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AN ANTHOLOGY OF PHILOSOPHICAL STUDIES VOLUME 6
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Patricia Hanna

This volume is a collection of papers selected from those presented at the 6th International Conference on Philosophy sponsored by the Athens Institute for Research and Education (ATINER), held in Athens, Greece at the St. George Lycabettus Hotel, 30 May-2 June 2011.

This conference provides a singular opportunity for philosophers from all over the world to meet and share ideas with the aim of expanding the understanding of our discipline. Over the course of the conference in 2011, sixty-five papers were presented. The nineteen papers in this volume were selected for inclusion after a process of blind-review by at least two of the editors and reviewers. The volume is organized roughly along traditional lines. This should not, however, mislead a reader into supposing that the topics or approaches to problems fall neatly into traditional categories.

The selection of papers chosen for inclusion gives some sense of the variety of topics addressed at the conference. However, it would be impossible in an edited volume to ensure coverage of the full extent of diversity of the subject matter and approaches brought to the conference itself by the participants, some of whom could not travel to one another's home countries without enormous difficulty.
PART A
History of Philosophy:
Ancient and Early Modern
CHAPTER TWO

Daemonic Beings: Politics and Human Life in Plutarch

Ivan Faiferri

Politics and philosophy show themselves, in Plutarch, as places of mediation between the divine and the human world; their border position make them of particular importance for a man who grounds his thinking in the platonic tradition, focused on overcoming the limits of human condition.

In Plutarch's cosmology, the border region between the two worlds is inhabited by daimones, spirits of divine nature, capable of doing both good and evil, disembodied fragments of the human nature that strives to reach the higher reality, from where its real essence comes.

The parallel between the function and the position of daimones and politicians and philosophers allows to unify the apparently diverging images that Plutarch offers of himself: the metaphysician, the anthropological essayist, the theologian-priest.

The Role of the De Genio Socratis

A work in the Moralia seems to be particular fitted for a better understanding of this problem: the De Genio Socratis. The dialogue has for a long time puzzled those who studied it. In fact the two themes discussed, the rebellion of the Thebans against the tyrants imposed by Sparta and the status of the divine sign that manifested to Socrates, do not apparently have any reciprocal relationship.

In the last years, some studies, have highlighted the internal coherence of the dialogue, that eventually has been found as one of the most ingenious works of the entire Plutarchean corpus.

As Mark Riley noticed, the true protagonist in this writing is not the daimon, but the man. The historical setting has not only a narrative function, but it represents a kind of stage on which Plutarch tests his doctrines.

1Boulogne, 2004.
2Ferrari, 2004; Donini, 1992.
5Brenk, 2005.
6See Babut, 1983; Babut, 1984; Donini, 1992; Brenk, 1998.
7Riley, 1977, p. 258.
In the writing, the world of men is the world of conflict, dominated by uncertainty and confusion.

The result of the deeds of the Theban rebels seems to be at the mercy of casualty and accidental events\(^1\). The attempt to stop the uprising made by Ippostenidas (586b-587f) fails\(^2\) only by coincidence; a storm allows the exiles to enter the city with their faces covered by cloaks (594e); even the trumpeters bringing confusion in the Spartan ranks with their calls (598e) happen to be in Thebes for an accidental reason.

Confusion and doubts strongly influence the actions and the decisions of both rebels and oppressors. The doubt moves Ippostenidas, whose companions are shocked by his decision (586b); when the tyrants convolve one of the conspirators, Caron, the other are caught by fear and suspect a betrayal (595a): when he returns, on the contrary, they realize that the tyrants themselves are confused by vague informations (596b).

Caphisias describes with his own words the general feeling that permeates the narrative:

‘as for ourselves, our feelings suffered an odd reversal; a little before we had been disappointed at the failure of our plans, while now, with the decision at hand and the need for immediate action upon us (postponement being impossible), we were yielding to anxiety and fear.’ (588a)

Within limits, this vocabulary is due to the very nature of the events told: the story of a revolt. But, in front of the uncertainty of the plotters, it stands the quiet resolution of Epameinondas.

Limits of the Daimôn

We are faced with two opposite worlds: the world of men and the divine one\(^3\).

For the description of the former Plutarch is influenced by the Hellenistic Platonism, that provides him with both the conviction of the fallibility of man and the prudence (eulabeia) that leads his thought\(^4\), and from his dualistic cosmology, that stated the existence of two metaphysical principles, the good and the evil\(^5\). In politics it is impossible to carry out the divine models proposed by Plato: the difficulty to investigate the superior realities

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\(^1\) On this, see also the ‘hesitation and perplexity’ of the plotters in the first movements of their deed (576d).

\(^2\) Luckily for the plotters.

\(^3\) The same movement, from the darkness to light, dominates the story of Timarchus (590b ff.).

\(^4\) For a declaration of eulabeia see De sera, 549e; Cf. also De genio, 580d, where Theocritus speaks of ‘matters dark and inscrutable to human wisdom’.

\(^5\) On this, see Opsomer, 1994.
reverberates in the uncertainty and in the turmoil pervading human actions, due to the existence of the irrational soul in the lower world.

The daimones, living between the two worlds, can fill the gap, exercising a leading function on men.

This role, however, does not hamper the personal free will. Even if capable of performing supernatural actions, daimones are often only indirectly involved in human events, as models or counsellors (593d).

‘They allow us to fight our way out and persevere unaided’ (593f) and only when we have shown ourselves worthy, god lets the daimôn directly save the man over whom he watches.

In the eyes of Plutarch, in fact, the Platonic doctrine states that god poses himself as a model, but virtue is gained only by those men ‘able to follow him’1. The daimones are agents of the divine will2 entrusted with the task to restore it in the world of men.

Their mediation is necessary: a direct involvement of god in the material world would threaten his perfection3.

Initially, one might be puzzled about the status of daimones: following two parallel traditional doctrines, Plutarch calls daimôn each member of the breed of disembodied spirits who dwell between the boundaries of the two realities but also the third and most divine part of the man, the intellect.

The nature of daimones is twofold. Man’s own daimôn (nous) constitutes its personal link with the divine, and give us the opportunity to grasp some part of it. The disembodied spirits are the result of the first death, which separates man from his own body4.

This cosmology constitutes the grounding of Plutarch’s political theory.

He reworks the functions the traditional religion assigned to daimones (as guide for the oracles, avengers and guardian spirits)5 in the light of the Platonic Platonic doctrine of homoïôsis tô theô and the believe in human fallibility; he does it with the help of two Platonic mythical models.

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1De sera, 550d, influenced by the image of the winged chariot of the Phaedrus (246a ff.; for a lessical parallel, see 247a9).
2Cfr. De facie, 941f ff.
3And could create significant problems for the explanation of the presence of evil in this world. See Opsomer, 2002, p. 285.
4‘[N]ot every soul mingles [with body] to the same extent’, some ‘leave outside what is purest in them. [...] [T]he part left free from corruption is called by the multitude the understanding (noun) [...] but those who conceive the matter rightly call it a daemon, as being external’ (De Genio, 591d-e).
5‘Yet not forever do the Spirits tarry upon the moon; they descend hither to take charge of oracles, they attend and participate in the highest of the mystic rituals, they act as warders against misdeeds and chastisers of them, and they flash forth as saviour a manifest in war and on the sea’ (De facie, 944d).
The Platonic Mythical Models

O’Meara and Van den Berg\(^1\) highlighted the influence of the Platonic images of the Republic’s philosopher-king and the Timaeus’ divine artisan for Neoplatonic ethics and politics. Both are employed by Plutarch to portray the politician’s activity and the relationship between theory and praxis\(^2\).

The former is represented, in the Plutarchean corpus, by the statesman with a philosophical background, like Epameinondas in the De Genio Socratis, Publicola, Dion, Brutus and Cicero, or by the savant-kings like Numa and Lycurgus\(^3\).

The latter find his human parallel in the philosopher-counsellor that Plutarch describes in the Moralia (Ad principem ineruditum, Maxime cum principibus) and in the lives (Solon in his biography, Plato in the Life of Dion\(^4\)).

Of the two models, the former is in turn an higher image of the latter: the fallibility connected with human condition does not permit the complete perfection of the divine nature; we can achieve only ‘a kind of similarity and participation with divine form and virtue’\(^5\).

Therefore, the philosopher-king is mainly relegated in the sphere of the illustrious models of the past, while the philosopher-counsellor seems to fit better as a concrete example of political action in the age of the empire\(^6\).

These two figures allow to explain the motivations that Plutarch reserves to the politician, above all the duty of taking care of both the other men and the community (philanthrôpia). The assimilation to god, that was settled as the end (telos) of philosophical life in the Thaetetus, is completed only when man attends to the human world\(^7\), as the demiurge attends to the entire cosmos\(^8\).

The action of the philosopher cannot leave this world, and it is at the same time influenced by the imperfect nature of men and of their reality\(^9\).

If the demiurge is the archetype, the status of the human world imposes that it is the daimôn the true guide in the vita activa; being the daimôn our intellect and therefore the divine part of us, the unity of intents between man and his daimôn represents a first step to assimilation.

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\(^{1}\) O’Meara, 1999; O’Meara, 2003; Van den Berg, 2005.

\(^{2}\) See Bos, 2004; Roskam, 2002; Stadter, 2002; Desideri 2002 for the philosopher-king and Boulogne, 2004 for the demiurge-god of Timaeus.

\(^{3}\) See Desideri, 1992; Roskam, 2002; De Blois, 1999; Van Meirvenne, 2002; Zecchini, 2002; Stadter, 2002. For philosopher kings see also Dillon, 2007.

\(^{4}\) On this see Roskam, 2002.

\(^{5}\) ‘[H]omoioitéti kai methexeı tı̂s peri to theion ideas kai aretêς’, De sera, 550d, my own translation.

\(^{6}\) See Desideri, 2002; Dillon, 2002.

\(^{7}\) An seni 786b explicitly stated that pleasure given by political activity is equal to the one reserved to the gods.

\(^{8}\) So politics is the most fitting and honourable activity (Praec. Ger. Rei. 798e). See also Roskam, 2005.

\(^{9}\) This is indeed a very realistic attitude; see Hershbell, 2004, p. 155.
Taking Care of the Others: Philanthrôpia and Education

As Hesiod says: ‘daimones eisin anthrôn epimeleis’ (De Genio, 593d). The epimeleia, that Plato had affirmed being the main duty of man with regards to his soul\(^1\) and of the guardians of the perfect city with regards to their citizens\(^2\), is a common trait for daimones and politicians. Both are moved by philanthrôpia, love for men.

Daimones are ‘kind (eumeneis) to those that strive for the same attainments’\(^3\) (De genio 593e), because they recognize the common noetic essence that resides in every soul and they act following the will of god who ‘overlooks us, and deals to every one of us according to our deserts’ (De sera, 560b).

In fact, there are men that ‘in fact we call holy and daemonic’: they are those who perceive the voices of the daimones and follow their guidance, thanks to the steadiness of their character and the restfulness of their soul (De genio, 589d).

They situate themselves over the troubled reality of common men, and live in a condition that, for ordinary people, is achieved only when the ground noise of the world fades away, namely during dreams\(^4\).

The philanthrôpia that moves daimones is the same one of daemonic men.

In the opening of the narration of the liberation of Thebes, the plotters make visit to the philosopher Simmias, who has just tried to plead with the tyrant Leontidas for some prisoners. They find him ‘very downcast and distressed’ for the failure of his attempt (578c-d). The philosopher shows empathy and involves himself into a political action.

The same philanthrôpia moves the Pythagorean circle, which Theanor belongs to, in offering Epameinondas and his family a monetary aid (583c): as the daimôn of 593d, they recognize the affinity of his pursuit of virtue with their philosophical doctrine.

The figure that shows in the most clear way a philanthropic behaviour in the dialogue is however Epameinondas himself.

The future Theban leader seems to adopt an ambiguous behaviour. He embraces the reasons of the rebels without taking part to their most violent deeds. Of this (apparent) lack of clearness Plutarch himself is well aware: in the early part of the story, Theocritus, the diviner, accuses Epameinondas of not being ‘keen or eager’ (De genio, 576e)\(^5\).

As Caphisias explains to his companion, Epameinondas concords with the purpose but not with the methods of the conspirators: ‘he would never put a

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\(^1\)See for example Phaed. 107c3 and Tim. 18b8 referred to the class of the guardians.

\(^2\)Resp. 451d7.

\(^3\)Namely, virtue.

\(^4\)Cf. De genio, 588d, where tranquillity and calm (hêskhian kai galênên) are attributed to the condition of the sleep. In the myth of Sulla, Zeus enshrouded his father, Chronos, into an eternal sleep, in order to soothe his ‘titanical passions’ and receive the prophecies of his son, that his daimones-servant bring to him (De Facie, 941f - 942a).

\(^5\)’Amblus esti kai aprotûmos’, ‘dull and inactive’ in the translation of Goodwin, 1874.
countryman to death without trial unless driven to it by extreme necessity’ (De genio, 594c), but at the same time he ‘will gladly join forces with all who endeavour without resorting to civil bloodshed and slaughter to set our city free’ (De genio, 576f).

His attitude becomes even more evident if we compare it with Caphisias and the other plotters’ one.

They are moved by a genuine will to grant freedom to their people and restore justice, but cannot avoid the crimes and the ‘collateral damages’ implied in a violent uprising. In Plutarch’s work, Epameinondas chooses a more difficult but wiser position. He knows that, in the future developments, people will look for a strong leadership, and that there will be the risk of a tyranny if the leader will be already marked by the blood of his citizens.

As the good ruler he is worried for his citizens and does not want to expose them to the risk of a civil war. His position associates him with Solon, another outstanding example of good politician.

Philanthrôpia is the correct development of a natural instinct, because each soul is ‘able to love’ (agapêtikon). When this impulse is not guided by reason, that is by the daimôn, it may be misdirected.

What distinguishes the naïve emotion from the very human feeling is the correct education of the soul of the single and of other men in interpersonal relationships.

Again, we find a parallel between the daimones and the daemonic men.

The task of the guardian daimôn is to lead the human soul entrusted to him. As a counsellor, he communicates directly to those men able to hear him, even without need of words: this action is a pedagogic one.

So, ‘our betters take the best of us’ and honour them ‘with a peculiar and exceptional schooling’ (De genio, 593b).

But not all men can hear directly the voice of the daimones. For the education of the mass, god established three main instruments.

First, the guardian spirit, after death, can hand over his protégée to the divine punishment if he judges him unprepared to the second death. This fate is seldom a definitive sentence; more often, it is a kind of medical therapy.

Moreover, god gave us some examples in this world of wicked men punished for their crimes, sometimes using the unjust man as the doctor uses red-hot iron to sear and heal a wound.

1 Such as unintentional killings, see De genio 597b.
2 Cf. De genio 576f-577a and 594b.
3 ‘[T]ô gar onti dediasin hoi basileis haper tòn arkhomenôn’ (Ad princ. in., 781e).
4 As Epameinondas, he refuses to subdue his decision to the will of the people (Life of Solon, §15) and is choosen as guide in time of crisis for his non involvement in the political struggle.
5 Life of Solon, §7.
6 Towards illegitimate sons, or animals, for example (Life of Solon, §7).
7 ‘[T]he thoughts of daemons are luminous and shed their light on the daemonic man’ (De genio, 589b).
8 Cf. De sera, 564e-f.
9 The process is described for example in De sera, 599e-560a.
The third, and probably the most significant instrument to our eyes, is the pedagogic function reserved to politics. It is a two-stage movement: first, the philosopher-counsellor has to educate the ruler\(^1\), that, in turn, he will take care of his citizens or subjects and offer himself as a model.

We find a description of the whole process in the *Life of Dion*. Observing the *apaideusia* of his nephew, the future Dionysus II, Dion adresses him to *paideia*, exhorting him

> ‘to use every entreaty with the first of philosophers to come to Sicily, and, when he came, to become his disciple, in order that his character might be regulated by the principles of virtue, and that he might be conformed to that divinest and most beautiful model of all being, in obedience to whose direction the universe issues from disorder into order; in this way he would procure great happiness for himself, and great happiness for his people, and that obedience which they now rendered dejectedly and under the compulsion of his authority, his moderation and justice would base upon goodwill and a filial spirit, and he would become a king instead of a tyrant.’\(^2\)

The *paideia* operated by the philosopher-counsellor harmonizes the soul of the ruler with the divine will and (indirectly) the community with the cosmical order. Acting as god in respect of the universe, both the philosopher and the politician move towards the *homoiôsis*.

*Paideia* and *apaideusia*, two terms particularly rich of meanings in the Platonic tradition\(^3\), return in the *De Genio Socratis*, where education is the boundary line that divides the good-tempered souls, whose movement harmonizes with the cosmos, from the evil ones, that roam disorderly ‘as though jerked about on a tether’ (592a-b). The importance of training and exercise for the reaching of this balance is stressed in 584e-585d by Epameinondas himself and lately in the images of the struggle for virtue at 593d-f.

The resolution of will and the self-confidence of the daemonic man\(^4\) draws him nearer to the divine world\(^5\) and allows him to guide the other citizens. Again, is Epameinondas that personifies this model in the dialogue\(^6\),

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\(^{1}\)Plutarch dedicated to this topic two specific essays, namely *Ad principem ineruditum* and *Maxime cum principibus philosopho esse disserendum*. See also Teodorsonn, 2008.

\(^{2}\) *Life of Dion*, §10.

\(^{3}\)The allegory of the cave, probably the most famous Platonic image, is conceived as an account of human nature in regard to *paideia* and *apaideusia*.

\(^{4}\)These are the traits attributed to Socrates in *De genio* 581c.

\(^{5}\)This psychological stability has also a physical counterpart: coming nearer to the celestial world, the souls gain ‘tension (tonon) and strength (dunamin) as edged instruments get a temper’ (*De facie*, 943d-e).

\(^{6}\)Keeping his decision of not participating at the bloodshed, maintaining an independent line of action, acting for the peace and the security of the citizens, as is summed up at 594b-c.
and his role is underlined by the parallels with the figure of Socrates, the very example of a man guided by his *daimôn*.

The same as him, he is a taciturn man (593f-593a), educated in philosophy (585d) and leading a frugal life (see, for example, 584a-b). Like the Platonic character, he engages himself in dialogues, displaying a certain degree of irony (583d ff.).

In him the tension between philosophy and politics\(^1\) seems to find an arrangement, an internal balance which allows the daemonic man to harmonize the inferior reality with the divine\(^2\).

**Politics as a Way of Life**

Men build their individuality through a succession of communities increasingly extended: family, city, state, cosmos.

The material world, however, is dominated by the struggle of the two metaphysical principles of rationality and irrationality that generates the discordance and the suffering of the human condition.

God, with a constant providence, directs the cosmos to the good, posing himself as a model for the existence of his creature.

In human world, politics is the field on which the conflict appears most clearly, but also where it can be solved, harmonizing the single lives in the creation of a whole directed toward the same end.

Man's task is the creation of this accordance. The politician with his educative action on his fellow citizens, performs a demiurgical and providential function: he is father, worried for the well-being of his sons, and artisan, committed in the adaptation of dissimilar parts\(^3\).

But, in his essence, he remains linked to his earthly *substratum* and cannot be god, even if he is not merely human, having separated himself from the turmoil of the inferior world: he is the *daimôn* of mankind.

So, for Plutarch, politics is not just an occupation, but a true way of life\(^4\): in Hannah Arendt's terms, it is the place where human beings find themselves and define what make them individuals, and at the same time make their fellow men able in the same way to define themselves.

This twofold harmonization constitutes the real fulfilment of human nature.

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\(^1\)That for some people, represented in the speech of Galaxidorus at 580a, were essentially divided in respect of truth.

\(^2\)This mediator role is both proper of the *daimon* and of the politician. See for example Solon's efforts to adapt (*harmozein*) his legislation to the spirit of his citizens, in order to realize on the earth an image of the justice (*Life of Solo*, §5, 15, 22).

\(^3\)See also Ferrari, 1996.

Bibliography


CHAPTE R  THREE

Is Aristotelian Moral Deliberation 'architectonic' As Well?

Dohyoung Kim

Can we deliberate only about how to achieve a moral principle or can we also deliberate about the principle itself? The debate regarding this question, which has baffled Aristotelian scholars for millennia, centres on two opposing interpretations of what Aristotle means by ‘deliberation’: one claim that deliberation is only of means (OM view), the other that deliberation is of both means and ends (BME view). These different interpretations are, naturally, based on different approaches to the following passages in question

T1: ‘And we deliberate not about ends, but about means. A doctor does not deliberate whether he is to cure his patient, nor an orator whether he is to convince his audience, nor a statesman whether he is to secure good government, nor does anyone else debate about the end of his profession or calling: they take some end for granted, and consider how and by what means it can be achieved...’ (NE 1112b12-16, H. Rackham translation)

T2: ‘...Now it is held to be the mark of a prudent man to be able to deliberate well about what is good and advantageous for himself, not in some one department, for instance what is good for his health or strength, but what is advantageous as a means to the good life in general. This is proved by the fact that we also speak of people as prudent or wise in some particular thing, when they calculate well with a view to attaining some particular end of value (other than those ends which are the object of an art); so that the prudent man in general will be the man who is good at deliberating in general...’ (NE 6 1140a25-28)

Briefly, according to the OM view, both passages state that deliberation is only of the means. According to the BME view, on the other hand, those passages should be read the other way around. We will first consider the latter view in detail.
The Controversy

The BME View

There might be little difference\(^1\) even in this group, but, in general, the possessors of the BME view claim that deliberation is not only of means, but also of moral ends, i.e., particular moral excellences, in Aristotle’s ethics, and their relationships to the highest good, end, or eudaimonia. If I rephrase their interpretation on Aristotle’s deliberation, we deliberate of course about ‘particular matters that conduce to deciding the best possible type of action in a given circumstance’, or just saying ‘conduce to our decision/choice (prohairesis) ’, and we also deliberate about ‘general moral ends’, mentioned above, because, they think, deliberating about particular matters is, in a sense, a part of deliberating about general moral ends or the conceptions of moral excellence\(^2\). Now we may see that the BME view assumes that there is some connection between particular moral matters and general moral ends, and thereby such continuation could also be the object of Aristotelian moral deliberation. Therefore we could also say that the BME view eventually defines Aristotelian moral deliberation as a sort of specification of moral general ends\(^3\). However, I see there are, at least, two essential components to be justified to keep this interpretation reliable; the concept of ‘constitutional means’, the idea of ‘specifying’ deliberation and the concept of ‘architectonic’ deliberation. It might be interesting to see where the BME view finds its textual evidence and how its possessors control that evidence.

The Possibility of ‘Constitutional Means’\(^4\).

Can we think about a wheel without thinking about a vehicle? I think, we can also say that the concept of ‘constitutional means’ in the BME view is a way to organize a negative answer to this question. Now, more related to our context, we shall think about playing golf or golfing. It would not be

\(^1\)There are some trivial differences among the proponents of the BME view. Nowadays many BME proponents (e.g., Cooper, Nussbaum and Wiggins) try to prove that ta pros to telos in Book 3 also includes ‘constitutional means’, but Ackrill seems to disagree with them. That is, even if Ackrill does agree that ta pros to telos is, in general, not only the instrumental means, but also the ‘constituent means’, he also states that what Aristotle means by that Greek phrase in Book 3 is the ‘instrument or external’ means. Therefore, what Ackrill seems to claim is that deliberation in Book 3 is only about the ‘instrumental means’, but deliberation in Book 6 is both about the ‘instrumental’ means and ‘constitutional’ means. Nonetheless, since both of them, for Ackrill, are the concepts of deliberation, he also seems to argue for the BME view. See, Ackrill, J.L. (1974). Aristotle’s Ethics.,26-7. Faber & Faber

\(^2\)See, Cooper (1986); 20-23., Irwin (1978); 256-59., Nussbaum (1978);170 with n.13., Wiggins (1980); 223-237.

\(^3\) See Tuozzo (1991); 194 ‘…A number of writers have pointed out that Aristotelian phrase ta pros to telos … includes closer ‘specifications’ of a general end…”

\(^4\)Greenwood might be one of those who introduce the possibility that there could be two different types of ‘the things toward the end, or the means (ta pros to telos)’, although he himself does not claim that this is what Aristotle means by that phrase. See, Greenwood, M.A. (1909). Aristotle Nicomachean Ethics Book Six with Essays, Notes and Translation, ; 46-47. Cambridge.
unreasonable to say both driving a car and putting are means to golfing. This is just because before we actually start playing golf, we of course need to drive a car to the green, and because putting is an expression of a type of golfing-activities. However, we can easily see that driving a car and putting are means in a different sense. ‘Driving a car’ is wholly external to, or only a causal condition for golfing but putting is a component of, or a constituent part of golfing and even a result of defining what golfing is. The former type of ‘means’ is what the commentators normally call instrumental means, so the concept of constitutional means is the name for the latter type. Basically the BME view claims that Aristotle’s ‘means’, namely, his expression ta pros to telos indicate both ‘means’ above. It seems easy to see that the BME view is supported by their concept of ‘constitutional means’ simply because deliberating ‘constitutional means’ is actually deliberating the end to which means are constitutive. I understand, the BME view claims that deliberating constitutive means is deliberating the given end is justified by some assumption that what they call constitutional means are somehow conceptually connected to, or conceptually constitutive of, a given end. That is, according to the BME view, there is some conceptual link between constitutional means and their ends. Now the question is whether this idea of the BME view is what we can find in Aristotle’s works or not. One of the favourite passages alleged, by the BME view, to contain Aristotle’s original idea of ‘constitutional means’ is Aristotle’s Metaphysics, 7.7 (1032a32-1033a1).

The Possibility of a Conceptual Link between Means and Ends – The ‘constitutional means’ in Aristotle’s Metaphysics 7.7

The Possibility of the Specific Description of ‘Constitutional Means’

Before we proceed to the text of Aristotle’s Metaphysics 7.7, it might be worth seeing some remarks on this concept from some proponents of the BME. Wiggins quite clearly describes the nature of their concept of ‘constitutional means’ saying that a constitutional means X ‘bears to telos Y when the existence of X will itself help to constitute Y’ and this X is ‘a constituent of the end’, and ‘the presence of a constituent of the end is always logically relevant to happiness’. After these remarks, Wiggins suggests the details of constitutional means. He provides an even more detailed description of category of constitutional means, also saying that in NE 3 Aristotle treats both deliberation about instrumental means and deliberation about constitutional means. According to Wiggins, constitutional means are (1) ‘what kind of life he wants to lead’, (2) ‘which of several possible courses of actions would conform most closely to some ideal he holds before himself’, (3) ‘what would constitute eudaimonia here and now’, and (4) ‘what would count as the

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2 See, Cooper (1986); 20-23, Greenwood (1909); 46-47
3 Wiggins,(1980); 224.
4 As I said, this is different from Ackrill (1973)
achievement of the not yet completely specific goal which he has already set himself in the given situation⁴ the BME proponents² believe that the basis of these details can be found in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, 7.7 (1032a32-1033a1)

The Possibility of Aristotelian Originality of the Idea of ‘Constitutional Means’

In their investigation on these passages of his *Metaphysics*, they focus on proving two different aspects of deliberation in their-BME interpretation, a specifying and a constituting aspect. Below, the BME proponents think Aristotle assumes the possibility of deliberation of ‘constitutional means’ saying that deliberating is a sort of specifying.

‘Heat in the body, then, is either a part of health, or is followed (directly or through several intermediaries) by something similar which is a part of health. This is the ultimate thing, namely that produces, and in this sense is a part of, health—or of the house (in the form of stones) or of other things. Therefore, as we say, generation would be impossible if nothing were already existent. It is clear, then, that some part must necessarily pre-exist; because the matter is a part, since it is matter which pre-exists in the product and becomes something.’ *(Metaph. 7.7. 1032b26-29; Hugh Tredennick Translation)*

According to Cooper’s interpretation of this passage, if we know that ‘in order that this patient is healthy again, she is to have her elements in balance, and in order that she has them in balance, she is to be heated, and finally in order that she is heated, she is to be rubbed, we can rub this patient to make her warm, keep her elements in balance and eventually get her healthy again. The BME view says that deliberating is specifying the general ends in this sense.’³ Therefore, what is important is that rubbing the patient to make her warm and balancing her elements to make her healthy are not, at least significantly, different. For, the former is a specification of health, and the latter is, in a sense, a generalization of health⁴. However, it is also important not to ignore that the general end, as an integrity, presents already, and its specifications presuppose the pre-presence of the general end, as Aristotle says in the cited passage ‘…therefore, …generation would be impossible if nothing were already existent…’ and in another passage (1032b15-17) ‘…the first step in the doing being the last state of the thinking…’ According to the BME view, Aristotle implies here that naturally there is some conceptual connection between the specification of a certain concept and the generalisation of it, and this ‘connection’ is possible only because of the pre-presence of (the

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¹Wiggins (1980) ; 224-5  
²There are some other texts where we could find, as Cooper, Nussbaurn and Wiggins say, some evidence of Aristotle’s idea of ‘constituent means’, such as Politics (1325b16 and 1338b2-4) and Nicomachean Ethics (1144a3ff). However, in general, they have more detailed arguments about the text of Metaphysics mentioned here. Tuozzo (1991);197  
³Cooper (1986);20-21  
⁴Ibid ‘ …No distinction is made between the step of rubbing the patient … and that of balancing his elements…’; 20
generalisation of) that concept. The BME view understands that this implication might be Aristotle’s theoretical basis for the idea of ‘deliberating-specifying’. More importantly that is why the particular end in the context of our discussion is not external to the general, but constitutive to it. Now we can draw Aristotle’s idea of constitutive means from this text of his *Metaphysics*. In Cooper’s comments on the next passage, there are more details of the aspect of ‘constituting’.

