x, which upsets other concerns by the customers, or not making the product or making a sub-par product, which will also upset the customers.

Perhaps what deserves our attention is a shift away from the very traditional belief that the final end of business activity is profit maximization. Another work by Adam Smith called *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* praises the wealthy for their practice of justice and benevolence. Perhaps the accumulation of profits and wealth are actually a means to some other, greater end, an end quite attainable to business owners and executives because of their wealth and power. Robert Solomon mentions some higher goods which are found in many societies and the cultivation of which

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<sup>3</sup> MacIntyre p. 148

<sup>4</sup> Aristotle p. 12

precede an environment for the cultivation of wealth. The goods he cites are: “the need to cooperate and live together, the need to supply the members of a society with the necessities of life, the need to protect the society...the need for dependable communication within society.”<sup>5</sup> The existence and maintenance of all these goods are foundational for the activity of business and the goods therein that I have mentioned. If we move the traditional business good of profit accumulation to be secondary to the final end of assisting to preserve the goods Solomon mentions, then business practices would be free to maximize profits so long as doing so was in agreement with and a means to the goods Solomon mentions.

Consider the following in order to draw a clearer picture of what I am describing. Earlier I mentioned some excellent character traits for business executive to cultivate. This list included courage, frugality, respect, wit or friendliness and magnanimity. All of these were illustrated in light of a hypothetical end of generating profits which I still maintain is important. But when generating profits is not the final end but rather a means to some final end, then these business specific virtues take on a whole new dimension. For example, courage for a business executive is no longer strictly limited to risk-taking for profits. Perhaps the business executive could display courage in the face of reconciling a dispute between companies. Or she could take a courageous stand on a serious issue, and given the influence of her rank and position in her company and in society she could be quite effective in doing so. A business executive could display the virtue of respect not only for laws but also for “dependable communication” with others and not lie about his products or make bad/dangerous products about which he would be forced to lie in order to sell them.

One could easily argue that nothing today is stopping business executives or leaders from acting virtuously as described above. Within their profession, however, these businessmen are currently not regarded as good businessmen for acting beyond the ascribed end of profit maximization, while this regard of good businessmen orders the hierarchy and allows the most exemplary to rise to the top where they can be distinguished and emulated. When good businessmen are exemplified for excellences in those final goods beyond profit they may be praised outside of their profession as well as inside it. This allows the truly virtuous to assume role-model status for the novice businessmen and thus a new tradition in the business world of excellence beyond profits persists. I have discussed the importance of business leaders maintaining a favorable place in the public’s eye for the purposes of increasing profits. When the final end no longer deals with profits, the company will not cease to remain favorable to the public. Rather, the relationship between company and customer will be enhanced as the company’s final end is now for the customer and not simply his wallet.

#### **IV: Conclusions**

A picture of a company or set of companies finally concerned with the good of the community and its members may seem hard to imagine. It would seem that such a massive shift, both in societal functions and the mindsets about these, demands a more thorough explanation of the new end a company, with its profits generating mechanisms already in place, could offer. Would the community accept or appreciate this new end of the corporation? Given the plurality of

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<sup>5</sup> Solomon p.36

conceptions about what is best or necessary for people, how could we conceive of a new end which would be accepted by and accord with especially large and diverse communities? The most nagging question and a question which is very difficult to answer is why companies should pursue this end as opposed to any other. Perhaps it is the wealth, the emphasis on profits, and the social power which make companies the most likely candidates for the final and daunting end of making society a better place. After all, Aristotle places the wealthy aristocrats as the forebears of virtue. The close relationship between true excellence and the positions of social power or leadership will continue to tug at one another so long as the community demands an adequate display of both.

**Jacob Britten:**

## **Implications of Evolution in Epistemology**

What is the goal of any epistemological model? To provide a system to explain what knowledge is, what the extent and limits of knowledge are. This system needs to be universally applicable to all rational beings, and be able to explain the scope and limits of knowledge. How do rational beings obtain, retain, recall, and organize information in their minds in order to form justified true beliefs which in turn gives us knowledge? There is a theory, evolution, that once reflected upon and understood properly gives us simple yet profound answers to these questions.

I was sitting in a philosophy class in the fall '07 semester and we were talking about concrete, objective steps in educational fields. It pained me when multiple students mocked and ridiculed philosophy for not having any objective progress. My aim is to change that with reflecting upon epistemology with an evolutionary frame of mind.

Let's get to the points. Sense-data (SD), this will be defined and used as anything that is gathered by our senses. Our senses are anything that is our connectors to reality / consciousness, for example, our eyes, ears, nose, physical feelings, and taste. But how do we justify SD? By that, I mean what makes our SD reliable enough for our mind to make decisions based upon that SD. Evolution has a simple answer. If we evolved then our epistemological mechanisms (senses) evolved along with us. So what that means is in order for us to have even evolved to the point of being a rational being our senses were busy gathering SD for our mind to make concrete decisions about. The SD gathered by our senses was reliable enough to keep our evolutionary ancestors alive long enough to evolve into us, which took millions of years. For those millions of years where we were shaped by our environment our senses were what allowed us to be shaped by our environment and kept us out of danger within that environment. Our senses without the help of a rational mind allowed the evolution of modern humans to happen. Based on our current view of evolution Australopithecines which inhabited Africa roughly from 4.5 – 1.5 million years ago evolved into the Homo species which is what we are. So as you can see getting from an unintelligent primate prior to 4.5 mya to modern humans has taken millions of years. And through these millions of years no rational mind was present on this planet, up until roughly two hundred thousand years ago when modern humans begin to appear in the fossil record, and even then we were not what we would say rational, but had the capacity to become rational. My point is that if our senses protected us from the dangers of our environment for millions of years, surely they are accurate enough to trust when they are used to gather SD. Of course our senses are not going to be one hundred percent accurate to think they are or would ever be would be making a human capacity perfect. To assign perfection to any human capacity becomes very problematic and to fault humans for not having perfection is problematic as well. This carries some implications with it, first that there are objects external to our mind, obviously there has to be if our mind wasn't even around until a couple hundred thousand years ago, and second our mind is a part of our physical body it literally evolved in intelligence as we evolved.

We must believe then that our mind evolved along with our mechanisms, because without a mind to organize and direct the mechanisms then there would be no use for the mechanisms. It is clearly evident through evolution that the Homo species which has been around since roughly 1.5 million years ago used more advanced tools, had a more complex society and developed a larger brain than species that date to an older time. Granted these Homo species that had been around were not nearly what we would consider rational, but the level of their cognitive abilities was undoubtedly growing. Eventually evolution yielded Homo sapiens which had the capacity to critically think and develop mathematics, complex languages, and social contracts. The point is as evolution progressed towards Homo sapiens our brains became larger and each new species that was derived from the previous was generally more intelligent. This is evident in the types of tools archeologists find, dating from 2.5 million years ago with the Olduwan tools, and then progressing towards the Acheulean tools that were found 1.5 million years ago up to the Mousterian tools that modern humans used prior to developing complex languages and complex societies. The difference is that the Olduwan tools were blunt rocks with one side of them bashed off to form a sharp edge used for cutting meat off bones or using the non-sharp side for breaking nuts open or bones to get to the marrow. Later we see Acheulean tools which have two sides of the rock chipped off to form a teardrop shape that can be used as a hand ax, for cutting, and for breaking nuts and bones open. And the Mousterian tools were used to hunt and were more diverse than the previous groupings. The point is that even without what we call a rational mind our ancestors cognitive abilities grew over time, seeing that the Acheulean tools are more complex to make than the Olduwan and the Mousterian tools are more complex than the Acheulean tools. The point is that our mind evolved after our senses. Our senses allowed that to happen and should not be now doubted by our mind. The fact that our mind directs our senses should not be taken to mean that our mind should doubt our senses. Our mind however evolved as did our senses so it should also be given credit and trust in knowledge forming. It should be used in accord with our senses to help us fit into our environment. Our environment is this thing we all call consciousness or reality that we are aware of. We gather empirical data from this external reality that we are aware of. We use our senses and mind together to form knowledge. We have thoughts and those thoughts are determined to be true or false based upon reflection and empirical evidence if needed. The fact is that we and our tools for obtaining knowledge evolved together and so should be equally important in forming knowledge. And if you disagree with equal importance and say that one is more important than the other, I believe that you cannot doubt the one you say is less important. If one were doubted or doubtful it would tarnish the other ones ability to form knowledge so much that justified true belief would be impossible. To me justified true belief is having a belief, determining if that belief is true or not, and then giving justification for that belief. Evolution gives us the answers on how to reach justified true belief. Let's take for example a wall to my right; it is light blue in color. The wall in front of me is dark blue in color. I can determine if this is a true belief by empirically verifying the different shades of blue and I can justifiably believe that because I know that my mind also agrees with that conclusion. My senses and mind products of evolution which if you remember is the process of adapting to be better suited to ones environment. If my senses and mind were incorrect about my environment then our ancestors would have never evolved into us.

This brings us to acquiring our knowledge. There is no way any valid epistemological model could disregard either a priori or a posteriori knowledge. There are clear cut arguments for the presence of both, so disregarding either would result in an incomplete model. When we are born

we have capacities that can be developed, language, advanced cognition (critical thinking), and mathematics for example are three of these. Also it is known that unless these capacities are worked with, used and nourished they do not grow to their utmost, and to say that their utmost capacity is achievable is giving us more credit than we deserve, and would be leveling us with a god. I will never use my capacity to understand language to its fullest, for I will never know all of the known languages, and I will never know everything so I can not develop my cognition to its fullest capacity either. But the truth is I can work with my language and cognition capacities and allow them to grow. So far I have been using a priori not necessarily as innate knowledge that can be grasped solely by rational reflection, but as innate capacities, because without the experiences that come after birth those capacities might as well be ignored. I am not saying that it is impossible to be born with knowledge, but obviously that infant cannot communicate any of that knowledge or even recall it for a prolonged period, but the capacities are present and remain present for the duration of normal life. An example I would like to discuss here is feral children; feral children are examples of the impossible unethical psychological test needed for this, they are isolated from human contact during the developmental years of life (roughly ages 1-5) and never develop these capacities past what we consider to be a wild animal. It is not the case though that these feral children ever learn to communicate or do mathematics even after they are brought back into society. Some feral children however who have not been away from human contact for too long have been rehabilitated to very low levels of communication and cognition, these are not truly feral children though. These feral children greatly damage any argument in favor of a priori knowledge, or even knowledge strictly resulting from rational thought, because for example if mathematics was truly innate these children once brought back into society from the wild should be able to learn and comprehend mathematics, but cannot. This means to me that these attributes labeled as innate are not innate completely but are innate capacities and that through trained use of our innate capacities they can develop into languages and quantum mechanics. This extends epistemology to all organisms in this universe, some organisms, like us compared to dogs however have larger innate capacities which in turn allow us to use our senses and cognitive abilities together to be more intelligent. These capacities are stretched and exercised not solely by our mind or senses but by both. It is the trust that we have in our evolutionary tested faculties, this includes both our mind and senses, that allows for us to form knowledge as justified true belief. Millions of year of evolution to me is justification that the faculties produced by that millions of year of filtering are worthy of trust. Yes they fault occasionally, but our own faults are recognizable by our own faculties, we know when we are looking at an optical illusion, other wise we wouldn't know what optical illusions are, we know when we are awake and aware compared to being in a dream or asleep. The point is that evolution has yielded a species that has innate capacities to expand, senses for observing and taking in the physical external world, and a mind to reflect upon the whole process, and the whole bundle is evolution tested and worthy of trust and is all needed to form knowledge.

So one must ask themselves do you believe in the theory, and in my opinion soon to be natural law, of evolution? If you answer no to that question, then there is a completely different debate for you and I to have, and if you answer yes, then you must reflect upon the implications of that theory. For I cannot hold beliefs that I find contradictory, and accepting traditional empiricism or rationalism, pose problems for me when believing in evolution. And if evolution is the origin of species, it would also be the origin of epistemology and philosophy must take that into account. If something as ideologically changing as evolution has been to mankind comes along,

philosophy cannot disregard the implications of that ideological shift. There must be an ideological shift in philosophy as well, or we run the risk of falling behind as I have already stated at the beginning of this paper, objective advances can be made.

## Robert Case:

### On the nature of god

When asked if God exists we must first ask, “Well, what exactly is God”? After turning to a common source (Webster’s Dictionary) I found an answer. It stated that God is the “supreme or ultimate reality”. This seemed a little vague so I read further. It mentioned the creator of the universe. Now, I had to find out what the universe really is. “The whole body of things and phenomena observed or postulated” it stated. In order to fully grasp where this was going I searched for the definition of “create”, which reads: “To produce or bring about by a course of action or behavior.” So, in response to the original question, I say, “If one holds that the sculptor is the creator of the sculpture, then yes, God exists”.

Allow me to clarify this enigma. If I am; I exist. This is to say that if I can think I must exist. That which does not exist cannot think, so I have established that I, in fact, exist. Also *nihilo ex nihilo fit*; nothing is created from nothingness. Thus all things must have a source. If I have a source, and nothing is created from nothingness, then that source must also have a source. One could trace these sources *ad infinitum*, yet one would quickly come to the conclusion that this is futile. To continue this forever would be proposing an infinite regress of sources. This cannot be, because there would be no beginning source. Creating something from nothing is not possible, so there must be an original source. Because of the principle; ‘*nihilo ex nihilo fit*’, it seems that nothing could exist at all. This is to say that nothing could have existed in the beginning, so nothing could exist today. This is true, with the exception of the universe itself.

This seems counterintuitive at first. The only thing that could have existed in the beginning is the universe. This is the container, the very fabric of space-time; that is the source of all things. Even the voids of space have an underlying energy present in them. This is a concept found in quantum physics known as vacuum energy or dark energy. This energy, combined with a few others, make up the “structure” upon which all the known universe exists. That energy was all that was present in the beginning. This is how the universe truly is the source of all things.

Since the universe proper is all that has ever existed, it must also (by default) be responsible for the existence of all things, as we know them. The universe set in motion the events that brought about all that exists within the universe. Just as the sculptor creates the sculpture; so the universe created all that is. The universe is the source, the energy (literally) from which all things are formed. Thus the universe is all things. If one holds that God is the ultimate reality, and the universe is all realities (realities being postulated items), then god is actually the universe. This means that, since the universe/god is the source and creator, then god is actually the whole of the universe. Even if one simply defines God as the creator, then one must also come to the conclusion that god is the universe. I would be more precise, though, in saying that the universe is god.

Some may ask “but where did the universe come from”? I do not address this for two reasons. First, this is like asking who created god. It has neither purpose in the argument nor the possibility of a relevant answer. Second, some may argue that god is separate from the universe. This cannot be the case, however, when one considers the definition of the universe already mentioned. The universe is all things observed or postulated. God fits into this category and must be part of the universe; they are inseparable. This is why it is important to see the difference between ‘God’ and ‘god’. When one sees ‘God’ it implies that it is separate from the universe, surreal, or somehow transcendent. When one sees ‘god’ it carries with it a mundane and common feel. The lower case spelling reduces the distinction between the concept of the universe and the concept of god. Since they are one in the same (the universe and god); this should be the correct version of the term.

In addition to the afore-mentioned definition of God, I have also encountered other aspects that seem to be present in definitions of God. God is often described as being omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent. I am frequently asked how these aspects “fit” into my argument on the nature of god. I will address the latter first. It seems to me, that it is far easier to digest the idea that god is omnipresent, because god is everywhere, and not because god transcends the boundaries of natural law. Allow me to clarify. If god is all things (the whole of the universe), then there are no places that god is not. It is less likely that god is at one place, and in all places simultaneously. The first aspect is, perhaps, easier to explain. All that is, is god. This means that all that have the capacity to have knowledge are god. If everything that has the capacity for knowledge is god, then god must hold all knowledge. All knowledge, even future knowledge will be held by god; thus god is omniscient. The omnipotent aspect falls into place just like the omniscience aspect. If god is all things, then all power belongs to god. Anything that has power is part of the universe. God is the universe, thus all power belongs to god. So, it seems to me, that this concept of god is more in line with the definition of god than the traditional Judeo-Christian image.

Ockham’s razor states that given multiple, vying explanations for any state of affairs, the simplest is best. Rather than postulate myriad improbabilities, I am postulating only one. The Judeo-Christian view most often asks one to believe these many improbabilities. For instance, god is at once here and everywhere simultaneously. At the same time this idea is asking one to believe in the all-powerful and all knowing deity. These are but two of the improbabilities the traditional view asks one to believe.

Rather than postulating a deity in which one must justify the breaking of all the laws of nature, I am postulating a deity that has no need to do so. To follow the traditional, western view of God, one must allow that it is transcendent of the laws of science. When god is accepted as the universe, there is no need. This is because, by definition, the universe is already omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent. The traditional view holds one to believe many improbabilities, though I am postulating only one such improbability. That is that the universe itself is god.

The fact that I find this explanation to be the simplest explanation of god is not my sole reason for finding it superior to other explanations I have encountered. It is also the only explanation, it seems, that is able to bridge the gap between religion and science. The two fields have been in a virtual war with one another for centuries. This explanation allows both fields to coexist without negating one another. Take the “big bang” theory for instance. Christians often deny the “big

bang” theory stating that god created the universe. When one views the schism between religion and science, through this new lens, one finds the two to be one in the same. When one uses the terms ‘universe’, and ‘god’ interchangeably, as I am proposing, then lines between science and religion blur.

In sum, I am proposing a change in the way god is envisioned. I am not proposing a change in the common definition of god. This seems somewhat innocuous at first, but the consequences are much more severe. It may be easier to change the very definition of god than to change the way god is seen. The old ways of imagining god (as separate from man), remove some burden of responsibility from man’s shoulders. If man is separate from god, he cannot possibly live up to the standards of god. When one views the universe as god, man is inseparable from god. Woe to man who must live up to the name of god! When each individual person understands that they are god, then they are forced to take absolute responsibility for their actions. They also must understand that all of their unkindness, and their kindness, is directed at god as well.

I have heard that postulating that the universe is god is tantamount to espousing atheism. This argument is primarily used against the idea of Pantheism. This argument states that worshiping god as the universe is to simply worship random events and the laws of physics. Without the concept of a supreme governor of the universe, morality and purpose (at least for mankind) are nonexistent. My response to this claim is, perhaps, a little unorthodox. First, I will postulate that the universe is not lacking in the same qualities that a deity separate from universe might have. This is to say that the universe is a conscious entity. Though proving a universal consciousness exists is near impossible, this has been a common theme throughout the history of mankind. It was Jacob Needleman in his essay, *A Sense of the Cosmos*, that stated:

So much is obvious, for a conscious universe is the only reality that can include human consciousness. And only when I am completely included by something does the need arise for me to understand my relationship to it in all the aspects of my inner and outer life. Only a conscious universe is relevant to the whole of human life.

Because this has been a recurring theme in philosophy and many eastern religions, I do not feel the need to justify the consciousness of the universe further. The existence of a conscious universe implies purpose in all things, for nothing is created by a truly conscious entity without purpose.

The issue of morality becomes a much more complex issue when one defines god as the universe. This was clear when Richard Bach, in *Illusions*, wrote; “the measure of a man’s ignorance is his belief in injustice”. This is true, but it does not stop something from being immoral. It simply means that immorality is part of the overall nature of how the universe operates. All that is god is good. How can bad things be good? How can a heinous act of murder be a positive event? There are two reasons for this. First is that god, or god’s divinity is found in our reaction to so-called evil. A simple random act of violence, or the mental retardation of a child, does not initially seem to be intuitively good. Upon closer examination, one will find that the good of these events lies in how we learn from them. It is neither avoidance nor mere survival that is key

here. It is the lesson taken away that matters. Only perfect love and patience can care for a mentally challenged child. The same is true of forgiving and accepting acts of violence. This is the primary justification for immorality in the world. If god is everything, and all that is god is good, then it must be that immorality serves a higher purpose. The second reason is more complex.

Since nothing else exists, all actions are directed at god. These actions must improve god. Matter and energy (which is god) cannot be destroyed. So no action toward god can be destructive, because god cannot be destroyed. Nor can any action be neutral. A neutral act would be a waste of energy, thus harmful or destructive. This cannot happen, so all acts are an improvement of god. But how could one improve upon god? “Nothing can have a knowing without doing” (Wayne Dyer). One can have an understanding but one cannot know. The same is true of god. God knows all that is known, because god is everything. Gods is omnipresent and omnipotent for the same reason. Yet, not even god can truly know human nature without experiencing it. Part of human nature is to be fallible, hurt, and to be cruel. Thus god must act in this way to experience humanity. That experience grows the understanding of god. Thus it improves god.

These so-called evil acts are part of the growth of the god-consciousness. It is immoral and good simultaneously. The act is immoral in that it is not directly in line with the essence and intention of god; yet it is good in that it helps to improve god. It does this in several ways. The act itself may no longer be a learning experience, but our reaction to it is. Also, the feelings of the perpetrator of “evil” expand god’s experience. Lastly, god gains a knowing of what it means to be human. All of these factors lend to the betterment of the universe and so aren’t truly evil. It is truly much more of a learning experience. This may, at first, seem to be a contradiction. Can what is perceived as evil really be good? The greatest moments of some lives are in their own death. Christians believe that this was true of Jesus of Nazareth. So, an immoral act (like murdering someone via crucifix) can be the single greatest learning experience for mankind. It is simultaneously horribly and wonderful. I do not mourn the death of Christ so much as celebrate it! There was no injustice in his death. It was part of how the universe learns...nothing more.

All of this raises another important question in my mind. Is god fallible? If god is everything, and man is fallible, then certainly god is fallible, right? Man certainly makes mistakes, and god is man. So, in this way, one might argue that god is fallible. Those who argue this are missing the overall point. If the purpose is to understand what it means to be fallible, then (at least on the part of the universe as a whole) there is no mistake. The exact result that is intended will occur. This is no different than a “mistake” made by a speaker for emphasis. It appears that they are making an error, but in actuality it is a scripted error. Its intention is to create a reaction. The same is true of the universe. The fallibility of man does not translate to the fallibility of god. All that we see as some error has a purpose. There are no mistakes in the overall scheme of things. In this way all things have a purpose and are intended to be. There are no coincidences.

To be fallible would also negate the primary principle of the universe. All that is god is good. To be fallible is to be harmful. It is either to be directly harmful, or harmful because the mistake wastes energy. As I have stated earlier, this cannot occur. All that is directed at god must

improve god, and all action is directed at god. Thus the universe cannot act in error. All events are perfect in that they are what they were intended to be. If one were to state that god is fallible, it would contradict the essence of god. This would negate god. In other words, to propose that god is fallible would be equivalent to saying that god cannot really exist. If we establish that god exists then we must hold that god is infallible.

