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5th Annual International Symposium on
Religion & Theology

25-28 May 2020, Athens, Greece

Edited by
Gregory T. Papanikos

2020

Abstracts
5th Annual International
Symposium on Religion &
Theology
25-28 May 2020, Athens,
Greece

Edited by Gregory T. Papanikos

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Preface

This book includes the abstracts of all the papers presented at the *5th Annual International Symposium on Religion & Theology (25-28 May 2020)*, organized by the Athens Institute for Education and Research (ATINER).

A full conference program can be found before the relevant abstracts. In accordance with ATINER's Publication Policy, the papers presented during this conference will be considered for inclusion in one of ATINER's many publications.

The purpose of this abstract book is to provide members of ATINER and other academics around the world with a resource through which to discover colleagues and additional research relevant to their own work. This purpose is in congruence with the overall mission of the association. ATINER was established in 1995 as an independent academic organization with the mission to become a forum where academics and researchers from all over the world could meet to exchange ideas on their research and consider the future developments of their fields of study.

It is our hope that through ATINER's conferences and publications, Athens will become a place where academics and researchers from all over the world regularly meet to discuss the developments of their discipline and present their work. Since 1995, ATINER has organized more than 400 international conferences and has published nearly 200 books. Academically, the institute is organized into 6 divisions and 37 units. Each unit organizes at least one annual conference and undertakes various small and large research projects.

For each of these events, the involvement of multiple parties is crucial. I would like to thank all the participants, the members of the organizing and academic committees, and most importantly the administration staff of ATINER for putting this conference and its subsequent publications together. Specific individuals are listed on the following page.

Gregory T. Papanikos
President

**5th Annual International Symposium on Religion &
Theology, 25-28 May 2020, Athens, Greece**

Scientific Committee

All ATINER's conferences are organized by the Academic Council. This conference has been organized with the assistance of the following academic members of ATINER, who contributed by chairing the conference sessions and/or by reviewing the submitted abstracts and papers:

1. Gregory T. Papanikos, President, ATINER & Honorary Professor, University of Stirling, U.K.
2. William O'Meara, Academic Member, ATINER & Professor, Department of Philosophy and Religion, James Madison University, USA.
3. Patricia Hanna, Head, Philosophy Unit of ATINER & Professor, University of Utah, USA.

FINAL CONFERENCE PROGRAM
5th Annual International Symposium on Religion & Theology, 25-28
May 2020, Athens, Greece

PROGRAM

Monday 25 May 2020

11.30-12.30
Registration

12.30-13.00

Opening and Welcoming Remarks:

- **Gregory T. Papanikos**, President, ATINER
 - **Patricia Hanna**, Professor, University of Utah, USA.
-

13.00-13.30

Ignacio Garcia Pena, Assistant Professor, University of Salamanca, Spain.

Title: All Things Flow and All Is One: Plato's Depiction of Heraclitus and Parmenides. (PowerPoint)

13.30-14.00

Shai Frogel, Associate Professor, Kibbutzim College of Education, Technology and the Arts, Israel.

Title: Free Will: Objective and Subjective Perspectives. (PowerPoint)

14:00-14:40

Laurynas Jacevičius, Ph.D. Student, Vilnius University, Lithuania.

Title: Humour in Contemporary Christian Apologetics Using Social Media. (PowerPoint)

14:40-15:20

Wilfried Ver Eecke, Professor, Georgetown University, USA.

Title: Breaking through Schizophrenia. Lacan and Hegel for Talk Therapy.

15:20-15:50

Ori Soltes, Teaching Professor, Georgetown University, USA.

Title: From the Euthyphro to Theodicy: The Problem of Language and God.

15:50-16:30

Gary Percesepe, Adjunct Professor, Fordham University, USA.

Title: Radical Philosophy: Debord, Merton, Trump and the State of the Spectacle.

16:30-17:00

Dylan Skurka, PhD Student, York University, Canada.

Title: Socrates' Complicated Relationship with the Sophists. (PowerPoint)

17:00-17:30

Meredith Drees, Chair, Department of Religion and Philosophy, Kansas Wesleyan University, USA.

Title: Sin, Death, and Moral Growth in Iris Murdoch's Discussion of Art. (PowerPoint)

17:30-18:10

Meredith McFadden, Assistant Professor, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, USA.

Title: When is it Wrong NOT to Have a Child? (PowerPoint)

18:10-18:30

Tennyson Samraj, Professor, Burman University, Canada.

Title: Right to Life/Live – Core Tenets and the Inalienability Question.

18:30-19:10

Mark Morelli, Distinguished Professor, Loyola Marymount University, USA.

Title: Plato's Gorgias: Uncovering the Spiritual Corruption of a Respectable Man.

19:10-19:40

Hugh Deery, Term Instructor, University of Alaska Anchorage, USA.

Title: From Hawking to Nagarjuna: Interdisciplinary Infusion Tactics as a Means of Meeting Challenges, in a Competitive Work Environment.

19:40-20:10

Pavel Stankov, Graduate Assistant, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, USA.

Title: The Ontological Primacy of Life as an Argument against Abortion. (PowerPoint)

Tuesday 26 May 2020

12:30-13:00

Daniela Matysová, PhD Student, Charles University, Czech Republic.

Title: Emmanuel Levinas: Beauty and its Evil

13:00-13:30

Marko Jakic, Postdoctoral Researcher, University of Split, Croatia.

Title: Ethical Actuality of Kant's Categorical Imperative. (PowerPoint)

14:00-14:30

Carlos Correia, Associate Professor, University of Lisbon, Portugal.

Title: Redefinition of Art: A New Aesthetical Proposal.

14:30-15:00

Andrew Ward, Lecturer, University of York, UK.

Title: Kant and Hume on the Judgment of Taste.

15:00-15:30

Angela Michelis, Teacher, "G. Peano - S. Pellico" High School in Cuneo (Grammar and Scientific Lyceum), Italy.

