Philosophy in Practice

VOLUME 2 – SPRING 2006

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

There is the anecdote of Thales the Milesian and his financial device, which involves a principle of universal application, but is attributed to him on account of his reputation for wisdom. He was reproached for his poverty, which was supposed to show that philosophy was of no use. According to the story, he knew by his skill in the stars while it was yet winter that there would be a great harvest of olives in the coming year; so, having little money, he gave deposits for the use of all the olive-presses in Chios and Miletus, which he hired at a low price because no one bid against him. When the harvest-time came, and many were wanted all at once and of a sudden, he let them out at any rate which he pleased, and made a quantity of money. Thus he showed the world that philosophers can easily be rich if they like, but that their ambition is of another sort.

[Aristotle, *Politics*, Book I, Chapter 11]

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Cover Photo by *Joanna Ghosh* [taken in Greece (Crete), Summer 2006]

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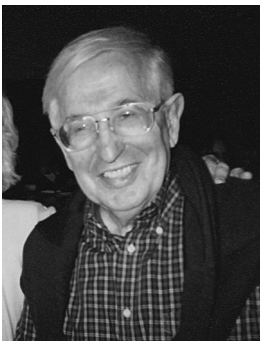
NOTE

[1] Years in parentheses indicate the year in which the faculty member began at Cal State L.A., followed by the highest degree earned, the university at which the degree was granted, and the faculty member's areas of specialization.

Professor Spotlight: Dr. Ricardo Gómez

Ricardo Gómez, Ph.D, is a very accomplished professor in the CSULA Department of Philosophy. He teaches with a great deal of dedication and enthusiasm, personally attesting to the great deal of pleasure that he gets from teaching.



Dr. Gómez comes to us from Buenos Aires, the capital city of Argentina. He has made Los Angeles his home for several years, yet every summer he travels abroad to several Latin American countries to teach at various universities, allowing him the privilege to teach in Spanish, his native tongue. With a strong background in the physical sciences, Dr. Gómez brings a vibrant and multifaceted aspect to his instruction. Particularly satisfying is his nurturing of students' interests in philosophy of science.

Dr. Gómez received his early education in Buenos Aires, becoming a Professor of Mathematics and Physics in 1959. The work of great thinkers excited him; however, the appearance of great thought—the process, the ability, the possibility—seemed even more enticing, and seven years later he received a degree in philosophy. Shortly after in 1968 he began to teach Philosophy of Science at the Universidad de La Plata, and only three years later he was named Director of the Institute of Logic and Philosophy of Science at the university.

In 1976 a vicious military coup took power in Argentina gripping the nation under a ruthless campaign of repression, an estimated 11,000 disappearances, and almost total restrictions on speech and personal liberties. Gómez, as a distinguished member of the intellectual community in Argentina, was taken from his home by military escort to an airport where he would be forced to board a plane and leave his beloved country.

Soon after his arrival to the United States he was confronted with the dire realization that in order to continue teaching, in

order to continue doing the job that he so loved, he would have to start his academic career all over again. Such an imposing obstacle might potentially have been the end of the road for many others, yet anybody who knows or has shared words with Ricardo Gómez, anybody who has witnessed his determination and resolve would not be surprised to hear that such an obstacle was merely a bump in the road for Gómez. In pursuit of his life's passion, he began his education again at Indiana University, ultimately earning an MA in History and Philosophy of Science (1978) and a Ph.D in Philosophy (1982). Already a distinguished professor in Argentina, already having published a book (Las Teorías Científicas), Gómez had to begin again.

Los Angeles was a welcome sight for a native of the city environment—the crowded streets, the diversity, the music, the food, all reminders of home, of Buenos Aires. Five years after completing his second education, Gómez was hired as a Philosophy Professor at Cal State LA. Since then he has published three books and an array of articles, traveled the world giving lectures, been awarded multiple outstanding professor awards, and called everyone from Mozart to Kant a bastard.

Dr. Gómez became a tenured professor at CSULA in 1987, and he reports that he has absolutely no plans of retirement as of yet. Raised in the lights, sounds and speed of a city, Gómez has never been one to ignore the pulse of civilization, and jazz, and literature, and westerns, and dulce de leche. And though one might be expecting him to slow down, he seems to only be hitting his stride. More and more he finds himself being interested in writers that shock him. He yearns to do research with students. He spends his summers abroad teaching graduate seminars in economics and philosophy at the University of Buenos Aires. It seems as if there is always the flash of action in his life.

> *And yet a secret slips out. He takes the longer more scenic route to school. In this simple act he reveals the tilt of the smile that seems to be so at home on his face; time has not taken control of him, rather he has taken control of time.*

Prepared by Rudolfo Plascencia and Omar Zubair

The Festival of Cruetly Revisited: Addressing Nietzschean Amoralism's Social Threat

Juan-Francisco Palacios

> The great majority of men have no right to existence,
> but are a misfortune to higher men.[1]
>
> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*

This paper will be the first in a series of philosophical commentary; these essays will not focus on philosophical theory in the analytic tradition as much as they will focus on a discourse of philosophy and the roles and functions that it plays within society at large. This particular paper will be entirely devoted to the concept that Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy, most prominently his writings on Amoralism pose a grave social threat to society at large. Note that my intention in discussing philosophy as a social threat, potential catalyst for destruction, and justification of immoral behavior is not meant to be an argument against philosophical enterprise and discourse. Rather it is most significantly meant to serve as a warning for present and future philosophers, as well as students of philosophy. There is no doubt that there is much that is wonderful within philosophy; there exists much that should be appreciated, proliferated and studied. Yet, along with the good also exists much that has the potential for detrimentally affecting society. Without leading ourselves to such drastic measures as book burning and persecution on the basis of ideas and ideologies, we must take it upon ourselves to be *prudent* students of philosophy, never forgetting the old saying: "The pen is mightier than the sword." It becomes obvious at

times that this old saying rings true, and when it becomes true, philosophy itself can become a tool of murder and destruction, justifying the horrible and the grotesque. When it becomes evident that philosophy can be perverted, grossly misinterpreted, or manipulated in such a manner that it threatens human life and ethics in general, it becomes the prudent philosopher's duty, no matter how unappealing it might be, to admit and recognize that in any philosophical discourse there potentially exists an ugly, dangerous side. Only through such recognition can there exist any hope for saving philosophy from such threats, and more importantly, such recognition gives us hope that society itself might be saved from philosophy and those who might use it for harm.

Jonathan Glover, in his book *Humanity*, attempts to give us *A Moral History of the Twentieth Century*. In doing so one of his concerns becomes the writings of Nietzsche and the plethora of negative implications that his infiltrations into modern philosophy and politics play. The writings of Glover and his commentary on Nietzsche will thus be used throughout this paper to keep us on track with some historical and social issues that have been significantly impacted by Nietzsche's philosophy, while direct quotes, along with concepts of Nietzsche summarized by the author will be used to demonstrate specific examples of claims and ideologies that exhibit the grave dangers of philosophic inquiry, and the grave social threat that philosophy poses if taken lightly.

"Good and Bad" and "Good and Evil"

In order to gain a concise yet accurate understanding of Nietzsche's Amoralism we should briefly discuss what leads Nietzsche to give up on morality. Glover writes,

> Nietzsche saw that the idea of a moral law external to us is in deep trouble. He wrote of the death of God, and took for granted that religious belief was no longer a serious intel-

> lectual option. He thought the implications of this, particularly for morality, had not yet been understood. Like rays of light from a distant star, its implications had not yet reached us.[2]

What this means is that Nietzsche essentially believed that the historical prevalence of a moral law external to us had been wholly manufactured and supported by religious dogma in an attempt to help the physically weak keep what he called the *noble* classes down. He equates Judaeo-Christian morality with *slave morality*, a synthetic tool of oppression used to subvert the integrity of the physical power of the ruling classes. He writes, "The truth of the *first* inquiry[3] is the birth of Christianity: the birth of Christianity out of the spirit of *ressentiment*, not, as people may believe, out of the "spirit"—a countermovement by its very nature, the great rebellion against the dominion of *noble* values."[4] Nietzsche believes that modern western morality has its historical roots in Judaism, and subsequently becomes concrete in the institution of Christianity and the conclusion of an ancient rebellion against power and privilege. This rebellion, a conflict that we will refer to as the *Plebeian Insurrection* would see the weak rise to power over the strong; it would for Nietzsche be the ultimate perversion and manipulation of ethical inquiry; it would create a pseudo-morality, a morality based on *weakness* and resentment, not on the good will and altruism that Christianity would emptily preach. Ultimately, Nietzsche would see this pseudo-morality as toxic and irreparable on the ground that its fundamental foundations are born of manipulation and resentment, and for Nietzsche the only justified alternative would be Amoralism.

In the First Essay of the "Genealogy of Morals," Nietzsche inquires into the historical significance of the linguistic terms, "Good and Bad" and "Good and Evil." Nietzsche believes that the coinage of such terms derives from the historical existence of a ruling *noble* class and a subordinate *plebeian* class.

Nobles were those who held power over others; such power was obtained and maintained by land ownership, serfdom, aristocracy, political power, military power, physical power, etc. Accordingly, the plebeian class would be constituted of everybody else in the lower ranks, those who were ruled over by others. Nietzsche explains, "It follows from this origin that the word "good" was definitely not linked from the first and by necessity to "unegoistic" actions, as the superstition[5] of these genealogists of morality would have it."[6] Nietzsche believes that the *noble* class, having the power to assign names to things and concepts and dictate their "proper" usage, effectively used language to their advantage. They assigned the word and concept of "good" to that which was useful to the *nobility*, while "bad" became a negative connotation of utility, assigned to the useless or *un-noble*, more commonly the *plebeian*. At this point in history, such terms were defined by utilitarian connotations, an internalized value judgment would not be present in the semantics of "Good and Bad" for quite some time. Consequently, the evolution of such terms to connote internalized value judgments, what Nietzsche defines as connotations of "egoistic" and "unegoistic" would flip around the good/bad distinction. The manipulation and redefinition of good and bad and the institution of internalized value judgments would ultimately be the story of the *plebeian insurrection* and the establishment of what Nietzsche would coin as *slave morality*, the basis for Judaeo-Christian ethics, and the West's most prominent concept of morality, much to the loathing of Nietzsche.

The Plebeian Insurrection

Though Nietzsche is starkly opposed to *slave morality* as an institution, he does show some appreciation for it in terms of the cleverness and sly manipulation that was required on the part of the Ancient Jews who were responsible for the rise of *slave morality*. He praises the Jews for their ability to use mechanisms

of language and semantics to their advantage, ultimately turning around the meanings and connotations of good and bad to benefit them. This *linguistic inversion of power* resulted in the modern interpretations of the words, involving degrees of unegotistical and egotistical connotation, respectively.

Something radically new occurred in the history of human class struggle during the plebeian insurrection, not only did the meanings of 'good' and 'bad'change to reflect a new ideology, but the valence of existing character traits was changed to echo a radically new societal ideal, an ideal imposed by means of completely changing society's language and psychology. Soon enough, 'good' and 'bad' were replaced by even stronger words and connotations: 'good' and 'evil', stressing an even greater internal value judgment against the *evil* exploitative ways of the ruling nobles. Good would come to be directly associated with religious righteousness and purity, things that the plebeian masses could potentially attain, as opposed to the exclusivity of the power held by nobles and aristocracies.

Nietzsche writes of a brilliant play by the priestly aristocracies, who were devoid of physical power and envious of the *noble warrior classes*: they fabricated the concepts of *purity* and *impurity*[7] of the soul in order to usurp power from the overvalued warrior classes. The priestly aristocracies' lack of physical strength and military power required them to employ cunning measures if they were to overtake the warrior classes. Accordingly, they attempted to increase their utility and influence on society by strengthening the importance of religious piousness and convention. In Ancient Greece, it was customary for a killer to enter the temple of a particular god, literally wash his hands of the blood he had spilt, and walk away emancipated of his transgression. This was not enough for the priestly aristocracies. They wanted power over the warrior, and wouldn't be satisfied until the *nobles* came to their temples on their hands and knees, begging for forgiveness and redemption. The concepts of *purity*

and *impurity*, when internalized, would serve to reinforce the importance of religious convention in society.

Consequently, the construction of a society ruled by religious dogma and fabricated morality ensued. The priestly classes abdicated their relatively high social positions among the other nobles and formed a new class, aligning themselves with the lowly *plebeians*. The priests would come down to help the *plebeians* in their struggle against the aristocracies of the noble classes, and in the process would gain an unimaginable amount of power over both the plebeians and the noble classes.

Good became the societal ideal, attainable by the *plebeians*, dictated by the *priestly*, and forced upon the *noble*. Bad and evil become vilified, associated with malice and impiety; slave morality would subvert the egotistical attitudes of the powerful ruling classes. Ultimately, slave morality's action would have to be considered reaction; it needs an enemy to fight and appear subjugated by, Nietzsche greatly dislikes this because it makes one dependent on the nobles to make one feel good about oneself; making it parasitic in nature. The nobles remain freely active and freely expressive; while Christians and Jews exist as merely reactive and parasitic entities.

While Nietzsche praises the plebeian insurrection for its shrewdness and success, in most light he views it with disdain for its capacity to undermine human potential, in the sense that it makes individuals reliant on religious dogma and the belief that they are constantly living under the oppression of others. Nietzsche believes that such a manufactured morality restricts human potential, as it creates boundaries that limit our creativity, power, and personal development. Ultimately, Nietzsche believes that slave morality perverts and corrupts our modern concept of morality, making it worthless; such a morality does more harm than good. He believes that one should create oneself, warranting personal development and creativity, and not limit oneself on the grounds of abiding to religious dogma. For these reasons,

Nietzsche rejects the principles of our morality; he believes that it is merely manufactured, such that it is not intrinsic to the world or to humans. In order to truly be free in our projects of *self-creation*, we must do away with religious dogma, our spirit of resentment, and the leashes of slave morality. Only then can we be free to create our own destiny and attempt to push the boundaries of human potential. In other words, Nietzsche is arguing for personal freedom, as he recognizes the strict boundaries that morality can place on the individual: "thou shall not do this, and thou shall not do that", only restrict our nature according to Nietzsche. Furthermore, if the foundations of a morality that tells us not to steal or lie are based on issues of resentment and revenge, then what makes such moral guidelines valid? Nietzsche argues that we should look at situations on a case by case basis, instead of relying on dogma and concrete edicts; we should think for ourselves and act accordingly. In a particular situation the *right* thing might be to lie or cheat, while in another, honesty might be the best policy. Ultimately, for Nietzsche it is up to the individual to act according to his own project of self-creation, and only then can the individual transcend petty limitations and attempt to push the boundaries of liberty and personal development.

Immoralism's Bait: Self-Creation

The attack on the legitimacy of our moral tradition and Nietzsche's stress for *self-creation* is often regarded as his most inspirational and widely praised philosophical concept. For obvious reasons, self-creation, with its strong support of individualism and capitalistic venture, is highly regarded in our modern culture. Consequently, the attractive nature of Nietzsche's argument makes it very easy for a modern reader to weed through Nietzsche's writings, picking out the concepts that appeal to him (i.e. *self-creation*), and ignore or fail to comprehend the innumerable horrors that can result from a negligent reading of

Nietzsche's philosophy. Also, the high degree of disagreement and fragmentation in Nietzsche's writings can lead an imprudent student of philosophy or ignorant layman to take Nietzsche's treatise for much less, or much more than it truly is. Under close scrutiny of his works, it becomes evident that Nietzsche is not a hero of the masses, and that his concept of *self-creation* is not such a beautiful realization when played by certain rules. Nietzsche writes, "The philosophers of the future will have a certain self-possessed cruelty which knows how to wield the knife with certainty and deftness even when the heart bleeds. They will be *harder* (and perhaps not always only against themselves) than humane men might wish."[8] Thus, Nietzsche paints a bleak picture of the *self-created superman*, an individual without remorse, without morality, one who gladly steps over others weaker than himself (even taking pleasure from it) in an attempt to reach new levels of *human development*.

The Threat of Nietzsche's Immoralism: The Festival of Cruelty

> That lambs dislike great birds of prey does not seem strange: only it gives no ground for reproaching these birds of prey for bearing off little lambs?[9]
>
> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, Essay I

Nietzsche writes that the outburst of industrialization and urbanization in the mid to late 19th century created a shift in the human conception of morality. Glover comments, "Christian morality's rejection of the law of the jungle had almost ruined the human species: for Nietzsche, it was more than time for that morality to be overturned."[10] Nietzsche believed that much like "rays of light from a distant star," Amoralism would eventually come to permeate society, proving to be the only means towards *self-creation* and unrestrained human development. Nietzsche writes of cruelty and suggests that primitive man understood the

value of cruelty and embraced its worth, its ability to bring him pleasure. Nietzsche suggests that morality, most prominently Christian morality takes this away from man, making him weak:

> It seems to me that the delicacy and even more the tartuffery of tame domestic animals (which is to say modern men, which is to say us) resists a really vivid comprehension of the degree to which cruelty constituted the great festival pleasure of more primitive men and was indeed an ingredient of almost every one of their pleasures…[11]

Nietzsche believes that there is much to gain from cruelty and seeing others suffer. He would look back at the times of the Roman Gladiators and see courage, bravery, suffering, pain, pleasure and from it get a picture of the unrestrained man, the self-created man. He believes that our modern conception of morality forces us to consider such acts as immoral, and consequently restrains our actions, ultimately restraining our development. Nietzsche believes that the humble, restrained man will never feel the glory of the arena; without spilling blood, without dominating others, we succumb to domination by others, or worse, we fade into monotony. Nietzsche writes of a time before *slave morality*, before the ethical muzzling of man, painting a *Hobbesian*[12] picture of unbridled cruelty and rampant malice:

> To see others suffer does one good, to make others suffer even more: this is a hard saying but an ancient, mighty, human, all-too-human principle to which even the apes might subscribe; for it has been said that in devising bizarre cruelties they anticipate man and are, as it were, his "prelude." Without cruelty there is no festival: thus the longest and most ancient part of human history teaches—and in punishment there is so much that is *festive!*[13]

He believes that the strong noble man resembles the previously described primitive man: he is willing and eager to dominate others, and according to Nietzsche is truly the better man. He writes, "The great majority of men have no right to existence,

but are a misfortune to higher men. I do not yet grant the failures the right. There are also people that are failures."[14] In light of Nietzsche's claims, we must ask ourselves if we are to accept that trampling over others is tolerable behavior for *good* humans; that there are certain classes of humans who deserve to suffer, who have no higher purpose but to serve the strong and powerful?

Nietzscheism: The Blueprint for Nazism

The Nazi project can be rightly considered a Nietzschean project, yet Nietzsche was personally an opponent of National Socialism, and held much contempt for anti-Semitism, to the point that it would cause Nietzsche to become disillusioned with, and ultimately break off his close ties to Wilhelm Richard Wagner because of his strong anti-Semitic convictions. Thus, an important question follows: "If Nietzsche was an opponent of National Socialism and anti-Semitism, how is it that we can at all attribute the Nazi project and all of its atrocities to Friedrich Nietzsche?" In order to illustrate this point we can turn to Glover, who writes, "The Nazi project of national renewal gave many people beliefs and hope of glory. Its belief system was a mixture of Social Darwinism and ideas from Nietzsche. Social Darwinism gave 'scientific' authority to tribalism and from Nietzsche came a belief in will, strength and power, together with a rejection of Judaeo-Christian morality."[15] The clear answer is that Nazism was a brazen perversion of Nietzscheism, through highly selective reading and realization. The Nazis carefully disseminated Nietzsche's work and assimilated it into their own project. They took his concept of the strong noble man and equated it to Aryan supremacy, and aligned themselves with Nietzsche's rejection of Christianity, subsequently justifying their rejection of morality and religion, and distorted his disdain of slave morality to justify anti-Semitism. Furthermore, accepting and glorifying Nietzschean Amoralism gave them their

ultimate justification for unimaginable cruelty and thoughts of a *final solution*.

Clearly, the atrocities committed by the Nazi regime and the ease involved in justifying such cruel government-led campaigns of segregation, scapegoating, torture, and mass murder shows us just how much of a threat Nietzsche's Amoralism really is, as explained by Glover in the following text:

> Some things Nietzsche said were pure Nazi doctrine. His comments that 'The extinction of many types of people is just as desirable as any form of reproduction' and that 'the tendency must be towards the rendering extinct of the wretched, the deformed, the degenerate' could come from any work on racial hygiene. Nietzsche's central contribution was not these explicitly Social Darwinist views, but his rejection of the Judaeo-Christian morality of compassion for the weak. Self-creation required hardness towards oneself: a strong will imposing coherence on conflicting impulses. It also required hardness towards others. Conflicts between the self-creative projects of different people made inevitable the attempt to dominate others. The whole of life was a struggle in which victory went to the brave and to the strong-willed. Noble human qualities, linked with the will to power, were brought out in combat but atrophied in peace. Compassion was weakness, cowardice and self-deception. The Judaeo-Christian emphasis on it was poison, In drawing these consequences from his beliefs about the death of God and from Social Darwinism, Nietzsche provided the part of the Nazi belief system which 'justified' the cruel steps they took to implement their beliefs.[16]

Christian morality might have lost its persuasiveness[17] with the decline of religion, or have been flawed at conception, but in such cases where a total lack of morality can lead to the systematic murder of 6 million Jews, it is clearly seen that some morality is better than none.

Humanized Morality: "Never Again!"

Nietzsche believed that there is nothing "*in itself*" about morality, that it is purely a synthetic construction, arguing:

> To speak of just or unjust *in itself* is quite senseless; *in itself*, of course, no injury, assault, exploitation, destruction can be "unjust," since life operates *essentially*, that is in its basic functions, through injury, assault, exploitation, destruction, and simply cannot be thought of at all without this character. One must indeed grant something even more unpalatable: that, from the highest biological standpoint, legal conditions can never be other than *exceptional conditions*, since they constitute a partial restriction of the will of life, which is bent upon power, and are subordinate to its total goal as a single means: namely, as a means of creating *greater* units of power."[18]

Yet, there is something inherently *human* that desires morality, something that Nietzsche fails to acknowledge. Desensitization or distance can lessen the effect, and governments and regimes can devise ways to combat it, but inherently there is an internal aspect of morality that is intrinsic to humanity, even if the moral law itself is socially constructed. The vast majority of people in society do not take enjoyment from the suffering of others, when we see somebody scream in pain and agony, do we not flinch as if able to feel their pain? Is it not true that most people are disgusted by the mutilation and torture of others? We might be ephemerally entertained by blood and guts horror movies, but it is my belief that few of us could pick up the knife and reenact what we see on screen, taking pleasure from it. Of course, exceptions must be made for the mentally incapable, and those systematically trained and desensitized to commit such atrocities; but even the realization of such exceptions points out that substantial measure must be taken in order to fight off this intrinsic *human morality* that stops most of us from committing atrocities. Glover writes, "the atrocities themselves do not just happen: people commit them. In a different moral climate, it could be harder to

take part."[19]

In order to answer Nietzsche's threat to morality we must take substantial measures to recreate morality, synthetically if need be. Nadezhda Mandelstam writes in her book *Hope Against Hope*:

> We have seen the triumph of evil after the values of humanism have been vilified and trampled on. The reason these values succumbed was probably that they were based on nothing except boundless confidence in the human intellect. I think we may now find a better foundation for them, if only because of the lessons we have drawn from our experience.[20]

Mandelstam believes that humanism will eventually save us, she describes a "boundless confidence in the human intellect" as the detriment of our moral values, much like how the imprudent student of philosophy has the ability to become so engrossed with his philosophical inquiry and its social manifestation that he fails to see the grave social impacts that such enterprises exhibit. Mandelstam would have us incorporate *human morality* in our philosophical project's foundation; only then can we hope to avoid the repetition of philosophy's horrible past. Glover, in agreement with Mandelstam, believes that we can achieve such a foundation if we are willing to take the fundamental aspects of *intrinsic human morality* and translate them into a broad psychological program. In trying to answer Nietzsche, we must instill in society's psychology the ideology that such atrocities as those committed by the Nazi Program will not be tolerated. Furthermore, *self-creation* should be accepted and encouraged, but not at the cost of condoning *immoralism*. Fundamentally there are lines that must not be crossed, and society must stand up equally for the rights of the minority, the weak, and the strong.

> The prospects of reviving belief in a moral law are dim. Looking for an external validation of morality is less effective than building breakwaters. Morality could be aban-

> doned, or it can be re-created. It may survive in a more defensible form when seen to be a human creation. We can shape it consciously to serve people's needs and interests, and to reflect the things we most care about.[21]

Ultimately, we must bite Nietzsche's bullet and accept that most aspects of morality are not *a priori*. Nietzsche is right in pointing out that most external morality is aimed at subjugation and restraint, but such observations do not warrant *immoralism*; essentially there is too much at stake to give up on morality. Glover further writes

> As authority-based morality retreats [in the form of the decline of religious authority], it can be replaced by a morality which is deliberately created. The best hope of this is to work with the grain of human nature, making use of the resources of moral identity and the human responses. But changes and additions to common-sense attitudes will be needed. Many of these involve the social and personal cultivation of the moral imagination.[22]

In an attempt to never again relive the horrors of Nazi Germany, Stalin's Russia, Pol Pot's Cambodia, Mao's China or any of the countless human atrocities of our long and bloody history, we must both nurture a "moral imagination" and embrace *human morality*, denying Nietzsche his glory, his festival of cruelty. Glover further writes on this point, "The means for expressing cruelty and carrying out mass killing have been fully developed. It is too late to stop the technology. It is to the psychology that we should now turn."[23] In other words, it is only through addressing society's psychology, instilling the importance of human morality and stressing the danger of Amoralism that we will ever be able to truly say "Never again!"

Notes

1. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Section 125, summarized in Jonathan Glover, *Humanity: A Moral History of the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 11.

2. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, Section 872 quoted in Glover, 15.
3. The "*first* inquiry" refers to the first essay of The Genealogy of Morals, most importantly the "Good and Bad" and "Good and Evil" distinctions.
4. Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, "Genealogy of Morals" in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. et ed. Walter Kaufman (New York: Modern Library, 2000), 768.
5. The "superstition" that Nietzsche alludes to is the western conception of morality and its constituent notion of altruism.
6. Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Essay I, Section 2 in Kaufman, 462.
7. In this context, religious purity and impurity in their most basic sense could be read to mean piety and impiety, respectively.
8. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Section 210 in Kaufman, 324.
9. Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, Essay I, Section 13 in Kaufman, 480-81.
10. Glover, 16.
11. Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, Essay II, Section 6 in Kaufman, 502.
12. Cf. *The Leviathan* by Thomas Hobbes, (1651)
13. Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, Essay II, Section 6 in Kaufman, 503.
14. Cf. 1
15. Glover, 317.
16. Ibid., 325–26.
17. Nietzsche refers to this loss of persuasiveness in his metaphorical concept of the death of God.
18. Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, Essay II, Section 11 in Kaufman, 512.
19. Glover, 42.
20. Nadezhda Mandelstam, *Hope Against Hope: A Memoir*, trans. Max Hayward (New York: The Harvill Press, 1971), quoted in Glover, 405.
21. Glover, 41.
22. Ibid., 409.
23. Ibid., 414.

On Platonic Love

Alessander

"He's like my brother!" Yeah, that is until,
You're drunk or dumped, and he moves in for the kill.

Technical Dialectic and *Noesis* in Plato's *Republic*

Gerardo Villaseñor

The theme of dialectic holds a central place in Plato's *Republic*. Not only is dialectic discussed as a major theme within the *Republic*, but also the work itself is written in dialogue form and as such it develops its themes and arguments in a dialectical manner. That is, the arguments made in the work develop out of the interplay of ideas between Socrates and his interlocutors. However, there are two distinct ways to understand the concept of dialectic: the nontechnical formulation and the technical variation. In his translation of the *Republic,* Allan Bloom points out that the Greek word *dialegein* can be translated as either "dialectic" or "discussion."[1] This understanding of dialectic, dialectic as open discussion, is recognized as the nontechnical variation of dialectic. Within the context of the *Republic* as a whole, nontechnical dialectic can be clearly observed as the process of logical argumentation through the method of question and answer in an attempt to ascertain the validity of particular ideas or opinions. Broadly, the concept of an informal discussion geared toward discovering truth is generally understood to be the nontechnical meaning of "dialectic." It is important to note that such a discourse does not always proceed within a logical paradigm or in a logical order. [2] It is purposefully broad, unsystematic, and leaves space for the full dynamic and serendipity of discourse. However, as David Roochnik and others have pointed out, dialectic as discussed within the *Republic* itself takes on a more technical manifestation.[3] The technical sense of what Socrates means by "dialectic" is quite difficult to get a handle on despite his frequent attempts at explanation.

What will follow will be a textual analysis aimed at trying to uncover what the exact characteristics of the technical formulation of dialectic are. It will become readily evident that the technical formulation of dialectic is the *methodology* prescribed by Socrates to reach the highest forms of knowledge. What will be unclear, however, are the exact specifications of said methodology. Socrates is successful in making clear the distinction between *dianoia* and *noesis,* that is, the distinction between understood discursive reasoning and intuition or intellection.[4] However, the ultimate goal of Socrates is to attempt to define the methodology of technical dialectic, and to show how it relates to *noesis*. Such a task will be quite demanding considering the elusiveness of the concept of technical dialectic. The difficulties in fully grasping the concepts alluded to within the *Republic* allow us to look at Socrates within the context of a philosophical endeavor whose *telos* can never fully be attained. This is precisely the problem with technical dialectic: its inability to be fully explained or grasped. The ethos of the *Republic* itself, and Socrates' use of nontechnical dialectic, privilege the journey to the extent that the ultimate *telos* may never be arrived at. The vision we get of Socrates is that of a zetetic philosopher, a searching philosopher who can see where he wants to go but never arrives.

Let us begin by understanding what it is exactly that technical dialectic aims to accomplish. It is clear from the discussions in Books VI and VII of the *Republic* that Socrates wishes to convey the indispensability of this form of dialectic[5] in understanding truth and ultimate reality. This is precisely what characterizes dialectic's *telos*: the attempt "to attain to each thing itself that *is.*" (532 a) Ultimate reality, i.e. the Forms, can only be discovered and understood through dialectic. Since the Forms constitute the "being" of the world, the Forms become the objects of investigation for the dialectician. In emphasizing this Socrates asks, "Do you call that man dialectical

who grasps the reason for the being of each thing?" (534b) The answer, of course, is yes. The "dialectical" man is able, through the application of rigorous dialectic, to grasp the "being" of the world around him. The knowledge sought, knowledge of "being", is higher order knowledge, knowledge of an eternal and unchanging type.

In seeking the "being" of things the philosopher, or dialectician, seeks the highest knowledge, knowledge of the Forms and of the Good. A dialectician "doesn't give up before he grasps by intellection [*noesis*] itself that which is good itself." (532a-b) Truly knowing the Forms and the Good is knowledge of ultimate reality. An understanding of the ontology of all things constitutes this knowledge. Thus, philosophers ultimately seek to know that which *is*, and what "*is*" are the Forms understood through the idea of the Good. (505a) The Forms, as ultimate reality, are eternal and unchanging. Socrates attempts to elucidate this by relying on the imagery of the Divided Line. The Divided Line is an attempt to separate what Socrates considers to be the "visible" from the "intelligible." It applies both to the objects of cognition and the modes of cognition. As one moves up the line, the objects of cognition are images, sensible things, the mathematicals, and the Forms. The modes of cognition that mirror these objects are imagination, trust, thought (*dianoia*), and intellection (*noesis*). Socrates explains the Forms to be "the other segment of the intelligible…that which argument grasps with the power of dialectic." (511b) The Forms are the ultimate objects of cognition, while the corresponding mode of cognition is intellection, or *noesis*. Thus, dialectic, through the medium of *noesis*, seeks to understand the underlying *being* of things through knowledge of the Forms. It is an ontological quest for an understanding of what is ultimately real. However, Socrates makes it clear that the fundamental reality underlying *all reality* is the Good. The Good becomes the ultimate objective of dialectic; it is through the Good that the Forms gain their nature and intelligibility.[6]

Socrates makes this clear: "Being known is present in the things known as a consequence of the good, but also existence and being are in them besides as a result of it…." (509b) A lengthy discussion of the Good is outside of the scope of this paper. However, it is important to remember the essential function that the concept of the Good plays in Socrates' understanding of knowledge and dialectic. It is within the context of the Good, under the light of the Good, that the Forms become intelligible. To reformulate, dialectic searches for what "is." Yet, the being of things is ultimately reliant on the Good. Thus, the ultimate goal of dialectic is to grasp the Good, as the Good is "the cause of knowledge and truth." (508e) In short, dialectic attempts to give an "overview" of Being itself, mediated through the Good. (537c)

From this evidence we can readily appreciate what Socrates considers as the goal of philosophy: knowledge of the Forms through the understanding of the Good. Furthermore, we also find Socrates repeatedly alluding to dialectic as the philosophical approach or methodology that will lead one upward along the Divided Line. It is crucial to note that Socrates' descriptions of dialectic do take on a technical manifestation in that the undertaking of philosophical inquiry requires a *specific* methodology. Socrates is admittedly vague in his attempts to describe the concept and methodology of dialectic. This is so much so that Socrates answers Glaucon's plea to further elaborate on "the character and power of dialectic" by stating that such an explanation would render "truth itself" and Glaucon would "no longer be able to follow." (533a) Thus, an explication of dialectic is difficult, if not impossible. The insinuation is that if Glaucon truly understood dialectic he would gain the truth. So in an important sense, to understand dialectic is to "see" the truth itself, not just an imperfect image of the truth. Also, it is important to remember that Socrates qualifies his statement by stipulating that the "truth itself" is only as he understands it. But what are we to make of

this qualification? In some sense Socrates is again reemphasizing his tendency toward self-effacement. Socrates is not *absolutely* certain that what he has is knowledge, yet he insists that an independent absolute knowledge does exist. Socrates clearly bears this out when he states, "That there is some such thing [truth] to see must be insisted on." (533a) Socrates repeatedly emphasizes his shortcomings in relation to the acquisition of truth. However, the *existence* of an absolute truth is never questioned. Socrates continues this line of thought: "The power of dialectic alone could reveal it [truth] to a man experienced in the things we just went through." (533a) The connection between dialectic and truth could not be made more apparent. It is *only* through the "power of dialectic" that ultimate reality can become intelligible. However, these passages fall short in explaining the comprehensive process of dialectic. For example, it is not at all clear *why* Glaucon "will no longer be able to follow" Socrates' explanation of the true character of dialectic.