To envision god as the universe is to alter much of what we held true for centuries. Furthermore, by emphasizing that this universe is a conscious entity, the concept of god is altered forever. Man is then forced to take even greater responsibility for his actions. Much of this argument is dependent upon the openness of the audience and current implications in physics. Perhaps new sciences will allow for further evidence of my argument. Perhaps it will prove to be an utter catastrophe. Only time will tell in this case. What is apparent is that, to accept these ideas one must have a shift in their state of mind. No longer are the previous limitations valid. Without these limitations, however, expectations of self are free to grow without end. This change just might open the door to infinite possibilities that were previously ignored.

**Michael Hobgood:**

### **Boots on the (Philosophical) Ground: Human Nature According to a Soldier**

Human nature is a strange series of ideas colliding with reality, high hopes dashed by natural tendencies and practical requirements. Herein lies the problem with trying to produce a coherent picture of what man's true nature is. There are more theories on this one subject than there are on many topics; perhaps this is because we crave and need an answer to the universal questions more than we need answers for the smaller questions of life.

What is human nature though? Some philosophers see us as naturally good natured people who are at the best when left free, others say we are not naturally good but just selfish animals who will always look out for our own interests. There seems to be a natural divide between those who see the world as it should be and those who see it as it is.

Perhaps the easiest way to sum up this tension is by looking at the works of Hobbes and Hume, particularly the *Leviathan* and *Enquiry*. Hobbes makes the argument that human motivation has three main sources: Diffidence, Competition and Glory. Diffidence is the human desire for safety, Competition represents the human desire for gain, and Glory represents the desire for reputation. Further, man is led to conflict because of these pre-existent forces. However, Hobbes does claim that human beings are led to a desire for peace by the fear of death, a desire for harmonious living, and a need for safety. Hobbes elucidates natural laws that revolved around safety, the need to lay down certain rights to obtain this safety and the contract system that allows this system to work. Hobbes famously stated that human life was "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."<sup>1</sup>

Hume in his *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* opposes this grim interpretation of human nature and existence. For his part he was an intermediate type of philosopher who took the stance that humans were selfish and humane, greedy but capable of "limited generosity". In essence, we as people are capable of cooperating and caring for our friends and family, but our natural greed limits our cooperation to that small circle.<sup>2</sup>

I am not a philosopher but I am a human being and an observer of human nature. For my part, I see human nature through a different lens; that of the soldier. I have seen the best and worst of what human beings have to offer, often in the same heartbeat in the same exact place. Here in lies the issue for me with ideas of human nature; we are not carbon copies of a single model.

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<sup>1</sup> Hobbes, Thomas, *Leviathan* (Oxford, 1996), p. 86-93.

<sup>2</sup> Hume, David, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (Oxford, 2004), p. 93.

War is and has been the strangest of human endeavors; yet in an odd way it is a natural outgrowth of human beings themselves. This at first glance will cause many to believe that I have gone quiet mad, or perhaps worse, but bear with me and allow me to explain my strange idea. Human beings are at their cores animals; rational animals but they are still animals. We as people cannot deny that we are animals that reason. As rational animals we try to separate ourselves from “mere” animals, we can reason after all and must try to live by reasoning; but there in lies the hitch, we must TRY to live by reason, yet we are driven by the same needs, desires, and biological drives as all animals are.

Humans are strange animals, and in the course of trying to understand “human nature” we must first understand the animal. Humans are social creatures that are constantly striving for the attention of others; we are the only creature that needs acceptance and other intangible things. As a social animal we desire status and power, much like a pack animal this desire leads to conflict. Man constantly searches for a way to become more than he is and to establish himself somewhere in a social hierarchy, preferably at the top of it. Further, man is driven by the need, just like all animals, to find protection. Protection is the natural offshoot of the conflict that arises when our social needs run up against someone else’s social needs. Naturally this is but a nutshell of what man is, but for the purposes of this paper my brief description combined with the aforementioned main points of Hobbes and Hume will suffice. However, before we continue we should explore, albeit briefly, the differing ideas regarding warfare that have been expressed by philosophers so that we have some sort of background to what we will explore.

There are three key categories that are the most common philosophical accounts of war. The first category is the Cataclysmic school of thought. According to this view, war is a bane of man’s existence. Further the school of thought holds that war can be either inevitable or avoidable and is only capable of causing death and destruction; though there is a caveat that social change may be brought about by warfare. To cap off the view point, war is viewed, at least by this school of thought, to be beyond man’s choice, being driven forward instead by global forces outside of humankind’s control.

The second category, called Eschatological, holds that all wars lead to a goal or end. The eventual goal for this school of thought is a massive upheaval of society the leads to a world devoid of conflict. The obvious examples of this school of thought are Marxist theory of a society that has no class structures after a massive uprising and the Christian idea of a final climactic battle that leads to a Utopia and the end of the corrupted world.

The last of these ideas I will present is the school of thought which states that war is simply a tool of the state. This is perhaps the best known school of thought, simply called the Political school of thought, and was greatly influenced by the thoughts of two particular thinkers, Carl von Clausewitz and Machiavelli. To say this is the “political school of though” does not imply that national leaders have a free hand in simply waving the sword; Clausewitz laid out three key standards for waging war that should be met before entering into any sort of armed conflict. The bylaws were that any war had to be “rational”, “instrumental”, and “national”. The key for it being rational is that the costs, both in material and men, have been measured and found to be outweighed by the possible gains; the instrumental point entails that war must be waged for one

goal and not just to wage a war; finally for a war to be national it must benefit the entire nation rather than a small group of people.

To return to the heart of the matter, what happens when we take these two natural occurrences, protection and conflict, and move them from the individual person to the greater collection of humanity? Naturally we have war; but what of war? Why is man drawn to it even in times of peace? Why is it that man seems to have a strange fascination with and yet a deep revulsion to war? Perhaps these questions are not completely capable of being answered, however I shall endeavor to at least shed a small bit of light upon the subject.

To answer these questions, particularly why man is fascinated by war, we have to refer to our own nature. This may seem as if I am speaking in circles, but I assure you this is not true. Man has a desire to prove himself and to be challenged constantly. For humans have that ingrained need to be at the top of the social chain, naturally the way to move up this is through feats of daring and acquisition of power. There is no test greater than having to face the fear of death, and those who have are never the same. It is a strange thing to see death, to become numb to it, to accept it and live with it as if it is no longer a frightening specter; war seems to drag this ability out of us.

Man's ultimate fear is that of oblivion; our non-existence is impossible for us to imagine. Now step back from that pivotal question that scares all of us and leaves us wondering what comes after this world and imagine what it is to stare into the maw and survive. This is the problem that faces the veteran that comes home from war; how to deal with facing the darkest part of the human soul. In war a man must set aside the more humane aspects of his nature and give in to his more base instincts.

Violence, destruction, brutality, the will to survive and the darkness that we usually consign to the deepest recesses of our mind are turned loose for those few moments; but those moments do not end as they should, there is a price to be paid. These few brutal moments, brief when compared to the totality of a human life, cannot be pushed to the back of his world ever again. The military is the oddest counterculture we could ever know; it is a group designed to be separated from the culture to preserve the culture by accepting that a price has to be paid and willingly paying it for everyone else.

It is this that changes a man that reshapes his nature and causes the shift that no one understands. The problem with the experience of war is that it never leaves the person who experiences it; it is almost as if it is a stain upon the soul. It is not just those who are wounded physically that are hurt by war, all who experience it are casualties. There is no escape from the changes that come from the experience, there is only the hope that the experience can be digested and used to better the man rather than tear him apart. This is part of the reason why I suggest that there is no set human nature. No man responds to the experience in the same way. The pressure placed upon the fragile human psyche seems to affect everyone in a different way; some are able to compartmentalize it while others never can find a way to cope with the horrors visited upon them.

Why is it then that there is a void in veterans when a war ends? Why is there a feeling of loss when the horror is over? This is the hardest question to answer, for the answer differs vastly

from person to person; but the simple answer is that there is no other experience like it. Perhaps Heraclites described the dichotomy that is experienced in war better than anyone when he wrote “War is the father of all and the king of all, and some he shows as gods, others as humans; some he makes slaves, others free.”

Soldiers know the duality of war more acutely than any other group. We are gods on the battlefield, yet mere men when at peace; free men who choose our lives, yet slaves who serve an entire nation; we bring death, but the death we sow spreads a new life when the scars heal. It is the duality of war that fascinates the soldier and the civilian alike; it appalls us by the cost in human life and suffering, yet draws us close with the guarantee of change whether for ill or good. And while millions of well meaning people will say they understand what a soldier goes through, the soldier knows better. It’s impossible to know the pain of being both a hero and a villain, of taking life from one to give life to another; to attempt to know the soldier’s mind is similar to trying to understand the mind of God.

Why is it impossible to understand what a person feels, sees, and is when he returns from war? The man who returns is not the boy that was, he is not who he was and never will be, but people try to pretend that he is or will be that person again. It is like asking a grown man to return to a child like state; it just cannot happen. The pain and hatred that he has seen has changed him for life; he can never view his fellow man in the way he used to. There is an overriding feeling that perhaps people are no better than animals. He has seen what people are capable of, and while some of it has been of the extraordinary variety a great deal of it has been of the side of man no one wishes to acknowledge. A man who has seen this cannot unlearn it; it is as if he is Adam and has eaten of the tree of knowledge and realized he is naked, there is no going back.

The veteran, more than anyone, recognizes what man is and the truth behind the idea of human nature. We wish to believe that we are advanced, that we have improved, and that we have somehow moved beyond the pettiness and barbaric ways of the past but in actuality we have done nothing to change. We are what we are and have always been; flawed. We have the exact same problems that we have always had; perhaps history does indeed proceed in a circular fashion. The need for soldiers is a direct result of this; it is not called the second oldest profession for no good reason. There is no nation or group of people who can honestly say they were not born of the sword. It’s one of the world’s most confusing issues, for war can grant freedom to one group while driving down another. Conflict is what life is; war is simply the largest possible conflict. There is no person that hasn’t been touched by war and by this I mean not only soldiers who wage it nor families and friends who wait for the separation to end and the fate of their loved one to be revealed, but all of mankind.

There is one other issue to explore when it comes to the ideology and philosophy regarding war and the soldier that experiences it. There is a theory that all have heard of but the theory has been changed and morphed since its first utterance, which is the Just War Theory. Many have advanced the theory, ranging from Aristotle to Aquinas to John Rawls, but the gist of the theory as it is understood today is that wars should only be fought for two reasons: either for self-defense or to end the violation of human rights. Supposedly no war is to be embarked upon for anything other than these reasons; though to be honest this theory can be stretched to cover any number of reasons for war.

What does this mean for a soldier though? The common soldier cannot know the intricate reasons but can see the direct results of the actions he must take. When someone comes in contact with the type of human rights violations that are referred to in the Just War Theory there is no question why he is there. To look into the eyes of a starving child, to smell the stench of death from a mass grave, to watch with your own eyes the destruction of a race or ethnic group for no other reason than wrong place, wrong time will convince anyone that sometimes war is indeed justified. But what does a veteran who sees and lives through this bring back with him from the experience? What can it possibly teach us about human nature?

For some they return with a view of man that shakes them to the core; that man is not only flawed, but inherently evil. To an extent it can easily be seen to be true, no one can honestly blame someone who has seen the worst that the world has to offer for believing that people are irredeemable. There is plenty of evidence to support this pessimistic view of man and his intrinsic nature. Man can be viewed as having only advanced in discovering new and more potent ways of destroying each other. If given enough time man will probably find a way to destroy itself, it does seem to be our true talent that has been passed down to through history.

There is an alternate view of course, that most will willingly cling to. Man is a flawed creature but there is a spark of divinity buried within him that allows us to grow beyond what we are or to at least attempt to. Further there must be something that you are willing to lay all else aside for. This is a lesson that only those who have had to make that decision truly understand and it is beyond a doubt the most important lesson and insight into human nature that war can reveal to a man. A life is never truly complete until you know what you are willing to lay it down for. Once you know what your life is worth giving up for you have found the piece of the puzzle that most never will but will always strive to find. The strife and adversity that a man is put through in war is much like the purging of gold; it sharpens and defines your life, it brings to the forefront the truths of it, both good and ill.

What is human nature then? Human nature is opaque at best, inscrutable at worst; perhaps this is the way it should be. To say that man has a certain nature in effect limits him. Yes there are universal truths about what makes up mankind: the truth of man being a rational animal, of being capable of both great and evil things, but herein lies the original issue I brought up at the very beginning of my paper; that man is a dichotomy. There is no such thing as human nature, to say so is naïve at best. Each person must find his own nature.

For the combat veteran it is even more so, for he's seen everything that man has to offer; from his immense ability to sacrifice for others to his darker side that wishes to exert control over others. He is an angel and a devil, a master and a slave; he knows deep truths about himself, but he can never express them. It is an existence that is filled with hope and pain, joy and sadness; he is the epitome of the confusion that man has about his own nature made manifest. For him the world is what he's helped make it, but the experience has left him scarred forever; the first casualty of war is said to be the truth, but this is not accurate the true first casualty is innocence. It is this loss that scars the veteran; he cannot deny the darkness that lives in him and every other person in the world. It is this loss that reshapes his definition of what makes up human nature.

I cannot give a complete answer to what human nature is; even the great philosophers from Socrates and Aristotle to Augustine and Aquinas to today have never had a complete answer. I can however provide opinions and ideas for you to take and discern on your own; perhaps that is all we need is to take the time to ponder it and realize that we do not have the answer. As for war and the effect that it has on the vision of what human nature is, there is no doubt in my mind that it has to change you when you experience it and that soldiers will always be necessary in this world. Why should people put themselves through this life altering event? To answer this I leave you with a quote from John Stuart Mill:

War is an ugly thing, but not the ugliest of things. The decayed and degraded state of moral and patriotic feeling which thinks that nothing is worth war is much worse. The person who has nothing for which he is willing to fight, nothing which is more important than his own personal safety, is a miserable creature and has no chance of being free unless made and kept so by the exertions of better men than himself.

**Ben Hole:**

## **Aristotle on MEGALOPSUCHIA**

### Abstract

Aristotle's *megalopsuchia* consists in deserving and claiming much. This is ambiguous because deserving and claiming much are described through the *megalopsuchos* and his dispositions toward honor and fortune. His disposition toward honor suggests he is a statesman, and fortune suggests he is a philosopher. I argue that this is a problem because the two exemplars are incompatible. I resolve this incompatibility by arguing that the dispositions are multi-tracked – they involve dispositions to think, act, and feel. I conclude that one possesses *megalopsuchia* just in case he possesses (1) the other virtues, and the right dispositions toward (2) honor and (3) fortune.

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*Megalopsuchia* is one of the virtues discussed in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. The virtue consists in deserving and claiming much (*EN*1123b3). The *megalopsuchos* is medial with respect to the *chaunos* who claims much but deserves little, and the *mikropsuchos* who claims little but deserves much (*EN*1123b12-13).

Many find the *megalopsuchos* reprehensible. For example, when Bertrand Russell reviews the whole of Aristotle's ethics, he focuses on *megalopsuchia*. He compares the *megalopsuchos* to the "master" in Nietzsche's master and slave moralities, and concludes that Aristotle's ethics convey "an emotional poverty."<sup>1</sup> In comparison to the *megalopsuchos*, Russell humorously remarks, "[o]ne shudders to think what a vain [*chaunos*] man would be like."<sup>2</sup> Thomas Hobbes declares that *megalopsuchia* "is no more than glory," one of the qualities of human nature that lead to the state of war.<sup>3</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre is downright "appalled" by *megalopsuchia*, and adds that Aristotle himself must not have been "a nice or good man."<sup>4</sup> J.L. Ackrill's commentary omits the chapters on *megalopsuchia*.<sup>5</sup> W.D. Ross comments that *megalopsuchia* is "the self-absorption which is the bad side of Aristotle's ethics" and thereby translates it as "pride". Some commentators are concerned that *megalopsuchia* is counterintuitive because it precludes self-effacing virtues, such as modesty and the Judeo-Christian virtue of humility.<sup>6</sup> Overall, *megalopsuchia* is one of the most controversial virtues in the Aristotelian corpus.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Russell, 175, 185.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>3</sup> Hobbes, Thomas. *Human Nature, or the Fundamental Elements of Policy*. IX. 20; *The Leviathan*. XII.

<sup>4</sup> MacIntyre, 34, 38-9.

<sup>5</sup> Ackrill omits IV.3 of *EN* and III.5 of *EE*.

<sup>6</sup> See Russell and Jaffa.

<sup>7</sup> W.R.F. Hardie gives the most complete list of comments criticizing *megalopsuchia*.

Aristotle's *megalopsuchia* consists in deserving and claiming much. This is ambiguous because deserving and claiming much are described through the *megalopsuchos* and his dispositions toward honor and fortune. His disposition toward honor suggests he is a statesman, and fortune suggests he is a philosopher. I argue that this is a problem because the two exemplars are incompatible. I resolve this incompatibility by arguing that the dispositions are multi-tracked – they involve dispositions to think, act, and feel. I conclude that one possesses *megalopsuchia* just in case he possesses the other virtues, and the right dispositions toward honor and fortune.

## I. The Exemplar Problem

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle does not explain what it means to deserve and claim much.<sup>8</sup> He states:

Now a person is thought to be *megalopsuchos* if he claims much and deserves much (EN1123b3) ... Though therefore in regard to the greatness of his claim the *megalopsuchos* is an extreme, by reason of its rightness he stands at the mean point, for he claims what he deserves; while the *chaunos* and the *mikropsuchos* err by excess and defect respectively (EN1123b8).

Aristotle does not give a detailed philosophical account of *megalopsuchia*. Instead, Aristotle describes the virtue by reference to the *megalopsuchos* and his dispositions toward honor and fortune.

This description is ambiguous, because the dispositions are open to radically different interpretations. On the one hand, the focus on honor suggests that the *megalopsuchos* is a politician. This is because honor, the greatest external good, is the primary object of *megalopsuchia* (EN1123b34-35). On the other hand, the focus on fortune suggests that the *megalopsuchos* is a philosopher. This is because he is indifferent to fortune and self sufficient (EN1177a27-b1, EN1199b18-33), he is worthy of honor, but concerned with truly great things instead of the opinions of others (EN1141b3-8, EN1123b16-23, EN1124b5-32, EN1127b32-26, EN1145a27, EN1177b19-1178b33), and he is reluctant to act (EN1124b23-27, EN1125a13-18, EN1178b5-7).

Because of the ambiguity in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, commentators have looked to a passage in the *Posterior Analytics* for help. When discussing the formulation of definitions, Aristotle uses *megalopsuchia* as an example of a definiendum that may admit more than one essence. He states:

If the series ends not in one expression but in two or more, clearly the definiendum cannot be one thing; it must be more than one. I mean, for example, supposing that we require a definition of *megalopsuchia*, we must consider individual *megalopsuchos* persons whom we know, and see what one characteristic they all have *qua megalopsuchia*. E.g. if Alcibiades and Achilles and Ajax were *megalopsuchos*, what was their common characteristic? Intolerance of dishonor; for this made the first go to war, roused the wrath of the second, and drove the third to commit suicide. Then we must

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<sup>8</sup> Some commentators question whether the exemplar is of a fictional or real person, which is a concern I do not address. See Arnhart, 25-267; Hardie, 74; Howland, 31-33.

apply the same process to another group, *e.g.* Lysander and Socrates. Suppose that here the common characteristic is being unaffected by good and bad fortune. Now I take these two and consider what there is in common between indifference to fortune and intolerance of dishonor; and if there is nothing, there must be two kinds of *megalopsuchia*. (APo97b14-27)

Alcibiades made many enemies during the Peloponnesian War and changed his allegiance several times. Achilles will not tolerate dishonor from Agamemnon, which led to numerous Achaean deaths. Ajax commits suicide because he is tricked by Athena. According to Plutarch, Lysander, a Spartan general, is accepting of bad fortune.<sup>9</sup> There are numerous examples that suggest that Socrates is indifferent to misfortune.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, Aristotle holds that Alcibiades, Achilles, and Ajax are thought to be intolerant of dishonor, and Lysander and Socrates indifferent to fortune.

This passage raises the question of what, if anything, honor and fortune have in common such that they would be the foci (or object) of the same virtue. If Alcibiades, Achilles, and Ajax, are exemplars of *megalopsuchia*, and Lysander and Socrates are too, then Aristotle chose two radically different exemplars of *megalopsuchia*. One is focused on honor, and the other on fortune. One seems to be political, and the other philosophical. I should be clear – that they are radically different is not, by itself, the problem. Any virtue is capable of different extensions vis-à-vis different contexts. For example, one may be courageous on the battlefield, or courageous battling cancer. The problem is that the two groups of exemplars Aristotle chose are incompatible. On reflection, we see that in the same contexts, these exemplars would act not simply in different ways, but in *conflicting* ways. Being insulted publicly by someone, for example, may be a case of receiving dishonor *and* misfortune. In such a case, the two exemplars would presumably act in conflicting ways. One would not tolerate the insult, and the other would be indifferent to it. Indeed, Alcibiades, Achilles, and Ajax did not tolerate insults, but Lysander and Socrates did. Which response is appropriate for the *megalopsuchos*? It seems that Aristotle's account offers us no help here because the two groups of exemplars are in conflict.

This problem gains traction, in part, because Aristotle famously offers two different accounts of the good, or *eudaimon* life in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. In I.7 Aristotle describes *eudaimonia* as a composite good consisting of all the virtues. However, X.6-8 describes *eudaimonia* as contemplation. Howard Curzer and Nicholas White argue that Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia* is inconsistent. On the other hand, John Cooper and Richard Kraut argue that the two views are compatible. The I.7 exemplar of *eudaimonia* seems to be a statesman and the X.6-8 exemplar seems to be a philosopher. These two exemplars of *eudaimonia* parallel the two exemplars of *megalopsuchia*.

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<sup>9</sup> Plutarch, *Parallel Lives: Lysander*: 20.1-2. Later in his life, Lysander became unpopular for promoting the interests of his friends and displaying vindictiveness against his enemies. It seems he did so without regard to his own fortune, and was thereby indifferent.

<sup>10</sup> The trial and death of Socrates (the *Crito*, *Apology*, and *Phaedo*) contain numerous examples of his indifference to fortune. Socrates explicitly discusses the topic in the *Euthydemus* 278-281, but there is the interpretive question of whether Socrates really advocates indifference to fortune.