Title: The Idea of Justice: Between Eros and Thanatos.

15:30-16:00

Thomas Auxter, Associate Professor, University of Florida, USA.

Title: Socrates at Eleusis: Existential Questions.

16:00-16:30

Katherine Cooklin, Professor, Slippery Rock University, USA.

Title: Ignorance, Epistemic Injustice, and Rape Myths.

16:30-17:00

William O'Meara, Professor, James Madison University, USA.

Title: Dewey on Moral Principles as Hypotheses (PowerPoint)

17:00-17:40

Chin-Tai Kim, Professor, Case Western Reserve University, USA.

Title: Rethinking the Foundation of Normative Ethics.

17:40-18:10

Peter Simpson, Professor, The City University of New York, USA.

Title: A Suggestion for Abortion Laws. (PowerPoint)

18:10-18:40

Katerina Psaroudaki, Doctor of Philosophy, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, USA.

Title: Group Reparations and Race-Conscious Affirmative Action.

Thomas Auxter

Associate Professor, University of Florida, USA

Socrates at Eleusis: Existential Questions

For Socrates, existential commitments in life shape his beliefs and actions. One such commitment is well-known. In the *Apology*, we find an existential statement in his response to what he took to be the deliverance of the Oracle of Delphi. By saying no one was wiser, the Oracle effectively gave him what he needed to continue on a path of questioning those who claimed to have knowledge of the truth. This was his own distinctive, existential commitment for an authentic life. Here we find a Socrates who values autonomy in fashioning a life of inquiry and wants always to follow the argument where it leads. However, it is also important to recognize other values affecting his choices and his identity. It is clear that the procession to Eleusis, and the values associated with it, are at the center of his thinking about choices in life. This is evident, for example, in his speech at the end of *Politeia*, a dialogue exploring all sides of human relations. Socrates not only tells the story of the myth of the cave to emphasize the value of autonomy; he also tells the story of the myth of *Er*, drawing conclusions about important life values. Here the value of community and building relationships with others is paramount. Indeed, the similarities between the journey in the myth of *Er* and the procession to Eleusis are striking. This reveals how important Eleusis was for Socrates. In both cases, those assembled move in a procession with others to make the ultimate choice in life. Along the way, they have plenty of opportunities to engage with others in dialogue and deliberation to consider the kind of life that is best. Participants realize that self-knowledge is inseparable from knowledge of how others have come to make choices and how they evaluate their experiences. Self-knowledge requires learning from others what they have experienced. We learn why they have chosen to reject what are for them false assumptions and false promises about life. We thereby avoid mistakes and overcome problems. Self-knowledge develops from this fundamental quest for orientation – with consequences for thinking, values, and judgement. At the end of the procession, it is time to choose fates. Those who learn from their experiences, and deliberate carefully, choose modest lives, with an emphasis on living well with others. A self that begins the journey in relation to others, ends that journey by turning into a relational self, one deeply interconnected with others. Commitments to values of

intellectual integrity, self-knowledge, and community are what an authentically human existence means for Socrates. In the body of the paper, I develop these themes and raise questions about what existential commitments mean for Socrates. In notes, the reader will find a literature review discussing the historical evidence for what occurred in and around the procession. The list of scholars includes Jane Ellen Harrison, George Mylonas, Karoly Kerényi, J.W. Roberts, Frank Snowden, Walter Burkert, and Eva C. Keuls.

Katherine Cooklin

Professor, Slippery Rock University, USA

Ignorance, Epistemic Injustice, and Rape Myths

I describe the relation between the epistemology of ignorance and epistemic injustices that women may face due to widely held rape myths. I suggest that in a patriarchal society, there exists a sexist epistemology of ignorance that scaffolds rape culture and influences the meaning of rape and sexual assault. The persistence and durability of these myths operate to actively construct an epistemology of ignorance that perpetuates male privilege and harms women not only because women are often assigned credibility deficits when telling their stories, but they are also harmed in their capacity to make sense of their experiences as rape or assault because myths restrict or diminish the conceptual resources available to them. In particular, I will address the relationship between functional beliefs that are influenced by rape myths, and the ways in which rape myths may contribute to two types of epistemic injustice identified by Miranda Fricker, testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice. I will address how rape myths widen the gap between the legal and promulgated rule of rape and the concepts used to interpret one's own experiences, and the role that rape myths play in the uneven distribution of epistemic resources such that interpretive concepts are available to some but not to others due to the distortion of widely held myths. Fricker's (2007) model of hermeneutical injustice focuses primarily on the absence of shared cultural resources, facts or concepts, necessary to adequately identify and make sense of one's experience. But what about examples where concepts do exist, are codified in law and yet appear to be unavailable as epistemic resources to some? Many women, particularly those who are of college age, experience acts that fully meet the legal definition and concept of rape or assault, and yet they fail to acknowledge their experience as rape or sexual assault. Fricker's model of hermeneutical injustice requires there be a conceptual lacuna, which raises the question of whether there can be a hermeneutical injustice regarding unacknowledged rape given that the concept of rape does exist. Jenkins argues that because of rape myths, the share of conceptual resources is genuinely compromised. There is an intelligibility deficit, so that they are unable to render their own experience intelligible as sexual violence. I argue that sexual violence myths alone are not sufficient to account for unacknowledged rape as a hermeneutical injustice, rather they are bolstered by neoliberal narratives of individual risk management.

Together they undermine women's ability to render their experience intelligible as sexual violence by inculpating victims of that violence and obscuring conceptual resources better suited to transforming rape culture.