To be sure, Socrates does make various attempts to elaborate on the process of dialectic in several other passages in the *Republic*. On several occasions, in attempting to explain the nature of dialectic and the type of knowledge it produces, Socrates juxtaposes dialectic to the study of the mathematicals. His aim in doing so is to explain the hierarchy of knowledge, and he does so through the analogy of the Divided Line. It is in explaining the hierarchy of knowledge that Socrates clarifies the difference between *noesis* and *dianoia*. Socrates reflects that the study of mathematics "is compelled to investigate on the basis of hypotheses." [7] (510b) These hypotheses, or beginning assumptions, lead to conclusions and mathematical knowledge. This type of knowledge is gained through *dianoia*, or thought. Discursive reasoning and logical argumentation characterize *dianoia*, itself only a lower form of thought.[8] Essentially, *dianoia* is an articulation of thought through discursive speech. As a result of *dianoia*'s methodology and objects of study (the mathematicals),

conclusions made through *dianoia* are regarded only as lower-order knowledge. Socrates observes that mathematicians use "visible forms." (510d) This means that, although the subject matter might very well be the Forms, they are only studied in "isolation", or for a specific purpose. It is this fact that distinguishes this type of knowledge from knowledge of the highest order. Thus knowledge of the mathematicals is only *episteme*. *Dianoia* is unable to transcend into the higher realms of knowledge as its discourse is confined to the mathematicals. The key point Socrates makes here is that this type of lower-order knowledge is based on assumptions that are *never* questioned. Again, Socrates points to the study of geometry and calculation to make his point. Mathematicians "treat as known the odd and the even, the figures. These things they make hypotheses." (510c) No further account of these hypotheses is ever given (or needed) within the context of the study of mathematics. In explaining the inferiority of mathematical knowledge to philosophical knowledge, Socrates alludes to the Cave allegory and goes so far as to say that mathematicians work with "images" and "shadows." (510d) Clearly, then, although knowledge of the mathematicals is knowledge *per se*, it is not the final or ultimate type of knowledge a philosopher would seek.

If, unlike the mathematician, the philosopher seeks the highest knowledge, knowledge of the Forms and of the Good, it should be clear that this type of knowledge cannot be achieved in the same manner as mathematical knowledge. That is, *dianoia* cannot be utilized to attain full knowledge of the Forms. Instead, Socrates begins by explaining the "affection arising in the soul" that corresponds to the contemplation of the Forms. (511b) This "affection" he calls intellection, or *noesis*, which is usually translated as "intuition" or "insight". How, then, is *noesis* substantively different from *dianoia*? The fundamental difference is that *noesis* is nondiscursive.[9] It consists of intuitions that culminate in an understanding that cannot be expressed or translated into

discourse. Thus, a noetic insight cannot be translated into a proposition that can be expressed. Two things point to this conclusion. First, if such knowledge is to be gained intuitively it would, by its very nature, be extremely difficult to express through discourse. It is precisely because such knowledge can only be gained intuitively that it lacks the structure and form for it to be demonstrated to others. Secondly, Socrates himself explains the ineffable nature of knowledge of the Forms, especially knowledge of the Good. The Cave allegory explicitly gives this impression. The philosopher, after having been outside of the cave, returns to the cave unable to express what he has experienced. (517a) He has understood the totality and reality of the cosmos. *Noesis* has allowed him to understand what "is". This knowledge, however, is not demonstrable; it is not reducible to *dianoia*.

However, an interesting and important question arises here. What is the exact relationship between dialectic and *noesis*? Socrates explains that dialectic is the process through which a noetic vision is gained. Dialectic is precisely "when a man tries by discussion - by means of argument without the use of any of the senses – to attain to each thing itself that is and doesn't give up before he grasps by intellection itself that which is good itself, he comes to the very end of the intelligible realm." (532a-b) Two things are of interest here. First, dialectic is partially described as "discussion" and "argument". So dialectic does include an element of discourse. But it must be reiterated that rational discourse about things-in-themselves, i.e. Forms, is not *dianoia*. Why not? The answer is precisely the subject matter that dialectic discusses, i.e. the Forms. Despite both being forms of rational discourse, what differentiates them are their objects of study. Dialectic "[makes] no use of anything sensed in any way, but using forms themselves, going through forms to forms, it ends in forms too." (511b-c) Dialectic is only present at the highest level of the Divided Line, and since it makes no use of anything sensed, it proceeds purely through *a priori* means.

Since *dianoia* is reliant on experience for its subject matter, it cannot provide unadulterated access to the Forms. Second, notice that dialectic *allows* for the "intellection itself" to grasp the Good. Socrates makes it clear that dialectic becomes the *process* through which *noesis* is reached. Thus, dialectic can be construed as setting the context for the culminating *noesis* to take place. That is, dialectic is the process that "sets the stage" and allows *noesis* to occur. As such, it is fundamentally characterized as pure philosophic rational discourse in that it is the way to gain knowledge of the Forms for their own sake. The idea of a dynamic dialectic, which results in *noesis*, fits in well with Socrates' description of dialectic as "journey" or process. (532b) Simply put, dialectic is not itself *noesis*, but it is instead a strenuous and rigorous philosophic speech resulting in *noesis*.[10] Since *noesis* is the paramount objective of philosophy, dialectic must be the mode of true philosophy. It is only *through* dialectic that absolute knowledge can be reached. It is clear then, that knowledge of the Good is gained only through a dialectical process that culminates in *noesis*. Knowledge of the Good could only be understood through insight or an intuition. This knowledge would culminate the philosophical endeavor.

But, we are still left unsatisfied and unenlightened as to the specific and defining characteristics of dialectic in the technical sense. To be sure, Socrates does attempt to give a more precise definition. He labors to elucidate by saying that "the dialectical way of inquiry proceeds in this direction, destroying the hypotheses, to the beginning itself in order to make it secure." (533 c) What exactly does the phrase "destroying hypotheses" mean? As we have seen, the use of hypotheses implies the study of the mathematicals through *dianoia*. However, unlike *dianoia*, dialectic must attempt to begin without any assumptions. Thus, the only possible way to construe the phrase "destroying hypotheses", within the Socratic understanding of dialectic, is to render it as meaning the "destruction" of assumptions. Clearly, then, the

differences between the mathematical approach to knowledge and the philosophical approach become essential to a clearer understanding of dialectic. Again, in mathematics the numbers themselves are posited without any critical reflection. (510c-d) Such assumptions would be anathema to the dialectician. The dialectic must move the argument forward without the assistance of any assumed premises. All assumptions must be thrown out so as to get to "the beginning itself in order to make it secure." (533c) The "it" here refers to the beginning of the search, the foundation on which knowledge will be laid. The foundation, or beginning, being secured, all subsequent conclusions arising from it will be well founded and acceptable. The conclusions, what will be attributed as true knowledge, will be based on solid foundations because any questionable assumptions or premises will have been "destroyed".

One aspect of this approach remains unclear, however. If all "hypotheses" are to be "destroyed", how will the dialectic move forward? In other words, what is to be posited as the departure point for the dialectic to begin? It is important here to remember that Socrates always begins his approach to questions with a disclaimer explaining his lack of knowledge. Because of Socrates' reticence to attribute any knowledge to himself, the departure points in the Socratic arguments are never to be understood as representing incontrovertible truth. They are always open to revision. This is a crucial point because it allows clarification concerning the differences between what I would call the "foundational premise" and "hypotheses." The critical difference is that the foundational premise is always open to modification, questioning, and critique. It is precisely because the foundational premise is open to scrutiny, and could possibly even be discarded, that it fits completely within the scope of dialectical thinking.[11] The foundational premise must never be assumed, but instead be subject to the scrutiny of philosophical thinking. This philosophical scrutiny is precisely what is called dialectic.

A very broad picture begins to emerge concerning the Socratic dialectical method. First, a premise must be posited as an initial attempt to answer the given question. This foundational premise is best understood as a "noetic beginning", or an intuitive departure point. Such a premise is posited as an answer that will subsequently be subjected to philosophical scrutiny. The dialectic unfolds within this context. It will hopefully produce new understanding and the subsequent new *noesis*. The introduction of the Forms in the *Republic* closely mirrors this process. Socrates posits the Forms "so that we [Glaucon and Socrates] may see more clearly whether this is as I divine it to be." (523a) Socrates does not deduce the forms; rather, they are "divined." Drew A. Hyland calls this an "archaic noesis."[12] Functioning as the beginning *noesis,* it can be transcended once the culminating or "telic" *noesis* is reached. What mediates between the two is philosophic speech, or dialectic. Another example of this is Socrates' introduction of the idea of the Good. Socrates explains the Good as something that every soul "divines," but "is at a loss about it." (505e) The Good cannot be deduced. It can only be reached through insight or intuition, that is, *noesis*. The idea of the Good is introduced as the "archaic noesis" which will be the context through which dialectic will work to gain a full understanding of it. However, at present, "we don't have sufficient knowledge of it [the Good]." (505a) Hyland's idea is that philosophic speech, i.e. dialectic, "bridges the gap between the originating and the culminating noetic insights."[13] This seems highly plausible as the Socratic method only moves forward with the impetus provided by dialectic.

Socrates' other attempts at explaining the nature of dialectic center on metaphors, most which are based on the Cave allegory. For example, Socrates, in explaining how the "study of the one" would necessarily lead "toward contemplation of what is", speaks of the beginning of the process as one of "turning around" away from the shadows. (524e-525a) Again, at 526e, Socrates

speaks of compelling the soul "to turn around to the region inhabited by the happiest part of what is." An even more explicit allusion arises at 532b-c where Socrates explicitly speaks of dialectic as "the release from the bonds and the turning around from the shadows to the light." However, these metaphors leave us with no clearer a conception of the specific characteristics concerning the methodology of technical dialectic.

The conclusion one ultimately arrives at is that the question of what exactly comprises dialectic is never fully answered. Socrates' attempts at definition do not yield a precise account and his attempts at elucidation through metaphor also fall severely short of a satisfactory explanation. Why is Socrates unable to give precise answers concerning dialectic? Two answers come to mind. First, the concept of the dialectic might itself be best understood or grasped through *noesis*. Consequently, any attempt at a rational, *logos*-based definition will fall short of capturing its essence. Socrates can attempt to describe dialectic, but these attempts will never capture the essence of dialectic and will be ultimately futile. Secondly, there is the possibility that a full understanding of dialectic implies the attainment of absolute knowledge. (Cf. 533a) For it seems as if once the methodology is clearly understood, it is but a short trip outside the cave to see the sun. (Let us recall Socrates' contention that if Glaucon were to understand dialectic, he would understand truth itself.) The idea here is that philosophy is a rigorous endeavor precisely because dialectic itself is rigorous, opaque, and clearly not available to most people.

Socrates seems to be focused on the process of philosophy, on what a philosopher does. The ideas mentioned above support the understanding of Socrates as a zetetic philosopher, that is, the searching philosopher who seeks truth.[14] In this respect, Socrates is clearly not dogmatic or a doctrinaire thinker. His understanding of dialectic as a process, which, at best, can only give us *partial* knowledge of the Good (505 a), reflects this.

Consistent with this would be the assumption that we can never have full knowledge of dialectic itself, for Socrates can say nothing directly about dialectic. Dialectic is certainly considered the "coping stone" (534e) of pure philosophic reasoning but its ineffable nature leaves Socrates with only the use of analogies and allusions in his attempts to elucidate it. Its ineffability is most certainly related to the function of *noesis* in the dialectical process. This is because, fundamentally, *noesis* is an occurrence that individuals must experience individually. Each person must undergo the strenuous search for truth on his or her own; Socrates cannot convey truth, truth cannot be read. It must, in a sense, be lived by individuals. Thus, the insight produced by *noesis* cannot be shared. From this perspective - the perspective of Socrates as a "searching" individual, or zetetic, philosopher- the vagueness of dialectic is completely consistent with the rest of Socratic philosophy. The focus is on the individual search for knowledge as much as it is on knowledge itself.

Notes

1. Alan Bloom, trans. *The Republic of Plato*, 2nd Edition (Basic Books, 1991), p. 381. Note that all references to this work are from this translation.
2. David Roochnik points out that Hans-Georg Gadamer describes nontechnical dialectic as "live play". The idea here is that dialectic in this sense does not always proceed in a logical manner. See David Roochnik, *Beautiful City: The Dialectical Character of Plato's Republic* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 142.
3. David Roochnik, p. 149.
4. This distinction is significant as *noesis* is considered a higher form of thought than *dianoia*. This will be discussed later in the paper. See Julia Annas, *An Introduction to Plato's Republic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), p. 251 and p. 254.
5. From this point on the term "dialectic" will refer solely to that of the technical variety unless otherwise indicated.
6. Julia Annas, p. 251.
7. Julia Annas points out that the study of mathematics in the ancient Greek world would most certainly have meant the study of geometry, i.e. circles and lines. See Julia Annas, p. 253.
8. David Roochnik, p. 142.
9. Ibid.

10. Drew A. Hyland, *Finitude and Transcendence in the Platonic Dialogues* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), p. 182.
11. One need only look at the evolution of the idea of *Callipolis* in the *Republic* itself as a salient example. The dynamic of the *Republic* is built on the stipulation of the ideal city, *Callipolis*, and the subsequent criticisms and revisions that are made. Ultimately, Socrates announces that it makes no difference if such a city as *Callipolis* can ever come into existence. What matters are the internal politics of one's own soul. So, in the end, Socrates discards the very possibility of *Callipolis* ever coming into existence. (592a-b)
12. Drew Hyland, p. 182.
13. Ibid.
14. Greg Fried's unpublished manuscript entitled *Back to the Cave: A Platonic Rejoinder to Heidegerrian Postmodernism* contains an interesting discussion of Socrates as a zetetic philosopher.

Meditation #1: Voids

Alessander

Often times, I turn the lights off, trying
To be as silent as this city allows
Try not to feel the mother upstairs crying
Null the 2Pac thumping through these shallow
Walls – a beauty lies somewhere beyond all this
I train myself to love what is not there
Or at the very least, not hate what is
As my spirit spires, gyres into air
I raise my hands two inches from my eyes
Is this not faith? To know they still exist
Though I cannot see their contours or size
A vague image in my mind somehow persists…

Vague, yes, they have now become a feeling
My hands have now evolved into 'hand-ness'
"A void deepens inside my very being."
Lily, knocked back, regrouped, and said to this:
"I won't be jealous of a memory."
His heart now softened from his firm desire
Truly, this was the moment of glory
The green bush blooming in the wilting fire.
There lies a beauty beyond the senses
A perfect image, though, physically flawed –
In this dark room, I try to love the absence
To love my fat warm wife, or thin cold God.

Ethical Issues in Predicting and Controlling Criminal Behavior through Genetics

Al Albergate

One of the great hopes of contemporary genetics research, including the Human Genome Project, is to achieve the ability to predict and prevent the births of children with serious diseases. One of the more controversial issues related to this great hope is whether we ever will be able to use genetic knowledge and scientific techniques to predict and control human behavior. This paper will focus specifically on criminal behavior and particularly on the ethical issues that we will have to face if our scientific knowledge and capability ever allows us to influence criminal behavior from the genetic level.

I will present some of these ethical issues from the perspective of the past, present and future. We must refer to the past because of the dangerous experiments with eugenics[1] performed in the first half of the twentieth century, such as in Nazi Germany and other Western societies, which still cast a shadow over genetics. The present is important in order to understand where we are with scientific know-how and what might be possible in the foreseeable future. The future both near and far, of course, is when people will have to make ethical decisions.

This paper will discuss six ethical issues or problems and propose potential solutions. The first issue that this paper will deal with is whether and to what extent genetic knowledge can ever be expected to help control criminal behavior. The second issue is whether parents have a moral responsibility to take action to prevent the birth of children with a genetic pre-dispo-

sition toward criminal behavior. Several related issues are then discussed, including: should parents with such knowledge be held legally liable for the anti-social behavior of their children? Does the government have a responsibility to control such births for the public good? Should the children allowed to be born with such genetic pre-dispositions be told, and can they be held fully responsible by society for their anti-social behavior? As a device to help set a context for these issues and their possible solutions, let me start with the future utilizing the fictional setting presented in the movie *Gattaca*[2] where eugenics is already a way of life.

A Glimpse Into The Future?

In the movie, a mother and father have two sons. The first sibling, Vincent, is born with problems including a defect spotted by a delivery room medical person who predicts that the baby will die of heart failure by age 30. Just a few years later, with Vincent at the toddler stage, the same couple plans their second child in a manner that we, in 2006, can only dream about. They sit down with a genetics counselor, who shows them several embryos which the couple presumably produced. The counselor explains that they've already screened out embryos with health problems and even eliminated undesirable cosmetic characteristics such as premature male baldness. The technician tells them they can even select the future baby's eye and hair color. The couple is somewhat taken aback, the mother exclaiming that they would like to leave some things to chance. Fast forward to the two boys' early adulthood. Vincent leaves home, the obvious loser both mentally and physically with bleak future prospects. His younger brother is clearly superior and faces a more promising path in a society which possesses so much genetic knowledge about each individual that one's future seems pretty much predetermined. The remainder of the drama focuses on Vincent. Although the film does not deal directly with controlling criminal behavior through genetics, what happens to him will be refer-

enced at times in this paper to help illustrate the ethical issues mentioned above.

Gattaca assumes a level of genetic knowledge and therapeutic skills that our society has yet to reach. However, the scenarios envisioned in Gattica are not very far from what we are already capable of—with in vitro fertilization, and many genes already identified and capable of detection with genetic tests, we can already achieve some of what is portrayed in the movie. Further, it is the stated aim of most genetic research projects to use the resulting knowledge to help society to eradicate or control genetic "ills." Insofar as we include both medical and behavioral traits in genetic research, we quickly see that the future is now. The first issue or question concerns just how much we can expect ever to utilize genetic knowledge to help control crime.

Nature Versus Nurture

The answer to this first question is perhaps the easiest to provide, but not very satisfying. At this stage of the game, we don't know yet how much control, if any, we will be able to exercise over criminal behavior. There are at least two major reasons for this. The first is that scientific research has not yet revealed enough about the causal relationships between genes and behaviors of all kinds, including criminal behavior. The second is that the consensus of researchers and other scholars is that behavior is a product of both genes and environment.[3] To what extent genetics and environmental factors individually or collectively influence behavior—namely the traditional nature versus nurture argument—is still being researched and argued. But even at this stage ethical issues are being raised about the value of such research.

One such concern, according to Robert Wachbroit, is whether further research will lead to identifying certain people as violent prior to them actually causing any trouble. Will people

be judged and stigmatized in advance leading to further concerns about whether this will justify preventive detention?[4] We must be careful to consider first what we do know about the relationship between genes and behavior.

For one thing, geneticists have found that genes have different "penetration rates." The significance of this finding is that few genes will lead to a certainty of having a phenotypical trait. This is especially true for behavior traits. Thus, finding a gene connected to behavior X will probably mean merely that a person with that gene is more likely to exhibit behavior X than persons without that gene. So, identifying and labeling certain people on the basis of their genetic make-up alone may not be justified without more knowledge than is currently available. But to continue the ethical discussion it is only fair to hold open the possibility that future will give us more information. And what then?

These issues are related to other ethical problems addressed by Dan W. Brock in the context of cloning. What if the results of pre-natal genetic screening were kept confidential, so that only the parents and the laboratory and associated medical personnel knew the results? What should parents do with that knowledge? In order to avoid the birth of a potential criminal, should they either have an abortion or screen out such embryos in cases of in vitro fertilization? In situations where they decide to bear the child, should they eventually tell the child? Brock responds to the issue of a cloned later twin being denied her right to an open future and her right to ignorance about her future that could be prevented/canceled, etc. by the existence of her genetically identical older sibling. In this paper the worry is about the burden on a child carrying around the knowledge that genetically he or she may be predisposed to a future in crime. I think Brock's response is applicable to situations involving both the parents and the children.

He contends that such worries are plagued by a "deep

confusion" that falsely assumes genetic determinism, the notion that genes totally determine the nature of the person.[5] His view coincides with Wachbroit's point that the consensus favors a variety of influences on behavior, involving both genes and environment. Thus, one could conclude that neither parents nor their children should make any drastic decisions about the future based merely on the presence of certain genes.

Further support for this conclusion comes from a recent scientific discovery reported in 2002 by CBSNews.com. A study conducted on more than one thousand children in New Zealand seemed to indicate that boys with a weakened version of a certain gene and who also were abused turned to criminal or antisocial behavior. Because researchers assumed that genes are strongly influenced by the environment, they had tracked how the children were raised. Simply having this version of the gene did not guarantee the boy would grow up to be a criminal. As the CBS reporter notes, "This suggests that the best strategy for preventing violence is to prevent child abuse."[6]

The argument against genetic determinism not only leaves open the possibility of gene-environment interaction, it also leaves open the door to free will. For example, returning to the *Gattaca* scenario, Vincent inspires us by showing that determination and effort can overcome what seemed to be a predetermined "bummer" of a life. It has been his dream to travel into space; however, given his poor genes, he begins as a janitor at a NASA-like training center for astronauts. He drives himself to incredible lengths to assume the identity and take the place of one of the regular astronauts, who has been paralyzed unbeknown to others at the space center. Meanwhile, Vincent's younger, more handsome, genetically-gifted brother has become a police investigator who, while probing a murder at the space center, begins to unravel Vincent's deception. In the end, Vincent's drive to realize his dream succeeds and he flies off into space– but not before he inspires both his brother and the astronaut whom he replaced.

Ironically, the latter two are trapped psychologically in a kind of reverse genetic determinism. Both have the genes to succeed, but the astronaut never realizes his potential and ends up committing suicide, while the brother ends up losing to Vincent in a final brotherly swimming competition. This fits nicely with the argument presented by Brock that you can create your own life in spite of what you know about your genes.

Parental Decisions

It would be nice to conclude our story here, but life isn't so neat and tidy. Playing the devil's advocate, one might say: "So what if genes alone do not determine whether someone will become a criminal? If, as the CBS story indicates, genes do play some role, shouldn't we do something about it, if we can?" I believe ethical choices could be forced upon us either by advancements in genetic science or by the way the media reports (and the public perceives) this science.

First, assume that we arrive one day at the level of science in *Gattaca*. Assume also that there is no pressure on parents from the government either to undergo pre-natal genetic testing or to do something about the results of such testing. The parents find out in advance that their embryo carries a gene that, depending upon environmental factors, may result in criminal behavior. Assuming they have no religious or other moral objection to abortion, shouldn't they consider having an abortion or screening out an *in vitro* embryo, and trying again for a child without that gene? Of course it's possible that some ability to manipulate the genes in the embryo might be available as well. Don't they owe it to themselves, the child and society at large to not take a chance on bringing a criminal into the world? I believe parents should seriously consider these issues. Further, given the possible consequences to the future child/criminal and the rest of society, the morally responsible thing to do would be to at least consider not bringing that child into the world. While society

should urge this consideration, I think that the choice to take action or not should ultimately be left to the parents under what Brock calls their right to reproductive freedom.[7]

Now let's consider a second scenario which I believe we may experience even sooner than the previous case, possibly in the near future.. If genetics reaches the stage where genes are linked causally to certain kinds of criminal behavior, although they share responsibility with environmental factors, everybody will know about this connection. Researchers are already concerned about the way the news media reports scientific discoveries, sometimes leaving out the qualifications and reservations of scientists and raising false hopes among the public. Even assuming that such reporting is accurate, I think there is a great danger that the public will focus mostly on the possibility (even if it is not very probable) that science will enable us to predict which babies will or will not be pre-disposed genetically to becoming criminals. Further, they may demand that the government do something about it, placing enormous pressure on the government to take measures to control crime, as the public already does today. One major reason is fear; another is money. Over the past 20 years, legislators have mandated longer and longer sentences for various crimes largely due to the public's perception that crime is rising and criminals are being treated leniently. In the same time period, California has built many new prisons. In 2003 the State of California Department of Corrections was allotted a budget of $5.2 billion to operate 32 prisons.[8] Their budget is only a part of the overall expense of fighting crime. It does not include the federal prisons and county jails in our state; nor does it pay for other law enforcement expenses such as running police and sheriff's departments, the highway patrol, prosecutors and public defender offices, and the courts. If the day comes when the public perceives that there is a scientific method for predicting and preventing the birth of criminals, I believe there will be intense debate over how to act upon that

knowledge, perhaps resulting in great public pressure for a genetic solution.

One issue society might soon be considering is whether the government should mandate prenatal testing for the relevant gene or genes. I am opposed to mandatory testing because that would put greater pressure on parents to act upon test results. I can't foresee that it will come to demanding mandatory abortions, but it is not outside the realm of possibility that incentives such as tax credits and free medical care would be offered to persuade families voluntarily to abort fetuses with such genes. Given the current heated debate over abortion, government actions are more likely to focus on education and testing, leaving the ultimate action up to parents. In keeping with the right to reproductive freedom, I believe the path of education, persuasion and voluntary action (both to test for the gene and take action) is the wisest course. Some might object that my proposed solution leaves a tension between education and persuasion (which could be perceived as coercive), and autonomy for the parents . I believe, however, that such tensions are what we learn to live with—one might say the price that we pay for living in a free democratic society.

One further thought about leaving final decisions up to parents:having children is an intensely emotional and personal matter. I think that respecting parental autonomy in these matters is the wise course. Hopefully, the voluntary path also would allay the fears of some that any government-mandated actions might tend to target racial and ethnic groups that represent a disproportionate percentage of the prison population.

Legalistic Issues

The final issues I want to raise are legalistic in nature. Should parents who permit the birth of children carrying "criminal" genes be held civilly or criminally responsible for their offspring's future actions? Should the criminal justice system

hold the children responsible for any crimes they commit?

With regard to the former question ofholding parents responsible: American society already has such laws regarding children who are minors. We hold parents responsible for gun accidents if they allow minor children access to weapons. Parents also are charged for property crimes committed by their minor children. But we certainly don't hold them legally responsible for what their children do after the age of 18. The question I'm concerned with here is whether parents in the future should be held responsible for the criminal actions of even their adult children because of the genetic knowledge available to them prior to the births of those children.

The answer to this question may depend upon what related actions the government takes with regard to the issues discussed previously. If the government does not mandate testing or other actions on the part of parents, then I think it is unlikely that the government would pass laws holding them criminally or civilly responsible for future actions by their children. I am less certain, however, about whether there would be a need to pass further laws in our 50 states to prevent crime victims or their relatives from successfully suing parents in civil courts.

Finally, looking at this from the standpoint of the children, will those with the so-called "criminal genes" fare better in the court system? Again, this will depend upon how much more scientific research tells us about the influence of genes on behavior. The determinism versus free will argument will come into play. Without the benefit of a crystal ball, we must to a great extent rely upon how courts operate today. Anecdotal evidence would seem not to favor those accused of crimes.[9] I base this assessment upon my own experience working in and around the Los Angeles County Criminal Courts. Defense attorneys generally seem to have a difficult time convincing juries to acquit their clients because of diminished mental capacity (the insanity defense). I think a genetic defense would face the same obsta-

cles. Jurors seem to want to hold people responsible for their actions, no matter what factors—internal or external—contributed to the criminal behavior at issue.

There is, however, an opposing view. Mark A. Rothstein worries that behavioral genetic information might possibly have a disproportionate influence in the courts: "By all indications, both judges and juries are ill-prepared to evaluate the validity of novel scientific assertions, and juries are likely to give too much credence to such arguments."[10] He says that several studies document that jurors tend to put great credence in expert testimony, although they tend not to understand it. I concede that Rothstein has a point. Defendants and their attorneys might benefit indirectly from the increasing reliance on DNA evidence to identify criminals. Although matching DNA to suspects is clearly a different argument than making the case that genes caused a person to commit a crime, the increasing familiarity with microbiology on the part of judges, attorneys and jurors might leave them more predisposed to such arguments in general. But predicting the outcome of such cases is speculative at best.

Conclusion

This paper has served to highlight some of the major issues that we, as a society, will soon have to face as the result of our tremendous scientific discoveries about genetics and the continuing research in this area. This knowledge brings with it both moral dilemmas and responsibilities.

1. We can expect research to give us more information about the connections between specific genes and criminal behavior, but we may never be able to make predictions and judgments about future behavior solely on the basis of genetic makeup.

2. Two things follow from the knowledge and the uncertainties spawned by the first issue. First, parents do have a moral responsibility to be fully educated about how genes might

influence the behavior of their potential children, to consider prenatal testing and, depending upon the results of that testing, to consider whether they should allow certain children to be born. Second, because of the uncertainties about the extent to which genes alone influence behavior, neither parents nor children should make any drastic decisions about the future based merely on the presence of certain genes, at least not before they become fully informed and not without giving full consideration to the scientific facts.

3. Legal responsibilities flow from knowing about the genetic makeup of one's children before they are born. What legal responsibilities do parents bear as a consequence of allowing the birth of children with genes that might predispose them to criminal behavior? The position I have taken is to give the parents autonomy or reproductive freedom to the maximum extent possible. At the same time, I think they have a moral, as differentiated from legal, responsibility to educate themselves on these issues.

4. What responsibility does the government have for controlling crime based on genetic knowledge? I am opposed to government-mandated testing because that might impinge too heavily on parental autonomy or reproductive freedom. And if the government does not mandate testing, this should lessen somewhat the possible problems parents might face with civil lawsuits.

5. As to the question about whether children should be told that they possess genes that might, given other factors in their environment, lead them to criminal behavior, I would say that they probably should, but with a caveat. Based on Brock's and Wachbroit's writings, children need to be educated so that they do not assume automatically that they have been genetically determined.

6. The final issue is a legal one. How will the increasing knowledge about the potential connection between genes and

behavior affect our justice system? As indicated, the potential is there for future juries to be influenced by criminal defenses based on genetic influences. But to what extent they will be influenced is difficult to predict based upon what we know about how juries currently respond to scientific or medical expert testimony.

I predict that the progress of science in genetics will figure largely in both the ethical and legal realms. How much more we learn about genes and behavior will have a great influence on all the issues discussed in this paper. I will close with the following suggestions that should help us negotiate our way through some of these challenges.

- **Research**: As a society we should encourage and support further research into the relationship between genes and criminal behavior for very much the same reasons why we want to find links between genes and disease: possible prevention and control. At the same time, we need to conduct further ethical discussions resulting in education to prevent harmful actions, such as stigmatizing individuals based on erroneous assumptions of genetic determinism.
- **Parents**: Should seek information and be encouraged to voluntarily undergo prenatal testing, assuming that scientific evidence indicates they are at risk for having crime-prone children. The government should support educational efforts and the availability of testing for the general welfare of society. Further actions beyond testing should be left up to the parents. Mandatory controls would violate the right to reproductive freedom.
- **Children:** I lean toward encouraging parental discretion in telling children that they possess a gene that predisposes them to criminal behavior. Disclosure should include complete information about the relative influences of genes versus environment. Parents should encourage kids to seek out environmental influences that counter the gene and avoid others that tend to activate the gene, as well as provide them with spiritual encouragement or counseling about the power of free will and

hard work. While this may seem like good advice to any parents, I think additional knowledge (genetic, in this case) places an additional responsibility on parents in these situations. My final advice is to rent *Gattaca.*

• **Courts:** I think science will drive any changes in this area. Officers of the court and jurors will have to look carefully at available scientific data. At the same time, the justice system might be forced to reexamine its current standards for holding people legally responsible for their behavior. Does simply being able to tell the difference between right behavior and wrong behavior form a sufficient mental condition for holding one criminally liable for his or her crime when there might be some genetic influence on criminal behavior? Further, society as a whole might be forced to focus more on measures to preempt or prevent criminal behavior, along the lines of what I recommended for children.

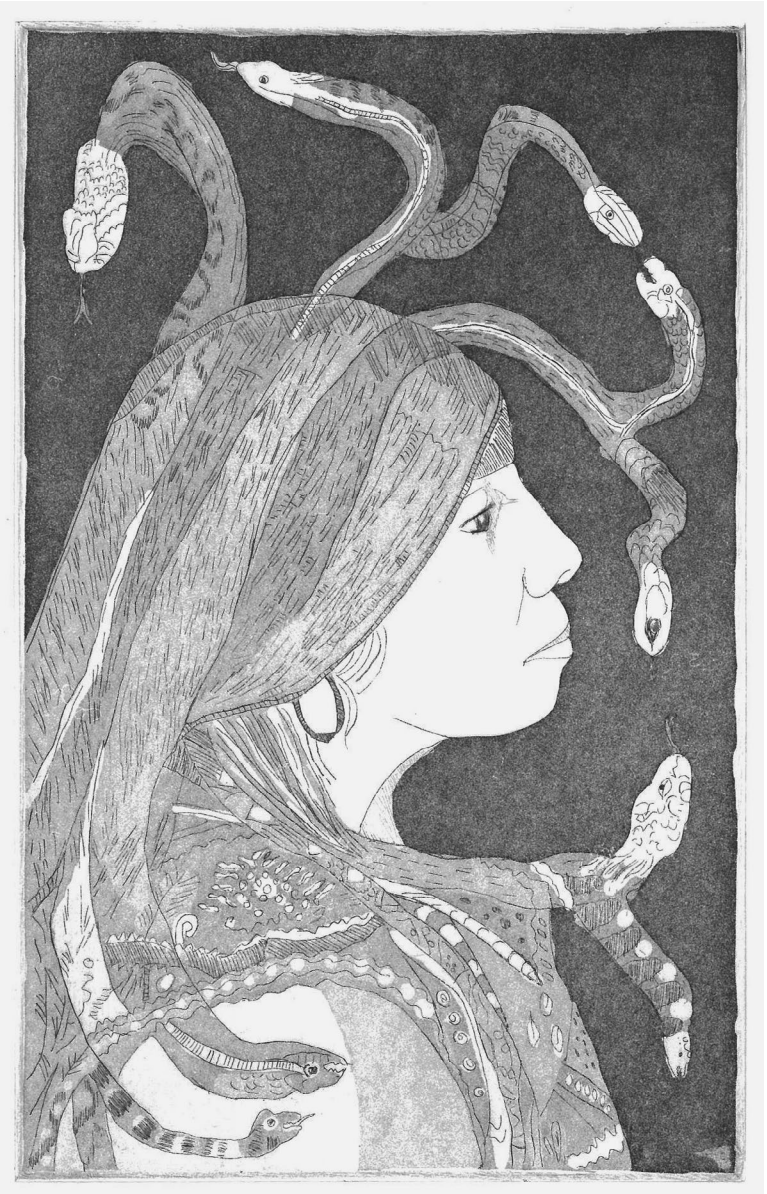
I think that these various conclusions and suggestions may give us a starting point for grappling with the difficult issues and decisions that lay ahead.

Notes

1. Eugenics comes from the Greek word *eugenes*, well-born. It refers to scientific inquiry into hereditary factors that determine the quality of offspring, with a view to improving the human population. *The Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy*, s.v., "eugenics."
2. "Gattaca" directed by Andrew Nicol, produced by Columbia TriStar Picture and Jersey Pictures, 101 minutes, 1997, videocassette.
3. Robert Wachbroit, "Understanding the Genetics-of-Violence Controversy," in *Genetics and Criminal Behavior*, ed. David Wasserman and Robert Wachbroit (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 33.
4. Wachbroit, 35.
5. Dan W. Brock, "Cloning Human Beings: An Assessment of the Ethical Issues Pro and Con" in *Clones and Clones*, ed. M. Nussbaum and C. Sunstein (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1997), 149.
6. "Study: Abuse And Genetics = Aggression," 1 August 2002. <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2002/08/01/health/main517241.shtml>
7. Brock, 162.
8. Richard Fausset, "Lancaster State Prison Backs Off Lockdown," *Los*

Angeles Times, June 6, 2003, sec. B.

9. It is beyond the scope of this paper to do extensive empirical research on the matter.
10. Mark A. Rothstein, "The Impact of Behavioral Genetics on the Law and the Courts," *Judicature* 83 (3): 116-123.