In addition, this problem is controversial in the secondary literature. René Gauthier first used the *Posterior Analytics* passage to analyze *megalopsuchia*. According to Gauthier, intolerance of dishonor and indifference to fortune are two conflicting character traits associated with two different meanings of the term *megalopsuchia*, “la magnanimité des politiques et la magnanimité des philosophiques.”<sup>11</sup> Gauthier concludes that the *megalopsuchos* is a philosopher. He points out that the *megalopsuchos* and philosopher possess similar character traits. Like the philosopher, the *megalopsuchos* is indifferent to fortune and self sufficient, worthy of honor, but concerned with truly great things instead of the opinions of others. Gauthier also argues that since *megalopsuchia* is the *kosmos* of all of Aristotle’s virtues, the *megalopsuchos* has perfect virtue. Given that intellectual virtues are the most perfect, Gauthier concludes that the *megalopsuchos* must be a philosopher.<sup>12</sup>

Most commentators, however, argue that the *megalopsuchos* is a statesman or political hero. The common strategy is to support a political interpretation through exegesis, while explaining away the disposition toward fortune. Like Gauthier, Larry Arnhart holds that the *megalopsuchos* has “two faces, one political, and one philosophical.”<sup>13</sup> Yet, Arnhart concludes that the *megalopsuchos* is a statesman, and that his indifference to fortune reflects his “concern for dealing with contingencies.”<sup>14</sup> Aristide Tessitore also hold that the *megalopsuchos* despite more philosophical character traits.<sup>15</sup> Harry Jaffa holds that the *megalopsuchos* seeks the divine honor men bestow to gods, and that his indifference to fortune reflects his god-complex. Jaffa thereby concludes that the *megalopsuchos* is “the political man par excellence.”<sup>16</sup>

The political interpretation also gains traction from the *Eudemian Ethics*. The account is similar to *Nicomachean Ethics*, in that *megalopsuchia* is not found without the other virtues (*EE*1232a1-3), and the *megalopsuchos* cares only about great things, and not what others think of him (*EE*1232b5-10). However, *Eudemian Ethics* diverges, in that the *megalopsuchos* deserves the greatest political positions, and would be dishonored if someone unworthy governed him (*EE*1232b9-24). This portrait is similar to the god among men in the *Politics* (*Pol*1284a3-18).

Furthermore, the political interpretations are especially controversial because the *megalopsuchos* appears reprehensible. Jaffa and the critics I cite in my introduction find him arrogant, self-absorbed, and unemotional. Other commentators, such as Arnhart and Tessitore, advocate a political interpretation, but do not emphasize anything negative. By contrast, R.P. Hanley applauds *megalopsuchia* as a civic virtue, which the *megalopsuchos* “realizes ... in his beneficence” toward others.<sup>17</sup> Saint Thomas Aquinas holds that *megalopsuchia* is compatible with Christian virtues, such as humility. While *megalopsuchia* aims at great things, humility shuns them (*STII-II* 161, 1, obj.3; *STII-II* 160, 2). He concludes that the two are twin virtues. While humility tempers excessive behavior (*STII-II* 161, 2-4), *megalopsuchia* inspires great action (*STII-II* 129).

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<sup>11</sup> Gauthier, 21.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>13</sup> Arnhart, 267.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 265.

<sup>15</sup> Tessitore, 34.

<sup>16</sup> Jaffa, 130.

<sup>17</sup> Hanley, 1.

## II. Aristotle's Dialectic

In the *Topics*, Aristotle distinguishes the dialectical method from the demonstrative. The dialectical method starts a line of reasoning from *endoxa*, while the demonstrative starts from first principles (*Top100a27-30*). *Endoxa* are common opinions held by all, by most, or by the wise (*Top100b22-23*, *Rh1361a25-27*). The dialectical method surveys *endoxa* before reaching a conclusion.

The *Posterior Analytics* passage is best understood in terms of Aristotle's dialectic. According to Aristotle, a definition is a set of words that indicates the definiendum's essence (*Top101b38*). Directly before discussing *megalopsuchia*, Aristotle presents the formula for constructing a definition (*APo97a24-97a31*).

1. Select attributes which describe the essence.
2. Arrange them in order of priority.
3. Make sure that the selection is complete.

Aristotle mentions *megalopsuchia* because it is a possible example of a definiendum that may admit more than one essence. He does not argue that *megalopsuchia*, in fact, admits more than one essence. Alcibiades, Achilles, and Ajax are commonly thought to be *megalopsuchoi* because they are intolerant of dishonor; Lysander and Socrates because they are indifferent to fortune. Aristotle does not state that these characters are *megalopsuchoi*. They are *megalopsuchoi* only if they possess *megalopsuchia*. If both sets of characters possess *megalopsuchia* because they intolerant of honor and indifferent to fortune, and if intolerance of dishonor and indifference to fortune do not share an essence, then *megalopsuchia* is a definiendum with two essences.

However, in naming these characters, Aristotle only surveys the *endoxa* with respect to *megalopsuchia*. He does not follow the formula for constructing a definition. That is, Aristotle does not investigate what is essential for *megalopsuchia*, arrange the *endoxa* in order of priority, or make sure that the selection is complete. Rather, the intolerance of dishonor and the indifference to fortune are merely unrefined *endoxa* commonly associated with *megalopsuchia*. By contrast, Aristotle investigates what is essential for *megalopsuchia* in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. The *endoxa* in the *Posterior Analytics* are *prima facie* inconsistent with the *megalopsuchos* in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Intolerance of dishonor seems to exceed the right disposition toward honor and dishonor (*EN1123b22*), and indifference to fortune seems to fall short of observing due measure with respect fortune (*EN1124a14*).

## III. A Multi-Tracked Account

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle gives us three necessary conditions for *megalopsuchia*. First, the *megalopsuchos* must possess the other virtues. This is because the *megalopsuchia* is the *kosmos* of the virtues, which "enhances their greatness, and ... cannot exist without them" (*EN1124a1-3*).

Second, the *megalopsuchos* must be rightly disposed toward honor. Honor is the primary object of *megalopsuchia* because it is the greatest external good (*EN1123b34-35*). However, the *megalopsuchos* does not care for all honors. Only honors accorded by the *spoudaioi*, or persons

of worth, will give him pleasure (EN1124a5-9). He hates honors given indiscriminately accorded by those who are not *spoudaioi* (EN1124a10). The *megalopsuchos* is not concerned with honor *qua* honor, then, because he regards it as a small good (EN1124a15-20). Therefore, Aristotle holds that the *megalopsuchos* must have this “right disposition” toward honor and dishonor (EN1123b22).

Third, the *megalopsuchos* must have the right disposition toward fortune. Aristotle says he is indifferent to fortune and self sufficient (EN1177a27-b1, EN1199b18-33). However, gifts of fortune, such as noble birth, wealth, and power contribute to *megalopsuchia* (EN1124a20-24). This is because gifts of fortune contribute to the possession of the other virtues. For example, wealth contributes to magnificence. Therefore, the *megalopsuchos* is not entirely indifferent to fortune. Instead, Aristotle states that he must “observe due measure with respect to wealth, power, and good and bad fortune in general, as they may befall him” (EN1124a14).

Aristotle’s virtues are what Rosalind Hursthouse often calls ‘multi-tracked’ – they involve dispositions to think, act, and feel. Aristotle defines virtue as a robust character trait to properly act and exhibit emotions (EN1105b25-26). Virtue requires being rightly disposed toward many different parameters in different contexts. Parameters are different aspects of feeling and acting that fall under the sphere of a virtue. Aristotle states:

But to experience all of this at the right time, toward the right objects, toward the right people, for the right reason, and in the right manner – that is the mean and the best course, the course that is the mark of virtue. (1106b20-24)

In the case of temperance, for example, a person may be intemperate with respect to an amount parameter, by eating too much or too little. Alternatively, he may be intemperate with respect to an occasion parameter, by eating too often or too seldom. Even under a single sphere of human action it is possible to err in many ways. Eating too much and too often are both excessive with respect to temperance. By contrast, eating too little and too seldom are both deficient. While there are many ways to go wrong, every way errs either toward excess or deficiency.

To illustrate, Aristotle’s account of courage spells out multiple parameters. He states:

Accordingly, he is courageous who endures and fears the right things, for the right motive, in the right manner, and at the right time, who displays confidence in a similar way. (1115b18-19)

There are many ways not to be courageous, but only one way to be courageous. Getting any parameter is vicious. A person errs toward cowardice by exhibiting too much fear or by exhibiting fear too often. Fearing too much involves an emotion parameter and fearing too often involves an occasion parameter. While the cowardly person may err with respect to either parameter, he nonetheless errs toward cowardice. Similarly, a person may err toward rashness by exhibiting too much confidence or by exhibiting confidence too often. In different contexts, courage has radically different extensions. For example, one may be courageous on the battlefield, or courageous battling cancer. However, in any given context, one must be rightly

disposed toward fear and confidence, i.e., he must endure and fear right objects, for the right reasons, in the right way, at the right time, and so on.

So too, *megalopsuchia* entails being rightly disposed toward honor in fortune in any given context. One errs with respect to honor if he values honor too much, from the wrong people, for the wrong reason, at the wrong time, in the wrong way, and so on. This may involve, for example, seeking honor from unworthy people. Similarly, one errs with respect to fortune if he fails to observe due measure with respect to fortune. That is, one errs if he observes too much, for the wrong reason, at the wrong time, in the wrong way, and so on. This may involve valuing the wrong objects, or the wrong gifts of fortune, e.g., eagerly anticipating the bad fortune of others. Like courage, *megalopsuchia* has radically different extensions in different contexts. One possesses *megalopsuchia* just in case he possesses the other virtues, and the right dispositions toward honor and fortune. It is possible for politicians and philosophers to meet these conditions. In either context, *megalopsuchia* entails the right dispositions toward honor and fortune.

An upshot of my account is that the characters in the *Posterior Analytics* passage are excessive and deficient. Alcibiades, Achilles, and Ajax err toward the *chaunos*, who claims much but deserves little. An intolerance of dishonor exceeds the right disposition. They are disposed to act improperly, because they exhibit improper emotion. That is, they are disposed to be excessively angry in response to dishonor. By contrast, Lysander and Socrates err toward the *mikropsuchos*, who claims little but deserves much. A complete indifference to fortune falls short of observing due measure with respect to fortune. They are improperly disposed, because they are deficient of emotion. That is, they do not exhibit enough emotion in response to misfortune. Therefore, Alcibiades, Achilles, and Ajax claim more than they deserve, and Lysander and Socrates less than they deserve.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

*Megalopsuchia* is ambiguous because deserving and claiming much are described through the *megalopsuchos* and his dispositions toward honor and fortune. His disposition toward honor suggests he is a statesman, and fortune suggests he is a philosopher. I argued that this is a problem because the two exemplars are incompatible. I resolved this incompatibility by arguing that the dispositions are multi-tracked – they involve dispositions to think, act, and feel. One possesses *megalopsuchia* just in case he possesses the other virtues and the right dispositions toward honor and fortune. In any context, being rightly disposed toward honor and fortune further entails being so disposed toward all of the relevant parameters. Although *megalopsuchia* has radically different extensions in the contexts of politics and philosophy, both extensions entail the right dispositions.

**Geoffrey James:**

## **Why Utilitarianism Does Not Justify Vegetarianism**

Peter Singer is one of the most controversial contemporary philosophers. He has made unparalleled contributions to the field of ethics and animal rights; however, despite his success, I believe there is a flaw in his justification for Vegetarianism on Utilitarian grounds. In this paper, I examine Singer's arguments for Vegetarianism and some objections raised by Tom Regan. This paper will consist of three parts. Part I gives a brief summary of Singer's initial argument for vegetarianism. Part II presents the objections to Singer's argument for vegetarianism by Tom Regan. Finally, Part III will show that Singer has not sufficiently responded to the objections by Regan, and consequently, should reject any form of utilitarianism to support vegetarianism.

### **I**

#### ***Singer's defense of Vegetarianism from Utilitarianism***

##### ***I.1 Preliminaries***

Singer asserts that he is a "vegetarian because he is a utilitarian", (Singer, *Utilitarianism*.325). Singer's argument for vegetarianism lies in connecting two theories: (1) the principle of utility (2) and a principle of equality. Since Singer claims that he is a vegetarian because he is a utilitarian, then it would logically follow that Singer is a utilitarian first, and a vegetarian second; therefore, I will briefly look at Singer's argument for utilitarianism, and then I will look at his justification for vegetarianism.

##### ***I.2 Singer's Utilitarianism***

In Singer's *Writings on an Ethical Life*, Singer reasons taking a broad utilitarian position is the best approach when handling ethical issues. He claims that when thinking about ethics, one must not only take their interests to heart, but they must consider the interests of others when making a decision. According to Singer, an action should promote the maximum happiness for all those whose interests are considered, and minimize the pain or sadness for all those whose interests are considered. Should we only be concerned with the interests of human animals? Singer thinks not. Singer first argues why racism, sexism, or any form of prejudice is wrong against another human being. He believes that when one race or sex considers their interests more important than the interests of another race or sex, he violates a principle of ethics. When discussing a human's interests, Singer doesn't mean the trivial interests to acquire capital, or drive a specific car; he means to discuss the most foundational level of interests: the interests not to suffer or to feel pain. We need, as ethically concerned human beings, to take the consideration of all humans who have the ability to suffer:

If a being suffers there can be no moral justification for refusing to take that suffering into consideration. No matter what the nature of the being, the principle of equality

requires that its suffering be counted equally with the like suffering-in so far as rough comparisons can be made-of any other being. (Singer, Writings. 35)

Singer then argues that there is no difference between the ability to suffer for a human animal, and the ability to suffer for a non-human animal. Both beings (humans and non-human animals) are sentient beings; (beings who have the ability to feel pain, have their interests taken away from them, etc...) therefore, we should not put our interests over the interests of another being that has the same foundational interests that we have-such an act would be another form of prejudice called speciesism.

### ***I.3 The Principle of Equality can lead to Vegetarianism***

The concept of a principle of equality tells us why we should become vegetarians. By eating meat, we are supporting an immoral industry that takes away the foundational interests of non-human animals to feed the higher level interests for human animals. When animals are put in adverse conditions, and made to suffer before being slaughtered, their foundational level of interests is taken away from them. This argument for vegetarianism is a good one; however, as Regan points out in his “Utilitarianism, Vegetarianism, and Animal Rights”, piece, this argument for Vegetarianism doesn’t seem to have anything to do with Utilitarianism.

## **II**

### ***Tom Regan’s objections to Singer’s defense of Vegetarianism***

#### ***II.1 Regan’s Thesis***

Regan agrees with the conclusion drawn by Peter Singer: we should be vegetarians; however, Regan believes that the arguments used by Peter Singer to justify Vegetarianism are invalid. In his paper, Regan believes that a rights based view of animals plays an important role in justifying Vegetarianism. Although he sparingly mentions this view towards the end of his piece, the focus of his argument is not in justifying the rights view; instead, he focuses on showing the inconsistencies of Singer’s argument for Vegetarianism from Utilitarianism. Regan believes that Singer’s support of Utilitarianism is non-existent in his initial argument for Vegetarianism:

Here, it perhaps bears emphasizing, Singer points to a particular capacity-namely, the capacity for suffering or, as he says a few lines later, the capacity for ‘suffering and/or enjoyment’-as the basis for the right to equal consideration. (Regan, Utilitarianism 306)

Regan raises a good issue: if one wants to argue for Vegetarianism by using a specific principle of philosophy, it would seem advantageous to mention how such a principle leads to the specific conclusion that one would like to reach. Unfortunately, and this is Regan’s thesis, Singer fails to justify Vegetarianism by relying on a principle of equality, or as Regan mentions, a principle of treatment.

## ***II.2 Inconsistencies in connecting Vegetarianism and Utilitarianism***

Regan begins his attack on Singer's position by analyzing Singer's supposed utilitarian position about our slaughter of animals for our trivial interest of taste. Singer believes that it is immoral to slaughter animals because we want the food that we consume to taste good. Regan argues that such an assertion could be utilitarian if Singer discusses the differences between the happiness humans can receive from eating pleasurable food, and the suffering the non-human animals receive by being slaughtered; however, there is no such data prevalent in Singer's argument: "when Singer objects to *p* [eating animals] on the ground that it does not 'cater for anything more than our pleasures of taste,' he [does not give us an] answer as we should expect from a utilitarian", (Regan, Utilitarianism 310).

Singer seems to allude to a connection between Utilitarianism and Vegetarianism when he discusses the possibility of a positive consequence of the masses adopting a vegetarian diet. Singer states that "By ceasing to rear and kill animals for food, we can make so much extra food available for humans that, properly distributed, It would eliminate starvation", (Singer, Writings. 27). Regan asserts that such a connection is extremely flawed based on these grounds. Since a utilitarian should only be worried about the consequences of an action, it seems logical that a utilitarian should provide hard data substantiating his claim. Any allusion to an idea seems to be insufficient if one is to make an argument based on the end result of an action.

## ***II.3 The failure of Singer to connect Utilitarianism and the principle of equality.***

Regan then analyzes Singer's usage of his principle of equality. Regan believes that it is unclear how such a principle is connected with any utilitarian basis. He believes that if the principle is connected to a utilitarian basis, then it must be so in three possible ways: (1) The principle of equal treatment is synonymous with the principle of utility; (2) The principle of equal treatment follows from the principle of utility; (3) The principle of equal treatment, (equality), is presupposed by the principle of utility. (Regan, Utilitarianism 315) Regan then systematically argues why each possibility is invalid or not shown to be sound by Singer. Regan dismisses the first possibility as invalid for the following reason: The principle of utility instructs us to bring about the greatest possible happiness for all beings considered, and to minimize the amount of suffering for all beings considered. The principle of equality, however, tells us how to *treat* another being by equating our like interests with theirs. These two principles are obviously not the same.

Regan then looks at the second possibility. If it was true that the principle of equal treatment followed from the principle of utility, then it would be impossible for one to affirm the principle of utility, while at the same time denying the principle of equal treatment; however, this can be shown to be true. The principle of utility indicates that we should try to maximize the greatest number of happy people, while simultaneously decreasing the number of sad people. A possible scenario that could follow from such a principle is the following: Bob travels to an unknown village in the jungles of the Congo. Immediately, the village chief invites Bob to come to the center of his village where 50 people are held captive. The village chief is planning to execute the 50 captives, but at the last minute the chief changes his mind. He tells Bob that he could kill the 50 captives or kill a 7 year old girl instead. He gives Bob the choice between allowing the 50

captives to be killed and for girl to be spared, or for the girl to be killed and the fifty captives to be spared. The Principle of equal treatment infers that no being should suffer for another's benefit; however, it seems that if the girl is killed, there would be more happy people, (the 50 captives who aren't killed), versus sad people, (only 1 girl is killed). After analyzing this example, it is clear to see why the principle of utility can be accepted while simultaneously denying the principle of equal treatment.

Finally, Regan analyzes the third possibility. Perhaps the principle of equal treatment is not identical or follows from the principle of utility; however, one could potentially argue that the principle of utility presupposes the principle of equal treatment. In order for this to be the case, Regan asserts that: "Like interests have like importance. That is something utilitarianism must presuppose even to get off the ground", (Regan, Utilitarianism, 317). Since Singer does not, anywhere in his argument, achieve such a presupposition, then "he fails to give a utilitarian basis for his objections against meat eating", (Regan, 318).

The objections raised by Regan seem to be twofold: (1) Singer does not give the hard data to support his position that a vegetarian diet would indeed promote the greater happiness of all beings considered, and reduce the suffering of all beings considered; (2) Singer does not show that the principle of equal treatment is either presupposed by the principle of utility, or even follows from the principle of utility; because he fails to defend himself against the objections raised by Regan, I believe Singer's arguments for Vegetarianism fail.

### III

#### *Singer's Failure to Defend Regan's Objections*

##### **III.1 What Singer has to do to defend his argument**

As I previously mentioned, Singer believes that he is a vegetarian because he is a utilitarian. As I also previously noted, this means that Singer will have to justify his vegetarian lifestyle by using the principle of utility. Regan raised two significant objections to Singer's argument for Vegetarianism; in order for Singer to defend himself, he would have to do the following: (1) Give hard data to support his position that a vegetarian diet would indeed promote the greater happiness of all beings considered, and reduce the suffering of all beings considered, or show that the hard data is not needed; (2) Show that the principle of equal treatment is either presupposed by the principle of utility, or that it follows from the principle of utility. I believe that Singer, through a very weak and apologetic defense, does not show either of these two points.

Singer begins his defense by asserting his utilitarian belief that we should always be concerned with the consequences of our actions when developing a moral theory. Since Utilitarianism aims at maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain for all sentient beings and since nonhuman animals can experience both pleasure and pain, then it would seem that they should be considered in our moral judgments. Singer states that his principle of equality is a tool used by the utilitarian in order to better consider his moral judgments. Instead of only considering human beings in the consequences of his moral judgments, now the utilitarian can consider all sentient beings in his moral judgments:

So utilitarians can do much to revise moral theory in favor of animals, merely by defending the claim that no being should have its interests disregarded or discounted merely because it is not human. (Singer, Utilitarianism. 329)

Does this statement answer any of the two objections raised by Regan? Singer affirms that he never discussed a principle of equal treatment; in fact, the only principle of equality that Singer supports is a principle that gives equal consideration to all sentient animals, regardless of their species. Despite his reaffirmation of this fact, it doesn't seem that Singer has shown a way to connect the implications presented by the principle of equality with the implications presented by the principle of utility.

### **III.2 *Singer Responds to three possible objections.***

Singer then attempts to respond to three possible reasons why a utilitarian condemnation of the treatment of farm animals could fall short of justifying a vegetarian diet. He states that the first way that utilitarianism could fall short of justifying a vegetarian diet is if we restricted our eating of meat to only the animals that did not suffer and died painlessly. Singer admits that there is no direct utilitarian objection to such a practice; however, he states that there is an implicit objection. He believes that if we are prepared to take the life of an animal in order to consume its flesh, then we are using the animal as a means to an end. Despite the truth of this fact, I do not see how this is a good response to the objection that Singer states himself. In order to justify Vegetarianism, Singer must give utilitarian reasons; using a being as a means instead of as an ends has nothing to do with promoting the greatest happiness, and minimizing sorrow. Singer seems to fail to answer his own potential objection!

The second objection Singer attempts to answer is the first objection raised by Regan: (1) Singer must give hard data showing that a vegetarian diet would promote the greatest happiness and minimize sadness in the world in order to justify Utilitarianism as his basis for Vegetarianism. Singer begins his response to Regan's objection by admitting that retrieving such data is extremely convoluted and he has not done all the calculations involved. Despite this fact, Singer says that he has started the necessary research to calculate such information. Singer states that his first step to this process was showing the suffering of animals in farm factories. The second step, Singer believes, was to show that a vegetarian diet would not affect our health, or our need to feed the growing population. The third step in Singer's calculations would be to consider the unhappiness or loss of the people involved in raising animals to be slaughtered. He believes that the gain people would receive from feeding the malnourished with grains and soybeans to reducing heart disease and cancer of the colon would outweigh the sadness produced by the loss of jobs of the factory farm workers.