Carlos Correia

Associate Professor, University of Lisbon, Portugal

Redefinition of Art: A New Aesthetical Proposal

The thesis we will argue is that any technical object can be interpreted as a no-technical work of art and thus be included in the set of art-objects themselves. We know that an appreciable number of artefacts or media are created to enhance their intrinsic properties, immediately making “visible” or “audible” features that in a sense are worth themselves, and thus this type of media is usually classified as a “genuine work of art”. However, ultimately, what constitutes something like a “real work of art” is an “aesthetical-institutional” decision to interpret any artefact as art. In the limit, there are no genuinely intrinsic artistic properties, but, as Danto pointed out, they are seen as such, which allows any humanly manipulated object – an artefact – to become a sufficient (non-technical) work of art. Original works of art are often the result of a certain kind of interpretation that “suspends” its practical purpose and focuses on the experience itself. Not everything can be a genuine work of art as it escapes human manipulation. The Messier 51a galaxy, also known as the “vortex galaxy”, is gorgeous and can be the subject of beautiful works of art such as photographs, but hardly, until proven otherwise, can itself be the object of any human manipulation. It is no technical art object *prima facie* – like a “garden” for instance –, and of course, there is no condition that allows it to be interpreted as a “genuine work of art”. In the absence of a better term, we can designate this philosophy of art as a theory that insists on the ‘as if’ (*als ob*) aspect, using an expression popularized by Hans Vaihinger.

Hugh Deery

Term Instructor, University of Alaska Anchorage, USA

**From Hawking to Nagarjuna:
Interdisciplinary Infusion Tactics as a Means of Meeting
Challenges, in a Competitive Work Environment**

The tremendous diversity in background and preparation of the student population of the University of Alaska Anchorage presents a unique set of challenges to delivering accessible content. Interdisciplinary learning methods are well-researched, effective means of meeting these challenges and can be implemented in online, hybrid, and conventional classroom settings. Unfortunately, the current political climate of not only our university, but many universities in the United States, makes it challenging to implement a number of these teaching styles. An infusion style of interdisciplinary learning can help avoid worrying about how to schedule and pay instructors from other departments, inconsistency in course content, reimbursement complications, requirement designation, the threat of loss of student population to another department, or being collapsed into another department altogether. Deliberately selecting hand-tailored examples based on researched assessment of student demographics, from disciplines that students focus on or engage elsewhere, infused into standard curriculum, can illustrate cross-disciplinary connections in a way that contributes to successful and fruitful application of concepts and theories outside of the use of classical formulations and examples. Actively using examples from anything from theoretical physics to Buddhism not only makes it apparent that philosophy applies to a variety of different fields but it can also expand discussion by allowing students who specialize in a different discipline or cultural background to take a lead in conversation. And, with any luck, this can establish a relationship between philosophy and a contemporary or personal interest with the student.

Meredith Drees

Chair, Department of Religion and Philosophy, Kansas Wesleyan
University, USA

Sin, Death, and Moral Growth in Iris Murdoch's Discussion of Art

In Iris Murdoch's view regarding the connection between Ethics and Aesthetics, the notion of a loving respect for an individual reality other than oneself is something that is relevant to all forms of art. However, she insists that the highest form of art is tragedy, "because its subject-matter is the most important and most individual that we know" (S&G 54). Usually, the artist strives to create something that is self-contained and self-explanatory, but what makes the art of tragedy "disturbing" is that self-contained form is combined with something that defies form, namely, "the individual being and destiny of human persons" (S&G 55). The aim of my paper is to examine why, exactly, Murdoch suggests that this is the case. I shall discuss Murdoch's arguments regarding the art of tragedy, and I shall argue that, on her view, both the idea of original sin and tragedy concern the difference between suffering and death. Sin, she says, is "the evasion of the idea of death" (MGM 104). If, on the other hand, we acknowledge death, this will lead us to morality. That is, acknowledging the fact that part of our human condition is that we will die, leads to a humbling of the self, and in turn a death of the ego. I suggest that if sin is the evasion of the idea of death, it would make sense to say that, for Murdoch, sin also evades the defeat of the ego, and, hence, part of sinning just is acting in accordance with egotistic fantasies. With this in mind, I shall argue that, for Murdoch, the idea of death and the realization of it plays a role in defeating the ego; i.e., the selfish part of us. Since, for Murdoch, becoming moral involves becoming selfless, the experience of tragedy may motivate moral growth in a person.

Shai Frogel

Associate Professor, Kibbutzim College of Education, Technology and
the Arts, Israel

Free Will: Objective and Subjective Perspectives

Natural sciences considered being not only the model of true science, but no less the best source of knowledge about the world. Therefore, scientific researches of the mind take the direction of natural science and intend identifying the mind, which is a faculty, with the brain, which is an empirical object. In this context, an immaterial and non-deterministic phenomenon, such as free will, could be easily rejected as an illusion. Does adopting the perspective of natural science necessitate rejecting the existence of free will? Should this perspective be exclusive when we examine the existence of free will? Kant's analysis of objective knowledge demonstrates why the determinism of natural science cannot exclude the possibility of free will. It does it by making a clear distinction between ontology, which is a knowledge on the nature of the world, and objective knowledge, which is knowledge on the world as it appears in our consciousness. Kant goes further and shows that although we cannot prove the existence of free will it is more rational to assume it than to reject it; he justifies this claim by analysing our moral thinking. Existentialism insists that we should not ignore our first-person perspective, which is more crucial for understanding our mental life than the third-person perspective of objective science. Sartre takes us to our personal experience for showing that our existence involves freedom that we cannot ignore. This is the meaning of his well-known provocative claim that 'Man is condemned to be free'. This freedom, Sartre claims, is the origin of our existential anxiety but also the origin of our ethical responsibility. The paper claims, by basing on Kant's and Sartre's philosophical analyses, that since the existence of free will cannot be excluded by objective science and cannot be ignored in our subjective experience, it is more reasonable to assume it than to reject it.