"Medusa" *etching by Maricruz Huerta-Edinger*

The Culture Industry Reconsidered, Again

Leslie Cain

A popular notion among creators and audiences of art is that "art imitates life." To Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin, however, this statement should perhaps be revised as "art dictates life." Both theorists were participants in the philosophical movement of critical theory, in which all possible forces contributing to the development of a society's economics, politics, ideology and general progression are examined and evaluated in regard to their respective powers to either affirm and promote perceived unfavorable conditions, or negate them in a movement toward positive social change. Thus, rather than setting aside art as mere reflection and commentary, or even simply a source of sensory pleasure, employed by members of a society, Adorno and Benjamin approach art as a substantial determinant of how society and correspondingly life in general should progress.

Each theorist accordingly presents an account of how art and popular culture affects people's lives in all domains, from pleasure to economics to society in general, as well as evaluative and prescriptive judgments regarding these effects. Adorno negatively assesses culture as destructive to the proper critical impulse as well as damaging to individuals and society, while Benjamin suggests that positive change is greatly assisted by the popularization of culture. In this paper I will describe Adorno's and Benjamin's views including both their affinities with and divergences from each other, and argue that despite their seemingly opposite evaluations, both face the same objections grounded in the idea of aesthetic value. By primarily deriving their judgments of what constitutes acceptable versus damaging

art from such broad social implications as commanded by their general project of critical theory, Adorno and Benjamin both improperly ignore or deny the substantial role that inherent aesthetic quality should play in determining the true value or acceptability of a work.

Adorno begins his analysis of art by describing the modification of artistic products from being genuine artifacts of inspiration and expression to being precisely calculated and manufactured objects designed to maximize profit as opposed to humanity. No longer is the existence of various works of art in the exhibitory sphere dictated by the fact that artists have created and displayed them. Rather, the decision of which works shall be presented to the public is made by a select group of non-artist executives that rule what Adorno terms the "culture industry," referring to the practices, products, and operators of the establishment of mass culture. As in any endeavor in which the end product can be bought and sold, the culture industry takes on such economic concerns as supply and demand, marketing and the desire for mass appeal, and observation of the populace's acceptance or rejection of particular products so as to increase the success of new ones offered.

While the desires of those in control of the culture industry may be as limited as the purely economic desire for profit, Adorno notes that the implications of the culture industry extend beyond economic concerns: also significantly affected are both other concrete operations of society, such as politics, as well as more conceptual concerns including the perspective or ideology of both individual members of society and their collective consciousness. Particulars of the concept and practices of art itself, including the role of the artist, the phenomenon of subjective taste, as well as the possible existence of objective aesthetic standards complicate the conception of the culture industry as purely economic even within itself and without regards to its societal or external effects.

Adorno notes that the controlling of the production of culture by such a limited number of individuals is disguised by terms such as "mass culture," which imply that cultural products arise from the populace in order to fulfill some shared preference or taste. Although Adorno acknowledges that the culture industry must respond to the tastes of the masses to make its products desirable, he argues that the industry's control over the distribution of cultural products as well as the nature of the products themselves consequently gives the culture industry some degree of control over the supposedly freely determined phenomenon of personal taste. Thus the culture industry designs its products toward fulfilling a particular demand that it itself imposes upon the masses, making the populace the object not only of distribution and marketing, but also of influence toward particular states of mind, namely those that will encourage one to participate in calculated popular culture.

Adorno's assertion that mass culture is projected onto the masses from an external controlling group finds support in the suggestion that the communal taste which would necessarily be present for the masses themselves to cooperatively produce culture can be conceived only as an abstraction from individually held tastes that happen to appear in many members of the society. Accordingly, observable mass trends toward particular cultural norms require points of origin in particular individuals, or at least conspiring small groups such as those operating the culture industry.

However, this conception seems to dismiss the commonsensical notion that the tastes of the common man must come into play in the creation and acceptance of culture, even if such tastes are limited to individuals. Further, even if one could reasonably speak of shared taste, Adorno must still account for the separation of consumers into particular groups, such as classical music lovers versus punk rockers. If tastes are in fact dictated by the culture industry, it seems that taste alone cannot

account for the gravitation of certain people to certain genres, even if all such genres are produced by the same industry. Accordingly, rather than reducing individuals' affectation to particular genres to variants of this problematic notion of taste, Adorno supplies several reasons and ways individuals respond to products offered by the culture industry that address more easily observed and definable psychological and societal desires.

Many of Adorno's assertions regarding how and why people appreciate art are found in his essay "Perennial Fashion—Jazz"[1] in which he condemns this popular form of music as a clichéd and mainstream genre masquerading as original, novel, and divergent. Elements such as improvisation and syncopation that supposedly distinguish jazz from traditional classical forms are in fact nothing exceptional, Adorno argues: improvisation is "in fact carefully planned out in advance with machinelike precision"[2] in accordance with established rules that musicians are unwilling or afraid to break; syncopation, while perhaps initially a novel rhythm, has become so standard within jazz that it is anticipated to the point of being undetectable, and thus meaningless. In addition to these formal aspects of jazz music itself, Adorno rejects the conception of the creative process and meaning intended by both early and modern-day jazz musicians, insisting that the jazz aficionado-championed rebellion of black artists against white oppression is actually an admission of defeat. And yet, jazz maintains privileged status in society as rebellious and novel in comparison with more mundane popular music that jazz fans (in Adorno's view, mostly misguided teenagers) deride. This image and acceptance of jazz reflects a general truth about why people gravitate toward certain forms of art: the desire to assert one's individuality appears alongside the desire to be accepted by the group. Thus, jazz fans shall praise their music's originality only when they feel safe in the knowledge that its popularity and, indeed, its promotion by the culture industry, ensures they will not be rejected for their preference.

Adorno provides another explanation of the favoring of particular arts in "On the Fetish-Character in Music,"[3] here addressing the concept of high art versus popular entertainment and the eminence of high art as an economic commodity beyond its physical products. Consumers of culture hold certain arts as valued above others, such as the symphony over the rock band, attributing this favoring to numerous concerns ranging from aesthetic quality to the approval of critics. Adorno suggests that the individual chooses to experience and financially support the high arts over less generally respected but perhaps more personally enjoyable genres not necessarily to demonstrate his good taste and appreciation for the quality of those arts (and certainly not because he genuinely enjoys such experiences). Rather, the individual celebrates the very fact that he has the economic means to participate in the high art sphere and delights in the notion that even art that disdains and purports to transcend the mundane world in fact depends on his decidedly nontranscendent, worldly labor to be financially supported.

While these reactions may arise independently of the actual content of offered products and therefore are not directly produced or controlled by the culture industry, the industry may still appropriate or exploit these social or psychological inclinations of the populace beyond the simple production and promoting of the products themselves. Adorno thus presents an account of how the culture industry designs its products to at least correspond and react to, if not dictate, these mentioned tendencies of the consuming public. His analysis emphasizes standardization of cultural products as the ultimate consequence of the culture industry's desire for mass appeal and consumers' desires for acceptance and so on. The culture industry continually offers reiterations of previous artistic ideas, manufacturing products according to strict formulas derived from whatever works have been successfully marketed in the past. This simple repetition could presumably be made apparent and acceptable to

the masses if their concern were only to experience enjoyment and entertainment in cultural products. However, the public's desire for divergence and a particular image to accompany the content of works adds further complications to the culture industry's formula of standardization. The culture industry must present rehashed works as new and original, concealing the sameness of offered products with different packaging, different means of distribution, and different marketing.

The standardization of cultural products has implications ranging from the role of the artist in producing culture to dramatic effects on the public's mentality and oppression in the general sense, beyond manipulation of cultural dynamics alone. In regards to the first concern, Adorno observes that the artist not only finds his works completely commodified and valued for popularity and sameness rather than quality and originality, but also in a sense loses the very definition of his profession as one who creates culture. While artists are still necessary to produce the artifacts that the culture industry shall reproduce and distribute, Adorno considers the culture industry's replacement of previous small-scale artistry with mass distribution to be the new technique of producing culture, even though this sort of production lacks the creativity and inspiration that traditionally distinguished artists as the arbiters of culture. Thus, artists must relinquish their products to the culture industry for the sake of their livelihoods even as the culture industry demands that artists participate in the false appreciation of original, high art by keeping up their iconic appearances.

More severe and disturbing for Adorno, however, are the effects on the populace itself of the culture industry's practices of standardization and its near-complete domination of the populace's cultural experience. Individuals are essentially standardized along with the cultural products they consume, Adorno argues, as the prevailing homogeneity of culture reinforces the public's gravitation toward sameness and conformity in regards

to itself, as well as to its objects. To increase the relevance and appeal of works, the culture industry also promotes a regression of taste, encouraging audiences to diminish their intellectual and refined preferences so that products can be uniformly distributed among different age groups.

That the culture industry eagerly produces and the public willingly accepts repeated offerings of the same ideas and products is simply a specialized instantiation of the mechanism of ideology in general, Adorno argues. The populace is convinced that conformity to the standards offered by those in control shall be most beneficial, while the industry itself either is convinced of the same and mistakenly attributes what are in fact means of domination to being well-intentioned practices or is aware of its manipulation and uses such attributions as concealment. Adorno notes that the culture industry's particular ideology might in fact be recognized by the populace, due to the marketing and conception of cultural products as escapist entertainment. Perhaps the culture industry is successful not because it conceals its manipulation of consumers' tastes and choices, but because audiences desire to be manipulated so as to distract from the difficulty of the current state of their reality. Although audiences presumably could agree with Adorno's dismay regarding the standardizing and controlling practices of the culture industry, Adorno suggests that these consumers are too daunted by the obvious difficulty in overcoming these and other forces of oppression to reject the numbing effects of popular culture and thus ironically turn to the source of their oppression for relief, or at least distraction, from this exhausting endeavor.

Adorno advocates a rejection of the products and practices of the culture industry in order to develop individual thought and the critical stance against culture and society as encouraged by his general project of critical theory. He favors fringe forms of art that have not been standardized and popularized in the mainstream, arguing that such genres as atonal music are the only

truly divergent and original forms one can acceptably consume while fulfilling the critical project. Note that Adorno does not suggest that the overcoming of the culture industry shall result in the prevailing of a superior aesthetic standard; his promotion of particular forms of art addresses them only as means to a improved social and ideological situation.

Adorno's prescriptive analysis brings about several concerns regarding his lack of accommodation of aesthetic taste and even the very possibility of pursuing his suggestions, which shall be discussed later. Now, however, I shall discuss Walter Benjamin's alternative description and evaluation of popular culture found in his essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"[4] to later demonstrate that even when in contradiction, both theorists encounter the same objection to their assessments.

Benjamin describes the popularization of art not as a consequence of active manipulation by deciding groups such as the culture industry, but as resulting from developments in technology affecting the production and distribution of works of art. He addresses specifically the advancements of photography, film and recording which allow both manmade works of art and impressions of natural objects to be captured, reproduced, and exhibited to a substantially increased audience than was previously allowed. Works of art that in the past were confined to the particular museum or concert hall in which they were presented can now be observed by persons in any location, at least in reproduction; experiencing works of art no longer requires direct contact with the originals themselves.

Although marveling at the accuracy of mechanical reproduction in reproducing at least the formal images or contents of works, Benjamin notes that the original work of art must be distinguished from its reproductions, not necessarily by appearance but by aspects invisible in the object itself. Benjamin terms such aspects the "aura" or the authenticity of an original work

of art, referring to both the physical original itself, including the various damages suffered since its creation (such as discoloration or chipped paint), and the history of the work's ownership, location, and use. Mechanical reproduction, however, allows for the detachment of a work from its aura: reproductions show only the work in its current state and thus do not contain the history and process by which a work of art came to be at the moment it is reproduced. Additionally, the fact that reproduction allows the transportation of images of the original beyond its previously exclusive location destroys the spatial aspect of the aura.

Benjamin describes several consequences of the loss of the aura in the age of mechanical reproduction, several of which correspond with Adorno's observations regarding the effects of the culture industry. In regards to the role of the artist, Benjamin notes that mechanical reproduction removes some measure of power from the artist alongside the removal of the original work's individuality; as in Adorno, traditional artistic technique is overshadowed by mechanical techniques of reproduction possessed not by artists but by distributors, reducing the conception of the artist as ultimately definitive of culture. The growing accessibility of production tools such as snapshot cameras allows creative projects to be pursued by the masses, rather than being limited to a particular class of specialists. Benjamin also notes a particularly intriguing point regarding film actors, observing the actor knows his performance is being captured on film specifically designed to be reproduced and widely distributed to a public beyond his immediate contact. Although he may inject his performance with genuine aspects of himself, he must be aware that the translation of this self to the world shall necessarily be altered by the camera's particular view, the image made of him by his studio, and so on; thus the actor's individuality suffers.

Benjamin further discusses the effects of mechanical reproduction on more general conceptions and reactions to art, ultimately arriving at an account of its effects on the project of

social change. Mechanical reproduction's allowance of works formerly restricted to a single location to be distributed and viewed by many has fundamentally changed the significance and use of such works, Benjamin argues, in that ritualistic or cult value is replaced by entertainment and political purposes. In the past, certain works such as religious paintings were confined to locations of particular ritual practices and could be viewed only by those participating. Mechanical reproduction, however, tears such works from both their physical and spiritual locations, allowing mainstream audiences to apprehend them at any location and with any alternative state of mind.

Additionally, the new capacity for wide distribution of cultural products promotes politics in art in terms of the spreading of particular messages through works of art. Rather than resorting to means less appealing to mass audiences, political persons can use media that double as entertainment to popularize their agendas, meshing simple experiential pleasure with more complex and significant understanding. Note that, although Adorno does acknowledge that particular political messages can be contained in products provided by the culture industry, his analysis credits social and political effects to the institution of the culture industry itself. Benjamin does not argue, as Adorno does, that such messages can only be distributed by a controlling group such as the culture industry, but allows for mass distribution even from individuals throughout society.

Although Benjamin laments the loss of the auras of particular works of art and the resulting loss of individuality and authenticity of both arts and artists, he does not consider the overcoming of traditional art by mechanical reproduction to be a threat to the critical impulse and project of social change. Rather, the newfound ability to promote political messages to extended audiences greatly assists visionary and original thinkers in translating their conceptual views of progress, as well as practical plans for action, to mass audiences, possibly pushing the masses

to action.

Benjamin's approval of the mass distribution of cultural products differs from Adorno's account not only in that it considers art capable of promoting cultural change in a positive rather than negative sense, but in its emphasis on the actual content of works of art. While Adorno rejects even products that depict positive social messages that are created by the culture industry given their origin in this corrupt institution, Benjamin allows for works from either mainstream or fringe artists to be acceptably consumed. Thus, Benjamin's approving evaluation depends on the contents of works themselves, while Adorno's rejective evaluation is separate from concern for the contents of works. Despite this fundamental difference in the formulations of each theorist's analysis, I argue that both are troubled by the same concern, namely the inability to account for the existence and fulfillment of individual and objective aesthetic taste, and accordingly a failure to properly address the classic aesthetic problem of determining whether concerns for the populace's benefit and morals (which I shall contain under the designation "practical"), should trump those for aesthetics.[5]

First, in regards to Adorno: although he occasionally refers to formal aspects of works as indicative of certain messages (such as 4/4 meter representing militaristic attitudes in music), he advocates that consumers should always pursue arts that diverge from previous forms and are not produced by the culture industry regardless of content, rejecting even works including positive messages. The immediate concern when aesthetics are considered is that it is easily observed that, under either personal or traditionally established criteria of artistic quality in art, many products supplied by the culture industry are certainly aesthetically valuable, especially given Adorno's inclusion of high arts within the control of the culture industry. Likewise, divergent products (including atonal music) may be of lesser aesthetic quality, but preferable under Adorno's charge. Those who value

aesthetic experience could not immediately accept Adorno's evaluation of such arts without more satisfying reasons to favor divergence and its social significance over pleasure and aesthetic taste-fulfilling choices of art.

Adorno's analysis seem in fact to promote particular forms of art based on his own aesthetic preferences, concealed in his supposedly nonaesthetic judgment. First, Adorno observes that "the function of something is no guarantee of its particular quality,"[6] suggesting that even an exhaustive analysis of the effects and implications of a work in regards to practical concerns or societal functionality does not automatically supply a decisive judgment of the acceptability or value of the work.

This acknowledgement seems immediately contradictory to Adorno's charge to accept or reject works of art based solely on their practical societal impact and origin in the culture industry rather than any other criteria, including aesthetic quality. Perhaps Adorno here considers concern for aesthetics relevant to the overall quality of the work simply as a phenomenon of society's reactions to art, suggesting that the concept of aesthetic appreciation necessarily affects the culture industry's operation even if aesthetics are disregarded in the work itself. However, this suggestion still disallows the pursuit of aesthetic taste in particular works, as he could easily discount the societal-scale conception of art as detrimental and worthy of rejection.

Further, Adorno's advocacy of particular arts as divergent is questionable for quite simple reasons. The possibility certainly exists of redundancy, formulaicness and mainstreaming of such art forms as atonal music: not only can composers repeat the same phrases within the atonal structure, one could argue even further that, as atonal composers are limited to choosing among the same 12 tones, true divergence is impossible. This suggestion is of course unfavorable, but points to a notable concern with Adorno's argument even if one accepts his charge to pursue divergent art forms, namely that he fails to provide a standard of

what establishes a work as divergent. Adorno's simple answer might be that whatever forms of art are created and distributed outside the domain of the culture industry and are not popular are properly divergent. However, this answer seems to suggest that one's appreciation of particular arts must in fact be dictated by that of the masses, to the extent that one must reject whatever the masses approve. Along with the severe doubt that Adorno would reject his favored atonal music even if it became popular in mass culture, concern here arises that Adorno may be limiting personal decision to being dictated by general thinkinga problematic suggestion from such a champion of thinking for oneself.

Benjamin's analysis, that presumably allows for more works to be deemed acceptable than Adorno's, might thus seem intuitively more appealing to the aesthetically inclined. However, even given its greater inclusiveness, Benjamin's theory still argues against the value of aesthetic taste given its reasons for rejecting any number of works. In arguing that only works with positive messages should be accepted, Benjamin quite clearly establishes his position of the supremacy of moral over aesthetic evaluations of art. To set aside practical principles in favor of aesthetic concerns would diminish the effect of mechanical reproduction's message-spreading capabilities, which Benjamin considers to be of primary value.

Benjamin could perhaps respond that one can actively divide one's approach and reactions to works of art such that aesthetic and practical concerns are both accommodated in evaluations without conflict. For instance one may appreciate a work of art for its aesthetic quality but reject it as impractical, allowing for simultaneous appreciation and disapproval of the work as a whole. In other words, appreciation for formal aspects of the work's appearance occurs separately from that for the work's meaningful content.

However, as in Adorno, this response fails given both Benjamin's own statements and a more intuitively prompted

concern. His comments on the phenomenon of the conception of art as valuable for its own sake betray his position that a purely aesthetic attitude, perhaps even when taken alongside practical consideration, allows for the prevailing of negative moral impulses. He cites the example of the Futurist painters who championed war as sublimely beautiful, significantly clashing with reasonably held views of war as repulsive and wrong. The concept of the receiving public is that the Futurist's paintings should be valued for the sake of aesthetics and beauty alone, despite the absence of ethics in their content. Benjamin argues that to bracket moral concerns in this way for the sake of some arbitrary standard of beauty dangerously encourages the complete abandonment of the temporarily disregarded practical concerns, implying that not only negative meaningful content of works but also the very concept of evaluating art based on any aspects beside meaning necessarily impedes art's possible assistance of the project of social change.

Benjamin's possible response above fails also in that it seems impossible to appreciate but not support particular works of art, especially given the tendency to promote works one finds aesthetically pleasurable even while recognizing their damaging content. One cannot specify as to which aspect of the work one's financial support is directed, unlike the separation of conceptual evaluations of the work. Thus, if Benjamin considers aesthetic appreciation valuable to any degree, certainly he could not fairly oppose the valid inclination to support such works, even given the necessary consequence of supporting their negative messages.

The most obvious response both Adorno and Benjamin could provide to the charge that they reduce their analyses and judgments to practical consideration and, thus, improperly undermine aesthetics, is that the latter concerns are simply not relevant to the domain of art each theorist addresses, namely art in relation to social and political dynamics. In a sense this response

appeals to an answer to the question of whether either aesthetics or practical concerns trump the other: of course practical concerns are primary, as the entire situation of society is what is addressed and what is at stake in the project of critical theory. While an aesthetic theorist could simply reject this response as insufficient in establishing why critical theory should be of most importance, one could respond to Adorno and Benjamin even within the domain of their critical project. The project of social change that aims to benefit not only society in general but the situation and mentality of the individual within society would be severely damaged by the disregard of aesthetic tastes which can reasonably be said to be quite significant components of one's individuality. That each theorist's prescribed account of the correct approach to art necessarily rejects aesthetics thus suggests the abandonment of individuality for the sake of later achieving a state in which individuality is freely established – a quite evidently problematic suggestion. To properly analyze and evaluate the effects of art on society and the individual, then, requires the addressing of aesthetics to be successful, accordingly rendering both Adorno's and Benjamin's accounts deficient.

Notes

1. Theodor Adorno,"Perennial Fashion—Jazz" in *Critical Theory and Society*, ed. Stephen Bronner and Douglas Kellner (New York: Routledge, 1989), 199–209.
2. *Ibid.,* 201.
3. Theodor Adorno, "On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening" in *Art and its Significance*, ed. Stephen David Ross (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 539–547.
4. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." in Ross 526–538.
5. The distinction made here between practical and aesthetic concerns must be elaborated in several respects. First, I recognize that the experience or conception itself of aesthetic beauty and art-for-art's-sake can impact the welfare or progression of society and thus constitute a practical concern. This observance appears in both Adorno and Benjamin and shall be discussed as such instances arise. However, this does not prevent the

distinction of concerns of aesthetics (beauty, appearance, artistic pleasure, etc.) as *contained within works of art* from practical concerns (economics, morality, etc.) that are necessarily referenced to greater society. Indeed, that the focus of the present discussion is the evaluation of particular works of art, rather than of the value of art in general, supports this delineation.

6. Adorno,"The Culture Industry Reconsidered," in Bronner and Keller, 128–135. 131.

Out of Time

Alessander

1. Out of Time

I said
There are no such things as white pumpkins
She said
Yes there is, they are called phantom pumpkins
I said
There are no such things as phantoms
She said
Yes there is, they are called memories
I said
There are no such things as memories
She said
Yes there is, because I'm not really here.

2. Progress

Since a half is always divisible by another half
This would mean, one would never get around a track

For every step we take, there'd be one more
For every two, there would be four…

Et cetera, et cetera…so how is it that
We can go forward without going back?

Is Libertarian Freedom Necessary for Moral Responsibility?

Kelley Falconer

As we go about our daily lives, most of us feel that there is an important sense in which we typically author and control the decisions that we make and the things that we do. We also sense that, for the most part, other people around us author and control their choices and actions as well. So, in many situations, we take responsibility for what we do and we hold others accountable for what they do. Thus, our sense of freedom plays an integral role in our morality. On the other hand, many of us also hold the common belief that all events, possibly even our decisions, are determined. But if our decisions are determined, then we do not possess libertarian freedom and whether we are really responsible for our actions and choices becomes unclear. Can our moral practices be properly justified if we are not free in the libertarian sense?

In his article "Freedom and Resentment," Peter Strawson contends that the truth-value of determinism is irrelevant to the justification of our moral practices. In other words, he does not believe that we must have libertarian freedom in order to validate our ascriptions of moral responsibility. Conversely, in "An Essay On Free Will," Peter Van Inwagen argues that the existence of moral responsibility is in itself evidence that we must have libertarian freedom. In the following paper, I will first briefly define the concepts of determinism, libertarian freedom, and Humean freedom. Then I will present Strawson's and Van Inwagen's conflicting viewpoints, and finally I will evaluate them both.

Determinism is the view that all events are causally necessitated by prior events together with causal laws. Therefore,

according to determinism, if one is a materialist and holds that her decisions are mental events, then all of her decisions were determined before she was even born. Libertarian freedom can be defined as "the ability to make decisions that are simultaneously undetermined and appropriately non-random."[1] Our decisions must be non-random in addition to being undetermined because if they are not (i.e., if they are random), then there is no real sense in which they are *our* decisions.

In order to clarify this point, let's consider the following case. Imagine that I have a computer chip in my head and an alien is using it to control my decisions. However, the alien is making my decisions based on coin tosses, which are indeterminate. In this case, I would neither be determined nor free. Now imagine that something that works in principle like the coin toss is in my thinking instead. Again, I would not be determined nor would I be free. If our decisions do not arise in such a manner that we are somehow in control of them, then there is no real sense in which they are *our* decisions. Thus, the mere absence of determinism when making decisions is not enough to get us libertarian freedom. In order to have libertarian freedom, our decisions must also be appropriately non-random.

The idea of libertarian freedom can be contrasted with David Hume's compatiblist definition of freedom, which is "a power of acting or not acting, according to the determinations of the will."[2] Thus, Humean freedom is simply the agent's ability to do what she wants. Within the reasonable limitations of normal human beings, all of us who are not imprisoned (or restrained in some other like manner) can be said to have Humean freedom. However, with Humean freedom, unlike libertarian freedom, *our wants* may still be determined (and Hume believes that they are). It is whether or not we possess libertarian freedom, not Humean freedom, that we are interested in investigating.

Strawson begins his argument by defining two types of people: the optimist and the pessimist. The optimist believes that

our moral sensibilities and practices are compatible with determinism, while the pessimist thinks that they are incompatible with determinism. The optimist maintains that the effectiveness of the practices of punishment, and moral condemnation and approval in regulating behavior in socially desirable ways is a sufficient basis for our use of them. In terms of freedom, these practices are considered appropriate and efficacious if the person who is their object merely possesses negative freedom, or freedom in a compatiblist Humean sense, which allowed her to consciously will the act or acts in question. Conditions that inhibit negative freedom—such as "compulsion by another, or innate incapacity, or insanity, or other less extreme forms of psychological disorders, or the existence of circumstances in which the making of any other choice would be morally inadmissible or too much to expect of any man"[3]—necessarily render the practices ineffective and hence inappropriate. Moreover, other circumstances that do not directly inhibit negative freedom—such as ignorance, mistake, or accident—may also cause moral condemnation or punishment to be inappropriate or to only be appropriate to a lesser degree than they would have if these circumstances had been absent. The pessimist, on the other hand, maintains that nothing less than libertarian, or positive, freedom is required for the justification of our moral sensibilities and practices, and charges the optimist with leaving something important out of his account of our conception of them; i.e., the pessimist claims that there is a "lacuna in the optimist's story."[4]

Strawson is arguing for a modified version of the optimist's position. He thinks that both the optimist and the pessimist misconstrue the facts. But he agrees with the optimist's conclusion and attempts to fill in the lacuna, or gap, so as to make the view more plausible. The problem with the optimist's argument is that it justifies our moral practices in terms of social utility alone and does not account for the vital role played by human attitudes and feelings. The flaw with the pessimist's view is that

it goes beyond the facts as we know them so as to get back what the optimist leaves out. In their respective ways, they both over-intellectualize the facts—the pessimist by making an unnecessary metaphysical claim and the optimist by not accounting for the importance of the human attitudes of which our moral practices are an expression.

Before specifically discussing our moral practices, which can involve a certain amount of detachment from the behaviors or agents to which they are being applied, Strawson first considers our non-detached personal reactive attitudes that we have in our direct transactions with one another, such as resentment, gratitude, love, hurt feelings, and forgiveness. He points out that we care very deeply about, and consequently react very strongly to, what other people's intentions and attitudes are towards us. When people intentionally disregard or hurt us, we tend to feel resentment towards them in a way that we would not if they had done it unintentionally. Likewise, if someone does something beneficial for us out of concern for our welfare, we feel gratitude in a way that we would not if they had done it without such an intention.

Next, Strawson explores situations in which one might feel resentment because of the treatment she received from another. He specifically discusses what sorts of special considerations might tend to change, lessen, or remove this feeling all together. Two significant classes can be roughly distinguished: those special considerations that encourage us to see the agent as <u>not</u> being a fully responsible agent and as someone towards whom we should suspend our ordinary reactive attitudes, and those special considerations that encourage us to see him instead as a fully responsible agent and someone towards whom our ordinary reactive attitudes can be appropriately applied.

Situations in which pleas are made that the wrongdoer did not intend the injury but was merely ignorant in regard to the specific incident in question and those in which the agent was

forced by other parties to commit the offense would both fall into the second category. Due to the special considerations, we would only be asked to view the particular event at hand as one in which the agent was not fully, or at all, responsible, but we would not regard the agent as the type of person to whom such reactions cannot be applied. Cases in which the agent has extenuating circumstances in her life, such as severe stress, and is not acting normally as a consequence, and those in which the agent has a serious mental disorder, such as schizophrenia or obsessive-compulsive disorder, would both fall into the first group. In these situations, we are not being asked to see the injury in question as either completely, or partly, not the agent's fault, but we are to consider him as someone to whom our ordinary reactive attitudes are not appropriate, either temporarily or permanently.

In situations that fall into the second category we take on attitudes of involvement or participation in a human relationship, whereas in cases that fall into the first category we take on *objective* attitudes to another human being. Moreover, even though we can choose to take an objective attitude toward a normal and mature person (as opposed to a child who also, to a degree, deserves suspension of such attitudes) for other purposes—e.g., "as a refuge… from the strains of involvement; or as an aid to policy, or simply out of intellectual curiosity"[5]—we cannot typically do it for very long. Strawson maintains that our participant reactive attitudes are so deeply ingrained in us because of how much we care about the good or ill will or indifference of others towards us, and hence we would not be able to always take the objective attitude in our normal interpersonal relationships even if we did find out that determinism is the case. Furthermore, when we do take the objective viewpoint with either normal or abnormal people, we do not do it in any sense because we believe that their actions are determined.

The last point that Strawson considers in his examination of our participant reactive attitudes is what it would be *rational*

for us to do if we were to find out that determinism is true, rather than merely what we would in fact do. He thinks that to even ask this question is to miss the main point of everything that he has argued so far—i.e., that our commitment to ordinary human interpersonal attitudes is a part of the general framework of human life and that therefore it is *impossible* for us to have a choice in this matter. However, he replies that if we could make a rational decision that we would make it based on factors that still have nothing to do with determinism.

> And I shall reply, second, that if we could imagine what we cannot have, viz. a choice in this matter, then we could choose rationally only in the light of an assessment of the gains and losses to human life, its enrichment or impoverishment; and the truth or falsity of a general thesis of determination would not bear on the rationality of *this* choice.[6]

Strawson next considers the vicarious (or sympathetic or disinterested or impersonal) analogues of the participant reactive attitudes, which are our "reactions to the qualities of other wills, not towards ourselves, but towards others."[7] Or, in other words, the vicarious analogues are our reactions to how others treat others. The vicarious analogue of resentment, for example, is indignation (or moral indignation or disapproval). Whether or not we feel the vicarious analogues is dependent upon whether or not the same criterion we hold for ourselves is met for other people, viz., that a reasonable degree of goodwill or regard is shown to them. Moreover, in order to be complete, we must also mention the correlates of the vicarious analogues on the part of those upon whom the demands are being made, i.e., upon the agents. Strawson explains, "Just as there are personal and vicarious reactive attitudes associated with demands on others for oneself and demands on others for others, so there are self-reactive attitudes associated with demands on oneself for others."[8] Examples of self-reactive attitudes are: obligation, compunction, guilt, remorse, responsibility, and shame. All three types of atti-

tudes are humanly connected and typically a person will manifest a similar level of development with them all. So a person will not normally show a high degree of one (or two) of them, while showing a low degree of the others (or other).

Strawson makes similar claims and arguments about the vicarious analogues as he does for the participant reactive attitudes. He considers situations in which one might feel moral indignation because of the way she saw one person treating another, and then more specifically he asks what sorts of special considerations might tend to mollify or remove this feeling. Again, two classes of special considerations, very similar to those described above, can be roughly distinguished: those that encourage us to see the agent as *not* being a fully responsible agent and member of the moral community and as someone towards whom we should suspend our ordinary reactive attitudes, and those that encourage us to see him instead as a fully responsible agent and member of the moral community and someone towards whom our ordinary reactive attitudes can be appropriately applied.

Moreover, the same types of reasons as given above for categorizing agents in regard to the participant reactive attitudes apply with regard to the vicarious analogues. Thus, pleas that the agent was ignorant or forced to do the act would indicate circumstances which might encourage us to feel less, or no, indignation, but we would still hold the agent to be a fully responsible member of the moral community. And circumstances such as being insane would indicate that our moral sentiments cannot be appropriately applied to the agent at all. He is not even considered to be a member of the moral community, but is thought of as someone who we should take the purely objective view towards as needing treatment and control.

Similar to our participant reactive attitudes, we can choose to suspend our moral reactive attitudes and take the objective viewpoint for normal people in normal circumstances if we wish.

But we are less motivated to do this with our moral reactive attitudes than we are with our participant reactive attitudes, as we do not as frequently feel the strains of involvement because we are not directly taking part in the relationships in question. Furthermore, Strawson argues that the vicarious analogues, or our moral reactive attitudes, like our participant reactive attitudes, would not be any different if we were to find out that determinism is true and that when we do in fact suspend these attitudes, it is never because we are thinking of the truth or falsity of determinism. And, once again, he holds that if we ask what would it be rational for us to do, regardless of what we would actually do, if we were to find out that determinism is the case, then we have again missed the point of his argument: that our moral reactive attitudes are grounded in our participant reactive attitudes and, as a consequence, they are both an integral part of our humanity that we do not have any choice about experiencing. Even if we could have a choice about the issue, it would not be based on any considerations having to do with determinism, but rather on gains or losses to, and the quality of, human life.

Hence, Strawson argues that he has filled in the gap in the optimist's account of the justification of our moral practices. The optimist holds that these practices are compatible with determinism because they are efficacious in regulating behavior in socially desirable ways. They are represented merely as "instruments of policy, as methods of individual treatment and social control"[9] and the pessimist cringes at this purely objective and inhuman account. But Strawson has shown that our moral practices cannot be such as to only serve objective ends because these practices are in themselves the expressions of our inescapably *human* feelings; i.e., they are the expressions of our participant, and moral, reactive attitudes. And when we hold these attitudes we cannot be viewing the agent objectively, because to have them at all we must first see him as a part of the moral community, though one who has offended against its demands.

Thus, Strawson has restored the vital thing that the pessimist charged the optimist with leaving out of his account; i.e., he has restored the humanity and thus the *morality* to the view, and he has done it from *the facts as we know them*. The only thing the pessimist must now do in return is give up his metaphysics.