‘…Now the healthy subject is produced as the result of this reasoning: since health is so-and-so, if the subject is to be healthy, it must have such-and-such a quality, e.g. homogeneity; and if so, it must have heat...’ (*Metaphysics* 1032b6-8)

More importantly, according to Cooper’s interpretation, here Aristotle rather clearly claims that as long as we deliberate the particular end, we can surely deliberate about the general end as well. And this is because the beginning stage of deliberation is the conception of the general end. Namely, what, basically, is proposed on the BME view is that it is impossible to draw the best possible specification of the general end, unless there is already a conception of the general end. Cooper says, for this specific case, ‘balancing his elements is necessary in order to make him healthy, but we need to know what that is before discovering a means of producing it’ and thereby ‘brining about whatever it is that balancing his elements consists in must be regarded as a way of bringing about the balancing’. Hence, deliberating general moral ends, in Aristotle’s ethics, is actually deliberating what they consist in as well. As long as we accept the concept of ‘constitutional means’, we should be able to say even the conception of *eudaimonia* is an object of Aristotelian deliberation. Consequently, some of the BME proponents try to show that even outside his ethical works we can find an Aristotelian idea of constituent means; and to establish that it is possible to understand Aristotle’s expression *ta pros to telos* as the concept of constituent means. Therefore, if we paraphrase what the BME view means by the phrase ‘constitutional means’, we have three options: (1) ‘a particular type’ or ‘an instantiation’ of general ends (i.e., a particular type of ‘just activity’) which is acquired as the conclusion of deliberation, (2) the general ends (i.e., a conception of just activity) and (3) the relationships between (1), (2) and the general conception of *eudaimonia*. So far we have seen how the concept of constitutional means is possible in the BME, but we have also seen that constitutional means pre-suppose that some pre-existing thought to make them. In the next section, we shall see what it is in the BME view.

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1 Cooper (1986), ‘…the first stage of deliberation is to take note of what the end, health, consists in; and it is by way of producing this the man is to be made healthy…’; 21-22
2 Ibid; 21
The Possibility of ‘Architectonic’ Deliberation - Deliberating General Moral Ends

Proponents of the BME view find, they think, textual proof for the possibility of this sort of deliberation from Aristotle’s remarks in NE 1140a25-31, I have already cited, at the beginning, with the title T2. From now on I will call deliberation about the general ends, architectonic deliberation, because they seem to mean, by this, the deliberation of practically wise persons about a good life in general (poia pros to eu zēn holōs). This deliberation actually means, if I am not wrong, some planning with regard to leading a good life in general. It seems right to say that ‘planning to go to Paris’ actually means ‘planning to decide the best possible particular action to make, in this moment, with regard to every related aspect about going to Paris, i.e., when, where, how, with whom etc’. If Aristotle means --- by his expression deliberation poia pros to eu zēn holōs in 1140a28---some deliberation about ‘so-called our moral principles’, as BME view suggests, it seems very clear that moral deliberation as conceived by Aristotle is both of means and ends. I will talk about this point later in this paper. Wiggins, for example, clearly says that in NE 1140a25-31 and also in NE 1141b8-18, Aristotle mentions what I have called architectonic deliberation which takes ‘questions of general policy’ as its object; Wiggins also claims that Aristotelian deliberation is a sort of ‘investigation to the study of both, also citing NE 1142b31-3), ascribe ‘being architectonic, supervisory and regulative’ to the nature of ‘architectonic deliberation’ mentioned in those passages of the Book 6. However, more importantly, in the BME view, we should notice that the objects of ‘architectonic’ deliberation are the conceptual links between ‘some means - constitutional means’3. Thus, since, if my reading on this view is right, in the BME view the conceptual link between constitutional means and ends presupposes the presence of architectonic deliberation, the concept of constitutional means also presupposes the concept of architectonic deliberation. Therefore, we may think that, even if we have already found out how BME view justifies the possibility of the constitutional means, this concept of ‘means’ can come to be impossible if we cannot justify the possibility of architectonic deliberation. This is because the existence of architectonic deliberation is presupposed by the existence of ‘constitutional means’.

There is an interesting criticism against the BME’s interpretation of T2. I think this criticism of Tuozzo4 properly undermines the reliability of

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1Wiggins (1980); 227-8  
3Tuozzo (1991) ‘…those passages where it is said Aristotle explicitly says that the phronimos determines his general ends by means of deliberation. There are … two passages where this claim can be plausibly made…NE, 1440a25-31…’; 198  
4Ibid, 198-201. Here Tuozzo actually deals with Rh. 1366b20-22 as well, because I wanted to focus on the inconsistency within NE. But his criticism about BME view’s reading on this text of Rhetoric is also quite interesting.
architectonic deliberation which is one of the major implications of the BME view. Observing the criticism we can of course see the idea of ‘architectonic’ deliberation more.

The Impossibility of ‘Architectonic’ Deliberation – OM view’s Criticism against the BME

Naturally the OM view commits to a different interpretation on the same text. If I cited the text again, with a different translation to disclose the matters in translating the Greek well,

‘Now it is thought to be a mark of a person of practical wisdom to be able to deliberate well about things good and advantageous for himself, not in some particular respect [kata meros], e.g., what kinds [of a good things] conduce to health or strength, but what kinds conduce to the good life in general [poia pros to eu zên holôs]. This is shown by the fact that we call people practically wise in a certain area [peri ti phronimous] when they have calculated well with a view to some good [spoudaion] end which is not the object of any art [technê]. Thus in general [holôs] the person who is capable of deliberating is practically wise [phronimos]’ (Revised Oxford Translation, modified by Tuozzo (1991); 195)

Since Aristotle here makes two separate distinctions, it is very important to attend to how they are distinguished. The question is how to distinguish deliberation about what kinds of things toward the good life in general (poia pros to eu zên holôs) from deliberation of those who are practically wise in a particular area (phronimoi peri ti), and how to distinguish deliberation poia pros to eu zên holôs from deliberation about things good in a particular respect (kata meros).

The 1st Distinction - between ‘Deliberation poia pros to eu zên holôs’ and ‘Deliberation of those who are phronimoi peri ti’

If one thinks she can draw the possibility of architectonic deliberation, presupposed by the concept of ‘constitutional means’, from this passage, it is possible for her, on the BME view, to translate holôs by ‘as a whole’. This is because proponents of the BME view tend to think that the former type of deliberation is a sort of integration of all latter types of deliberations1. However, for advocates of the OM, this interpretation is misleading, because, they think, the former deliberation is a simple generalisation of the latter. Namely, it seems that the only relationship between these two deliberations is the relationship between ‘type’ and ‘token.’ That is, the relationship between these two is simply inductive, because, as Tuozzo says,2 there is no case where the expression holôs is used to indicate ‘how a number of things fit together to

1Irwin (1978); 257, Wiggins (1980); 228, cf. Greenwood (1909), 45-45, Tuozzo (1991); 199, 200 with n.49
2Tuozzo (1991);200
form a single whole’. Therefore, based on this distinction between the deliberations above, it seems impossible for the architectonic deliberation of *phronimos* to obtain, because we cannot say that deliberation about the well-being of life in general is a deliberation of a whole of (consisting of) particular moral excellences and in turn, of another good or end which supervises all subordinate ends.

**The 2nd Distinction - between Deliberation poia pros to eu zên holôs and Deliberation about things good kata meros**

However, Tuozzo claims that deliberations in the second distinction are not inductive, because the relationship between these deliberations is different from that drawn by the previous distinction. Deliberations in this second distinction are already different in their subject matters. Actually those adverbs, *holôs* and *kata meros* are Aristotle’s favourites, especially when he describes a qualified usage and an unqualified usage of some adjectives, and explains how they can be contrasted. Therefore, to understand this second distinction properly, it is worth seeing some other distinctions where the same principle applies.

**Theoretical Wisdom (sophia) in an Unqualified (holôs) Sense vs. in a Qualified (kata meros) Sense (NE 1141a9-17)**

In Aristotle’s philosophy, *sophia* generally indicates theoretical wisdom, but when he says this wisdom in some particular respect, he seems to mean some analogous sense of theoretical wisdom, namely, some intellectual excellence of an excellent practitioner in the field of art, *teknê*. That is, here ‘unqualified theoretical wisdom’ and ‘qualified theoretical wisdom’ differ in their subject matters. Again, the distinction given shows neither the contrast between a so-called constituent theoretical wisdom and the whole theoretical wisdom, nor that the qualified *sophia* is a specification or particularization of the unqualified *sophia*.

**Unqualified (haplôs) Incontinence (akrasia) vs. Qualified (kata meros) Incontinence (NE 1147b20-21)**

Even if in the case of incontinence the adverb *haplôs* is preferred to *holôs*, the contrast is the same. This is because the contrast here is also the one ‘between some central or privileged case of the predication of some term (‘incontinent,’ ‘wise’) and cases where the predicate applies only in a qualified or partial sense.’ Hence, between these two ‘incontinences’, one is to indicate the character of a person who is incontinent in an unqualified, in turn, a proper

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1Ibid
2Tuozzo (1991), ‘…medicine and gymnastics are not adduced as particular cases of *phronesis*…’
3NE 6, 1141a16-20 ‘…Wisdom (sophia) must be the most perfect of the modes of knowledge. The wise man therefore must not only know the conclusions that follow from his first principles, but also have a true conception of those principles themselves…’
4Tuozzo (1991); 201 ‘…haplôs …holôs the contrast is the same…’
sense; the other for the person who is so only in a qualified, conditional and analogous sense. According to Aristotle’s expression, the former type of incontinence possesses common objects with morally vicious agents, such as those who are intemperate and self-indulgent, but the latter does not\(^1\). Consequently, we can see that in the contrast of two, in a sense, different incontinences Aristotle also distinguishes the incontinences of different subject matters in the same manner he employs in distinguishing qualified sophia and unqualified sophia ---he uses haplōs instead of holōs though. Accordingly, we now know that the relationship between deliberation kata meros (deliberation in a qualified sense) and deliberation holōs (deliberation in a unqualified sense) is not inductive, and eventually that it is only that Aristotle, in the second distinction in NE 1140a25-31, means deliberation about the objects of technē (production or art) by the deliberation kata meros and indicates deliberation about moral matters by the deliberation holōs. Therefore it is not correct to say that in this passage Aristotle assumes the presence of ‘a certain type of deliberation which is confined to a practically wise person or phronimos,’ or ‘a sort of architectonic’ deliberation, which presupposes the reliability of ‘constitutional means’. That is, the only deliberation we can ascribe to the phronimos is the deliberation concerned with achieving general moral ends in each particular case. If so, it seems true that in this passage we cannot find any proper basis with which to justify the concept of constitutional means which presupposes architectonic deliberation about the close relationship between general moral ends and the highest good, eudaimonia.

It seems clear to me that Tuozzo’s criticism of the BME view’s reading of T2 is reliable, so I think the BME view of architectonic deliberation becomes suspicious, because its proponents lose their favourite, and perhaps most influential, piece of textual evidence. I do think that the BME’s misreading of T2 is no coincidence, since, as long as Aristotle’s expression the ends ta telē means ‘moral general ends’ and sometime eudaimonia, they are not to be deliberated upon at all. I talk about this in the next chapter.

The Conclusion

As earlier suggested, the BME misreading of T2 is neither unlucky nor coincidental. Rather, for those who think we can deliberate about moral ends, moral first principles and general concepts, it is a necessary consequence of their position. Intuitively, we say that we deliberate about moral principles because, in day-to-day life, we decide and establish many principles, such as to be a vegetarian or to be a doctor. In general, the decisions to be things like these are properly rational decisions. However, the Aristotelian concept of deliberation (bouleusis) should not be understood in this common-sense fashion. Under the Aristotelian conception, we deliberate only to decide

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\(^1\)In NE 7.4, Aristotle says that the unconditional, proper incontinent people share the common object with the morally bad people.
(prohairesis)\(^1\). If we note Aristotle’s comments about the ‘function of deliberation’ or about ‘what we deliberate for’, it is not difficult to see Aristotelian deliberation is to determine something. I see some texts in the Book 3.

‘…Deliberation then is employed in matters which, though subject to rules that generally hold good, are uncertain in their issue; or where the issue is indeterminate…’ (NE 1112b9-10)  
‘… The object of deliberation and the object of choice are the same, except that when a thing is chosen it has already been determined, since it is the thing already selected as the result of our deliberation…’ (NE 1113a3-4)

It is said, in the cited texts, I think, that the objects of deliberation are strictly to be determined through that deliberation. In the context of NE 3.3, determining is deciding which action is the best particular type of action to perform, for each moral circumstance. We can hardly say that moral ends and moral principles are to be determined in the same way that these particular types of actions are to be determined, because they (moral ends and moral principles) are, in a sense, antecedent to moral deliberation in Aristotle’s ethics. Consequently it is not necessary to deny that it is rational capacity which is to determine moral principles, but it is surely deniable to say that moral principles are determined through deliberation. Moral ends and principles are already determined by something other than deliberative reason. They may be determined by ‘wish (boulēsis)’ as Aristotle says ‘…we wish rather for ends than for means … (NE1111b27)’ and ‘…If then whereas we wish for our end, the means to our end are matters of deliberation and choice… (NE 1113b3)’

References


\(^1\)I know there is very interesting about whether prohairesis is action or not, but in this paper I want to proceed my argument assuming it is a rational decision still in the level of psychology.
It is a paradox that, of all Aristotle’s monumental efforts, what he thought was his greatest contribution to science, animating most everything he ever wrote, is not only nothing for which he is especially known today, but nothing that is much understood or honored, either as his conception or as it still functions in science.

The causes of this dereliction are numerous, all ironically dependent on the very nature of what he discovered. For his greatest contribution was not some truth about the world, instead it was an all-encompassing insight into the very nature of knowing anything at all, that is, the procedure used to know. And it was the employment of procedures less comprehensive than his that caused the obfuscation and misinterpretation of his insight. Hence this paper is committed to explicating one of the greatest, yet sorely neglected contributions to science; Aristotle’s procedure.

The Problem

It is a paradox that, of all Aristotle’s monumental efforts, what he thought was his greatest contribution to science, animating most everything he ever wrote, is not only nothing for which he is especially known today, but nothing that is much understood or honored, either as his conception or as it still functions in science. Yet in all his writings he specifically addressed the elaboration and explanation of this one powerful notion whose implications effect everything attempted by man. The true import of this contribution or of its overwhelming importance in science is overlooked or downplayed in many commentaries on his thought, and is virtually impossible for a reader to derive from any widely distributed English translation of his writing.

The causes of this dereliction are numerous, all dependent in an ironic way on the very nature of what he discovered. For his greatest contribution was not some truth about the world, instead it was an all-encompassing insight into the very nature of the attempt to know anything at all, that is, the procedure used to know. As we know, procedure is the manner in which we formulate statements about the world, the assumptions we make in formulating those statements, and Aristotle’s discovery concerns both the complete statement of that procedure and the variabilities to which we subject it by our whimsy and our myopia. Yet in the more popular books one reads about Aristotle’s
contribution, the focus is almost exclusively on his conclusions, the products of his thinking, either specific matters of interest, or his ‘weltanschauung,’ the ‘world-view’ he is supposed to have created.

For Aristotle, the results of inquiry, that is, the conclusions one arrives at, are less important than the way in which the inquiry is conducted, and so, through misinterpretations and misunderstandings his thinking has been reversed. For as you will see, it was Aristotle who formulated not only a comprehensive procedure for accounting for fact, he also provided us with a method by which we can understand and critique the way other thinkers account for fact. Needless to say, it was the employment of procedures less comprehensive than his that throughout the years caused the obfuscation and misinterpretation of his insight. As we will show, claiming to have arrived at sound conclusions without a thorough knowledge of the procedure that one uses in arriving at one’s conclusions reduces them to mere opinion, and one’s understanding is superficial at best.

It seems that we are intoxicated with the almighty stubbornness of fact. We celebrate information as all that constitutes knowledge, being focused always on conclusions and not on how conclusions are justified, as if facts are picked like diamonds from the sand, obvious to anyone by simply observing them without the least effort or contribution of the inquirer. This is the simplistic heritage left us by the sophists and the logical positivists, and now revived by the post-modernists and others with simple thoughts that have naively convinced themselves that they are saying something new. But it is a jaded piece of nonsense because we refuse to educate ourselves. This can be most vividly seen today in the way in which political ideologues pontificate their views without a hint of evidence or without any reference to how or why their views are valid. Worse, we have been led to believe and often accept the notion that there is no criteria by which ideas can be fairly and rationally judged, and therefore the basis of selecting one idea or policy over another lies merely in deciding whether it aligns with one’s current unexamined thinking, as in the saying, “Might makes right.” This disregard for a rational accounting of one’s thoughts, as well as the dismantling of an objective criteria by which those thoughts are made worthy of consideration, seems to be a sophistical twisting of the truth, and we fear may well be the harbinger of a dangerous intellectual ‘dark age.’

Why the Problem Exists

The most well known commentators on Aristotle’s thought, whether the detailed sort of W. D. Ross, or the more sketchy ones in the Loeb series by Tredennick, Rackham, Hett, etc., or the books purporting to explain what Aristotle sought and accomplished, like Randall’s, Irwin’s, or Lear’s, have treated every statement he wrote as πίστις (pistis), or belief, thereby treating Aristotle’s statements as if they are unrelated to any procedure by which they possess either their significance or validity. But if conclusions, both their
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meaning and their truth, are totally controlled by procedure, there can be no adequate statement about a thinker’s conclusions until one has first mastered that person’s procedure.

As a result, most attempts to state Aristotle’s conclusions are fraught with misunderstandings, distortions, and outright falsity. For example, it is claimed, as by W.S. Hett⁠¹, that “Aristotle believes implicitly in design and purpose in the universe, and lays it down as axiomatic that no account of any part of the body or function of the mind can be considered adequate, unless it shows the purpose which it serves in the scheme of creation.” Since Aristotle nowhere makes such a statement, this claim is made simply through ignorance of both Aristotle’s procedure and the Greeks use of their language. Hett’s mistake is the result of his confusing Aristotle’s notion of ‘completion’ as detailed in Chapter I of the Physics. Here Aristotle explains how the impetus towards being is not controlled or determined by some grand design or purpose, but rather is independently inherent in each things potential to become the actuality of its implicit being, as the maple tree serves to illustrate the actualization of the completion of the maple seed.

Hett’s thinking suffers from two flaws, the first being the projection of his own reductive procedural assumptions in his explanation of Aristotle’s ideas of causality, which ironically is the very approach that Aristotle was seeking to correct, and the second is that as a result of this projection the reader is led to believe things that Aristotle himself did not say.

Another obstacle to the understanding of Aristotle has been the fact that virtually every time-honored English translation and commentary on Greek philosophic thought has been produced by people confined almost totally to philological training, which is irrelevant to matters of science and its procedure. In addition, as is seen in the terminology emphasized in classical lexicons, the concern of classical scholars has been primarily with Greek poetical, literary, and historical works, not the scientific and the philosophical. It seems to have been assumed by some that the stage of learning attained by the Greeks on any topic is of no such complexity as to require any special learning, and linguistic training in Greek by itself makes any Greek scholar the master of Greek thought on any topic. One illustration of the deleterious effects of mistranslation is witnessed in the translation of Aristotle’s term ‘that whence the beginning of the motion,’ (οφεν η αρχη της κλησεως) as ‘efficient cause,’ for it is obvious that the term ‘efficient’ does not capture Aristotle’s intent for the simple reason that no initiation of motion is ever itself efficient because it can be interrupted. We will elaborate on this point momentarily.²

The primary responsibility for both the distortion of ancient thought, and the supposition of its contemporary irrelevance lies in the failure of commentators on Greek thought and modern science itself to grasp the enormous difference between the facts available in any given culture, altering

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as do the instruments by which fact is discovered, and the conceptual framework that is assumed by any inquirer in effecting his inquiry into fact. That is, the difference has not been understood between fact, and the procedure by which fact is scientifically explained. The distortion is thus due to a contemporary failure to understand the very thing that Aristotle thought was his greatest contribution. But it is the clarity and comprehensiveness of his thought on procedure that makes his works especially needed in today’s culture. And there is no example in contemporary culture that better illustrates this need than the fact that we have found no text book on logic today which has the least awareness that the function of logic is precisely the analysis of the conditions of inquiry and the determination of their adequacy.

In most texts book in logic, authors have abstracted their discussion from the requirements of any procedure, and thereby made them applicable to none. Yet at least in a dim way we all have a notion that there is a difference between the logically \textit{a priori} which applies to any fact since it is a matter of procedure, and the \textit{a posteriori} which is dependent on fact.

For facts do not come already labeled as facts. In order to explain and account for facts there are four problems that must be addressed, which consequently constitute the four functions of inquiry. The proper employment of these functions is essential to the very nature of any inquiry into any factual object of interest. For though fact exists independently of man’s description of it, man’s statements as to what is the truth about any fact are not constructed without a great deal of effort to make them say what is intended and to support those statements with evidence. And the structuring of this meaning and evidence is not itself a matter of fact. Instead, we bring to the inquiry about fact presuppositions about how this should be done.

But if inquiry into any topic, including the inquiry into other inquiries, depends upon the adequacy of one’s procedure, and one is unconscious of one’s own procedure, then the greatest distortion of the thought of another lies in the commentator’s unconscious projection of his own way of thinking upon the work he studies. For we employ procedure whether we are conscious of it or not, and that of which we have no awareness of is that over which we stumble the most.

It would seem, therefore, if we would show any continuing value to past thought and its continuing importance to contemporary knowledge, it cannot lie, as so many books about past thought assume, in simply determining the conclusions to which past thought arrived. For to the extent that conclusions are the effect of known fact, our superior access to fact would seem to reduce the value of past conclusions, but only to the extent that their conclusions depend upon fact. If, on the other hand, ancient thought has much to teach us about procedure, our superiority is in great measure an illusion.

Our contemporary celebration of fact is the inverse sign of our ignorance of the importance of procedure. We call our age the ‘information’ age, and rightly so. For we are glutted by information without understanding its difference from knowledge. Our most celebrated scientists and thinkers too often show a blissful disregard, as will be discussed momentarily, of the
subtleties well known to the ancients that make fact significant and determine how it is to be established and explained. These important observations may well have been done better in the past when facts were fewer. In this lies our need of Aristotle, not simply of his logic, but of his scientific works, however much they are deficient in fact, for they illustrate in great clarity and detail what each science needs procedurally in order to be valid.

**Explanation of Aristotle’s Procedures**

The problems that we have noted regarding mistranslations and misrepresentations of Aristotle’s thinking were discovered and corrected in the translations and commentaries of Kenneth A. Telford\(^1\), one man, who unlike those scholars previously mentioned, was skilled in both Greek linguistics and in philosophic and scientific procedure.

We will therefore call upon the work of Telford to begin explaining what we believe to be a more accurate account of Aristotle’s thinking by asking what is involved in seeking an explanation of anything in experience.

Whenever we find a problem in experience, whatever the topic, we can understand the thing we experience, account for it and explain it, only in terms of other things we have already experienced. This is what the first several books of Aristotle’s *Physics*, his inquiry into ‘things moved,’ are about. For it is there especially that he asks what it is we possess when we suppose ourselves to know about nature.

We understand, or have science of anything, always within a context supplied by other things that either coexist or precede that which we are seeking to explain. But this is not simply true of ‘most’ inquiries into fact, it is true of absolutely all problems relating to things experienced. It is always in something ‘other’ than the target of our thought that we find the explanation for the thing about which we have a problem. As we will see later, Aristotle says the difference between our procedures lies in ‘what sort of things,’ external to our topic, we rely on in accounting for our topic. Our procedures differ only in what sort of things we recognize as explanatory, for in every procedure, explanation is through something other than our topic.

But if this is the shape of all inquiry, accounting for ‘this’ through ‘that,’ it is by examining ‘how’ we severally do this that we discover the differences in our procedures, (why for example Galileo used a forensic procedure to establish his conclusions about the system of the heavenly bodies while Newton used for his procedure the demonstrative precision of the mathematician).

As we previously stated, it was principally Aristotle, more than any other, who consciously focused on procedure. It was he who first articulated each of the four functions of procedure, and showed that ‘to state,’ anything, is not merely ‘to say,’ ‘to express,’ ‘to publicize,’ etc., but to assert a relation

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between ‘what is stated’ and ‘what is.’ For a statement is logical precisely to the extent that it is justified by an argument, and not merely squeezed out of us as from a tube of toothpaste.

The function of procedure, or logic, is to resolve the problem of ‘stating’ anything in a defendable way. It is the problem of how the inquirer, the subject, justifiably makes claims about what he objectively finds in experience. And the four functions of attempting ‘to state’ or ‘assert’ anything, justifiably, or in a systematic, defendable, scientific way, so that it can indeed be said that objects studied have been ‘stated,’ are the four functions of Aristotle’s Organon. They are the four functions to which solutions must be assumed in the execution of any science.

The first function of inquiry, categorization, is treated in Aristotle’s Categories which addresses the problem of formulating the ‘predicatings,’ that we might ‘predicate of’, or ‘accuse,’ anything of being. For what is real is stated only by ‘blaming’ something for the being of something else, and we have to formulate not only the topics, entities, or things discussed, but also the other things stated of them, and determine the relations between them, apart from any assertions about them.

The second function of inquiry, interpretation, is treated in Aristotle’s On Interpretation which is about putting these entities into arguments or predications so as to affirm ‘what is,’ which is impossible without the inquirer deliberately joining two entities such that one is predicated, not ‘of’ another, as most every translation of Aristotle says, but rather ‘by virtue of,’ or ‘because of’ the one underlying.

The third function of inquiry, method, is treated in Aristotle’s Prior Analytics which establishes the analytical relation between statements in order to justify what is claimed in any case.

And the fourth function of inquiry, principle, is treated in Aristotle’s three works, which respectively, determine the ultimate ‘basis’ or principle of the stating, either in ‘what is,’ as addressed in the Posterior Analytics, ‘what is most opined,’ as addressed in On Topics, or in ‘what seems’ or ‘what seems to seem,’ as addressed in Sophistical Refutations.

Having established the four necessary functions for the complete accounting of fact, Aristotle also showed in his Physics and his Metaphysics the four different ‘causes’ as they are commonly referred to, what we refer to as the four considerations, by which the functions of inquiry can be addressed. In accounting for any fact, one must identify what contributed to the cause of there being a fact to account for in the first place. The cause then focuses on the consideration that is employed by the thinker to either formulate or explain fact. Aristotle showed that there are essentially four considerations to be addressed in fully accounting for the existence of fact, and the insufficient accounts of fact provided by both past and present thinkers is directly related to their failure to take into account all four considerations in their explanation. Namely, in accounting for the existence of fact one must consider: the material to which something comes to be, the form that comes to be attributed to that material, the initiation of this coming to be, and the completion of the process
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initiated. These four considerations together exhaust the facts of experience, however only one of the four considerations is adequate by including all the others.

Unfortunately, these four considerations for accounting for fact have been vitiated through their interpretation by translators and commentators who were using the very reductive procedures Aristotle’s logic was designed to correct. The error does not lie so much in the static considerations, matter and form, (that of the stuff out of which something experienced is formed, and the shape or structure into which the matter is brought). For once it is pointed out, it is fairly clear to most that a thing has some properties due to the parts out of which it is made and some properties due to the whole those parts have come to be. The neglect of either consideration results in a reduction in the facts for which one has an account. Philosophers and scientists who regard either of these explanatory principles as fundamental also regard substance, or what aides and is self-subsistent, as either the parts of things (Democritus), or the whole of things (Plato), and whatever is dynamic, that being the flow of experience, was naively regarded as simply the imperfect approximations of these realities.

But for over two thousand years, since Sulla found Aristotle’s manuscripts in Scepsis, the interpretation of the other two considerations, the dynamic ones of initiation and completion, along with many other matters of linguistic confusion, has precluded a sound understanding of Aristotle’s own procedure, and the relation he claimed between it and how other scientists and philosopher’s employed procedure. In fact, it has been primarily the misunderstanding of the dynamic considerations that has in general precluded an adequate account of Aristotle’s contribution to all logic and science, so essential are they to his procedure, and so badly have they been interpreted.

For Aristotle, not only because Greek lacked a developed vocabulary in which to express his ideas, but in part also to keep scientific language in touch with its experiential basis, used phrases of common speech to express his ideas. The initiation of the dynamic he called ‘that whence the motion,’ or ‘the principle whence the motion,’ but western scholars, themselves addicted to reductive procedures, translated this as ‘the efficient cause.’ Yet it is only those using sophistic procedures, like Protagoras, Occam, Galileo, Hume, Kant, Bentham, Mill, Darwin, Freud, and Heisenberg, who supposed that the initiation of motion is adequate to its completion. To Aristotle, as was previously noted, it is obvious that initiated motions can be interrupted, and thus total reliance on initiations obscures the articulation of the completion of any motion, which is thereby the opposing consideration in accounting for things in flux.

It was Aristotle, primarily, who saw the necessity in adding to the three previous ways of accounting for experience, what he termed ‘that for the sake of which,’ or the ‘completion’ of the process, action, or motion. But translators whose habits of thought made this confusing in the first place, translated the phrase as the ‘final cause,’ and translated τελος (τελος), not as ‘completion,’ but erroneously as ‘end.’ Yet care in observing Greek usage shows teleutí
(τελευταίος) means ‘end’, as in ‘the end of one’s arm’, whereas telos means ‘completion’. \(^1\)

It is common custom to regard human action as aiming at ends due to the sophistic procedures of the greater part of our intellectual heritage since Rome and Cicero endearing us with this expression. But the least thought about actions and processes shows us that what is sought is never the termination of either the effort or the process, but it is its fulfillment or completion. To put it most plainly, just because something has ended does not necessarily mean that it is completed. Here we see how we can be the victims of our own inadequate procedures.