Ignacio Garcia Pena

Assistant Professor, University of Salamanca, Spain

**All Things Flow and All Is One:
Plato's Depiction of Heraclitus and Parmenides**

In many studies, it is common to find a contrast between the philosophies of Heraclitus and Parmenides, since the former is presented as the philosopher of change and becoming, while the latter appears to be the philosopher of unity and permanence. This paper aims to show that the origin of this interpretation is to be found in the Platonic dialogues, in which the author adapts someone else's thoughts by putting them at the service of his dramatic and philosophical intentions. However, if we analyze the fragments of both pre-Socratic philosophers carefully, we will find not only many similarities between the two of them, but also significant differences with regard to what can be read in Plato's works. As it happens with other authors, such as Homer, the sophists or even Socrates, it is very likely that his peculiar reading is not the result of a confusion or lack of knowledge, but a dramatic tool used by the philosopher with his usual mastery. Since antiquity, Plato's version of Heraclitus and Parmenides has been interpreted too literally, which partially obscured our understanding of those great pre-Socratic thinkers.

Laurynas Jacevičius

Ph.D. Student, Vilnius University, Lithuania

Humour in Contemporary Christian Apologetics Using Social Media

The paper aims to overview and evaluate the implementation of humour in contemporary Christian apologetics using social media. This is done, first, by providing and explaining the definitions of apologetics and humour, as well as pointing out various problems related to Christian ethics. It is later shown, however, that it is possible to resolve them, as well as argued that both humour and apologetics can serve as appropriate ways to love God and one's neighbour. Thus, not only overcoming the issues raised but also finding a legitimate place for humour, which has been unduly neglected and even despised, in the Christian worldview and behaviour. Later, the concept of social media is analyzed, with references to such authors as Maurizio Ferraris and Valeria Martino, as well as Alberto Romele and Enrico Terrone, providing a discussion about their traits and significance. The paper reveals that, even though, social media provide a wide range of opportunities to share and receive information, by mediating the relationship between the communicator and the receiver they also raise new challenges. Mediation, in fact, is double, given that humour works as a mediator, as well. This causes problems for the desired goals – to attract attention and to present the Christian faith convincingly, which are tried to be solved by employing Kierkegaard's ideas.

Marko Jakic

Postdoctoral Researcher, University of Split, Croatia

Ethical Actuality of Kant's Categorical Imperative

The presentation deals with Kant's founding of ethics. Kant's categorical imperative was viewed as one of the dividing lines in the philosophy of morality. It was therefore viewed as the dividing line between ethical intuitionism and ethical relativism. Namely, until today there is no significant contemporary ethical theory that has not addressed this imperative. And so that it was: a) completely rejected, b) only partially challenged, c) fully accepted. This imperative was considered within the framework of the following theses: (a1) Historical relativism The thesis according to which the categorical imperative, as an ontological pins and the principle of moral judgment, is set as an extra-historical constant, and in an epistemological sense does not refer to anything in objective reality. Adorno's and Habermas's objections were considered in this regard. (a2) Ontological ambiguity: The thesis that the categorical imperative is unclear, since it is ontologically based on an unknowable (transcendent) thing in itself (Ding an Sich). According to this thesis The mode of ontological grounding leads Kant's philosophy to the claim that there are unknowable causes that govern human behavior (how nortmeno,r). Sidgwick's objection was considered in this regard. (b) Psychological interpretation: The thesis according to which the categorical imperative is metaphysically established as an expression of speculative assumptions. Therefore, this imperative, with the help of psychological scientific interpretation, should be fitted into an empirical setting of mentality. c) Ethical intuitionism: The thesis that the categorical imperative is established as a statement of our intuitive ability to distinguish between moral good and evil. So, this imperative provides sufficient reason for intuitively establishing the foundation of philosophical reflection on morality. in this sense, Rawls's view was considered as an example of the construction of a social contract; based on the intuition of justice as the moral value. Under the subtitle: 'The Limits of Historical Relativization' (a1) objections were considered. The objection of 'formality' addressed to the part of the categorical imperative which defines it as 'general law' is critically considered. Also, the objection of 'mono logical-quality' addressed to the part of the categorical imperative that defines it as 'imperative claim is critically considered. Hegel's objection to this imperative is particularly singled out since Hegel's philosophy- does not belong to historical moral relativism. Under the subtitle: 'The Limits

of Ontological Ambiguity, the (a2) objection was considered. With the help of an analysis of Kant's views, Sidgwick's objection was rejected as unfounded. Under the subtitle: 'The Limits of Psychological Interpretation', (b) thesis was considered. In intuitionistic-oriented contemporary philosophy of psychology; the epistemological value of the categorical imperative is recognized. But it is emphasized that contemporary psychology does not have such a theoretical explanatory power Explanatory power by which it could be able to express a philosophically understood intuition of morality in a 'more scientific' way. In conclusion, the (c) thesis was discussed; in an attempt to prove the relevance of Kant's categorical imperative as an historical source of the foundation-oriented contemporary philosophy of morality. Kants notion of 'unconditioned good' (das Unbedingt Guten) was crucial here.

Chin-Tai Kim

Professor, Case Western Reserve University, USA

Rethinking the Foundation of Normative Ethics

Few would dispute that normative ethics needs a foundation. But whence and how such a foundation originates and how its constituent elements should relate to concrete human moral life are complex issues. The expression “The foundation of normative ethics” carries the implication that the beliefs and values belonging to the foundation must be consciously presupposed and brought to concrete existential contexts to occasion, support or justify moral judgments or decisions by agents—persons or institutions. Many traditional philosophical systems portray a mode of human existence characterized by consistent applications of relevant elements of a system to concrete moral life. But from the other end of reflective perspective on human moral life comes a portrayal of human subjects-agents making moral judgments, decisions or actions with little better than situational justification with intuition or inclination.. A comparative critique of contending ontologies of human life with a moral dimension presents itself as a weighty foundational task. Should a moral act be viewed as an occasion to apply and fortify a worldview with justificatory tools one already has, as a Kairos for deliberate but free choice of it along with an entire supportive framework, as a moment in a teleological process toward an “absolute” resolution, or as an occasion to optimally solve a problem with whatever effective tools that can be found and put to use? And what principles, if any, should guide such a critique and whence do they come? A special concern in the handling of these issues will be to clarify once again how being moral.