Van Inwagen's argument for the incompatibility of determinism with our moral practices is much more concise than Strawson's argument for their compatibility. In short, he argues the following. We are at least sometimes morally responsible for our actions. Without free will (or libertarian freedom) we would not ever be morally responsible for them. Therefore, we have free will (i.e., libertarian freedom). He holds that there are indeed genuine moral facts, such as when we describe an act as despicable, it really *is* despicable, and that moral properties, such as wrongness and responsibility, are real. He points out that any philosopher who denies that there is free will is constantly contradicting himself because his non-verbal behavior displays a continuous belief in free will. And any philosopher who denies that there is moral responsibility verbally contradicts himself anytime he expresses that someone behaved wrongly, such as in saying of a thief that stole his property, "That was a shoddy thing to do!"[10]

Peter Strawson has presented an excellent analysis of the psychology of moral judgments. However, his view does not adequately account for the fact that all of our participant, and moral, reactive attitudes *are grounded in the assumption that we are genuinely free*, i.e., that we are free in the libertarian sense. If we possess only Humean freedom, then our thoughts, desires, and intentions may all be determined; i.e., they may be causally necessitated by prior events together with causal laws. If our choices and intentions are determined, then there is no real sense in which we are in *control* and there is no real sense in which we are *responsible*, morally or otherwise, for what we do.

In order to clarify this point, I offer the following thought

experiment. Imagine that I am the most accurate pool player that ever existed and I am playing a game of pool in which I have an alive and conscious cue ball. However, when I touch the cue ball with my pool stick instead of me hitting it where I want it to go as is the case in a normal game, what happens is that I magically give the cue ball reasons and an intention to go where I want it to and then it decides to do it on its own, and does. Say that I decide that I want the cue ball to hit the eight ball into the corner pocket. So I touch it with my pool stick, it suddenly develops reasons and a desire to hit the eight ball into the corner pocket, and does. Whose fault is it that the eight ball was hit into the corner pocket? Is it the cue ball's fault because it was the one that did it and it also had reasons for the action? Or is it my fault for determining the cue ball's reasons in the first place? It seems ridiculous that the cue ball be held responsible for this act when I (or prior events together with causal laws) determined its choice. And if our choices are determined because we only possess Humean freedom, then our moral practices do not have an adequate basis.

Thus, Strawson's argument—that our moral practices would not be otherwise if determinism is the case—does not properly account for the basis of those practices. He is clearly right in maintaining that our morality goes much deeper than mere social utility and that it is grounded in our very nature as human beings. However, an inextricable part of what our moral nature entails is our belief that others are genuinely free when they act and hence possess libertarian freedom. Being truly free, as is being moral, is a fundamental feature of being human.

Van Inwagen has a superb argument for the existence of libertarian freedom. However, a possible objection to his view must be addressed. The objection concerns the truth of his contention that "moral responsibility requires libertarian freedom." The claim can be analyzed with the following question: do we use 'morally responsible' in a way that entails that

libertarian freedom is required for the correct application of the term? The objection is that this is an empirical question about ordinary language and therefore it could not have any bearing on the question of whether we have libertarian freedom, which is an empirical question about the universe and not merely about our concepts. Thus, it seems that Van Inwagen's argument is no good because it mixes up a claim about our concepts with a claim about what reality is like. Or does it?

Van Inwagen is a moral realist and thus holds that moral language picks out real moral properties. But *where* exactly are these properties located? They could be located actually *in* the objects and acts that we experience in the world, in which case the objection would stand. Or, as Strawson would most likely agree, they could exist as a result of *our*—i.e., humanity's—interactions, or relationships, with the universe. In other words, our moral sensibilities may not be objective features of reality, independent of us, but rather they may be the result of the way we, as a species, filter and understand reality, including ourselves. That is, our moral sensibilities may not be a feature of us without the world, or a feature of the world without us, but may rather be an objective feature of us—i.e., humanity—and the world interacting. And it would seem that if this is the case, then for a uniquely human concept, such as moral responsibility, the entailments of our conception of it would indeed be evidence about what is really true about the universe concerning our interactions with it and with each other in it—a critical point left unaccounted for by Strawson. Thus, because we believe that, or minimally act as if, we are morally responsible and our conception of moral responsibility requires that we have genuine control and thus libertarian freedom, then we must, in fact, have it.

Notes

1. Mark Balaguer, "A Coherent, Naturalistic, and Plausible Formulation of Libertarian Free Will," *Nous* 38:3 (2004), 379.

2. David Hume, *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, 1748 (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, Reprinted in 1955), section VIII, part I.
3. Peter Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment." In Watson, ed., *Free Will* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 60.
4. Strawson, 61.
5. Strawson, 67.
6. Strawson, 70.
7. Strawson, 70.
8. Strawson, 71.
9. Strawson, 76.
10. Peter Van Inwagen, *An Essay on Free Will*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 207.

When Clicking Tongues Sound Like Gun Shots

Omar Zubair

Each bullet in this gun has a name, and, though the reflection of metal on metal that plays infinitely within each chamber is an exact replica of its neighbor, one can tell by the relative distance to the barrel which ones are hard asses and which ones are softies. And when it's game time the hard asses race to the finish, while the softies wait simply to reiterate an already administered argument. But this game makes it too easy to pick out personalities. One bullet. One spin. One click. Now that's a doozy. They say the Russians have a knack for it, and maybe they do, but I would have to have more acquaintances than just guns and bullets before I would feel ready to guess the name of the screamer that comes out at random.

Russian roulette in the house of Hermes. and Gadamer. and Schleiermacher. and two versions of *Don Quixote* naked in their lack of revealing whether the penman signed his name Menard or Cervantes.[1] Life, ha, what a drop in the bucket. This game is for keeps, and at stake are the eyes and minds of the Academy and the Academy-to-come. Here are the rules:

• There are two books with the exact same words in the exact same order.

• However, each was written by a different author with and in a different history.

• Each interpreter/academic will be given a copy of the two books and asked to divulge an account of each.

• Then, one copy of each book will be placed on a table and stripped of its copyright information.

• The two books will be switched around until neither Gadamer nor Schleiermacher know which is which.
• Each player will be given one of the books, and then asked to explain it.

Before any drum rolls and sweat drops make the room uncomfortable, let's see what each is thinking as he enters this arena.

Schleiermacher, according to Gadamer, comes from a background that seems to believe in the estrangement that time and distance (both physical and mental) have on understanding. For him, empathy is the universal language and a conversation that lacks this underlying understanding is bound to fail in its endeavor to flower into fullness. As a consequence of this, though, it would seem as if Schleiermacher would be bound to the thought that language is an individual project: that each speaks his own language. Luckily, there is a universal translation device to link the infinite dialects together and make communication possible (and memory, also, as it is a form of communication between two individuals separated by time and space), and that translator is the objective vantage of the effects of time period, location, and emotion on the individuation of language. Schleiermacher, as he steps into the library-that-is-an-arena, is thinking that the task at hand is translation and making connections between estrangements.

Gadamer, as he makes his way to the set, is readying himself for a conversation. He seems to be under the impression that communication and understanding are not so much exercises in bridging mutual estrangements, but rather that engagement is the process of constructing a new: communication-as-procreation. For him, one cannot detach himself from himself, so translation is never the same coming in as it is coming out, as it must go through the filter of self. With this in mind, there is

no objectivity (at least, not an objectivity that can be grasped objectively), so the communicator is not given the privileged point-of-view, in that there is no necessarily privileged point-of-view. Going further, perhaps Gadamer is not even making the distinction between communicator and communicatee a highly legitimate one. In communication-as-procreation, just as in procreation, the places where parties touch become part of both parties (or simply, all parties, for the open minded).

And all the parties have finally arrived: Schleiermacher, Gadamer, me, you.

Schleiermacher's name has been chosen from the hat, so he will be given the task of the two texts first. And. After a few hours, he has emerged from his study ready to give his findings. Due to history, he has decided to discuss Cervantes first and then move on to Menard. He sees in the Cervantes text a colloquial tale of cultural relevance, while the Menard version tells of estrangement and frailty. The differences, he notes, are not as subtle as he had thought that they would be. There is no way that one could confuse the two books. In fact, for Schleiermacher, as for Borges, Cervantes is not even in the same league as Menard, whose imagery and choice of words show such a wide breadth of imagination. Menard must first create the schema of a windmill in the mind of the reader and then remind him of it—as if to make him think that he, himself, created it. Cervantes, on the other hand, simply asks the reader to envision (as opposed to imagine because the image is such a mundane one) a windmill and a quirky old man.

Gadamer, then, takes the books into a private study to examine them in detail. When he returns he decides that, yes, there are two different books in his hand; but, the differences take the eye of an expert to note, due to the level of subtlety. He goes on to state that the title pages were distinctly different in

that two of the words were similar and two of the words were different. A fairly trivial difference, but a difference none the less. The real difference is that the conversation with Cervantes' text seemed very careful, and he found himself to be extraordinarily attentive; while the conversation with Menard's was a bit more relaxed and enjoyable. This, he later confesses, was due to the actual pages themselves: The aging Cervantes book had to be dealt with carefully so as to not crumble a piece of the text; the newer Menard book could be read any way that felt comfortable. In a conversation, the environment can play just as much of a role as the content of the discussion. Apart from this, though, Gadamer admits that he would recommend either version to a friend, and tell them just to buy whichever was cheaper.

The first round was staged mostly for the two academics to position themselves and gain their bearings. The second round may press each one a bit further. So. One version of each text (one new version of each text) has been placed without its copyright information on the table. Each of the thinkers is given one book, and asked to talk about it. Schleiermacher will begin.

Schleiermacher turns the book in his hands–searching for clues, any clues at all. He flips pages and his eyes pace nervously. He tries to read the book, and a light bulb! and then a dimming. He remarks that either this book is pure nonsense or else it is so overlade with allusion that it is erudite to a fault: each word, each phrase could mean virtually anything. or virtually nothing. *Are they even chosen with care, these phrases?* Schleiermacher is reduced to questions; and, though some may read that as a positive, Schleiermacher is a man of answers, surefire answers. and this is not good.

Gadamer grabs the book that is left, opens it, and reads. He smiles at the jokes, and the he cringes at the tension. He puts down the book, and says that he's read this before. It seems like

the Menard version, but that may be just because it's new; and, anyway, it does seem slightly different. *I think that this is neither the Menard nor the Cervantes*, he resolves. *I didn't laugh at this wordplay the last two times*, he says, pointing to a particular paragraph. *Though maybe I have changed and not the book, and, if that is the case, then it is, most certainly, both of their books; and if it is not, then it does not matter.*

But it does matter, and here is what the judges have to say.

Schleiermacher seems to be the more able of the two thinkers when he is presented with both versions of the book, for there really is a difference in the two texts and they do not mean the same thing. A meaningful reproduction of *Don Quixote* written in a different place and time would have different words, a different title, and different themes. However, when only presented with one, the hole that is shown in his system reveals itself as a black hole. He can read and understand Cervantes' text because he has, presumably, read Cervantes' biography; but, he can only read Cervantes' biography because he has, assumably, read a biography of that biography. The process is a downward-spiraling infinity, and Schleiermacher only leaves himself two choices: either omniscience or illiteracy. And. Many texts that are read are read without much knowledge of the when and the how and the by whom, so a system of understanding should take that into account; and, if there really is some objective when and how and by whom, then there must be some form of objective truth; and, if there is an objective truth being stated in a book (which seems plausible, if one allows Schleiermacher the claim that there is a knowable objectivity), then one should be able to grasp the object truth either from an apparent immanence or from a transcendence that becomes perceptible through a set of relationships (though probably only through the set of all relationships, which is infinite), not from previous knowledge of

the objective truth of that objective truth. What he doesn't understand is that translation remains stagnant until a conversation has enabled the move from one form to another.

Gadamer seems to have a more stable reading than Schleiermacher in the second round; but, the circumstances have changed substantially, and yet his reading of the text has remained fairly similar. This does not seem ideal. If there is no objective reading (as Gadamer claims), then shouldn't the circumstances, like not knowing who the writer is, affect the reading to a greater extent? A conversation with a nameless, faceless individual is much different than a conversation with an old friend, even if the words exchanged are the exact same. Gadamer seems to acknowledge that context is important by stressing the importance of the reader's vantage; however, he seems to arbitrarily decide that only certain kinds of contexts are important: Isn't the history of a text a context? He seems to contextualize via the present at the expense of the past. What he doesn't understand is that conversation is always grounded in translation, or else the situation could never be internalized, making any response impertinent.

Pressed with the two tasks presented to each thinker, one will probably note that one falls where the other stands, and vice-versa. If they are not necessarily exclusive methods, which they do not seem to be, then a combination of the two would surely make a stronger case: Gadamer could finally read between the lines, and Schleiermacher could finally read a text by itself. It also seems that in order to give a charitable reading to either separate method, one must suppose that there is a high level of the other's thought present.

Apparently, Russian roulette does not always conclude in a dramatic fashion. Sometimes the two rivals merely click their tongues to mask a false shot, in order to seem bold in the presence of the other.

Notes

1. The many references to *Don Quixote* come from a short story written by Jorges Luis Borges entitled *Pierre Menard, Author of Don Quixote* in which there is a depiction of Menard rewriting parts of *Don Quixote* word for word; however, Menard is writing hundreds of years after Cervantes and he is not merely copying the text but rather writing it from his own experience, thus, it is an original text that is not based upon the first version.

Mind Police: Lie Detection in the 21st Century

Stephan C. Margolis

EXT. SUPERMALL — DAY

Two plainclothes detectives join the thousands of shoppers in a crowded futuristic SUPERMALL. Frenzied activity fills every movement in this dense landscape. Three hundred and sixty degrees surround the detectives with little robots buzzing around people, carrying items and assisting customers. The crowd is very absorbed in what they should be doing… the everyday business of shopping. Detective JACOB is a no-nonsense detective, with strong shoulders, a military bearing and silvered hair seasoned with decades of committed public service. Detective LOEW appears to be what he is—a rookie detective full of attitude and thin on experience. They are both carrying small metallic viewing devices; LOEW is using his camera to scan the crowd.

JACOB

> When I came on, we didn't have all this tech bullshit. We broke suspects, got them to confess. It was your psychology and will against theirs. You knew who was a crook, you could sniff it out. That was why I joined the force. How is this thing supposed to read minds anyway?

LOEW, ignoring the elder detective's reminisces of a time gone by, focuses his gaze on what he understands, the targets—his job. LOEW starts speaking quickly.

LOEW

> That OLD MAN over there, near the organ-harvesting booth, number 12378G. He is thinking about exceeding his

life credit limit. That LADY at the face regeneration booth, number 45689B, is fantasizing about having an affair with her BOSS. Hold on dude…we hit the jackpot. That one, the YOUNG MAN, number 13459V, standing next to the virtual eroticism booth is depressed about the lack of meaning in his life, and… He *LIED* when he took his oath to the LEADER—he wishes that the LEADER was never born.

The YOUNG MAN notices the attention and is nervous. JACOB watches the YOUNG MAN and now appears reinvigorated. A collar!

JACOB

Nice trick… pay dirt—and not bad for a few minutes of work. You got him nervous. Let's grab that guy for societal removal… OK, I guess this old dog can learn new tricks."

The YOUNG MAN sees the DETECTIVES approach and starts running…

* * * * * * * * * * * *

This fictional account forecasts the problems surrounding the reliance on current lie-detection technology. Why is this subject of interest to philosophy? I believe that philosophy can illustrate the deficiencies in the existing lie-detection technologies' principle claim that by measuring certain physiological states one can determine the presence of specific mental states (lying and guilt). While this article's ambition is not to exhaust the problems associated with lie-detection, it is my intent to drive home the need for more research in this field or perhaps a reconceptualization of the dominant model before we could embrace such a claim.

In this paper I have chosen to examine two lie-detection technologies, the familiar polygraph and a newly emerging functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI). My rationale for this choice is that both the polygraph and the fMRI

operate on the claim of measuring mental states. The polygraph is still the standard in the industry and is used in more than 56 countries (including the United States, Canada, China, Israel, Japan, Mexico, Romania, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan).[1] This alone merits its inclusion in this article.

The fMRI commands additional attention. Some proponents believe that this technology holds greater implications than just detecting lies; specifically this usage could bridge the chasm between particular brain activities and specific mental states. Ruben Gur, a prominent neurophysiologist at the University of Pennsylvania makes the claim:

> In the long term, I think we will have technologies powerful enough to understand what people are thinking in ways unimaginable now. *I think in 50 years we will have a way to essentially read minds*.[2]

This broad claim is predicated on Gur's work using fMRI to disclose deception (asserting that fMRI actually measures the mental state of lying). While the use of fMRI in detecting deception is relatively new and currently the domain of research laboratories, I believe it is wrong to presume that problems associated with this work will eventually "just work themselves out." Rather, I argue that the acceptance of the usage of fMRI in the field of deception could lead in the future to more far reaching societal implications (including the extreme claim of reading citizens' minds) and therefore should be the subject of extensive debate.

This brings us to the thesis of this article. I contend that neither the proponents of the polygraph nor the fMRI have adequately made their case that they are measuring the mental state of lying (directly or through a mediating mental state). To make this argument, this article will explore the following questions:

1. **What is lying?** This is the first step to seek a common

understanding of what phenomenon we are talking about.

2. **What are the philosophical assumptions of the technologies?** Rather than search for a philosophical theory to support lie-detection technologies, I will explore the underlying assumptions and identify possible issues.

3. **How do the technologies work?** This emphasis on the technologies, principles and mechanics is important is sorting out the answer to the following philosophical question.

4. **What are the technologies measuring when they claim to measure a mental state of lying?** If the proponents fail to appropriately address this question, I believe that the implications hold significant real-world implications in the domains of national security, criminal investigations, employment, and privacy.

What is lying?

Before proceeding to examine these technologies, I will first provide an operational definition of lying that is used in the research of deception. In the case of measuring the mental state of lying, one ought to agree on what we mean by the word 'lying' or 'lies.' Surprisingly, this is no small feat. An interesting finding, however, is that very few fMRI experiments have provided an explicit definition of 'lying'; rather, it is inferred in the behavior of the subjects. Scientists admit that this is a problem. Ray Johnson, in his work on fMRI and deception, scanned the literature for an operational definition used in this work and concluded: "To the best of our knowledge, there is no definition or conceptual framework that specifies the cognitive processes used when persons are deceptive."[3] The behavior ranges from misrepresenting an image (that the experimenter provided to the subject) to distorting a description of events that occurred during a family vacation.

Researcher G. Ganis[4] in his studies with deception and fMRI showed the activation of the brain varied depending on

the type of lies told (e.g., with regard to memorized lies versus spontaneous lies). In one study in which the subject lied about autobiographical information, the activation was in the ventrolateral prefrontal cortex and the medial prefrontal cortex. In another study involving the feigning of a memory problem, activation occurred in some different regions, including parietal and temporal cortices, the caudate nucleus, and the posterior cingulated gyrus.

This distinction in neurological activation suggests a complicated "constellation of cognitive and affective processes involved in specific types of deception."[5] This introduces the idea that lying is a general category comprised of many species of complex representations corresponding to different brain regions. This would possibly entail multiple referents for the word 'lie,' even if those referents all reside in the brain. Such a prospect would complicate a resolution to the problem: "What are we measuring when we claim to measure a mental state of lying?"

Abandoning a global definition that would embrace every possible type of lie used in the research, I refer to a definition offered by philosophers, R. M. Chisholm and T. D. Feehan[6] which has been referred to as the standard account of lying.

> L lies to D $=_{df}$ there is a proposition *p* such that (i) either L believes that *p* is not true or L believes that *p* is false and (ii) L asserts p to D.
> and
> L asserts p to D $=_{df}$ L states *p* to D and does so under conditions which, L believes, justify D in believing that L not only accepts *p*, but also intends to contribute causally to D's believing that *p*.

This definition captures that L believes that *p* (what he states to D) is either untrue or false and he does so with the intent of contributing to D's believing *p* to be true.

Chisholm and Feehan's definition gels with our folk

psychology use of the word ‘lying’ and is consistent with the usage of professional law enforcement interrogators. I will use the following as the working definition for what we mean by ‘lies.’

> To tell a **lie** is to make a declarative statement to another person that one believes to be false, with the intention that the other person believe that statement to be true, and with the intention that the other person believe that one believes the statement to be true.

Before leaving this discussion, it is important to restate that the definition of lying does not occupy much space in the debate on the scientific research of deception. However, it is important also to recognize the role that it plays in measuring lying. I believe that this debate requires substantial review beyond the scope of this article and leave further discussion for another paper.

* * * * * * * * * * * *

EXT. SUPERMALL — DAY

The DETECTIVES are running the length of the SUPERMALL. JACOB with the talent of a professional halfback, is clearly showing his superior skills in quickly negotiating the crowd and annoying robots. LOEW runs submissively behind his tail.

JACOB

> Now this is real police work, just like the old days. Catching the perp. The mind-reading trick really spooked him.

LOEW (breathing heavily)

> It is not a trick. The ATDS… Aberrant Thought Detection Spectrum… really reads minds.

JACOB

> Can it tell if someone is lying?

LOEW (speaking between gasps)

Absolutely… that is why it was originally invented… It baselines your belief systems and measures your statements against what you believe.

JACOB (still running)

Nice trick…

* * * * * * * * * * * *

Current Lie Detection Technology

A process for detecting lies has been one of mankind's Holy Grails. Whether in business, social relations, law enforcement or espionage, lie detecting technology would reduce complex mind events to a mere dichotomy of truth and lies. Psychologists J. Vendemia and M. Schillaci, experimental researchers in this field, have presented this concept as modeling a two-state system, truth and deceptive responses.[7] Hence the promise of certainty in determining the truthfulness of statements holds tremendous appeal for decision-makers in these fields.

The technological objective of this quest seemed first realized with the introduction of the polygraph, often referred to as a "lie detector." All lie detection technologies are built on the assumption that the measurements of certain physiological changes (within specific and identifiable ranges) distinguish lies from non-lies. The operational assumptions of all lie detection technology are

1. Mental states, *lyin*g and *non-lying*, produces distinct, and measurable, physiological states that can be compared.

2. The technology is designed to measure those physiological states that correlate to the mental states of *lying* and *non-lying*.

* * * * * * * * * * * *

EXT MEGATROPOLIS — DAY

Transparent doors dissolve and reappear as the DETECTIVES breach them into the MEGATROPOLIS. JACOB and LOEW search the dozens of levels, filtering through the congestion of people, robots, and airborne vehicles.

JACOB

Now we earn our credits. Where is that perp? Can your toy track our rabbit?

LOEW (out of breath)

No… uh… it is strictly for reading peoples minds… and it is real, not a toy.

JACOB

Whatever, it got our little friend to beat feet. Now that shows guilt. We used to have props like that, but it was before your time. We called them polygraphs—"lie detectors."

LOEW (breathing hard)

I saw one…once, in the police museum.

JACOB

Museum…right. Anyway, it would measure blood pressure, heart rate, stuff that jacks up when you're stressed about your answer. Then we could tell that the perp was lying. If you were good he would break…confess. That was real lie detection.

* * * * * * * * * * * *

Polygraph—the process and technology

Since the early 20th century,[8] polygraph tests have been used to determine deception in criminal and civil cases as well as in employee screenings**.** Additional to the assumption above the polygraph asserts that

1. Subjects who lie create a cognitive dissonance or guilt
2. This state produces a fight or flight response (stress)
3. This state is different from when the subject tells the truth.

The polygraph is designed to pay attention to changes in the part of the autonomic nervous system (the sympathetic system) that is responsive to stress or perceived threatening events. The polygraph machine measures these physiological changes through three components:

- cardiosphygmograph—measures blood volume and pulse rate;
- galvanometer—measures electrodermal skin response; and
- pneumograph—measures respiration.

The polygraph process involves *relevant* and *control questions*. Before the examination, the polygrapher is provided all relevant information from which he constructs a pool of test questions that are not too general, rather focusing on narrow subjects or specific incidents. These are call *relevant questions*. For example, a typical relevant question on a theft case might be: "Did you have access to the cash drawer that Monday night?" To evaluate the responses to these sets of questions the examiner begins the polygraph by asking typical *control questions*, intended to elicit truthful and deceptive responses. The responses to this set of questions become the baseline to judge the truthfulness of responses to the relevant questions. A typical control question to elicit a truthful response from me might be "Is your name Stephan Margolis?," while a typical control question to elicit a lying response might be "Have you ever lied on an official document?" For both relevant and control questions, the measurement continues to record the physiological response for 15–20 seconds after the question is asked.

As a person is questioned about a certain event or incident, the examiner looks to see how the person's heart rate, blood

pressure, respiratory rate and electro-dermal activity change in comparison to their truthful and deceptive responses to control questions. The examiner reviews the *patterns of responses* to relevant questions (e.g., graphs of breathing pattern relative to blood pressure), not just the individual data points. The patterns from the relevant questions are most likely not exactly the same as the patterns in the control questions. Fluctuations from truthful statements may indicate that the person is being deceptive, but exam results are open to interpretation by the examiner. An important point to reemphasize is that the polygraph measures the consequence of producing the lie, this has been described as the stress response.

Polygraph—the issues

As the polygraph has been employed across the globe (unlike the nescient fMRI), it has generated substantial data and subsequent argumentation, both in favor and opposition to its use. Advocates for the polygraph have advanced one primary premise: that given a substantial number of measurements between verbal responses (which have been categorized as "lies" and "truth") and measured physiological states, a statistical correlation between these variables has been demonstrated.

One of the most vocal advocates, the American Polygraph Association (APA), claims that over 80 research projects have been conducted (involving 6,380 polygraph examinations) of which 12 studies "provided accuracy of 98%." The remainder of the sets of studies exceeds an average accuracy of 81%.[9] The advocates conclude that these numbers are correct and sufficient to justify the position that the polygraph accurately detects lies in its subjects.

A number of attacks have been brought to bear on the polygraphs. Before introducing the philosophical issues, I will offer three of the common attacks in this debate. The first of the arguments has been the rejection of the statistics as strong evidence,

with opponents countering with a high tally count of failed diagnoses (including a number of challenges to the accuracy of APA statistics).[10] These failed diagnosis fall into two types of errors: false-negative (failing to detect a lie) and false-positive (falsely identifying a lie). Borrowing again from statistics, these errors are classified as Type I errors (omission) and Type II errors (commission) respectively.

Both types of errors can create false interpretations for decision makers. For example, in the case of failing to detect a lie (false—negative), this error can impede solving a criminal case. In the case of falsely identifying a lie (false—positive) a person's employment, reputation and possibly liberty can be wrongly placed at risk. Stephen Fienberg provided the following finding in his report on the utility of the lie detector for screening employees of secure United States government laboratories: "…the polygraph has such an error rate that any attempt to use it to catch spies would be swamped with false positives, loyal employees who would be incorrectly classified as suspects."[11] The stigma of failing the poly can stay with employees throughout their career.

The second problem that scientists as well as other professionals have described as a methodological weaknesses is the failure of polygraphs to control key variables, principally the investigator's questioning.[12] As discussed earlier in the methodology, it is the examiner's job to generate the questions particular to the area being investigated. This places a great deal of methodological weaknesses on the examiner's skills and knowledge in controlling the variance of the questions and their connotations. A simple example could be:

Question 1

Detective: Did you have sex with Jane against her will?

Suspect: No

Question 2

Detective: Did you have illegal sex with Jane?

Suspect: No

Question 3

Detective: Did you steal anything?

Suspect: No.

Question 4

Detective: Did you take anything at Joe's hardware that you did not pay for?

Suspect: No.

The reader can do a thought experiment where he answers in his head each series, creating different rationalizations for answering the Question 1 versus Question 2 and Question 3 versus Question 4. Opponents of the polygraph have argued that the need of the examiner to tailor questions to the particular event creates substantial methodological problems.

A third issue that scientists have seriously questioned is the relationship between deception and the physiological changes measured in polygraphs. Many scientists, among them psychologist David Lykken have testified throughout the nation on the misuse of the polygraph. Lykken argues that there is a lack of scientific evidence for the assumptions underpinning polygraphy.

> …shallow breathing, heavy breathing, a speeding up or a slowing down of respiration, a "sigh of relief" after a crucial question, are all represented as being "dependable" or "very reliable" criteria of deception. *There is no objective evidence to support such claims*.[13]

Lykken believes that "peripheral responses—of muscle tension and voice changes, of heart rate and vasoconstriction, of blood pressure and respiration, of pupil size and palmar sweating, responses which the polygraph can measure—will never provide a basis for emotion detection" translating quantifiable measurements to qualitative states.[14]

This leads us to return to the philosophical thesis question: "What are we measuring when we claim to measure a mental

state of lying?" In the below stated assumptions, the strength of the word *RELATED* can only reasonably be offered as correlated. To give a stronger interpretation (e.g. causality) would be overstating the relationship. The assumptions of the polygraph should now be refined to

1. The utterances called "lies" are *RELATED* to mental state(s) called "lying"
2. The mental state(s) of lying are *RELATED* to mental state(s) of stress or guilt
3. The mental state(s) of non-lying are *RELATED* to mental state(s) of non-stress and/or non-guilty.
4. The mental state(s) of stress or guilt are *RELATED* to certain measurable physiological states (sweating, blood pressure, respiration)
5. The mental state(s) of non-stress or non-guilt are *RELATED* to certain measurable physiological states (sweating, blood pressure, respiration)

In short, mental state(s) that we call lying are *RELATED* to certain measurable physiological changes (sweating, blood pressure, respiration).

What are measured in the employment of the polygraph are the physiological changes that scientists have attributed to stress or anxiety. That is probably the strongest of the assumptions of this group. It also offers a preliminary answer to the question, "What are we measuring when we claim to measure a mental state of lying?" in that we are measuring physiological changes that are attributed to stress or guilt responses. Two weaknesses in this assumption are that many experiences can create guilt (other than deception) and that many emotions can show the same physiological arousal as guilt.

A simple illustration would be if money were to be discovered stolen at a bank. A polygraph examination is given to the supervisor of the bank He is asked the question:

"Did you steal the money in the drawer?" The inter-

viewee did not steal the money, yet he has guilt feelings when he answers "no" because he was the responsible supervisor on the day the money was discovered missing from the drawer. Hence, if he subsequently took a polygraph, he might well show measurements that correspond to a guilty response. The examiner could interpret the response and presume that the supervisor was lying when he answered the question (when in fact he was telling the truth).

The second weakness is that emotions other than guilt can generate the same autonomic responses. David Lykken and colleagues argue that the polygraph is more of a fear detector than a lie detector device. That is, the polygraph cannot distinguish between mental states of anxiety, irritation and guilt.[15]

However, if we temporarily ignore these challenges, I believe another interesting vulnerability is assumption #2, a foundational assumption of the polygraph. Here the assumption makes the linkage of the mental state of lying to the mental state of stress or guilt (not the straight linkage to the physiological state).

This linkage between mental states appears to be assumed without support or explanation as it does not make an appeal to any particular theory to understand how the relationship between these two internal states is known. One might expect that the mental state of lying would be discussed in terms of a corresponding brain state. The only external physical state is attributed to the mental state of guilt in assumption #4 (none is attributed to the mental state of lying). Consequently, a clarification of the connection of the two mental states is absent.

Other real world examples offer counter-examples discounting this connection, such as sociopaths who don't feel guilt and people who learn to inhibit their reactions to stress and can slip though a polygrapher's net. Among the former famous criminals who passed polygraph tests only to resume their criminal activities was Gary Ridgway, the Green River Killer. Among

the latter who learned how to beat the test was CIA double agent Aldrich Ames. Ames is not an uncommon example of people who control their stress response (naturally or through practice) to anticipated questions. This phenomenon manifests itself in the examiner declaring that the test is "inconclusive" as he cannot determine the truthfulness or deception of the responses.

Most advocates in the field believe that through greater control and increased refinement of measurements (e.g. computerization of interpretation) these issues can be mitigated. However, some advocates have abandoned pursuing a "more accurate" measurement of the guilt state for a direct measurement of brain states, the functional Magnetic Resonance Imagery (fMRI).

This is more than merely changing technology; it is an important shift of what is being measured. While polygraph arguments centered on the consequences of the mental state of lying (the stress- related physiological indicators), proponents of fMRI claim to measure the antecedent to the lie statement (the neuroactivity in the deception).

fMRI—the Technology

Functional MRI, or fMRI, developed in the early 1990s, is a variation of magnetic resonance imaging. The fMRI is very similar to the more well know MRI, used for imaging the body and diagnosis. MRI scanning uses a very strong magnet and radio waves to produce images. The subject places his head into a tube that is surrounded by a large magnet. The magnet causes the protons of the atoms inside the brain to align with the magnetic field. A pulse of radio waves is then directed at the patient's head and some of it is absorbed by the protons, knocking them out of alignment. The protons, however, gradually realign themselves, emitting radio waves as they do. These radio waves are captured by a radio receiver and are sent to a computer, which constructs the brain image.

The fMRI signal intensity is sensitive to the amount of oxygen carried by hemoglobin. The fMRI uses a conventional MRI scanner, but takes advantage of two additional phenomena. The first is that blood contains iron, which is the oxygen-carrying part of hemoglobin inside red blood cells. Iron atoms cause small distortions in the magnetic field around them. The second key phenomenon underlying fMRI is the physiological principle that whenever any part of the brain becomes active, the small blood vessels in that localized region dilate, causing more blood to rush in. A large amount of freshly oxygenated blood pours into any activated brain structure, reducing the amount of oxygen-free hemoglobin. This causes a small change in the magnetic field, and thus the MRI signal, in the active region.

In principle, fMRI can be used to observe the activation of brain structures in response to almost any kind of brief stimulation, ranging from sounds, to visual images, to gentle touching of the skin. An important point not to miss is that precise changes in brain activation or metabolism are *not directly observed*, only the effects of local increases in blood flow and microvascular oxygenation. These events are mapped as a change in raw image intensity.

fMRI and Deception

This change in measurement has appeared to have created among some researchers the belief that this technology can be used for direct measurement of mental states, including thinking strategies.[16] Gur described the potential use of functional MRIs for interrogation of criminals or terrorists at a university workshop sponsored by the Institute for Strategic Analysis and Response. He bases this on the belief that "everything we do, and everything an enemy does starts in the brain."[17] Another scientist at the same workshop, Daniel Langleben had been examining functional MRI to "read thoughts."[18] This ambitious project is attempting to correlate changes in brain activity with subjects'

reporting of a variety of mental states.

Both Langleben and Gur have collaborated on detecting differential activity in the anterior cingulate region and the frontal cortex of the brain during experiments where the subject provided false information. The brains of subjects who were lying lit up in these particular places, in ways that they did not when the subjects were being honest.[19]

The appeal of the use of this technology is not isolated to a few researchers. A few companies have been marketing their capabilities to *get the truth* using fMRI, such as *No Lie MRI* and *Cephos*. Cephos founder Steven Laken, developer for the first commercial DNA test for colorectal cancer is an advocate of the science of the project.

> fMRI lie detection is where DNA diagnostics were 10 or 15 years ago. The biggest challenge is that this is new to a lot of different groups of people. You have to get lawyers and district attorneys to understand this isn't a polygraph. I view it as no different as (*sic*) developing a diagnostic test.[20]

Boasting such a claim (and reducing the associated costs) could promulgate this technology into areas not currently employing lie-detection technology.

fMRI issues

The fMRI's apparent promising future could unleash a proliferation of this technology into the legal and business domain with significant societal implications (similar to the polygraph Type I and Type II errors). The concern is what valid uses the science of fMRI and deception justify. The operational costs and the relative newness of its use in deception detection have produced a limited number of studies (particularly in comparison to the polygraph).