### **III.3 *Singer's Failings.***

This is all well and good; however, where is the data that supports this information? Singer has not shown the following: (1) the relationship of heart disease and cancer to eating meat; or (2) how soybeans and grains would feed the population of malnourished people. On top of this, Singer seems to forget about the relationship between eating meat, and the millions of jobs that people may have in such an industry. *All* fast food restaurant chains would be closed or be forced

to spend millions of dollars overhauling their purchase of meat products for vegetarian products. Many employees would have to be laid off, or would have to receive new training in preparing and serving vegetarian products. Advertisement agencies that build their empire in order to market these fast food restaurants would also be disbanded. People who make a living off of showing others how to cook meat would also lose their jobs, etc... Singer's conclusion that there would be a greater number of sentient beings happy if all humans adopted a vegetarian diet seems significantly flawed without hard proof data to substantiate such an argument. Singer believes that to avoid this unhappiness, a "gradual phasing out which would allow the industry to be wound down in an orderly fashion", (Singer, Utilitarianism. 334), would have to happen. But Singer fails to say *how* gradual? How many years would it take to fizzle out industries relied on meat production to avoid extreme unhappiness? If the interests of one animal should not be sacrificed for another, even the totality of human beings' interests should not allow that one animal's interests to be sacrificed. In five years, millions of animals would be slaughtered; despite the fact that the end result is the safety of billions of more animals, it would seem that the principle of equality is neglected for the bigger picture.

Singer fails miserably in attempting to defend the position that Utilitarianism justifies Vegetarianism. The two objections raised by Regan, Singer neglects to answer. At the end of Singer's response paper, the reader does not have the data substantiating Singer's claim that the gradual abolition of the meat industry would promote the greatest happiness in the world. Nor does Singer provide any true connection between his principle of equality and Utilitarianism. The fact remains that Utilitarianism and the principle of equality seem to be incompatible. No matter how emotive Singer's argument may sound, he does not provide a very convincing argument; therefore, it seems logical that Singer should abandon his argument for Vegetarianism by using a utilitarian basis. Despite the fact that Regan doesn't really provide a solution to Singer's problem, I believe we can conclude that if one is a vegetarian, it cannot be for any utilitarian reasons.

**Timothy James Wright:**

## **The Sacred Whore**

*Breaking the Waves* (1996) and *The Rapture* (1991) both use a promiscuous female hero to explore the themes of faith in the absurd and finding the sacred through the violent. This paper, through the films, Søren Kierkegaard's<sup>1</sup> *Fear and Trembling*, written under the pseudonym Johannes de Silentio, and the Bible, will explore the ways in which each film looks at these ideas and ultimately show that while *The Rapture* is a strong exploration of faith, *Breaking the Waves*, in due course, provides the viewer with deeper insight into, and an example of, faith and the sacred in contemporary society.

First, it is important to establish what we are talking about when we use the term "faith." I will not provide a strict universal definition, but instead, use the example of faith that de Silentio finds most important. In Genesis Chapter 22, God tells Abraham, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about." From there, Abraham takes Isaac, a donkey, and 2 servants on a three-day journey to Moriah. On the third day, he leaves the servants and the donkey behind. Isaac carries the wood and knife for his sacrifice and at one point asks his father where the lamb is. Abraham replies that, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering." They continue on, and when they reach the top of the mountain God had instructed Abraham to, Abraham builds an altar, places the wood on it, and then binds Isaac on top of the wood. Then he takes the knife and holds it over Isaac, in the striking position. Before he can slay his only son, whom he loves, an angel calls to him from Heaven, and tells him not to hurt the boy. After this, Abraham spots a ram in the bush, and sacrifices the ram instead of his son. Then the angel tells Abraham that God has seen that Abraham fears Him, and He will reward Abraham.

Some pastors, priests, reverends, or Rabbis teach this passage as a story of blind faith. They will say that we should all be so fortunate as to have the kind of trust in God that Abraham has. We should follow his lead, listen to the word of God, and know that there will be a reward in the end.

De Silentio provides a different interpretation of Abraham's faith, and it is this understanding, provided in *Fear and Trembling*, that is guiding my judgment of the Characters of Sharon and Bess. De Silentio is not a man who has faith. Through de Silentio, Kierkegaard presents Abraham's story from the perspective of the society, which contains everyone outside of Abraham, and finds itself in reason. We must all view Abraham's story from this vantage. As society, we live within an ethos, a tradition that provides us with an ethic. The societal ethic of Kierkegaard's time works within the "system." By this point, both Kant and Hegel are widely

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that Kierkegaard wrote *Fear and Trembling* under the pseudonym Johannes de Silentio, and that he requested in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, that when referencing a pseudonymous book, one should refer to the pseudonym, and not Kierkegaard. Thus, from this point, I refer to the author as de Silentio.

acknowledged, and their systematic, reason-based ethics have infiltrated most of society, including the church.

Our own society and its ethic are direct descendants of this society, and so we have not far removed ourselves from de Silentio's perspective. Judging from such a reason based tradition, we ought to be outraged, sickened, and disgusted by what Abraham is willing to do. God does command Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, and in that way, he does not arbitrarily decide sacrificing his son would be something to do, but Abraham does have to recognize the voice, and decide that this is the voice of God, and that God does want him to kill his son. He also has to choose, in his free will, to follow God's will. He can simply say no and he and Isaac can go on with their lives, but he does choose to believe that this is the voice of God, and he chooses to follow the command. He takes Isaac to the top of the mountain, he binds him to the altar, and he raises a knife to strike his only son, a living, breathing, feeling, thinking human being, as a sacrifice to a God who would ask him to sacrifice his only son. How can society allow for this behavior?

De Silentio must qualify Abraham's actions. He differentiates the hero of faith, Abraham, and the tragic hero. The tragic hero, or someone whose story a church leader could present before a congregation and say, "Follow this man's example," is reasonable. This hero works out of resignation; he has an obligation to an ethical absolute, and he does what he does to fulfill that duty. Often, the tragic hero does not even have free will. He is destined, and moves toward the same end regardless of his actions. In the tragic hero mythology, the fates make his decisions. De Silentio assumes that humans have free will, and does not even question it. In general, Kierkegaard talks little of free will, other than in relation to sin.

Abraham, in stark opposition, has complete free will. He uses this to act outside of a politically acceptable reason. It is not logical within a societal ethic to will to kill your only son, whom you love, in a burnt offering to a God that would ask you do to that. Not only is it not logical, it is not ethical. De Silentio refers to this as the teleological suspension of the ethical. This occurs in the religious stage, the third of three in the movement toward faith. There is no reason here, and there is no foundation in an ethical realm. This is essentially Nietzsche's *übermensch*. The individual defines the moral, except that for Kierkegaard, it is the individual's relationship with the divine that does this.

The basis for Abraham's morality is absurd to a reason-based community that does not accept divine command, such as the one de Silentio is writing for, and it is this seeming absurdity that justifies his action for him. Because the community cannot empathize with Abraham's personal relationship with the divine, he seems to act unethical. However, Abraham is actually suspending the finite ethos of human society, transcending it to move momentarily in the infinite command of God, before moving back into the finitude of communal law.

When Abraham ties Isaac down to the woodpile altar, and takes his knife to stab his son, whom he loves, he has no justification from any system of ethics. A Hegelian ethic, which claims that morality is a social construct, and which de Silentio jests at considerably, surely cannot see any way possible that this act can serve some function to society. From this perspective, no reward in Heaven or on earth could possibly justify stabbing your only son and burning him as a sacrifice.

Again, though, it is Abraham's subjective relationship with the divine that prompts him to trust in God's command and submit to His will. Abraham does not need justification.

The very idea that God would ask Abraham to kill Isaac is absurd to anyone outside of that personal relationship with God. In this conversation, we must consider the absurd that which the individual can experience or understand in such a subjective way that it cannot be rationalized, understood, or even sympathized with by another. We might also interchange "the absurd" with "the sacred." For the community, God's request represents the absurd, here. God is absurd in asking this, and Abraham is absurd to acknowledge such a God as a good God and as one to whom he should and will listen. It is absurd to the community, and it transcends its good and evil. Abraham transcends its good and evil. Eventually, though, Abraham will come back to the finite state of ethics, and there, he must rely on grace to sustain his soul. This is our understanding of faith, one that requires fear and trembling, that we might hear the voice of God call on us to transcend the communal ethic and move beyond our conceptions of existence and well-being.

Through this lens, we should first look at Sharon from *The Rapture*. Sharon is an attractive telemarketer who spends her days confined to a small desk with walls blocking her from those sitting directly on either side of her. Here, she keeps to herself. At night, she goes to bars with her wealthy sexual partner to pick up other couples to engage in orgies. She has no genuine relationships, and her closest relationship is with her swinging partner. This psychological separation, along with the physical separation in her work leaves her feeling as though she is missing something. This follows the profile of the swinger, or someone de Silentio would consider in the aesthetic stage, the first of his three stages in the movement towards faith. The nightly acts of giving of her self freely in an attempt to fill her emptiness are a strong representation of the constant process of self-dispersal that characterizes this stage. Here, when the physical actions are violently pillaging her soul, she is the absence of the sacred.

From here, she moves into de Silentio's second stage, that of the ethical. She is a born again member of the small Christian sect in her community. She stops having sex with the man she has begun seeing on a regular basis, and attempts to cleanse her self of her former life. She does this, however, from a sense of obligation. It is this sense of duty to her religion that separates her from the religious stage. She is still in this stage when her husband is murdered and she has a vision telling her to go out into the desert, with her young daughter, Maggie, and wait for the Second Coming of Christ.

The move to the desert is what cultivates her move into the religious stage, where de Silentio says that Abraham was, and where one finds true faith. Early in the stay in the desert, she is acting out of resignation. She has heard the call of God and she has chosen to follow the call, taking Maggie out of school, away from an appropriate shelter, and away from any chance at developing the social skills necessary for adulthood. She never seems to have a real sense of forlornness, though. She never seems to be aware that this is entirely her decision and that she is without excuse.

That sense comes as she and Maggie begin to suffer severely from hunger. Here, she begins to doubt her God and herself. It is now that the two decide to stop waiting for God and take their transcendence to Heaven into their own hands. Sharon never fully completes her movement

towards faith. It would appear, at first glance, that she suspends the ethical and moves into the sacred when she pulls the trigger on Maggie. Instead, she immediately recognizes her action as a mistake, which she rationalizes through the communal ethic. She is convinced that she has to kill Maggie so she can go to Heaven, and then rationalizes that she cannot kill herself because she will not be able to go to Heaven if she does.

Sharon murders her daughter as a sacrifice. She sacrifices her daughter's life on earth, as well as her own soul, as she sees it, so that Maggie can have life in heaven. She violently murders her only daughter, whom she loves, so that Maggie can escape the awful life she lives on earth. This is the sacred in the violent.

In *Breaking the Waves*, Bess is a young woman of questionable mental capacity living in a community of a small religious sect in Scotland. She marries Jan, a man from outside the sect, who works on an oilrig, staying out to sea for months at a time. Missing him deeply, Bess prays for his return, and shortly after, an accident paralyzes him, forcing his return. Believing he will die, and afraid that Bess will not be able to cope if she spends all of her time caring for him until then, he tells her to take on a lover. She does so, believing this will save Jan, ultimately leading to her death.

Bess begins as what the church would call a faithful person. She has a strong desire to please. She does what she can to please the church fathers, God, and her husband. Her church always represents God in the masculine form, and all of His representation is male. This being the case, it is not a stretch to believe that Bess might have an inclination to view Jan's commands as the commands of God. Therefore, when Jan tells Bess to go out into the world and find a lover, she does not consider it the request of a man impaired by pills or close to death, but something that she must do.

She follows his command, and she does so against her culture's sense of logic, reason, science, and her own well-being, all the while, knowing that it is her choice. She goes out and takes on lovers. She finds men in bars and men on the bus. She cries through sex with a man just a few feet from a road. She goes onto a ship, where two men attempt to rape her, and beat her badly in the process. Then she goes back, at which time they beat her to death. What she does to herself by going back to the ship is sick to the viewer, and should be to anyone that is not her and thus cannot understand, as her experience with the divine is unique to her, but this simultaneously sanctifies her. She goes through with these actions when it is against her self and against the world. She chooses the absurd, and makes a conscious decision to go back out to the boat, knowing that she is in great danger there.

The film provides an important insight into faith in the chapter titled *Faith*. This is the only point in the film when Bess prays and does not feel God's presence. The important lesson here is that Bess continues with what she has been doing. She goes on, when it seems clear to the viewer that even God has abandoned her. This is what makes her story one of faith, though. It would not be faith if God were always there to tell her to go on. It is when she cannot hear God, but continues as though He is still there, that she acts in true faith.

In the story of Bess, both her life after Jan's accident and her death represent the sacred in the violent, and her sacrifice to Jan. She gives her blood so that he may have life. She is the sacred sacrifice, and she is the sacred in the violent.

Both films end with a confirmation of the existence of God, which de Silentio, assumes. Sharon's story ends with her inability to cope with the absurdity of a God who would allow her to kill her child. Bess' story ends with church bells, markers of beginnings, ringing for her death. Sharon has the opportunity to show great faith and allow God to work, but she does not have the faith to wait for God. Bess takes God at His word, and she, like Abraham, receives God's blessings of abundance. As de Silentio says to Abraham, "you gained everything and kept Isaac."  
(22)

**Jonathan Langlinais:**

## **Hegel's Concept of Virtue as Ethical Phronesis**

Hegel's political philosophy is often criticized as being anti-individualist or proto-fascist, and indeed some of the basic assumptions of fascism can be found in Hegel's account of the State. But this all-too-simplistic critique obscures the role of virtue in the Hegelian State, which might otherwise challenge such a critique. Although he is critical of Aristotelian moral virtue and is prone to replace it with rectitude, Hegel reserves a function for virtue in his *Philosophy of Right*, albeit a conception of virtue that differs considerably from what we typically think of as virtue. Against Andrew Buchwalter, who considers Hegel's concept of virtue to be a revived form of Greek civic virtue, I will argue that virtue for Hegel is a species of *phronesis* peculiar to Ethical Life.

In Hegel's philosophy, the only legitimate subject of inquiry is the development of the Concept, or self-determining thought, through the self-sustained process of negation, or dialectic. Through Hegelian dialectic, the Concept determines itself by the continual exposure of its "one-sidedness," the Concept's inability to account for the whole of which it is the concept. The one-sided or abstract character of the Concept reveals itself in the face of contradiction, and prompts the subsumption or "sublation" of the abstract instantiation of the Concept by a new, more concrete instantiation. Hegel calls these instantiations "moments" of the Concept. The dialectic is repeated, proceeding from moment to moment until the Concept is wholly sufficient. At this point, the Concept is fully actualized; this actualization gives rise to the Idea.<sup>1</sup>

The *Philosophy of Right* (hereafter *PR*), Hegel's main political work, traces the development of the concept of freedom and the individual will through three moments or "spheres:" Abstract Right, Morality, and Ethical Life.

The concept of freedom in the sphere of Abstract Right is essentially negative. The abstract will is characterized by immediacy, and is concerned only with its own needs. The freedom of the abstract will, therefore, is the freedom to be left alone, unimpeded in the pursuit of its own ends; a freedom the abstract will retains so long as it recognizes the similar freedom of other wills. The one-sidedness of negative freedom is exposed when the abstract will enters into a contract with another out of necessity and is subsequently wronged. Through the encounter with wrong, Abstract Right is sublated by Morality.

Having been wronged, the individual will resolves, through its new found subjectivity, to determine itself by a universal principle, i.e. the good, and thereby enters the sphere of Morality. Surrounded by an external world not similarly determined, the moral will decides to make itself

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Houlgate. *Freedom, Truth, and History: An Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1991), 5-10.

the sole judge of what is good. As such, the freedom of the moral will is the freedom of universal subjectivity. But as a consequence of this unchecked subjectivity the moral will becomes susceptible to evil, thus exposing the deficiency of the concept of freedom in the sphere of Morality.

To mitigate the possibility of evil, moral wills must externalize their subjective sentiments to provide an objective standard of conduct manifested as law and custom. When the individual will identifies itself with these laws and customs, it enters the sphere of Ethical Life (*Sittlichkeit*) and becomes an ethical will. The freedom of the ethical will, which is the individual's true freedom according to Hegel, lies in a type of submission to the ethical norms of society and through participation in the State. The individual is sublated by the State rather than annihilated by it, and retains the negative and subjective freedoms first encountered in the preceding spheres. This point is crucial if we are to consider Hegel's concept of virtue as anything more than simple conformity.

Hegel's discussion of virtue occurs in the spheres of Morality and Ethical Life. Virtue "in the strict sense of the word,"<sup>2</sup> though necessary only, as we will see, in exceptional circumstances, plays a pivotal role in the actualization of the Idea of freedom and the maintenance of Ethical Life. This concept of virtue sublates the classical account, which Hegel locates in the sphere of Morality and of which Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (hereafter *NE*) is paradigmatic.

According to Aristotle, a virtue is a disposition of character that enables the possessor of said disposition to act well.<sup>3</sup> "Acting well" in an Aristotelian context is understood with respect to the ultimate end, or *telos*, of the agent in question. For example, the end of the eye is to see, and therefore the virtue of the eye is seeing well. The *telos* of a human being, Aristotle says, is *eudaemonia*, often translated as "happiness" or "flourishing." Since happiness is the highest good for human beings, the virtues are necessarily those dispositions of character that enable human beings to live happy lives. Furthermore, virtue "is a mean condition,"<sup>4</sup> found between excessive and deficient feeling or action, both of which are vices; to react rashly or cowardly in the face of fear, for instance, is vicious, while to react courageously is virtuous. Using this method, Aristotle distills a table of virtues necessary for human happiness.

Aristotle also deduces a set of intellectual virtues to complement the moral virtues. The principle intellectual virtue discussed in *NE* is *phronesis*, most commonly translated as "prudence" or "practical wisdom." *Phronesis*, Aristotle says, is the deliberative faculty that matches means to ends and considers what is good for oneself in general.<sup>5</sup> In Book VI of *NE*, Aristotle says that "it is not possible to be good in the true sense without prudence, or to be prudent without moral goodness."<sup>6</sup> Without *phronesis*, an individual would be unable to apply general principles to particular circumstances, and would therefore be unable to engage in virtuous conduct.

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<sup>2</sup> G.W.F. Hegel. *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. Trans. T.M. Knox. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1967), 108.

<sup>3</sup> Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans. J.A.K. Thomson (New York, NY: Penguin, 2004), 38-39.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 150-157.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

Hegel's concept of virtue largely jettisons Aristotle's account of moral virtue. Phronesis, however, survives Hegel's reformulation and constitutes the heart of his theory of virtue in Ethical Life.

Hegel's chief criticism of classical moral virtue is that it "readily borders on empty rhetoric."<sup>7</sup> "Since virtues are ethical principles applied to the particular," Hegel says, "and since in this their subjective aspect they are something indeterminate, there turns up here for determining them the qualitative principle of more or less."<sup>8</sup> The problem as Hegel sees it is that the virtues, which we designate with general terms like "justice" or "liberality," are devoid of content in themselves. Courage is nothing but a word if divorced from actual courageous acts. Being empty, the virtues are vulnerable to the subjective approximations of the moral will. Unfortunately, as Aristotle readily admits, giving determinant content to moral virtue is not an exact science but depends upon degree. Because of this ambiguity, we are led to such questions as how many drinks one may have before being guilty of intemperance, or to otherwise quibble over matters of degree.

Matters of degree, however, can only be considered with respect to the two poles of a continuum, and therefore "consideration of [the virtues] introduces their corresponding vices."<sup>9</sup> Returning to the example of courage, the attempt to locate the virtue can only be accomplished with respect to rashness and cowardice. The virtue itself, in fact, is a rather inconsequential factor in the process of deciding what the virtuous course of action is. The ambiguity inherent in moral virtue grants the moral will license to exercise its unbound subjectivity to determine what constitutes virtue for itself; this is precisely the situation that Hegel insists must be overcome.

Along with being ambiguous, Hegel believes that a system of moral virtue may conceivably create a situation in which adhering to one virtue requires trespassing against another. "Where they subsist together thus absolutely," Hegel says, "the virtues simply destroy one another."<sup>10</sup> That is, unless the virtues emanate from a unified spirit. If the many virtues are but instantiations of a single spirit, then by surrendering their absolute character, the virtues need not necessarily conflict. In the *Early Theological Writings*, this spirit is Christ-like love,<sup>11</sup> but the decidedly Christian character of these writings is replaced in *PR* by the ethical order.

Hegel resolves the ambiguity inherent in moral virtue by replacing it with duty. The subjective sentiment in Morality that takes the form of virtue remains empty within the sphere of Morality. To give this sentiment content (which is of the utmost importance for Hegel), and to escape the one-sidedness that results in evil, it must be actualized in the form of custom and, eventually, law. In the sphere of Ethical Life, the individual has objective standards to which he must conform and duties he must perform. Here the many enumerations of virtuous acts are replaced by explicit duties that appeal to concrete ethical norms instead of an indeterminate concept of moral virtue. "In an ethical community," Hegel says, "it is easy to say what man must do, what are the duties he has to fulfill in order to be virtuous: he has simply to follow the well-known and

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<sup>7</sup> Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 107.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> G.W.F. Hegel. *Early Theological Writings*. Trans. T.M. Knox. (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977), 247.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 244-247.

explicit rules of his own situation.”<sup>12</sup> What was formerly considered virtuous behavior becomes what Hegel calls “rectitude.”<sup>13</sup> Rectitude thwarts the moral will’s drive to be distinguished by democratizing the particular content of virtue.

The importance of custom in Hegel’s political philosophy encourages an interpretation of *PR* that emphasizes rectitude while forgetting virtue, and it is tempting to suggest that Hegel’s concept of virtue *is* rectitude. But Hegel makes a subtle yet important distinction between rectitude and virtue, thereby avoiding the elimination of human excellence from his political philosophy. Rectitude undercuts *moral* virtue in order to prevent the development of evil that results from unchecked subjectivity. Virtue, however, is not reducible to rectitude, though it is assigned by Hegel a more circumscribed role in political life than that of moral virtue in Aristotle’s political theory.

Hegel defines virtue as “the ethical order reflected in the individual character so far as that character is determined by its natural endowment;”<sup>14</sup> a frustratingly brief definition for the reader trying to distill a theory of virtue out of *PR*. Despite various mentions of virtue found in his other works, Hegel never gets down to describing exactly what virtuous conduct is or when it might be visible. On the other hand, Hegel says plenty about the ethical substance (*Sitte*) and the relationship between the individual and the State, and it is tempting to approach Hegel’s concept of virtue solely on these terms. This appears to be the spirit in which Andrew Buchwalter attempts to explicate Hegelian virtue in his paper “Hegel’s Concept of Virtue.”

Buchwalter characterizes Hegel’s concept of virtue as a kind of modern-day civic virtue “where genuine public spiritedness flows from reflection on the meaning of individual rights and liberties.”<sup>15</sup> In Buchwalter’s view, Hegelian virtue is essentially patriotism motivated by the ethical order found in the individual’s character. Virtue in the Hegelian state resembles Greek civic virtue, Buchwalter says, but whereas the ancient Greek pursues the ends of the polis because they are the ends of the polis, the individual in Hegel’s modern state wills the ends of the state because those ends are the product of the dialectical development of the concept of freedom in the individual’s consciousness.