Daniela Matysová

PhD Student, Charles University, Czech Republic

**Emmanuel Levinas:
Beauty and its Evil**

Main aim of this paper is to present a philosophical exploration of the nature of aesthetic experience in the work of french philosopher Emmanuel Levinas. My attention is going to be paid mainly to the problem of Levinas's strong condemnation of some aesthetic phenomena - nevertheless not all of them. The reason behind is that Levinas explored two possible but radically contrary conceptions of aesthetic experience. Without the effort of closer examination of the reason of this division, we are going to be concentrated directly to the question of second Levinas's determination of aesthetic experience: why does Levinas equal some sort of aesthetic experience with the possibility of escape from the world of efforts and sufferings which we undergo to take care of our neighbours - from the the ordinary world of responsibility - to the world of dreams, illusions and cowardice? I am going to show that we need to uncover the underlying context of this problematic, namely Levinas's philosophical polemic with Martin Heidegger's ontology and explain properly its implicit connection with the Levinas's critique of aesthetic experience in order to solve our problem of aesthetic immorality. The necessity of clearing this connection between Levinas aesthetics and criticism of ontology is manifested since publishing Levinas's major work *Otherwise than being or beyond essence* where Levinas examines his idea that aesthetic experience is giving access to the „being itself“ - key notion of Heidegger's philosophy. Nevertheless without any doubt, if Levinas de facto accepts this Heidegger's own description of the aesthetic experience he does it only to change radically the overall conclusion: this experience of being itself, different from the ordinary everyday experience (which is to be defined, according to phenomenological tradition, as based on consciouss activity of identifying and objectifying comprehension), is not the opening of the process of „transcendence“ itself, is not something of the highest value for our lives - but the opposite. My intention is to demonstrate that if, according to Levinas, the aesthetic experience is extra-ordinary exactly thanks to its ability to leads us beyond the scope of ordinary thinking - and if this simultaneously means that we are returning to the experience of pure being - it has to mean that the aesthetic experience is only reprehensible regress to the thoughtless naivity.

Meredith McFadden

Assistant Professor, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, USA

When is it Wrong NOT to Have a Child?

Becoming a parent is not a morally neutral decision. There are better and worse ways of deciding to become a parent. The more medical technology advances, the more choices for the manner in which we can become parents will be available, and thereby more ways in which we can go wrong. In vitro fertilization paired with preimplantation genetic diagnosis allows parents to choose amongst potential embryos, prenatal testing allows parents to know more about their pregnancies, and the development of genetic editing via CRISPR points to a future of design that opens up further choice. With these choices come questions of the permissibility of making selections between potential parenting relationships. Deciding to become a parent to certain potential children but not others draws out tensions in our understanding of the morality of the parental relationship itself. It is common for potential parents to screen for medical conditions in their children using current technology. In debates in biomedical ethics concerning the choice of potential parents to select against certain conditions that would lead to their child experiencing a life of more disadvantages, the focus has been on child-centered reasons. In noting this and expanding the discussion, I hope to make progress in articulating the framework of discussing the permissible attitudes towards advantage and disadvantage in a potential child's life. Considerations that indicate the possibility of a child's flourishing seem appropriately relevant to parental choice. In this paper, I articulate the moral landscape of parental choice in terms of child-centered and parent-centered reasons and the conditionality of the commitment of parenthood. When the focus of the choice is on the child's flourishing, I suggest, as it is in child-centered reasons, then a potential parent is morally satisfactory so long as they meet epistemic standards of assessing that flourishing. The troubling forms of deliberation come in when parent-centered reasons are employed in particular manners. I articulate these deliberations as parent-centered conditional opting-in considerations. When someone decides to have a child conditionally, and the conditions rest on parent-centered considerations rather than child-centered ones, this is where the morally dubious attitudes arise, I argue. With this suggestion, we can make sense of the tension between the lines of discussion in disability rights that point towards the permissibility of advocating against smoking and drinking during

pregnancy while dissuading parents from selecting against children that have the conditions that such behaviors lead to. This framework also aids in understanding the conditions in which vectors of disadvantage such as gender identity, race, sexual orientation, and ability function similarly or come apart in permissible parental deliberation.

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**The Idea of Justice:
Between Eros and Thanatos**

Eros and Thanatos are impulses that have both revealed themselves to be evidently present in human action since the beginning of history and which Kultur tries to embed through rules of coexistence and education. However, for the sheer fact of existing the human being is involved in the often violent dynamics of the struggle for survival. This fight characterizes the natural world of which every living being is a part. On the other hand, equally evident in history is the action of men under the sign of free will, of independence from sensitive impulses to the point of self-sacrifice for others or for an idea. In the face of this, the questions on the ultimate meaning of human life reopen the perennial mystery of mankind. Life, in fact, has its roots in organic matter with its needing laws, but at the same time it transcends them continuously in desires and actions. In the contemporary world, whether human beings can answer such questions only in a private way, in the singularity of their conscience and their reflection, or rather, they can go back to confronting universal wisdom and finding comfort in it, is becoming an ever more pressing and excruciating issue. Can a renewed search for Dike, as a law of harmony on a rational and universal basis, still be a shareable goal?