One study by Sean Spence examined the inhibition of 'truthful' responses theoretically necessary for lying.[21] Subjects

were asked questions to which they pressed one of two keys on a computer to indicate an affirmative or negative response. The data of twenty-three subjects showed greater activity in specific areas of the brain when telling "lies" compared to when telling "truths."

The difference reported between the lying and truth activations was through a statistical analysis of the study group as a whole; however, the findings were not significant enough to isolate deception at the individual level. What this means is that something meaningful may be said about the neural activity of the group as a collective, but this does not translate to predicting brain activity for the individual subject.

Spence identified that subjects questioned delayed their answer for a deceptive response in comparison to a truthful response. A subsequent study by Langleben in 2002 reaffirmed that truth-telling activity was the baseline and that neural activity and response delays increased with deception.

An interesting issue emerged from these studies, namely the introduction of a mediating mental state. A later study of Spence explained that deception's neural activity was an *executive function* that involved the active inhibition of truth.[22] "Executive function" is a term encompassing a variety of cognitive and psychological processes that work to control and coordinate the selection and execution of willed actions or strategies for a response.[23] This approach essentially invokes the image of a homunculus and leaves questions unanswered as to how the executive function is accomplished. Regardless, the executive function as described seems to involve a conscious mental state.

Let us now examine the apparent assumptions of the fMRI investigation of deception. As in the polygraph, the strength of the word *RELATED* can only reasonably viewed as correlated.:

1. Mental states are *RELATED* to the responses to the questions.

2. The responses to specific questions fall into the catego-

ries of accurate representation (truth) and deception (lying).

3. These mental states are *RELATED* to discrete measurable neurophysiologic and physiological states.[24]

Additionally,

4. The mental state of lying is *RELATED* to the mental state of executive function.

This returns us to the thesis and to ask the question: "What are we measuring when we claim to measure a mental state of lying?" The fMRI shares some commonalities with the polygraph. The attempt to offer an explanation of the direct observation of the mental state relies on a relationship with another mental state (similar to the polygraph). The theory assumes that an explicit relationship exists between the mental state (state of lying) and the body (neurological correlates), mediated via another mental state of executive function. However, in the case of the fMRI, the mental state of lying is present only when the executive function has been active. After clarifying our assumptions, three critical issues remain:

1. Mental states (specifically "mental states of lying") are not directly measured; rather, physiological changes of the body's systems are directly measured.[25]

2. The mediating relationship between the "mental state of lying" and the "mental state of executive function" is ill-defined and unclear.

3. Does the mental state of executive function have other mediating relationships that need to be accounted for to measure the mental state of lying?

These issues illuminate the disconnection between what we are measuring and the mental states of lying.

Advocates of this technology could reasonably imagine a future where technology would directly measure very discrete neurological states. It could be argued that scientists could systematically index different states, of which one could be called the "lying state." However, research has shown that this

path too is fraught with problems.

Conclusion

The two technologies of lie detection examined both claim that they measure the mental state of lying either directly or through a mediating state. I believe that this article has successfully challenged that claim. While the technologies and what they measure are very different, they suffer similar issues. Neither technology directly measures mental states. Under the guise of science, both technologies explain the mental state of lying in terms of another mental state. This type of linkage requires much more debate before processing a technology that has such strong social implications. Finally, the examination of the technologies has revealed methodological issues conspicuous in the polygraph and at least identifiable in the fMRI. This leads us to conclude that while the technologies may measure mental states, it is unreasonable to assert that they measure the mental state of lying. To establish such a correlation would require more research or perhaps a reconceptualization of the model of the mental state of lying.

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EXT LARGE BUILDING — DAY

The subject of the pursuit is in-range. DETECTIVES and PERP are now positioned high on a ledge. JACOB and LOEW now close in.

JACOB (yelling)

Stop. Don't do it!

PERP (breathing hard—exhausted)

What's the point...I am already judged. The government thinks that machine can know my thoughts…but it doesn't

JACOB (yelling)

Don't do it!!!

LOEW (desperately trying to read the machine)

He..he is thinking of jumping….

JACOB (looking only at the PERP)

I know…

FADE OUT DARKNESS

* * * * * * * * * * * *

Notes

1. Jim Danneskiold, "Polygraphs Focus of DOE News Conference," *Daily Bulletin Los Alamos Laboratories,* 8 September 1999, http://www.lanl.gov/orgs/pa/News/090899.html (May 10, 2006).
2. Faye Flam, "Your Brain May Soon be Used Against You," *Philadelphia Inquirer on the Web*, 29 October 2002, http://www.philly.com/mld/inquire/43916.htm (29 July 2003).
3. Ray Johnson Jr. "The Contribution of Executive Processes to Deceptive Responding" *Neuropschologia* 42, (2004): 878.
4. G. Ganis et al., "Neural Correlates of Different Types of Deception: An fMIR Investigation," *Cerebral Cortex* 13, no. 8 (August 2003): 830-836.
5. Committee to Review the Scientific Evidence on the Polygraph, *The Polygraph and Lie Detection,* (Washington: The National Academies Press, 2003), 160.
6. R.M. Chisholm and T. D. Feehan, "The Intent to Deceive,*" Journal of Philosophy* 74, no. 59 (1977): 143.
7. J. Vendemia J and M. Shcillaci, "Neuroscientific Modeling of Deception with HD-ERPs and fMRI: Experimental and Computational Problems" (Colloquium Department of Computer Science and Engineering, University of South Carolina, 2004).
8. The complete set of polygraph equipment has been used in law enforcement since 1939.
9. The American Polygraph Association, http://www.polygraph.org/betasite/apa5rev.htm (26 September 2003).
10. Committee to Review the Scientific Evidence on the Polygraph, *The Polygraph and Lie Detection* (Washington: The National Academies Press, 2003): 35.
11. Stephen Fienberg, Australian Statistical Conference and the International

Biometric Conference, 2004.

12. Committee to Review the Scientific Evidence on the Polygraph, *The Polygraph and Lie Detection* (Washington: The National Academies Press, 2003), 2.
13. David Thoreson Lykken, "A Tremor in the Blood," (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981): 59 (emphasis added).
14. *Ibid*., 58.
15. *Ibid*., 61.
16. Committee to Review the Scientific Evidence on the Polygraph, *The Polygraph and Lie Detection* (Washington: The National Academies Press, 2003), 159.
17. Faye Flam, "Your Brain May Soon be Used Against You," *Philadelphia Inquirer on the Web*, 29 October 2002. http://www.philly.com/mld/inquire/43916.htm (29 July 2003).
18. *Ibid*.
19. D.D. Langleben et al., "Brain Activity during Simulated Deception: An Event-Related Functional Magnetic Resonance Study," *NeuroImage* 15 (2002): 727-732.
20. Steve Silberman, "Don't Even Think About Lying" *Wired Magazine*. http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/14.01/lying.html (1 May 2006).
21. *Sean Spence* "Behavioural and Functional Anatomical Correlates of Deception in Humans," *Neuroreport*. 12, no.13 (September 17, 2001): 2849-2853.
22. This is based on activity in the prefrontal cortex of the brain associated with the "executive function."
23. Ray Johnson Jr., "The Contribution of Executive Processes to Deceptive Responding" *Neuropschologia* 42, (2004) 878.
24. Committee to Review the Scientific Evidence on the Polygraph, *The Polygraph and Lie Detection* (Washington: The National Academies Press, 2003): 27-33.
25. Whether it is blood flow in the brain, blood pressure or galvanic skin response, the measurements are probably too gross to offer sufficient precision to correspond to a constellation of discrete mental states.

Against Voluntary Control Over Belief

Matthew Darmalingum

Introduction

I will argue that we don't have voluntary control over what we believe in the sense that we cannot make ourselves believe propositions just by willing to believe them. It may be that all events are either random or determined, and that it follows that I do not have libertarian freedom in my actions. But it remains the case that, should I want to raise my arm, if I am not paralyzed, tied down, or otherwise constrained, I will raise it. In the case of action, we at least have the intuition that *we* author and control our actions. The problem of free will in action arises from this intuition, together with the intuition that our actions are either determined or random. If our decisions are determined by prior events, we are bound to act as we are determined to act, whereas, if our decisions arise randomly, we have no control over them. But I think that if we want to make ourselves believe propositions, there is no guarantee we will succeed in the way we succeed in raising our arms upon our desiring to raise them. And I intend to show that an epistemic analogue of the intuition that we author and control our actions is generally false by providing a close examination of how we come to hold beliefs. If I am correct, there is little room for an analogous problem of free will in belief formation.

My general interest is in what can be said about epistemic normativity if we cannot make ourselves believe propositions just by willing to believe them, and this interest limits what I will cover in this paper. So let me make clear the scope of this paper,

as well as its intended context.

I don't mean to deny that if somebody tells us we shouldn't believe what we believe, we might be able to voluntarily perform an action so that the likelihood of our believing what we are supposed to believe increases.[1] Whether we can voluntarily perform an action to increase the likelihood of our believing what we should believe is a matter of whether we are free to act, and that is not the topic of this paper.

Furthermore, I don't mean to deny that we might be able to reconsider our evidence if somebody tells us we shouldn't believe what we believe. We might be able to make ourselves reconsider the data already available to us, or we might be able to make ourselves consider whether or not we are being logical. As a result, what we believe might change. But if so, our new belief does not come about just because we will it, but because we reconsider our evidence. And it is not up to us what to believe given the evidence we consider.

Now, just with respect to discovering the truth,[2] we may believe that a person should not arrive at a belief on the basis of fallacious reasoning, as well as that a person should hold only beliefs that are true.[3] But, if the word 'should' here expresses an obligation, and the obligation is *purely epistemic*, i.e., it is an obligation to believe a proposition, and not an obligation to perform a certain action which may be conducive to believing this proposition,[4] then talk of such obligation appears nonsensical. If we are either determined to form the beliefs we believe, or if beliefs may arise in us randomly, then we cannot make ourselves believe propositions just by willing. In either case, we have no direct voluntary control over our beliefs. But on the assumption that a person's being obligated entails that she can meet her obligation, for talk of a person's being obligated to believe that P to make sense, it must be the case that either she can make herself believe[5] that P just by willing, or she believes that P.[6]

Now, we may imagine a case in which a person is obligated to believe that P, even when she can't make herself believe that P just by willing, namely a case in which the person does believe P. Clearly, if a person does believe P, she can believe P, but she can't make herself believe P. But just because a person believes P doesn't mean she isn't obligated to believe P. For example, you might think I should believe that fallacies aren't fallacies, even if I happen to believe that fallacies aren't fallacies. You might think the obligation holds, whether or not I believe fallacies aren't fallacies. And this is why—on an epistemic version of the notion that a person's being obligated entails that she can meet her obligation—we might think a person can be obligated to believe a proposition not just in cases when she can make herself believe it, but also in cases when she indeed believes it.

But, if both if the obligation to believe that P entails either the ability to believe that P just by willing, or our already believing that P, then it follows that we can never be obligated to believe a proposition, unless we in fact already believe it.[7]

However, if we think some people believe propositions they shouldn't, then it can't be the case that people are obligated to believe a proposition *only* when they in fact do believe that proposition.[8]

So, the problem here is that, in order to talk of pure epistemic normativity, we either need to say we can make ourselves believe propositions just by willing, or deny that for talk of epistemic normativity to be sensible, people must be able to make themselves believe a proposition just by willing,[9] or we need to accept that we can never be obligated to believe a proposition, unless we in fact already believe it. The argument in this paper that it is generally true that we cannot make ourselves believe propositions just by willing should be taken in the context of this problem. I want to show that the solution to this problem cannot lie in saying we can make ourselves believe propositions just by willing.

Against the notion of belief arrived at as the result of decision

I want to show that we actually cannot willingly make ourselves believe propositions in most cases. Just by considering how we fail to manipulate our beliefs in the following examples, we can easily see that whether we think a proposition is true or false is generally not the result of our willing ourselves to believe it true or false.

To start, we seem unable to believe propositions of which we have no idea whether they are true, such as that the dime in my pocket is going to come up heads should I flip it right now. Absent motivation to believe one way or the other, we have no view on the matter. Furthermore, it seems impossible for us to believe, on the spur of the moment, propositions that we already think are not true, such as that the Earth is flat.[10]

We don't make ourselves believe what our evidence supports, nor do we decide what to believe on the basis of our evidence.[11] We don't make ourselves believe that *x* number of rings in a tree-stump supports the tree's having been *x* years old when it was cut down. Nor are we at liberty to make ourselves believe that the number of rings' being an indicator of the tree's having been *x* years old when it was cut down is a bad reason to believe the tree was *x* years old when it was cut down.

Nor can we decide how much weight evidence for the truth of a certain proposition has, or how much weight absence of evidence for the truth of a certain proposition has.[12] For example, say you believe that, were it not for the theory of natural selection, you would have considered the argument from design a good argument for the existence of God, since it posits a divine creator as doing what would have been necessary explanatory work. Furthermore, although you believe some theory of natural selection is probably right, because gaps in the fossil record leave you without complete evidence of how transition from one

species to another occurred, you are even willing to keep the argument from design on the back-burner, so to speak. Now, if you were asked to to change the weighting of there being gaps in the fossil record to the degree that you would come to believe that God is most probably a necessary posit, you couldn't do it.

Bernard Williams says that since beliefs are by nature directed at truth, they can't be acquired independently of the truth.[13] This is not to say that the believer aims at truth, but that belief does. So, even if it turns out that we do not have the goal of believing truths, it remains the case that to believe a proposition is to believe it is true. Ginet adds that this doesn't mean we can't decide to believe something because we want it to be true: If you hear the plane your lover was supposed to be on has crashed, and your lover has called you on her way to the airport to say she is running late and might or might not miss her plane, you can choose to believe she didn't make the plane.

But this seems to conflate hoping and believing.[14] There is a difference between, on the one hand, believing your lover wasn't on the plane that crashed, and, on the other, hoping that she wasn't, even though you are aware that there is a good possibility that she was on the plane. In the former case, it can't be that you are entertaining reasonable doubts[15] about whether your lover was on the plane.

Saying that you believe that P is not the same as saying that you don't acknowledge any reasonable doubts regarding whether it may turn out that not-P. Nor is it the same as saying that you act regardless of these doubts. For example, you might decide to proceed on the assumption that your lover wasn't on the plane, in which case you choose not to call the airline to see if she was on the plane, but head to the airport to pick her up from a later flight. But just because we can make ourselves act as if a certain proposition is true doesn't mean we can make ourselves believe it is true.[16]

Nor can you be said to believe a proposition just because

you won't be surprised if it turns out to be true. I don't believe the sun is shining in London right now, but I wouldn't be surprised if it was. You may not be surprised to find your lover wasn't on the plane, but that doesn't mean that you believe that she wasn't on the plane. Would you, having heard from her that she may or may not make the plane, really have been surprised to find out she was on the plane?

If Ginet is not conflating hoping and believing, he is proposing you can just choose to ignore your reasonable doubts and make yourself believe your lover is not on the plane, so that if you find out she was on the plane, you will be surprised. But the doubts you ignore must be *yours*, as well as *reasonable*, for if they are not your reasonable doubts, you already have good reason to believe your lover wasn't on the plane, and the example no longer serves Ginet's purpose of showing you can believe a proposition because you want to.

With all the above in mind, Ginet's claim seems unbelievable. And the story about believing that your lover is not on a crashed plane only conveys that we do not necessarily form a belief on the basis of evidence: You could have believed that your lover wasn't on a crashed plane because you were emotionally compelled by fear and shock. So you can have a belief that P because of non-evidential reasons, you pay no heed to reasonable doubts about whether P is true. Emotions might compel you to not attend to the possibility that your lover made her plane, and so you would believe that she missed it, but then this causes you to believe that she missed her plane not because you want to believe it, but because you were compelled to believe it.

In sum, the above scenarios were meant to show that we have voluntary control over our belief formation, but they are not convincing. In the case of trying to believe God is a necessary theoretical posit, I hope to have shown that we have no control over the degree to which we are certain in our beliefs. Further, upon disambiguation, it should be clear that Ginet's case of the

lover and the crashed plane fails to be an example of believing just by willing.

However, one might object that it is possible to exert indirect voluntary influence over our beliefs.[17] For example, you might be convinced by Pascal and think you should believe in God, and so, in order to achieve this, you expose yourself to theology, attend church, and so on. As a result it is possible that you might come to believe in God. But, *pace* Pascal, who thinks you will be able to brainwash yourself so that you believe in God,[18] you might not come to believe in God. Whether you succeed or not remains contingent on whether you acquire good reasons to believe in God. Thus, it remains the case that you can't believe in God of your own volition.[19]

The same holds for cases in which you already hold a certain belief, and you perform (or forgo performing) some action in an attempt to maintain this belief. Consider the following scenario: You believe that God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent, and somebody mentions Mackie's paper on the incoherence of such a notion to you. As a result you think to yourself that you should read the paper, but you decide not to. Now, if it is possible to believe that an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent God exists, while believing that you should really do some further research into the matter (i.e., if it is possible to believe a proposition whilst yet thinking it is not indubitably true), it is possible that you still believe that God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent. Reading Mackie's paper might have convinced you that such a notion of God is incoherent, but in choosing not to read the paper, you seem to have exercised control over what you believe, in that your decision guaranteed that you would not be exposed to any evidence that might have affected your current belief.

But the fact remains that you already believed that God was omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent, and, from the previous, you had no control either over your initial acquisition

of the belief, or over the maintenance of your belief.[20] You may decide to forgo seeking out disconfirming data, and in doing so, maintain your belief, but only because you are not allowing yourself exposure to such data. If you did allow it, and the data were of sufficient weight, your belief would be affected. And so it is not the case that you make yourself maintain your belief just by willing that your belief remain true, you decide to act[21] in order to try to guarantee that your belief is maintained. And whether you were free in doing so is an issue of freedom in action, and beyond the scope of this paper.

I want to close the door on any libertarian argument analogous to Kane's self-forming actions,[22] or Balaguer's torn decisions[23] for voluntary control over belief formation; thus, I shall not argue for this here, but I believe these to be the most promising strategies the libertarian may employ when trying to meet the challenge of explaining how *action* can be undetermined, yet result from the total psychology of the agent, in such a way that the action can be properly said to be hers. On Kane's and Balaguer's arguments, an agent acts with indeterministic freedom if she has reasons for multiple options and no idea which set of reasons is strongest, so that she *decides* on an action without coming to a view about which option is best, so that it feels that she just chooses.

But, in the evaluation of a proposition, to have no idea which set of reasons is the strongest—those in favor, or those against—is to have no idea whether the proposition is true. No further decision is to be made: You already are compelled to have no view about the truth of the proposition.[24]

For the compatibilist, an action is free if it results from appropriate processes. A paradigm case of such voluntary action is the case of ordering from a menu, in which the appropriate process is the deliberation of what to choose. The person deliberates internally about whether to have chocolate or vanilla, and it is this deliberation that is key in ascription of free agency. As

long as nobody is putting a gun to her head, or controlling her through hypnosis, etc., when she decides to have chocolate, she orders chocolate freely. Thus, even if determinism is correct, and our desires and actions are determined, we can nonetheless be said to be free.

Up to now, we have seen that a person cannot will herself to believe a proposition, in that evidential and emotional reasons determine her belief. But if you are a compatibilist who denies that willing a belief is possible, you want some account of why a person is not free in her belief formation that goes beyond just saying that she is determined by her reasons and emotions. After all, the compatibilist may agree that a person is determined in her actions in this way, yet add that this does not rule out her acting voluntarily. So why should her being determined in her belief formation rule out her *believing* voluntarily?

Indeed, some compatibilists think that they can give an account of how a person has voluntary control over belief formation, whereas others want to distinguish between action, which is free, and belief formation, which isn't. One strategy of the compatibilist who asserts that *both* action and belief are free is to assert that action can be free despite determinism, and then draw analogies between belief and action to show that nothing pertinently differentiates them. Such a compatibilist might say that just as an action is free if it results from appropriate processes, belief formed from the right sort of causal process—say, purely from consideration of evidence--might be said to be voluntarily formed.

This is the move that Steup makes when he calls a belief voluntary if it is formed from consideration of evidence.[25] According to Steup, if jury member S believes that R is guilty from evidence alone, S freely makes a doxastic decision to believe that R is guilty.[26]

But we do not deliberate about evidence the way we deliberate about what to do. Feldman says that though it is true we

can come to believe as a result of considering evidence, it is not the case that we can *decide to believe R* is guilty. From our evidence, we *come to the conclusion* that R is guilty.[27] From our discussion above, it should be clear that S is not free to decide to believe that R is guilty, because, first and foremost, *she doesn't decide anything*.

At the beginning of this paper, I drew a contrast between, on the one hand, deciding to raise my arm and being able to raise it just by willing and, on the other, wanting to believe a proposition and not being able to believe it just by willing. Since I am usually not chained to the wall or otherwise constrained, the state of affairs in the world is such that it allows for a significant correlation between my wanting to perform an action (such as raising my arm) and my then performing it, so that we can speak of a causal relationship between my wanting to act and my acting. But there is no such correlation between my merely wanting to believe a proposition and my coming to believe it.

There is a pertinent difference between action and belief. There is generally a range of actions I can wish to perform, and then perform, without doing something more than just acting. But there are no beliefs I can wish to make mine, and then make mine, *without doing something more than just believing*. I can't just will to believe, the way I can just will to act. And so I can't make myself believe, the way I can make myself act.

In Steup's story, we don't even need to talk about whether S's decision that R is guilty is determined, but voluntary in a compatibilist sense. S certainly may decide to vote to find R guilty, but that's not to say that S believes R guilty. And if S did believe R guilty, then it is a misnomer to call S's coming to believe R guilty a decision.

In certain cases, you might want to hold a belief and then bring it about that you hold it. For example, Feldman suggests that you can, say, decide to believe you are underwater by running a bath and getting into it.[28] But it remains

that your belief here is formed because of a state of affairs that you perceive to obtain.[29] In the example, you succeed in believing you are underwater because you perceive that you are underwater, and you are readily able to do the latter because you decided to bring about a state of affairs in which you can perceive that you are underwater.

Another example is the following: You are diagnosed with some disease of the joints whose medical name you have forgotten, so you just go about calling it D. Since you have faith in the expertise of your doctor, you believe her, and so believe that you are suffering from D. Now, you could say to yourself, "I want to believe that I have the disease called X, where X is the medical term for D," and then call up your doctor (or even try to retrieve the medical term from memory) and discover that what you have is rheumatoid arthritis and so come to believe that you have rheumatoid arthritis. And, since rheumatoid arthritis is the medical term for D, you were successful in coming to believe what you wanted to believe. Indeed, one might claim that in any case where you already believe a proposition P that contains a term T whose meaning is unclear to you, you can make yourself believe a proposition P in which T has been explicated, if all you need to do is consult a readily available authority to get an explication of T.

Now, if you believe that there is a medical term for D, and you believe you have D, you may believe the proposition

(a) I have the disease called X,

where X is the medical term for D, even if you don't believe you have rheumatoid arthritis. And so, when you say you want to believe that you have the disease called X, where X is the medical term for D, you might be said to desire to believe a proposition you already believe.

But there could be a case in which you desire to believe the proposition

(b) I have the disease called X,

where X is the medical term for D. Now, you might be free to call up your doctor, or you might possess some mnemonic device that guarantees you will retrieve the medical term for D. But you don't make yourself believe what you retrieve or what your doctor tells you. You retrieve the term from memory or call up your doctor, and, having good evidence for thinking yourself or your doctor an authority, you simply believe the result of your query. So, in both this case and Feldman's counterexample, you don't make yourself believe the proposition you want to believe just by willing.

Conclusion

It appears we cannot make ourselves believe a proposition just by willing. The example of the lover and the crashed airplane failed to show anything other than that we do not always form beliefs for evidentiary reasons, but may be compelled to by emotions. So, our love for and fear about our lover might make us believe she is not on the crashed plane. But love and fear happen to us. We don't decide to love or fear. Even if we are compelled by emotions to believe a proposition which flies in the face of what we should believe given what we can observe out in the world, does not mean that we made ourselves believe said proposition.

A libertarian argument from torn decisions never gets off the ground because, in effect, no decision to believe a proposition is made. And likewise, Steup's attempt to argue for compatibilist freedom in belief formation by drawing an analogy with the compatibilist account of freedom in action fails for the same reason. Since no decision to believe a proposition is made, we can't speak of a decision to believe that was determined, yet free in the compatibilist sense. Feldman and Balaguer's examples fail to show belief is not formed because of a state of affairs that the person perceives to obtain.

There are no beliefs we can wish to make ours, and then

make ours, without doing something more than just believing. And so we can't make ourselves believe a proposition just because we want to believe it. And even if we act in order to bring about or maintain a certain belief, indirect voluntary influence over belief formation cannot guarantee that we acquire the belief we wish. This is because the desired belief will only come about if we have good reasons[30] for it, and we can no more make the reasons for a belief compelling than we can make ourselves hold a belief.

Obviously, this result is troublesome if we consider epistemic ought-statements which talk about the kind of beliefs you should have (e.g., statements such as (a) ''You ought to believe what you have rational reasons for believing''), as well as epistemic ought-statements which talk about specific beliefs you should have (e.g., statements such as (b) ''You ought to believe in God''). If such statements are statements of obligation, and if for talk of obligation to be reasonable, it must be the case that the agent be able to meet her obligation, then these obligation statements are false. But, we'd like to think (a) is true.

Notes

1. For example, someone might say I shouldn't believe God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent, and that I should convince myself of this by reading J. L. Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," *Mind* 64 (1955). If I wished to convince myself of this, my reading Mackie might be conducive to my losing my belief that God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent.
2. In other words, aside from ethical or emotional considerations.
3. And perhaps there are some specific beliefs a person should hold (for example, perhaps she should recognize formal and informal fallacies as fallacies). At any rate, crudely, just with respect to discovering the truth, we might say she should not hold false beliefs. But something needs to be said about false belief that leads to massive true belief, as well as about having a false belief for good reasons. I leave such a discussion for another time.
4. I am not so much concerned here with whether you ought to perform some action in order to increase the likelihood of your acquiring some belief you ought to have, though I will discuss performance of such action in some of the examples below.

5. I wish to avoid confusion with the phrase 'can believe'. Often people say they can believe that P, but all they mean to say is that they won't be surprised to discover that P is true.
6. The latter disjunct since if the epistemic agent believes that P, she can believe that P.
7. This argument is similar to Feldman's Voluntarism Argument in R. Feldman, "Voluntary Belief and Epistemic Evaluation," in *Knowledge, Truth, and Duty,* ed. M. Steup, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
8. *Vide* Saka, who argues against 'ought' implies 'can' in action by claiming we believe there are cases when a person should perform an action even when she doesn't perform it. P. Saka. Ought does not imply can. *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 37, 2000.
9. See Feldman.
10. *Vide* C. Ginet, "Deciding to Believe," in *Knowledge, Truth, and Duty,* ed. M. Steup, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); and W. Alston, "The deontological conception of epistemic justification," in *Philosophical Perspectives*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989).
11. Feldman.
12. I get this observation from Keith Kaiser.
13. B. Williams, "Deciding to Believe," in *Problems of the Self*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973).
14. If it is true that we cannot make ourselves believe a proposition just by willing, what do we mean when we say we want to believe a proposition? On the face of it, such desires could merely express a psychological need for a state of affairs to obtain. You want to believe your lover isn't on the plane, not because you want to believe true things, but because you want her to be alive. You want to believe that there is no mistake in your argument, because you want your theory to be right already. I leave this discussion for another time.
15. That is, the doubts are reasonable not just because you have rational reasons for them, but also because the projections they result from are not improbable.
16. *Vide* Alston, 267.
17. Both Feldman and Alston claim this.
18. Since my paper here is about whether it is psychologically possible to make yourself believe a proposition *just by willing*, it is an empirical matter whether you actually can brainwash yourself just by willing. It seems highly implausible.
19. Even if it is possible to brainwash yourself so that you believe in God, we may ask whether it makes sense to say that a person *ought to* believe in God, even if this means brainwashing herself. If you succeed in brainwashing yourself so that you believe in God, it will have to be the case that you believe in God, but have forgotten pertinent reasons why you didn't believe in God. But if we say that you ought to brainwash yourself in order to forget pertinent reasons why you didn't believe in God, and come to believe in God, we are in effect saying that you should cut yourself

off from your epistemic history of not believing in God, and reconstitute yourself as a believer. But then it seems we are not saying that *you* ought to believe in God, but *some other person* who believes in God should usurp you. This other person may have a lot in common with you, but isn't the same person as you in the same way someone who remembers the reasons why she didn't believe in God, but who now believes in God, is the same person. In the latter case, it is *her* mind which has been changed.

20. The reply is Mark Balaguer's.
21. Strictly speaking, you decide not to act, by not reading the article, but that is an action of sorts.
22. R. Kane, "New Directions for an Ancient Problem," in *Free Will, ed.* R. Kane (Blackwell, 2002).
23. M. Balaguer, "A Coherent, Naturalistic, and Plausible Formulation of Libertarian Free Will," *Nous* 38 (2004).
24. Since, absent motivation to believe one way or the other, we have no view on the matter.
25. M. Steup, "Introduction," in *Knowledge, Truth, and Duty,* ed. M. Steup, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001)
26. M. Steup, "Doxastic Voluntarism and Epistemic Deontology," *Acta Analytica* 15 (2000). And perhaps there are some specific beliefs a person should hold (for example, perhaps she should recognize formal and informal fallacies as fallacies). At any rate, crudely, just with respect to discovering the truth, we might say she should not hold false beliefs. But something needs to be said about false belief that leads to massive true belief, as well as about having a false belief for good reasons. I leave such a discussion for another time.
27. This claim is made by Feldman.
28. See Feldman, 82.
29. Ibid., 83.
30. Be they evidentiary or otherwise.

Inspired Half Way Through PHIL 300

Mark Mighnko

Is it the compilation of the narratives and/or does it come to some necessity for living?

Rubbish! All is chasing after the wind!

Show me a man who fastens his future and I will break *him*.

It is the paradox of the *is* and the *is not*(s) and the paradox of the *unity* in the dialectics or is it? The coherentists (Alcoff) blurs it altogether, but isn't that just another *word game* (Wittgenstein)?

Show me a man who can separate the *wrong* from the *right* and I will break *him* into pieces.

Ah, but he says here and there, but only because he holds my life in his hands. I shall perish and he rejoices. This is and has been, and I am the same.

Oh you wise men, the father of *cogito*, tell me, who can escape the skin they are in, and what say you the saint of Hippo?

You are the one closest to my heart, I bleed and am broken. The oppressed cries out! The innocent are murdered. You that are meek and humble, you are swallowed by your adversaries' appetite! Who will hear you Nietzche, are you not stoned, *who* is this that breaks *you* and scatters *you* into pieces?

My *beloveds* have gone. Look Nietzche, what do you think of the one that stood in the *Tiananmen Square*?

Let the one who escapes the compilation speak and I will listen.

Can Hegel Help Gloria Anzaldua Find Her *Mestiza*?

Michael Baldo

In "La conciencia de la mestiza—Towards a New Consciousness," Gloria Anzaldua discusses the evolution of a consciousness identified as *la mestiza.* Anzaldua gives credit to Jose Vasccelos for identifying *la mestiza*.[1] Vasccelos describes *la mestiza* as a single race consisting of a mixture of gene pools, a single race representing the multitude of different cultures, races and ideologies.[2] In Anzaldua's writing we see a discussion of the evolution of the consciousness of *la mestiza.* A race is comprised of individuals, individuals each inseparably linked to and identified with a specific consciousness. It is this consciousness that reflects who that individual is and how that individual thinks and acts. So, the evolution of a race is an evolution of individuals within that race, and the evolution of the consciousnesses of the individuals within that race. The evolution of *la mestiza* is the evolution of individual *mestiza* consciousnesses, with each reflecting the plurality of all the included cultures, races and ideologies. *La mestiza* appears as something completely foreign to us and something beyond our knowledge due to its lack of identification with any culture, race, or ideology that is familiar to us in the singular.

For Anzaldua, this kind of a new consciousness is necessary for the social changes required to end oppressions and provide for a just world. She states, "the struggle has always been inner, and played out in the outer terrains. Awareness of our situation must come before inner changes in society. Nothing happens in the "real" world unless it first happens in our heads."[3] Here, Anzaldua seems to reminds us that it is individuals that

initiate, influence and implement important and difficult changes, and that given the difficulties associated with such changes, the individual's motivations to act must come from within and not from some external import. It is only when one has individually resolved one's beliefs that one is empowered as required for societal changes.

It appears that this enlightened consciousness, having assimilated the plurality of humans, including the oppressor and the oppressed, the haves and have-nots, and the empowered and powerless, will not sustain a world where there are oppressors and oppressed persons, haves and have-nots, empowered and powerless. Furthermore, this consciousness, due to its enlightened status and inclusive nature, motivates the individual to remove problems of oppression from the world.[4] Having assimilated the multitude of cultures, races, and ideologies, it follows that *la mestiza* is that which is or has been the agent of oppression. It is also that which is or has been the object of oppression. Such an evolution seems to challenge oppression, for to oppress would be to oppress the self, for the self includes the oppressor and the oppressed, and therefore it is to be avoided and to be remedied. Furthermore, oppression feeds further oppression. The oppressed, shamed by their submissive existence, lose their self worth. Once this condition exists, the oppressed seeks affirmation to compensate for the shame and lack of self worth, often in the form of oppressing others. By oppressing another, in the form of any individual or group viewed as lacking or inferior in some respect deemed of consequence, the individual is provided some false sense of superiority. This sense of superiority provides a feeling of self-worth.[5] An individual that recognizes their own true self-worth inherent in their being, has no need to oppress for self-worth.

This style of an analysis is difficult for those of us trained in a more traditionally analytic style of analysis. This style of analysis seems foreign, and to a great extent, ungrounded in

any kind of formal justification with which we are familiar. Two questions appear to leap off the pages for such readers. What could this consciousness possibly look like? And how does it evolve? Even Anzaldua acknowledges that she is unsure how this consciousness actually evolves, though she acknowledges the pain involved in the evolution.[6]

As far as the first question, concerning what this consciousness could possibly look like, maybe it really isn't important to have an answer. Anzaldua and Vasccelos provide some description, as enumerated in the first paragraph of this paper wherein *la mestiza* is described as a mixture of gene pools, cultures, races and ideologies,[7] and maybe that is enough of a description. I'm thinking of viewing the path to *mestiza* consciousness the way we may view paths of discovery or a scientific expedition. The seeker may have a broad idea of what they seek, but truly not know the specifics of what is sought. These specifics, if ascertainable at all, don't appear or aren't known until what they seek is found. If the attributes enumerated by Anzaldua and Vascocelos describe, even minimally, a consciousness that frees us of some, if not all oppression, then it does not seem that our lack of knowledge of specifics should preclude us from undertaking the investigation.

If one accepts the above proposition and, of course, that the vision presented by Anzaldua is one worthy of investigation, I think it fair to focus on the second question as to how this consciousness evolves, or could evolve. It seems as if Hegel's "Phenomenology of Spirit," specifically his analysis provided in the passage entitled "Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: Lordship and Bondage," may provide some assistance. The passage describes how one's self-consciousness discovers its true nature. Anzaldua describes *la mestiza* in terms of a necessary evolution of our consciousness, on which our future, a future without the enumerated problems of our current society, depends.