For as we will show, there is a priority existing among the four considerations that makes some abstractable and others inclusive. The four considerations are not equally valid modes of thought, but analogous and derivative manners of solving the four functions of inquiry. That is to say, they are neither separately invalid nor adequate, but adequate to the extent that the consideration governing one’s procedure includes all other considerations. And there are analogous restrictions throughout science due to the failure to include all four considerations.

The three considerations of matter, initiation and form are only parts of the total or complete logical situation as grasped by Aristotle. Aristotle shows that all argument must be based first and foremost on stating the completion, (telos), not the matter, nor the initiation, nor the assimilating form of the topic one has isolated for discussion. He affirms this not only in his Organon, but also in practically every one of his works.

As can be abstracted from the matrix of philosophic procedures (see Table 1), a total of 64 separable combinations can be obtained in the development of one’s accounting for fact. \(^2\) Each of the four functions of inquiry that are essential to any science can to some extent be resolved by virtue of each of the four considerations, and the differences that one witnesses in inquiry is due to the different considerations thought to be fundamental to the exposition. The ability of the consideration chosen to include the data relating to the other considerations determines the compass or range of the overall procedure to the available facts. For the order of material, initiating, formal, and completing considerations is an order of priority in which the earlier tend to be abstractable and used autonomously, while the later tend to implicate the earlier as necessary. Thus, each of the Greeks, not simply Aristotle, as well as every subsequent writer on any topic, addresses all four functions of inquiry according to the consideration that he assumes to be fundamental. Any writer’s account of his topic is complete to the extent that the consideration on which he primarily relies allows for the inclusion of the other considerations. Thoughts

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are therefore not equally valid, but partial or complete depending upon the capacity of the consideration assumed as fundamental.

Table 1. Matrix of Philosophic Procedures (©McCormick & Kuchuris)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Four Considerations (Causes)</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Interpretation Semantics</th>
<th>Method Epistemology</th>
<th>Principle Metaphysics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Material Consideration</td>
<td>What is being considered?</td>
<td>The locus of reality?</td>
<td>How do you know?</td>
<td>What is it based on?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used by Atomists</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiating Consideration (Efficient)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used by Sophists</td>
<td>Matters into various reductive compounding</td>
<td>Ontic/Initiative Meaning is found in an underlying nature</td>
<td>Particular/Logistic Aim is construction of proofs and axioms based on indivisible elements</td>
<td>Meroscopic/Simple Decompose things into basic simple ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal Consideration</td>
<td>Types of perspectives</td>
<td>Phenomenal/Existential Meaning is created in an act of choice</td>
<td>Universal/Operational Aims at persuasion by power or debate</td>
<td>Meroscopic/Actional Postulation of distinctions into kinds by action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used by Plato</td>
<td>Hierarchies of forms</td>
<td>Ontic/Ontological Meaning is found in a transcendent ideal</td>
<td>Universal/Dialectical Aims at synthesis of contradictory &amp; the exemplification in dialog</td>
<td>Holoscopic/Comprehensive Everything is assimilated into an englobing whole idea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completing Consideration (Final)</td>
<td>Kinds having different functions</td>
<td>Phenomenal/Essential Meaning is found in circumstantial limits</td>
<td>Particular/Problematic Aims at resolving problematic situations, seeks to discover causes</td>
<td>Holoscopic/Reflexive Thought is evidence of its own existence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used by Aristotle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some historical examples that illustrate how past thinkers restricted the range of their inquiry by focusing on only one consideration are shown in the Anatolian physiologists and the Athenian atomists who used exclusively, in each of the four functions of inquiry, the material parts out of which a topic is composed. The sophists used exclusively in all four functions the initiations of events by tracing everything stated to the arbitrary distinction of the subject speaking. The Platonic dialectic used, in all four functions, the encompassing structures of forms that successively create wholes. However it was Aristotle who differed from his predecessors by pointing out that there is a fourth sort of explanation, which he also used in all four functions of inquiry, and this is the completion of any motion or process which attains a whole or nature.
The genius of Aristotle’s account of procedure is his realization that in performing these four functions of inquiry, unless one’s procedure includes all possible modes of consideration, one’s conclusions are restricted to those facts which are compatible only with the consideration one has happened to choose. And if the consideration to which one primarily turns allows or entails the absence of the other considerations necessary to completion, the science one produces is reductive. Modern science is replete with theories that exhibit such reductiveness.

For example, in his account of the origin of species, Darwin was forced by the restricted nature of his procedure to assign the determination of new species to chance. This happened because his method accounted for things only in terms of the consideration of the initiations of motion, and he had no machinery to account for the consideration of the completion of motion, such as the attainment of new species. The assignment of chance is always the admission that one has not the instruments for articulating fact. The completion or fulfillment of motion is the area of fact most often found unaccountable by one’s procedure. One’s statements are not only limited to the area of explanation chosen, but also distorted by falsely giving that consideration the quality of a complete explication which exceeds its capacity. In Darwin’s case this is accounting for completions through only the initiations of motion. At this point it should become obvious that each of the four functions of inquiry (i.e. categories, interpretation, method, & principle) become restricted if one does not account for all four considerations (the material, initiating, formal & completion) in one’s inquiry.

This illustrates the manner in which procedure can be a limiting factor in inquiry and can reduce the range of fact to be accounted for in science. This reductive approach to science can be extended indefinitely (as alluded to by the matrix) once the individual procedures of scientists are understood in respect of each of the four functions of inquiry. For instance, Descartes used the consideration of completion as the determining factor of his principle, as in his *cogito ergo sum*, but relied on the material consideration and mathematical demonstration for his method. His principles therefore had the maximum range of factual applicability, but his method was restricted to the implications of matter. Herein lies the significance of Aristotle, for unlike these other notable thinkers, it is he alone who uses the completing consideration in accounting for all four functions of inquiry, and thereby provides us with the most comprehensive procedure in the accounting of fact.

The extreme specialization of learning today due to the quantity of facts at our disposal has made each field obtuse to the developments in other fields. But there are two avenues by which a scientist may look outside of his own expertise and learn to enlarge the capacity of his procedure, either by grasping the procedural analogies within another science, or by the objective comparisons of procedure itself. If contemporary logic ever understands it relevance to science, this would be its function, to explore the adequacy of procedure to facts. But if all the logician does is to explain the syllogism, there is not much hope for this. And it is Aristotle, above all others, ancient or
modern, who has led us to an adequate notion of procedure. If we wish for our science and for our understanding to be truly illuminating of fact, and if we desire the ability to distinguish between explanations of substance from those lacking, then we need to revive and resuscitate the insights of the ancients, particularly the contributions to procedure provided to us by Aristotle.

Bibliography


CH A P T E R  FIVE

Truth is Subjectivity: Kierkegaard, Socrates, and Immortality

William M. O'Meara

It is the thesis of this paper that Kierkegaard’s interpretation of Socrates in the *Phaedo* offers a meaningful understanding of how Socrates’ commitment to the examined way of life leads Socrates to the acceptance of immortality of the soul.

John Wild offers the basis for this thesis when he interprets Kierkegaard’s use of the Aristotelian teleological approach in ethics as not a special disciple regarding only the concerns of humanity but as:

An ontological discipline that plunges us into the roots of being itself. Moral choices confront us with existence as against non-existence, and we cannot understand them without gaining some insight into the mystery of being. The issue is not merely one quality (good) as opposed to another one (bad). It is the question of really choosing, really living, really existing, as against a diluted seeming to choose and to live. It is real existence that is at stake.

This concept of the real or authentic as opposed to unauthentic mode of being now pervades the whole of existentialist thought. It is the revival of an ancient conception. Plato and Aristotle both agree that goodness is realized in the performance of a proper function. According to Aristotle, there is no difference between a good flute-player and one who really plays it. Human goodness is not a property, not a quality, not an attribute of any kind, but rather something much deeper—a mode of really living and acting, existing authentically as a man (Wild, 47).

Wild’s grasp of Kierkegaard recognizes that for Kierkegaard the difference between the aesthetic, the ethical, and the ethico-religious ways of living is not primarily a difference between ways of thinking but between ways of choosing. The human individual cannot encompass reality in a system of thought since she does not exist outside the universe with an eternal perspective. Both the would-be knower, the human, and the would-be object of knowledge, whether the world or the human being, are in process of change. Objective reflection cannot discern the key to reality since the very knower and objects to be known are in process, and the choices which the person makes of herself constitute herself to be different objects of awareness. Kierkegaard reflects upon the
difference that one’s human subjectivity in choice and one’s subsequent process of change make:

Is he a human being, or is he a speculative philosopher in the abstract? But if he is a human being, then he is also an existing individual. Two ways, in general, are open for an existing individual: Either he can do his utmost to forget that he is an existing individual, by which he becomes a comic figure, since existence has the remarkable trait of compelling an existing individual to exist whether he wills it or not. . . . Or he can concentrate his entire energy upon the fact that he is an existing individual. It is from this side, in the first instance, that objection must be made to modern philosophy; not that it is a mistaken presupposition, occasioned by its having forgotten, in a sort of world-historical absentmindedness, what it means to be a human being. Not indeed, what it means to be a human being in general; for this is the sort of thing that one might even induce a speculative philosopher to agree to; but what it means that you and I and he are human beings, each one for himself (Kierkegaard, 109).

An example of the comical thinker would be the behaviorist psychologist who would construct a theory of human behavior all the while ignoring her own personal need to make commitments in life, all the while ignoring her own responsibility for even her own theorizing and experimentation. The speculative thinker must recognize that the thinker is primarily a human being, an existing individual, one who chooses. Since the very object of knowledge, what I am, is affected by my choices, unless I make the right choices I will not come to proper awareness of what I am and what I can be, for example, whether or not I can be immortal. To become aware of myself as primarily an existing individual requires that the fundamental categories for understanding human existence be ethical or ethico-religious in nature. To be an existing human being is primarily to be capable of a commitment, a reasonable choosing of oneself in the world, a choosing that is, first, evaluational, reflective of and critical of the options available, and, second, valuational, in dedication to and creation of the primary value by which one shall live and choose. All human activity and thought must be related to this central commitment, or else the person has forgotten that she is an existing individual, one in process of becoming though her own choice of herself in her world.

It is in this light that Kierkegaard comments on Socrates, identifying him as one who realized that truth is found in one’s subjective, that is, in one’s existential, appropriation of it; he writes: ‘Socrates’ infinite merit is to have been an existing thinker, not a speculative philosopher who forgets what it means to exist. . . . The infinite merit of the Socratic thinker was precisely to accentuate the fact that the knower is an existing individual, and that the task of existing is his essential task (Kierkegaard, 184-185).’

By his famous Socratic ignorance, by his denial of the claim to have knowledge, Socrates realized that in relation to the eternal truth, the ultimate
truth that makes sense of life, he was existing in time and that ‘existing [in
time], the process of transformation to inwardness in and by existing [that is,
by choosing and living out that choice], is the truth (Kierkegaard, 184)
(Phaedo, 64).’ It is clear that Kierkegaard is offering us an interpretation of
Socrates rooted in the existentialist tradition rather than in the rationalist
tradition of Plato and Aristotle. Plato’s Phaedo offers arguments for
immortality, in part, rooted in the eternal nature of the Forms, but it is not clear
that Socrates himself held this Platonic doctrine of the Forms.

Kierkegaard offers a reading of the Phaedo without an emphasis upon the
objective nature of the Forms as eternal. Socrates has already been condemned
to death in the Apology and has refused escape in the Crito. It is the day of his
execution, and his friends gather in his cell to say their goodbyes. In their talk
about death, Socrates points out ‘that those who really apply themselves in the
right way to philosophy are directly and of their own accord preparing
themselves for dying and death.’ For death is the release of the soul from the
body, and the philosopher, one who seeks to live in accord with wisdom is one
who turns away from the pleasures of the body in order to develop the values
of the soul. Hence, the philosopher is not afraid of death. As Socrates more
fully explains this, he at first appears quite assured that death is a passage to an
immortal world where his soul will be able to contemplate pure truth and
beauty unadulterated by the transitory nature of the body and temporal objects.
But we have to remember that Socrates’ disclaimer of knowledge is primary in
his life and that he faces death as an uncertainty. As he said in the Apology:
‘Death is one of two things. Either it is annihilation . . . , or . . . it is really a
change—a migration of the soul from this place to another (Apology, 40c).’
And also: ‘Now it is time that we were going, I to die and you to live, but
which of us has the happier prospect is unknown to anyone but God (Apology,
42a).’

Kierkegaard has the highest praise of Socrates’ approach to immortality
through his ethical-religious purification of his soul; he writes:

When one man investigates objectively the problem of immortality,
and another embraces an uncertainty with the passion of the infinite:
where is there the most truth, and who has the greater certainty? The
one has entered upon a never-ending approximation, for the certainty
of immortality lies precisely in the subjectivity of the individual; the
other is immortal, and fights for his immortality by struggling with
uncertainty. Let us consider Socrates. Nowadays everyone dabbles in
a few proofs; some have several such proofs, others fewer. But
Socrates! He puts the question objectively in a problematic manner: if
there is an immortality. He must therefore be accounted a doubter in
comparison with one of our modern thinkers with the three proofs? By
no means. On this ‘if’ he risks his entire life, he has the courage to
meet death, and he has with the passion of the infinite so determined
the pattern of his life that it must be found acceptable—if there is an
immortality. Is any better proof capable of being given for the immortality of the soul? But those who have the three proofs do not at all determine their lives in conformity therewith; if there is an immortality it must feel disgust over their manner of life: can any better refutation be given of the three proofs (Kierkegaard, 180)?

The courage with which Socrates affirms the values of life such as truth and friendship in the face of death which may be ultimate annihilation is for Kierkegaard the best proof of immortality. Expressing Kierkegaard’s point with a pragmatic perspective, we may say that if immortality is a true idea, then it should have valuable consequences for human life; it should have transforming effects upon human personality to live in the light of immortality even though immortality may be objectively uncertain. The infinite passion with which Socrates has committed himself and transformed his life is to Kierkegaard a sign that Socrates is living in the truth, that for him truth is subjectivity, appropriated inwardly, letting the truth become a living truth in him. Since ‘the Socratic ignorance, which Socrates held fast with the entire passion of his inwardsness, was thus an expression for the principle that the eternal truth is related to an existing individual and that this truth must therefore be a paradox for him as long as he exists,’ Kierkegaard concludes that Socrates does exemplify his statement that truth is subjectivity (Kierkegaard, 180). Socrates’ personal appropriation of immortality through the development of his moral character exemplifies for Kierkegaard the following ‘definition of truth: An objective uncertainty held fast in an appropriation process of the most passionate inwardsness is the truth, the . . . highest truth attainable for an existing individual (Kierkegaard, 182).’ The highest truth about the self can only come to the self in an ethical commitment or an ethico-religious commitment to a value which is objectively uncertain. Ethics is not a special discipline that can be restricted to a limited territory, as John Wild has pointed out. Rather it is an ontological discipline which plunges us into the roots of being itself, placing before the self both life vs. death and commitment vs. drift.

In support of the thesis of this paper that Kierkegaard’s interpretation of Socrates in the Phaedo offers a deeply rooted understanding of the text, we turn now to a more detailed analysis of the Phaedo. One of the objections to accepting immortality for the soul in the dialogue is as follows: when our body is tuned and held together in proper proportions of its elements, then the soul is a kind of mixture and harmony of these elements. If the soul is a kind of harmony, then it would seem to follow that when the elements of the body become disordered, then the individual begins to die. When the elements no longer maintain their proper proportions, then the soul as the harmony of the body must perish even though like music it seems divine when it occurs. But no one asks if the music continues when the musical instrument has fallen apart; so also no one should ask if the soul continues to exist when the body has fallen apart (Phaedo, 85a-86d).
One of the hearers of Phaedo’s retelling of the dialogue, Echecrates, is disillusioned at this point. At first, he was convinced by the argument of Socrates; but now that he has heard this objection, he says, ‘How can we believe in anything after this? Socrates’ argument was absolutely convincing and now it is completely discredited (Phaedo, 88d).’ Phaedo then explains how Socrates, aware of such possible disillusionment, warned against misology, the hatred of reasoning. Misology is like misanthropy. Misanthropy arises when an individual believes in the goodness of people uncritically. One trusts another as absolutely truthful, sincere, and reliable, but the other proves untrustworthy. After repeated disappointments like this one, the individual swings from one extreme of trusting everyone to the other extreme of trusting no one. He becomes a misanthrope. In a similar way, misology arises. Then an individual trusts all arguments uncritically and finds that such arguments contradict each other as in this case about immortality, the individual swings from one extreme of naïve acceptance to the other extreme of distrusting all reflective argument. He becomes a misologist. The solution to this danger of misology is, the dialogue records:

First, then, let us be careful, he said, and let us not admit into our souls the belief that there is really no health or soundness in arguments. Much rather let us think that we are not sound ourselves, let us be men and take pains to become sound: you and the others to prepare you for all your coming life, I to prepare myself for death (Phaedo, 90d).

To prepare himself properly for death, Socrates is affirming the centrality of his commitment to the examined way of life; he will not accept immortality if the arguments are unsound for it. He is aware of the danger of distrusting all arguments and of the foolishness of simply believing what he self-assertively would like to be true. Even in the face of death he rejects misology and remains a philosopher, a seeker after wisdom.

In telling us to beware of misology and to commit ourselves to philosophy, Socrates prepares the listeners for his own intellectual autobiography, as though he himself had suffered the temptation of becoming a misologist. When Socrates was young, he had a passion for pre-Socratic philosophy, the attempt of the earlier philosophers to explain why things are the way they are by reference to material causes such as heat and cold, earth and moisture. But he tells us:

It occurred to me that I must guard against the same sort of risk which people run when they watch and study an eclipse of the sun; they really do sometimes injure their eyes, unless they study its reflection in water or some other medium. I conceived of something like this happening to myself, and I was afraid that by observing objects with my eyes and trying to comprehend them with each of my senses I might blind my soul altogether. So I decided that I must have recourse
to theories and use them in trying to discover the truth about things 
(*Phaedo*, 99d).

So Socrates turned from his disillusionment with investigations into the 
causes of physical things and turned to the examination of human values and 
purposes. Trusting in Anaxagoras’s statement that the mind is the cause of all 
things, Socrates found that this was at least true in human life. For example, 
the cause of why Socrates sits in prison, awaiting his execution, is not because the 
material parts of his body make him be there but because the citizens of Athens 
believed it was the best purpose to condemn him and because Socrates believed 
it was his best purpose to accept the death penalty rather than escape. The 
actions of Socrates are explained by the mind of Socrates, by the purposes of 
Socrates. This fundamental truth comes to him because he has sustained his 
commitment to philosophy rather than succumbing to misology (*Phaedo*, 98c-
99b).

This existential commitment to sustaining the examined way of life fits in 
well with two recent commentators on the nature of ethics for Kierkegaard as 
founded in existential commitment. As Melchert has argued:

> The judge’s either/or, then, has to do with the categories under which 
> things are evaluated. One will lead a radically different life if 
everything is decided according to good/evil (ethical choice) rather 
than interesting/boring (aesthetic choice). And the basic either/or, the 
really significant or deep one, is not one of these alternatives but that 
which poses this question: aesthetic or ethical (Melchert, 504).

The ethical is not the proper category by which to live because we can 
objectively prove it as the only way of life that is logically self-consistent as 
Kant would argue by objective reflection, rather, for Kierkegaard, the ethical is 
a chosen way of life, a chosen way of interpreting and judging one’s actions by 
the categories of moral good and evil. The judge wants the aesthete to choose 
freedom in a way that enhances freedom itself. The aesthetic way of life loses 
one’s freedom to a control by that which is other than freedom, namely, one’s 
feelings and passions. But when the aesthete becomes aware of what Kant has 
called negative freedom, the ability of a rational will to become independent of 
external causes determining it, then the rational will can determine itself by its 
own nature, thereby developing positive freedom (Kant 63). Kant has argued 
that this rational nature necessarily involves respect for the value of all rational 
natures because reason must avoid the logical contradiction of valuing oneself 
for one’s own sake while at the same time not valuing others for their own 
sake. However, Kant is wrong that these different views of the value of self and 
others is a logical contradiction. Such different views create a moral 
contradiction, not a logical contradiction, only after the self has freely chosen 
to view itself as fundamentally equal in value for one’s own sake with all other 
rational natures. This movement to the universal valuation of all selves is an 
existential leap.
Echoing Kant’s distinction between negative freedom, in which the will is independent of foreign causes determining the will, and positive freedom, in which the will gives to itself and to every other rational being a universal law (Kant, 63), Kierkegaard has Judge William argue against the Aesthete’s choice of living by the categories of the interesting vs. the boring because such a lifestyle is not authentic choice. Rather it is the preference of drifting along in one’s life, subject to one’s feelings moods, and passions. Such control of the self by the mechanical nature, that is, cause and effect nature, of one’s impulses is heteronomy of the will, control of the self by that which is other than oneself. True autonomy of the will, positive freedom, can only come to the self who chooses to live, that is, who chooses to interpret all of one’s life choices, by the categories of moral good and moral evil. The Aesthete’s selection of the aesthetic lifestyle is not a choice of evil from that person’s perspective. Rather, it is the selection of the indifferent, that which makes no difference for moral good or moral evil; it is the selection only of that which is interesting or boring. Judge William sees positive freedom, true choice of choice itself, true autonomy, as coming to the self who chooses to live by the categories of moral good and moral evil. This positive freedom, this true autonomy of the will, comes not by a logical deduction of morality because of the logical impossibility of valuing self as an end in itself but not others as ends in themselves, but by a choice of seeing oneself as bound by the ethical categories of good and evil (Melchert, 504-506).

In addition to Melchert, another recent commentator on Kierkegaard has also emphasized that the Socratic command to know oneself in the ethical sphere is understood by Kierkegaard as to choose oneself to be ethical. Ferreira writes:

One need not view choice as active in contrast with reflection. Choice need not be understood in terms of a deliberate decision preceding or following that reflection, but rather can be seen in terms of the descriptively more complex phenomenon of a reflection upon oneself which itself constitutes a change rather than simply setting the stage for subsequent change—that is, choice is the transfiguring move of an agent’s ‘reflection upon himself which is itself an action’ (Ferreira, p. 66).

This choosing of the self as knowing oneself is an imaginative exploration of the self in which one envisions both self and world in a way that is transforming of both. For she writes: ‘Coming to see the world differently is coming to see ourselves differently, and vice versa (Ferreira, p. 67). For example, to see the world of human selves as beautiful in the ethical sense of Judge William is to see oneself simultaneously as capable of participating in the creation and enjoyment of such ethical beauty, as Judge William writes: [When you] ‘contemplate existence under ethical categories’, [then] ‘you will see that only then does existence become beautiful, that only in this way can a
man succeed in saving his soul and gaining the whole world, can succeed in using the world without abusing it’ (quoted by Ferreira, p. 67). Building upon Ferreira’s insights into the transforming vision of self and world involved in choosing the self and knowing the self, this paper is building towards the combination for Kierkegaard of the Socratic commitment to the examined way of life with both the commitment to the ethical way of life and the commitment to a vision of the ethical way of life as an immortal way of life. Ferreira insists that ‘Kierkegaard does not propose the “leap” as “unique” to the religious sphere, but suggests, on the contrary, that a “leap” or “transfiguring” move, which can only be understood properly in the light of his understanding of the role of imagination, is constitutive of all such qualitative transitions (whether to the ethical or to the religion of immanence [also called by Kierkegaard, Socratic religion] or to Christianity)’ (Ferreira, 147).

Let us proceed to draw out these existential interconnections for Kierkegaard’s reading of the Phaedo. Having discovered by his Socratic commitment to the examined way of life that it is the soul which directs the body, Socrates can reply to the objection that the soul as the harmony of the body cannot exist after death since the parts of the body will no longer be coordinated. The harmony which comes from a musical instrument does not direct the instrument; however, the soul does direct the body; hence the soul is not dependent on the body; so the soul is not just the harmony of the bodily parts. Brumbaugh summarizes the analysis:

As against any ‘harmony of the body’ hypothesis, we must recognize that a soul (1) directs the body; (2) is able to know truths that are unchanging; (3) feels the attraction of ‘ideals’—it has some “divination” or ‘vision’ of wisdom, courage, and justice as qualities that have intrinsic value; (4) realizes, reflecting on this, that its true identity lies in the unchanging realm of ideals and ideas. . . . Seen in

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1See also William McDonald’s evaluation of Kierkegaard’s Ethics: ‘The ethical position advocated by Judge Wilhelm in “Equilibrium Between the Aesthetic and the Ethical in the Composition of Personality” (Either-Or II) is a peculiar mix of cognitivism and noncognitivism. The metaethics or normative ethics are cognitivist, laying down various necessary conditions for ethically correct action. These conditions include: the necessity of choosing seriously and inwardly; commitment to the belief that predications of good and evil of our actions have a truth-value; the necessity of choosing what one is actually doing, rather than just responding to a situation; actions are to be in accordance with rules; and these rules are universally applicable to moral agents. The choice of metaethics, however, is noncognitive. There is no adequate proof of the truth of metaethics. The choice of normative ethics is motivated, but in a noncognitive way. The Judge seeks to motivate the choice of his normative ethics through the avoidance of despair. Here despair (Fortvivelse) is to let one's life depend on conditions outside one's control (and later, more radically, despair is the very possibility of despair in this first sense). For Judge Wilhelm, the choice of normative ethics is a noncognitive choice of cognitivism, and thereby an acceptance of the applicability of the conceptual distinction between good and evil (McDonald, Section 4).’
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Kierkegaard, Socrates, and Immortality

this way, the soul is different in kind from any physical process, and its nature must reach beyond the immediate adventures of its body; and insofar as a man’s true identity is an unchanging ideal goal, he can claim immortality (Brumbaugh, 38).

In this perspective on Socrates’ thought, John Wild’s thesis on ethics is correct that it is not a special discipline that can be restricted to a limited territory. Rather it is an ontological discipline insofar as the Socratic commitment to the examined way of life places the self in a position which enables it to gain some perspective on immortality. Just as Socrates has sustained his commitment to mind and purpose as an explanatory principle in general, as recommended by Anaxagoras, so his own purposes sustain him in directing his body to accept his death penalty rather than his body controlling his purposes, and so also may Socrates existentially choose to affirm his belief in the immortality of his soul and its deepest orientation to the purposes of the virtues. In Kierkegaard’s interpretation, Socrates has existentially and simultaneously chosen that the examined way of life, the moral way of life, and immortal life are ‘an objective uncertainty held fast in an appropriation process of the most passionate inwardness . . . the truth, the . . . highest truth attainable for an existing individual (Kierkegaard, 182).’

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CHAPTER SIX

The Supreme Way of Al-Ghazali in Attaining Intellectual Knowledge

Zahra (Mitra) Poursina

Merold Westphal wrote in his important article “Taking St. Paul Seriously: Sin as an Epistemological Category”: “I want to suggest in this essay that for Christian philosophers sin should be an essential epistemological category …” and mentioned that we can think of epistemology as a matter of psychology and ethics in order to notice the nature and the limits of human knowledge. This “shifts attention from beliefs to believing and makes it more natural to speak of sin as an epistemological category.” (Westphal, 201)

Also he rightly wrote: “… the history of philosophy is a mine filled with raw materials for a deepened understanding of the Pauline motif [i.e. as sinners we “suppress the truth” (ref. to Romans 1:18-24 RSV)] (Westphal, 207)

Pursuing this, al-Ghazali, the great Muslim thinker, is one of those stops, but it should be noted that his idea of the acceptance of the relation between sin and the intuitive knowledge, like other thinkers with mystical views, is a famous one among Muslims. But the impact of sin on the objective and intellectual knowledge in a general sense seems strange; especially if we consider that al-Ghazali is well-known as an anti-rationalist. He was indeed the one who introduced the restrictions and disabilities of reason and clarified the importance of purifying the heart for achieving intuitive or mystical, or in al-Ghazalian words, prophetic knowledge; the one that settles beyond and above the rational level of knowledge.¹

Illuminating this claim requires noticing to two important issues:

Firstly, analyzing the essence of sin shows that sin is not only based on the prohibition of God but also is related to the veritable and essential aspect of its

¹Frank Griffel studies this idea in his book Al-Ghazali’s Philosophical Theology and mentions that “The influential Muslim theologian al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111) has always played a leading role in Western attempts to explain the assumed decline of philosophy in Islam.” (Griffel, 5)

This idea which is especially assigned to al-Ghazali’s condemnation of philosophers in his work The Incoherence of the Philosophers (taḥafut al-falāṣīfa) has been investigated by Frank Griffel. He has noted to some subtle points and demonstrates that in spite of the current idea, we can think of al-Ghazali as a thinker who stands at the center of developments in Islamic theology and whose Incoherence and subsequent works on Islamic theology are, in fact, a vital part of the naturalization and effective integration of the philosophical discourse in Islam. (See: Griffel, 7)
examples.\textsuperscript{1} In fact, analyzing the influence of sin on knowledge will be the analyzing of the real effects of sin on the cognitive realm of the soul.

Secondly, according to al-Ghazali’s epistemology the highest level of knowledge which is the prophetic or intuitive knowledge is intellective and objective. This level is the evolution of the lower level of the rational knowledge.

**Sin as a Veritable Quality**

Al-Ghazali’s view about sin is based on his teleological and psychological analyses about human nature. According to al-Ghazali, mankind has been created only to achieve happiness which is the “knowledge of God and vision of His Beauty”. (\textit{Kimia}, I, 15) So man’s existential direction has been created toward this goal. For this very reason, every part of his existence has a significant relation to this end and as if it has been “defined” from the beginning. So if it is used for any purpose other than that, it would have gone astray and wouldn’t do its duty, hence the individual wouldn’t achieve his object. Thus, the ontological view of al-Ghazali about man is a value-based one and these two attitudes are integrated into each other.