In Buchwalter’s reading it is difficult to see the difference, if there is one, between public-spiritedness and the ethical substance itself. Granted the more an individual integrates his subjective will with the ethical order, the more patriotic and spirited he or she will become. But is that virtue? In *Ethical Life*, patriotism is more or less a given since the individual will is identical with the will of the community. In the context of the *Ethical Life*, then, patriotism is something relatively commonplace.

Certainly whatever form of virtue Hegel reserves for *Ethical Life* will seem mundane compared to the heroic virtue sought by the moral will, but if virtue is indistinguishable from the ethical substance, then virtue must be indistinguishable from rectitude. But this is a conclusion Buchwalter rightly rejects. Hegel makes a clear distinction between virtue and rectitude, but an

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<sup>12</sup> Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 107.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Andrew Buchwalter. “Hegel’s Concept of Virtue” *Political Theory* 20.4 (1992): 549.

interpretation of Hegelian virtue as public-spiritedness renders this distinction nebulous if not meaningless.

Buchwalter is right to highlight the prevalence of public-spiritedness among the citizenry of the Hegelian State, but a characterization of the citizenry in general fails to provide much insight into the character of the virtuous or excellent citizen. Willing the ethical order, as each individual does in an ethical community, is not a distinguishing mark of excellence in the Hegelian State. This is not to suggest that relative excellence is the sole determinant of virtue; Hegel derides the will that is motivated by the desire to stand out. Still, the existence of the excellent individual who does in fact stand out because of his or her natural abilities remains possible in the Hegelian State, but is not suitably accounted for in a characterization of virtue as public-spiritedness. Public-spiritedness at best describes the motivation of the virtuous individual who, like other individuals in the ethical community, wills the ethical order. But the issue at hand is not what motivates the virtuous individual. The question is: when is this person's virtue visible?

Although Hegel does not provide specific criteria for virtue, he does provide a test for virtue that is underappreciated in Buchwalter's treatment. In a fully-developed ethical community, Hegel says, "virtue in the strict sense of the word is in place and actually appears only in exceptional circumstances or when one obligation clashes with another."<sup>16</sup> Even in a community with a complete and explicit set of norms, there is always a risk that an individual may be simultaneously obligated by incommensurable duties. I will call such an instance an ethical antinomy.

Hegel provides no examples of these "exceptional circumstances," but it should be easy to imagine what he has in mind. Obviously the trivial conflicts of everyday life would not qualify, since these conflicts are easily resolved and are more inconveniences than clashes. But when a "genuine"<sup>17</sup> clash of obligations occurs, in which multiple obligations of some gravity obligate the individual with equal force, only the virtuous individual can successfully resolve the dilemma, where success implies actualizing the ethical order. Put another way, the ability to resolve ethical antinomies is the hallmark of virtue in Ethical Life.

Patriotism is not this ability. When we normally think of patriotism, we do not associate it with the capacity for problem-solving, and it is hard to imagine a conception of public-spiritedness that would imply such a capacity. Patriotism is a sentiment towards one's nation, not, strictly speaking, an ability of any kind. When faced with an ethical antinomy, the patriot cannot rely solely on his or her patriotism to determine a course of action — the ends do not supply the means. The ethical will cannot actualize the ethical order simply by willing the ethical order. "The laurels of *mere willing*," Hegel says, "are dried leaves that never were green."<sup>18</sup>

Phronesis, the intellectual capacity to match means to ends, would enable the individual to actualize his will and resolve ethical antinomies. Ethical Life gives the individual ends to pursue, the ethical order, and in most cases objective means of pursuing those ends, rectitude. But more

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<sup>16</sup> Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 108.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 252. (italics are mine).

is required of the individual in exceptional circumstances. When obligations conflict, the individual must choose which course of action best advances the ethical order and the ends of the State. Phronesis, as a deliberative ability, makes its possessor better able to make these decisions correctly.

Hegel's thoughts about virtue neatly parallel Aristotle's concept of phronesis, and there is a congruent dialectical tension between virtue and rectitude in Hegel on the one hand, and between prudence and moral virtue in Aristotle on the other. For Aristotle, it is not possible to be morally good without phronesis or vice versa. Similarly, for Hegel it is not possible to be ethical, in the specific sense Hegel uses, without virtue, or to be virtuous without an ethical will "when one obligation clashes with another." The phronesis Hegel describes though is peculiar to Ethical Life, both in that the subject of deliberation is the ethical order and that this manner of deliberation is peculiar to ethical wills. Hegel also stipulates that virtue is not required under normal circumstances, while for Aristotle the presence of phronesis is implied by the presence of moral virtue.

The development of the concept of virtue parallels the development of the individual will in *PR*. Just as the moral will surrenders its subjectivity to custom in the interest of freedom and so becomes the ethical will, moral virtue likewise surrenders its moral character to rectitude and so gives way to ethical virtue. The sublation of moral subjectivity into rectitude and ethical phronesis liberates the individual by allowing him or her to be at home in the world, free from the many false dilemmas that arise from the moral will's ability to "manufacture clashes of all sorts to suit its purposes and give itself consciousness of being something special and having made sacrifices."<sup>19</sup>

An interpretation of Hegelian virtue as ethical phronesis rather than public-spiritedness sheds more light on the function of virtue in Hegel's political theory. The virtuous individual in the Hegelian State contributes to actualization of the Idea of freedom and the maintenance of Ethical Life when it is most difficult: when the very laws and customs meant to advance the ends of the State serve to hinder that advancement.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 108

**Ryan Larosa:**

### **On American Foreign Policy: Non-Intervention, an American Tradition\***

Since the creation of United States a philosophical debate has ensued about what the proper role of America should be in the world. In the very beginning, the choice was limited; after the Revolutionary War, this country was in a massive amount of debt and could not afford to have colonial ambitions. Early American presidents like George Washington and Thomas Jefferson understood the benefits of liberal trade and non-entangling alliances and did not pursue such aggressive ambitions. These men did not want to establish the groundwork for an American Empire, having just separated from the British Empire. To really understand what early American traditions and ideals were, one must look at the philosophies that inspired the Founders. One of the most influential men on American political philosophy is English philosopher John Locke. The Founders believed that Locke's ideas of inalienable rights and the social contract is what justified their independence from England. By analyzing his work, Americans can truly understand what a large number of the Founders intended to be America's role in the world. Exploring Locke's *Second Treatise of Government*, it must be concluded that he would argue that a non-interventionist philosophy is the only proper foreign policy for a republic like the United States.

If one were to look at Locke's work on the state of nature, they would be able to apply this philosophy not only to individuals but to governments around the world. Firstly, individuals come out of the state of nature and create a commonwealth because they believe if they cede a little bit of their own power then they would benefit more than if they remained in the state of nature. Secondly, when these individuals form a government there is an agreement between the ones that govern and the governed. This government is only a legitimate force if it only exercises power that people give to it. It must follow that one country, like an individual can not exert its influence on another country's policies, because they would be exercising more power than they legitimately possess. I posit that when individuals come together and form a commonwealth then that government is a representation of those individuals, whether it may be a republic or a totalitarian government. All nations in the world should be viewed as completely sovereign individuals and participants in the state of nature. Locke says about men in the state of nature, "All men are in a state of perfect freedom, no man has more power than another, and the State of Nature has a law of nature to govern it; reason is that law." The same should be applied not only to individuals but the governments that represent those individuals. In the state of nature when one wrongs another he has a right to punish the offender so that it may never happen again. Locke says about the punishment of a transgressor:

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\* Special thanks for the help in developing this paper: Dr. Hugh Arnold, Dr. Alexander Hall, Dr. Ron Jackson, Dr. Marko Maunula, and Dr. Adam Tate.

But only to retribute to him, so far as calm reason and conscience dictates, what is proportionate to is transgression, which is so much as may serve for Reparation and Restraint. For these two are the only reason, why one Man may lawfully do harm to another, which is that we call punishment (Locke 290).

According to Locke, the only reason for one to harm another is defensively and proportionately. In his *Second Treatise of Government*, book two, section nine, line eleven through seventeen, Locke explicitly explains why one country has no authority to influence the policies of another:

Those who have the Supreme Power of making Laws in England, France or Holland, are to an Indian, but like the rest of the World, Mean without Authority: And therefore if by the Law of Nature, every Man hath not a power to punish Offences against it, as he soberly judges the case to require, I see not how the Magistrates of any Community, can punish an Alien of another County, since in reference to him, they can have no more Power, than what ever Man naturally may have over another (Locke 291).

This here is the logical case for non-intervention, every free society derives its power from the governed; one country can not intervene and try to shape another country's policies because it does not have the power from the ruled people.

We must also examine what Locke has written on the "State of War." In the state of war, a man is allowed to use violent force only when he has been attacked, for the law of nature is in support of reason to resolve conflicts. Reason always favors the innocent; the aggressors are always the one who forfeit reason and whose position is at all times illogical. Initiation of force is a violation of one's right to life and liberty. When one government initiates force upon another they are attacking the individuals for which that government represents. Locke explains:

[For by the] fundamental Law of Nature, Man being to be preserved, as much as possible, when all cannot be preserved, the safety of the Innocent is to be preferred: And one may destroy a Man who makes war upon him, or has discovered an Enmity to his being, for the Same Reason, that he may kill a Wolf or a Lion; because such men are not under the ties of Common Law of Reason, have no other Rule, but that of Force and Violence, and so may be treated as Beasts of Prey, those dangerous and noxious Creatures, that will be sure to destroy him, whenever he falls into their Power.

Pre-emptive war is not the design of man but a tactic of lesser animals who do not possess reason. In nature, animals only attack other animals over food or in self-defense. Animals lack reason to resolve conflict, humans possess reason and should always use this to resolve conflicts; therefore, if a man strikes in a pre-emptive fashion then he has failed to reason and lost what separates him from a lesser animal. According to Locke's philosophy, the aggressor in any conflict has failed to reason and is deemed the evil while the victim is always viewed as innocent and may justly use proportional force in defense.

Lastly, we must examine Locke's view of government and the formation of commonwealth to establish a criterion so as to judge the ideal role of government. Men enter a civil society to enjoy "benefits of cooperation" from their equals and to secure their rights of life, liberty, and property. For this political society to have any power the people who enter it must give up some of their own power. Through this social contract men have the unwritten agreement that the government is established to serve in their best interests. One of the liberties that everyone must surrender is the right to punish someone that has injured or cheated them. Locke states:

And thus the Commonwealth comes by a Power to set down, what punishment shall belong to the several transgressions which they think worthy of it, committed amongst the Members of that Society, (which is the power of making Laws) as well as it has the power to punish any Injury done unto any of its Members, by any that is not of it, (which is the power of War and Peace;) and all this for the preservation of the property of all the members of that Society, as far as is possible.

The establishment of an impartial system is paramount in securing the legitimacy of the institution. This commonwealth is only as powerful as its governed participants allow it to be. It has no legitimate power over people who do not to agree to join. It is erroneous to believe that there is any philosophical justification that contends that it is right and just to control and influence the policies of another country. It is also a violation of the original agreement if the commonwealth expands its powers without consent of the governed and utilizes interventionism and a policy of pre-emptive war, because no individual possess those powers to give their government. Such presumptions constitute tyranny and Locke prescribes such actions as dissent and revolution as a remedy.

There exist two strong examples of John Locke's influence on the early leaders of American government. Firstly, George Washington's Farewell Address warned the American people the dangers of an aggressive foreign policy. He knew that there were some influential men in the early government that wanted to lay the groundwork for America to pursue colonial ambitions. Washington warned:

Harmony, liberal intercourse with all nations, are recommended by policy, humanity, and interest. But even our commercial policy should hold an equal and impartial hand; neither seeking nor granting exclusive favors or preferences; consulting the natural course of things; diffusing and diversifying by gentle means the streams of commerce, but forcing nothing; establishing, with powers so disposed, in order to give trade a stable course, to define the rights of our merchants, and to enable the government to support them, conventional rules of intercourse, the best that present circumstances and mutual opinion will permit, but temporary, and liable to be from time to time abandoned or varied, as experience and circumstances shall dictate; constantly keeping in view, that it is folly in one nation to look for disinterested favors from another; that it must pay with a portion of its independence for whatever it may accept under that character; that, by such acceptance, it may place itself in the condition of having given equivalents for nominal favors, and yet of being reproached with ingratitude for

not giving more. There can be no greater error than to expect or calculate upon real favors from nation to nation. It is an illusion, which experience must cure, which a just pride ought to discard.

Washington would have opposed what is known today as the balance of power institutions such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). He would have objected to signing such treaties because they would undermine our national sovereignty because America could be drawn into a war that would not serve its interests and would be detrimental to its free and open trade. Washington also warns against preferential treatment for other countries and calls for an “impartial hand” in trade. His call for non-intervention is not to be confused with a philosophy of isolation. Washington was opposed to these obligations to other countries because they limit American sovereignty. It is here Locke’s influence can be seen on Washington. Washington knew that if there were treaties signed, an alien country would have influence on American policy which would violate the people’s social contract.

Secondly, Locke’s influence can be seen in Thomas Jefferson’s retaliation to the Barbary pirates. When Ottoman pirates were harassing U.S. trade ships in the early 1800’s, Jefferson issued letters of Marque and Reprisal against the individual pirates. Jefferson responded defensively and proportionally, and after the conflict was resolved through treaty, the military returned home. Locke’s influence on Jefferson can be seen because Locke states about the just use of force, “But only to retribute to him, so far as calm reason and conscience dictates, what is proportionate to its transgression, which is so much as may serve for Reparation and Restraint.”

In conclusion, it is effortless to see that the political philosophy has changed over the past one hundred years and as a consequence America has deviated from the early tradition of non-intervention that many of Founders set so long ago. This new interventionist philosophy that America adopted is in violation of the original agreement because it is using power that it does not derive from the people. Such policies have brought so much instability to certain parts of the world that the nation we live in is no longer the beacon of freedom and hope but is viewed as an aggressive empire.

The invasion of Afghanistan after 9/11 was totally within reason and just because we responded defensively and proportionally. We targeted the individual terrorists and dismantled the government that harbored and supported their cause. What is not an American tradition is forcing the conquered people to accept our style of government and not allowing the people to govern themselves. The expansion of the war from there is totally illogical and outside the reason of Locke’s just use of force. The War in Iraq does not fit Locke’s criterion because there was no eminent threat, no showing of aggression, and the nation of Iraq did not attack America. The original intent of our government was to protect our inalienable rights and allow us conduct trade freely with all, not be restricted to partial trade with some, or to submit to external exploitation from other countries through trade agreements.

All nations are in the State of Nature; one has no inherently greater cause than the other, and all have their own liberties to do how they wish in the confines of their own borders. Moreover, for one nation to demonstrate aggression towards another country without being provoked is in violation of the Law of Nature. No individual has the power to tell someone in America how to

live just as no nation has the legitimate power to control the lives of citizens in other countries. Many men like Jefferson and Washington knew international intervention has too many unintended consequences to be beneficial for the majority of the American people. There is a need for realignment with the philosophies that inspired the Founders. Through the writings of Locke Americans can connect to what many of our Founding Fathers believed the proper role that an enlightened country like United States has in the world. Peace and prosperity is what all nations should strive for, and the American experiment should show other nations the benefits of this philosophy. In his inaugural address in 1801 Thomas Jefferson prescribed America's role in the world stating, "Peace, commerce and honest friendship with all nations; entangling alliances with none."

**Richard Marrero:**

## **Rawls' Original Position**

John Rawls' original position, which is central to his theory of justice, is not the fair situation which he believes it to be. I intend to show that this is the case by laying out Rawls' beliefs concerning the original position as shown in Rawls' book *Justice as Fairness*. I will then explain why the original position is not the fair situation Rawls believes it to be and defend my position against possible objections.

The original position is essentially a mechanism of procedural justice. This means that the original position is a selection device by which principles of justice can be chosen, and the principles selected from within the original position are validated and legitimated by the procedure itself. Rawls believes that through procedural justice and the original position we can discover the best principles of justice available to us. He believes that out of fair situations come fair terms and agreements, and likewise out of unfair situations come unfair terms and agreements. To quote Rawls, "Clearly, unless those situations satisfy the conditions for valid and free agreements, the terms agreed to will not be regarded as fair" (*Fairness* p.15).

It is a thought experiment, the original position, in which representatives of a democratic population convene in order to choose principles of justice which will legislate their society. But while it is a hypothetical situation Rawls states that it might be possible for us to enter it, "Can we enter it [the original position], so to speak, and if so when? We can enter it at any time. How? Simply by reasoning in accordance with the modeled constraints, citing only reasons those constraints allow" (*Fairness* p.86). The question of whether we can actually enter the original position is an important one that I would like to address, but I leave it for the moment in order to spend some time discussing something else this quote illustrates, a very essential feature of the original position: constraint.

Within the original position certain constraints are imposed on the representatives. These constraints exist in order to ensure and maintain fairness. One can narrow down these constraints to two provisions; they are (1) the symmetrical arrangement of parties and (2) restrictions on reasons for favoring principles.

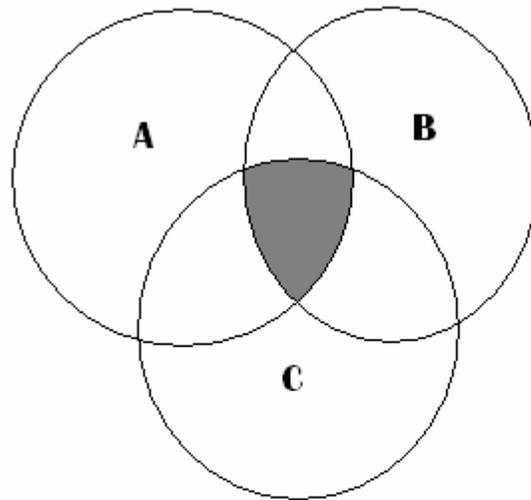
The first constraint the original position requires is that which Rawls has labeled the 'symmetrical arrangement of parties'. Rawls asserts that representatives are arranged symmetrically when "...they are represented solely as free and equal..."(*Fairness* p.82). Rawls explains that people are free and equal insofar as each person has the 'two moral powers' (*Fairness* p.18-19). But what are these two moral powers? To paraphrase Rawls: the first moral power is that each person has the potential to have and act from a sense of justice while the second moral power is that each person has a capacity to have, revise, and pursue their conception of the good (*Fairness* p.18-19). So it seems that the parties that are in the original

position are arranged symmetrically when they view themselves and the other parties as having the two moral powers.

The second constraint in the original position is the appropriate restriction of reasons. It is closely related to the first constraint for it is there to ensure that the representatives in the original position do not see themselves or their counterparts as anything other than free and equal citizens. The second constraint does this by instituting what Rawls calls the 'veil of ignorance'. From behind this veil of ignorance any knowledge about one's social position, income, ethnic group, native endowments, or comprehensive conception of the good is not known (Fairness p.15). Nor are representatives aware of the identity of those whom they represent. In addition Rawls mentions that there are other restrictions of reasons besides those just mentioned. These additional restrictions include emotional deterrents such as envy, spite, aversion to risk, uncertainty, and the desire to dominate others (Fairness p.87). The motive for this imposed ignorance is so that the parties within the original position will not be predisposed to any self-interested course of action. Rawls hypothesizes that if people within the original position do not have any idea as to their place in the world, then they are more likely to evaluate all possible principles objectively as opposed to pursuing a personally advantageous agenda.

The question which now arises is: why these constraints? Rawls says that the original position is a device of representation, "As it models our considered convictions as reasonable persons by describing the parties as fairly situated and as reaching an agreement subject to appropriate restrictions on reasons favoring principles of political justice" (Fairness p.18). Thus the original position is a representation of our considered convictions which are specifically, according to the aforementioned quote, the convictions that when in a situation of making an agreement people should be arranged fairly (i.e. symmetrically) and that there should be restrictions on reasons for favoring principles. So if the original position's constraints are synonymous with what Rawls calls considered convictions, then we must find a justification for those particular considered convictions.

Rawls has prepared a justification for this. He introduces his reader to three terms: reflective equilibrium, public reasoning, and overlapping consensus. Reflective equilibrium is obtained when an individual is able to make self-consistent their judgments concerning political justice, this consistency is qualified by the requirement that a person must consider alternatives when adopting or rejecting these judgments (Fairness p.30-31). Overlapping consensus can be easily understood if we can imagine that a group of individuals' and their judgments are represented as a circle on a plane, and for every group included there is a corresponding circle representing them on the plane. When all circles share a common point on the plane, then the area they share is what Rawls would consider as overlapping consensus.

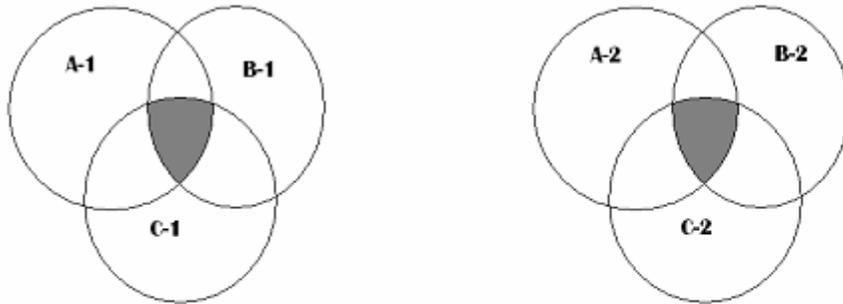


Finally, public reasoning consists of a public justification of society's consensus judgments (Fairness p.27). According to Rawls when these three social processes obtain then we can expect as a result the same considered convictions Rawls has assumed.

It is at this point that I think the fundamental problem within the theoretical groundwork for Rawls' original position reveals itself. The convictions which the original position models in order to secure a fair situation are created by means that are somewhat dubious. To put it bluntly I believe that the processes of reflective equilibrium and overlapping consensus are impossible. The idea that an individual can make their beliefs consistent with one another without any contradictions is naïve. Regardless of how long people may spend reflecting or how many alternatives are laid before them, I don't believe they would be able to reach a point of *no* inconsistency. I think that internal contradictions are a part of the human condition, and realistically all we can hope to do is minimize them. Even Rawls seems to admit this possibility when he states, "Those who suppose their judgments are always consistent are unreflective or dogmatic; not uncommonly they are ideologues and zealots" (Fairness p.30). The consequence of this lack of consistency within individuals, or groups of individuals for that matter, would carry over into Rawls' notion of overlapping consensus. In looking for an overlapping consensus in a situation where groups of individuals had inconsistent sets of principles it would be found that their inconsistency would allow for a multiplicity of consensus points.

In remembering the circles on a plane we saw that each group was represented by a single circle, therefore the subsequent overlapping area was singular as well. But in a situation where groups

having internal inconsistency and contradictory beliefs, on the plane I just mentioned, they would have to be represented by multiple circles.