> Because the future depends on the breaking down of paradigms, it depends on the straddling of two or more cultures, By creating a new mythos—that is, a change in the way we perceive reality, the way see ourselves, and the way we behave—*la mestiza* creates a new consciousness.[8]

If this evolution is truly necessary, then the result of the evolution, *la mestiza* consciousness, would seem to reflect the true nature of consciousness as demanded by our future. That which is a necessary component of an evolution would seem to reflect an essential component of that which is evolving. Therefore, the future's dependency on *la mestiza* consciousness would seem to render it essential to future consciousness and therein to reflect consciousness's true nature, as it will evolve. Once viewed as an evolving process, our current consciousness can be viewed as un-evolved, and therefore, not true, with true consciousness being the fully evolved *la mestiza.* If one accepts this analysis, then Hegel's analysis of how one discovers one's true nature can be viewed as an analysis of how it is one discovers one's *mestiza*.

Accord to Hegel, the true nature of self-consciousness is an existence "in and for itself."[9] Despite this existence "in and for itself," the process of discovery requires a second consciousness, "Self-consciousness is faced by another self-consciousness; it has come *out of itself*."[10] The appearance of this *other* self-consciousness is required to affirm and reflect the self-consciousness' true nature back upon itself.

> But according to the Notion of recognition [*of self-consciousness' true nature*] this is possible only when each is for the other what the other is for it, only when each in its own self through its own action, and again through the action of the other, achieves this pure abstraction of self-being. [11]

A complete picture of self-consciousness emerges in the two self-consciousnesses' actions and their perceptions of their own as well as the other's actions and nature. Recalling

that the *other* self-consciousness emerged from an original self-consciousness, the two are really one and the same, or part of a single consciousness. So, the *other* is of the same kind as the self-consciousness from which it came. Therefore, the two seek the same ends, their own true nature, which is one and the same.[12] A reading of Anzaldua does seem to reflect a pre-*mestiza* consciousness that is fractured and a multiplicity, while *la mestiza* is presented as a single unified consciousness. Our current pre-*mestiza* state is described as follows:

> The ambivalence from the clash of voices results in mental and emotional states of perplexity. Internal strife results in insecurity and indecisiveness. The mestiza's dual or multiple personality is plagued by psychic restlessness.[13]

La mestiza is described using the following language:

> At some point on our way to a new consciousness, we will have to leave the opposite bank, the split between the two mortal combatants somehow healed so that we are on both shores at once and, at once, see through the serpent and eagle eyes.[14]

The functioning of an *other* self-consciousness in reflecting self-consciousness' true nature seems plausible within her discussion of the evolution of *la mestiza.* If the process of becoming *la mestiza* truly involves the incorporation of a plurality of humanity and Hegel's evolution of consciousness's knowledge of its true nature truly involves an *other* consciousness, then both evolutions reflect a non-singular representation of consciousness. In addition, Hegel's asserted need for the *other* self-consciousness to fully reflect self-consciousness's true nature would seem consistent with the process I described earlier. A process wherein *la mestiza,* having incorporated the oppressor and oppressed, ceases to oppress, recognizes itself in both the oppressor and oppressed. For both authors, a singularity is unable to capture the true nature of what is at issue. It is only when another is introduced or acknowledged that the seeker is capable of true

discovery and evolution. In the following paragraphs, we shall see how the process works in detail, and specifically how the process described by Hegel reflects the *mortal combat* and *internal strife* described by Anzaldua in the above quotes.

Hegel describes a life and death struggle between the two consciousnesses. Each, seeking to affirm its own being-for-self, seeks to destroy the other; thereby, establishing its lack of dependency on anything else. In addition, each consciousness must stake its own life, in an attempt to prove that it is not attached to any existence, and affirm its pure objective being-for-self.[15] But neither can succeed in destroying the other. If either succeeded, then there would be no independent self-consciousness to affirm self-consciousness's true nature.[16] Anzaldua describes a similar struggle.

> straddling all three cultures and their value systems, *la mestiza* undergoes a struggle of flesh, a struggle of borders, an inner war…. The coming together of two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference causes *un choquo,* a cultural collision. [17]

I think it not unreasonable to consider two of Anzaldua's internalized cultural identities in accord with Hegel's two self-consciousnesses engaged in the life and death struggle. Using her Indo-Hispanic and Anglo distinctions to assist in supporting my proposal, I don't think it difficult to envision an Anglo self-consciousness oppressing, if not seeking to destroy, an Indo-Hispanic self-consciousness, for the purpose of affirming its own worth, or lack of dependency on others. Without much further difficulty, one could envision this oppressed Indo-Hispanic self-consciousness then seeking to oppress or destroy some non-Indo-Hispanic self-consciousness reflecting any one of the pluralities incorporated by *la mestiza,* an other consciousness perceived as lacking or lesser. This action is taken to affirm its self worth and independence. One could further envision either taking great risk, even staking it's own existence, in pursuit of

these ends. Interestingly, just as Hegel's self-consciousness is unable to succeed in destroying any *other* self-consciousness, it appears that Anzaldua's self-consciousnesses may too be unable to destroy other self-consciousnesses because succeeding in this destruction would leave no other to oppress or seek to destroy; thereby, denying the self-consciousness its means to affirm its worth. Hegel describes an evolution involving the interaction of two self-consciousnesses, while Anzaldua's description involves a plurality of consciousnesses. Yet, one can see how an evolution of *la mestiza* could encompass, not one, but a series of Hegelian struggles. Each struggle born in a particular oppression, with a specific oppressor and oppressed. The task of resolving the multitude of oppressions in existence being too extensive for a single resolving action, thereby demanding a series of resolutions, each specific to a specific oppression. And with each struggle comes the eventual recognition of the participants' actual unity. Each resolution brings the plurality becoming *la mestiza* a step closer to recognition of its true essence. The pre-*mestiza* consciousness then appears to be a consciousness that has yet to comprehend its worth and the worth of all of the included plurality. Such comprehension would occur once *la mestiza* is fully evolved. Until fully evolved, consciousness would continue to need some other to provide its worth, thereby precluding it from actually destroying the oppressed others needed to provide its self-worth.

Recall that both of Hegel's self-consciousnesses are really one and the same. Both are part of and actually of a single self, though neither recognizes this yet. Each is so focused on itself and in its pursuit of discovery, that the other's true nature remains masked. Under such a scheme, it appears problematic for one to kill off the other, for it would require destroying ones' self. If *la mestiza* is, as discussed previously, the fully evolved consciousness, then our current pre-*mestiza* state of consciousness is *la mestiza* undiscovered. If it is, then the plurality of *la*

mestiza self-consciousnesses exists within us, and is us, though not discovered. As a result, any attempt to destroy any single self-consciousness would be as problematic for the pre-*mestiza* as for Hegel's self-consciousnesses.

According to Hegel, self-consciousness, having staked existence in a life-and-death struggle, comes to recognize that life is essential to self-consciousness.[18] This conflicts with a notion of being-for-self, for which there would be no other essential components except for self-consciousness itself.[19] The two self-consciousnesses now come to reflect and display this conflict, with one embodying being-for-self, and the other embodying being for another. Having been unable to achieve the destruction of the other, the two now assume certain roles. One consciousness, whose nature is to exist for itself, assumes a dominant role (identified by Hegel as the "lord"), while the other, whose nature is existence for another, assumes a subordinate role (identified by Hegel as the "bondsman").[20] The lord regards that which is not it, as unlike it and as not reflecting the lord's embodiment of being-for-self, and therefore not being self-consciousness. As such, that which is other is treated as an object or as a *thing,* as opposed to a subject, as the lord perceives itself.[21] The bondsman, existing for the lord, subjugates itself to the lord, and performs the lord's work, the destruction and negation of the thing that is not the lord. This destruction is perceived as needed by the lord in order to affirm the lord's being-for-self.[22] But this thing cannot be destroyed, because it, as the perceived other, is actually self-consciousness. The plurality remains a single self-consciousness.

Anzaldua's description of conflict between internalized identities or consciousnesses seems to parallel Hegel's lord and bondsman, with Anzaldua's oppressor acting in accordance with Hegel's lord, and her oppressed acting in accord with Hegel's bondsman. She states, "A counterstance locks one into a duel of oppressor and oppressed; locked in mortal combat, like the cop

and the criminal, both are reduced to a common denominator of violence."[23] An oppressor does dominate the oppressed and demand that the oppressed act in accordance with and in support of the oppressor's dominance. Furthermore, the domination does appear to require that the oppressor deny, on some level, the inherent value of the oppressed and to treat the oppressed more as a thing. Acknowledging any inherent value in the oppressed would make rationalization and justification of oppression far more problematic. It seems more difficult to justify oppressing that with value than that without value.

The conduct of the oppressed is a bit more difficult to equate with that of bondsman. The bondsman works towards the destruction of the thing, and in doing such works towards its own destruction, for all are really one and the same. Anzaldua's oppressed are described as opposing the oppression. This is reflected in her assertion that, "commonly held beliefs of the white culture attack commonly held beliefs of the Mexican culture,… we see an attack on ourselves and our beliefs as a threat and we attempt to block with a counterstance."[24] This would not appear to reflect an attitude of submission. Yet even though the two authors' views seem inconsistent on the surface, they may well not be. It may be that though the oppressed think their actions oppose their oppression, their actions actually support the oppression and are consistent with the activities of the bondsman. Recall that *la mestiza* demands a unification, an acknowledgment and incorporation of a plurality. Opposition, blocking, and assertion against seem to be in conflict with unification. These types of activities further isolate the two in opposition, thereby further entrenching the oppression supported by the condition of opposition. The response of the oppressor to challenges reflecting force or other similar activities is further oppressive actions to counter the challenges.

In Hegel's analysis, it is the bondsman that reveals the true nature of self-consciousness.[25] The lord is precluding from

recognizing the bondman's true nature as self-consciousness because of its need to destroy that which it is not. As previously discussed, in its attempt to achieve this end, it treats all others as *things* and objects of destruction and negation. This includes the bondsman, thereby precluding any recognition of the bondsman's true nature.[26] The bondsman's is under no such misguidance and is therefore not precluded from seeing the other's true nature. Anzaldua also seems to assert that it is through the oppressed that the true *la mestiza* will be revealed in stating, "They will come to see that they [*white society*] are not helping us [*Chicanos*] but following our lead."[27] This reflects Anzaldua's belief that it is the oppressed Chicanos, not their oppressors, that will show the way to the end of their oppression.

Further, it does seem that ends to oppression should somehow be rooted in, instigated by, or derived from the work of the oppressed. The oppressor's motivation to end the oppression seems, in general, far lesser than that of the oppressed. In addition, history seems to affirm that movements to end oppressions initiate from within the oppressed, not the oppressor, group.

Recall that according to Hegel, the work of the bondsman is to destroy self-consciousness as it appears to the lord in its *thinghood*, and therefore destroy itself and its lord, for all are self-consciousness. As a result, the bondsman exists in this constant state of fear, being constantly confronted with and working towards its own and its lord's destruction.[28] Because of this, the bondsman experiences the "absolute melting-away of everything stable"[29] All that is dependent and non-essential dissipates, leaving only that which is independent and essential to survive. Having mistakenly associated its own existence with that which is melting away, the bondsman is faced with terror of non-existence, or so it thinks. Only when the bondsman is truly willing to release itself from those false perceptions of what is essential, does it discover what is truly essential. Existing and surviving in this constant state of terror allows the bondsman to

come to terms with the terror. Eventually the bondsman learns to act in defiance of the fear, as required for it to risk existence for the ultimate reward of knowing its own true nature.[30]

Compare the above description with the description given by Anzaldua of the discovery of *la mestiza*.

> She can be jarred out of ambivalence by an intense, and often painful, emotional event which inverts or resolves the ambivalence. I'm not sure how. The work takes place underground—subconsciously. It is work that the soul performs… is where phenomena tend to collide. It is where the possibility of uniting all that is separate occurs… the self has added a third element, which is greater than the sum of the severed parts. That third element is a new consciousness. [31]

Could the "intense, and often painful, emotional event" described by Anzaldua be the fear described by Hegel? It does seems plausible. If so, then it could well be that the hidden underground work she notes, without describing or claiming to know its workings, is the work or process described by Hegel (the bondsman's confrontation of fear). It is the oppressed, not the oppressor, that is constantly confronted with its own destruction and its own perception of lack of worth. It is the oppressed that must look beyond their existence, an existence of imposed and constructed servitude, in order to see what is true and essential beyond the constructed servitude. What is constructed is, by definition, not essential, and cannot be the true self.

But, according to Hegel, fear is not enough to reveal self-consciousness' true nature.[32] The lord's activities arise from desire, a desire to affirm consciousness' true essential nature. Desire is by its nature subjective and impermanent. In contrast, what is essential is that which is objective and permanent. Work represents the suppression of desire. Its goal is to create and form that which is permanent and independent. Work requires suppressing desires in order to achieve some greater ends. It is

the bondsman performing this work. The bondsman, through work, has access to that which is permanent and independent. In addition, the subject of its work is self-consciousness. Only the bondsman can come to know the true nature of self-consciousness, for only the bondsman is (i) working in the realm of that which is permanent and essential, and (ii) working directly with the subject of self-consciousness. In its work, the bondsman recognizes the objectiveness, permanence and independence of the work, and sees this as a reflection of the bondsman's own objectiveness, permanence, and independence. This refection reveals the bondsman's own true and essential nature of being in-and-for itself.[33]

If one accepts my proposition that Anzaldua's oppressed may well be viewed as Hegel's bondsman, then Hegel's description of how the bondsman discovers self-consciousness' true nature tells the story of how the oppressed, though their work, discover the true nature of their self-consciousness, namely *la mestiza.* It is the oppressed working. It is the oppressed that must examine their notion of self, in order to resolve or find answers for their current condition. It is the oppressed that access that which is objective and permanent through work. It is the oppressed suppressing desire. It is the oppressed that are in a position to recognize the true or inevitably evolving self-consciousness of *la mestiza.*

In Hegel, during the revelation of self-consciousness' true nature, we see a need for a plurality of self-consciousnesses, all in constant interplay and movement within a singularity. I think Anzaldua's description of *la mestiza* and its evolution, to the extent it is described in the writing, is consistent with Hegel's description of the truly recognized self-consciousness, which I have described as a singularity and an interplay between a plurality. According to Anzaldua, *la mestiza* has "discovered she can't hold ideas in rigid boundaries."[34] Hegel's self-consciousness holds no rigid boundaries, it reflects the constant and

evolving interplay between self-consciousnesses. *La mestiza,* in being the whole of the plurality it encompasses, would also seem to reflect a constant and evolving interplay amongst the pluralities. Yet, both author's self-consciousnesses also appear to be a singularity. Both *la mestiza* and Hegel's self-consciousness are described as that which is at the same time encompassing more than a singularity, but at the same time existing as a singularity, with neither the singularity nor the plurality alone reflecting one's true nature.

To assert that a Hegelian analysis of Anzaldua's writing resolves all issues and difficulties with it, is a great oversimplification. Not only would such an assertion ignore difficulties with Anzaldua, but it also would ignore difficulties presented by Hegel's theories. But I do think Hegel does provide some insight into Anzaldua's process and theory, and such insight may provide for a more informed critical analysis of Anzaldua. Similar language, the dualities and multiplicities reflecting a singularity discussed by both, and the vision of a more fully evolved consciousness and improved existence common to both does seem to invite the comparison. But how would Anzaldua respond to such an analysis? Her words seem to encourage it:

> *La mestiza* constantly has to shift out of habitual formations; from convergent thinking, analytical reasoning that tends to use rationality to move toward a single goal (a Western mode), to divergent thinking, characterized by movement away from set patterns and goals and toward a more whole perspective, on that includes rather than excludes.[35]

Anzaldua's own words warn us against an analytic analysis. An analysis using the writing of Hegel is, if nothing else, an analysis that challenges the analytic traditional.

Notes

1. Gloria Anzaldua, "La Conciencia de la Mestiza—Towards a New Consciousness," In *Theorizing Feminisms—a Reader*, ed. Elizabeth Hacket and Sally Haslanger, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. 422.
2. Anzaldua, 422.
3. Anzaldua, 427.
4. Anzaldua, 423-424.
5. Anzaldua, 425.
6. Anzaldua, 423.
7. Anzaldua, 422-423.
8. Anzaldua, 423-424.
9. Hegel, G.W.F. 1977. *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Trans. A.V. Miller, Oxford: Oxford University Press. Section 178.
10. Hegel, 179.
11. Hegel, 186.
12. *Ibid.*
13. Anzaldua, 422.
14. Anzaldua, 423.
15. Hegel, 187-188.
16. Hegel, 188.
17. Anzaldua, 423.
18. Hegel, 189.
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.*
21. Hegel, 188-189.
22. Hegel, 190.
23. Anzaldua, 423.
24. *Ibid.*
25. Hegel, 192-194.
26. Hegel, 192.
27. Anzaldua, 427.
28. Hegel, 194.
29. *Ibid.*
30. *Ibid.*
31. Anzaldua, 423.
32. Hegel, 195.
33. *Ibid.*
34. Anzaldua, 423.
35. *Ibid.*

"Woman with Leaves" *etching by Maricruz Huerta-Edinger*

Human Nature and Moral Agency in The *Mencius*

Eugene Park

I am interested in this essay to determine whether or not we can locate in the *Mencius* a coherent notion of moral agency, which, as I understand it, should include accounts of moral responsibility, justification, and reasoning/deliberation. This project will require an analysis of Mencius' beliefs about human nature. In contemporary Western scholarship, there are two opposing analyses that I wish to highlight in particular for this purpose. On the one hand, there is the "active cultivation" reading of Mencius, some form of which is held by Ivanhoe, Wong, and Van Norden, among others. According to this reading, Mencius believes that a person must work towards becoming a good moral agent; that is, no one is just born with the necessary tools for right action and right moral judgment. Alternatively, Manyul Im has argued for something like a "natural development" interpretation of human nature in Mencius. According to this reading, Mencius thinks that human beings are innately endowed with the basic capacities for becoming a good moral agent. That is, all humans have within them the full potential for proper moral action and judgment, and they will achieve their potential so long as the right conditions exist.

Each of these readings has its merits. I will not, however, argue in this paper for one reading over the other. Rather, it is my primary aim to assess whether there is even a coherent notion of moral agency to be discovered in the *Mencius*. To this end, I will refer often in my discussion to a famous passage from 1A:7 in which Mencius finds fault with King Xuan of Qi for neglecting the suffering of his people. As we will see, no matter

how we choose to read Mencius' views on human nature, it will not be an easy task to fully explain why King Xuan fails to act compassionately towards his people. Of course, as some might argue, this difficulty could just turn out to be the result of certain irresolvable defects in Mencius' moral philosophy. I propose, however, that our interpretive difficulties actually have more to do with our own conceptual shortcomings in approaching this ancient text. Specifically, I believe that we are in error to attribute to Mencius the commonly accepted idea that a person is morally responsible and blamable for what he does if and only if his action results from some kind of informed choice. I believe that this idea does not map so nicely onto the moral landscape of the *Mencius*. If this is the case, then maybe we are simply asking the wrong questions of Mencius when we try to make sense of moral agency in his teachings. I attempt in this paper to discover what the right questions might be.

Two Opposing Interpretations: Active Cultivation and Natural Development

In this first section, I will briefly outline the distinguishing characteristics of both the active cultivation reading and the natural development reading of Mencius. These two interpretations provide starkly different understandings of Mencius' views about human nature. Most notably, each of these readings will make different sense out of the "four beginnings" that Mencius attributes to all human beings. These "four beginnings" are:

(1) compassion
(2) shame/aversion
(3) modesty/compliance
(4) a sense of right and wrong[1]

According to Mencius, all humans possess these "four beginnings" innately, and they possess them to an equal degree. In other words, Mencius does not allow for the possibility that some people are just "born bad", so to speak, or that others are

naturally endowed with a super-moral sensibility. We are left to consider, then, what is to account for the wide difference in moral behavior from one person to another, or even within the same person over time. Mencius is not entirely clear on this point, and, not surprisingly, interpreters are in some considerable disagreement over what to make of Mencius' story about human nature.

According to the active cultivation interpretation, Mencius believes that the necessary attitudes, skills, etc. for proper action and proper moral judgments must be cultivated within the moral agent. That is, a person can move closer to becoming a good moral agent only through training, learning, habituation, and/or practice. This reading of Mencius, it should be noted, has long held sway among Western interpreters. As evidence for their analysis, these interpreters typically have pointed to the vegetative imagery found in the *Mencius*, suggesting that the allegorical significance of such imagery lies in the fact that agricultural plants must be properly cultivated in order to flourish. With humans, then, the "four beginnings," or "four sprouts," must be actively improved or built upon in order for correct moral knowledge, judgment, and action to arise. Wong argues, for instance, that in 1A:7, Mencius makes an absolute claim that "appropriate education" is necessary for the cultivation of virtue.[2] In fact, without this essential education, the uncultivated sprouts of human nature will leave a person incomplete, somehow inept and deficient in his/her moral construction:

Having the sprout of compassion that can develop into the virtue of *ren* (human-heartedness, humanity, benevolence) involves feeling compassion in some situations but not in many others in which one ought to feel it.[3]

It appears, then, that the active cultivation analysis of Mencius attributes to him the view that human nature is essentially good, albeit hopelessly flawed and unrefined without some additional help.

The natural development view, by contrast, holds that human nature already contains within it everything that it needs in order to achieve correct moral knowledge, judgment, and action. Importantly, this view should not be confused with the view that human nature is innately perfect in its moral constitution, so that there is no need for growth or improvement. Rather, the natural development analysis attributes to Mencius the view that humans are endowed, by virtue of their very human nature, with the *capacities* for right moral attitudes, judgments, actions, etc. As a general point, capacities, as such, do not entail the exercise of those capacities, nor do they entail the proper exercise of those capacities. Surely, I can have the capacity for laughing, say, without laughing all the time. Indeed, it is even feasible that I could have the capacity for laughing without ever having a single occasion to laugh. The right sort of conditions must exist in order for my natural capacity for laughing to produce laughter. It is also feasible that I could be bad at laughing, choosing the wrong times to laugh (e.g. upon learning of my friend's death), and refraining from laughing when I should probably laugh (e.g. when a nervous party host tells a mediocre joke in an attempt to break the ice). The right sort of conditions must have existed in order for my natural capacity for laughter to develop in a socially acceptable and approvable way. Likewise, according to the natural development model, the right conditions must exist in order for proper moral development to occur. These conditions do nothing to develop the capacities for morality, *per se*, but they do allow for the naturally occurring capacities to blossom, as it were. In that case, the "four beginnings" are not a complete set of tools, judgments, attitudes, etc. that will meet the full demands of a proper moral life. But they are roots common to all human beings, and, as such, they are the beginnings of "humaneness (*ren*)", "rightness (*yi*)", "propriety", and "wisdom".[4]

King Xuan's Failure

I would like now to turn to the well-known chapter of the *Mencius*, 1A:7, in which the great sage criticizes King Xuan of Qi for failing to show proper compassion for the suffering people of his kingdom. My primary concern here is to demonstrate that any reading of Mencius' views on human nature will find this section problematic. Specifically, it is not clear from the text how and why Mencius finds the king blameworthy for his inaction. To highlight this ambiguity, I will quickly sketch out the kinds of questions that will arise under the active cultivation reading and the natural development reading, respectively. In the following two sections, I will give a more detailed analysis of how each reading might try to explain the failure of King Xuan and his ensuing moral culpability.

Very briefly, the story of King Xuan of Qi is as follows. Mencius consults with King Xuan about the latter's ability to rule and care for his subjects. The king doubts his own abilities in this regard, whereas Mencius is convinced that the king is able to the task. Mencius has heard that King Xuan, out of compassion, once spared an ox that was to be sacrificed. This he takes as strong evidence that the king is indeed fully able to care properly for his subjects. In other words, because the king has displayed compassion for the ox, it must be true that he is also capable of feeling compassion for the people of his kingdom. Mencius states explicitly, then, that the king's failure is due to a lack of action, not a lack of ability:

> That the people are not protected is because one does not exercise kindness toward them. Therefore, that the king is not kingly is because he does not do it; it is not because he is unable to do it.[5]

Some immediately obvious questions arise given Mencius' claims here. First, why is it that the king does not show compassion for his people if he is fully able to do so? In other words, is

it really just a matter of choice that the king does not care for his subjects properly? And if so, why does he choose to neglect his subjects? Second, by virtue of what is the king himself morally responsible for failing to show compassion for his people?

We will understand these issues in different but very similar ways, depending on which of the two models of human nature we take to be true for Mencius. Under the active cultivation model, as we said, human nature is not perfectly good, nor is it fully endowed at birth with all the capacities for moral goodness. Even so, Mencius seems quite convinced that the king is fully able to act compassionately towards his people, and this implies that Mencius must also believe that the king has achieved the proper cultivation. This gives rise to the following question: If the king is morally cultivated and fully capable of acting compassionately towards his people, why doesn't he? What would cause someone of fully developed moral virtue to choose a worse course of action over a better course of action?

Alternatively, if it does turn out that the king has not had the proper moral cultivation, then how can we so assuredly hold him responsible for his failure to show compassion for his people? It may not be (entirely) the king's fault, after all, that he acts in the way he does. Indeed, active cultivation requires the exertion of internal will *as well as* some degree of external influence, perhaps even a great deal of external influence, in order for proper moral cultivation to occur. It is possible, then, that the king's failure to act is not entirely the result of his own informed choices. If this is so, then it is not immediately clear why and how the king is blameworthy—i.e. morally responsible—for not caring properly for his subjects. One might even go so far as to construe the king as a victim of circumstance, unable to act any better because he has been deprived of good teachers and advisors.

Under the natural development model, the questions surrounding King Xuan's failure are similar to those above, but

based, of course, on a very different set of assumptions. The natural development analysis of human nature, we recall, claims that all human beings are endowed with the essential elements required for proper moral development. Barring any negative or destructive influences, this natural endowment will come into its own as a matter of due course. If this is the case, then the King Xuan story puzzles us because there is no immediately obvious reason that the king should choose not to help his people. That is, assuming he is fully able to feel compassion for his people and to act accordingly, there seems to be no compelling reason why he chooses not to do so.

If, on the other hand, the king makes the choice not to help his people because he is morally undeveloped—i.e. he doesn't know any better—and the fact that he makes this kind of poor choice is in turn due to some factors outside of the king's control (e.g. a bad education, negligent parents, wayward society, etc.), then how and to what degree are we justified in holding him responsible? In other words, it may be the case that it is simply not the king's fault (or not entirely his fault) that he does not feel compassion for his subjects. If this is true, then Mencius will not be justified in assigning blame to King Xuan. But, clearly, Mencius *does* hold the king responsible for the people's suffering, and, just as clearly, Mencius does blame him for not acting with compassion to remedy the situation.

As it turns out, either reading of Mencius' views on human nature will lead us to some puzzling considerations about King Xuan. First, is the king is blameworthy at all? Secondly, if he is blameworthy, to what extent is he blameworthy? I will, in the next two sections, try to articulate in some detail how I think these issues will play out under each of the two different models. Surprisingly, both readings lead to the same exact kinds of interpretive questions. That is, it will not matter for our purposes whether we adopt the natural development reading or the active cultivation reading of human nature—in either case, we will be

faced with nearly identical questions about King Xuan's agency, culpability, and moral responsibility.

Moral Agency under the Active Cultivation Model

If active cultivation is truly the model of human nature that Mencius had in mind, then problems of moral agency will parse out in a more or less straightforward manner. Specifically, in order to assess blame and moral responsibility to someone like King Xuan, there are two general kinds of badly acting moral agents that the active cultivation model will have to consider and explain: (1) the morally undeveloped person who acts badly; and (2) the morally developed person who acts badly.[6] There are, as I can see it, four paradigmatic cases of the morally undeveloped person acting badly, and three paradigmatic cases of the morally developed person acting badly. These seven cases are certainly not meant to be exhaustive, but I believe they will cover the necessary bases for the purposes of this discussion. They are as follows:

(1) **The Morally Undeveloped Person**[7]

- (a) A person is morally undeveloped, but this is entirely due to the negative influence of factors that were out of his control.
- (b) A person is morally undeveloped, and this is entirely due to the negative influence of factors that were within his control.
- (c) A person is morally undeveloped, and this is because the negative influence of factors out of his control overpowered any positive influence from the factors within his control.
- (d) A person is morally undeveloped, and this is because the negative influence of those factors within his control overpowered any positive force from those factors outside of his control.

(2) **The Morally Developed Person**

(a) A person is fully morally developed, but in the present situation, he chooses for some reason not to act in the morally correct way.

(b) A person is fully morally developed, but in the present situation, certain negative conditions that were entirely/mostly foreseeable and avoidable prevent him from acting in the morally correct way.

(c) A person is fully morally developed, but in the present situation, certain negative conditions that were entirely/largely unforeseeable and unavoidable prevent him from acting in the morally correct way.

Let me try now to give a quick assessment of these seven cases under the active cultivation reading of Mencius.

The seven types of badly acting moral agents under consideration fall into two distinct, broad categories: (i) the morally undeveloped person who acts badly; and (ii) the morally developed person who acts badly. Persons who are of type (1a) and (1c) are entirely blameless, it seems, as there was nothing they could have done to prevent their current lack of moral cultivation. By contrast, persons who are of type (1b) and (1d) *might be* blameworthy—whether or not they are, however, will depend on an analysis of exactly why they failed in the past to overcome negative influences on the development of their character, even though it was within their power to do so. Likewise, a person of type (2a) and (2b) *might be* blamable, but we need to first understand exactly why he chooses now to act badly against his better judgment. Finally, persons of type (2c) are not blamable at all, since they are the victims of circumstance, if you will, and could have done nothing to prevent their bad action in a given situation.

It should be apparent now that there is another way to characterize the different kinds of badly acting moral agents. There

are those who, through some bad "moral luck," are not blamable at all (1a, 1c, and 2c), and there are those who, through some apparent weakness of will, have made poor choices and may therefore be blamable to some degree or not (1b, 1d, 2a, 2b). With King Xuan, then, we should focus our attentions solely on those cases of weakness of will, since it is only in those cases that Mencius will be justified in blaming the king. The cases of overwhelming bad moral luck, as it turns out, have little relevance to our discussion, because in those cases Mencius would not in fact hold the king responsible for the suffering of his people. It is crucial, then, that we understand the nuances of the different instances of weakness of will in order to determine how, why, and to what extent someone like King Xuan is blamable. I will take up this issue of weakness of will more fully in section five. But first, I turn now to an analysis of moral agency and bad action under the natural development model. Surprisingly, we will discover here the very same dichotomy, with cases of bad moral luck on the one hand, and cases of weakness of will on the other.

Moral Agency under the Natural Development Model

In his analysis of Mencian agency, Manyul Im makes a useful distinction between what he calls *insufficient development* and *improper choice*.[8] Mencius criticizes a person for insufficient development when that person is categorically unable to have the morally correct feelings and act in the morally correct ways. By contrast, Mencius criticizes a person for improper choice when that person is able to feel and act in the morally appropriate ways, but for whatever reason, he does not. Borrowing (somewhat loosely) from Im's talk of insufficient development and improper choice, I will attempt to show now that an analysis of the badly acting moral agent under the natural development model closely parallels the analysis of the badly acting moral agent under the active cultivation model.

Certainly, someone who acts and feels wrongly due to insufficient development may be entirely faultless. A child, for instance, might grow up among savages, and, as a result, his "four sprouts" may never develop in a morally admirable way. It is not likely that Mencius will hold this kind of person morally responsible for his lack of moral development. This parallels case (1a) of the morally undeveloped person under the active cultivation model.

However, it is also possible that a morally undeveloped person is in some sense the very cause of his own lack of moral development—i.e. by his own volition (or lack thereof) he has caused (or allowed) himself to develop into a poor moral agent. As Manyul Im has aptly put it, this person causes "self-interference" to his own moral development.[9] This kind of person, it seems, may be blamable in some way for his current bad action(s) and improper moral feelings. The question remains, however, why this person opted to do things that disrupted his natural moral development, while other people, under the same circumstances, do not. In other words, what explains the morally undeveloped person's weakness of will? This case parallels case (1b) of the morally undeveloped person under the active cultivation model.

As should now be obvious, there will also be parallels in the natural development model to cases (1c) and (1d) under the active cultivation model. On the one hand, we will find the person who has had some considerable disadvantages in life, so much so that he is unable to develop in a natural and proper way. He is more or less blameless, since there was nothing in his power that he could have done to avoid his own lack of moral development. On the other hand, we will find the kind of person who has had some disadvantages in life, but not so many that he could not have overcome them; nonetheless, he uses these disadvantages as an excuse, and fails to develop morally because he chooses not to properly exert his "inner control,"[10] as it were, to

nurture his four sprouts into their full moral potential.

The cases of improper choice in the natural development model map nicely onto the cases of full moral development in the active cultivation model. Mencius criticizes King Xuan, we recall, not because the king is unable to act with compassion towards his people, but because he is fully capable but still doesn't do it. Why does the king opt to do the wrong thing? We cannot appeal to a lack of moral refinement, because the king, Mencius assumes, is fully capable of feeling and acting in the morally appropriate ways. How, then, can we account for his weakness of will? This case parallels case (2a) of the fully morally developed person in the active cultivation model. Cases (2b) and (2c) in the active cultivation model will also play out similarly in the natural cultivation model. On the one hand, we cannot hold the king responsible if the present conditions prevent him from treating his people compassionately, and he did not knowingly and intentionally create these barriers to his acting/feeling properly (e.g. his advisors are bad, and they tell him that the people are in fact flourishing, or they hide from him the extent to which the people are actually suffering). On the other hand, we *will* find the king responsible if he knowingly and intentionally created barriers to his feeling compassion for his people (e.g. he knowingly chooses to build grand palaces and gardens that isolate him from his people and their suffering).

In this fourth section, I hope I have demonstrated that the analysis of badly acting moral agents under the active cultivation model closely (but not exactly) matches an analysis of badly acting moral agents under the natural development model. Stronger, I hope to have shown that *it does not matter* which of the two readings of human nature we choose—in either case we run into one of two issues. Either it will turn out that we cannot blame the king at all for his failure to act—i.e. in cases of insurmountable bad moral luck. Or, it will turn out that he *might* be blamable, and the extent to which he will or will not be blamable

will in turn depend upon an adequate account of his weakness of will. King Xuan, if we take Mencius at his word, is blamable. So let us disregard those cases of bad moral luck as possibly applying to the king and consider in more detail the relevant cases: the cases of weakness of will.

Weakness of Will

I have used the phrase "weakness of will" loosely in this paper. It should be clear, however, that this phrase actually covers a wide range of cases. I will now try to refine my usage of the phrase "weakness of will" by reviewing the relevant scenarios in which I believe it occurs.