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Plato's Gorgias: Uncovering the Spiritual Corruption of a Respectable Man

Plato's *Gorgias* is remarkable for a variety of reasons. First, the likely date of its composition suggests that it may have been written by a Plato deeply angered by an unflattering revisionist account of Socrates' conviction and execution circulated by Polycrates while Plato was away from Athens. It might be an attempt to correct the record and to expose the real reasons for Socrates' execution. Secondly, despite the fact that the dialogue is named for Gorgias, the father of rhetoric, and was given the Thrasyllan subtitle "On Rhetoric," the reader discovers quickly that Gorgias plays only a small role in the dialogue and is replaced by a follower and author of rhetoric textbooks Polus, and that Polus, in turn, is replaced almost as quickly by the politician Callicles. The bulk of Socrates' conversation is with Callicles and is not about rhetoric but contrasts a life devoted to the pursuit of pleasure with one devoted to the pursuit of the good. Thirdly, none of Plato's anaretic/agonistic dialogues is as emphatically refutatory and polemical. The *Gorgias* is distinguished by the undertow of violence throughout, and each interlocutor is more volatile than his predecessor. Fourthly, while Socrates never succeeds in converting his opponents, no other dialogue concludes with so radical and hostile a standoff. Fifthly, Callicles is the only figure besides the Athenian Stranger in Plato's dialogues of whom we've found no historical trace. The odd early disappearance of Gorgias after whom the dialogue is named, the dominant role of Callicles, the complete abandonment of the discussion of rhetoric, the ever-increasing volatility of the interlocutors, the radical final opposition, the absence of evidence of Callicles' existence, and the unique structure of the dialogue - three conversations with three apparently quite different interlocutors - all have puzzled commentators. Dodds speculated that, despite their apparent differences, the interlocutors represent one force, are spiritually akin, that each subsequent interlocutor is the "spiritual heir" of the preceding one, and that the dialogue progresses from the superficial to the fundamental. His hypothesis has merit. I shall go farther than Dodds and propose that the three interlocutors are layers of the one personality, Gorgias, after whom the dialogue is therefore appropriately named, and that Plato is peeling away its outer layers, as one peels an onion, moving inward from its surface features to reveal

its corrupt spiritual core. Instead of thinking of Polus and Callicles as “spiritual heirs” of Gorgias, it may be better to think of Gorgias and Polus as “spiritual descendants” or emanations of Callicles. On this view, Plato’s Gorgias exposes gradually the fundamentally aberrant core of Gorgias who, blissfully ignorant of his own aberrance, stands in radical opposition to the Socratic personality and is also obviously complicit in its execution. Perhaps we find no historical traces of Callicles, not because he died young, a victim of his violent temperament, as some speculate, but because he’s actually a depiction of the darkest depths of the historical Gorgias. So it is, perhaps, that spatial framing of the Gorgias is minimal and an almost magical movement from ‘outside’ to ‘inside’.

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Dewey on Moral Principles as Hypotheses

In John Dewey's Pragmatist theory of knowledge, all truths whether theoretical principles or practical moral guidelines are hypotheses that need to be tested. We focus on moral principles. Dewey is arguing that moral principles, whether they are negative prohibitions such as "do not take an innocent human life" or positive guidelines such as "do seek the good of marriage according to one's mature and free choice" are not absolute moral truths but only tentative, hypothetical guidelines that need to be tested in their moral appropriateness for specific application to our lives. This paper proposes to examine: detailed examples of (1) negative and (2) positive moral rules to see if they are in fact better interpreted as hypotheses in need of testing in our lives rather than as absolute rules, and then, (3) to examine with George Herbert Mead why theoretical and, especially, moral principles are well conceived of as hypotheses. (1) We will consider four rules, (a) against harm to human beings, (b) against suicide and active euthanasia, (c) allowing capital punishment for the most serious of crimes, and (d) the 1896 Supreme Court decision allowing African-American children to be excluded from white schools, and we will find that none of these rules are absolute, allowing no exceptions. (2) We will consider four examples of positive moral ideals or rules and how they may be evaluated as moral hypotheses, not as absolute rules allowing no exceptions. (a) We look at the ideal of heterosexual marriage and how it has been expanded as a fundamental human right applying to the LGBT and Q community. (b) We examine the ideal age for mature and free consent to marriage and find reasonable variations amongst the states. (c) We consider the ideal for protecting free and mature consent for marriage in the states and find reasonable variations in how this ideal of free and continuing mature consent may be protected and enhanced. (d) Finally, we consider Aristotle's famous conceptualization of virtue as the art of living, suited to the individual as a person of practical wisdom would decide, and we have emphasized that there is no mathematical calculation of this art by any individual. (3) Fesmire suggests the importance of Dewey's agreement with George Herbert Mead on our need to understand sympathy's key role in our understanding of the interaction of the self with the other for ethical deliberation in order to understand why moral principles are hypotheses, always in need of testing. For Mead

understands the self as a process of the “I” taking on a “Me,” a social role which is always being tested through all our interactions with our social others. However, Fesmire does not use the thought of Mead to elaborate a pragmatic understanding of moral deliberation as imaginative, dramatic rehearsal [Fesmire, pp. 66, 81]. It is precisely this pragmatic understanding of moral deliberation as imaginative, dramatic rehearsal which this paper develops from Mead’s grasp of the self as involving both the “I” and the “Me”.

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Radical Philosophy: Debord, Merton, Trump and the State of the Spectacle

This paper explores and extends Guy Debord's contention in *La société du spectacle* (1967) that in societies where modern conditions of production prevail, life is presented as an immense accumulation of spectacles. I explore strategies of resistance to the domination systems of the spectacle, comparing and contrasting Debord's radical praxis with French-born Thomas Merton (1915-1968), a Trappist monk whose key insight involves a demarcation between the "false self" and the "true self." The name "Trump" enacts a spectacle of daily life wherein the spectators of an ongoing reality TV show – the only show playing on the one channel available, which is impossible to turn off – participate in the making and shaping of unreality, click-baiting more and more unreality into their world, even as they are more and more separated from the truth. This process of auto-colonization reveals how wrong (if well-intentioned) Orwell was about "Big Brother." Big Brother is not watching you, Big Brother is You, Watching. The spectacle is tautological; its means are simultaneously its ends. In itself, the spectacle is an affirmation of appearance, disappearance, and reappearance. The spectacle operates with public consent to and passive acceptance of its monopoly of appearance. The auto-colonizing nature of this consent is seen in the fact that we click for more, we hunger for more of it and there is always more to be seen of spectacle: it is a sun which never sets over the empire of modern passivity, covering the entire surface of the world and basking endlessly in its own glory; the spectacle aims at nothing other than itself. How Debord and Merton practiced self-care in the society of the spectacle, extending the critique of falseness from the embodied self to the state of extended false consciousness which is the condition of modern life, is the subject of this paper. As such, the paper points to one possible trajectory – a "new image" of philosophy – that answers Jere Surber's question, "Does Philosophy Have a Future, in his book, *What is Philosophy: Embodiment, Signification, Ideality*.