The result of this would be a multiplicity of overlapping consensus points which in turn would result in a multiplicity of problems for Rawls and his “fair” system. The likelihood of such a situation as this arising I believe would not be inconceivable, since Rawls’ original position is supposed to be addressing a democratic society, and one of the tenants of democracy happens to pluralism which would promote the likelihood of such an occurrence as this.

Perhaps here is where someone might want to interject and show me how I am mistaken. They might say that democracy with its electoral process shows beyond a shadow of a doubt that consensus among large groups of individuals can be achieved. I admit that a democratic election *might* be able to be used as evidence of an overlapping consensus by people with differing values, but in my opinion, it is more likely to show the opposite. It seems that in reality citizens vote in accord with their values and not in spite of them. What I mean by this is that people ally themselves with politicians who share their common conceptions of the good. While I admit it is not a unanimous occurrence, it is overwhelmingly the case that people form a consensus not with people with differing values but among people with shared values. And if we were to revisit the analogy of the circles on a plane what we might likely see are autonomous circles rather than overlapping.

Underlying those problems which I have already addressed is one of a more troublesome nature. If we take into account the threefold process Rawls uses to validate his considered convictions and that one may doubt its effectiveness in producing the best constraints for the original position, and consider still that Rawls concludes the opposite of what a doubter might, we are ultimately forced to ask the question why *he* thinks that it is so that this threefold process is sufficient. I believe the reason for this is that Rawls has been working from the perspective of a comprehensive conception of the good all along despite the fact that he states it to be something which makes a situation aimed at agreements an unfair one and to be avoided. I believe Rawls has for his comprehensive conception one which espouses certain democratic and liberal conceptions, and while I personally do not have a problem with democratic or individualistic principles I must nevertheless protest them if they are weaved into a device which Rawls promotes as being fair. Especially since Rawls’ definition of fair acknowledges an exclusion of

comprehensive conceptions of the good. It seems that many people who do not share Rawls' conceptions about democracy and people might not find it so.

I find it hard to blame Rawls however, for in my opinion it is impossible for any human being to remove themselves from their comprehensive conceptions of the good. Whether it is a religion, a social ideology, or an ethnic or cultural tradition, people cannot step out of these in order to view the world "objectively". These aspects are what make us who we are. They are what drive our decisions. In fact, I believe that outside of these conceptions a person would not be able form an opinion in favor of this or that principle. Therefore the original position becomes an unfair situation because it rejects all comprehensive conceptions that people might refer to when making a decision about principles of justice, while the entire time using one as its foundation.

I have one more important point to make to those who are not yet convinced by the preceding. If Rawls has succeeded in legitimating the constraints of the original position and if the considered convictions he has given us are the best to be modeled because the threefold process that justifies them is one which does produce fair judgments, then the original position is not necessary. If we can discover and have principles that are fair by means of reflective equilibrium, overlapping consensus, and public reason then the original position is redundant. We have the selection device already!

I now conclude my examination of this subject by revisiting the question I posed earlier of whether we can actually enter the original position. Hopefully I have been clear enough in my assessment of the situation that you can predict my answer: a resounding no. As I have already said I believe that there are certain aspects of our personality without which there would be little left, especially in the way of having a basis for normative decision making. Rawls' original position is built around the assumption that we can detach ourselves from these aspects and still be rational and reasonable individuals. However, it is this idea which seems to be undermined by the way Rawls attempts to justify the constraints of the original position. To allow oneself certain liberties while denying those very same liberties to others is in my opinion the very definition of unfair. Therefore, the original position is unfair.

**Jay Mikelman:**

### **Thomas Hobbes and the Problem of Suicide Bombers\***

In today's world, suicide bombings are almost daily news. Not only are these attacks deadly but also their morose and cynical message is that attackers willingly give up their own lives to hurt and frighten others. The devastating effects are social, economic, and political. Because the way in which suicide bombers wreak so much havoc necessarily involves giving up their own lives, psychologists and social scientists have difficulty in accounting for such behavior. This also creates a particular challenge for philosophers to whom death-avoidance is central to their view of human nature. The paradigmatic example of such a philosophy is that of Thomas Hobbes. Consider the "standard interpretation" of Hobbes according to which a sovereign is able to use the threat of force or, if necessary, force itself to create an internally stable commonwealth. However, the flaw is that rebels who are willing to give up their lives to create instability might not find the threat of force sufficiently effective for imposing political stability. In *Ideals as Interests in Hobbes's Leviathan: The Power of Mind over Matter*, Sharon Lloyd focuses on precisely this issue. She proposes an alternative interpretation of Hobbes, one with less focus on the drive for self-preservation and more emphasis on the moral and religious interests that drive individuals' behavior. She also argues that education, not punishment, is the key to maintaining an internally stable commonwealth. Lloyd considers her interpretation to be a radical departure from almost all conventional versions of Hobbes's philosophy. Thus, contemporary readers of Hobbes are, in an important sense, faced with a choice between Lloyd's interpretation and the so-called standard interpretation.

However, I believe that these two vastly different interpretations of *Leviathan* represent a false dichotomy. First, in this paper, I will present opinions given by the standard interpreters and, in contrast, those of Lloyd, pointing out specifically the ability of each to deal with the case of the suicide bomber. Next, I will show that this false dichotomy leads to a necessary deficiency in interpreting *Leviathan*. Finally, I will defend an interpretation that bestows equal, although different, roles to punishment and education in maintaining a peaceful commonwealth. I will make a distinction between what is most useful for creating the original obedience to the sovereign power and how best to maintain that same obedience: punishment fulfilling the role of the former and education the latter.

Many interpretations exist in Hobbes scholarship, and not surprisingly, a wide range of variance marks the specific details included in them. However, the majority of these interpretations (at least among analytic philosophers) contains the same basic framework and come to

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\* I would like to thank Susanne Sreedhar for helping me with this paper and Tulane University for the financial support that allowed me to attend the conference.

approximately the same conclusion. Lloyd picks out a few of these shared characteristics and creates an agglomerated interpretation, which she calls the “standard interpretation.” It holds:

[T]hat Hobbes intended to derive a necessary form of political organization from fundamentally egoistic human nature, that Hobbes was a moral subjectivist or relativist, that the essentials of Hobbes’s theory can be captured without reference to religious interests, that political obligation is solely prudentially based, that might makes order, and correspondingly that fear of death and the desire for self-preservation are the strongest motivating forces (Lloyd 1992, 7).

The story given is a familiar one, heard in countless political philosophy classes covering Hobbes. The self-interested behavior of actors causes their natural state to be that of war. However, since these actors fear death more than anything else, they agree to a social contract for which they enter into a commonwealth ruled by an absolute sovereign. They obey this sovereign, because if they do not the sovereign will punish them, and the punishment is worse than any benefit they expect to receive from breaking the law.

The commonwealth maintains internal stability only as long as the threat of punishment effectively deters actors from rebelling against the sovereign. According to the standard interpretation, this task is not difficult considering that the desire for self-preservation is an incredibly strong appetite, one nearly impossible to ignore. For instance, Jean Hampton quotes a passage that says actors prefer life over almost any other circumstance, except perhaps when the pain they are undergoing is of unbearable magnitude.<sup>1</sup> This viewpoint becomes a problem when the situation of the suicide bomber is examined. A suicide bomber is rarely, if ever, thought to give up life because of its excruciating pain. Rather, these aggressors evidently decide to end their own lives because doing so creates the possibility of a success at achieving alternative ends. If this is the case, it is highly improbable that the threat of death will affect their decision. The worst punishment the sovereign can inflict is death, but that is something these people willingly choose. When neither punishment nor death is an effective threat, behavior conducive to peace cannot be dictated, and stability cannot be achieved.

Sharon Lloyd finds the standard interpretation so unreasonable, in part because it fails to establish and maintain stability, as exemplified by the suicide bomber scenario, that she proposes a radically new interpretation of Hobbes, one that avoids the pitfalls she believes will eventually doom the standard interpretation. In stark contrast to the standard interpreter, Lloyd identifies four kinds of interests that must be considered when explaining and predicting the behavior of actors. Not only do actors take into account their narrowly prudential interests (e.g., survival, as identified by the standard interpreter), but also moral, religious and special prudential interests, (e.g., desire for a positive afterlife) (Lloyd 1992, 51). These extra kinds of interests reveal themselves in Lloyd’s fixation on the belief that actors would willingly give up their narrowly prudential interest to follow their religious beliefs and earn entrance into heaven. Stated in this way, it appears clear that whatever solution Lloyd attributes to Hobbes for maintaining order ought to cover the case of the suicide bomber: that is, a case where religious and special

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<sup>1</sup> See Jean Hampton’s discussion on glory and self-preservation in *Hobbes and the Social Contract Tradition*, pages 15-17.

prudential interests override narrowly prudential ones, including that of self-preservation (Lloyd 1992, 52).

Once the four-interest model has been introduced, the conclusion that Lloyd reaches is more amenable to analysis. She is searching for a principle of political obligation laid out in *Leviathan* that is affirmed by a concurrence of all four kinds of reason (Lloyd 1992, 52). Lloyd finally concludes that Hobbes' political principle designed to ensure the perpetual maintenance of a commonwealth reads: "One is to obey one's extant effective political authority in all of its commands not repugnant to one's duty to God as specified by that same political authority" (Lloyd 1992, 150). It is important to note here the incredible power placed in the hands of the sovereign, who is in charge of identifying citizens' duties to God. By giving the sovereign this task, Lloyd enables Hobbes to avoid the problem of people disobeying the laws of the commonwealth when their religious beliefs transcend those of the sovereign, who by definition has now included the latter duties (Lloyd 1992, 151). By appealing to all four kinds of interests that Lloyd mentioned (Lloyd 1992, 156), her interpretation would prevent the sovereign's plan from falling prey to the same criticisms that plague the standard interpretation.

In addition to identifying a principle of political obligation that would ensure the commonwealth's stability, Lloyd must show that Hobbes' design enables the sovereign to persuade people to follow said principle. She proposes that Hobbes' method for succeeding in this goal is through education. She believes that Hobbes' strategy succeeds by, "Pursuing a process of socialization, or of moral education, [that] encourages the formation of *properly conceived* interests, and instills in people a desire to do what the satisfaction of these interests requires" (Lloyd 1992, 159). Lloyd maintains that this moral education would effectively prevent many, if not all, of the internal causes of disorder in the Hobbesian commonwealth and, thereby, would create stability. She holds, "[I]t is Hobbes's view that virtually all social disorder is the result of bad education" (Lloyd 1992, 160). If the sovereign were to ensure that the actors' perceived interests lie in following the previously identified principle of political obligation, the result would leave little cause for social disorder; the commonwealth would maintain internal stability, and the only remaining worry about dissolution would be outside forces (such as foreign invasion).

Lloyd's interpretation, while arguably an improvement in some aspects over the standard interpretation, diverges an unnecessarily great distance from the standard interpretation. The end result is an interpretation that lacks both fit with the text and theoretical power. The lack of fit can be demonstrated by the fact that Lloyd's theory does not seem adequate to move actors from their primitive unsocialized conditions, Hobbes "state of nature," into the communal society of the commonwealth. Because of this failure, her account of *Leviathan* is incomplete, since this issue is the major theme of at least five chapters of the work and can be viewed as dominating most of Book I. The transcendent interests that Lloyd discusses seem very unlikely to exist in the state of nature, with the brutal and pessimistic description provided by Hobbes (XIII, 9); therefore, narrowly prudential interests would be the only kind found in that environment. Aside from mentioning humans' focus on the fear of death, which Lloyd deems as the strongest motivating force of the standard interpretation, one must also note that the three forms of transcendent interests are highly unlikely to exist in the wild state. First, Hobbes blatantly denies that any sort of morals exist in the state of nature (XIII, 13). In addition, in an environment that

lacks such attributes as letters, an account of time, or knowledge of the face of the earth, the actors are unlikely to have a concept of either God or heaven and are even less likely to be greatly concerned with fulfilling their duty to God or their own salvation, at least not enough to override their interest in survival.

Another criticism of Lloyd's transcendent-interest thesis is one posed by Jeremy Anderson (Anderson 2004, 78), who finds it highly improbable that transcendent interests themselves would be a major problem for a Hobbesian sovereign attempting to maintain stability. This would obviously be a major blow to Lloyd's theory, because her viewpoint is based on the fact that transcendent interests causing instability force the Hobbesian sovereign to use more than just the threat of punishment to maintain order.

A small group of transcendent-interest holders may not be deterred by the threat of punishment, but this would pose little problem to the stability of the commonwealth. Logically, the sovereign could adequately punish them all (with death if necessary) and eliminate the threat to stability. However, perhaps this group begins to grow, and with each addition has a better chance to achieve its goal of destabilizing the commonwealth. When enough people steeped in a common personal passion have joined the group, force alone cannot to stop them. This is the exact situation that Lloyd believes Hobbes attempts to forestall; formation of a group of individuals motivated by their transcendent personal interests to cause disorder.

However, at the point where this group reaches a critical mass, its growth is unlikely to stop. By that time, transcendent interests are no longer required to join the group poised to cause disorder, because successful rebellion becomes a realistic possibility. That tantalizing benefit outweighs the costs, which include the far more remote chance of the rebellion's possible failure. Consequently, transcendent interests are no longer necessary for instability.

Thereby, Anderson's scenario shows that, even if Lloyd's four-point solution is successful for the situation she posits to destabilize the commonwealth there is a very small chance that this situation would actually come to fruition. That is, if the group of rebellious transcendent-interest holders is large enough and contains only people who create disorder to satisfy their narrowly prudential interests, the effectiveness of Lloyd's thesis is nullified.

These criticisms of Lloyd's transcendent-interest theory significantly weaken her interpretation to the point at which other interpretations must be explored. Although her reasoning avoids many pitfalls of the standard interpretation, a whole new set of problems arise when the focus shifts from rational individuals concerned with their self-interest and survival to individuals with transcendent interests. It is now time to explore a third interpretation of Hobbes, one that accounts for the suicide bomber example but excludes all the problems that come with Lloyd's transcendent-interest interpretation.

I propose that Hobbes intended the sovereign to use both punishment *and* education as significant tools for building a commonwealth, however, not necessarily interchangeably. During the first stage of establishing the commonwealth, punishment is the tool to be used almost exclusively by the sovereign to gain control. At subsequent stages after the commonwealth is established, the sovereign best maintains stability and peace by using a

combination of education and punishment. This latter stage is when the suicide bomber is most likely to exist and must be curbed.

In Book I of *Leviathan*, Hobbes lays out his conceptions of metaphysics and human psychology. A major aspect of his psychology, which is also a cornerstone of the standard interpretation, is his definition of deliberation. Hobbes defines deliberation by saying (VI, 49):

When in the mind of man appetites and aversions, hopes and fears, concerning one and the same arise alternately, and diverse good and evil consequences of doing or omitting the thing propounded come successively into our thoughts, so that sometimes we have an appetite to it, sometimes despair or fear to attempt it, the whole sum of desires, aversions, hopes and fears, continued till the thing either done or thought impossible, is that we call DELIBERATION.

Although the above process appears to be vaguely defined, an absolutely clear idea is that the deliberator chooses actions because they appear to have good consequences. This comes about by contemplating, or *deliberating*, the action and weighing the pros and cons of acting or not acting. These options are continually in mind until one decides whether to act or not. Eventually, the deliberator comes to the point of making a decision, and Hobbes defines this last appetite for or aversion to choice as the will or the act of willing (VI, 53). Note that there is no definite conclusion to the deliberation, no one moment when the “right” answer is reached. Rather, the will to act is only the last episode of appetite (pro) or aversion (con) that presumably tips the balance of decision making. Then the deliberation is finished. Understanding this process is essential to envisioning the sovereign’s proper uses of punishment and education.

I find ample textual evidence to support the standard interpreter’s claim that a move from the state of nature into the commonwealth via the social contract is successful because the sovereign’s threat of force creates sufficient fear. Hobbes provides this evidence with his assertion that a central authority figure with legitimate power validates first performer covenants (XIV, 19), which he gives as a reason why men enter into the commonwealth from the state of nature (XVII, 1). Certainly, Hobbes himself summarizes this assertion best when he says, “And covenants without the sword are but words, and of no strength to secure man at all” (XVII, 2). Although this view of sustaining order through the threat of punishment and fear would appear to validate the standard interpretation and allow the problematic scenario of the suicide bomber to linger, other text shows that Hobbes’ theory is much more complex than simply having the sovereign threaten punishment for the maintenance of order.

Hobbes knew the power education could have on the deliberation process and valued this power very highly. When discussing the intellectual virtues and their genesis, Hobbes says, “The causes of this difference of wits are in the passions, and the difference of passions proceedeth, partly from the different constitution of the body, and partly from different education” (VIII, 14). In this quote, Hobbes remarks clearly that education has the capacity to alter passions, a procedure that he considers the basis for deliberation. Therefore, education is a powerful tool with the potential of altering all deliberation processes and thus the will.

Hobbes believed this effect of education is so important that the sixth essential right of sovereignty is to dictate the education (broadly construed) of subjects (XVIII, 9). Hobbes gives a justification for this right, which centers around censorship, when he says, “For the actions of men proceed from their opinions, and in the well-governing of opinions consisteth the well-governing of men’s actions, in order to their peace and concord (XVIII, 9).” Hobbes is writing that humans’ opinions should be molded so that their actions lead to peace and accord and, thus, the maintenance of a stable commonwealth. Hobbes again points out the importance of proper education when discussing causes of the dissolution of a commonwealth by saying that every private man is judge of good and evil actions (XXIX, 6). Properly interpreted, Hobbes’ statement that, “It is manifest that the measure of good and evil actions is the civil law, and the judge the legislator, who is always representative of the commonwealth” (XXIX, 6), reflects this concept: it is the sovereign’s obligation to ensure that obeying the law has positive consequences and disobeying has negative consequences.

Combining our study of the suicide bomber with the definitions of deliberation, punishment and education enables us to discern their mutual roles. Since the threat of punishment is ineffective against suicide bombers who, by definition, do not value self-preservation as highly as other goals, the sovereign must apply another strategy to maintain an internally stable commonwealth. By modifying the standard interpretation of Hobbes’ punishment tool to substitute the use of education in an established commonwealth, the sovereign can alter the deliberation process of the would-be suicide bomber. The result either diminishes the benefits of disorder or increases the costs, so the potential suicide bomber is no longer willing to attempt disobedience. To restate the outcome succinctly, using punishment to establish the commonwealth and a combination of punishment and education to maintain it, the sovereign is best able to achieve Hobbes’ goal of stability.

**Chelsea Ruxer:**

### **Falsity in Physicalism\***

Due to the extensive role mentality seems to play in our behavior, as well as in how we observe the world and our relationship to it, scientists and philosophers alike consider the study of intelligent systems to be of utmost importance in developing a more comprehensive understanding of the universe. Philosophy of the mind calls into question the very principles regarding the kinds of beings we think we are, as well as examines the nature of the physical world and its ability to causally interact with the apparently immaterial and non law-like things which we consider to be vital components of our mental life. Finding an adequate philosophy of mentality seems important not only because it is crucial to development in the fields of Cognitive Science, Biology, Neurophysiology, Psychology, and even Computer Sciences, but also because it is of such great personal importance to provide an explanation of consciousness that accounts for our having thoughts, feelings, memories, and perceptions that have causal significance in our behavior, and indeed in that of the universe as a whole.

Due to the non law-like nature of some of the behavior of intelligent beings, it seems necessary to consider mentality on a very different basis, and indeed as a much more complex property than those identified by the descriptive laws of the sciences. Mentality, therefore, should perhaps be looked at as a causally active set of system level properties which have qualities over and above those things accounted for in the fundamental sciences but rely on such basic interactions and structures as found in these fields to make up the components of its subsystems. In this manner, only systems of a certain level of complexity are able to utilize “mental” content, semantic and qualitative properties, to affect their functioning. Because these mental events seem to be causally active components of the natural world, it may be necessary to revise the scientific notion of causation to explain how non law-like mental things causally interact with strictly law-governed matter in the universe. Such causal relationships suggest that the universe is more complex than the basic interactions for which the fundamental sciences can account, and we must revise our assumptions regarding the most basic “stuff” which composes our world.

Science studies law-like relationships, both describing and defining the behavior of matter and other physical things. Things exist in the physical world, it seems, just in case they are in some way causally active; they either cause things to happen, can be caused to do things, or are part of a causal process. For instance, we prove a pencil’s existence by the visual experience we have of it, its effect on a paper, the sound it makes when it falls, and other things it causes or “does.”

Mental events can be proven to exist in the same manner as the pencil, as mental causation, whether physical to mental, mental to mental, or mental to physical, appears to be a significant part of our conscious lives. Something physical, for instance Jane being bitten by a bird, seems

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\* Winner of the Best Paper award.

to cause something mental, her pain, as well as perhaps causing a variety of intentional states, such as the desire not to get bitten again and the belief that she should stay away from birds. If it is possible for Jane to experience pain, more specifically the qualitative “hurt” of pain, it would appear physical states can and do cause mental states, and that they do so with some regularity. It seems equally relevant to consider the mental’s role in causing other mental and physical states. For instance, Jane’s intentional states, her belief that it is going to rain, her desire not to get her hair wet, and her belief that using an umbrella will prevent her from getting her hair wet would appear to be the cause of her taking an umbrella with her to class, just as her feeling of pain may cause her to remove her hand from the bird’s beak. Similarly, Jane’s desire not to get her hair wet, if she does not own an umbrella, may cause another intentional state, perhaps her disgust for outdoor activities or sadness upon interpreting the forecast.

These interactions are naturally very different from those between strictly physical matter in the universe. Water, for instance, freezes, evaporates, and liquefies at certain temperatures, and its interactions with other substances, based on their chemical compositions and states, happen in a predictable manner. It does not seem that water decides to evaporate or feels like freezing one day any more than it believes it is obligated to turn back into a liquid at the dew point and move out of the way for a school of fish or water fowl.

Those very same feelings, beliefs, or desires, however, may be the principles governing the behavior of a swan. A swan cannot be likened to a non-intelligent, feathered airplane of equal size and structure in that it has certain properties above and beyond what an engineer can replicate in the airplane. Though the machine swan may be designed so carefully as to have all the same neurological or chemical structures to allow its physical movements to be identical with those of a real swan, its structure does not guarantee the same kind of behavior or processes given the same stimuli. To know what a swan is doing, sometimes it is important to know the *content* of its mental states. The same movement, running with wings outstretched, may constitute running away from a wolf, fighting, or even children-chasing. Its inclination to fly and the structures that allow it to do so may be hindered by its belief that there is a giant wolf in the sky or its desire to chase children instead. Whereas the swan is liable to get stomach cramps and be distracted from its target to run into a flagpole, it seems that its behavior is subject to things which cannot be replicated by the swan-like machine in the same manner.