First, there is weakness of will as it applies to a present moral choice. This occurs when someone has the proper moral development and all the proper moral abilities, yet, for some reason, he chooses now to act against his better judgment. Take, for instance, the loving and loyal husband who suddenly and inexplicably hits his wife one day. There is, as I am conceiving the scenario, nothing about the situation that overwhelms the man's ability to act properly. He knows perfectly well not to hit his wife. If you asked him if he should hit his wife, even just before he does it, he would say no. All that can be said is that the man chose, with full knowledge and intention, to do a morally bad act in spite of his better judgment. His will, as it were, was weak in the moment and failed to stop whatever impulse drove him to hit his wife.

Secondly, and more subtly, there is the case of weakness of will that occurs when a fully and properly developed moral agent chooses, willingly and knowingly, to place himself in a situation that will lead him to act and feel in morally inappropriate ways. Take, for instance, the upstanding citizen who randomly decides one evening to go on a wild drinking and driving spree. Inevitably, he crashes his car, causing significant injury to himself and others. This man "sets himself up," as it were, by placing himself

in a situation and in a state of mind that he knows full well will jeopardize his ability to act and/or feel in appropriate ways. In a sense he exhibits a weakness of will because his will failed to guide him towards proper action and steer him away from misconduct.

Thirdly, there is the case of weakness of will that occurs when a person has, as a result of his own poor choices in the past, developed into a morally unrefined person. This person's bad moral path, if you will, results in his inability to make proper moral choices at present. Take, as an example, the young boy who has all the advantages of education, loving parents, popularity in school, etc. But eventually, let's imagine, he drops out of school and falls in with the "wrong crowd". This degenerate group furthers his moral decline, and he ends up leading a life of petty crime and unsteady, tumultuous relationships. For some reason, the boy has decided at almost every turn to do what is wrong and not conducive to his proper moral development, even though he *knows* better.[11] But why does such a person make choices that prevent his own moral development? What weakness in his will, as it were, can explain the boy's deliberately poor choices?

Thus we have these three distinct cases in which a badly acting moral agent *could be* blamable. But which case best describes the case of King Xuan? Given the limited details of 1A:7, it is not entirely certain that we can answer this question. We might be tempted, at the very least, to discount the third case because Mencius clearly believes that the king is morally fully able, and fully so. However, we must acknowledge the alternative reading of this story that claims the king is not in fact morally developed, and that Mencius only *says* so in order to prod the king into doing the right thing. Certainly, this is a possibility, however remote. Nevertheless let us put aside this debate about whether the king really is or is not morally able for now. For our immediate purposes, it matters little how we settle this

debate. Moreover, determining which of the three types of weakness of will the king exhibits is also immaterial. The common thread that runs through all three cases is that the badly acting agent chooses, at some point or another, to do what is wrong even though he knows and is fully able to do what is right. So what is important, then, is that King Xuan will be blamable to the extent that he is personally accountable for his choosing badly—i.e. for his own weakness of will.

The relevant passage to this topic occurs in the *Mencius*, 6A:15. Here, Mencius deals directly with the question of why some people become "great persons" while others end up as "small persons". He states:

> The faculties of seeing and hearing do not think and are obscured by things. When one thing comes into contact with another, they are led away. The faculty of the mind is to think. By thinking, one gets it; by not thinking, one fails to get it. This is what Heaven has given to us. When we first establish the greater part of ourselves, then the smaller part is unable to steal it away. It is simply this that makes a great person.[12]

Our interpretive problem, then, is: Why would anyone willingly choose to establish the "smaller part" of himself over the "greater part" of himself? Equally, why do some people "think" while other fail to "think"?[13] Manyul Im and others believe that this problem reveals an inherent paradox within Mencian philosophy that is irresolvable. We cannot, after all, appeal to the guidance of the heart-mind to explain why a person chooses greatness over smallness, for the guidance of the heart-mind *just is* what he chooses when he chooses greatness. What, then, justifies our praise and blame if we cannot explain a person's choosing greatness over smallness, or vice versa? To state the problem in another way: It cannot be that a person chooses to be virtuous because of some antecedent virtue; so what then prompts a person to choose to be virtuous?

Solution

I would like now to attempt a solution to the problem of weakness of will in the *Mencius*. In the last section, I effectively collapsed the different types of weakness of will into one overriding problem: what prompts a bad person to choose "smallness" over "greatness" and a good person to choose "greatness" over "smallness?" To address this question (as mentioned at the outset of this paper), I want now to bring into question our commonly held notion that a person is morally responsible and blamable for what he does if and only if his action results from some kind of informed choice or process of choosing. The very notion of weakness of will suggests that a person has available to him a range of choices, some morally good and some morally bad, and he chooses with intention to take the bad course when he *knows* he could have taken the good course. Or, better yet, he fails to exert the sufficient will to do the right thing, and this weakness of will allows his base desiresto lead him to do the wrong thing.

So what does Mencius have to say about all this? Not much, it seems to me, because he does not analyze morality with this kind of strong emphasis on choice. Perhaps, in 6A:15, what is actually praiseworthy when someone establishes the "greater part" of himself is the fact that, in the very act of becoming great, the agent has allowed his "four sprouts" to take their natural course and develop into moral virtue. And, likewise, what is blameworthy when a person establishes the "smaller part" of himself is the fact that he has acted in such a way as to disrupt the natural course of moral development. There is, in other words, an antecedent *tendency* for moral development to occur in a certain way, just as there is an underlying tendency for a flowerto grow in a certain way. Or, to look at it another way, there is a certain natural form that just is the normative standard for proper human moral development, just as there is a certain form

that sets the standard for proper flower development. When we allow a flower to blossom naturally, we approve of it and call it beautiful, a sparkling example of the greatness of Mother Nature. When we cause a flower to die, wither, or grow in a deformed manner, we frown upon it and call it ugly, a bastardization of Mother Nature's plan. I suggest, then, that in Mencius, there is a similar teleological conception of human moral development. Consider the following passage:

> The goodness of human nature is like the downward course of water. There is no human being lacking in the tendency to do good, just as there is no water lacking in the tendency to flow downward.[14]

The flow of water in this analogy can be disrupted, of course. But this does not change the overall downward tendency of water.

Do we see an analogous tendency towards goodness in the case of King Xuan? Certainly. Recall that he feels compassion for an ox, but, through some kind of disruption, does not feel compassion for his subjects. On the analysis that the king is not yet morally able, we will say that the king is morally *capable* in the sense that he possesses the "four sprouts"—i.e. potential—and that his natural human tendency is for these sprouts to develop into virtue and virtuous action. But through some disruption, he has not yet developed the proper abilities to feel compassion for his people. On the other analysis (which claims that the king is morally able), we will say that some aspect of the current situation, either something within him or without, disrupts his natural tendency to feel compassion. Once this barrier is removed, the "water will flow downward," so to speak, and he will naturally act and feel in the appropriate ways.

My proposal, then, is that we abandon the idea that Mencius' criticisms of King Xuan are moral judgments based on the king's failure to make the right choices; instead we should

treat Mencius' criticisms of the king as moral assessments that are grounded in the expression of brute facts. That is to say, let us appreciate in Mencius a kind of *evaluative morality*, as opposed to the kind of *prescriptive morality* that is typical of religion and much of modern philosophy. Evaluative morality, as I am defining it, derives from factual statements about the world, whereas prescriptive morality derives from morally-loaded "ought" and "should" statements. G.E.M. Anscombe's treatment of Aristotle's ethics might serve as a model for the kind of conceptual shift I am suggesting here. In "Modern Moral Philosophy", Anscombe harkens a return to virtue-based ethics, such as that of Aristotle, and she advises us that concepts of "*moral* obligation and *moral* duty… and of what is *morally* right and wrong, and of the moral sense of 'ought', ought to be jettisoned."[15] More specifically, she shows us in Aristotle that it is certainly possible to conceive of morality without assuming the primacy of such concepts as "obligation", "blame", and "moral goodness". I will not, like Anscombe, argue that one way of conceiving morality is better than the other. Nor do I wish to make any recommendations here about how we should approach ethics in the contemporary sphere. My point is only this: just as we cannot understand Aristotle's ethics in terms of certain modern conceptions of morality, we are mistaken to approach Mencius with any preconceived notions about the role of informed choice in morality.

So, if we find ourselves unable to properly explain King Xuan's failure to act, because his failure to act looks to be the result of some sort of inexplicable weakness of will, we have verily stumped ourselves by interpreting this as a problem of weakness of will in the first place. I believe that Anscombe's teacher, Ludwig Wittgenstein, may have something to say that can help us to understand the root of our mistake. In his "Lecture on Ethics", Wittgenstein makes a distinction between *trivial* or *relative* value statements, on the one hand, and *ethical* or *absolute* value statements, on the other.

> Supposing that I could play tennis and one of you saw me playing and said "Well, you play pretty badly" and supposed I answered "I know, I'm playing badly but I don't want to play any better," all the other man could say would be "Ah then that's all right." But suppose I had told one of you a preposterous lie and he came up to me and said "You're behaving like a beast" and then I were to say "I know I behave badly, but then I don't want to behave any better," could he then say "Ah then that's all right"? Certainly not; he would say "Well, you ought to want to behave better." Here you have an absolute judgment of value, whereas the first instance was one of relative judgment. The essence of the difference is obviously this: Every judgment of relative value is a mere statement of fact, and can therefore be put into a form that loses all appearance of a value judgment."[16]

Therefore I argue that the statements of moral judgment that Mencius makes of King Xuan are in fact relative statements of value in the way that Wittgenstein describes here.[17] In order to understand what I mean, let us consider Wittgenstein's playing tennis badly. In what sense is he playing tennis badly bad? For one thing, there exists a set of facts—a normative standard, if you will—that defines a good tennis player. And these facts are the facts against which we will compare Wittgenstein's tennis playing in order to make a judgment of his abilities as a tennis player. As it turns out, he fails to meet these standards in a spectacular way. Moreover, if Wittgenstein is on our tennis team, and we proceed to lose the state championship, say, because he failed to win a single match, then we can justifiably *blame* Wittgenstein for our loss. Indeed, we might even be able to blame Wittgenstein himself for being so bad at tennis. (Say, for instance, that he never practices, or that he refuses to get his bad eyesight checked out.) Importantly, then, notions of blame and responsibility do not go out the window simply because we are no longer dealing with absolute statements of value. That is, we can talk on the level of relative values, and still preserve assessments of good

and bad, as well as notions of blame, personal responsibility, and even choice.

Let's return now to King Xuan and Mencius. If the preceding analysis of relative and absolute value statements is correct, then the king is "bad" in the sense that, *qua* king, he simply doesn't do what is right—there is a certain way that a king is supposed to act, which is entailed by the mere fact of a person's being a king. Moreover, King Xuan is blamable for the people's suffering quite simply because they suffer as a direct result of his failure to act. So there is a sense of "ought" in the story of King Xuan, too. The king ought to act properly and treat his people with compassion. But this is not the "moral ought" that Anscombe has jettisoned. There simply is no argument from Mencius that allowing people to suffer is sinful or unjust in any kind of absolute moral sense. We find in Mencius no objective moral judge, so to speak, or some god or ideal moral observer, whose viewpoint establishes moral normativity. Rather, an immoral act is wrong because it is an aberration of what is natural. For instance, the king's failure to help his people is, at its core, to "entrap the people" by allowing them to fall into depravity and crime.[18] That is, the king's failure is wrong because of the *unnatural* disorder and chaos it will produce. That Mencius does not place a high emphasis on absolute moral truths is even more evident in the closing lines of 1A:7; he says to King Xuan, "Attend carefully [to your subjects]… and gray-haired people will not be seen carrying burdens on the road."[19] Thus, Mencius' recommendation is that the king must rule rightly because, if he does not, unfavorable conditions will arise and as a result people will act in ways inappropriate and unnatural to their persons.

If my analysis holds together, then Mencius' admonitions to King Xuan really go something like this: In order to achieve X, you ought to do Y. And you ought to achieve X because, insofar as you are a Z, achieving X constitutes a "good" Z—i.e. a

natural Z.

King Xuan's misbehavior as a king, then, is something akin to climbing a tree in order to find fish.[20] This is simply the wrong way of going about doing the thing that it is you are trying to do.

Conclusion

So what does all of this do for our reading of Mencius? First and foremost, it removes the burden of answering questions regarding weakness of will. It does not matter so much, after all, *why* the king chooses to act badly—even though he is fully able to act and feel in the appropriate ways. What really matters is simply *that he did* act badly. Or, if it turns out that the king is actually not morally cultivated, and this is due to some "self-interference" in his own development: it does not matter so much *why* he chose his "smaller part" over his "greater part." It matters primarily *that he did* develop his smaller part. In order to make moral judgments, then, Mencius does not need an explanation for the king's poor choices; he certainly doesn't ask the king for one, nor does Mencius himself offer any kind of speculative explanation. We should take note of this and seriously consider Mencius' lack of attention to "why" questions if we are to understand what exactly Mencius is doing when he criticizes the king.

According to my proposal we can stop dwelling on moments of weakness of will and still allow Mencius to make moral judgments. His method for doing this, however, will be different than we might have originally guessed. Instead of making absolute claims about what is "good" and "bad," he will simply issue evaluations and judgments on the basis of brute facts. In so doing, he still retains the usual notions that constitute our own sense of moral agency: attributing action to someone, blaming/praising someone for an action, and holding someone responsible for an action. The difference in the Mencian approach is that the thrust of a moral judgment lies not in an evaluation of what the agent *chose* to do, whether that

agent knew what he was doing, and whether that agent could have and should have done otherwise. Rather, the thrust of a negative moral judgment for Mencius will be that the agent failed to do what is right *relative* to that agent's position, or, as is more generally the case, *relative* to what it is to be a human being in a well-functioning society. We need only think about the case of King Xuan to find an example of what I am arguing for here. Mencius does not ask the king, "*Why* did you fail to show compassion for your people even though you could and should have done otherwise?" Instead, Mencius criticizes the king because, given that King Xuan is a king, he should take care of his people. And the brute fact is that he is not taking care of his people. Indeed, the entire basis of the conversation between Mencius and the king is the following question: "What must one's virtue be like in order to become a king?"[21] The topic of conversation is not, "Why is it morally bad to let people suffer?"

In closing, none of this is to say that Mencius does not have any notion of moral choice; it is clearly there, but the primacy of such a notion is perhaps something particular to certain modern or religious conceptions of morality. Also, in case we are worried that Mencius is falling into a kind of hopeless moral relativism, I should point out that there may actually be room in Mencius for absolute conceptions of good and bad. After all, what it is to be human is "given to us by Heaven." But we should not look too hard for absolute statements of moral judgment in the *Mencius*; we will we disappointed, for they are noticeably lacking. Mencius largely restricts his ethics to relative statements of value. And, as far as he is concerned, such statements are coherent, meaningful, and normative in practical living.

Notes

1. *Mencius* in Theodore Wm de Bary and Irene Bloom, eds. *Sources of Chinese Tradition*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999, 2A:6.
2. Wong, David B, "Reasons and Analogical Reasoning in Mengzi." in Essays on the Moral Philosophy of Mengzi, edited by Xiusheng Lu and Philip J.

Ivanhoe, 2002, p. 191.

3. Ibid., p. 189.
4. *Mencius* 2A:6
5. *Mencius* 1A:7
6. Of course, we give praise and moral responsibility to the rightly acting moral agent, but I will leave those cases aside, since they will simply mirror the cases of the badly acting moral agent, but with a positive formulation.
7. Admittedly, a morally undeveloped person could very well be on his way to becoming fully developed. But he is, nonetheless, at present still undeveloped. Therefore, I will not distinguish between the following cases: the *morally undeveloped* person, the person of *partial cultivation*, and the person who is *becoming cultivated* but is not quite there yet.
8. Im, Manyul, Wielding Virtue in the Mencius," in *Conceptions of Virtue East and West*, Eds. Kim-chong Chong, Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2005, pg. 5.
9. Ibid., p. 3.
10. Ibid., p. 2.
11. It is important, for my argument that the boy in this case *knows* that he is making choices that will retard his moral development. Of course, we could just as easily imagine a person who unknowingly or unwittingly makes bad choices that negatively impact his moral development, but this kind of person does not exhibit the kind of weakness of will that I am concerned with here.
12. *Mencius* 6A:15
13. In Mencius, this sort of "thinking" (*si*) is best understood as the activity of the "heart-mind" (*xin*). This activity encompasses aspects of both feeling and thinking according to the modern-day distinction.
14. *Mencius* 6A:2
15. G.E.M Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy." *Philosophy*, 33:124 (1958), p. 1.
16. Ludwig Wittgenstein, "Lecture on Ethics," *The Philosophical Review*, 74:1 (1965): 3–12, p. 5.
17. Let me be clear, here, that Wittgenstein is *not* claiming that ethical statements are statements about absolute value. Indeed, Wittgenstein's whole point in his lecture is that ethical statements are nonsense because they attempt to speak about absolute value.
18. *Mencius* 1A:7
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.

From The Archives of The Skeptics

Alessander

If words really do in fact exist,
and secondly, if words
actually represent meaning;
and if my senses do not deceive me,
that you are here –
or for that matter that some grand daemon
has not dreamt ourselves.
Then let me, for one instance, be permitted
to concede
that I love you,
if ever love exists.

Non-Propositional Knowledge of Persons

Aaron M. Mead

Introduction

Modern epistemology has generally focused on propositional knowledge, or *knowing that* something is the case. According to the tripartite analysis, propositional knowledge is true justified belief. However, this picture has tended to leave out certain kinds of knowledge that may not be strictly propositional, such as *knowing how* to do something (i.e., skill knowledge) or *knowing who* someone is. In this paper I will address the topic of the knowledge of persons, and in the process I will touch on the topic of skill knowledge.[1] While personal knowledge may be propositional to some degree, traditional epistemology hardly seems to capture what it means to know someone; knowledge of persons seems to be more than simply having true justified beliefs about them. In this paper I aim to show that personal knowledge has several non-propositional components, including an affective component, and a holistic component that I will refer to as "understanding." I will also claim that a certain kind of skill knowledge may be part of personal understanding.

Propositional Knowledge of Persons

Recent essays by Vrinda Dalmiya and Christine McKinnon on the topic of personal knowledge provide a helpful starting point for my discussion. Both Dalmiya and McKinnon argue that the standard epistemological ideals of objectivity and impartiality—goals derived from the scientific model of knowing—are inadequate in the case of personal knowledge. In "Knowing

People" Dalmiya argues that knowledge of another person requires the subjective involvement of the knower through the "method of care".[2] The key to Dalmiya's method—distinguishing it most strongly from standard "simulation-theory" wherein knowing another person is a matter of putting oneself in her shoes, or "simulating" her experience—is what she calls "care reception," whereby the knower desires a response (from the other) to her care for the other. This care reception functions as a feedback loop whereby the knower's assumptions about the other are tested and refined if necessary. Dalmiya's sketch of coming to know a person is highly interactive and reflexive: both knower and known are subject to change, and thus the traditional ideal of objectivity cannot be maintained. McKinnon makes a similar claim, arguing that personal knowledge requires "a subjective involvement and investment in coming to know other persons that is quite alien to the standard scientific investigation."[3]

Despite their methodological innovations, Dalmiya and McKinnon preserve the traditional notion of knowledge as propositional. Both authors continue to refer to knowledge of persons as *claims about people*—such as, "Smith has brown hair" or "Jones is brave"—implying an essentially propositional structure. For example, in her conclusion McKinnon writes,

> The kinds of knowledge claims and justifications thereof we make of other persons and ourselves do not meet the ideals of objectivity, impartiality, and value-neutrality traditionally employed by epistemologists. Yet these knowledge claims comprise an important part of our cognitive activities.[4]

Dalmiya also persists in using propositional categories. According to Dalmiya, the goal of her method of care is "justified claims about other people."[5] As noted above, her concept of care reception essentially functions as a "veracity check" on these claims, a means of making propositional claims about

people more accurate.[6] Thus, while both authors alter considerably the method of acquiring knowledge when its object is personal, they retain a propositional model for describing the knowledge itself.

McKinnon and Dalmiya are at least partially correct to retain propositional categories in their discussion. Clearly, some kinds of personal knowledge are propositional. For example, some statements about a person's physical characteristics, such as "he is short" or "she has green eyes," are propositions that could be true (albeit in a relative sense), justified objects of belief. At the same time, such statements are clearly examples of personal knowledge. Thus, at least in some cases, it is unproblematic to understand knowledge of persons in propositional categories.

Non-Propositional Knowledge of Persons

However, it seems inadequate to claim that our knowledge of persons is exhausted by the propositional form. There seems to be an important difference between knowing *about* a person—arguably a propositional venture—and simply knowing a person. For example, we might read a book about Jimmy Carter and obtain many true justified propositional beliefs about him (e.g., where he was born, where he was educated, how many children in his family, etc.), but this kind of knowledge seems quite different from the kind of knowledge his wife Eleanor has of him. But what exactly is the difference? One answer might be that Mrs. Carter would know something of his *character* that we simply cannot get from a book. Indeed, knowing someone's character is at the core of what we mean when we say that we know someone. Having observed President Carter and interacted with him for so long, Mrs. Carter would have a sense of his values, his motivations, his tendencies to believe, speak, and act in various ways, how these components fit together uniquely with his life story, and all this not only from her interpretive

perspective but also at least partially from that of her husband, since he will have verbalized much about himself to his wife over the years. However, the objection may be raised that the distinction here is merely quantitative. It may be the case that all this knowledge Eleanor Carter has of her husband is still propositional; it is just that she has more of it than we could obtain from reading a standard book. For example, given enough time, could Mrs. Carter not propositionally articulate all of the characteristics previously listed? If she could describe his character in propositional terms—a plausible condition—it seems that her knowledge may in fact be propositional and thus *could* be recorded in a (very long) book.

However, it still seems that knowledge of persons is qualitatively different from book knowledge. Take another example, that of a young child's knowledge of her caregivers. Under ordinary circumstances, even at one year old (before most children can speak) a child has some knowledge of her caregivers. She can pick her mother or father's face out of a crowd and can quickly recognize the voice of a parent. Moreover, a child often knows what kind of behavior to expect from a parent given the way the parent has treated her in the past. Thus, children seem to know their caregivers in some way, though they cannot articulate their knowledge in propositional terms. This kind of knowing exemplifies an intuitive aspect of personal knowledge that applies also to adult-adult relationships. For example, in many relationships we have a sense of knowing the other person without actually having articulated what it is we know in propositional form. We might intuitively recognize certain dispositions of character that yield a sense of personal knowledge *before we ever try to describe our knowledge of such traits*.

But is such intuition merely pre-propositional? Is it *implicitly* propositional, and therefore still propositional at the core? Perhaps, but even when we try to articulate our knowledge of someone in propositional terms our description is partial at best,

since we are forced to abstract and consider individual traits, while our personal knowledge tends to have a holistic aspect to it. This seems true even of our knowledge of a person's physical character. For example, if someone who has never met our friend asks what our friend looks like, it is impossible to provide a complete description since we know what they look like as a whole, and any particular characteristics we pick out fail to communicate this total view. If I described my friend to the person, and then the person passed my friend on the street—perhaps even making eye contact—it is doubtful that the person could identify the other as my friend. Yet once we know someone fairly well we usually recognize their face, even after a long break in the relationship or substantial aging. Propositional descriptions are simply inadequate to capture the holistic knowledge we possess of what a person looks like. If the propositional form is inadequate for knowing the visually accessible nature of a person, *a fortiori* a person's inner character (which is not directly visible and harder to describe) is inadequately known in propositional terms.

Understanding, Skill, and Affect

It seems plausible that the non-propositional aspect to personal knowledge might be taken as a kind of "understanding."[7] In a recent essay Wayne D. Riggs defines understanding as "the appreciation or grasp of order, pattern, and how things 'hang together.'"[8] Understanding explains the relationship of diverse parts to a whole, which may or may not be propositional. For example, if one understands a complex machine like a car engine, such understanding does not merely amount to a collection of true propositional beliefs about the engine. Rather, one's understanding of the engine is more likely captured by an image—perhaps something like an internalized diagram—or by certain intuitions about how the parts work together. As Linda Zagzebski notes, explanatory theories—including scientific and

philosophical theories—draw on something like this notion of understanding.[9] She points to the coherentist raft and the foundationalist pyramid as examples of epistemological theory that provide understanding. They are attempts to characterize knowledge as a whole in non-propositional terms, and their power is in the intuitive images they provide of how individual pieces of knowledge fit together. Despite the fact that many contemporary epistemologists reject these specific models, the kind of holistic theorizing they represent continues to underlie much philosophical work.

It seems plausible that we might understand a person in a similar way. At least part of what we recognize in the face of someone we know is the way the individual features of their face are in proportional and symmetrical relations to each other. This recognition is a non-propositional kind of understanding that we have of the person's face. Similarly, knowledge of someone's character may include a kind of non-propositional understanding. Zagzebski points in this direction when she includes "the motivational structure of a person" in her list of things for which we do not have "a set of rules codifying the relations among pieces of the structure."[10] When we know someone well, in addition to individual character traits that might be described propositionally, we understand the way the traits fit together, perhaps how motivations sometimes conflict causing tension for the person, and even in some cases how traits might have been formed in response to events in the person's history. Such a holistic understanding of a person's character might give us an intuitive sense of when a particular action of his is either in or out of character. Or, we might have a sense of how we should help the person if they are struggling with a certain problem.

This seems to be the kind of understanding a good psychotherapist might gain as a result of a long history with a particular client. Through questioning, listening, and observing, the therapist might come to know much about the client's character traits,

how those traits interrelate to influence behavior, and what kinds of conversation or experience might help the client to navigate life struggles and heal internal wounds. While it is true that much propositional knowledge is required to be a good psychotherapist (consider the propositional knowledge gained in medical school), it seems clear that a good therapist must also develop a kind of intuitive understanding of her clients that cannot be learned from a book, but must be learned through actual therapeutic practice, such as in an internship. In this context, the therapist gradually develops her ability to know people and how to help them. Thus, the kind of personal understanding that a psychotherapist might gain seems closer to a kind of skill than it does to propositional knowledge. Moreover, the therapist's skill is not something that is strictly separate from her personal knowledge of a client.[11] Indeed, significant aspects of the skill a therapist has in helping a client are *deeply particular to that client* because that skill knowledge is simply part of what it is to know the client herself. It is important to note that this kind of skill knowledge of people is not reserved for therapists, though it might be most pronounced in that case. Such skill knowledge will likely be a component of the knowledge that one person has of another in any truly intimate relationship. Arguably, one may also develop this kind of skill knowledge of oneself.

Characterizing an aspect of personal knowledge as non-propositional understanding raises at least two problems. First, it is impossible to characterize understanding as true in a strict propositional sense. In fact, Riggs notes that "understanding and literal truth are sometimes at cross purposes to one another" since understanding requires "abstracting away from or 'idealizing' the actual situation."[12] In choosing a model such as a pyramid to represent knowledge, we inevitably highlight certain features of knowledge—such as the logical relations between particular propositions—and leave off representing other complicating features—such as the role of background

beliefs in reasoning. This departure from strict truth explains the emergence of different models that try to compensate for the features left out. Although an in-depth study of this problem is beyond the scope of my paper, divergence from strict truth does not seem debilitating for the concept of understanding, as long as there is a significant level of verisimilitude between reality and the explanation that provides understanding of reality.[13] In fact, there are many examples of scientific theories that are known *not* to be literally true, and yet continue to be fruitful theories. For example, Newton's gravitational laws continue to underlie the basic equations of fluid mechanics that are learned and applied by the best civil engineers in the discipline, despite the fact that his laws are not literally true in a propositional sense.

The second problem is whether understanding constitutes knowledge proper, and therefore whether a study of this aspect of personal knowledge is appropriately located within epistemology. Clearly, understanding is different from traditional notions of knowledge insofar as it has a non-propositional object and its aim is not strict truth.[14] However, this need not imply that understanding is not a valid epistemic goal. In fact, as Zagzebski and others have pointed out, the narrow focus of modern epistemology on propositional ends has been driven substantially by the skeptical question of whether knowledge is possible at all. In periods when skeptical concerns were not as pressing, something like the notion of understanding seems to have been the *central* epistemic goal. For example, prior to the influence of Hellenistic skepticism, Plato and Aristotle tended to discuss knowledge more as a species of understanding than as a strictly propositional category. Zagzebski argues that the same is true of the medieval period.[15] Insofar as we are entering a period in which epistemologists are less concerned to let skeptical questions drive their work, understanding seems a relevant topic of epistemological inquiry.

An additional consideration suggesting that personal

knowledge is not exhausted by propositional categories is the place of affective states in such knowledge. Affective states almost always occur together with personal knowledge. As we come to know someone we begin to develop a certain feeling about that person. This feeling is most obvious with people that we are very close to (such as our spousal partners) or that we strongly dislike. In the former case, one would hope that the accompanying affect is generally positive (!), perhaps due to a recognition of certain virtues in one's partner that draw one to get to know that person better. In the latter case, the affect is generally negative—perhaps due to our recognition of certain vices in the other person—causing us to avoid that person (if at all possible), and thus cease from knowing her more deeply. In both cases, part of the affect seems to be a sense of trust or distrust of the other person. While the place of emotion in personal knowledge is most obvious when we are strongly attracted or repelled by someone, it seems to have a role even in relationships that are less emotionally charged. In most cases, even from the first time we meet someone or have a conversation with them, some sort of affect accompanies our nascent knowledge of them, whether slightly positive or slightly negative, slightly trusting or slightly distrusting. The intensity of affect may generally increase with our knowledge of the person and may account for part of our sense of knowing someone.[16] Thus, the affective component of personal knowledge is a further consideration that separates personal knowledge from a strict propositional form.

Conclusion

I have argued that describing knowledge of persons as a collection of true justified beliefs is inadequate. Rather, there are non-propositional components to personal knowledge, including an affective component, and an intuitive holistic component I have called understanding. Such understanding includes knowl-

edge of the way a person's individual (physical and especially non-physical) character traits interrelate in a particular order or pattern, and may also include a kind of person-specific skill knowledge that enables the knower to help the known.

If I am correct in my claim that personal knowledge includes such non-propositional components, this conclusion may indicate an important shortcoming in the traditional tripartite analysis of knowledge wherein knowledge is generally understood to take propositional objects alone. For this reason, it may be that a non-traditional paradigm—such as the emerging categories of virtue epistemology—may be better-suited to account for personal knowledge than the traditional view. For example, virtue epistemology seems not to be limited to propositional objects, and so may plausibly aim at non-propositional goals such as understanding or skill. Moreover, traditional virtue theory (e.g., the framework of the *Nicomachean Ethics*) has ready categories for incorporating affect. Finally, insofar as virtue has often been understood as a kind of skill, acquiring the special skill knowledge of how to help someone may be viewed as cultivating a kind of epistemic virtue. Though much additional work would be required to evaluate whether virtue epistemology is indeed a better framework for thinking about personal knowledge, this paper at least suggests that some sort of non-traditional account of personal knowledge is warranted.

Notes

1. Throughout the paper I will use "personal knowledge" and "knowledge of persons" as interchangeable terms.
2. Vrinda Dalmiya, "Knowing People," in *Knowledge, Truth, and Duty: Essays on Epistemic Justification, Responsibility, and Virtue*, ed. Matthias Steup (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 225.
3. Christine McKinnon, "Knowing Cognitive Selves," in *Intellectual Virtue: Perspectives from Ethics and Epistemology*, eds. Michael DePaul and Linda Zagzebski (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 232. Incidentally, the authors' call to loosen epistemological categories when it comes to knowing persons is a counter to the post-modern critique that people are self-constituting, non-essential beings that simply cannot be

known. While McKinnon concedes that people are much less stable and enduring than middle-sized physical objects—the traditional paradigmatic objects of knowledge—she argues that the kind of personal knowledge she is talking about is necessary for communal living (which in fact human beings *do* accomplish), and that rather than throw out wholesale the goal of personal knowledge, we are better off simply loosening what it means to know someone (pp. 234–35).

4. McKinnon, 251.
5. Dalmiya, 225.
6. *Ibid.*
7. I owe the connection between personal knowledge and understanding to an insightful comment by Kate Carpenter.
8. Wayne D. Riggs, "Understanding 'Virtue'," in *Intellectual Virtue*, 217.
9. Linda Zagzebski, "Recovering Understanding", in *Knowledge, Truth, and Duty*, 243.
10. *Ibid*., 243.
11. Though *general* aspects of the therapist's skill knowledge might well be separate from her personal knowledge of a client, such as applicable skill deriving from other client relationships.
12. Riggs, 218–19.
13. *Ibid*., 219.
14. Zagzebski, "Recovering Understanding," 243–44.
15. *Ibid*., 237–39.
16. However, a monotonic increase in the intensity of one's affect probably never occurs; affect may increase or decrease in intensity through the course of knowing someone, and may even switch from negative to positive, or vice versa. For example, I may have a slightly negative feeling toward someone upon first meeting them, but acquire a positive feeling toward them as my knowledge of them deepens.

"Woman with a Scarf" *etching by Maricruz Huerta-Edinger*

Disorientation Therapy

Omar Zubair

Like a crane, man wishes to think that there is some distance between his heart and his head, giving his rashness time to dissipate before an action is made, getting all of the intention yet guarding still the vulnerability of his impressions. But the reflex of the finger is usually what grabs or pushes. And all too often the written word is a reflex and the finger is merely repeating. And the pattern that matches the cliché would easily be seen, except; except that there are a thousand reflexes between the eye and the page and each curls when it is tested, and, by the time the eye focuses, it is a madness and trust seems the only answer. And trust has read the classic novels and trust has given accolades and trust is that thing that turns the blur in front of the unwatching eye into a story. And what of the reader? The one who wants, the one who does not just feel, but really wants? He is to crawl, to become a smallness and trace each of the myriad of curves between the eye and page, between that which views and that which is viewed; and on the way he will look around and, in turn, cover a thousand thousand bends on his knees and forearms. And if at the end of a twist he reaches his own pupil; then, he will see the world as an endowment of himself, himself an endowment of the world.

The force between mind and mass is often misweighed by perception and another pencil tip cracks across the page. A slight smudge, but mostly he just wishes that the mechanical version of this simple machine didn't cost so much. And what is this anyway? Shouldn't an artist be standing by a window with a palette in one hand and a brush in the other, shifting his

eyebrows in between thoughtful glances? Instead there is this figure—bound to a chair with no arm rests and no real back support—staring at a series of symbols that he has just written like it's some Rorschach that will either convict him or set him free, caught in the confusion that lies between the word and the world.

It seems so easy to create a beautiful idea, almost any set of legs and arms will build an exquisite corpse. Add a few pieces of string, and it dances. Add fireworks and a parade, and it becomes a festival; it becomes a dream; it becomes an institution.

A lightbulb!

a blackout.

Where do you go to get a mile and a half of industrial tubing with no budget?

This is where the pencil falls and the chair collapses and action shakes reality. And this is where the page can no longer be of assistance and feet do more than thoughts. But really a newspaper does the most, and news of a closing factory is good news indeed.

Two weeks later and too many pulsating muscles from way too many trips to and from the edge of town and nearly two miles of tubing sitting in the living room and in the kitchen and in the studio and in the backyard.