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Group Reparations and Race-Conscious Affirmative Action

Is a black American today worthy of reparations in virtue of being a member of a historically disadvantaged group? And if so, is affirmative action the appropriate remedy? I will show that black Americans are not entitled to receive group reparations in the context of race-conscious affirmative action. My argument proceeds as follows. First, I make a distinction between the special duty of Reparation and the general duty of Compensation, showing that an argument in favor of affirmative action for the sake of rectifying racial injustice should be modeled upon the former. Modeling affirmative action upon the duty of Reparation entails that we can a) identify the victim of injustice, b) identify the perpetrator of injustice, and c) explain why affirmative action restores the equivalent of what the victim of injustice has lost. Next, I argue that an argument defending group reparations for black Americans fails to satisfy the above desiderata: a) the morally arbitrary property “being black” does not effectively track the morally relevant property “being a victim of injustice”, b) the morally arbitrary property “being white” does not effectively track the morally relevant property “being a perpetrator of injustice”, and c) affirmative action does not seem to restore perfectly the group loss that has been historically inflicted upon black Americans.

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Right to Life/Live - Core Tenets and the Inalienability Question

The Right to life, liberty, and property are inalienable rights defined and guaranteed by most constitutions. The American declaration of independence claims that these inalienable rights are self-evident truths (1776). However, is the inalienability of this right defensible? This paper purports that the inalienability of this right is indefensible for three reasons. (1) While we have the right to life, we are aware of the existential option and choice to continue to live or choose to die. This existential option is real and should not be ignored. (2) The same American constitution that argues the right to life as a self-evident truth also states in the 5th and 14th amendments that the right to life, liberty, and property can be annulled by due process as in cases of crimes such as murder or treason. How can something inalienable be subjected to any due process? (3) As long as we engage in just wars, argue for killing in self-defense and argue for capital punishment as penalty for crimes like murder or treason, we cannot truly argue for the inalienability of the right to life. Inalienable human rights, when understood in the context of the legal world, become alienable. However, while the inalienability of the right to life is indefensible, it is possible to define what is entailed in this right by asking the following questions. Should we define the right to life in the context of the existential option and choice to live or die? If one chooses to live, does this right include the right to have a place to live? Is ownership of the place we live in necessary? Does this right imply the right to self-defense, and does it purport the right to procreate? Does this right demand the freedom to think, believe, and act freely? This paper posits that this right purports five fundamental tenets: (1) the right to self-determination. (2) the right of self-defense. (3) the right to have a place to live and the right to own the space one lives in. (4) the right to procreate—for if one chooses to live, one can also choose to procreate. (5) The right to follow the dictates of one's conscience and the right to believe. It appears that the right to life cannot be addressed independently of the right to have a place to live. The right of self-defense cannot be addressed independently of the right to bear arms. The option and choice to continue to live cannot be addressed independently of the option and choice to die when life is unbearable—the choice to die is not about killing oneself; it is about choosing to end one's life when necessary. So the five core tenets—

namely, self-determination, self-defense, ownership, freedom of conscience, and procreation are fundamental to the right to life.

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A Suggestion for Abortion Laws

It is a curious fact about current laws that abortion is viewed as the solution for which pregnancy is the problem. Thus, laws that lay down limitations or prohibitions on abortion also contain clauses making exceptions for the life and health of the mother – as if the mother’s life and health were threatened by pregnancy and preserved by abortion. What is puzzling here is that, on any fair assessment of the issue, these exceptions are one-sided if not even back to front. Of course, continuing a pregnancy has its risks, but it is hardly as if abortion has none of its own. So why not think of things in a different way? Instead of wording abortion laws so that they say abortion is permitted for the sake of the life and health of the mother, word them so that they say abortion is permitted except for the sake of the life and health of the mother. Accordingly, I offer the following proposal for a single, and very simple, law to cover all cases of abortion: “abortion is permitted through the whole of pregnancy, up to and including the final month, except for the sake of the life and health of the mother.” The paper explores the implications of this change.

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Socrates' Complicated Relationship with the Sophists

Was Socrates a Sophist? It seems sacrilegious to even entertain the question in the first place, yet a deeper reflection of it reveals a more complex story than one might hope for. Perhaps the greatest reason why scholars have avoided associating Socrates with the Sophists is that the former has largely been associated with the noble pursuit of truth while the latter have been categorized as deceiving and self-interested in their intellectual engagements. Despite this apparent distinction, however, this paper argues that there is nothing that is known about Socrates which significantly untangles him from what is known of the Sophists and that the distinctions that are made between the two have to do largely in part with Plato's evaluative portrayal of them. Comparing Plato's unfavourable portrayal of the Sophists in the *Protagoras* and *Sophist* with his favourable portrayal of Socrates in the *Apology*, this paper notes the shocking similarity between the pejorative eristic element in the former and the celebrated Socratic method in the latter once Plato's evaluative claims of the two are dispensed with. Addressing the scholarly interpretations of Alexander Nehamas and Terrence Irwin who attempt to distance the Socratic method from sophistry as a genuine pursuit of truth, this paper sheds light on the fact that there is nothing within Plato's text that makes such a distinction clear. Concluding that Plato does not convincingly separate Socrates from the Sophists in his dialogues in a meaningful way, this paper posits that perhaps Plato's criticisms of the Sophists were a way to salvage Socrates' declining reputation in fifth century BCE Athens.