It seems, furthermore, that it is the *content* of the swan’s belief that there is a giant wolf in the sky and the *feeling* of a stomach cramp that cause it to stay on the ground or have its attention diverted from the flagpole, rather than a mere manipulation of syntactic information. The same stimulus in swans of the same structure and situation may elicit different responses in different swans. For instance, the form of a wolf may cause one swan to run away, whereas a swan raised with dogs as playmates may behave in a very different manner. This is due to the fact that a real swan operates not on syntax alone, but also on semantic content. The swan-like machine, though programmed to “act” like a swan, does not have thoughts “about” the wolf, the sky, or the flagpole, merely manipulating forms from its environment in order to mimic the likely behavior of the conscious swan. It seems that this very “aboutness” of the real swan’s thoughts, however, is what is causally significant in its behavior.

As intelligent beings, we do not manipulate mental states solely in terms of their shape; we seem to operate, at least sometimes, as though it is the *content* of our mental states that matters. The content of Jane's belief, that it is going to rain, for instance, seems to be the catalyst for her bringing an umbrella to class, whereas if the content of her belief had been that there was going to be a hurricane, she might have left school altogether. There is no neurological correlate, so far as we have discovered, for the belief that rain causes Jane's hair to become frizzy, nor a chemical interaction signaling to Jane that she should avoid unnecessarily frizzy hair. Jane's belief that it is going to rain does not necessarily imply that it will and must rain, and the principles of natural law are, not surprisingly, unable to explain her attachment to Oreo cookies, her distaste for brussel sprouts, or her belief in God, unicorns, or garden gnomes. It seems, however, that because Jane prays, draws unicorns, avoids brussel sprouts, and buys Oreo cookies, these things not accounted for by scientific law nevertheless play a significant role in causing, as well as being able to correctly describe or account for, her physical behavior.

Descartes attempted to allow for this type of mental causation by accepting a dualistic approach to the material, the physical world, and the nonmaterial, the world of mentality<sup>2</sup>. Whereas this approach requires two sorts of "worlds" that could not possibly interact, there seems to be no reason the mental must be something apart from the physical universe. It seems almost impossible to separate a mental event from its neurological correlate or break apart the inherent interconnectedness of physical, law-like, and mental, non law-like things since they are so closely linked in cause and effect relationships. This calls into question the very notion of causation, which science assumes operates solely in a law-like manner between law-like things. Under this assumption, if mental events exist, it seems they have nothing to do. It follows that, if mental events have nothing to do, there appears to be no reason for, and certainly no proof of, their existence. This presents a great obstacle if indeed what we define as mental events are, as exhibited by Jane and the swan, able to affect physical bodies and interact in the universe.

It does not seem that causal efficacy of the mental, however, need be so mysterious, as there appears to be abundant evidence in the behavior of intelligent beings for causal interaction between law-like and non law-like things, which require no further proof of existence than their occurrence in our experiences. To remove or damage part of the brain can, and indeed does, affect an organism's mentality; loss of brain functions or the inability to use certain parts of the brain results in diminished cognitive abilities or even loss of consciousness. At the same time, something not governed by physical laws, an individual's belief that he or she will be able to recover a brain function or return to health after an illness, has been shown to have a profound affect on physical recovery.

This notion of causation does not seem at all implausible since there are all sorts of physical events for which natural law cannot provide a sufficient account in Searle's social realm<sup>3</sup>. The descriptive laws of science fail to explain, for instance, how individuals in a society might act in accordance with things like obligations, for which an entirely different set of laws must be appealed to in order to account for physical behavior. Such imperative "laws" might explain why people interpret a red light on the side of a long paved strip of blacktop as a signal to stop moving or be required to exchange money for the goods they pick up in a store. Similarly,

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<sup>2</sup> Descartes, Rene, *Meditations on First Philosophy*.

<sup>3</sup> Searle, John, *The Rediscovery of the Mind*, Bradford Books (1994) ch.2.

people may take on additional obligations to other individuals by lighting a candle and saying a series of words in front of a preacher, or gain “ownership” of a bicycle by signing a paper. A group of individuals holding instruments may say they are playing a famous piece from *The Nutcracker* by interpreting ink symbols on a page, though their conception of the piece itself cannot be identified with the mere sheet music. Though there is nothing in natural law to explain such things as obligations, ownership, and symphonies, it seems they are no less causally active components of the physical world.

Even were the sciences to find neurological correlates for things like beliefs and intentional states, it does not appear that intelligent life always operates in a law-like manner. True mentality, rather, seems to imply, at least to some degree, free will of those with a certain level of mental life. It does not seem that every one of our actions is rooted in a long chain of causal events lasting since the big bang, nor that they are entirely predictable by the laws of nature. Both Jane and a well-programmed computer are able to interpret things in the world around them to affect their actions in a game of chess. Unlike Jane, the computer is programmed to follow a set of rules which are a part of natural law and act seemingly “intelligently” to predict the moves of a rival player and calculate how to best win a game. These calculations, however, are merely a result of its programming; if the robot is properly functioning, it will act in a predictable, law-governed manner. Even when the robot “randomly selects” or shuffles chess moves, the outcome is able to be predicted, at least in a ratio of probability, and is limited to a certain number of options. Jane’s mental states, on the other hand, are non-denumerable, and her preference for using turquoise chess pieces instead of red cannot be explained by appeal to her experiences or “programming” and internal structures. Whereas the computer merely manipulates forms, it seems utilizing wide and narrow content in a very different manner gives Jane an opportunity to exercise true, non-deterministic mentality.

Such abilities are inexplicable merely by looking at Jane or the swan’s neurophysiology, as intelligent systems seem to have certain properties above and beyond those which can be explained by appeal to their structure. In order to fly, a swan must be a system; it is built in such a manner as to be aerodynamically able to become airborne, have wings which are able to beat air and muscles attached to its wings and feet for movement. The swan must have, by means of a digestive system, a manner utilizing an energy source to allow its circulatory system to supply energy to its muscles, just as it must have the neurological structures which behave in such a manner as to signal the breakdown of energy, the circulation of oxygen, and the muscle movements which enable flying. None of these things, however, allows for a definitive calculation of its flying. Rather, flying, for the swan, may be at least in part governed by a mental state, or even the content of a mental state, a feeling, or a desire, as well as by the properties of the subsystems that make it possible.

Whereas the basic sciences describe the law-like chemical interactions and even some physical systems, the necessary “component” of semantic content in the functioning of an intelligent system makes its behavior inexplicable by appeal to natural law alone. Beyond the simpler chemical and structural interactions which operate *within* an intelligent being, these laws cannot sufficiently explain how such a system might function as a “whole” on the basis of both law-like and non law-like “parts” and what unique properties might arise thereof.

Mentality should therefore perhaps be considered as a system level property, taking an active causal role as a result of the combinations of properties and structures that make up an intelligent or conscious organism. Like a swan, Jane requires certain structures inherent to her, things like her nervous system, circulatory system, and a physical body, in order to be able to properly utilize semantic content. Jane also requires things external to her, utilizing wide content in order to interact with the external world.

Just as parts of a body allow an organism, Jane, to function, Jane may be part of a student body, a religious organization, or an assembly production line. Her manner of interacting with and internally processing the world, as well as having things external to her (as demonstrated by her consideration of the rain and Oreo cookies) affect her behavior, are evidence of the system level properties which arise within an intelligent system. Her acting in a manner by which her behavior cannot be fully explained by natural laws, furthermore, should not be surprising, since Jane is a part of a much larger system, which itself is, in many ways due to the intelligent life that is a part of it, inexplicable by the laws of nature alone.

**Jason Shepard:**

## **Qualia – or Something More Relevant – Regained**

### Abstract

In this paper, I argue that eliminativism based on Daniel Dennett’s “Quining Qualia” article is the wrong approach for any complete theory of consciousness. More specifically, I argue that even if Dennett is successful of eliminating qualia, as he defines qualia, he still fails to completely eliminate the troublesome what-it-is-like aspect of experience. It is this troublesome what-it-is-like aspect of experience that must be eliminated in order for science to be able to storm “our last bastion of specialness.” Unfortunately, the what-it-is-like aspect of experience is highly resistant to any attempts of elimination. What it is like begs an explanation – not convincing us that it does not exist. Toward the end of this paper, I briefly propose that some naturalistic project other than eliminativism is the right path, but even still the problem of other minds potentially stands in our way to any complete explanation of consciousness.

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I wish to argue that even if Daniel Dennett is successful at quining qualia<sup>1</sup> – which I hesitate to say he is – he overestimates the conclusions that may be drawn from what he may have quined. “To quine” is to “to deny resolutely the existence or importance of something real or significant.”<sup>2</sup> ‘Qualia’ are something of a philosopher’s invention meant to capture the perspectival, what-it-is-like aspect of experience. It is the subjective aspect of experience that is supposed to be problematic for the defenders of materialism and the like. It is the what-it-is-like aspect of experience that philosophers like Thomas Nagel,<sup>3</sup> Frank Jackson,<sup>4</sup> and David Chalmers<sup>5</sup>, among others, recognize as what is most problematic with a materialist account of consciousness. It is this what-it-is-like aspect of experience that makes consciousness interesting. Nagel sums up the relationship between the what-it-is-like aspect of experience and consciousness as follows: “But fundamentally an organism has conscious mental states if and

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Dennett, Quining Qualia, *Philosophy of Mind Classical and Contemporary Readings*, ed. David Chalmers, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, 226-44.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel Dennett, *The Philosophical Lexicon*, 8<sup>th</sup> Edition (1987), <http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/lexicon/>, accessed 15 December 2007

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Nagel, What is it Like to be a Bat?, *Philosophy of Mind Classical and Contemporary Readings*, ed. David Chalmers, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, 219-225.

<sup>4</sup> Frank Jackson, Epiphenomenal Qualia, *Philosophy of Mind Classical and Contemporary Readings*, ed. David Chalmers, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, 273-280.

<sup>5</sup> David Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

only if there is something it is like to *be* that organism – something that it is like *for* that organism.”<sup>6</sup>

Anti-materialists recognize the what-it-is-like aspect as a defeater of sorts. Many materialist and materialist sympathizers recognize it as a hurdle for any complete materialist explanation of consciousness.<sup>7</sup> However, Dennett’s goal in “Quining Qualia” is not to show how the what-it-is-like aspect of experience can be captured in a materialist account; it is to show us that we are mistaken in believing that such a defeater actually exists. In order to convince us of the fact that qualia do not exist, Dennett takes us through a series of intuition pumps that are meant to create serious doubts as to the existence of qualia. Each intuition pump attacks one or more of the properties Dennett supposes qualia possess. Dennett proposes that qualia as represented in the literature are ineffable, intrinsic, private, and directly or immediately apprehensible in consciousness.<sup>8</sup> In the process of his attacks, Dennett relies on making a distinction between qualia change and changes in memory-anchored dispositions to react to qualia.<sup>9</sup> It is by this separation that Dennett attacks the properties of qualia, but it is also this separation that ultimately leaves parts of the what-it-is-like aspect of experience left over.

Perhaps Dennett has quined qualia, where qualia refers to a collection of *some* problematic properties, but even if successful, I can hardly see how he has fully quined the troublesome what-it-is-like aspect of experience. As long as this what-it-is-like aspect of experience fails to be quined or shows itself to be explained in some appropriate naturalistic terms, then the last bastion of specialness seems to fail science’s – and Dennett’s – attempted storm of it. Dennett’s and other eliminativists’ failure to satisfactorily eliminate the what-it-is-like aspect of experience, along with the staying power of the intuitive realism about the what-it-is-like aspect of experience, seems to leave eliminativism facing troubles in providing a complete account of consciousness.

### **I. The bright orange sky above?**

Take the following Dennettian-style intuition pump:

Ron looked at the sky yesterday. To Ron it appeared blue. Today Ron looks at the sky and something seems amiss. It appears orange. Ron soon notices that everything appears in a way quite bizarre. The green grass appears red. The yellow school bus appears violet. The colors of everything are amiss. Ron asks the nearest passerby whether he notices the bizarre phenomenon. He looks puzzled – no, disturbed – by the question. He quickly scurries away refusing to

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<sup>6</sup> Thomas Nagel, What is it Like to be a Bat?, *Philosophy of Mind Classical and Contemporary Readings*, ed. David Chalmers, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, 219.

<sup>7</sup> For example, see David Lewis, What Experience Teaches, *Philosophy of Mind Classical and Contemporary Readings*, ed. David Chalmers, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, 281-294. “There is no way to uphold the Hypothesis of Phenomenal Information and still uphold materialism.”

<sup>8</sup> Daniel Dennett, Quining Qualia, *Philosophy of Mind Classical and Contemporary Readings*, ed. David Chalmers, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, 229.

<sup>9</sup> Daniel Dennett, Quining Qualia, *Philosophy of Mind Classical and Contemporary Readings*, ed. David Chalmers, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, 231.

entertain Ron's question. From the next passerby, Ron receives a similar reaction. Ron becomes terrified, thinking to himself that he must be going crazy. Finally, one young lady, perhaps enchanted by Ron's beautiful blue eyes – wait, those are orange, too, right? – takes Ron's plea seriously. She tells Ron his eyes are blue, the same blue as the blue sky, the same color the blue sky was yesterday and the day before and so on. She laughed it all off and told Ron that he really needed to work on his pickup lines.

Ron has gone mad! At this very moment, Ron remembered those crazy philosophical thought experiments, basic facts about the color wheel, and some facts about perception and memory. Ron realized his color qualia have been shifted 180 degrees! Wow! Ron is real life example of a qualia shift! How exciting!

But just as Ron realize this, Daniel Dennett pops into Ron's head and asks, "Did your qualia really change? Or did the memory-anchored dispositions to react to your qualia change?"

## **II. The traditional paradox regained?**

Ah! Those problematic qualia! Ron's natural response may be to say that his visual-perception mechanisms have changed in such a way as to have Ron perceive orange where he previously perceived blue. For Dennett this would qualify as a change in qualia, if qualia exist. The second alternative proposed by Dennett is that his memory-linked disposition to react to a certain color has changed.<sup>10</sup> In this case, blue still appears blue, but the color blue now elicits the same dispositions to react as what the color orange previously elicited. Here, there is no change in qualia, under Dennett's view. Through introspection, Ron cannot determine whether his qualia have indeed shifted or whether his memory-linked dispositions to react to experience have shifted. This is supposed to highlight the paradox. Qualia are traditionally characterized as being directly or immediately apprehensible to consciousness, but this example shows that we could be wrong about our own qualia. It seems odd, if not paradoxical, that we could be wrong about something that is supposed to be directly or immediately apprehensible to consciousness.

But does Dennett's proposal really show us that qualia are not directly or immediately apprehensible to consciousness? It depends. For this move to work, Dennett requires us to look at qualia in a certain way. It requires us to view experience in various components. In particular, Dennett wants to separate qualia shifts from memory shifts. For Dennett, the change in the visual-perception mechanisms would serve as a potential example of qualia change. In this case, the way someone perceives the color she sees when she sees the wavelength 475 nm has actually changed. However, the change in memory-anchored dispositions to react to wavelength 475 nm doesn't actually change the color she sees. In this case, blue looks as blue has always looked. It is only because of changes in memory that she becomes tricked into believing that seeing blue is qualitatively different to the senses (when, in fact, it is not).

Now perhaps Dennett is successful at quining qualia, or at least successful at raising serious doubts about whether qualia have the second order properties that Dennett ascribes to it, but

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<sup>10</sup> Daniel Dennett, Quining Qualia, *Philosophy of Mind Classical and Contemporary Readings*, ed. David Chalmers, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, 231.

Dennett's goal is much grander than quining a view of qualia (or even quining qualia altogether). He wants to quine whatever it is that will allow him to storm our last bastion of specialness and inwardness of the mind. He wants to eliminate this specialness.<sup>11</sup> This means eliminating the what-it-is-like aspect of experience.<sup>12</sup> Supposedly, this what-it-is-like aspect of experience is captured by qualia. But can viewing qualia as a component of experience isolated from other components of experience really capture the what-it-is-like aspect of experience?

Let's return briefly to my above outlined intuition pump. I can grant Dennett that Ron might not know *why* his experience has changed, but Ron does know that his experience, taken as a whole, *has changed*. What it is like for Ron to perceive the wavelength 475 nm (along with the rest of the visible spectrum) has changed in such a salient way that he became temporarily convinced of his lack of sanity. Whether or not Ron's visual-producing mechanisms cause him to see 475 nm differently — by, for example, replacing the photopigments in the R-cone with the photopigments in the G-cone and visa-versa — *what it is like for Ron to look at the blue sky, the green grass, the yellow school bus is different*.

The same can be said for Dennett's Chase and Sanborn, the famous Maxwell House coffee tasters.<sup>13</sup> It does not matter if the coffee actually tastes different or simply that the coffee tasters have grown tired of that very same taste, the fact remains that *what it is like* for Chase and Sanborn to taste Maxwell House Coffee *has changed*.

Dennett wants us to accept that it takes a change in our senses for the qualitative aspect of experience to change, and that a change in reaction to a qualitatively identical sense does not constitute a change in the same kind of relevant way. Dennett is limiting qualia to changes in sense experience. But if reactions to a given experience have changed, then these changes can constitute evidence that our experience has actually changed. The qualitative state of experience can change even if the qualitative state of the senses remains the same. At first, this may seem like an odd claim, but it is not just our basic senses that provide the perspectival, what-it-is-like aspect of experience. It is the inclusion of complex variables of the human mind and the mind's interaction with the world around it. This would clearly include memory and other relevant components.

Take for example a person who has loving childhood memories of walking along sandy beaches on carefree summer days. For this person, the recollection of these memories creates a feeling of innocence and carefree blissfulness. These feelings become even more vivid when the person

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<sup>11</sup> Daniel Dennett, Quining Qualia, *Philosophy of Mind Classical and Contemporary Readings*, ed. David Chalmers, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, 229. "Qualia seem to so many people to be the last ditch defense of the inwardness and elusiveness of our minds, a bulwark against creeping mechanism. They are sure there must be some sound path from the homely cases to the redoubtable category of the philosophers, since otherwise their last bastion of specialness will be stormed by science."

<sup>12</sup> As mentioned in the introduction, an alternative way to storm the last bastion of specialness would be to show that the what-it-is-like aspect of experience could be explained in some acceptable naturalistic term. However, Dennett's goal is to eliminate this specialness.

<sup>13</sup> Daniel Dennett, Quining Qualia, *Philosophy of Mind Classical and Contemporary Readings*, ed. David Chalmers, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, 232-33

takes a visit to sandy beaches, especially those sandy beaches most like the ones she spent her childhood enjoying. The smell of the ocean water, the feel of the light ocean breeze, the feeling of sand beneath her feet and cradling her toes, the sound of children playing in the surf, all help bring about a certain subjective experience for this individual. But it is not just simply the senses that are responsible for what it is like for her to visit her favorite beach. Her particular experience owes just as much to her kind memories as it does to the actual touch, sight, sounds, and smell of the beach landscape. If her previous memories of the beach were severed, she would still feel, see, hear, and smell the same touches, sights, sounds and smells, but what it would be like for her to experience these things would change.

Now what if we didn't just sever her memory but also changed her memory? Let's say her joyous childhood memories become replaced by memories of being abused at her aunt's beach home on those same summer days. She may now have a disposition to react to the same sense experience with feelings of disgust and contempt. Through her senses alone, the beach is the same. However, what it is like for her to experience those senses change quite dramatically.

The phenomena at play in this beach example are well-documented phenomena of the mind: associations, discrimination, and generalization. Our mind comes to associate certain memories to certain kinds of sense experiences, and these associations can change what it is like for a person to experience certain kinds of sense experiences, even if there is no change in the way the person actually sees, hears, smells, or feels the sense experiences. In cases of the strongest discrimination, only the exact same sense experiences will elicit certain associations. What it is like to experience the certain sense experiences can change tremendously between pre-association and post-association without a change in actual sense information.

### **III. Qualia revisited**

So, what exactly is this qualia stuff? Well, I am not sure. It is indeed a philosopher's invention meant to capture the what-it-is-like aspect of experience, but if qualia fail to do this in a way that really highlights the problematic what-it-is-like aspect of experience, then I am fine with letting qualia go. What it is like does not seem to be captured by Dennett's characterization of qualia. What it is like is an aspect of our experience taken altogether, and this means I cannot hack off relevant components such as memory when talking about what it is like. The color blue may appear the same. The Maxwell House coffee may taste the same. The sounds, sights, smells, and touches of the beach may be the same. However, if the experience of looking at blue or the experience of tasting Maxwell House coffee or the experience of the beach is not the same then, trivially, the experiences are not the same, regardless of what contributed to the difference in experience. The what-it-is-like aspect of experience cannot be fully captured by focusing in on changes in immediate-perception-producing mechanisms alone. Experience is influenced by more than just immediate perception. What it is like is an aspect of experience taken as a whole.

### **IV. (Possibly) A Naturalizing Turn**

It seems there is no denying that there exists this perspectival, what-it-is-like aspect of experience for conscious beings, even if qualia do not sufficiently capture it. When it comes to consciousness, this fact begs explanation, not convincing that it really doesn't exist. Although I

believe the eliminativist project fails in providing a complete account of consciousness because it wants to eliminate the very fact(s) that separate the conscious from the non-conscious, I am very sympathetic to the naturalization of the mind and consciousness. However, I must admit that what a successful naturalization project might look like in the end, I am forced to leave wide open.

Science in recent years has done so much to shed light on the problems of consciousness. As science helps us learn more about the brain and other relevant parts of our system and their relation to various features of our mind, we are able to build a more complete functional account that shows the physical bases for the various features of the mind. The claim that “there can be no change in the mental without some change in the physical” shows more and more promise. There exist physical bases that can explain the activities of the conscious mind. Further it seems that two systems in exactly the same functional state – and for me the same functional state would require relevantly similar physical characteristics – will have the same experience.

However, it is one thing to be able to give a thorough mapping of the features of the mind and a completely other thing to be able to explain how and why certain clumps of matter give rise to a perspectival, what-it-is-like aspect of experience. Science may be able to give a causal account of how our senses combined with memory and other relevant features of the mind affect our experience. Science may even be able locate the neural basis of certain experiences with exact precision. However none of this guarantees an explanation as to how and why certain clumps of matter give rise to a perspectival, what-it-is-like aspect of experience.

There has to be some necessary and sufficient conditions that explain the rise of phenomenal consciousness. A complete naturalistic account – or any theory of the mind for that matter – will have to include such conditions in its analysis. But finding out exactly what these conditions are may be beyond our means. The ability to make this discovery rests completely on our ability to solve the problem of other minds. Our ability to discover the necessary and sufficient conditions of consciousness rests on being able to determine what constitutions give rise to consciousness and what constitutions do not. But what empirical test could we use to determine if consciousness existed in constitution XYZ but not UVW? It is not that there is not some physical fact that can explain the rise of consciousness, but that it may be beyond our ability to discover what physical fact(s) explains the rise of consciousness. I don’t want to surrender all hope and become a “Mysterian” in Colin McGinn fashion,<sup>14</sup> but it is definitely going to take a new perspective, perhaps a revolution in our scientific theories/methods, to shed new light on this old problem – and eliminativism is not that light.