In this picture “concupiscence” and “anger” are two faculties which should help man; but sometimes they indulge and don’t do their duties in relation to human’s happiness. This prevents the heart from the journey through which it can reach eternal happiness. (\textit{Ihya’}, III, 7)

Therefore, in this situation man commits sin, i.e. commits the actions which are in accordance with his indulgence (hava) and doing actions in accordance with indulgence (hava) causes man to oppose with God’s commands. So Al-Ghazali defines sin as “everything opposed to God’s command, whether to commit it or not do it.” (\textit{Ihya’}, IV, 17)

On the other hand al-Ghazali says:

The creation of the concupiscence is such that it doesn’t stand in its realm and wants plenty; and [God] has created reason in order to preserve it in its limit and has sent religious laws through prophets’ language to find its limitations. (\textit{Kimya}, I, 73)

It means reason is the one which should understand the relation between the different aspects of human and govern them so much so that every aspect wouldn’t do the action which is in opposition with man’s ultimate goal. Viewed from this aspect, the origin of sin derives from human nature itself and in its nature is something in opposition with reason and God’s commandments.

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\textsuperscript{1}This opinion is contrary to al-Ghazali’s formal and well-known position which indicates that the goodness and badness of the acts are accidental qualities for actions.
Another explanation of sin is based on the relation between man and the present world. Man lives in the world and “the world” causes preoccupation for him. Thus his heart would be related to it and would love it, so worldliness would emerge. Also it would occupy him because the human being wants to utilize it. This way, he concludes, human beings would forget their souls and their object of coming to this world. (See: *Ihya’*, III, 238-239)

According to this analysis, being in this world entails the situation for man which may cause sin: “The present world is the beginning of every evil and worldliness is the origin of all disobediences.” (*Kimiya*, II, 133)

Accordingly, in al-Ghazali’s thought, analyzing the noetic effects of sin is based on the analyzing of the roots and the real consequences of man’s attributes and acts. When a person sins some emotions and demands form in him with the origin of the affection to the present world. Since these emotions and demands follow forgetting the goal and the reason’s commands we should say that sin shows in its nature a will and a request which is opposed to both the intellect and God’s command.

Also we can say al-Ghazali considered every act, feeling, and even thought which converts the soul’s attention from God to the self and its relatives in its grade as sin. And the analysis al-Ghazali explicitly proposes as the origin of the influence of sin on knowledge, is that sin converts complete attention of the soul from God to the self. (See: *Ma’arij*, 74-75)

This explanation is confirmed by his definition of sin in the Book of patience and gratitude (*Kitab al-Sabr wa al-Shukr*) in the *Revival of Religious Sciences* (*Ihya’ olum al-din*). There, he defined sin in terms of its noetic impact:

> Every act either attracts a state to the heart that prevents revelation and causes darkness of the heart and leads to the world’s adornments; or creates a state that prepares the heart for the revelation and causes the cleanness of the heart and cutting his world’s interests. The name of the first one is disobedience (*ma’siya*) and the name of the second one is obedience (*ta’a*). (*Ihya’*, IV, 143)

**The Intellectuality of Certain Knowledge**¹

One of the most well-known positions of al-Ghazali’s viewpoints is his opposition to philosophy and intellectual knowledge as a certain knowledge and a way through which human being can achieve certainty in theological doctrines. But, in spite of this position, a more accurate investigation shows al-Ghazali

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¹The article “Al-Ghazali’s Supreme Way to know God” (Binyamin Abrahamov, *Studia Islamica*, LXXVII, Paris, 1993) helped me to ensure what I thought about the real al_Ghazali’s idea about intellectuality and prepared me more evidences for it.
believed that the highest path for achieving the highest level of knowledge is *intellectual* and the ultimate goal of the human being is becoming an *intellectual world* which is in turn the reflection of the whole world. (See: *Maʿarij*, 149)

Al-Ghazali, on one hand, believed when man enters the rational level of knowledge which is actually the level of *human* knowledge, he can apprehend the universals and rational first principles and the knowledge which acquired as a result of thinking based on logical rules. Then, he finds another level which can figure out the things that reason couldn’t apprehend, in its own level. These truths consist of the things which belong to the future and the invisible world. This level is known as the prophetic level of knowledge (See: *al-Munqidh*, 70-71) and al-Ghazali calls it the “prophetic spirit” in his *Mishkat al-Anvar (Mishkat*, 166).

On the other hand, in al-Ghazali’s view all epistemic levels, including reason, reach their most excellent perfection in the prophetic level of knowledge. Thus, he recognized three properties of prophecy which would be the perfection of theoretical reason, the perfection of practical reason and the faculty of imagination, and the perfection of the faculty of the soul. (See: *Maʿarij*, 135-145)

Considering many incompatible statements about reason in his works, shows that in al-Ghazali’s thought, reason has different usages and we should be careful about his intention and know the broad lines of his thought in order to comprehend the main idea. Among the different usages of reason, i.e. ontological, psychological and epistemological, we can distinguish two main usages of discursive and the whole range of human knowledge for reason in al-Ghazali’s thought and say that in fact reason in this second meaning has different manifests, ranging from discursive knowledge to the prophetic level of knowledge.\(^1\)

It is remarkable that al-Ghazali calls the prophetic level of knowledge, the Sacred Prophetic Intelligence (*al-ʿAql al-Qodsi al-Nabawi*) or Aquired Intelligence (*ʿAql Mostafad*) which emphasizes on the intellectual nature of the highest manifestation of reason. (*Maʿarij*, 52 & 65)

Moreover, a very important matter is that he believed this intellectual level is the perfection of the lower level of reason which he called the first kind of rational knowledge. In other words, he considered the knowledge of the *visual* and *intuitive* kind, the higher level of the *rational* knowledge in the lower level. In *Kimiya* (II, 587) and *Maʿarij* (p. 159) this opinion is proposed by emphasizing on the essential unity of the two levels and both have been introduced as rational.

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\(^1\)I have proposed this issue in my article: “Systematization of the Different Usages of “al-ʿAql” (Reason) in Al-Ghazali’s View-point” published in: *Philosophical-Theological Research*: V. 11, No. 1, Full 2009
This matter is proposed in *Iljam* by considering the demonstrative property of the highest level of the knowledge of God and its dependence on the logical rules and the performance of deductive conditions.²

Besides, in al-Ghazali’s view-point, reason can intrinsically propose demonstrative proofs for fundamental religious beliefs including belief in God¹, prophecy⁴ and resurrection⁵.⁶

Accordingly we can say reason has the ability of acquiring knowledge but its highest manifestation depends on a noetic-moral process in which the individual has to perform the demonstrative reflections. This is done by applying logical rules in using the intellectual proofs in a moral way in order to choose the truth by the guidance of God.⁷

For this reason, al-Ghazali considers learning and acquiring knowledge safer than the Sufism way for achieving the truth and when he wants to explain this well-known Sufis’ statement that “science is the veil of the way [of achieving mystical knowledge]” (*Kimiya‘*, I, 36) he reports that science would be a veil when the scientist attaches his heart to his knowledge and thinks there isn’t any other knowledge except his and the only knowledge which leads to the truth is his knowledge (*Kimiya‘*, I, 37-38)⁸.

Hence, al-Ghazali prefers learning together with refinement. Refinement causes the faculty of reason to attain the highest level of its manifestation.

**The Mechanism of the Impact of Sin on Knowledge**

We can study the impact of sin on acquiring knowledge from two aspects: 1- Regarding the veritable changes in the soul which follow from committing sin. 2- Regarding the relation between the human being and God as an Emanating Source of knowledge.

Also, these two aspects should be regarded in the impacts of sin on both the *process* and the *product* of acquiring knowledge. Again in the stage of *process*, the impact of sin on both requesting and passing the course of acquiring knowledge should be investigated. Besides, we should notice

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¹*Ijām al-awam‘ an ʿilm al-kalam* (Restraining the uneducated from the science of theology) in *Majmaʿa Rasa‘il*, p.329
² See the discussion of Binyamin Abrahamov in his article “Al-Ghazali’s Supreme Way to know God” which has shown the rational nature of this level and demonstrated for the philosophical way as the supreme way of knowing God in al-Ghazali’s thought.
³*Mawārij*, p.165;
⁴*Kimiya*, I, 64
⁵*Maznoon, Rasael*, pp.344-345
⁶There are opposite statements in al-Ghazali’s works about these ideas and it is a fairly difficult task to achieve his real idea. In fact it should be investigated in an independent paper. But here I can only refer that we observe the explicit statements in al-Ghazali’s works that we not only cannot overlook them, but also we should count them as important evidences for an alternative idea.
⁷See *Ma‘ārij*, p.39 & 178; also pp. 94-95 & 96-97; *Ihya‘*, IV, pp. 451-452
⁸Also see: *Kimiya*, II, pp.598-599

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whether the different kinds of sin have different influences on different kinds of knowledge or not.

In these alternatives, we will only glance on the mechanism of the impact of sin on the process of acquiring knowledge in order to understand how sin affects reason both fundamentally and functionally and prevents it from achieving its highest actuality.

The Impact of Sin on turning Reason Up to Truth

Studying the impact of sin on knowledge with regard to its fundamental influence requires considering the quality of turning reason to truth.

In al-Ghazali’s view-point, reason reaches knowledge and its highest level of its actuality by turning up to the superior principles (al-mabadi al-ula) and actual intellects (Oqul bi al-fi’l) in order to perceive the intelligible passively. (See Ma’arij, 123-127) Al- Ghazali explains this idea in Ma’arij and demonstrates how intelligences receive knowledge from Active Intellect and continues:

… when any contact occurs between our souls and it [i.e. Active Intellect], special intelligible forms impress in them from it … and if the soul turns away from it toward what relates to the physical world or toward another form, what was formed at first disappears … (Ma’arij, 124-125)

In fact reason receives knowledge from Active Intellect when accompanies by moral virtues and depends on its ability modestly, not sinfully and notices its poverty in receiving the intelligible this way.

In other words, reason cannot turn up unless with the moral-rational modesty. This means that reason will miss its emotion of poverty to receive the truth from the superior principles if it looks at its ability proudly. So even if it turns up to the superior principles, since it doesn’t have a virtual look, in fact it doesn’t turn up there. Reason should humble when it wants to step into the path of acquiring knowledge. It should firmly believe in its high ability yet shouldn’t count its ability. It should even be prevented from this wrong idea that because of its disability of acquiring knowledge it should expect bestowing knowledge from an above source.

The difference between selfish rationality which is the one al-Ghazali saw in the philosophers’ method and the rationality directed to the truth is, in the former, reason depends on its ability selfishly while in the latter it performs humbly. In the first case, it thinks of the truth by gazing to itself but in the second it thinks of it by turning up to it. That’s why al-Ghazali in his discussion titled “science as a veil” doesn’t reckon learning or acquiring knowledge an obstacle for attaining certain knowledge.
Al-Ghazali stresses on the ethical-epistemic process of acquiring knowledge which is established by applying logical rules and avoiding sin in a wide meaning all together.

**The Impact of Sin on the Process of Acquiring Knowledge**

*The Impact of Sin on requesting Knowledge*

Al-Ghazali believed that the request of knowing God is embedded in man’s nature (See: *Kimiya*, I, p.31) in a manner that it is not only the main request of the heart, but also originally the tendency of acquiring every other knowledge emerges from that. Nevertheless it doesn’t have so much manifestation in many people. This status which occurs when the heart gets sick, if and when it isn’t immature, follows from plunging in concupiscence and vices. Al-Ghazali says:

Those who cannot comprehend the pleasure of knowledge and wisdom are divided into three classes: the one whose inside doesn’t become alive like a child, and the one after being alive, becomes dead because of following lusts. And the one who gets sick because of following lusts, and God’s statement: “In their hearts is a sickness, …” refers to the sickness of the reasons … (*Ihya*, IV, 106-107)

According to al-Ghazali, sin destroys the request of the superior knowledge, i.e. the knowledge of God, because it converts the direction of man’s tendencies. Also it affects the results caused by the *mode* of requesting knowledge. It means, in relation to how and why a person wants to seek knowledge, the intention would affect every stage of the process and the kind of knowledge which he will acquire. Ali Issa Othman expresses al-Ghazali’s idea:

The relative significance of things lies primarily in the inner motive of the individual who seeks them. The pursuit of knowledge, for example, has a different influence on the development of the “heart”, when sought as a means to acquire power and “prestige” than when it is sought to “know and experience” the works of God as a means to know Him and love Him. The qualities developed in the “heart” in the former case are quite different from those developed in it in the latter, … . In the two cases cited above, the pursuit of knowledge may at first sight be supposed to produce the same kind of development in the “heart”. Actually, the degree and kind of knowledge acquired in the two cases are quite different, for the qualities produced by the difference in motives are different and may even be opposite. Accordingly, the kind of understanding attained by the individual who

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1. See *Concept of Man in Islam*, pp. 73-74
2. Also see *Ma’arif*, 150; *Ihya*, III, p. 68; & IV, pp.106-107
pursues knowledge to acquire power and “prestige” is different from that of the individual who pursues it to become closer to God.” (Othman, 187)

That’s why we can consider the influence of sin on requesting knowledge in the following respects:

1- Destroying or reducing the request of the superior knowledge which is the ultimate goal of human’s evolution.
2- Requesting those sciences which don’t serve the superior knowledge.
3- Destroying or reducing the urge of acquiring knowledge.
4- Acquiring knowledge for self-interests not for true happiness.

These effects not only take place in the stage of requesting knowledge but also, they continue affecting the process and the product of acquiring knowledge.

The Impact of Sin on passing the Course of Acquiring Knowledge

We should study the impact of sin on the process of believing in the stage of passing the course, through considering al-Ghazali’s discussion about “thinking” in different positions:

1- In the Book of Thinking (Kitab al-Fikr) in Iḥya’ (The Revival of the Religious Sciences), where he analyzes the essence of thinking and states that thinking is presenting two prior knowledge in the heart in order to achieve the third knowledge.

He says regardless of the primary self-evident intelligibles, there isn’t any knowledge unless it is the product of the logical incorporation of the two prior pieces of knowledge. (See: Maʿarij, 96-97 & 141; Iḥya’, IV, 451-452) Passing through the two premises and achieving the new knowledge, requires knowing the quality of the incorporation of the two premises; i.e. knowing the deduction method. However, knowing the deduction method consists of two ways: 1- Through the Divine Light, like prophets; and 2- Through learning and practicing, like most people.

In this discussion, al-Ghazali reveals his deep belief in the discursive method for acquiring knowledge and the intelligibility of the product of its process. Even regarding the prophets he believed in “knowing the way of using and exploiting the sciences” which is the deductive method even though it emerges through the “divine intrinsic light”.

2- In Mishkat al-Anwar (The Niche for Lights) when he introduces five cognitive levels under the title of five spirits (Mishkat, 170), he called the fifth one, the sacred prophetic spirit, that is the highest one and the forth one is the reflective spirit. But he divided the reflective spirit into two levels, the higher of which is realized in the prophetic level and has attained knowledge
instantaneously and through rapid guess\(^1\). Thus al-Ghazali included the prophetic way of acquiring knowledge in the way of reflective or thinking way.

We can find the confirmation of this idea in his *Mizan al-ʿAmal* (*Criterion of Action*), where he places the intelligibles acquired through Speculative Reason in two levels of ordinary and inspirational. There he includes revealed knowledge among speculative sciences acquired by speculative reason. (See: *Mizan*, 205)

3- In *Maʿarīj* (p. 39) he considered the reflective movement as one of the three voluntary movements which include verbal and actual movements. Man should *select* the truth in his reflective movement. This means we cannot consider the process of believing a passive process. Our volition and emotions greatly impact the process of acquiring knowledge.\(^2\)

Now if we notice the role of volition in the process of acquiring knowledge, the analysis of the impact of sin on knowledge would be more understandable.

4- In several places in his works, he proposes five obstacles which prevent the reflection of truth in the heart (or reason): 1- A deficiency in itself, like the heart of a child; 2- The pollution of sins and the vice compressed on the heart’s face because of the plenty of lusts; 3- That it wouldn’t be toward the right direction; 4- The veil; 5- The ignorance of the direction from which the sought would be discovered. Two of these obstacles are related to the mode of thinking and its direction and rules.

In *Ihya*’ he says:

The third is that it wouldn’t be in the direction of the desired truth . . . . The fifth is ignorance of the direction from which the sought would be discovered. Of course it isn’t possible for the seeker of knowledge to know the unknown unless by reminding the sciences appropriated with the sought. . . . (*Ihya*, III, 15-16)

And in *Maʿarīj* he states explicitly that recalling and arranging knowledge in a special manner, which the learned know it, causes the individual to produce what he was seeking by the method of logical inference (*Iʿtibar*). (See: *Maʿarīj*, 95)

According to what he mentioned, we can distinguish some of the main elements of al-Ghazali’s thought in attaining the truth such as:

1- Attaining the truth requires a *thinking* movement. This means al-Ghazali’s idea is not the same as the Sufis’ idea about the way of attaining knowledge which is considered as a mystical experience.

\(^1\)For further discussion on rapid guess in prophets see *Maʿarīj*, pp. 141-143

\(^2\)See Zagzebski’s discussion about the voluntariness of belief in her *Virtues of the Mind*, pp. 58-69
2- The demonstrative movement is one of the three voluntary movements. So we can clearly see the affection of the individual’s volition, including sinful ones, in it.

Depending on al-Ghazali’s explanation of the way of attaining certain knowledge and its relation to the lower level of rational knowledge, and also depending in his idea about the necessity of the reflective movement and its logical rules for achieving the truth, we can notice the impact of sin on the process of acquiring knowledge in the stage of passing the course such that:

1- Committing sin causes the mind to meet the direction other than the truth and occupy it with unnecessary affairs. Al-Ghazali says:

When the heart doesn’t seek the truth and isn’t parallel with its mirror of the desired, it may rather notice the details of bodily obedience or notice preparing the requirements of the life and won’t direct his thoughts to the reflection of the Presence of Lordship and the Hidden Divine Truths, then it wouldn’t be discovered for him except what he would be thinking of, including the details of blights of actions and the hidden imperfections of the soul if he would be thinking of, or the requirements of life if he would be thinking of. Now, if preoccupying the actions and the details of obedience would prevent it from enclosing the revealed truth, what do you think of the one who directs his attention to worldly lusts and its pleasures and attachments? Wouldn’t it be prevented from real disclosure? (Ihya’, III, 15)

2- Committing sin causes the mind to notify the special kind of the premises and arrange them in such a way that will be directed to the desired conclusion. The person who desires what would be proved, the one that he wants, would notice the materials that would prove what he wants. Sinful emotions and volitions cause the mind to notice the materials corresponding to his benefit.

3- Committing sin impacts on demand of learning the logical way of arranging the premises. The amount of interest for discovering the truth leads the individual to learn what is needed for attaining the truth. Learning the logical principles is one of the most important requirements, as al-Ghazali frequently repeats.

4- Committing sin has impact on using the logical way for attaining the truth. One might learn logical principles but when it should be applied, because of his self-interested desires, his mind tends in a manner that he wouldn’t apply them in such a way which would lead to the truth.

5- Committing sin impacts selecting the result after reflecting and attaching it to the heart. This means wherever the volition may be present, sinful emotions and desires may prevent it from selecting the truth. Our mind can see the truth only when it becomes free from noticing his self-interests. Of course, if self-interest demands discovering the truth, the mind would be more keen about it.
This impact is in the stage of the product of the process of acquiring knowledge. This means that sometimes in spite of passing the logical way of inference, one will choose the result that confirms his sinful desires.

Conclusion

Studying the mechanism of the influence of sin on the process of acquiring knowledge shows that sin extremely affects the cognitive aspect of the soul and prevents it from achieving its highest actuality. This impact is both fundamentally and functionally. In fact, every act, feeling, and even thought which converts the soul’s attention from God to the self and its relatives causes reason not to turn up to truth, on one hand, and won’t function in a logical way, on the other, unless the direction of self-interests won’t be in opposition to the truth.

Sin destroys the request of the superior knowledge and in relation to how and why a person wants to seek knowledge, sinful intentions would affect every stage of the process and the kind of knowledge he will acquire.

Also committing sin causes the mind to meet the direction other than truth and occupy it with unnecessary affairs, causes the mind to notify the special kind of the premises and arrange them in such a way that will be directed to the desired conclusion. Sinful emotions and desires prevent the mind from selecting the truth too.

By interrupting the structure of man’s existence, sin destroys the central position of the cognitive realm which other aspects of the human being should be in the service of it so that it settles in a place which it can be actualized and evolved. This influence prevents reason as the main source of knowledge, from achieving its highest function and attaining the kind of knowledge which causes happiness, or we can say it is itself, the ultimate happiness.

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Hannah in Plato's Cave:
Does Politics Need a Philosophical Method?

Elisa Ravasio

The choice to compare the ethical and political thought of Arendt and Plato might seem to be bold, since Arendt accuses Plato to have killed politics basing her critique on a detailed reading of the allegory of the cave (Republic, 514a ff.)\(^1\). According to Arendt, potential rulers must be familiar with the issues and desires of their citizens; on the contrary, she claims that the Platonic philosopher stays out of the cave in contemplation\(^2\): he is not concerned with what is better for politics\(^3\). When he comes back to the cave, the prisoners cannot understand the meaning of his speeches about eternal truth: common people cannot comprehend philosophical life, because it is far removed from human matters. Arendt accuses Plato of making all opinions equal introducing absolute criteria in the political realm abolishing the possibility to exchange opinions, in order to prevent people from killing the philosopher, as it was for Socrates\(^4\).

My aim will be to show how some of Arendt's implicit reflections can be developed through a detailed reading of two dialogues she analyzed and criticized, the Gorgias and the Republic\(^5\).

Indeed, Plato and Arendt agree as far as they both believe that people should reflect more deeply on their ethical values in order to improve their political lives thanks to the dialogue within themselves and with others.

According to Arendt, people who wish to improve politics should think, and exchange opinions with their fellow citizens, as Socrates did. At the same time, Plato's dialogues stage possible conversations with different characters about how the individual and political good should interact.

Plato's (a)political Philosophy

The gulf between philosophy and politics opened historically with the

\(^1\)Cf., Arendt 1978, p. 81, and Arendt 1990, pp. 95-6.
\(^2\)Arendt 1990, p. 73.
\(^3\)Arendt 1978, pp. 141-51.
\(^4\)Arendt 1990, p. 78.
\(^5\)The argument I will present in the paragraphs about the Gorgias and the Republic is ad hominem, so I will analyze only the two dialogues which Arendt deals with in her reflections.
trial and condemnation of Socrates. Our tradition of political thought began when the death of Socrates made Plato despair of polis life and [...] doubt certain fundamentals of Socrates' teachings1.

Socrates was not able to persuade the judges and even his friends, and this 'made Plato doubt the validity of persuasion'.

'The city had no use for a philosopher, and the friends had no use for political argumentation. This is part of the tragedy to which Plato's dialogues testify [...]. The spectacle of Socrates submitting his own doxa to the irresponsible opinions of the Athenians, and being outvoted by a majority, made Plato despise opinions and yearn for absolute standards. [...] Plato himself was the first to use the ideas for political purposes, that is, to introduce absolute standards into the realm of human affairs, where, without such transcending standards, everything remains relative2,

and a correct man as Socrates can be unjustly accused.

The allegory of the cave contrasts the men freed by knowledge and the slaves of opinions. The philosopher is not concerned with human affairs and when he returns to the cave, he cannot dialogue with anyone, because no one can understand his speeches about eternal truth3. In addition, as it is clear from the allegory (517a-b), he risks of being killed, which of course reminds the reader of Socrates trial.

Philosophy begins with the thaumazein described in the Theaetetus (155d) and deals with those things, according to Plato, are the most serious. 'Ultimate truth is beyond words'4.

'Thaumadzein, the wonder at that which is as it is, is according to Plato a pathos, something which is endured and as such quite distinct from doxadzein, from forming an opinion about something5.

In Arendt's view, speech and action represent the political realm, but these words, 'the two politically most significant words designating human activity, [...] are conspicuously absent from the whole' allegory of the cave, and also from the world ruled by Platonic philosophers6.

The most radical conclusion that Plato draws from the trial of Socrates is the opposition between truth and opinion. The wise men do not know what is good for themselves and for their citizens and look ridiculous when they appear.

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1Ibidem, p. 102, and Arendt 2003, p. 85 ff.
2Arendt 1990, pp. 73-5.
3Ibidem, p. 76. See also, p. 96, and Cavarero 39 ff.
4Seventh Letter, 341c.
6Ibidem, p. 77. See also, p. 101.
in the marketplace. Plato tries to rescue these good-for-nothing men by turning politics into something for those who have grasped the truth.

Through the invention of political philosophy, Plato banishes the thinking activity and the possibility of exchanging opinions from the political realm: thinking is replaced by knowing how to achieve the citizens’ good and only people who possess this kind of knowledge can claim the right to govern the city. Thus, as Arendt pointed out, philosophy can no longer meet political demands: the philosopher just wonder about eternal truths and shows no concern for human affairs. His knowledge is speechless: no one dialogues in the cave. No room is left for discussing values that can promote the common good, so what design politics, reflective thought and persuasion, is replaced by silent truth.

In order to ensure that the philosopher lives in the city without being killed, Plato banished thinking activity from the city, thus destroying the very possibility of politeuesthai.

**Arendt’s Socrates: The Thinking Politics**

According to Arendt, totalitarian regimes reveal most clearly the extreme consequences of this form of thoughtless and speechless politics: the leaders know what the common good is, and the citizens are no longer in a position to think for themselves and question the values proposed by their rulers. They are no longer able to criticize the system of principles that permits them to act justly, and ‘simply exchange one system of values against another’. Politics turns into the realm of silent obedience as advocated by Plato.

People who did not oppose Nazism, like Eichmann, acted in an automatic way: they relied on ‘a set of learned or innate rules which’ they ‘then applied to the particular case as it arose, so that every new experience or situation was already prejudged’, and they only ‘acted out whatever’ they learned or ‘possessed beforehand’. They obeyed orders without questioning the correctness of the values on which they were based.

On the contrary, as Arendt points out, the good politician has to critically weigh up events. His thinking activity has to be based on the principle whereby ‘doing wrong is fouler than suffering it’ and he has to live, judge and act accordingly, like Socrates and all the people who oppose totalitarianism did.

In her view, Socrates is the perfect thinker and, as a consequence, the perfect citizen. He examines the opinions of his fellow citizens in order to

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1Arendt 1978, p. 150.
2Ibidem, p. 78. See also, p. 74: ‘Platonic truth, even when doxa is not mentioned, is always understood as the very opposite of opinion’. Cf. also Parekh 1981, p. 10.
3Arendt 2003, p. 44.
4For the trial of Eichmann, cf. Arendt 2006. Ibidem, p. 25: Eichmann ‘would have had a bad conscience only if he had not done what he had been ordered to’. Cf., also, Arendt 2003, p. 18, and pp. 22-3, and p. 44.
5Arendt 1978, p. 151: There is [...] a decisive difference between Plato's [...] quest of divine matters and the seemingly more humble attempts of [...] Socrates at defining the unseen
rebuke them for scorning the things that are of less worth and caring more for what is most important (Apology, 29e-30a, and 41e)\textsuperscript{1}. His maieutike techne is quintessentially political, in that it erodes prejudices, and criticizes events and values\textsuperscript{2}. Through the example of Socrates, Arendt shows that only a correct ethics based on a critical and active thinking activity can allow a just government of the political realm, because only through this kind of thinking activity and ongoing dialogue citizens can achieve mutual respect and the common good\textsuperscript{3}.

In addition, in Plato's Gorgias, Arendt finds the principles which ground correct thinking: avoiding personal disagreement (482b-c) and 'doing wrong is fouler than suffering it' (475b and 508c)\textsuperscript{4}. People who are willing to listen to their conscience choose to suffer injustice rather than damage their fellow citizens. Criteria that grounded the actions and thoughts of those who opposed the totalitarianism were identical to those put forth in the Gorgias. Such persons would be able to live in peace with themselves, and were ready to die when forced to take part in actions that contradict their conscience\textsuperscript{5}.

To sum up, the condition for a correct and democratic government is dialogue: with oneself (first) and with other citizens (second). The best model for contemporary statesmen is Socrates, because he engages in democratic dialogue with his fellow citizens, stinging them to think deeply about the principles that should ground their thoughts and acts. He, also, would prefer to be unjustly accused rather than damage other people.

**Revaluing Plato**

In this second section, I will highlight some implicit features of Arendt's conception of politics as a democratic interplay, and develop a potential interpretation of Plato's dialogical method that can help define them better and prevent the potentially apolitical outcome of Arendt's reflections\textsuperscript{6}.

According to her, Plato killed politics as the realm of free speeches and thoughts, turning it into the kingdom of truth and knowledge. No room is left for the exchange of opinions, hence for democracy. On the contrary, Socrates

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measures that bind and determine human affairs'.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{1}Ibidem, p. 168 e p. 170.
\textsuperscript{2}E.g., Arendt 1978, p. 166 ff.
\textsuperscript{3}Cf., e.g., Parekh 1981, p. 12, e p. 30.
\textsuperscript{4}Cf. Arendt 1978 p. 179 ff. and Arendt 2003, p. 82 ff. I also remind the reader of the Theaetetus (190a5-7), the Sophist (263e3-8), and the Philebus (38e1-4), where Plato describes this type of dialogue as a discussion between two people. Cf. also, Dixsaut 1997.
\textsuperscript{5}Arendt 2003, p. 45: *The precondition of this kind of judging is not a highly developed intelligence [...] in moral matters but rather the disposition to live together explicitly with oneself*.
\textsuperscript{6}I would like to point out that, like Arendt, I am not referring to the democratic regime as we are accustomed to devising it. I will consider democracy as an exchange of opinions among free people who try to understand the adversary's point of view in order to choose what values should govern human affairs, instead of a group that rules elected by the majority of citizens.
is Athens' best statesman because he dialogues with his fellow citizens, urging them to discover the deep meaning of their values: *he knows how to sting the citizens who, without him, will sleep*.