Now the problem is that once assembled this won't be moveable. But a long-winded manifesto and street cred as the guy-who-stapled-Bible-verses-to-himself-and-waited-two months-for-the-staples-to-expulge-themselves-in-order-make-a-point-about-evolution should be enough to get him a gallery or park space or a warehouse or something.

250 E. Fifth St.

Perfect.

The doors and the windows that announce to the world that here,

right here, is the exhibit have been tinted deep black; and, unless you use the back entrance, the moment that you step inside you've already been engulfed. The darkness makes a joke out of arrogance, and, ten steps in, heads smack foam and bodies are forced onto their knees. (Why would the local who's who submit themselves to such humiliation? Well, it was cheaper than a psychiatrist, and you could tell your friends that you went. Disorientation therapy. Surely you've heard of it. Well, I mean, I hope you have. It's not in any of the magazines yet, but that's because it's the next big thing. Not the thing that's already a big thing that's merely being heralded by the latecomers as the next big thing, but, really, the next big thing.) So knees become feet and hands become eyes, and forward. Like a child burst forth too early left wandering the lower intestine, blind and clumsy, a turn means stubbed fingers and a jolt to the soft spot, but forward is the only way to go. And this doesn't make sense. And is this really art? And I can't believe that I'm on my knees. And somehow the dark seems to only get darker, and eyes strain to adjust, and headaches. And sometimes the crawling feels as if it's inclined and sometimes it feels like it's declined, and soon it all just feels the same. And corners blend into straights. And distress blends into acceptance. And, really, instead of following the hidden path of plastic tubing, those little lights that sparkle ephemerally in the mind when eyelids are shut too tight become the landmarks to reach, become destinations in themselves; and acceptance isn't some tool of the defeatist but rather a renaissance of determination. And mothers disappear. And lawyers disappear. And insomniacs disappear. And fashions disappear. And friends disappear. And jobs disappear. And money. disappears. And emotion. disappears. disappears. disappears. disappears. disappears. And crawling. And crawlers. And progressive movement. That's what fills in the gaps.

And the dark persists.

And who knows how long it's been. And that fourth wall of

resistance that time builds up has become as transparent and as malleable as the imagined landscapes that perspire from the thick darkness within the tubes. 10. 20. 5. an hour? And the thought, in its impotence toward either comfort or control, blends clear with clear and disappears. And each moment is itself an act of becoming or being or whatever that space is that crawls outside of beginnings and endings and tasks. And when, finally, there is a dimness and the face looking out sees the same face looking in, it doesn't register that the reflection on the glass door is a double. Rather, an outsider melding with an outside. And as the one moves closer to the two, a strange urge to resubstantialize overcomes. And instead of meeting when hands reach forth, there is a gathering, or a regathering, like one wrongfully accused being handed his possessions as he is lead out.

By the end, one has unbecome, become, unbecome, and become again; and, if there is an alchemy of the self, this feels like transmutation.

The hushed murmur of those still dazed lingers by the exit. A breath and a breeze and a blowing. And soon those murmurs cloud the city, and precipitate the city, and flow through the walkways getting on shoes and getting tracked into the homes of those with ears for public weather. Hearing transfixes itself onto knowing as scaled-down models of disorientation pipes are built into the air around conversations. And as the knowers increase so, too, do the tellings; and soon it is hard to navigate public spaces without noticing the remnants of translucent tubing wafting through the air.

Lines form helixes as they grow in size and twists around the gallery's entrance, and, as those exiting form their own helixing lines in order to weave through the awaiting, something new takes its first gasps of life. Excitement, itself, is induced into being. And sometimes like an earwig. And sometimes like a flash

flood. And before even having the experience the incoming are already believers, and disorientation therapy is a given.

Local exuberance glides enticingly in through the windows of regional magazines, and quick wits cast ink to the air to cover and catch the dancing ghosts. Now solid. Now real. Now reputations are on the line and a month late means bandwagon while a month early means ground breaking and important. And is it important to write with eloquence? Is the art magazine part or apart of the aesthetic experience? Either way a good picture never hurts; but. But how to express the darkness in a full page spread? Black on black? Surely an M.A. from any non-online university can do better than that—a photo of the artist it is. and blindfolded!

From the eye to the page and now back to the eye, and reading re-enforces reality. And the words *Disorientation Therapy* written on the lower right side of the front cover legitimizes. And long lines get longer. And, of course, I've been to the exhibit. And a house once filled with industrial piping is now filled—low tide in the morning, high tide by afternoon—with tape recorders and digital cameras catching privacy amidst crowds and quotes amidst hand gestures and generalizations. And *That.*, pointing to a blueprint on a desk, *has already been said*. So the focus goes where it can. A blink, and the gaze resides clearly on the host.

Articles, having already been written about the exhibit, begin to detail questions concerning lifestyle and personality instead of method and meaning. Those having never been to the exhibit now know much more about the man than the machine. And now *he*, and not *it*. And the growing merely grows. And the print next to the picture on the center of the front cover now reads *Disorientation Therapist*. and the blindfold is off. and the face is backlit so that it glows in that man-as-saint-as-artist-as-perfect kind of way.

Days seem etched into marble as they become grand and

glorious. Parties; no, soirees; no, galas; yes, galas. And the who's who becomes the how are you? becomes Pete and Dave and Jen. And this thing where strangers don't think that they're strangers. And speeches. And transcripts of those speeches. And people actually reading the transcripts of those speeches.

And fiction. And fiction. And fiction falls rockstyle from the gravity of reality. And breaking. And breaking. And hear-it-here-first. Five channels, three newspapers, and an unnamed source. Breaking news. The cognitive, the emotional, the self-realization of the local phenomenon has merely been misdirection. The tunnels that brought prestige to an all-but-dead art scene can now only become the bouquet that marks a cheerfulness in a timely demise.

Chloro-neurotrusion. This is not the work of an artist, but a drug dealer.

Around each of the first four bends of the dark tubes, right at the spot where heads and fingers meet soft plastic, concealed within the moment of uneasiness about both the bump and the blackness, tiny needles, each a fresh drop into the pressing skin. A neurotoxin that blocks the absorption of oxygen into the brain: A hyperventilation of the nervous system and a flushing of short-term memories. But time is the key, and that is why the crawl must be excessive. The refreshing sensation and the new joy of life at the end of the tunnel is and was just a reflection of temporary lobotomy.

A quickness rises with steaming critiques. A furious wind. A desperate flocking. Again blindfolded; the photo that marked the beginning of exuberant local-artist spotlights now remarks from the covers of *Time* and *Newsweek* how deceptive art has become. The cries of danger ululating from check-out lines across the country give *Disorientation Therapy!?!* the same font size and boldness as previously allocated to *9-11!?!* and *Pearl*

Harbor!?!.

fame becomes Fame; reality, Truth.

And television news magazines go undercover to investigate. And confirmation merely by questioning. And a blurry exclamation point on the non-illegality of a substance used to trick so many. A demand for legislation. A lynching. Anything to momentalize this. Make it big and the town crier, too, gets monumentalized by the mob. Forget the pocket bell, the church is only across the street and a quick blurb about the endangerment of family values is surely enough to get access to the real noisemakers.

Oh, the letters. Pre-written by religious leaders, by social club leaders, by those who've gotten their facts from those who've gotten their facts from those who've gotten their facts; so there can be no doubt, really. And, as for a representative democracy in which being a representative is most lucrative, the job of those in power is merely to keep the job of being in power because that's the only way to stay powerful, and, hence, representative—as the collective-ego is that little voice that whispers an overly-enlarged identity to any group—so civil code P-5-AS93 passes and officially puts an end to anything connected with the newly outlawed drug.

The dark sheets once covering the entrance to the exhibit rip and fall to the floor unglamorous rugs, and a long-lost light pierces the empty gallery space. Dust hasn't settled and yet it feels like it should be thick and comfortable here. *RAPE*. has been scribbled large on the door, but it's hard to decipher whether it comes bearing sympathy or disgust. Tubes trail from the backdoor into the alleyway, the discarded remains of a gutting.

Like a ghost-town? No; like a town-town, the neighborhood returns—a reinvention of regression.

And yet the typing of keys makes a rustling sound. A

message board laments the loss of never having had the experience of being digested and renewed by the space between gallery walls. A request, for any who have known, to post their remembrings. A vigil online for the undone.

A meeting of believers, not those who believe in the power of art, but those who believe in the power of controlled substances. And a governmental ban is quality verification. And whispers in the spaces between bring back an empty ultrasound. And a knowledgeable market that can produce no facts.

Rumors. And hearsay reconnaissance reports a reconstruction. A hall of mirrors, and locations taunt from all directions. Two-dimensional and painted in shades of whisp, each sighting a phantasm cloaked in unreliability.

More typing ensues. The sound of thoughts vibrating between skin and plastic. Details of an ugly road and the wrinkled brain that lies at its end. Alas, hope for the hopeful—seekers and tweakers, alike. A pinpoint location, an Indian reservation, and a dust cloud resolved. The exhibition has resurfaced, and the subterranean have dug it up.

Converging at the crossroads, art enthusiasts, drug enthusiasts, press, the adventurous, the bored, the optimistic, the depressed—scientists in search of a cure. A line, zagged with tents, zigs for more than a mile. And conversations juggle whimsy with a magician's precision, never letting the weight of anticipation cause a dropping and a full view of the hollowed egg of feigned interest.

One at a time the line going into becomes shorter, and one at a time the amoeba coming outof becomes larger. And, singularly, jaws—open from an unnoticed forgotten thought—close, but not from remembrance, rather from the necessity to form coherent word-sounds. Singularly, agreeance. A universal acceptance of medicine and a simple quality-ascribing analogy. Chemical agents are scientific. Science is both real and dependable. Voila!

Embers still amber with warmth from the media's burn-him-alive crackle and burst tiny sparks into the execution crowd, cold from lost anticipation. A sensation of warmness and the village itself spontaneously combusts from the instant firecracking of a thousand passionate hotheads. Articles. And more articles. The exhibit, once a small town carousel, once a put-down horse, now the recipient of an apology-flowered wreath, a prized zombie stallion, has been bolstered back into the limelight as a respectable obsession; for, those-who-have-said have said and squealed the delights of resurrection. Each has staked claim to the title of most affected. The worries of a public unafraid of psychiatry have been replaced with an embraced analogy.

Back to the covers of *Time* and *Newsweek*, again the blindfold—to the tune of *see no evil*—a report not on moral deprivation, but sensory deprivation. Now a rite of passage, now exotic and chic. A growing celebrity hum: *life-changing*, *spiritually-rejuvenating*, *innocence-regaining*.

And in the midst of the inauguration of a new figure to the popular culture pantheon, page D6 of the *New York Times* Sunday edition. a full page editorial advertisement:
The crane, in his attempt to look behind and under and around in order to see himself, has managed to knot the neck that he has so prized. And the impulses that pulse from his heart upward to the permission of the head, now only return unnoted and unwitted. And the eye, as unwatching as ever, does not notice the twist from the swirling madness that sweeps from here to there. A randomness generated from a computer program thinly veiled as therapeutic passes for interactive sculpture if it is described as such, if the head cannot monitor the body, if the body does not interpret but only accepts. And pages unread read the world a new sense of insecurity, a faked drug, an unchecked experi-

ment, a body politik that could care less and only wants more. attention. Manipulation is not so much a physical bending, but a perceptual one; and, if it thinks that it should revel, then it revels; if it thinks that it should shriek, it shrieks; repent and rejoice, repent and rejoice. The new art is releasing the thing-without-itself, and the reflection in the window at the end of the hall is only the face that can recognize itself even when looking away.

Book Review: Terry Eagleton's *The Illusions of Postmodernism*

Lee Schneider

The term "postmodernism"[1] in analytic philosophy departments has come to refer primarily to the works of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Jean-Francois Lyotard; and, in cases of deeper consideration, the work of Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari Helene Cixous, Julie Kristeva, and Jean Baudrillard, among others. Yet the term itself is largely proliferated by English-speaking commentators. The only French thinkers who identify with the title of "postmodern" are Lyotard and Baudrillard. Deleuze and Guattari use "postmodern" as a pejorative exclusively, while Foucault and Derrida have been hard pressed to categorize their work in this way. And, although it is common among spectators to emphasize the family resemblance among these writers, the writers themselves typically perceive fundamental differences. For example, Foucault was highly critical of the work of Derrida and vice-versa, each rejecting the other's categories and methods. Lyotard, in his postmodern period, distanced himself from the political theories of Deleuze and Foucault. Deleuze and Guattari differentiate their project from that of Derrida's, and attack the work of Baudrillard. With that in mind, it is a bit of a mystery how "postmodernism" can be discussed by anyone as a kind of univocal discourse among its constituents. Nonetheless, much of the literature criticizing postmodernism is carried out precisely in this way. Within this particular canon is the recent book, *The Illusions of Postmodernism* by the British Marxist and Oxford Professor, Terry Eagleton. In this

critique Eagleton sets out to criticize postmodernism in a way that brackets the claims of particular philosophers, but targets "popular brands of postmodern thought."

As someone who is ambivalent towards the philosophical efficacy of postmodernism, but quite interested in it, I started the book with an open mind. After a couple pages I realized I was in for a fun and interesting read. Eagleton's writing is exciting and hilarious; I laughed out loud on more than a few occasions. Sometimes I felt that the book was less a critique of postmodernism then an anthology of jokes that a French professor would send around his own department. But despite its charming nature, many points in the book (and its overall technique of critique) were hard to swallow. There are several reasons for this. The first is the most obvious and the one already mentioned, that the book attacks "postmodernism" on the whole and does not address the work of any particular writer. As mentioned, the writers associated with postmodernism do not seem to agree with each other and often don't even identify with the label of "postmodernism." So how does a critique of the popular brands of postmodernism ever critique anyone? Nonetheless, it could be said on Eagleton's behalf that there are some common themes in what he terms postmodern. He identifies these as skepticism towards traditional philosophical categories such as Reason, Identity, Objectivity, Universal Progress, Emancipation, Grand Narratives, Essentialism, Ultimate Explanations, and Classical notions of Truth as well as other Enlightenment norms. Even still, I can't help feeling that this farraginous generalization comes at the expense of a concise and substantive critique of actual, specific works.

However, one may still find some important points against postmodernism by acquiescing in a general critique, so this feature of the book is not what troubles me the most. What is really hard to swallow is the book's explicit Marxist angle of attack (but not *because* it is Marxist). Eagleton comes right out in

the preface of the book and does the dialectical materialist move; he claims that postmodernism is a style of culture that reflects a historic shift in the West to a new form of capitalism—i.e., to the ephemeral, decentralized world of technology, consumerism, and the culture industry. For him, the problem with the discourse of postmodernism as a kind of conservative political quietism is that ignores the real material conditions of oppressed people by way of its acquiescence to capitalism as the now intellectually incontestable socio-economic structure of western society.

All this might well be true. I am not going to make the claim that Eagleton's Marxist analysis is false or improbable, or that his analysis is weak because it is Marxist. My issue is concerned with the inability of his critique to appeal to a non-Marxist philosopher. After all, his major point is that postmodernism ignores classical Marxist issues of class-based struggles. But this says nothing about the philosophical efficacy of otherwise philosophical claims of postmodernism. It seems to me that the "illusion" is that postmodernism is not Marxism, but I do not think that the theories self-identified as postmodern actually purport to be such.

My point is this: a critique of postmodernism that seeks to convince others that postmodernism is an "illusion" in whatever other sense, should not only appeal to Marxists. If someone is a Marxist then she probably already agrees with Eagleton prior to reading this book. Yet if she is not a Marxist, she will not be willing to accept Eagleton's main criticisms about postmodernism since they are grounded in a Marxist analysis. This latter individual, having the capability of being convinced to reject the philosophical efficacy of postmodernism, but all the while not having Marxist convictions, is probably likely to be Angelo-American philosophers and students. I simply reject continental philosophers and students from Eagleton's target group because postmodernism as a philosophical movement is so ubiquitous in Europe that this group would be more interested

in the debates between different writers and less interested in a critique on the whole. Imagine a generalized critique of "analytic philosophy"; analytical philosophers would laugh at it. They are so immersed in its discourse that know it would be foolish not to examine theories on an individual basis, as there is an obvious diversity in Anglo-American philosophy; the situation is analogous with continental philosophers and postmodernism. So it seems to me that anyone in the business of disenfranchising postmodernism for the analytical philosopher would be more successful if they addressed it on a more philosophically-appealing level broadly speaking or at least one that does not need to fall back on Marxism. In fact I doubt this would be very difficult since most analytical philosophers are suspicious of postmodernism in the first place.

At any rate, I am getting too hypothetical; let's return to the book itself. We may inquire: who is this book supposed to be written for, from Eagleton's point of view? He says in a number of places that he is trying to convince the student, or "consumer" of postmodernism that she never believed what she thought she believed in the first place. I take this to mean that the student, although thinking she believed in postmodernism, never actually believed a word of it. So is this student then essentially a Marxist unbeknownst to herself? For then postmodernism would surely be an illusion. But it is not as though Marxist literature is secretly suppressed by the state. For all the popularity that postmodernism has to offer, it can surely be said that Marxism is no less canonized. It seems to me that even those people who know little about philosophy before Frege still have greater classroom access to Marx than to Derrida. Having surveyed course lists in many different schools for my recent graduate school applications, I can say with confidence that even the hard-line analytic schools have classes on Marx. The point is that there is unlikely to be an erasure of Marxist discourse in favor of an exclusively postmodern regimentation in contemporary philosophical

academia. So it is hard to accept that the pro-postmodern student is essentially a state-deceived or self-deceived Marxist. So who is the target student of Eagleton's book? Who is left for Eagleton to convince? I suggested earlier that the likely reader to target would be one from the analytic tradition. Let us assume for the time being that this is Eagleton's target.

We can say it is quite uncommon that discussions of Quine in an analytic department spontaneously erupt into heated Marxist critiques. It is no mystery that political questions get bracketed during serious inquiry into the nature of language or the mind-body problem. Right off the bat it looks as if Anglo-American philosophy falls victim to the same kind of political quietism as postmodernism, considered from a Marxist perspective. With that in mind, let us take a look at an obvious example in the book that illustrates this point..

From the beginning of the book Eagleton does in fact pejoratively politicize postmodernism. He portrays postmodernism as a kind of highfalutin philosophical critique that ignores important Marxist-oriented political issues. He writes:

> The politics of postmodernism, then, have been at once enrichment and evasion. If they have opened up vital new political questions, it is partly because they have beat an undignified retreat from older political issues – *not because these have disappeared or been resolved*, but because they are for the moment proving intractable. In the early 1970's cultural theorists were to be found discussing socialism, signs and sexuality…by the late 1980's they were talking about sexuality. This was not indeed a displacement from politics to something else, since language and sexuality are political to their roots; but it proved, for all that, a way of valuably reaching beyond certain classical political questions, such as why most people do not get enough to eat, which ended up all but edging them from the agenda. Feminism and ethnicity are popular today because they are markers in the mind of some of the most vital political struggles we confront in reality. They are also popular because they are not necessarily anti-capitalist, and so fit

well enough with a post-radical age.[2]

For Eagleton, Postmodernism is ignorant of social and political concerns outside of the capitalist framework. While it may be the case that postmodernism has done some work for feminism and other such libratory issues, it still ignores class-based struggles. It is then a kind of "undignified retreat" to political issues that exist within capitalism, ignoring the anti-capitalist/socialist concerns that have been a major part of the discourse of the philosophical left for so long. This characterization of the politics of postmodernism might not be far from the truth. But it will only detour the postmodern consumer if she is in essence a hard-line Marxist. Others that are philosophically minded, particularly those interested in the philosophies of mind, language, and science, will feel that the same charge can be brought against their disciplines—because surely, analytic philosophical inquiry into the areas just mentioned are equally devoid of a Marxist critique of capitalism. Eagleton's political critique of postmodernism equally alienates the analytical philosopher or student. So once again, Eagleton seems to appeal only to a very narrow audience.

Maybe this is still unfair. Perhaps an English speaking philosopher would be enticed by the parts of the book where Eagleton does appear to engage with postmodernism on a philosophically-interesting level. An example of this can be found in the section of the book were he discusses a certain "fallacy" of postmodernism. He suggests that postmodernism (philosophically) contradicts itself because its ideas often fall victim to the naturalistic fallacy. On the one hand, Eagleton claims, postmodernism sees the world as a ceaseless play of difference and non-identity. At the same time it advocates these descriptions as prescriptions; that we ought to endorse difference and non-identity as such and reject totalities. How is it that the "is", which is descriptive, implies the "ought", which is prescriptive? This

suggests that postmodernism falls victim to naturalistic fallacy; in other words, it jumps from "is" to "ought".

At first glance it seems that Eagleton is on firmly philosophically interesting grounds on this one. But is he really discussing postmodernism in a philosophically interesting way, or does it only appear as such? I raise this question because it seems to me that Eagleton's allegedly philosophical engagement with postmodernism is invalidated by his own ontological presuppositions that he does not take the time to philosophically justify. Let's consider a certain philosophical position that is common to postmodernism, and is also found in analytic philosophy (for example, in Putnam)—namely, that perceiving itself confers value. The position commonly holds that any kind of pursuit of truth whether in science, in philosophy or whatever, is inevitably value laden on behalf of language, perspectives, or whatever. These kinds claims about value lead some postmodernists to the position that even descriptivity is normative, i.e. that description is inevitably conflated with prescription because values cannot be separated from epistemic endeavors. If this is at least one kind of postmodern (and sometimes analytic) position, then it follows that the appeal to the naturalistic fallacy must itself be philosophically contested. One might make the case that there cannot be a naturalistic fallacy in the context of postmodern descriptive-prescriptive claims about the world because descriptive and prescriptive are already ontologically conflated. Yet, *this is not to say whether postmodernist or anyone are right or wrong to believe so*, but rather to point out that Eagleton's criticism fails because he has already made his own ontological assumptions that there are the categories of description and prescription and that these categories are *a priori* legitimate to critique a philosophy in which these categories are absent.

My point is that within the entire philosophical discourse, whether analytic or continental, ontological presuppositions are themselves contested and debated; they cannot be assumed as

true in order to discredit an opposing point of view (although they often are). Moreover, these kinds of discussions of ontological presuppositions make up a massive chunk of philosophical discourse. In recent times, the postmodernists have criticized the Enlightenment's ontological presuppositions and certainly Quine, Putnam and many others have criticized the ontological presuppositions of the logical positivists. So while Eagleton makes waves about "postmodern fallacies" his own ontological presuppositions seep in unquestioned; this leads me to believe that Eagleton's case against postmodernism is still unappealing to analytical philosophers concerned with the fallacies of postmodernism despite the appearance that there is some kind of formal and legitimate philosophical case being made against postmodernism.

I must conclude that these aforementioned examples serve to point out a fundamental weakness in Eagleton's case against postmodernism in *The Illusions of Postmodernism*: it does not convince anyone that postmodernism is illusory. It does not convince the Marxist, because she is already convinced. It probably does not convince the philosophically minded whom reside on the continent, since these people will be detoured by a critique that makes huge generalizations about a philosophical discourse they are so familiar with. Finally, if only by default, the book seems directed towards teachers and students in the analytic tradition. But this is just as unlikely, since Eagleton's explicitly Marxist critique of postmodernism could equally be brought against analytic philosophy; moreover, in the places where Eagleton does seem to engage with postmodernism in a manner that might be philosophically interesting to analytic philosophers, we find weak philosophical arguments with blatant metaphysical presuppositions; analytic philosophers would likely view these arguments as too naive for serious consideration. All in all, this leaves me in a state of confusion. I still wonder what the purpose of this book is, other than to make me laugh.

My advice for someone not looking for a farcical lampooning of postmodernism is to look elsewhere for a broad and philosophically captivating critique.

Notes

1. This information is based on the early lectures of Professor Jay Conway's Postmodernism class.
2. Eagleton, Terry. *The Illusions of Postmodernism*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1996. 24–25.

Contributors

Al Albergate retired from a 30-year career in news reporting and public relations to enter CSULA's philosophy graduate program in Spring 2002 with high hopes of becoming a college philosophy instructor. He successfully completed all coursework in 2003, including the Certificate in Critical Thinking. The department and the university accepted his master's thesis on the ethics of anticipatory self-defense in December 2005, and his M.A. degree was awarded that same month. Al's aspirations to teach, especially in the areas of critical reasoning and ethics, were rewarded when CSULA hired him as a lecturer to teach an undergraduate course in critical thinking in Spring 2002. Al has taught continuously at CSULA since that time, gradually adding a variety of upper and lower division courses to his teaching load. He also taught an introductory logic class at Glendale Community College in summer 2005; Glendale has hired him to teach the same course again in summer 2006. Al resides in Hermosa Beach, Calif., with his wife, Diana, a restaurant manager, their son, Justin, an artist and production assistant, and dog, Terra. Their daughter Kathryn graduated from Sonoma State University May 2006.

Alessander is presently a "bohemian" suffering from post-traumatic-Lit-disorder after receiving a BA in English. His work is published here and there, with sporadic honors and awards along the way. Somehow he managed to get into The Academy of American Poets, and as such, is now part of the all-knowing, all-powerful, status quo [insert evil laugh here]. Alessander was this close to majoring in philosophy (with interests in aesthetics, ethics, and epistemology) but couldn't quite get into hacky-sack. He habitually uses "funner," to the chagrin of all educated people world-wide. He is possibly searching for a cozy home in which to get a Masters, or god forbid, a PhD. And naturally, as an English major, he has a manuscript (poetry) to unload, etc, etc. He can be contacted at amacias6@calstatela.edu.

Michael Baldo is a MA student at California State University at Los Angeles. Michael previously earned a JD from Pace University School of Law and a BS in computer science from Hofstra University. At CSULA, Michael's studies in philosophy have been fairly diverse, with

his current focus being philosophy of law and Critical Legal Studies. He pays tuition with proceeds earned speaking on and advising clients on computer and internet related law.

Leslie Cain is currently in her junior year at Cal State L.A., combining a major in philosophy with intensive study of classical piano. She delights in allowing these two projects to influence each other, emphasizing the philosophies of art, music, and culture in her academics and using philosophy as inspiration for her playing. Her other favorite activities include dancing and exploring Los Angeles through the public transit system. In the future, Leslie plans to earn her masters degree in philosophy, then move to New York and become a neurotic intellectual ala Woody Allen.

Matthew Darmalingum grew up in England and the Netherlands. He worked in a diaper factory for a while, but didn't like it. He received an undergraduate education in Latin and Greek at the University of Leeds and at Cattolica in Milan. He tried studying Arabic at Leiden, but failed miserably. He taught English in Athens, Izmir, and Cairo. He started lusting after an American woman after he spotted her at Heathrow airport. She lured him back to NYC. They got married and went West. He tried to reinvent himself as a scientist at UC Berkeley. He found he knew nothing about science. He went back to school to study computer science at Santa Monica College, and took some logic classes from one of Mark Balaguer's goons, Robert Jones. Robert Jones said Matthew should go get an MA in Philosophy at CSULA, and become a goon himself. Matthew hopes he is about to achieve goonhood, and finish his MA this spring. He will be starting his PhD this fall, so that one day he can have goons of his own. He likes soccer (at which he is very good), paradoxes, Spacemen 3, and, apparently, writing about himself in the third person.

Kelley Falconer was born and raised in Los Angeles, California. She earned her BA degrees in Environmental Studies and Religious Studies from the University of California, Santa Barbara. Currently working as a private tutor, she is finishing her MA in Philosophy at California State University, Los Angeles. Her future plans include further study in philosophy and education, as well as a career in teaching and writing. Kelley spends her free time hiking, camping, skiing, swimming,

listening to live music, meditating, and traveling.

Joanna Ghosh will be graduating from CSULA in 2006 with a BA in Philosophy and in the near future, she plans to attend law school. Interested in international affairs, she will spend the next year completing an MS in Political Theory at the London School of Economics She is known for her membership in the "The Troika" (consisting of Marissa Amy, Leslie Cain, and herself) and for her vivacious appetite (be it for learning or eating).

Maricruz Huerta-Edinger was born and raised in Mexico City. She received a BA degree in Communications Science from the Metropolitan Autonomous University. She took many art courses at the National School of Fine Arts (San Carlos Academy) where she worked as a Theory of Communications instructor. Since 1997, Maricruz has permanently lived in the United States. She enjoys painting and etching, reading and writing poetry, and writing philosophical essays. She is an MA philosophy student at CSULA. She can be reached at maricruz@lafn.org for comments.

Stephan Margolis is a returning student to the MA program in philosophy. He is living testimony of the importance of finishing your thesis on time (as he now has to retake too many courses due to the lapse of five years). He received a dual BA in philosophy and psychology (CSUN), a Masters in Public Administration (CSUN) and a Masters in Behavioral Science (CSUDH). Subsequently, he taught graduate and undergraduate courses for five years at CSUDH. During this period he also taught internationally and worked on various projects (for over a decade) with the ethnologist Dr. Jane Goodall. He is a graduate of the FBI National Academy and in his current occupation he consults with federal, state and local agencies on national security issues. He intends to use his degree to demonstrate the importance of critical thinking and philosophy in the engagement of national and international issues.

Aaron Mead completed the first leg of his academic journey at Stanford University where he earned a BS (1994) and an M.S. (1995) in civil engineering. After six boring years as a consulting engineer, he entered a Master of Divinity program at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena (which he completed in 2005). Having mastered divinity,

and having discovered how much he enjoys philosophy, Aaron decided to pursue an MA in philosophy at CSULA ("Yes, I do need one more master's degree!"). His main interest is in ethics (especially the history of ethics, virtue ethics, and metaethics), with strong secondary interests in epistemology and philosophy of religion. He recently presented his paper "Non-propositional Knowledge of Persons" at the Inter-mountain West Student Philosophy Conference at the University of Utah. After completing his program at CSULA, Aaron plans to pursue a PhD in philosophy and have three miniature plastic master's diplomas made so he can hang them on his key chain. Aaron is also a grateful husband and father.

Mark Mighnko, a CSULA senior majoring in philosophy asks: Why philosophy? His answer: Well, I first pursued my passion—of all things art. As far as I can remember I was always drawing things as a child, so painting came easy for me. However, at some point I thought paint brush was somewhat limited in communicating what I was feeling so that led me to music-classical guitar. During my musical training I did some traveling and it led me to do some soul-searching. Most significant life-changing experience was my visit to Katmandu, Nepal. I then pursued religious study at Biola University. That led me to Political Science at CSULA, but this led me to philosophy. I am on a philosophical (life) journey to find the meaning of life. I am currently interested in the morals of life and death and the existence of god(s) or God. I am planning to enroll in law school after earning my BA in philosophy. Afterwards, I hope to pursue an MA in philosophy.

Juan-Francisco Palacios was seduced by the Dark Side of the Force and became a servant of the Dark Side—a Philosopher. When that happened, the good naïve boy he was once was destroyed. He's more machine than man now—twisted and evil. Though, when he's not shamelessly quoting Star Wars characters or aspiring to become a Master of the Force, he's quoting Nietzsche and Descartes. He's an animate student of Philosophy at Cal State L.A., currently a junior with the focus on working towards an MA in Philosophy (with a concentration in Meta-ethics), and possibly a PhD further down the road. He is doing his little part to save the world, one footnote at a time.

Eugene Park earned his BA in English from the University of Pennsylvania in 2000, and expects to receive his MA in Philosophy from California State University, Los Angeles, in the summer of 2006. After that, he's headed to Indiana University in Bloomington where he'll try his darndest to earn a PhD in Philosophy. Lately he's been thinking a lot about practical reason, and is currently in the process of writing his master's thesis, tentatively entitled *Incommensurability, Incomparability, and Rational Choice*. His broader research interests include normative ethics, meta-ethics, moral psychology, and related topics in philosophy of mind and philosophy of action. When time permits, he also dabbles occasionally in Eastern metaphysics and ancient Greek philosophy. One day he hopes to fuse these interests somehow into a coherent worldview that is neither too mystical nor too mundane. He also hopes one day to have a job, preferably as a philosopher.

Rodolfo Plascencia is currently pursuing an MA in both Political Science and Philosophy here at Cal State L.A. His interests are in political philosophy, political economy, ethics, hermeneutics, theology, and epistemology—to name a few. Rodolfo's aspiration is to earn a PhD someday so that he may be allowed the privilege to illuminate countless of students as well to earn the certification necessary to publish—he does have much to say. Rodolfo is proud of his Mexican heritage and also of the fact that he has not had a 'silver spoon'; much of what he knows has in great part come from his own independent studies—in short, he is a self-made man. His lack of excesses compelled him to excess in what much of our society lacks: knowledge and understanding. He says to the downtrodden Mexican brethren what Cuauhtémoc would have been proud of, "Oknepa Mexikatl!"—náhuatl para, ¡adelanté Méxicano!

Lee Schneider will earn his BA in philosophy in the graduating class of 2006 at CSULA. His research interests include the history of philosophy in the 20th century, pragmatism, postmodernism, social & political philosophy, epistemology, philosophy of science, philosophy of language, and Nietzsche. After graduation, Lee plans to live the decadent rock star lifestyle by touring the world with his band Groundfloor. However, recognizing that success in this field is highly implausible despite the obvious paradigm-shattering character of Groundfloor's music, Lee ultimately (and happily) plans to pursue graduate level work

in philosophy.

Gerardo Villaseñor earned a BA from Pomona College in Philosophy and History. He is currently in the last stages of earning his MA in philosophy from CSULA. His masters thesis is on Richard Rorty's antirepresentationalism and its political consequences. For the past 13 years he has taught History and Introduction to Philosophy courses at Don Bosco Technical Institute in Rosemead, CA. His interests in philosophy include epistemology, metaphysics, Marxism, Critical Theory, and the continental/analytic divide. In his spare time he enjoys chasing his two children, Laura Isabel and Mattias, around the house and goaltending for his ice hockey team.

Omar Zubair Awaken from a comfortable dream into a wanderlust nightmare; I've suddenly grown a thousand arms and a hundred eyes. and this beast-that-I've-become bellows from the aches of an ever-emptying digestive tract. and upon hearing my own voice, the half-thought of recognition/unrecognition resonating between two new ears and two familiar ones fulfills itself through the realization that this is not a dream within a dream, but rather a Deleuzian becoming-aware that echoes that other primal scream—the one in which placenta-filled lungs released a new hunger for air. Sustained in this moment is an almost uncontrollable grappling and grasping of all those previously unaccounted for appendages toward any sudden movement: and architecture and economics and music and physics and genealogy and… …and that sustained moment, this sustained moment, is philosophy—that which works upon the self, as opposed to, merely, that which the self works upon. and in this way philosophy has been a process, and not a goal, that compels and informs each of my projects, from the book that I'm writing to my two music/performance groups to a list of socio-political activities that seem necessary if I'm to retain a claim to humanity.

"The Shallows of a Shadowed Thought" *photo by Omar Zubair*

A man sets himself the task of portraying the world. Through the years he peoples a space with images of provinces, kingdoms, mountains, bays, ships, islands, fishes, rooms, instruments, stars, horses, and people. Shortly before his death, he discovers that the patient labyrinth of lines traces the image of his face.

[Jorge Luis Borges “Dreamtigers”]

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All manuscripts should be prepared in concordance with the *Chicago Manual of Style*; information regarding this format is available on-line at http://www.calstatela.edu/library/styleman.htm.

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