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<sup>14</sup> Colin McGinn, “Can We Solve the Mind-Body Problem”, *Philosophy of Mind Classical and Contemporary Readings*, ed. David Chalmers, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, 394-405.

**Michael Uhall:**

## **'Talking Wolves' in Sheep's Clothing: Biletzki, Hobbes, and the Primacy of Rhetoric**

The primary text from which I shall draw in this paper is Anat Biletzki's *Talking Wolves: Thomas Hobbes on the Language of Politics and the Politics of Language*, and I shall contend that it is fundamentally confused and flawed in its approach – not only from my perspective, but, I will argue, also from that of Thomas Hobbes. In a chapter concerned with Hobbes's religious interpretation, Biletzki casually comments that "It is almost trite to claim that Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* is really two books: one political, the other theological."<sup>1</sup> He of course refers to the division between *Leviathan*'s first two sections, which address the nature of mankind and the commonwealth, and its last two sections, which solely address matters related to religious interpretation and misinterpretation. But this comment only exemplifies the strategy that Biletzki relies upon throughout his entire text, which has been to hold Hobbes's hermeneutics apart from what Biletzki wishes to argue is really Hobbes's philosophy of language – i.e., a formal pragmatics. Ascribing this strategy to Biletzki is not particularly contentious; in fact, he claims it as such: "It is not enough to merely provide the reader with a list of uses [of language]; one must – in order to be a convincing pragmaticist – relate the concept of 'use' itself to more theoretically exact guidelines."<sup>2</sup> And providing these exact guidelines – indeed, interpreting Hobbes's texts as explicitly containing them – is exactly what most of Biletzki's text is all about.

Biletzki states his purpose as to explicate the connection between Hobbes's political theory and Hobbes's views on language, but also and primarily to "ascribe to Hobbes a deep... philosophy of language" – specifically, "a *pragmatic* theory of language."<sup>3</sup> By "pragmatic," I should clarify, Biletzki refers to the field of linguistic analysis called pragmatics, which involves inquiry into the relations holding between signs and users of those signs. It is with this ascription by Biletzki to Hobbes of a "deep philosophy of language" that I wish to contend and, specifically, with Biletzki's strange reliance on "the constant duality between [Hobbes's] formal semantics and his general treatment of speech."<sup>4</sup> I say that his reliance on this distinction is strange because, as we shall see, Biletzki ends up discarding the distinction, even though his account depends upon it.

For example, Biletzki's reliance on this distinction is most clear in the text where he dedicates an entire chapter to examining how, for Hobbes, moral concepts gain their meanings. He cites what in Hobbesian scholarship is known for being a particularly contentious section in *De Cive*:

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<sup>1</sup> Anat Biletzki, *Talking Wolves: Thomas Hobbes on the Language of Politics and the Politics of Language* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997), 138

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 64

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 2, emphasis in original

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 9

All controversies are bred from hence, that the opinions of men differ concerning *meum* and *tuum*, *just* and *unjust*,... *good* and *evil*... and the like; which every man esteems according to his own judgment: it belongs to the same chief power to make some common rules for all men, and to declare them publicly, by which every man may know what may be called his, what another's, what just, what unjust... what good, what evil"<sup>5</sup>

He then sketches the relevant problematic – "Do 'just' and 'unjust' and the like acquire meaning through the sovereign's legislation, or do they have prior meaning but variable reference?" – and proceeds to take a side: "I shall take the point that the sovereign creates or constitutes moral constructs, yet still concur with holding that moral terms are meaningful before (or independently of) the sovereign's performative."<sup>6</sup> This is possible, Biletzki argues, only in light of Hobbes's assertions that language can be used to do a variety of things, and in the further illumination provided by pragmatics. Biletzki claims that "there are obvious elements in [Hobbes's] theory of meaning which in modern day parlance are clearly semantic."<sup>7</sup> He supports this claim by pointing to the several passages in Hobbes that relate to marks and naming (e.g., "A name... therefore is the voice of a man arbitrary, imposed for a mark to bring into his mind some conception concerning the thing on which is it imposed"<sup>8</sup>). As such, Biletzki separates the private, semantic meanings of moral terms from the public, semantic meanings of the same terms. What is important here is not whether Biletzki thinks that Hobbes's moral philosophy is grounded in the natural laws (in fact, he doesn't), but that Biletzki hollows out a space for private, semantic meaning in Hobbes's account – the point being that the moral terms in question can have meaning before the sovereign legislates their meaning within the commonwealth. Biletzki then concludes that by this analysis of the problematic in question, "a long-standing debate of Hobbesian interpretation can be laid to rest."<sup>9</sup>

Another example of Biletzki's explicit reliance on this "constant duality" between formal (i.e., pre-social, or private) semantics and "other uses of speech" comes when he compares it to another "over-riding duality [present] in any reading of Hobbes," namely, the division between the state of nature and the commonwealth.<sup>10</sup> He severely criticizes any attempt to explain this division analogically by comparing the state of nature to a (fictional) pre-linguistic condition and the commonwealth to a linguistic one. This argument builds upon the last argument, taking as a premise that "[moral terms] do carry a minimal significance in the sense of having been used as names independently of authoritative society."<sup>11</sup> Likewise, "...we must be able to tell the difference between names that have nothing to do with institutional society... and laws, instituted by the sovereign."<sup>12</sup> In other words, moral terms may have private meanings. Biletzki's conclusion, given the above, is precisely what one should expect. He blurs the division between the state of nature and the commonwealth in favor of the "constant duality" to which he (for the

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<sup>5</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *De Cive* in *Man and Citizen* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998), 6.9

<sup>6</sup> Anat Biletzki, *Talking Wolves: Thomas Hobbes on the Language of Politics and the Politics of Language* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997), 80

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 20

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *De Homine* in *Man and Citizen* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998), 5.2

<sup>9</sup> Anat Biletzki, *Talking Wolves: Thomas Hobbes on the Language of Politics and the Politics of Language* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997), 81

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 121

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 129

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 129

moment) ascribes primary importance. As such, Biletzki begins his argument by describing what he calls the "very certain mythology" of the state of nature – "*Homo homini lupus est*," or "Man is a wolf to man" – and ends it by concluding that "...man to man is a talking wolf – and therefore no wolf at all."<sup>13</sup> Like with the last argument, Biletzki thinks here he solves a problem of Hobbesian interpretation (this time, by shedding light on "the move from the natural [and therefore private] to the social-political [and therefore public] by recognition of the social inherently subsisting in the natural"<sup>14</sup>).

Solving all these problems is, of course, fantastic; but it seems that Biletzki ultimately performs a *reductio* on his own position. For much of the text, as we have seen, Biletzki relies on the distinction between so-called ordinary language and political language. The former derives its meaning from private, semantic acts (the "imposition of Names"); and the latter derives its meaning from the meaning-constitutive legislation of the sovereign (which, by the way, Biletzki identifies as "an Austinian performative – a speech act which does more than it says, and a mainstay of pragmatics"<sup>15</sup>). By the end of the text, however, Biletzki draws what appears to be an extremely counterintuitive conclusion indeed, especially considering all of his previous arguments: "I now want to retract that distinction and to claim that, for Hobbes, all words, all language, all meaning depends on agreement or convention. In other words, we cannot make use of some sort of fact/value dichotomy... and ascribe it to Hobbes by having him recognize natural or private meaning which is independent of convention or society."<sup>16</sup> He continues: "In fact, we can specifically point to Hobbes as erasing that dichotomy [i.e., the one between fact and value] by making all facts humanly... dependent."<sup>17</sup>

But these conclusions do not at all conform to the project that Biletzki first described. Far more seriously, I would argue, these conclusions undo nearly all of the work he has been trying to do. Considering that Biletzki's project was not merely to analyze the "linguistic tinges" present in Hobbes, but to fully recast those tinges as a "full-blown pragmatic theory," this poses no small problem. First, it now appears that Hobbes, if Biletzki's final analysis is correct (and I think it is), will not admit of such a theory – indeed, of any kind of formalist theory at all, pragmatic or otherwise. If there is no fact/value dichotomy present in Hobbes, then it seems unlikely to suggest, as Biletzki does, that Hobbes has a formal semantics on which some "deep philosophy of language" relies. Second, the "solutions" that Biletzki proffered to resolve long-standing problems in Hobbesian interpretation collapse. It appears that, in the final analysis, Biletzki's text consumes itself – by first building on the foundation of a formalist (pragmatic) theory and then demolishing that foundation irrevocably.

I have spent so much time with Biletzki's text not merely in order to criticize it; rather, I wish to contend more generally that any formalist exegesis of Hobbes is bound to fail. By "formalist," I mean that style of exegesis which proceeds on the basis of a number of assumptions about language which I do not think the history of textual interpretation itself bears out. These assumptions, as described by Stanley Fish, include, but are not limited to the following: "...that

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 115, 135

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 134

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 148

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 188

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 188

words have clear meanings... that minds see those meanings clearly; that clarity is a condition that persists through changes in contexts... that meanings are a property of language; that language is an abstract system that is prior to any occasion of use; that occasions of use are underwritten by that system..."<sup>18</sup> And, as he also points out, if the claim of formalism in the philosophy of language is "[that] it is possible to specify a level at which language correlates with the objective world and from which one can build up to contexts, situations, emotions, biases, [and] literature," then, "The claim is a far-reaching one... [which makes] claims about... the stability of... texts, *the independence of fact from value*, and the independence of meaning from interpretation."<sup>19</sup> That such claims are ultimately untenable is where Biletzki and I end up agreeing about what Hobbes says.

By now, depending on your philosophical inclinations, you might be dismissing what I have to say as what Biletzki would call an "aggrandizing hermeneutic [activity]," but the bite of my contention with these formalist assumptions stems from a theory of truth found in Hobbes's texts. In *Leviathan*, Hobbes writes, "For True and False are attributes of Speech, not of Things. And where Speech is not, there is neither Truth nor Falsehood,"<sup>20</sup> and in *De Corpore*, he repeats himself, saying, "truth consists in speech, and not in the things spoken of."<sup>21</sup> Richard Rorty, in his *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity*, provides a contemporary update of this view when he writes, "Truth cannot be out there – cannot exist independently of the human mind – because sentences cannot so exist, or be out there. The world is out there, but descriptions of the world are not."<sup>22</sup> Biletzki calls Hobbes's theory of truth "conventionalist," and he (correctly, by my lights) points out that it "emphasizes the human, user-dependent (and perhaps even arbitrary) aspect of truth, rather than its congruence with the facts."<sup>23</sup> But Biletzki spends little time discussing Hobbes's views on truth, and he certainly does not take to heart anything Hobbes says about it.<sup>24</sup> And nor could he, for once the notion of truth as correspondence to something called "reality" or "the facts" is discarded, the whole formalist approach to language goes as well. Without the aforementioned assumptions being held firmly in place, any way for language to be analyzed as an abstract system which *does* exist prior to occasions of use and divorced from the intentions of the speaker disappears. I think that Biletzki would agree, but his agreement could not go all the way down – that is to say, while he dresses up his account in the use-oriented language of "pragmatics," his project is still essentially a formalist one (rather than a rhetorical enterprise).

My final conclusion – really more of a suggestion than a derivation – is that, rather than trying to make Hobbes fit inside some model of pragmatics, we should openly view him as an essentially rhetorical thinker and writer. As Biletzki admits, it's no secret to anyone that Hobbes wanted to

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<sup>18</sup> Stanley Fish, "The Anti-Formalist Road" in *Doing What Comes Naturally: Change, Rhetoric, and the Practice of Theory in Literary and Legal Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989), 6

<sup>19</sup> Stanley Fish, "How Ordinary is Ordinary Language?" in *Is There a Text in This Class* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 97, emphasis my own

<sup>20</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Barnes and Noble Classics Collection, 2004), ch. 4

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *De Corpore* in *The Elements of Law, Natural and Politic* (Boston: Adamant Media Corporation, 2005)

<sup>22</sup> Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 5

<sup>23</sup> Anat Biletzki, *Talking Wolves: Thomas Hobbes on the Language of Politics and the Politics of Language* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997), 53

<sup>24</sup> I am not suggesting that Biletzki is obligated to adopt Hobbes's views on truth – or anything else for that matter – merely that here he specifically does not take into account what are, on Hobbes's part, radical views about truth.

persuade his audience, but I would contend further that Hobbes also discusses (by showing, a la Wittgenstein) how rhetoric is used to coerce and manipulate. What I mean by this is that we should look at Hobbes as someone who is simultaneously out to persuade at all costs *and* open about it – what Reed Way Dasenbrock calls an "incomplete Machiavellian" – Machiavellian because not bound by the principles of the day and incomplete because he tells you what he's doing.

In other words, we should take the claims of pragmatics seriously, but to do so, we must stop talking about how other people talk about talking and simply focus on *what* they are doing when they talk. While it is important to realize that people actually do things with words (a la Austin), once that realization has been made, the next step is to start looking at the sorts of things people do with words. Biletzki observes that "By uttering words, we achieve various purposes, but *to be understood* is not one such purpose; it is the intention underlying all linguistic purposes."<sup>25</sup> This is a very perspicuous observation. Similarly, *mutatis mutandis*, when we analyze language, we analyze the various uses of language, but "The Nature of Language" is not one such use. And that brings our attention back to what I would call the primacy of rhetoric. Stanley Fish observed that "whenever someone says that we live in a rhetorical world, someone else will immediately say... this means 'Anything goes'..."<sup>26</sup> But what this really means, he clarifies, "is that *anything that can be made to go goes*."<sup>27</sup> To some, this is perceived as a contentious claim, but not, I would argue, to Hobbes or to myself.

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<sup>25</sup> Anat Biletzki, *Talking Wolves: Thomas Hobbes on the Language of Politics and the Politics of Language* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997), 64

<sup>26</sup> Stanley Fish, "Truth and Toilets" in *The Trouble with Principle* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 307

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 307

**Taurean Webb:**

## **The Importance of Deliberation**

In the following paper, I will examine Harry Frankfurt's article, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility," as it relates to free will.

From this point, I will refer to "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility" as APMR.

In order to successfully critique APMR, it is important to note that APMR deals with the issue of free will. Loosely stated, having freedom of will means possessing the ability to use one's own motives, feelings, and deliberations to choose courses of action that reflect one's own desires.

Next, I will introduce moral responsibility and how moral responsibility relates to the issue of free will. Loosely stated, moral responsibility is the state of an individual being accountable and liable for actions that he has executed. There are, obviously, positive and negative consequences of various actions. When morally responsible, the individual is therefore deserving of these consequences.

Moral responsibility relates to the issue of free will in this way: it has been traditionally believed that an individual is morally responsible for an action when the individual executed that action out of his or her own free will.

Concerning APMR, Frankfurt first introduces a concept labeled "the principle of alternate possibilities." According to Frankfurt, the principle states that a person is morally responsible for what he has done only if he could have done otherwise. In other words, if someone acts in a situation in which he could not do other than what he actually did, he is not responsible for his action. He is not responsible because he did not control his action. Frankfurt introduces this principle as one that has played a dominant role in the discussion of free will. He believes that this principle is so pervading in the philosophical inquiries about free will that many people have characterized it as *a priori* truth.

An *a priori* truth is a statement that is knowable and true independent of experience or observation. It is frequently called "truth by definition."

Frankfurt then purposes himself to prove that the principle of alternate possibilities is false. He attempts to prove the principle's falsity by making a claim about it, offering illustrations to support that claim, reviewing a possible objection, and revising his argument to address that particular objection.

We will examine this now: according to Frankfurt, a person can be morally responsible for what he has done even though he could not have done otherwise. Frankfurt offers three illustrations

that all regard an individual whom we will call Person A. The illustrations address the notion that coercion excludes moral responsibility. This notion hinges on the fact that if someone is coerced into doing something, he cannot be responsible for his action.

In the first illustration, Person A makes a decision about something. Upon making this decision, A is approached with a threat of some kind. He is told that unless he changes his decision, the threat will be manifested. The threat is unacceptable and very severe. A knows that the threat is unacceptable and severe. It is so severe that any reasonable person would renege on his decision for the sake of not receiving the penalty of the threat. But A, being unreasonable and unyielding, decides to follow through with his initial intent and carry out the decision that he had planned.

Here, Person A was unaffected by the threat. He was indifferent towards it. He acted as he would have acted if there was no threat at all. Needless to say, A was not coerced.

In the second illustration, and totally separate situation, A has made a decision. Again, he is approached with a threat. He is told that unless he changes his decision, the threat will be manifested. The threat is, again, unacceptable and severe. But this time, the threat upsets and terrifies A so profoundly that he totally forgets about his initial decision. He is so paralyzed with fear that he changes his decision so that it complies with the wishes of the threatener.

In this example, A is influenced by the threat and “supposedly” coerced by the threatener. Because of this coercion, A cannot be held accountable for his actions.

In his final illustration, A, again, makes a decision. This illustration is also separate from the previous two illustrations. Here, after making a decision, A is approached with a threat yet again. This time, he is neither indifferent nor terrified by the threat. He was impressed by the threat, according to Frankfurt. And the threat would have impressed any reasonable man in that situation. So impressed, that A would have complied with the demand after the threat, if his initial decision was not identical to the demand of the threatener. But here, his decision already complied with that of the threatener. So, obviously, he did not alter it.

In this illustration, A did not submit to the threat. Because A did not concede to the threat, in this particular case, he made the decision irrespective of the threat. Again, he was not coerced.

In presenting these illustrations, Frankfurt attempts to prove that scenarios commonly labeled as “coercive,” are either not instances of coercion at all (as in illustration #2), or situations in which a person may still be responsible for his actions if it is not because of coercion that he acts (as in #1, 3).

Frankfurt next addresses a possible objection to his argument. According to Frankfurt, some would say that A’s inability to resist the threat (i.e. A’s state of being coerced, if that state exists) does not mean that he cannot do other than what he actually did. A could have chosen to do otherwise, and simply received the consequences of the threat, but he did not. Therefore, these illustrations do not prove that one can still be morally responsible without having the ability to do otherwise. A has the ability to do otherwise. These illustrations do not prove the falsity of

the principle of alternate possibilities. This is a very keen objection that Frankfurt raises on behalf of his argument's objectors.

Frankfurt now revises his original argument to accommodate the previous objection. And although he does accommodate the aforementioned objection, there will still remain a flaw in his reasoning from which his argument cannot recover. The revision is as follows: suppose a person- we shall call him B- desires to perform a certain action. We will call that action, "action." B decides that he is going to perform "action." There is also another party involved. We will call him C. C desires for B to perform "action." In the event that B opts out of performing "action," C will intervene and through a mind-controlling machine, cause B to perform "action." If C can avoid intervening, he will. But if intervention cannot be avoided, C will step into the situation and ensure that B performs "action." C will guarantee that his wishes prevail.

In this scenario, Frankfurt offers a revision that does defeat the problem of "being able to do otherwise." In the initial three illustrations, Person A could have done other than what he did. Frankfurt needed A *to not be able* to do otherwise. In the revised illustration, however, B could not have done otherwise. B could not have done anything other than perform "action." He was either going to perform "action" on his own volition, or C was going to intervene and ensure that he performed "action."

Again, in order for the principle of alternate possibilities to be false, an individual would have to not be able to do otherwise, yet still be morally responsible. As far as Frankfurt is concerned, he has accomplished this goal by the end of his article. But, I assert that there is a serious and significant flaw in his reasoning.

This objection, and possible cannon to the Frankfurt argument, is aided, in part, by the Daniel Dennett book excerpt, "Could Have Done Otherwise." In Dennett's article, he uses Frankfurt's example (the example that we labeled with B, C, and action) to gird his argument. Dennett seems to be in favor of Frankfurt, or at least this particular Frankfurt illustration. Dennett has helped me in that his commentary on the Frankfurt illustration illuminates its major flaw. Dennett's commentary states, "Frankfurt claims, the person (B) would be responsible for his deed (action), since he chose it with all due deliberation and wholeheartedness, in spite of the lurking presence of the overdeterminer (C)....." So according to Dennett, "deliberation and wholeheartedness" are characteristic of an agent who possesses moral responsibility. And I absolutely agree.

The issue is this: Frankfurt claims that if, and only if, B reneges on the decision that he already made, C will then intervene and ensure that the original decision (and the decision that he favors) is fully executed. Let us say that this happens. B decides to commit a certain act- a crime, say. C strongly desires for B to commit this crime. But, at the last possible second, B reneges. He decides that he will not go through with it. He decides with *all due deliberation and wholeheartedness* that he will not go through with the crime. After he makes this decision, C steps in, as promised. C pushes a button on the machine that is directly connected to B's mind, brain and behavioral controls. He ensures that B commits the crime. I assert that at this point, C intervenes and *changes* B's intentions from "not wanting to go through with it" to "wanting to go

through with it.” Because B’s “most recent deliberations” resulted in B desiring to renege from committing the crime, C’s intervention changes B’s “most recent intention.” C’s intervention changes B’s most recent intention to an intention other than B’s. So now, B’s motives and desires are no longer his own. His intentions are being controlled by someone else. And we absolutely cannot hold an individual responsible for actions, desires, and motives that are not his own. Dennett and I apply due deliberation to slightly different aspects of the scenario, but the idea remains the same. So instead of presenting a scenario that covers all loose ends and provides an avenue to prove the falsity of the principle of alternate possibilities, Frankfurt simply failed in the completion of his article’s initial goal.

For clarity, let us look at why Frankfurt was unsuccessful in his attempt to totally dismount the principle of alternate possibilities. Let us remember that if the principle is going to be fully dismantled, it has to be false in *all* cases. The principle of alternate possibilities states that an individual is only morally responsible for an action that he commits when he could have done otherwise. This means that if he could not have done otherwise, he cannot be held responsible. Frankfurt needed to prove that there exist situations in which individuals could not have done otherwise, but nonetheless are responsible for what they do. The process of proving this is twofold. In addition to proving the ability to do otherwise, or lack thereof, Frankfurt also needed to prove responsibility. The inability to do otherwise, alone, is not sufficient to prove responsibility. According to Dennett, and I agree, deliberation and intention are characteristic and necessary to prove moral responsibility. In the scenario, B did have deliberation and intention, but his deliberation and intention was not focused on the action that he ultimately committed. Therefore, he cannot be held responsible.

So, in examining Frankfurt’s article, “Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility,” and considering the purpose that Frankfurt announced at the beginning of his article, I assert that his overall argument is unsound. His argument is unsound because of the falsity of, at least, one important premise. Implicitly, Frankfurt argues that in this scenario, B is responsible for his actions because his initial motive was to go through with the commission of the crime. He ultimately, could not have done otherwise, but he is still responsible for his action. It asserts responsibility without the ability to do otherwise. And this, friends, is simply false.

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