Socrates who dialogues with other people in the marketplace provides the best model for what Arendt conceives as a good *democracy*: politics is the realm where free people exchange their opinions based on a reflective thinking activity which is grounded into the principles of the *Gorgias*. However, a careful reading of Arendt’s reflections shows some difficulties, which lead her thought to an unpredictable result. According to her, people who, unlike Socrates, do not think and discuss political values cannot be involved in politics. Unfortunately, this exclusion is incompatible with Arendt's own purposes, insofar as she advocates a true democratic interplay, whereby the majority of people should take part in political decisions.

Starting from Arendt's notion of democracy, I will analyze the Platonic dialogues she deals with, namely the *Gorgias* and the *Republic*, in order to show how Plato actually tries to stage concrete discussions about what values should ground politics. In his dialogues, he depicts people who exchange opinions about how the individual and the political good should interact. Furthermore, I will argue that Plato's dialogical method can redeem Arendt's thought from its apolitical outcome. I will do this by highlighting the peculiar role of Callicles, the selfish man who shows no concern the common good. Plato both refutes and voices Callicles' positions: by including this thorny character in his own reflections, Plato ends up modifying some of his own tenets. Thus, we can consider Plato's philosophy as more *democratic* than Arendt depicted it, provided that we construe *democracy* as the possibility of integrating an opposite point of view into one's final perspective.

**Socrates VS Callicles**

In the *Gorgias*, Plato underlines Callicles' importance for the dialogical method itself. Socrates recognizes his interlocutor's excellent qualities: knowledge, goodwill and frankness (487a). Most importantly, Callicless, like Socrates, believes in the existence of a criterion of justice, which enables them to understand each other. According to Callicles, the man who respects the laws is passive, because he accepts to suffer injustice (482e5-6 and 483d), so the philosopher, *i.e.*, the just man, is not a model for the society (485c-d), since he lives a passive and hypocrite life, therefore he is not happy.

In spite of Callicles’ final contradiction (505b11-12), Socrates recognizes his importance, and throughout the *Gorgias*, continually tries to involve him into dialogue. He knows that Callicles’ position is strong and uncompromising, but he keeps on discussing with him, and evolves his starting point: Socrates

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2. Philosophy makes people 'ignorant of everything that ought to be familiar to the man who would be a thorough gentleman and make a good figure in the world' (485d3 ff., 484c9-d4). Cf. also 486b6-c3, Arendt 1990, p. 73, and Samama 2003, pp. 87, 98-9.
tries to turn the sober man into a good model for the city.

Socrates argument has three steps: at first, he claims that the politician needs social recognition. Secondly, he ascribes to him nobility and courage (507b5 and 512d7-8). At the end, the statesman is identified with the lover of wisdom: Socrates now claims to be the only true Athenian politician (521d6-9): 'I think I am one of few, not to say the only one, in Athens who attempts the true art of statesmanship'.

In order to persuade Callicles, the philosopher presents himself as the noble man described by the young rhetorician. Socrates claims to be the only true politician, which reminds the reader to what he tells Polus 'I am not one of your statesman' (473e6).

By contrasting true and false politics, Socrates (and Plato) modifies his original position: the philosopher shows to be a model for public life$^1$. He makes this turn during the discussion with Callicles: he considers his arguments and tries to integrate them in his own perspective, even if he does not share Callicles' conclusions.

The Gorgias ends with Socrates' defeat. He claims to be the best statesman, but he proves unable to improve his citizens: Callicles is not persuaded and, in the real world, Socrates will be killed, Socrates is defeated, since the interlocutors end up ignoring each other (517c7).

The Philosopher in the Cave: The Republic

According to my reading of the Gorgias and the Republic, in order to integrate Callicles' troubled soul into the just city and to depict the philosopher as a political leader, Plato describes the traits of the leonine man through the features of the thymoedic soul and radically changes the portrait of the lover of wisdom.

Callicles wants to be a model for society, but he does not want to accept all the consequences that derive from his proposal. If he did so, the ideal nobility in which he grounds his reflections would be destroyed$^2$. At the same time, Plato cannot possibly support an ethical-political theory such as the one he puts forth in the Gorgias, which implies the conclusion that only the just person is happy and only Socrates is the good statesman (521d6-9). To be sure, Plato is aware that different ethical outlooks can successfully question such a theory and deserve political recognition$^3$.

In the IX Book of the Republic, Plato describes the generation of the tyrant and analyzes different types of desire (571a8-b1): Socrates depicts the man

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$^1$For the conception of the true politics in Socrates (and Plato) proposal in the Gorgias, see 515b ff.

$^2$Cf. Williams 2008, p. 132 ff.: Callicles is defeated, since he wants to demonstrate the nobility of the tyrant. I, also, remind the reader of the Gorgias (494e-495b) where Socrates describes Callicles' noble man like the catamite, the passive lover. Callicles asks the philosopher if he is not ashamed to lead the discussion into such topics, because he would like his model to be a social leader rather than a passive person.

$^3$Cf. Wollf 2000, p. 25.
who cannot control his instincts and, on the opposite side, the sober that
domines his epithymiai and the thymos (571e ff.). The philosopher directs his
passions, since eliminating them would give birth to the opposite character,
namely the tyrant (572c-d, 575a, 577e).

In the Republic, the soul is described as tripartite and balanced: reason
does not fight desires, but rather it harnesses them. On the contrary, the
Gorgias opposes a rational and irrational soul, so Callicles argues that Socrates' 
position is ultimately unsatisfactory: it destroys desire and condemns people to 
live the life of a stone (492e). In the Republic, Plato takes Callicles' point: if
only one element governs the soul and there is no harmony among the three
parts, we cannot be balanced, i.e., happy.

Plato fights against Callicles using his weapons: he highlights the
beneficial role of desires, insofar as reason harnesses them towards the correct
objects of love, since he knows that the apathetic philosopher cannot be the
right model for the political life.

The Republic overturns the Gorgias: Plato ridicules the tyrant just like
Callicles did with the lover of wisdom, since he shows that the ideal model that
Athenian youth may admire and envy is unable to govern himself\(^1\). He is
conflicted by his appetites, is confused about what is good or bad (574a-b, e). He
is the slave of his passions and pleasures. He is like the passive lover
depicted in the Gorgias (494e). The tyrant's desiring soul makes him violent and
unsociable. The 'tyrannical nature never tastes freedom or true friendship'
(576a3-5) and, as a consequence, he is the most unhappy man (576c).

In the Republic, the features of the tyrant coincide with those of the
philosopher as described by Callicles: the sober and dikaios man is not
concerned with human affairs\(^2\), he is frightened, insecure, and isolated
(Gorgias, 484c5-7, 484e1, 485b2, 485d)\(^3\). Like the tyrannos, he cannot rule,
but, in Plato's view, a man cannot be virtuous outside of the political realm
(Republic, 579c-d, 579e-580a)\(^4\).

As in the Gorgias (487e6-7), crucial question of the Republic is: 'how
should one live?'\(^5\). According to Plato, eu pratein stands for eudaimonein\(^6\), so

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1 Cf. Samama 2003, p. 84 ff.
2 Cf. also Phaedrus, 249d: 'but since he separates himself from human interests and turns his
attention toward the divine, he is rebuked by the vulgar, who consider him mad [...]'.
3 Cf. also Theaetetus, 176a-b.
4 The opposition between the philosopher and the city is underlined in other dialogues as the
Theaetetus, 176a-b. The aim of the Republic is not oppose the philosopher to the city, but only
to the tyrant who, as it turns out, is isolated from society. On the contrary, the lover of wisdom
is a political leader.
5 E.g., Republic, 352d: 'For it is no ordinary matter that we are discussing, but the right conduct
of life'. Cf. also Williams 1985, p. 1: 'It is not a trivial question. Socrates said: what we are
talking about is how one should live'.
6 In the Republic, the parallel between the city and the soul underlines Plato's will to persuade
the city that the philosophical life is suitable for all citizens: for Socrates, but also for Glauc
and Adeimantus. Cf. also 577c ff.: Plato tries to allay the psychological dichotomy, partially
overcome in the Gorgias, that some scholars underline in the early dialogue, so he can claim
that Socrates is the only one statesman in Athens (cf. Wolff 2000, p. 33). In the Republic,
politics mediates among the three classes as well as ethics among the desires of the human

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people need their fellow citizens in order to be happy: the happiness of a man, the soul and the city are intertwined. Moreover, as it has turned out, also in Callicles' view, the sources of eudaimonia are courage, nobility and social recognition.

At 580e, Plato starts once again the analysis of the different types of soul: he highlights the importance of desires in a life worth living. Only the philosopher can correctly judge them (581e ff.), since he 'is the only one whose experience will have been accompanied by intelligence' (582d). At the end, Plato turns Callicles' final accusation against Callicles' own model: only the philosopher is really concerned with human affairs, and leads the happiest life.

Between these poles, there is the thymoedic soul, which is keen on values such as nobility and honor. The tyrant is not the man Callicles would like to be, since he has not political recognition. The model he is looking for is the noble, thymoedic man in which the rationality harnesses the soul to the correct object of love.

Rather than eliminating it, the Republic aims at integrating Callicles' soul into the city and at portraying the philosopher as the right leader for his society. In order to turn the philosopher into the king of the city, Plato modifies his features: in the Republic, the lover of wisdom does not live isolated from the political realm as in the Theaetetus (173d), but wants to be recognized as a model by his fellow citizens.

As we have seen, Plato does not ignore Callicles' ethical proposals and his criticism of the philosophical life. Rather, he tries to integrate them into his own, which is a normative proposal based on the ethical and political virtue of justice. Thus, Plato's dialogical method allows Callicles' voice to enrich the discussion about what portrayed a good and happy life.

Results and Discussion

For both Arendt and Plato, the exchange of opinions is the only way to achieve a shared good. Both would like to persuade people that taking part into political life, rather than a duty, is a way to improve their lives: in order to look for a common good, everyone should renounce his private interests. Furthermore, dialogue can promote true democracy: all citizens should express their individuality by stating their own opinions and trying to understand the points of view of their opponents.

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1. The tyrant is unhappy (Republic, 576d), because he cannot rule over himself and his city, as the philosopher portrayed in the Gorgias.
3. He is the best judge of the three. See also, 372d and 578c3.
5. Plato is not so optimist elsewhere: there are some interlocutors that do not want to live like the philosopher. The tension between praxis and contemplation is described in several ways according to the different aims of the dialogues (cf., e.g., the Theaetetus, and the Phaedo).
As a result of my discussion, I can define Plato's dialogical method as democratic, since it does not eliminate rival positions but integrates them into his final perspective. Plato's method mediates among different doxai in two ways: on one hand, Socrates tries to make his interlocutor conscious of his true opinions. On the other hand, Plato resorts to some radical opponents to stress the existence of a variety of issues and perspectives.

In the Republic, Plato develops Callicles' criticism of the philosopher precisely because he wants the lover of wisdom to be a model for the city.

Plato improves his theory by introducing a tripartite soul, designed to accommodate common men, guardians and philosophers. Thus, the philosopher himself turns out to be quite a different figure: not only he voices the rational part of the soul, he also meets the political and social needs expressed by Callicles. He is noble and has political recognition: he is the king of the city.

By introducing difficult characters, Plato stages possible conversations among different voices existing in his society, and describes some basic features of human nature. Furthermore, he aims at expressing and integrating into his dialogues a variety of ethical perspectives: in such a way, every character can discuss helping in amplifying the outlook of the reader about ethical and political matters.

Unlike Arendt, who construes Plato's philosophy as the imposition of truth over human opinions, I have tried to point out that Plato's conception of political interplay is relevant to contemporaries debates: all too often do we confuse democracy with the dictatorship of the majority, and political confrontation with the elimination of one's opponents. Integrating radical positions through and into dialogue can help devising a democratic govern of the political realm, as is suggested by some of Plato's dialogues. Thus, I can conclude that, in this respect, Arendt would found herself in agreement with the philosopher she has always condemned.

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Hannah Arendt

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Do Hume and Kant hold strongly divergent positions on the principle that every event or change of state in nature must have a cause? The answer traditionally given is that they do: Hume thinks that the principle is not justifiable and Kant thinks that it is. I shall dispute this answer.

I

Throughout, I shall be assuming that, within his system of transcendental idealism, Kant has succeeded, in the Second Analogy of his *Critique of Pure Reason*¹, in proving the principle that every event, every change of state, in nature must have a cause². Given this assumption, has Kant succeeded in answering Hume?

Certainly, it may be said, because although Hume did not deny that we believe the causal principle - every event in nature must have a cause - he did deny that we can justify it. We cannot justify the principle by recourse to experience and we cannot justify it by means of reason alone (demonstrative reasoning). Experience cannot do the trick because the principle claims strict universality (*every* event) and necessity (*must* have a cause), and neither of these, strict universality or necessity, can be justified on the basis of experience. Nor can we justify the causal principle by demonstrative reasoning because the denial of the principle is not self-contradictory or, in other words, it is not analytically true. Since Hume regarded these two methods of proof, recourse to experience and demonstrative reasoning, as exhaustive, he concluded that the causal principle is unjustified.

Now, as Kant himself makes clear, he agreed with Hume that the principle cannot be proved by experience and that it is not analytically true. But he did think that it could be proved. He thought it could be proved by showing that it

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¹Immanuel Kant *Critique of Pure Reason* (1ˢᵗ edition 1781; 2ⁿᵈ edition 1787), Second Analogy, A189/B232-A211/B256. References and quotations are from the translation by Norman Kemp Smith (Basingstoke, 2ⁿᵈ edition revised, 2007); another good translation (with identical referencing) is by Allen Wood and Paul Guyer (Cambridge, 1997).

²I have defended Kant’s argument in the Second Analogy (within his system of transcendental idealism) in Andrew Ward *Kant: The Three Critiques* (Cambridge, 2006), pp 73-81; and in ‘On Kant’s Second Analogy and His Reply to Hume’, *Kant-Studien* (1986), pp 409-22.
makes our experience possible: more specifically, he thought he could show that the possibility of our experiencing any change of state, any event, in nature presupposes that the event in question must fall under a causal law.

But why should Kant’s proof – couched in terms of the possibility of experience - be thought to answer Hume’s claimed scepticism about the causal principle? One suggestion might be that since Hume maintains that we can have no good reason for holding that the occurrence of an event requires that the event has to fall under any causal law, he must equally allow, and in fact does allow, that (so far as we can tell) it is possible for us to perceive an event which is behaving randomly or acausally. Hence, if Kant can show us that such perception is not possible, he will have answered Hume.

This suggestion, however, is open to the rejoinder that the most that Kant will have proved against Hume is that we cannot perceive or experience any acausal change in nature. He will not have shown that such a change in nature cannot occur. Yet, the rejoinder concludes, the main thrust of Hume’s scepticism is that we can have no good reason for holding that every event in nature must be subject to causal law; he is not concerned, or anyway chiefly concerned, to deny that, insofar as we can perceive any events in nature, these events must be subject to causal law.

In fact, Kant’s proof in the Second Analogy does represent a more full-scale attack on his reading of Hume than the above suggestion allows. The objects of the senses, spatio-temporal objects, are, for Kant, merely appearances; and appearances are constituted by a manifold of representations (mind-dependent phenomena). Accordingly, appearances can have no existence independent of possible experience. On this position, the Second Analogy (if sound) does rule out the possibility of any spatio/temporal object, any object in nature, changing its state in an acausal manner. For if it is not possible to experience such a change, it follows – given the status of appearances – that no such change in nature can occur.

As I understand it, then, Kant’s position is that once we recognize that the objects of experience, spatio-temporal objects, are, in reality, appearances, not things in themselves, it can be seen that the conditions making possible our experience of objects (in respect of changing their states) undermine Hume’s scepticism about the causal principle.

II

What of Hume’s view about our experience of objects? Although for most of An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding¹, Hume assumes that the objects of our experience are perceived representatively (and certainly this is how Kant interprets him), it is clear from A Treatise Of Human Nature², as

¹David Hume An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding (1748), ed. Peter Millican (Oxford, 2000). Many other excellent modern editions are also available.
well as from the concluding section of this *Enquiry*, that he holds that our *natural* perceptual belief is a direct realist one. Moreover, although we naturally believe that the objects of our senses, external objects, have a continuous and distinct existence from our mind, Hume also maintains in the *Treatise* that these objects are, in reality, merely constituted by mind-dependent phenomena (impressions of the senses). To employ Kantian terminology, Hume holds that the objects of our natural perceptual belief are merely appearances and not things in themselves - despite the fact that we do naturally believe that they are things in themselves, directly perceived.

But if our natural belief in external objects is, for Hume, a direct realist one, with the objects of our experience being, in truth, collections of sense impressions (as for Kant they are collections of representations), the question arises as to whether, on this position, Kant’s alleged response to Hume in the Second Analogy is really a response at all. The question arises since if we recall Hume’s own explanation of how our natural belief in external objects comes about, it is on the basis of certain patterns of regularity exhibited by the series of our sense impressions (or perceptions). It is only because our serial sense impressions present themselves in regular patterns on different occasions – patterns that exhibit *constancy* or *coherence* – that we are enabled to form our natural belief in the existence of external objects.1

From now on, I will concentrate on Hume’s discussion of coherence, since it is that discussion, rather than the one concerning constancy, which is closest to Kant’s discussion of our experience of objects changing their states. On Hume’s account, it is only because, given the structure of our imagination, the contents of a given series sense impressions are found, on the different occasions of their appearance, to occur in a *coherent* manner that we are enabled to form the belief in objects changing their states. For instance, let us say that, in the past, we have found that our set of serial sense impressions of one billiard ball moving towards and then striking a second stationery ball has always been followed by a set of serial sense impressions in which the second billiard starts up and moves away from the first ball. And let us say that, on this present occasion, the whole series of impressions is very similar to all past ones except that we do not have the sense impression of the first ball actually striking the second (but an impression of a human body passing across our visual field). As a result of this gap in the present series of billiard ball impressions compared with all past ones, there is no longer a *constant conjunction* between the sense impressions of the second ball’s behaviour and the sense impressions of the first ball moving and striking it. Only if the imagination fills in the gap, in the present series of billiard ball impressions, with an *unsensed* perception of the first ball striking the second - so making this present series *fully* coherent with the earlier series - is it possible to preserve the constant conjunction between the sets of billiard ball impressions (and, thus, hold onto the claim concerning the cause of the second ball’s movement). On Hume’s view, we come to form the belief in the continuous

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1See *Treatise*, Book I, Part IV, Section II ‘Of scepticism with regard to the senses’.
and distinct existence of the two balls – the belief in their existence whether or not the mind actually has a complete set of sense impressions of them – precisely in order to preserve a causal account of the behaviour of the perceptions.

Put briefly, in respect of those series of sense impressions which exhibit coherence between the various occasions of their appearance, Hume argues that we form the belief in the continuous and distinct existence of the perceptions of our senses – that is, in the existence of objects of the senses – because this enables us to retain our causal claims. If, however, the contents of a given series of sense impressions had not, on differing occasions, exhibited coherence, our belief in the existence of objects changing their states would never have come about from that series; for without this coherence, the imagination would not have formed the belief in unsensed perceptions.

The upshot is that if we confine ourselves to Hume's account of our natural belief in objects changing their states, the difference between Hume and Kant is considerably smaller than is normally supposed. According to Hume, the perceptual belief in objects changing their states arises because, but only because, it enables us to preserve our causal claims: we could never take ourselves to have witnessed an object changing its state acausally. We could not since, unless the series of sense impressions (out of which the belief in any changing object is to be constructed) exhibits coherence in its various manifestations, the imagination would never have postulated unsensed perceptions - and, from that, formed the belief in objects of the senses. For the mind only comes to the perceptual belief in an object changing its state provided that there is sufficient coherence in the various manifestations of a given series of impressions to allow us to hold onto our causal claim by means of the postulation of unsensed perceptions. Hence, on Hume’s account, there can be no question of our having a perceptual belief in an object changing its state acausally, since the very condition that enables our imagination here to form the belief in an object of the senses will not have been fulfilled.

Compare this position with the Kantian one. According to Kant, it is impossible to experience an acausal change in nature. The very possibility of our experiencing a given series of representations as the changing states of an object requires that we think of this given succession as falling under a causal law (and, hence, as always occurring in the same way under the same circumstances). Kant requires that the series of representations must fall under a causal law because, he holds, it is only insofar as the given series can be conceived – through the understanding - as falling under a causal law that the observer is enabled to think of its apprehension of those given serial representations as suitably bound down or necessitated; that is, to think that its apprehension cannot, on that occasion, be reversed. Once the observer has thought of its apprehension, on that occasion, as irreversible, the serial representations can be experienced as the changing states of an object. (This is plainly the barest outline of a central argument of the Second Analogy. It is intended only to indicate how, for Kant, our experience of an object changing its state is dependent on the understanding being able to apply the principle of
sufficient reason to the serial representations out of which the event is constituted.)

Here is a summary comparison of the two positions. Kant holds that, granting the structure of our mind (and, in particular, our understanding), the very possibility of experiencing an event, an object changing its state, depends on the manifold of representations, out of which the given event is constituted, conforming to the law of cause and effect (the principle of sufficient reason). For it is only insofar as the understanding can think of the manifold as falling under this law, that the manifold can be experienced as an object changing its state. Similarly, Hume holds that, granting the structure of our mind (and, in particular, our imagination), the very possibility of our forming the perceptual belief in an object changing its state depends upon the series of sense impressions, out of which the given event is constituted, displaying coherence in its various manifestations. For it is only insofar as the imagination can apprehend the series as possessing this coherence, that the series can be perceived as an object changing its state, viz. by thinking of the change as subject to a causal law.

Even though, as Hume and Kant agree, the denial of the principle that every event must have a cause is not self-contradictory – and so the causal principle cannot be analytically true - neither think that we can experience, or have a perceptual belief in, objects changing their states acausally. Further, since for both of them, the objects of our possible perception are, in reality, mind-dependent (appearances), it follows that all possible objects in nature, all possible spatio/temporal objects, must change their states in accordance with the law of cause and effect.

III

It might be objected that although, on Hume’s account, we can only *originally* form the perceptual belief in events, in objects changing their states, by thinking of the changes as subject to causal law, we can go on to believe ourselves to be perceiving other events which are not held to be so subject. But this is not a sustainable objection, granting Hume’s own explanation of why we believe in the existence of objects changing their states. If the present contents of a given series of sense impressions fail to exhibit coherence with earlier manifestations of that series, the mind will not be led to believe, on this present occasion, in the continuous existence of the perceptions of the given series, and, thereby, in their distinctness from the mind. On Hume’s account, the imagination only postulates the existence of unsensed perceptions, in the gaps in a given series, in order to retain a constant conjunction that existed in earlier series of sensed impressions. Consequently, if the contents of the present series of perceptions breaks with the coherence exhibited in earlier series even in regard to its sensed parts, there will be no tendency for the imagination to fill in the gaps in the present series with unsensed perceptions, *i.e.* in order to preserve the constant conjunction of impressions formerly perceived. Unless
the contents of the present series of sense impressions are conceived to be coherent with the earlier ones, the belief in the continuous existence of these contents, and so in their distinct existence from the mind, will not arise. If, on the other hand, the present series is found to be coherent with past ones, the perceptual belief that ensues will be the belief in an object changing its state according to a causal law.

Of course, in the case of both Hume’s and Kant’s account, an observer may, given certain circumstances, understandably claim that a present lack of sensed coherence with a past perceived regularity is occasioned by some currently disturbing factor. Say, for example, that a present series of sensed fire impressions does not burn down in the way expected from having sensed many similar series in the past. In such an eventuality, the observer may well assume that the reason for this lack of observed coherence is that, unperceived by the observing mind, more coal has been added to the fire on the present occasion. In fact, if the later part of the present series of sense impressions is perceived to behave in a way that resembles other past series, where the mind has sensed the effect of additional coal, this is very likely to be the attitude adopted (in this way greater coherence with all earlier observed series will be achieved). But, on neither Hume’s nor Kant’s account, is it possible for us to think that a given series of representations or impressions is not exhibiting the requisite regularity and, yet, experience, or believe ourselves to be perceiving, an object changing its state on the basis of the given series. The very conditions that allow us to have such an experience or perceptual belief require our thinking that the very same series of perceptions that is now occurring would have occurred, on all previous occasions, if the same circumstances had prevailed.

(Where the mind encounters, for the first time, a series of perceptions that is really different to any series sensed beforehand, it may straightaway form the perceptual belief in the existence of a new type of object changing its state. But this belief will be the result of the past experience of coherence among a large number of disparate sets of serial sense perceptions, thereby leading to the general conviction that series of perceptions, of the same type, will exhibit coherence on each new occasion of their appearance. Far from disproving the requirement of coherence, in order to ascribe objective change to our serial sense impressions, this action of the mind depends upon it).

IV

Does this mean that there are no important differences between Hume and Kant on the question of the validity of the causal principle?

It might be said that this is indeed so. Kant, after all, explicitly maintains that if the objects of our senses, spatio-temporal objects, had been things in themselves – which, for him, would have had the consequence that we perceive objects representatively – there could be no good reason to hold that the causal principle is provable. As he puts it, on the assumption that the objects which we seek to know about are things in themselves ‘that which is merely in us [viz.
Hume versus Kant on Causality and External Objects

the categories) could not determine the character of an object that is distinct from our representations’ (Critique of Pure Reason: A129). The claim that the causal principle is not known to be true would thus be correct, i.e. when applied to things in themselves. For if the objects of the senses exist independently of our being able to experience them, there can plainly be no constraint on how they must behave which is imposed by our experiential capacities. Consequently, granting the causal principle is not analytically true, we could have no assurance that the objects of the senses, spatio-temporal objects, must change their states in accordance with that principle. It is only because, for Kant, the spatio-temporal objects are merely appearances – and so constituted by representations - that we can prove that all changes in these objects must conform to a rule of our understanding and, more specifically, to the causal principle.

Equally, assuming our natural perceptual belief in external objects, Hume is also committed to accepting that these objects, spatio-temporal objects, must invariably change their states in accordance with the law of cause and effect. As we have seen, on Hume’s system, the imagination postulates the existence of unsensed perceptions (and, hence, objects of the senses) if there is coherence between the present changing contents of a given series of sense impressions, on the one hand, and the changing contents of that series on many earlier occasions. However, if the present appearance of the given series does not possess this match or coherence with earlier occasions, the imagination would have no tendency to postulate unsensed perceptions – since there is not here the resemblance to past observed constant conjunctions which would require the imagination to fill in the gaps, in the present manifestation of the series, in order to preserve the belief in causation. Hence, the belief in the existence of an object changing its state would not arise from the present serial sense impressions. Clearly, this line of argument can be generalised to cover every case where the imagination postulates unsensed perceptions on the basis of the changing contents of a series of sense impressions. It follows, therefore, that all the objects of our natural perceptual belief must, in respect of their changes, behave in accordance with causal law. And since, for Hume, these objects have in reality no existence independently of our capacity for perceiving them (they are constituted by sense impressions), it follows that all external objects, all spatio-temporal objects, must, for Hume (as for Kant), invariably change their states in accordance with the law of cause and effect.

Yet despite these similarities between their two accounts, there is, on the face of it, this remarkable difference. On Kant’s account, it would appear that we can come to grasp what, in general, our experience of external objects consists in without the feeling that our reason is being put under strain. This is not so for Hume. He thinks that, when we employ our reason in the attempt to understand perceptual illusions and so on, we come to realise that we cannot justifiably hold onto our natural perceptual belief in external objects; and yet he thinks that we also cannot wholly give up our belief in external objects. The upshot is that we seek to embrace a representative realist account of our perception of external objects: an account which in turn, Hume argues, is
thoroughly unjustified. Hence, so far as we exercise our reason, the perceptual belief in external objects becomes inherently unstable: once we start to use our reason to reflect on certain perceptual phenomena (illusions etc.), we find ourselves forced to drop our natural perceptual belief, viz. the belief in direct realism. We then try to replace this form of realism with representative realism, which itself is shown by our reason to be wholly unjustified. At this point, Hume does not suppose that we will altogether throw over our belief in the continuous existence of objects, embracing instead some form of phenomenalist account of external objects. On the contrary, he thinks that these actions of our reason lead only to short-term ‘amazement and irresolution and confusion’, followed by a return, via ‘carelessness and inattention’, to our natural perceptual belief in direct realism (see Treatise, Book I Part IV, Section II).

Undoubtedly, this does mark a difference between Hume and Kant. For although Kant, like Hume, roundly rejects our directly perceiving spatio-temporal objects, when these objects are taken to be things in themselves, he does argue for a phenomenalist account of our experience of spatio-temporal objects, given that these objects are, for him, merely appearances (see Critique of Pure Reason A491/B519-A497/B535, where a phenomenalist account is explicitly offered). Moreover, he shows no inclination to claim that such an account of our experience of objects – viz. a phenomenalist account - in any way opposes our ordinary perceptual beliefs.

However, while I think that this does highlight a distinction between the manner in which Hume and Kant approach the issue of our perception of external or spatio-temporal objects, I am not inclined to think that this can be used to suggest a philosophically significant difference between them. What it does bring out is that while Hume is above all concerned with the causal conditions of our perceptual belief in objects, Kant is primarily concerned with the meaningful content of our perceptual judgments. In offering a phenomenalist analysis, Kant does not claim that this is all we believe, but this is all we can mean in making perceptual judgments. Such a claim, at least on a Humean account of belief, is entirely consistent with allowing that our perceptual beliefs may extend further than the meaningful content of our corresponding perceptual judgments.