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From the Euthyphro to Theodicy: The Problem of Language and God

Plato's *Euthyphro* ends in *aporia*: Socrates has failed to elicit an effective definition of *hosiotēs*—translatable either as “piety” or as “holiness”—from his increasingly flustered sophistic interlocutor, who walks away from the courthouse steps where their dialogue has taken place as Socrates prepares to enter and face a charge of impiety being leveled against him. This early dialogue is a harbinger of inconclusive endings in Platonic works over the next nearly four decades, as Plato furthers the search initiated by Socrates for absolute definitions of diverse aspects of the Good. One of the most important of those efforts is the *Cratylus*, which is the fullest of Plato's explorations of the problem of language as a medium for accessing the truth regarding the Good and the entire realm of Ideas. Included among the many kinds of words examined by Socrates, Hermogenes, and Cratylus are the names of gods, but the essences conveyed by these names are not perceived as more problematic than those of other names and nouns: in the end the dialogue's *aporia* pertains to the fundamental inadequacy of language: using words to apprehend words of any sort. That complication is applied both to the here and now and to the divine realm. Regarding the latter, the problem intensifies as Western religious thinking shifts its understanding from that of many divinities of limited power, knowledge, and vision to the sort of God worshipped by Jews, Christians, and Muslims: singular, all-powerful, all-knowing, all-merciful, all-good, and interested, involved, and interventionist in human affairs. The complication is signified by the brief dialogue between Moses and God (Ex 3:14) in which, when Moses asks who to say to the Israelites has sent him. God responds: “I am/will be that I am/will be.” Rather than being coy, God is asserting to Moses that the divine essence is Being itself, which cannot be defined by the essence-confining box of an ordinary name. The problem of understanding God encompasses not only the ineffable divine Name; it includes every divine attribute that we assert: from “all-powerful” to “interested”: we do not and cannot know what such concepts really mean in divine terms. We use them as a convenience and because we lack better instruments; we apply them from our own realm of experience, but they all fall short, offering at best metaphors for a God whose actual essence and attributes are, by definition, beyond human knowledge.

This is the problem recognized by Emmanuel Levinas in his essay, "God and Philosophy." The two sides of the problem are that we cannot effectively speak of God with language and cannot know how God speaks to us through prophets when our sacred texts use the phrase "God said" or "God spoke." The implications of this problem intensify when, in the aftermath of an event like the Holocaust, we pose the question of theodicy. A legion of Jewish and Christian theologians has tried to explain God's action—or inaction—in spite of our fundamental inability even to know God's name or the divine parameters of the words we use to describe God. How can we anticipate anything other than Socratic, post-Jobian aporia when we enter into this realm of theological inquiry?

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The Ontological Primacy of Life as an Argument against Abortion

Abortion in the paradigm case is *prima facie* wrong because it disregards the ontologically more basic value of life in pursuit of other, subsequent values. My claim is that regardless of one's theoretical framework, we can recognize that life is a necessary condition for all values because it's the metaphysical bedrock that allows those values to exist. At the same time, there is something both binary and significant about conception: along with brain death, it's a point of irreversibility marking a natural boundary of human lifespan. And since a fertilized ovum is numerically the same entity as an adult human organism, it follows that the future of that fertilized ovum is morally significant and should be taken seriously in our conversation about abortion. Unfortunately, much of that conversation implicitly or explicitly appeals to our identification with entities that are inherently difficult to empathize with (zygotes, embryos and fetuses), and the end of whose existence is less obviously morally significant. But not all kinds of empathy are helpful to the debate. I argue that the most helpful object of our empathy should be the fully developed adult human of a counterfactual future and one whose entire existence is prevented. Finally, I outline some political implications of my argument and argue that prevention of life is a form of discrimination at least as bad as any other form of political prejudice.

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**Breaking through Schizophrenia.
Lacan and Hegel for Talk Therapy**

I will start by a quotation of the DSM-V, the official book of the American Psychiatric Association where they claim that schizophrenia is a biological disease and thus hereditary while at the same time mentioning that a person with severe mental illness normally does not have family members with severe mental illness. I will then go to Hegel's Phenomenology where Hegel argues in his passage on the "Law of the Heart" that severe mental illness is the result of a defective position of the mind. Indeed, Hegel argues that paranoia can be explained by the psychic attitude of a person who wants to create a perfect world where aggression would have no place. In that perfect world the laws would be exactly what the heart of the reformer wants. This project is not considered narcissistic by the reformer because he believes that what his heart wants all is precisely what all human hearts want. Hence he sees his project of radical reform as a messianic mission. However, when the reformer succeeds in changing the law then his romantic expectations are necessarily disappointed. A realized law is never an ideal law. Furthermore, other people feel that the new law is a law imposed by the reformer. Hence instead of applause the reformer receives criticism. Hegel now makes the conclusion that if somebody experiences that his life project, when realized, is the opposite of what they wanted, then such a person feels that they must be crazy. However, all human being want to avoid the experience of being crazy, so argues Hegel. Hence the failing romantic reformer accuses other people as having interfered in his altruistic project. The reformer hereby becomes paranoid. We thus see that Hegel needs no biological cause to explain the severe mental illness if paranoia.

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Kant and Hume on the Judgment of Taste

Hume holds that we determine the beauty of an object on the basis of a feeling of pleasure. So does Kant. Equally, both hold that judgments of beauty are not a mere matter of individual taste but claim to hold for all human beings. But whereas Hume thinks that the standard of taste or beauty rests on an empirical foundation, Kant thinks it rests on an a priori one. For Hume, the possibility of a standard depends on the contingent agreement of human beings in their sense of beauty; for Kant, this possibility depends on their sense of beauty being necessarily shared. The upshot is that while Hume holds that judgments of beauty only carry what Kant calls comparative universality (a claim to hold for everyone as a matter of fact), Kant holds that they carry strict universality (a claim to hold for everyone without possible exception). The paper investigates the main reasons for this difference between the two philosophers' views on the nature of the judgment of beauty and offers an assessment of their respective positions.