In discussing the possibility of our experiencing objects, Kant is primarily concerned with elucidating the conditions that allow us to give meaningful content to our perceptual judgments about spatio-temporal objects; he is not concerned with elucidating what, rightly or wrongly, we take our natural perceptual belief in these objects to contain. Hume, on the other hand, since he is principally concerned with the genesis of our perceptual belief in external objects, concentrates on how our mind is tricked into believing in the continuous – and, thereby, in the distinct - existence of the objects of our senses. However, given Hume’s own theory of descriptive meaning, as well as his account of our natural perceptual belief, I would argue that he too must be committed to a phenomenalist account of the meaningful content of our belief in objects of the senses, at least insofar as that belief refers to the sense
perceptions themselves (and not to any associated feeling that they may cause in us by means of the imagination). For, to the extent to which we can understand talk about the objects of our perceptual belief, this comes down, on Hume’s account, to our consciousness of actual and possible constant and coherent series of perceptions. Thus, when, on Hume’s account, we form a perceptual belief in an object changing its state, the meaningful content of that belief, so far as it concerns the data of the senses, is only that certain series of sense impressions (mind-dependent phenomena) are found by the imagination to exhibit coherence. Equally when, on Kant’s account, we have an experience of an object changing its state, the meaningful content of our perceptual judgment is that the apprehended representations (mind-dependent phenomena) are judged by the understanding to conform to the principle of sufficient reason.

Let us now review the question of whether Hume and Kant hold strongly divergent positions on the causal principle’s applicability to the objects of our senses. Given Hume accepts – as he does – that we naturally believe that we directly perceive objects changing their states, he is in no position to deny the causal principle. By his own account, he is committed to holding that in any case where we take ourselves to perceive an object changing its state, we must believe that the change itself has a cause. But, equally, Kant is no position to claim to have answered Hume’s scepticism about the causal principle given Kant accepts – as he does - that the objects of the senses are merely appearances and not things in themselves. For, on their shared assumption that the objects of the senses are merely constituted by mind-dependent data (sense impressions or representations), Hume is not sceptical about the causal principle. On the contrary, he argues that we are enabled to form our natural perceptual belief in an object changing its state only insofar as the perceptual data can be taken to accord with a causal law.

Bibliography


PART B
Metaphysics, Philosophy of Science and Meta-Philosophy
Although cognitivism has lost some ground recently in the philosophical circles, it is still the favorite view of many scholars of the emotions.\(^1\) According to cognitivism, emotions are not simply feelings or perceptions of physiological sensations. On the contrary, emotions, like other mental states, such as beliefs, mental pictures, desires, intentions etc., have a common characteristic: they are directed toward something or someone; they have, in other words, \textit{intentional objects}.\(^2\) The intentional object of the emotion enables us to identify the emotion as the kind of emotion it is and distinguish it from other emotions and mental states. For instance, if I characterize the object of my emotion as dangerous, then I will be able to identify the emotion as fear, or, if I think that the object of my emotion is unjust, I will be able to identify it as anger, and so on.

According to most cognitivists, emotions are essentially propositional attitudes such as evaluative beliefs, thoughts or judgments, although it is granted that they are often accompanied by feelings, physiological disturbances, etc.\(^3\) Consequently, making cognition as a necessary, and, sometimes sufficient condition of the emotion, cognitivists are able to account for the intentionality of the emotion. Cognitive states such as beliefs and judgments are essentially intentional. What is more, through the evaluative cognitions cognitivists are able to identify the emotion as the kind of emotion it is, as well as distinguish it from other emotions and mental states. For instance, what distinguishes envy from jealousy is that in the case of envy I believe or think that you have something that I want to have, whereas in the case of jealousy I believe that something or someone that should rightfully be favored and enjoyed by me is being favored and enjoyed by someone else.

Even though I agree with cognitivism's insight that emotions typically involve some type of evaluative intentional state, I shall argue that in some cases, less epistemically committed, non-propositional evaluative states such as

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\(^2\) The intentionality of mental states was first captured by Franz Brentano, and then it was brought to the Analytic Tradition by Anthony Kenny. See Brentano (1973) and Kenny (1963).

\(^3\) Cognitivists disagree about the role of feelings in the emotion. While some believe that they are inessential (Solomon, 1993; Nussbaum, 2001), others believe that they are necessary or constitutive components of emotion (Lyons, 1980; Taylor, 1985; Alston, 1967; Kenny, 1963).
mental pictures can do a better job in identifying the emotion, or, in providing its intentional object. In order to show this, I shall examine a case of irrational fear and a case of humiliation where the requisite identificatory beliefs are missing.¹

A Case of Irrational Fear

According to most cognitivists, to experience fear is to hold the evaluative belief, thought or judgment that the object of fear is dangerous. Such belief is supposed to provide the intentionality of fear, identify it as the kind of emotion it is, and thereby differentiate it from all other emotions and mental states. However, although this may be true in some cases of fear, often times one might be afraid without believing, thinking or judging that one is in danger. This is usually the case with irrational fears, where one's beliefs are at odds with one's emotion. For instance, we can imagine a situation where a perfectly rational person is afraid of a harmless spider, even though she knows that it is not dangerous. If this is the case, then one is at loss on what emotion one is feeling. For, according to most cognitivists, bodily “feelings” are inessential to emotions, and even if they do exist, they are not able to identify the emotion.² That is, a cognitivist cannot resort to the special, qualitative nature of feelings for the identification of emotion. Thus, given that in this particular case the identificatory belief of fear ‘the spider is dangerous’ is missing, cognitivism is unable to account for the intentionality of fear, and, as a result, it fails to identify the emotion.

A cognitivist might argue that even though the arachnophobic lacks the belief that this particular spider is dangerous, she might have other beliefs in the “region” of dangerousness of the spider. For instance, she might think that this spider resembles other truly dangerous spiders, that the present spider looks like a black widow, and black widows are dangerous spiders, etc. I do not deny that it is, of course, possible that the arachnophobic has such beliefs. However, these beliefs do not necessarily amount to the requisite belief that this particular spider is dangerous.

But if there is no evaluative belief that would identify the irrational fear of the spider, then perhaps evaluative beliefs (or other propositional attitudes) are not as omnipresent in emotions as most cognitivists think. Consequently, cognitivism is unable to account for the intentionality of irrational emotions,

¹Although my argument will eventually show that all cognitivist accounts that claim that emotions require evaluative propositions are deficient, for the sake of clarity and simplicity, I will suppose in my examples that the intentional propositional states necessary for the emotion are beliefs and judgments.

²Robert Solomon, in his seminal work The Passions (1993) has likened the role of feelings and their supposed omnipresence in emotions as the fleas ‘plaguing’ a dog. They are always there, but they do not form the essence of the dog! (See Solomon, p. 73.) Given that the scope of this essay is not an overall critique of all the different forms of cognitivism, I will not discuss this here. For a comprehensive critique of cognitivism please see Deigh (1994), Griffiths (1997) and Goldie (2000.)
and as a result, it cannot identify nor distinguish such emotions. How we are to understand the intentionality of irrational emotions will emerge towards the end of this essay. Now let us turn to a case of humiliation that would also show that cognitivism is insufficient in explaining some emotions.

**A Case of Humiliation**

Let us assume, for the sake of argument, that there is an essential belief or propositional thought involved in humiliation, namely, the belief that my situation is degrading or my status has been degraded (either in my own eyes or in the eyes of others). It can still be shown that there are cases of humiliation in which such belief is absent. Consider such a case as it is presented in James Joyce’s short story 'The Dead'. The protagonist, Gabriel, after spending his evening at a party given by his aunts, is now with Gretta, his wife, who is telling him about a certain boy in the gasworks who died for her sake. Gabriel, in an effort to stop her, is making ironic comments, but Gretta does not even notice his irony:

Gabriel felt humiliated by the failure of his irony and by the evocation of this figure from the dead, a boy in the gasworks. While he had been full of memories of their secret life together, full of tenderness and joy and desire, she had been comparing him in her mind with another. A shameful consciousness of his own person assailed him. He saw himself as a ludicrous figure, acting as a penny-boy for his aunts, a nervous, well-meaning sentimentalist, orating to vulgarians and idealizing on his own clownish lusts, the pitiable fatuous fellow he had caught a glimpse of in the mirror (p. 216).

What is the identificatory belief in Gabriel's humiliation? One may be tempted to say that the identificatory belief is that his status has been degraded. But Joyce nowhere tells us that Gabriel holds such belief or thought. Alternatively, one might think that the requisite belief is that he is a ludicrous figure, or that he is acting as a penny-boy for his aunts, etc. But, these beliefs, if indeed Gabriel does hold them, are not entailed by Gabriel's humiliation. One could feel humiliated without having such beliefs.

Yet, an objector could plausibly claim that in so many words, the aforementioned beliefs, (i.e. that he is a ludicrous figure, that he is acting as a penny boy for his aunts, etc.) if they were Gabriel's beliefs, could add up to the belief that Gabriel is degraded, and thereby they could constitute his humiliation. That may be true. I do not deny that there could be cases of humiliation where a person’s beliefs that he is a ludicrous figure, idealizing on his own clownish lusts, etc., could add up to the belief that one is degraded. But this is not how Joyce depicts Gabriel. What Joyce writes is: 'He saw himself as a ludicrous figure, …a nervous, well-meaning sentimentalist, orating

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1 Although the same story is used in G. Taylor's *Pride, Shame and Guilt*, my discussion here is concentrated on an entirely different aspect of the story.  
to the vulgarians...the pitiable fatuous fellow he had caught a glimpse of in the
mirror' [my italics]. It is important to notice that Joyce does not tell us that
Gabriel believes that he is a fatuous fellow, acting as a penny boy for his
aunts, etc. If so, then it is possible for Gabriel to believe that he is a wonderful
person that everyone likes and admires, but picture, or see himself as a
ludicrous figure and fatuous fellow who acts as a penny boy for his aunts, etc.
That is, it is perfectly compatible with Joyce's description that, all things
considered, Gabriel's stable belief is that he is a kind person helping his
aunts, valiantly trying to enlighten the people he is lecturing to, and that,
so far from being ludicrous, he is, in his own way, improving the lot of the
people around him. But if this is the case, then although Gabriel does feel
humiliated, he does not believe that he is degraded (either in his own eyes,
or the eyes of others.) Accordingly, feeling humiliated does not require the
belief that one is degraded. If the Queen of Great Britain and Common
wealth slips and falls down, she could well feel humiliated without at all believing that she is
degraded.

But if Gabriel, as described by Joyce, does not believe that he is degraded,
how is he able to identify his emotion as humiliation? The clue lies in Joyce's
use of 'he saw himself as a ludicrous figure, acting as a penny boy for his
aunts', etc. To follow up this clue, I will borrow some ideas from Francis W.
Dauer's essay 'Between Belief and Fantasy: A Study of the Imagination' and
suggest that what brings about Gabriel's humiliation is his picturing or seeing
himself in a certain way.\(^1\) Such 'picturing' or 'seeing' is closer to imagination
than to belief.

**Imagination vs. Belief: Dauer’s View**

According to Dauer, there are instances of imagination, which use pictures
instead of concepts as their medium. For example, there is a use of seeing or
picturing as where the proposition 'I see or picture X as being Y' can be true,
while the viewer knows X is not Y (Dauer, p. 266). This seems to be the case
with a lot of attitudes towards ourselves and others. We do say things such as
'she still sees him as the young man she met at the prom, while she knows that
he is her middle-aged husband', or 'he still sees himself as the best player,
when he knows otherwise'. Does this mean that the wife and the player have two
contradictory beliefs? Of course not. Generally, we do not accuse people who
say such things of cognitive deficiency. The reason seems to be that we take
such cases to be closer to imagination than to belief and cognition. At the same
time, these are not cases of free imagination, because we use the same sense of
'seeing as' or 'picturing as' when we say things such as 'though I know
otherwise, I cannot picture him as being a cook', or, 'though I know she has
broken a lot of hearts, I cannot see her as a heart breaker'. That is, there must be

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Mental Pictures, Imagination and Emotions

something that enables or prevents a person to see or picture someone or something to be in a certain way. Dauer calls cases of *seeing* or *picturing* as 'imagination that lies between belief and fantasy':

Because criteria and constraints are present we may call this form of imagination, imagination that lies between belief and fantasy. It is like free imagination because it can coexist with belief and knowledge to the contrary, yet it is like belief, because there are external constraints and the criteria for imagining approximate the criteria for believing (Dauer, p. 268).

This type of imagination has two important features:

*a) External constraints.* There must be something external to the picture or imagining that makes the picturing possible, i.e. it might be the belief that the husband still has a youthful liveliness, which generates the picturing. Or, alternatively, I must believe that there is something in her that prevents me from seeing or picturing her as a heartbreaker. Perhaps I believe that she is not attractive or that she lacks self-esteem. However, the constraints can be somewhat nebulous. In fact, this is one of the reasons why the phenomenon of *seeing* as, or *picturing* as cannot be seen as a matter of belief. The constraints that generate the picturing do not have to be objectively true. Although a loving wife might interpret her husband's lively behavior as youthful, someone else might see it as a behavior of a silly old man. Similarly, although the hefty stature of the heartbreaker prevents me from seeing her as a heartbreaker, someone else might see it as the very reason for being a heartbreaker.

*b) Criteria that approximate those of believing X to be Y.* If the criterion for believing X to be Y is exhibiting the relevant behavior and the feelings stemming from such belief, then a similar criterion could be placed for *seeing* or *picturing X as Y*. For instance, if someone says that he believes that the Chair is the best Chair the department ever had, we expect him to behave accordingly, i.e. to get upset when people are making jokes at the expense of the Chair, or to agree with some of Chair's policies, etc. If, however, his behavior and feelings show otherwise, (i.e. he never votes for the Chair's policies, or when others talk about the Chair's 'virtues' he gets angry with them, etc.), unless an explanation is given, we will be reluctant to accept his avowals that he really believes that the Chair is the best Chair the department ever had. This is also the case with *picturing* or *seeing as*. If someone pictures himself to be the best player, while he knows that he is not, he is expected not to get annoyed or angry when he doesn’t get the Best Player of the Year Award, or when
others do not include his name among the best players. However, such person is still expected to show some signs that he sees himself as the best player. For instance, he might feel pride and joy when little boys come and tell him that they believe he is the best player, or he might give advice to young players with the air of a person who is the best player, etc.

The medium for this state of imagination is mental pictures instead of propositions. Pictures have different logical features from propositions. Three of the distinct logical features of pictures are the following:

a. They are representational.
b. There are objects and people depicted in the picture.
c. Some pictures can portray actual objects and people, and the portrayed objects and people may or may not portray the actual persons aptly (Dauer, p. 271).

According to this reading, to see or picture X as being Y is to see the picture that depicts Y as an apt portrait of X. Pictures are the right medium for this kind of imagination, because while a proposition is simply true or false of a person (a concept either subsumes or doesn't subsume a person) a picture can portray a person with varying degrees of aptness. 'Being a young man' is simply false of the middle-aged husband, but a ‘picture of a young man’ can still portray the husband aptly; perhaps it is because of the husband’s lively behavior. The judgment by which we judge Y to be an apt portrait of X, is essentially an aesthetic judgment; accordingly, if one sees Y as an apt portrait of X and another does not, this does not mean that one is right and the other wrong. Hence, mental pictures cannot be reduced to propositions and beliefs because they lack the truth or falsity dimension that is ontologically connected to propositions and beliefs. Further, whether a picture is an apt portrait of someone or something is a purely aesthetic matter. One either sees or does not see a certain portrait as apt. There are no objective criteria by which one can judge or persuade another that a certain picture is an apt portrait of someone or something. Aptness is something one sees for oneself. One cannot take someone else's word for it, as one might in order to believe a proposition. And even if there is a good and bad taste in aesthetic judgments, one cannot be said to have made a mistake if one takes a picture to portray something or someone aptly. Yet, one can be said to be mistaken if one forms a false belief about something or someone.

Humiliation and Imagination

Now let us return to Gabriel's case and see how this type of imagination explains his humiliation. It is true that Gabriel has various beliefs regarding
that evening. However, we need not ascribe to him the beliefs that he is a ludicrous, pitable, fatuous fellow, idealizing on his own clownish lusts, etc. He certainly has, for instance, the beliefs that he is helping his aunts for the party he thought uninteresting, that he was talking to an uncultured audience, that his wife, a woman that he very much loves, was not listening to him when he was talking to her about their secret life together, etc. These beliefs function as external constrains in order for Gabriel to see or picture himself as a ludicrous figure, fatuous fellow, orating to the vulgarians, etc. Taking such a pictures to be apt portraits of himself brings about Gabriel's humiliation.

To illustrate the point, let us modify a bit Gabriel's case. Suppose that Gabriel knows that the propositions 'I am a ludicrous, fatuous fellow', etc. are false. Yet, he takes them to apply to him at that moment. But if the propositions are false, how could they apply to him? Obviously, they must apply to him in some way other than truth. The only alternative, it seems, is that Gabriel sees the picture of a ludicrous figure, fatuous fellow, etc., as an apt portrait of himself at that particular instant. And, given that aptness lacks the truth or falsity dimension, it is perfectly understandable that while Gabriel thinks that the propositions “I am a ludicrous, fatuous fellow” are false, as he does not think that they truly apply to him, he sees the mental picture of a ludicrous, fatuous fellow as an apt portrait of him.

Now, the question is how picturing oneself as a ludicrous figure, or fatuous fellow, etc. amounts to humiliation. Well, it seems that by picturing himself as a fatuous fellow and the like, Gabriel also pictures himself as having been degraded, because he finds the portrayed person in the picture to have been degraded. This, in turn, brings about Gabriel's humiliation. Therefore, although Gabriel does not have the relevant identificatory belief that his situation is degrading, by picturing himself in a 'degrading light' he is able to identify his emotion as humiliation.

But one might ask, why can we not say that Gabriel just exhibits a case of free imagination, and so, he is imagining the proposition 'I am a ludicrous, pitable fellow' to be true? For, if he does imagine such proposition as being true, then we can explain his humiliation by saying that he also imagines that being a fatuous, ludicrous figure, is degrading, and consequently, feels humiliation. This might be feasible in some cases. However, this is not what happens in Gabriel's case. According to Joyce, Gabriel is not daydreaming, nor is he fantasizing. The events of that evening led him to picture himself as a ludicrous fellow, etc. Had those events not happened, he would not have pictured himself in that way. That is, there are external conditions and constraints that led Gabriel to picture himself as a ludicrous and fatuous fellow.

Yet, again, one might object, if I allow beliefs to play the role of external constraints, do I not also agree with the cognitivist who believes that cognitive propositional states such as beliefs are necessary for the emotion? To say that

1Greenspan (1988) and Stocker (1987) have also suggested that emotions can arise simply by imagining certain propositions to be true. Although I agree with their insights, I also think that the main medium of imagination is mental pictures, and not propositions or concepts, for, while concepts and propositions could be true or false, pictures could merely be apt or inapt.
beliefs are necessary for emotions is a triviality. Surely emotions require beliefs. However, what is problematic with this type of cognitivism is not the claim that beliefs or judgments are necessary for emotions, but that in each emotion there is a particular evaluative belief (or proposition), which is essential to the emotion and identifies it as the kind of emotion it is. Also, we have to remember that although Gabriel's beliefs function as conditions and external constraints for his humiliation, these conditions are not decisive; for, one can meet the conditions, have all those beliefs, and still not picture oneself in such a way, and, therefore, not feel humiliated. That is, the beliefs that lead Gabriel to his picturing, and consequently to his humiliation, are just vehicles for his emotion, and as such, they do not play any essential role in his humiliation.

Irrational Fear and Imagination

We are now equipped to explain the case of the irrational fear of the spider. As we recall, our arachnophobic lacks the evaluative belief 'this spider is dangerous' that would identify and explain her fear. I would like to suggest that in such case, although the person believes that the spider is harmless, she pictures or sees it as something genuinely dangerous, a black widow perhaps, and seeing this picture as an apt portrait of the present harmless spider, brings about her fear. Furthermore, the arachnophobic's beliefs that are in the 'region' of dangerousness, i.e. 'spiders are ugly and disgusting creatures', 'to be bitten by them is unpleasant', 'this spider resembles a “black widow”' and '“black widows” are dangerous spiders', function as external constraints and conditions for picturing or seeing the present spider as a dangerous “black widow.” If the arachnophobic had none of these (or relevant) beliefs, she would not have seen the picture of the dangerous spider as an apt portrait of the present spider.1 Thus, even if there is no belief to identify the irrational fear of the spider and account for the intentionality of the emotion, there is a mental picture that is able to do a better job in both areas.

Conclusion

Our discussion has shown that evaluative propositional states are not necessary for the identification and the intentionality of emotions. Sometimes imagination with its medium of mental pictures is better equipped to explain and identify a person's emotion.2 If this is the case, then the cognitivist view is

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1 Again, we have to remember that while some beliefs must act as external constraints, the particular beliefs, which act as the external constraints, are not required.

2 If my account regarding mental pictures is correct, then it also shows the inadequacy of the so-called weak cognitivist view according to which emotions may not require such strong epistemological states as beliefs, but they certainly require some type of propositional thought, and hence concepts. Although I am sympathetic to such accounts because they recognize the
mistaken in claiming that emotions entail propositional attitudes, and, consequently, an analysis of emotions solely in terms of concepts and cognitions is unsatisfactory.

Bibliography


inadequacies of straightforward cognitivist theories, I disagree with their insistence on the use of propositions and concepts in emotions. As we have seen, sometimes concepts are not necessary for an emotional experience.
CHAPTE R TEN

Supervenience, Emergence, and the Ontological Novelty of Consciousness

Reinaldo Bernal Velásquez

Chalmers (1996) proposed an influential argument for the claim that consciousness is not a physical property:

1. In our world, there are conscious experiences.
2. There is a logically possible world physically identical to ours, in which the positive facts about consciousness in our world do not hold.
3. Therefore, facts about consciousness are further facts about our world, over and above the physical facts.
4. So materialism is false. (p. 123)

As a physicalist (or ‘materialist’) I take conscious experiences to have a physical nature: facts about consciousness either are physical facts or supervene (i.e. are entailed with metaphysical necessity) on physical facts.\(^1\) Therefore, I take a world where there are conscious experiences to be physically different from a world where there are not. But for Chalmers, surely, this point would beg the question. He proposes a ‘construction’ of the ‘zombie world’ which he thinks must be accepted by the physicalist and that leads to his proof. This ‘construction’ can be stated as follows:

If,
(premise 1) Facts about consciousness are not microphysical facts.\(^2\)
And,
(premise 2) The ‘high-level facts are entailed [with logical necessity] by all the microphysical facts’ (p. 71. Italics in the original).

Then,
(conclusion 1) A world W' microphysically identical to the actual world W ‘will have the same macroscopic structure as ours, and the same macroscopic dynamics’ (p. 73).
And yet,
(conclusion 2) There would be no conscious experiences in W'.

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\(^1\)Chalmers’ defines ‘supervenience’ as follows: ‘B-properties supervene on A-properties if no two possible situations are identical with respect to their A-properties while differing in their B-properties’ (1996, p. 33).

\(^2\)Premise 1 amounts to the rejection of panpsychism.
I will give an argument against premise 2, which stands for what I label ‘microphysicalism’. It is based in ‘Bell's inequalities’ theorem of quantum mechanics, and the experiments realised by A. Aspect and his colleagues. No previous training in quantum mechanics will be required to follow the argument.

Physics is an empirical science and thus its ontology is open to substantial revisions. But let us take it that reality is such that the general atomistic metaphysics underlying it is true: physical entities are either fundamental entities or complex entities composed by fundamental entities, and the laws of nature determine the way these entities interact as a function of their properties. ‘Fundamental entities’ are those characterised by not being composed by further entities; they instantiate ‘fundamental properties’. ‘Complex entities’ are those composed by fundamental entities; the properties they instantiate as a whole are ‘high-level properties’. Now, some physical property types can be attributed as high-level or as a fundamental. For instance, we attribute electric charge to an electron or to a capacitor. But other properties, like solidity or temperature, are exclusively attributed as high-level ones. Hereafter I will use the following abbreviations: ‘HP’ stands for ‘high-level property’, ‘FP’ for ‘fundamental property’ and ‘FL’ for ‘fundamental law’.

**Microphysicalism**

Chalmers’ zombie argument is based on the following intuition: there is a metaphysically possible world physically identical to the actual world where, nonetheless, there is no consciousness. This intuition, in turn, is based on two further ones: (i) every ‘high-level fact’ supervenes on ‘microphysical facts’, except consciousness, since (ii) consciousness cannot supervene on microphysical entities that do not have it—the metaphysical entailment relation cannot ‘produce’ consciousness out of something that lacks it.

I agree with ii. However, I will challenge i: I will argue that some ‘high-level facts’ do not supervene—are not metaphysically (or logically)\(^1\) entailed—by microphysical facts. Premise i stands for ‘microphysicalism’, and it has, in particular, the following corollary concerning high-level physical properties:

\[(m\text{-}PH)\text{ Every HP is entailed by fundamental (physical) items with } \text{metaphysical (or logical) necessity.}\] \(^2\)

\(^1\)Chalmers strongly relates metaphysical necessity with logical necessity: ‘[...] the metaphysically possible worlds are just the logically possible worlds (and [...] metaphysical possibility of statements is logical possibility with an a posteriori twist)’ (2006, p. 38. Italics in the original).

\(^2\)In Chalmers’ terms the statement \(m\text{-}PH\) can be restated as follows: no two possible physical systems can be identical with respect to their fundamental constituents while differing in their HP.
The ‘fundamental items’ are: (1) The fundamental entities and the fundamental properties they instantiate; (2) the fundamental laws of nature; and (3) boundary conditions. Ingredient 3 is required because a physical system is not fully determined by the set of entities it contains and the laws of nature that apply. Some spatio-temporal conditions are required.

Suppose we want to create an exhaustive inventory of the entities, properties, facts and events that ever existed or obtained in the world. If microphysicalism is true, when we include all the fundamental items the inventory is complete. To be sure, it is useful for epistemological purposes to include items that are not fundamental. But these are redundant from the ontological point of view. As a metaphor, microphysicalism can be said to be a 2D metaphysics: the physical world is exclusively inhabited by the fundamental entities, behaving in accordance with the fundamental laws. The mere existence of the fundamental items metaphysically entails the existence of the entire complex entities and of all the facts and events involving them.

Microphysicalism might look appealing, especially if one prefers ‘desert landscapes’, and is easily taken as being in perfect agreement with contemporary natural science. Indeed, Chalmers does not argue that microphysicalism is true; he just supposes it is. However, I will argue against this commonly held supposition.

**E-physicalism**

Think about a claim like ‘there are no rigid bodies, since physics has shown that the volume occupied by supposedly rigid bodies is almost completely empty and, moreover, every body is made out of atoms that are in permanent motion’. I believe there is something deeply wrong with this claim. To be sure, contemporary physics explains rigidity by proposing the existence of fundamental entities, atoms, molecules, and so on, which do not (and cannot) instantiate this property. Clearly, several properties like solidity, liquidity, and temperature, are HPs, and only complex entities composed of many molecules can be said to instantiate them. But then, should we conclude that these HPs are not real physical properties, by contrast with the FPs? Does the acceptance of physical theories that account for the instantiation of these HPs by appealing to fundamental items involve a commitment to an eliminative reduction of them? Maybe not.

The main motivation for e-physicalism is the intuition that even though there surely are tight relations between FPs and every HP, and even though we can better understand high-levels with models of the lower-levels, many HPs are real on the same footing that the FPs are considered to be. Diamonds are rigid, water is liquid, and the sun has a surface temperature of about 5778 K. These HPs, despite being entailed by fundamental items, seem to be real in some strong sense and to have original causal powers. They seem to be ‘ontologically novel’, i.e., not eliminatively reducible in terms of fundamental items.
E-physicalism proposes, metaphorically speaking, a ‘3D’ view of physical reality: in addition to the two dimensions of the fundamental level, there is a vertical dimension corresponding to higher-levels. This 3D world is inhabited both by fundamental entities (at the bottom) and by complex entities which instantiate some ontologically novel properties, i.e., HPs that cannot be eliminatively reduced in terms of fundamental items. These HPs emerge in the following sense:

\((e\text{-PH})\) Some HP properties are entailed by fundamental items with nomological necessity.

By ‘nomological necessity’ I mean a necessity mediated by laws of nature, by contrast with metaphysical necessity. It is the nomological nature of the entailment of some HPs (the emergent ones) from fundamental items, what ensures their ontological novelty. Emergent properties result from fundamental items plus laws of nature.

In the following section I will argue, on the basis of contemporary physics, in favour of \(e\text{-PH}\). Being physics an empirical science one cannot definitely prove \(m\text{-PH}\) to be wrong. But it is also clear that the metaphysical picture of microphysicalism is motivated by contemporary theories. Moreover, any support a contemporary theory could give to microphysicalism requires to suppose that this theory is true to an important extent. Thus, it is perfectly legitimate to use contemporary physics to argue against \(m\text{-PH}\) and, thereby, against microphysicalism.

**The EPR Paradox and Bell's Theorem**

In a famous article, A. Einstein, B. Podolsky and N. Rosen claimed that quantum mechanics is an incomplete and thus unacceptable theory.\(^1\) This ‘EPR argument’ was based on (1) the principle of ‘locality’ and (2) a realist requirement of ‘completeness’:

(1) The principle of locality rejects the possibility of ‘spooky actions at a distance’: ‘... anything that happens at a given location has only local effects. Nothing that happens at A can have any effect on the state of affairs at B’ (Greenstein & Zajonc 1997, p. 112). Consider two disjoint closed volumes in physical space, A and B. Locality says that a change in the properties of the physical systems enclosed in A cannot determine any change in the properties of the physical systems enclosed in B, unless there is some signal going from A to B. By a ‘signal’, I mean some field waves, or some particle, or something of the sort. No doubt locality is an intuitive principle, underlying in the classical picture of the physical world.

(2) The requirement of completeness is framed in a realist view of scientific theories. It says that a theory, to be acceptable, needs not only to be

\(^1\)See Einstein, Podolsky & Rosen (1935).
empirically adequate but must also provide a true\textsuperscript{1} and complete model of the physical world. Every type of physical entity, property, and every law, must be truthfully represented by the theory. In the EPR paper this requirement is stated as follows: ‘[E]very element of physical reality must have a counterpart in the physical theory’ (1935, p. 777. Italics in the original). Now, the group EPR provides a ‘principle of physical reality’: ‘If, without in any way disturbing a system, we can predict with certainty [...] the value of a physical quantity, then there exists an element of physical reality corresponding to this quantity’ (1935, p. 777. Italics in the original). This principle gives, of course, sufficient but not necessary conditions for the attribution of reality.

Einstein, Podolsky and Rosen imagined an experimental setup and discussed the solution given by quantum mechanics. Their ‘EPR system’ used two particles and the properties of position and momentum, which are ‘complementary variables’ and so are subject to Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle. Lately, David Bohm proposed a new but equivalent version of an EPR system, with two electrons and their ‘spin’ property.\textsuperscript{2} Bohm’s version illustrates in a simpler and more intuitive manner the situation and, in particular, makes more explicit the requirement of locality. Furthermore, Bohm’s version can also be adjusted to use other particles and properties, like photons and ‘polarisation’, and can be generalised to include more than two particles.\textsuperscript{3} I will then discuss the EPR paradox under Bohm’s version, as is commonly done.

The EPR Gedanken Experiment

The EPR setup is depicted in Figure 1. There is a source of electrons, and two Stern-Gerlach magnets. These systems are spatially separated, and not connected by any further system or related by any signal. The space between them is empty.

Figure 1. EPR Setup – D. Bohm’s Version

Electrons are particles with spin $S = \pm 1/2$. This means that a (correct) measurement of the spin will always produce one of two possible values, namely $+1/2$ or $-1/2$, with equal probability.

\textsuperscript{1}Truth is conceived as some kind of correspondence or isomorphism between models and physical systems.

\textsuperscript{2}See Bohm (1951).

\textsuperscript{3}See Greenberger et al. (1990)
The Stern-Gerlach magnets are devices that measure the spin of particles. Each magnet has an orientation, and when a particle of spin 1/2 encounters the magnet, it is deflected either in the direction of orientation, or in the opposite direction. Thereby a measurement of the spin is obtained: +1/2 or -1/2 respectively.

A row of the EPR experiment, divided in three intervals, proceeds as follows:

- \((\Delta t_1)\) Both magnets are oriented in the same direction \(\alpha\). The source contains a system of two entangled electrons with spin \(S_{\text{Total}}=0\).
- \((\Delta t_2)\) The source emits the electrons. Electron \(e_1\) travels towards magnet \(M_1\), and electron \(e_2\) travels towards magnet \(M_2\).\(^1\)
- \((\Delta t_3)\) Electrons \(e_1\) and \(e_2\) arrive at magnets \(M_1\) and \(M_2\) respectively, and each one is deflected either in direction \(\alpha\), or in direction \(-\alpha\). Thereby, a measurement (in direction \(\alpha\)) of the corresponding spins \(S_1\) and \(S_2\) is obtained. I will label ‘\(M_1/e_1\)’ and ‘\(M_2/e_2\)’ the events of \(M_1\) and \(M_2\) interacting with \(e_1\) and \(e_2\) respectively.\(^2\)

Quantum mechanics predicts two possible outcomes for this EPR experiment: \(\{S_1 = + 1/2 ; S_2 = - 1/2\}\) or \(\{S_1 = - 1/2 ; S_2 = + 1/2\}\).\(^3\) The combinations \(\{S_1 = + 1/2 ; S_2 = + 1/2\}\) and \(\{S_1 = - 1/2 ; S_2 = - 1/2\}\) never occur. In other words, the electrons \(e_1\) and \(e_2\) are \emph{always} deflected in opposite directions. Quantum mechanics also predicts that each one of these possible outcomes has the same probability of obtaining.

In principle, these predictions are not surprising. The initial system we have during \(\Delta t_1\) is composed by two electrons and has a total spin \(S_{\text{Total}} = 0\). Then, it is expected to obtain in \(\Delta t_3\) results such that \(S_1 + S_2 = 0\). The EPR paradox concerns the interpretation of the experiment.

According to the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanics, during \(\Delta t_2\) the electrons \(e_1\) and \(e_2\) do \emph{not} have a definite value for their spins. Each electron is in a ‘superposition’ of states: \(e_1\) is in a superposition of \([S_1 = + 1/2 ; S_1 = - 1/2]\), with each sub-state having the same probability of obtaining; same for \(e_2\). In other words, \emph{before} the measurements \(M_1/e_1\) and \(M_2/e_2\) occur, the variables \(S_1\) and \(S_2\) do not have any definite value.

But then—argues the EPR group—how is it possible that, in \(\Delta t_3\), whenever magnet \(M_1\) measures \(S_1 = + 1/2\) magnet \(M_2\) \emph{always} measures \(S_2 = - 1/2\) and, conversely, whenever \(M_1\) measures \(S_1 = - 1/2\) magnet \(M_2\) \emph{always} measures \(S_2 = + 1/2\) ?

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\(^{1}\) The propagation of the electrons takes some time. This is an important factor for the interpretation of EPR experiments.

\(^{2}\) In technical terms, these events correspond to the measurements that produce the ‘collapse of the wave function’.

\(^{3}\) For instance, \(\{S_1 = - 1/2 ; S_2 = + 1/2\}\) means that \(e_1\) was deflected in direction \(-\alpha\), i.e., in a direction opposite to the orientation of the magnets, while \(e_2\) was deflected in direction \(\alpha\), i.e., in the direction of orientation of the magnets.
It can be maintained that during $\Delta t_2$ the values for $S_1$ and $S_2$ are not determined, but that there is a physical relation between $e_1$ and $e_2$ which constrains the outcomes. Somehow, at the moment of the measurements (during $\Delta t_3$) there is a physical relation between $M_1/e_1$ on one side, and $M_2/e_2$ in the other side, which accounts for the synchrony.

The problem with the previous solution is that this physical relation would be non-local. First, $M_1/e_1$ and $M_2/e_2$ are spatially separated and, ex hypothesis, no physical system connects $M_1$ with $M_2$. Second, the measurements $M_1/e_1$ and $M_2/e_2$ can be made simultaneously. Therefore, no signal could have travelled from $M_1/e_1$ to $M_2/e_2$ or vice-versa.¹

As an analogy for this violation of locality, consider the following situation: one subject flips a coin in Athens, and another subject flips a coin in Bogotá. Whenever the coin in Athens falls ‘head’ the one in Bogotá falls ‘tail’, and conversely. To explain the result, one would look for some signal that ensures the synchrony. If there is no signal locality is violated: there would be a ‘spooky action at a distance’.

Since the solution that appeals to a physical relation between $M_1/e_1$ and $M_2/e_2$ violates locality, it must—according to the EPR group—be rejected. For them, the outcome of $M_1/e_1$ depends exclusively in the interaction between $M_1$ and $e_1$, same for $M_2/e_2$, and these events only have local effects. Now, note that just by realising the measurement $M_1/e_1$ one can predict with absolute certainty the result of $M_2/e_2$ (and conversely). If one finds $S_1 = -1/2$ one can predict the result $S_2 = + 1/2$, and if one finds $S_1 = + 1/2$ one can predict the result $S_2 = - 1/2$, and this without in any way disturbing $e_2$. So, according to the principle of physical reality, $S_2$ is a real property of $e_2$ that takes a definite value (same for $e_1$ and $S_1$). But orthodox quantum mechanics, as we saw, does not attribute to $e_2$ this real property. It says that, if no measurement is made, $S_2$ does not take a definite value. Therefore, following the requirement of completeness, the EPR group concludes that quantum mechanics is not a complete theory.

Einstein, Podolsky and Rosen presented a simple and intuitive alternative interpretation of the experiment. The idea is that, during $\Delta t_3$, electrons $e_1$ and $e_2$ have a definite value for their spins—they are not in superposed states. If the outcome of the experiment is $\{S_1 = + 1/2 ; S_2 = - 1/2\}$ this shows that, before the measurement, $e_1$ already had the (intrinsic) property of spin $S_1 = + 1/2$ and, similarly, $e_2$ already had the (intrinsic) property of spin $S_2 = - 1/2$. Analogously for the outcome $\{S_1 = - 1/2 ; S_2 = + 1/2\}$. Accordingly, the measurements in $\Delta t_3$ just revealed the value that the variables $S_1$ and $S_2$ already had when the electrons were travelling towards the detectors. Interpretations of the EPR experiment like the previous one are called ‘hidden variable theories’. They are characterised by denying the existence of non-local correlations between $M_1/e_1$ and $M_2/e_2$. Instead, they consider that $e_1$ and $e_2$ have intrinsic properties—corresponding to the ‘hidden variables’—that explain the synchrony between the outcomes of the experiment.

¹A principle of relativity theory says that nothing can travel at a speed greater than the speed of light, let alone instantaneously.
N. Bohr replied to the EPR paper by elaborating the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanics. He did not argue for the possibility of non-local correlations, but defended an instrumentalist view of science and rejected the requirement of completeness: theories are *only* required to be empirically adequate, and empirical adequacy is always tested at the macroscopic level. If quantum mechanics makes correct predictions for EPR systems it is fulfilling its purpose.

For many years it was considered that no experimental evidence could give support to one of the parts in dispute. The EPR argument was not meant to question the empirical adequacy of quantum mechanics; the discussion was purely conceptual. But, in the sixties, J. S. Bell published a seminal paper where he presented ‘Bell’s inequalities’. This theorem showed that there was a difference between the predictions of orthodox quantum theory and hidden variables theories for ‘generalised EPR systems’. The possibility to empirically test if indeed there are ‘spooky actions at a distance’ was open.

**Bell’s Inequalities**

J. S. Bell considered a slightly different set-up for the EPR experiment, depicted in Figure 2.

**Figure 2. EPR Setup – J. Bell’s Version**

In this generalised setup the Stern-Gerlach magnets are not oriented in the same direction. Between the orientation of magnet 1 and magnet 2 there is an angle $\gamma$. Under these conditions, quantum mechanics provides the following prediction:

$$(QM) \quad < (\sigma_x \cdot \alpha) (\sigma_z \cdot \beta) > = - \cos \gamma$$

The expression $< (\sigma_x \cdot \alpha) (\sigma_z \cdot \beta) >$ represents the statistical distribution of the product between $(\sigma_x \cdot \alpha)$ and $(\sigma_z \cdot \beta)$. Terms $(\sigma_x \cdot \alpha)$ and $(\sigma_z \cdot \beta)$ represent the measurements $M_1/e_1$ and $M_2/e_2$, where variables $\{\sigma_x, \sigma_z\}$ represent the

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1Bohr (1935)
2See Bell (1964)
spins of \( e_1 \) and \( e_2 \), and variables \( \{ \alpha ; \beta \} \) represent the orientations of magnets \( M_1 \) and \( M_2 \) (which form an angle \( \gamma \)). All these variables \( \{ \sigma_x ; \sigma_z ; \alpha ; \beta \} \) are unitary vectors, and the dot between them represents the scalar product. If, e.g., \( (\sigma_x \cdot \alpha) = -1 \) this means that \( e_1 \) was deflected in the direction opposite to \( \alpha \).

Let us see three examples. First, take \( \gamma = 0 \). This corresponds to the original EPR setup. Equation \( QM \) entails that \( < (\sigma_x \cdot \alpha) (\sigma_z \cdot \beta) > = -1 \). This coincides with what we saw: while one of the electrons was deflected in the direction of orientation of the magnet, the other one was deflected in the opposite direction.

Second, take \( \gamma = \pi/2 \). Equation \( QM \) entails that \( < (\sigma_x \cdot \alpha) (\sigma_z \cdot \beta) > = 0 \). This means that, statistically, there is no correlation between the result in \( M_1/P_1 \) and \( M_2/P_2 \).

Finally, take \( \gamma = \pi/4 \). Equation \( QM \) entails that \( < (\sigma_x \cdot \alpha) (\sigma_z \cdot \beta) > = 2^{1/2}/2 \approx 0.7 \). This means that approximately two times out of three both electrons are deflected either in the direction of orientation of the magnets, or in the opposite direction.

Now, Bell's theorem shows that no local hidden variables theory (LHT) can make the same prediction for the generalised EPR setup that is provided by quantum mechanics. In other words, no theory that (i) supposes locality and (ii) explains the results of \( M_1/e_1 \) and \( M_2/e_2 \) by appealing to hidden variables, can produce equation \( QM \). Recall that a 'hidden variable' corresponds to an intrinsic property of the electrons which takes a definite value. This property would exist and take a definite value independently of any measurement to determine it. For instance, the property of \( e_1 \) having \( S_1 = -1/2 \) during \( \Delta t_2 \) would correspond to a hidden variable.

Bell's theorem has the advantage of applying to any LHT. It does not make suppositions about which properties could correspond to the hidden variables. They can be spins (like in the solution of the EPR group), any other physical properties, and even combinations of them. Bell's theorem is the proof of the following inequality:

\[
(BT) \quad |P(\alpha, \beta) - P(\alpha', \beta')| + |P(\alpha', \beta) - P(\alpha, \beta')| \leq 2
\]

In BT two possible orientations for each magnet are considered: \( \alpha \) and \( \alpha' \) are orientations of \( M_1 \), and \( \beta \) and \( \beta' \) are orientations of \( M_2 \). The function \( P \) represents the left hand of equation \( QM \):

\[
P(\alpha, \beta) = < (\sigma_x \cdot \alpha) (\sigma_z \cdot \beta) >
\]
\[
P(\alpha', \beta) = < (\sigma_x \cdot \alpha') (\sigma_z \cdot \beta) >
\]

Etc.

Accordingly, and since \( \alpha \cdot \beta = \cos \gamma \), equation \( QM \) can be rephrased as:

\[1\] Variables \( \{ \sigma_x ; \sigma_z \} \) are not supposed to have a definite value before the measurement. Only after the interactions of the electrons with the magnets the spins are taken to have a definite value.
Bell proved that every LHT is constrained by equation $BT$. Any prediction of a LHT for the quantity in the left, for any values of $\{\alpha ; \beta ; \alpha' ; \beta'\}$, is going to be minor or equal to 2. Hence, if the experimental implementations of EPR systems show results that violate Bell's inequalities, there is empirical evidence against any LHT.

Now, as expected, quantum mechanics does violate inequality $BT$ for certain values of $\{\alpha ; \beta ; \alpha' ; \beta'\}$, for example, for $\{0 ; 3 \pi/8 ; -\pi/4 ; \pi/8\}$.

The Experimental Results

Several EPR experiments to test Bell's inequalities were realised by A. Aspect and his colleagues. They reproduced a generalised EPR scenario, and registered the results for several values of all the variables. In particular, they varied the (macroscopic) distances between each magnet and the source. First, they showed a systematic violation of Bell's inequalities and, second, that the predictions of quantum mechanics obtain with great accuracy. Even though, ‘[s]ubtle and delicate objections have been raised to the design of and assumptions underlying the Aspect experiments [...] most workers in the field believe that these objections are not fatal’ (Greenstein & Zajonc 1997, p. 143).

Note that what Bell's theorem and ‘the Aspect experiments’ strongly suggest is that theories which assume the existence of hidden variables and locality are false. Indeed, a non-local hidden variables theory can reproduce the same predictions of quantum mechanics, as is the case with the quantum theory of D. Bohm (1951).

It is important to note that the non-locality of quantum mechanics does not violate the principle of relativity theory that says that no body, signal, or causal influence can travel faster than light. The correlations between $M1/e1$ and $M2/e2$ are not causal; no ‘information’ can be transmitted from $M1/e1$ to $M2/e2$.

In sum, there is strong empirical evidence for the existence of non-local correlations in nature. According to Greenstein and Zajonc, ‘the lesson [...] is that it is not appropriate to think of these states as consisting of two separate particles with their own individual properties. Rather, the two particles are tangled together into a seamless unity’ (1997, p. 155).

Emergence and Non-locality

Mermin (1985) claims ‘Einstein maintained that quantum metaphysics entails spooky actions at a distance; experiments have now shown that what bothered Einstein is not a debatable point but the observed behaviour of the real world’ (p. 38). However, I do not want to claim that there are, without

\[ QM' \quad P(\alpha, \beta) = -\alpha \cdot \beta \]
Supervenience, Emergence, and the Ontological Novelty of Consciousness

doubt, non-local relations in nature. First, there are many discussions about the interpretation of quantum mechanics. Indeed, Copenhagen’s interpretation and antirealist views of science prevent a realist reading of Aspect’s experiments. Second, this would suppose that there are crucial experiments, against the Duhem-Quine thesis.

However, \( m-PH \) is supposed to get support from contemporary physics, and any scientific support for a metaphysical thesis requires a realist stance towards scientific theories. If a realist reading of Bell’s theorem plus Aspect’s experiments supports \( e-PH \), the view \( m-PH \) is seriously undermined. I will argue that this is the case.

First, note that non-local properties are, by definition, HP. These are properties of a system that cannot be instantiated by a fundamental constituent. In the generalised EPR system, \( QM \) represents this property.

Second, note that the non-local property of EPR systems is not metaphysically entailed by fundamental items. According to Bell’s theorem, equation \( QM \) cannot be deduced from any LHT. But a LHT is precisely characterised by the fact that it takes the non-local property to supervene, i.e., to be entailed with metaphysical necessity, from fundamental items: fundamental particles, the properties they instantiate, and the laws that directly relate these properties. Therefore, Bell’s theorem shows that no supervenience base exclusively composed by fundamental items metaphysically entails the non-local property.

Third, note that the non-local property of EPR systems is nomologically entailed by fundamental items. The nomological relation is given by equation \( QM \). Clearly, \( QM \) is not a fundamental law: Bell’s theorem shows that \( QM \) does not directly relate fundamental properties, since these fundamental properties would be hidden variables.

In sum, Bell’s theorem plus Aspect’s experiments provide evidence against \( m-PH \) and support \( e-PH \): EPR systems have a non-fundamental physical property which is not metaphysically—but nomologically—entailed by their fundamental constituents and the FLs. Certainly, non-local effects have only been observed at the atomic level. But this is a virtue of this case against \( m-PH \): it shows that even at the atomic level there seem to be HPs which are ontologically novel, i.e., not eliminatively reducible in terms of fundamental items.

Quantum mechanics provides other theorems and phenomena that can be used to discuss the validity of \( m-PH \). In particular there is the Kochen-Specker theorem,\(^1\) which is based on a second theorem developed by Bell.\(^2\) However, the Kochen-Specker theorem it not empirically testable.

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\(^1\)See Kochen & Specker (1967)
\(^2\)See Bell (1987)
Conclusion

Some arguments against the thesis that consciousness is a physical property of some complex physical systems, and in particular Chalmers' zombie argument, suppose the validity of ‘microphysicalism’: the thesis that every physical property of a complex physical system \( P \) supervenes, i.e., is entailed with metaphysical (or logical) necessity, by the properties of the fundamental constituents of \( P \).

To be sure, microphysicalism is usually taken to be in perfect agreement with contemporary physics. However, I showed that the phenomenon of non-local correlations in quantum mechanics seriously undermines this view. If microphysicalism happens to be false, Chalmers’ zombie loses its grounds.

By contrast with microphysicalism I favour a form of emergentism labelled ‘e-physicalism’: some high-level properties are entailed with nomological necessity from fundamental items. Accordingly, consciousness could be a physical property of complex physical systems, despite not being eliminatively reducible in terms of the constituents of the lowest-level of ontology. From non-conscious fundamental entities conscious ones could be entailed via some laws of nature.

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References


C H A P T E R ELEVEN

What if Plato Took Surveys?:
Thoughts about Philosophy Experiments

William Goodman

About ten years ago, a new branch of philosophy, called ‘Experimental Philosophy,’ was introduced. Its founders sought to adapt for philosophy some experimental methods applied, for example, in psychological research. They aim to counter or supplement conventional ‘thought experiments’ used by traditional philosophers.

Traditionalists may cap an argument by saying something like this: ‘If you insist on statement A, you have to accept statement B. Yet B defies our intuitions; don’t you agree? Hence: Reject A.’ But experimental philosophers now survey real people in the world; then they counter traditional arguments by saying something like: ‘Empirically, many people do not share the intuition about B that you just appealed to; so your argument fails.’ Often, experimental philosophers look for and claim to find such differences in intuitions between groups with different ethnic, or other, characteristics, such as ‘Westerners’ versus ‘East Asians.’ Some experimental philosophers focus on refuting traditional intuition-based arguments, as just described; others explore more positive programs.

Methodology is the movement’s defining issue; so we examine here particularly the methods that experimental philosophers employ. This paper is neutral about specific, philosophical debates undertaken by experimental philosophers, such as in epistemology or ethics. None of this paper’s criticisms are meant to deny that experimental methods can have a legitimate role in philosophy. Instead, this paper offers a cautionary note about methodological pitfalls, relevant for those who explore the movement’s potentials.

The portrayal of experimental philosophy as a new philosophical movement is somewhat self-promoted—as based on proponents’ websites and articles in the popular press (Knobe, 2010; Stich, 2001). Yet a genuine, wider interest is signalled by increasing attention paid to the topic in conferences and special journal issues. A number of references, below, derive from such sources.

There is no one protocol or objective shared by all experimentalists. Nadelhoffer and Nahmias (2007) describe three ‘distinct kinds of projects’ for experimental philosophy, which Spicer (2010) more recently called three ‘agendas’. Most attention and controversy focus on the first two agendas; these would use the experiments to either rebut traditional-style arguments, or somehow refine them. The third agenda is less focused on traditional debates—exploring instead for underlying mechanisms for why people respond,
intuitively, as they do (Knobe, 2007; Hardy-Vallee & Dubreuil, 2009). Many papers have elements of more than one agenda.

For the first agendas, it makes sense to demand that philosophers’ arguments be sound (where this can be assessed) as well as valid; and this requires true premises. If a premise is really about what ‘people (universally) intuit’, and this premise is experimentally falsified, then there is an impact on the argument. But adequately interpreting an experiment’s result requires understanding the study’s design.

The experimental philosophy literature, regrettably, contains accounts of experiments with inadequate descriptions for: what hypothesis tests were used; or why those specific tests; or on how/why particular samples were selected or the findings assessed as ‘significant’; or on the validity and reliability of their survey designs and test instruments. Below we clarify these issues, the last listed of which Simon Cullen has addressed extensively in a recent paper (2010). We also look at whether quantitative experiments, in particular, are necessarily central to the potential contributions of experimental philosophy. Newer experimental philosophy papers are generally improving in methodological respects; yet some still cite, unquestioningly, earlier less careful, findings. This paper hopes to encourage, not discourage, experimentation—but with perhaps more awareness of methodological considerations.

(Note that, beyond the scope of this paper, is another school calling themselves experimentalists (see Berman, 2009). The latter is essentially about introspective methods, like Berkeley’s.)

Examples of Methodological Issues arising in the Literature for Experimental Philosophy

Key to the program for experimental philosophy is the movement’s self-description as ‘experimental’—deliberately suggestive of objective, empirical-based, and transparently rule-following methodologies. Experimentalists do not just write essays to persuade; they also point to hard and demonstrably suitable data, and to justifiable analyses for summarizing or manipulating those data. Those claiming this type of backing for their conclusions imply a commitment to such a standard.

The experimental and reporting standards used by experimental philosophers are evolving, but some important issues still reoccur. Several key concerns are raised below, in the context of papers (presented roughly chronologically) where the issues have appeared.

We present, first, what is virtually the founding paper for experimental philosophy: Normativity and Epistemic Intuitions, by Weinberg, Nichols, and Stich (2001). They hypothesize that people’s epistemic intuitions about a given topic vary as a function of seemingly extraneous, individual factors, such as one’s culture, socioeconomic group, or academic background. Order of prompting, they hypothesize, also can vary the outcome. In experiments, they
exposed participants to various ‘intuition probes...similar to cases that have actually been used in the recent literature in epistemology.’

One such probe adapts Lehrer’s ‘Truetemp’ thought experiment (1990), designed to explore the ‘externalist/internalist dimensions of ... subjects’ intuitions.’ Suppose that by some scenario a person Charles endures a brain-changing event, so any time he estimates the temperature, he is always reliably correct. The next time Charles estimates a temperature (suppose he says ‘71 degrees’) — and inevitably he is right — does he know the temperature is 71 degrees or only believe it? Respondents’ answers to this scenario are matched to their ethnicities, to look for patterns.

At least two important methodological issues for experimental philosophy arise in this paper, which is still being cited unquestioningly (e.g., Beebe, 2010).

Methodological Issue 1: Ensuring Representative Samples

Respondents for the above study were recruited, in some manner, from among students at Rutgers University, in north-eastern United States. A sample is representative if it contains roughly the same mix of types of individuals as does the full population, at least regarding differences that might impact results. Otherwise, outcomes may only reflect local circumstances. Did Weinberg et al ensure a reasonable mix of ethnic, socioeconomic, and demographic characteristics among their presumably all student-age subjects? And can they confirm that English-speaking East Asians who can read complex English-language prompts are representative of the larger population of, presumably, the world’s mostly non-English-literate East Asians? (These questions matter because if the sample is not representative, then regardless of response patterns in the sample, conclusions cannot be inferred about a whole group, as a population. The problem is compounded if, as Cullen suggests, different groups do not even interpret the same survey prompts the same way.)

Moreover, the study’s authors developed and applied over the course of their research alternative versions of their prompts. Did they, then, use the same, original participants for all repeat promptings (risking a ‘carry-over effect’ from subjects’ previous ponderings and responses) or did they use different participants (risking extraneous differences between the different groups recruited)?

There are no mechanical or easy answers to such questions when designing a research protocol. But if such concerns are not addressed during study design, or the rationale for protocol decisions explained when presenting and interpreting results, then experimenters’ findings may not necessarily be more generalizable than those of so-called armchair philosophers.

Methodological Issue 2: Choosing the Appropriate Test

Almost universally, experimental philosophers use statistical tests as a means to bolster their empirical claims. At the least, the test used should be clearly identified, and its relevance explained. Only in a later version of their
paper (in Nichols et al, 2003) did Weinberg et al’s narrative explicitly name the test employed.

A common format for hypothesis testing is to posit, explicitly or implicitly, a presumption (to be either rejected or not rejected, based on study results) that there is ‘no effect’, e.g. that ‘Westerners’ and East Asians’ intuitions about $x$ are not different.’ This no-effect presumption is called the null hypothesis. If the empirical results appear inconsistent with that hypothesis (to a suitable degree), then the tester might conclude that the no-effect presumption is really untenable. However, one’s choice of test can be disputed by questioning either the technical assumptions of one’s method, or, more fundamentally, the way that the null hypothesis has been framed.

Figure 1 illustrates two alternative ways to frame the null hypothesis for the first Truetemp case. The testing method employed by Weinberg et al assessed—and rejected—a null hypothesis most like the version presented in Figure 1(a). The implied null hypothesis is that, for both Westerners and East Asians, the respective ratios of numbers of people choosing one versus the other of the two available responses are the same. I.e., their test compares the two ethnic groups’ respective response ratios for how many responded ‘Knows’ versus how many responded ‘Only Believes’. Those ratios do appear non-equal in the top graph, and the authors’ hypothesis test confirms this appearance. However, their actual paper does not address this matter of differing opinions within individual cultural groups. It speaks only of differences between groups.

Figure 1. Framing the Null Hypothesis for Truetemp Case, Version 1

Figure 1(b) better corresponds to the actual claim that Weinberg et al make in their narrative. They are comparing the proportions of respondents in each
group who specifically ‘Deny knowledge,’ i.e., answer “Only believes”. A null hypothesis that better matches that claim is that the two groups’ numbers of knowledge deniers are consistent with (i.e., roughly proportional to) the groups’ respective numbers of participants. In this light, Figure 1(b) suggests that the data do not particularly show much difference between cultural groups.

In practice, the choice for ‘best’ test or null hypothesis may not be self-evident; and colleagues may disagree with one’s choices. Yet we expect philosophers to justify the methods and assumptions that they employ, and this can include experimental assumptions. As recently as May et al (2010), we find examples of failing to name the test that supposedly justifies some conclusion. Choice of test can also impact the choice of survey questions (see Issue 5).

**Methodological Issue 3: Being Mindful of Possible Confounding**

Confounding occurs when there are other, non-acknowledged variables that could impact the experimental results. Suppose you tested for the impact of people’s shoe-brand preferences on their cars’ purchase prices, but failed to consider a variable for income or wealth. Surprisingly, your test might show a ‘significant’ impact for shoe-brands; but really because price differentials for some shoes (e.g., between expensive import brands versus discount-store options) will stand in for (called being a ‘proxy’ for) the non-considered wealth factors.

An illustration where this could occur in experimental philosophy is found in Machery et al.’s paper (2004). Again, they contrast the intuitions of different cultural groups, by re-purposing historical thought experiments as prompts—here, with regard to proper names and reference. The authors provide appropriate details about participants (where recruited, demographics, and exclusion criteria), and give more information about the tests employed.

However, concerns arise from the authors’ response to possible objections that ‘the labels “East Asian” and “Western” are too crude […] given the enormous diversity’ within those groups. They dismiss that objection lightly, saying that ‘if we find significant results using crude cultural groupings, […] then] more nuanced classifications should yield even stronger results.’ Their assumption is that ‘cultural group’—properly bounded—is the key predictive variable, so if there are any misclassifications, these would be randomly scattered, with no systematic impact on the study.

But suppose the real, causal variable is ‘Was English the primary language spoken in the childhood home?’ The East/West variable would be only a proxy. Even ‘nuanced,’ this proxy would systematically fail to group together such cases (that should be grouped together) as (a) a bilingual (but primarily French speaking) French Canadian in the U.S. sample, and (b) a bilingual (but primarily Cantonese speaking) individual in the Hong Kong sample.

Since a confounder is something we failed to test for explicitly, the problem can often arise from an imperfect data collection instrument (see Issue 5). However, confounding factors can also arise during the execution of an experiment that possibly looked good on paper.
Methodological Issue 4: Meaningfully assessing Effects

Almost universally, experimental philosophers apply (or claim to apply) conventional statistical concepts of ‘significance’ and ‘p-values’. They say an effect (such as the test-measured difference between Easterners’ and Westerners’ responses) is ‘significant’ if it is so large as to make it seem implausible that both (a) there really is no effect in the population (i.e. the null hypothesis is true), yet (b) this apparently very large effect in our sample occurred anyway, just by a random fluke. Surely, the thinking goes, such a discrepancy suggests that assumption (a) about the population must really be incorrect.

Such conclusions are generally based on a combination of ‘p-values’ (discussed below) and a model like Figure 2.

**Figure 2. Expectations of Observed Effect Size, IF the Null Hypothesis is True**

Assuming the null hypothesis is true:

Probability of the observed (apparent) effect falling in a given range (such as this one) = (area under the corresponding portion of the curve)/(the total area under the curve)

...so in a given sample there’s only a relatively ‘small’ probability (e.g. 0.05) that the observed (apparent) effect would be so large as to fall in one of these small, remote, shaded areas.

Examples of apparently large-magnitude effects—considered ‘significantly’ different from 0.

The figure models what is expected as a sample result if the null hypothesis (that in the population, there really is no effect to be observed) is true. Interpret the curve this way: If the null hypothesis were really true, the probability that any random sample would yield a result (of some apparent effect) that falls in a particular range along the bottom axis, would be proportionate to the corresponding, relative area under curve, above that range of possible values.

For example, suppose there are two cultural groups for whom there really is ‘no difference’ between the intuitions of those two groups regarding some scenario (i.e., the null is true). Then what do we expect to result if, in an experiment, we sample opinions from members of those two groups? Most likely, the sampled difference of opinions between the groups (the ‘observed effect’) would be zero or relatively small—falling in the large, central area (in
white) under the curve in Figure 2. The large relative size of this white area suggests that, correspondingly, a ‘relatively small effect’ is the most likely observed outcome, again if the null were true.

On the other hand, a given sample could exhibit, by random fluke, an apparently large effect—so large that in the figure, it would be depicted in one of the remote (shaded) ‘tail’ areas. These tail areas are relatively small, suggesting that if the null were true, results that fall there are unlikely and unexpected. If such results occur there on this occasion, we are inclined to question the veracity of the ‘no effect’ hypothesis, itself. Therefore, when an effect is large enough to fall in an ‘unexpected’ outer region of the figure, authors may report that a ‘significant’ difference (from the null expectation) has been found.

This approach is many decades old and very widespread, but is also widely misinterpreted. It is often conjoined with a concept called p-values, which are cited as a kind of standard for claiming significance of results. Significance is commonly claimed when the p-value ≤ 0.05, though some accept larger, ‘marginal’ p-values, such as 0.084 (Swain et al, 2008). A clear example where p-values are misinterpreted appears in Bengson et al (2009), where he mistakenly says ‘a p-value of … 0.001 [i.e., near the small tip of a tail region in Figure 2] ...means … a 99.9% chance [i.e., 1–0.001] that the [finding about the population] is genuine.’

The p-value is the conditional probability labelled (a) in Figure 3: It is the probability of obtaining such a sample result as we did, presupposing that the null hypothesis, as happened to be postulated, is really true. (Recall that the null hypothesis could have been formulated differently.) At best, a small p-value (ideally, much below the conventional 0.05 cut-off) tells us that a particular sample’s outcome is surprising, if the null is really true—as, for example, if my samples show a large difference between cultures’ views, although in reality there is no difference between these populations’ views. This would be a surprising result; and the assigned p-value is likely small.

However, (a) is not (as Bengson suggests) a direct measure of evidence for (or against) the null hypothesis. A truer measure of evidence is expression (b) in the figure: (b) gives the probability that the null hypothesis (e.g., of no real difference between populations) is true, given that in fact we obtain a sample result exactly as empirically occurred. (b) and (a) are not identical; in fact, (b) is not even, strictly speaking, a probability statement. At the time of the experiment, the null hypothesis is either factually true, or not; the null’s truth value is not subject to probability. (b) is more like a reliability check for the test method: Of many times such methods have been employed, and the test results have been similar to what we obtained, in what share of such cases has the null actually been true? Empirical studies suggest that the p-value method is a poor predictor of the latter proportion (Goodman, 2010).
Figure 3. The p-Value versus ‘Evidence in Favor of the Null Hypothesis’

This is the “p-value”

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{a)} & \quad \text{Prob. ([The sample data have the obtained distribution] assuming that [the null-hypothesis-model is really true])} \\
\ne & \ne \\
\text{b)} & \quad \text{Prob. ([the null-hypothesis-model is really true] given the empirical fact that [The sample data have the obtained distribution])}
\end{align*}
\]

This addresses ‘the evidence in favor of the null hypothesis’ provided by the data.

But even if we use a p-value to conclude that the population exhibits a real effect, many reviewers and publishers now demand also a contextually meaningful, independent measure of effect size (Ellis, 2010). The apparent difference from the null may be inconsequential, in practice. Having found some difference between culture-groups’ perceptions, what supports a claim that this is a non-trivial difference? Re-citing the p-value does not answer this question. A fine, recent example for not using p-values just mechanically is found in Feltz and Zarpentine (2010, footnote 20): Although nominally \( p < 0.05 \) for a certain finding, they advise caution due to (a) confounding factors they identified, and (b) the increased risk of false positives when you do multiple testing (since each test adds more chance for error). Similarly, Schaffer and Knobe (2010) hedge their strict reliance on p-values—being cautious when they ‘just squeak past the conventional threshold of statistical significance.’

Methodological Issue 5: Ensuring Validity and Reliability of Test Instrument

For a test to be informative, it should measure what it purports to measure, and do so consistently (i.e., be valid and reliable). Cullen’s paper, cited earlier, provides a thorough treatment of ways in which experimental philosophers’ survey instruments have often not met this standard. For example, errors may arise from inattentiveness to Grice’s (1975) conversational maxims, such as to make conversational contributions (including survey prompts) as informative as required, without superfluous or ambiguous additions. Responses which experimentalists interpret as subjects’ varying their intuitions based on ‘irrelevant factors’ may really reflect the subjects’ trying gamely to meaningfully interpret all the conversational elements included in the survey prompts.
Consider this example from Weinberg et al.’s cancer conspiracy case (2001): Its long and complex text prompt (in one paragraph) includes at least these components: Three statements of logically relevant premises; then three non-sequiturs (about what might have happened but didn’t, and who didn’t know); followed by a conclusion. Subjects’ ambiguous responses may better reflect how they tried to parse this non-Grice-sensitive paragraph, than their specifically logical intuitions.

Being aware of such communications concerns is just a start. To ensure one’s survey questions and responses are interpreted as intended, one should try them out first by designing and running pilot studies. In the literature, Buckwalter’s paper (2010) is a rare exception in suggesting that a preliminary study was conducted. Included in Cullen’s critique (2010) are a number of post-hoc experiments that raise questions for experimental philosophers’ surveys. He shows, for example, how responses to one of Weinberg et al.’s vignettes would vary if responses were accepted using a 5-point scale, from least to most agreement as to whether someone ‘knew’ something, as opposed to using a forced ‘yes/no’ choice. Ideally, an experimenter would have tried this check in advance, on his/her own, to ensure the impact of the question-form on the answer would not remain an unknown and possibly confounding factor.

Are ‘Experiments’ the Central Issue?

Experimental philosophy adds something new to philosophy. But is its contribution necessarily, or only, about experiments?

Why Necessarily Experiments

Experiments are not new to philosophers with a bent towards modeling and understanding human perceptions, at least regarding risk and decision making, or in areas like philosophy of biology. For example, what Swain et al (2008) identified as ‘ordering’ effects (that responses to prompts may be influenced by their presentation sequence) was foreshadowed by earlier work on ‘framing effects’ (that responses to risk cues may vary with presentation contexts) (Fagley & Miller, 1987; Tversky & Kahneman, 1981). Experiments for these other domains have generally been conducted by psychologists, economists, and others, but interested philosophers have closely followed these projects; compare Gardenfors and Nils-Eric’s compendium (1988).

But might experimental philosophers be taking the expression ‘thought experiments’ too literally? They object to arguments that seem to hinge on statements like (for one example) ‘Almost everyone will accept [thus-and-so]’ (DeRose, 2005). If indeed an argument stands on claims about near-universal beliefs, then an empirical check of those claims is reasonable.

Yet what we call thought experiments are sometimes just exercises for ‘drawing out a contradiction in a theory, thereby refuting it,’ as Brown (1996) and recently, Ichikawa (2011), point out. Here, the better analogy may not be a
literal experiment, but instead a step in a mathematics or geometry demonstration, following what Polya (1968) describes as the ‘logic of plausible reasoning’. Compare Socrates, in Plato’s Meno (1961), where he demonstrates to a slave boy an error in the boy’s original understanding of triangles. At each step, Socrates invites the boy to reflect with him whether a certain observation or claim is reasonable; Socrates invites his discussant into a shared conceptual context, to assess the appropriateness of each step. Whether a sample of students outside this shared context of reasoning agrees with the boy’s ‘intuitions’ is not clearly relevant.

In like manner, consider the Gettier cases for epistemology, frequently cited by both traditional and experimental philosophers (Greco, 2007; Beebe, 2010). Suppose a person has a factually true belief and good (by usual standards) evidence, but, by some twist, the evidence is true only accidently. The usual case is presented with this logical structure:

(1) If A’s attributes with respect to ‘knowing’ what is in fact the true nationality of B’s car satisfy the true definition for knowledge, then A knows the nationality of B’s car.
(2) But (I, pondering this odd combination of facts and A’s attributes, sense that) under this unusual scenario, A does not ‘know’ the nationality of B’s car.
(3) Therefore (I conclude by Modus Tollens), A’s attributes etc. do not satisfy the true definition for knowledge.

This argument structure collapses for a discussant who disagrees on premise (2); just as Socrates’ triangle demonstrations might fail if encountering a discussant with non-Euclidian intuitions. This dependence on a particular sample evaporates if the topic is specifically Euclidian triangles.

For the Gettier case, the argument has apparent force when the person writing premises (1) and (2) means the same thing when she writes ‘knows’ each time. Grice (1969) suggests that meaning reflects the intention of the speaker. The speaker in (1) searches for a ‘timeless meaning’ of the word ‘knows’, but in (2) intends to somehow discredit ‘accidental knowledge.’ It is beyond the scope of this paper to determine whether ‘knows’ should mean just one thing, or whether the above syllogism captures that meaning. The point is that asking how many people would support statement (2) if presented out of context does not exhaust the philosophical interest in the original thought argument.

Why Only (Quantitative) Experiments?

On the other hand, if the real issue is getting empirical data, why restrict, arbitrarily, the means of getting it? Experimental philosophers have largely associated ‘experiments’ with techniques to obtain quantitative data, such as obtained from fixed-answer surveys. Some have now realized that these instruments can be too restrictive for obtaining all relevant information (Nahmias et al, 2004). More qualitative methods of analysis, which directly
What if Plato Took Surveys?: Thoughts about Philosophy Experiments

engage participants in discussions and focus groups, are used in the social sciences. These also could be called experiments in the general sense of seeking to obtain information by an empirical discovery process. Though more systematically documenting and analyzing responses, this approach looks more like familiar dialogue methods favoured by x-Phi opponents like Kauppinen (2007).

Qualitative methods can have their own issues. For example, how can one validly compare and integrate one’s qualitative findings with more quantitative measures, where both are available (Risjord et al., 2001). Yet these methods offer another route, besides quantitative experiments, for accessing empirical data, where needed for sound arguments.

Discussion/Conclusion

In summary, experimental philosophers are right to ask for empirical evidence where arguments depend on empirical claims, though not every argument or thought experiment is necessarily this type. Experimental philosophers usefully demonstrate how experiments may help to obtain empirical evidence, and show potential impacts of this on traditional philosophy.

Where quantitative experiments are applicable, this paper alerts to some methodological issues that experimenters—not just in philosophy—should address, in both the planning and reporting of their studies, to enhance their results’ credibility: (a) Are the samples sufficiently representative? (b) Are the test and null hypothesis employed appropriate for the types of claims intended? (c) Have potential confounding factors been considered? (d) How will significance of results, and meaningfulness of effect size, be determined? (e) Have the test instrument’s validity and reliability been established?

Note that some appeals to intuition or thought experiments are inevitable in arguments. It is impossible to recursively field-test every presumed fact that serves as an assumption for testing other facts. At some point, you just have to make your case, for example, as to why a sample recruited from your campus is sufficiently representative. Nonetheless, it is always open to another experimenter to question and field-test any such assumptions, and experimental philosophers are commended for attempting this.

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This paper continues and builds upon ongoing research and ideas established in a series of earlier works, the most recent titled *Ontology that Matters: Binding relations* (2011). The aim of this paper is to establish the conceptual basis of an organising principle of conscious development employing a process philosophy. Life evidently organises itself and if this were not true we would not be here. So how does it do so? Thomas Aquinas, in further developing Aristotle’s matter/form theory, which subsequently became for Aquinas a moderate dualism, claimed that the form, or soul, of a living thing is, as for Aristotle, the ultimate ‘life principle within the living thing’ (Reichmann 1985:238). Similarly, I contend that life does follow an organising principle however one based on three aspects of being whereby consciousness is considered primary and fundamental in nature. This project follows the task set by many recent thinkers in terms of understanding replication, self-organisation and consciousness.\(^1\) I draw from David Bohm’s interpretation of quantum theory which encompasses in its scope a new theory about the nature of mind and matter. Bohm presented a holistic view of two interwoven orders of existence defined as the Explicate material world and the Implicate (quantum) enfolded world from which the former materialises.

The focus of this paper is to provide the groundwork and establish by way of inference to best explanation an adapted and adjunct conceptual schema in the form of a Triple-Aspect-Theory (TAT) of Being as a grounding ontology. Consistent with Bohm’s idea that matter at a fundamental level consists of a kind of protointelligence, the TAT facilitates a perspective based on aspect conditions of the human organism intended to furnish an explanation of the constitutive mechanism (TAT) inherent in the evolving human being. The relationship between organisms and environment is largely responsive\(^2\) particularly through the interaction of energetic processes whereby Nature’s information coheres with protointelligence as mediated in the elements. The TAT, it is argued, operates as an organising principle by which it is further


\(^2\)Typically described in terms of feed-forward/feedback systems and even DNA operates through circular feedback.
suggested evolution inherently proceeds and maintains itself in an interactive relation between the Implicate and Explicate orders. The accumulated effect of natural selection consists largely as adaptations, but without an organising principle it simply could not occur.

Drawing on Bohm’s explanation of the interactive orders of existence an argument is made suggesting that the two orders, the Implicate and Explicate, and by extension, consciousness and cognitive processes, are only partially distinct overlapping in terms of the explicate (or expressed) aspects of consciousness. A deficiency exists with the current metaphors describing human form (i.e. body and mind) and it is argued a broader perspective is achieved by employing the integrative and holistic terms of the TAT. At a very fundamental level ‘consciousness’ is regarded as amorphous and indistinguishable in the quantum vacuum. When enacted dynamically consciousness has the capacity to transform into the more expressed aspects as witnessed in living organisms with specific reference to human experience and form here conceptually defined in terms of the TAT. The preliminary structural outline: Primary Consciousness - three orders (levels) of manifestation; Primary Body-of-Experience - the experiencing body having its own three discernible yet interwoven aspects; and Primary Intellect-Reflective - cognitive processes with a minimum of three crucial interwoven first-order capacities: ‘memory’, ‘perception’, and ‘intelligence’. From these fundamental capacities arguably emerge the other recognizable cognitive faculties: reasoning, understanding, and imagination, etc. The term ‘primary’ is employed to indicate an overarching concept of engaged process for each of the three constitutive interwoven aspects of the Triple-Aspect-Theory.

Consciousness as it is formed in the TAT is taken primarily as an activity, for though we use the singular term for this natural kind of phenomenon, consciousness indeed displays distinct aspects e.g. particular (qualia) and universal (Nature). Putatively qualia stand as the identifying features of consciousness and the general approach to examining consciousness is to assume, based on a reductive analysis, it arises from some substratum whether neurological or architectural, etc.; and this approach, as recent history (e.g. identity theories) has shown, arguably is impoverished. Consciousness as a phenomenon manifests with at least three orders (or levels) of actualisation. In brief, the manner and uniqueness of my sensory conscious experiences, my qualia, are conditional upon my Body-of-Experience - inclusive of my physical experiencing body coupled with the body of my life-long accumulated phenomenally embodied experiences wherein I am engaged in life - and inclusive of my Intellect-Reflective constitution of engagement. This paper’s argument supports the concept that consciousness has a neutral and universal aspect. This analysis has both metaphysical and epistemological implications.

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1 cf. Sartre, J.P. in *Being and Nothingness*, (1943) provides a phenomenological perspective of consciousness as nothingness – indeed a kind of no-thing-ness (amorphous though active) from which freedom spontaneously emerges. Similarly see also Heidegger’s “moment-of-vision” in *Being and Time* (1962).
A Process Philosophy

Philosophy has a long history of thinkers that fall under the classification of process philosophy dating back to Heraclitus. There are several ways to understand ‘process philosophy’ and to encapsulate its central idea, the ‘philosophy of process’ resonates most strongly with the work of Alfred North Whitehead. Nicholas Rescher (2002) summarises its basic propositions:

1. That time and change are among the principal categories of metaphysical understanding;
2. That process is a principal category of ontological description;
3. That process is more fundamental, or … not less fundamental than things for the purposes of ontological theory;
4. That several if not all of the major elements of the ontological repertoire (God, nature-as-a whole, persons, material substances) are best understood in process linked terms; and
5. That contingency, emergence, novelty, and creativity are among the fundamental categories of metaphysical understanding (2002:5).

In order to examine and make sense of reality these summary propositions of process philosophy articulate a uniform methodological framework even if not a complete theory. The kind of process philosophy conceptually engaged and partially developed in this paper suggests there are at least four further integral concepts required to provide the necessary explanatory power sought as a practical philosophical model/system; that of ‘conservation’, ‘extraction’, ‘transformation’ and of ‘binding-relations’ - all essential for making sense of the composition of reality

Bohm’s Implicate and Explicate Orders

David Bohm’s account of the Implicate and Explicate Orders parallels the quantum world and classical world of physics, respectively. Bohm’s theory suggests that the whole Universe and everything in it enfolds or implicates everything else, which he likens to a giant flowing hologram or ‘holomovement’. Underlying the apparently chaotic realm of physical appearances - the explicate world - there is a within, an inner or hidden implicate order. Important to note that the Implicate Order or quantum vacuum (within) exists all around us at every point in space and that means at every point of inhabited space occupied by phenomena, like you and me, there is a within or quantum vacuum. Imagine stretching your arm out away from your body into the enveloping space around you. At every spatial point along your arm co-exits the quantum vacuum in real space-time though within each point.

Bohm believed that total order is contained within this holomovement, in some implicit sense; analogously to a hologram film cut into pieces each retaining the original object. From Bohm’s perspective, order, is contained in

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1 see Naimo 2011
each region of space and time. Meaning that total order is contained within this holomovement (form) in such a manner that “…under typical conditions of ordinary experience, there is a great deal of relative independence of things” (Bohm, 1990:273). As Bohm describes there is an ‘enfoldment relationship’ between the Implicate Order and Explicate Order (between the quantum and classical worlds) which is not passive instead having an ‘active aspect’ essential to the very nature of how and what each thing is. We are not separated by the quantum vacuum since it forms part of our being and is integral to nature. Each thing is essentially ‘interdependently related to the whole’, and therefore, to everything else (Bohm, 1990:273).

The implicate order is not static, that is the quantum realm is primarily dynamic in nature, in “a constant process of change and development” to which its most general form is the holomovement (1990:273). Consequently all phenomena arising in the unfolded, explicate order emerge from the holomovement in which “they are enfolded as potentialities and ultimately they fall back into it” (Bohm, 1990:273). The explicate order drawn from the holography perspective is a projection from higher dimensional levels of reality, i.e. from the inner order of the quantum realm to the external or classical order of the macro physical world. Individual entities composing the explicate order are generated and sustained by an ongoing process of ‘enfoldment’ and ‘unfoldment’, whereby subatomic particles are said to be constantly dissolving into the implicate order and then ‘re-crystallizing’ providing stability. Bohm explains that the explicate order dominates ordinary experience as well as classical physics, thus it appears to stand by itself. The explicate order cannot be fully understood when abstracted from its ground in the primary reality of the implicate order (i.e. the quantum world) (Bohm, 1990).

Subatomic particles such as electrons Bohm describes as ‘highly complex dynamic entities’ not just simple, structure-less particles, whereas in the Copenhagen interpretation, the motion of particles is fundamentally ambiguous. Bohm’s view is the antithesis of the Copenhagen interpretation. Arguably Bohm developed a more coherent interpretation according to which particles follow a precise path - one which is determined both by conventional physical forces and a more subtle force which he called the quantum potential. The quantum potential guides the motion of particles by providing “active information” with respect to the whole environment. The quantum potential pervades all space and provides direct connections between quantum systems linked by ‘nonlocality’, that is the ability for distant parts of the environment to affect the motion of the particle in a significant way. The word ‘in-form’ (‘active information’) is taken literally, i.e. ‘to put into’ (Bohm, 1990:278). The electron moves under its own energy. The quantum potential puts form into the electron’s motion and the form of the electron’s motion is related to the form of the wave from which the quantum potential is derived (1990:278).

For Bohm the mind is described as a:
...constant flow of evanescent thoughts, feelings, desires, and impulses, which flow in and out of each other, and which, in a certain sense, enfold each other (as, for example, we may say that one thought is implicit in another, noting that this word literally means ‘enfolded’). Or to put it differently, the general implicate process of ordering is common both to mind and to matter” (Bohm, 1990:273).

In the *The Phenomenon of Man* (1959) Teilhard de Chardin provides insight expressed through a similar triadic relation of processes.

“Taken at its lowest point, primitive matter is something more than the particulate swarming so marvelously analysed by modern physics. Beneath this mechanical layer we must think of the ‘biological’ layer that is attenuated to the uttermost, but yet is absolutely necessary to explain the cosmos in succeeding ages. The *within, consciousness, and then spontaneity* – are three expressions of the same thing” (Chardin, 1959:62).

In a footnote Chardin qualifies the use of the term consciousness: “Here, and throughout this book, the term ‘consciousness’ is taken in its widest sense to indicate every kind of psychism, from the most rudimentary forms of interior perception imaginable to the human phenomenon of reflective thought” (Chardin, 1959:62). Chardin describes two energies, that of mind and that of matter as spreading respectively “through the two layers of the world (the *within* and the *without*) have, taken as a whole, much the same demeanour. They are constantly associated and in some way pass into each other. But it seems impossible to establish a simple correspondence between their curves” (1959:69-70). Now consider an apt interpretation of the account typically rendered in Big Bang cosmology. The universe began from a *within* and spread as the consequence of a singularity (big bang) to a *without* producing simultaneously spacetime as the expansion of the universe of matter. Further to this construal there is no doubt a conceptual correlation evident between the ideas of De Chardin’s *within* and Bohm’s implicate order and De Chardin’s *without* and Bohm’s explicate order.

From this elaboration it is evident that a common theme emerges in situating the parameters of investigation between the quantum and classical realms since indeed in reality they coexist. To make the connection and to spell out the Triple-Aspect-Theory and its significance attention turns to one constituent cognitive faculty, memory, as it most certainly plays a pivotal role in conscious life. I am using the term memory in its broadest sense. Memory is an important aspect of personal identity and plays an important role in the acquisition of skills and knowledge. That we remember past experiences and events *not now occurring* indicates that memory differs from perception. Perception nonetheless requires the activity of memory and understanding in order to make sense of what one perceives. The concept of memory however is
quite problematic in that as a term it is assigned to a variety of phenomena and internal processes in that there seems to be more than one type of memory. Fundamentally, however, memory is a reflective process. From a neurological perspective the brain areas implicated are the ‘prefrontal cortex’ (higher-order areas), ‘the hippocampus’ (left language; right spatial), the ‘extra-pyramidal motor system’ and ‘cerebellum’, the ‘amygdala’ (processing emotions) and the ‘association areas of the neocortex’ (Sutton 2010). This construal is by no means exhaustive I dare say since it considers only the neurological perspective of the concept of memory which simply may be incomplete.

Human memory putatively understood is divided into two categories - functional and temporal. Functional memory is described as explicit memory (declarative, includes semantic and episodic aspects) and implicit memory (non-declarative includes non-verbal motor skills). Temporal memory has three aspects working memory (immediate involvement); Short-term memory (important aspect required for learning) and; Long-term memory (most resilient over one’s life time though can be modified by experience) (Sutton, J. 2010). Memory historically has been characterised as representing the mental or ideational side of our being such that when things come to mind, we recall that remembered, but we reasonably assume that memory has a physical underlying structure. Part of this account rests on the idea that memory is stored, coded such to be retrieved however widely distributed throughout the brain. Though in other ways we can talk about muscle memory, threshold memory, and behavioural memory; an example is one’s ability to ride a bike and another to play the piano executing key strokes without watching which keys one is depressing (which also involves spatial memory). Add to this the sense that one’s abilities are also dispositional, genetically coded, whilst recognising that behaviour is also learned yet without memory, in all its aspects or types, how could we learn, notwithstanding any organism having the capacity to act instinctively?

In addition, it is also important to consider that the concept of mind (putatively, the sum of all cognitive functions) is expressed metaphorically. Bruno Snell in The Discovery of the Mind (1982) observes that it is through the usage of metaphor that provides a means to even speak about the mind. We cannot speak about the mind without reference to metaphors which then consequently effect all other expressions we employ to outline the situation (Snell, 1982:vi). Metaphors such as ‘mind’ and ‘consciousness’, two very ambiguous concepts, interwoven no less with various cognitive ascribed notions involving cerebral faculties are themselves each difficult to define or indeed to separate into distinct or independent faculties. It is little wonder that the question concerning their substrate remains at issue.

The central thesis of the Triple-Aspect-Theory argues that the conscious human being, its body, replete with its interactive systems, is a sensory responsive, enactive process (senses and responds) embedded in the physical or expressed structure whereby the different integrated systems (i.e. Digestive and Excretory systems; Respiratory and Circulatory systems; Skeletal, Nervous and Endocrine systems; etc.) supervene upon a basic or lower order (level) of
intelligence (i.e. protointelligence) as an inherent capacity. Intelligence as a capacity arguably is a necessary condition for having basic instincts for even sensory recognition. Further, that the processes involved in the cognitive (mental/mind) are embodied as such expressing the psychophysical nature of the attendant faculties extending to the higher order capacities. I am using the concept of ‘order’ in the sense of ‘levels’ to capture stages of ‘intrinsic change’ resulting in the manifestation of attendant psychophysical capacities within the human organism (the interdependent systems and layers throughout). The contention is that underlying these two primary aspects is the base medium, which is indeed primary consciousness or first order consciousness. A useful metaphor to think about this idea is a ‘coin’ having two sides: heads and tails. The two sides project the face of each of the adjoining two sides, both sides however are of the ‘one coin’ which the two sides project. The two sides project but without the third grounding base which is the coin itself the sides would disappear. The coin metaphor though useful I admit is static and therefore an incomplete descriptor since consciousness (in the analogy: the coin body) is rather dynamic possessing different aspects manifested in its various activities (i.e. ‘awareness’, ‘intuition’, ‘understanding’, ‘insight’, etc.).

One overarching aspect of the TAT is named Body-of-Experience. Typically the human body is described as a multicellular organism. Cells we observe communicate with each other and the external world through a myriad of receptors located on its membrane. Specific cellular functions are determined by both the expression of these receptors and by the way they organise on the biological membrane in space-time. Significantly, however, little is currently known about this organisational process. To expand on this description through the combined aspects in process, Body-of-Experience captures not only the experiencing capacities that the body manifests through its integrated systems but also it operates as a metaphor whereby it captures much more that is indeed essential if the TAT is to serve as an investigative framework. In more concrete terms the human body is at once an experiencing organism, it lives through experiences, and in a way, life, is the expression, (Bohm’s explicative order) of living experience.

The concept of ‘experience’ is itself a complex notion explained in various ways but my focus here is broadly defined as the activity of living engagement, in Heidegger’s sense of ‘Being-in-the-world’ (In-der-Welt-sein) (1962:138-39). Heidegger conceptually extends upon Edmund Husserl’s articulation of the unfolding of ‘inner time’ (i.e. ‘protention’, ‘retention’) developing instead an understanding of “human beings as a ‘nexus’ of lived experience ... he recognises the priority of the ‘lived’ world [Lebenswelt] ... its three temporal dimensions ... ecstasies, in which we, as temporal beings, exist all at once” (Ward, 2008:100). “Being is essentially temporal”, in that “Being is always understood in terms of time explained by its temporal structure” (Blattner, 2006:14). As such that the human body experiences is to say that it is engaged in the process of life, that it absorbs or imbibes those experiences of sensory and intellectual engagement in a myriad of ways. For example, describing the
more mechanical functions such as eating and drinking - digesting - the body extracts necessary nutrients from what we eat and drink which includes respiration at a cellular level.

Body-of-Experience refers more broadly to the embodiment of the history of those lived experiences (cf. Heidegger’s *facticity*) inclusively and as such it is a containment-field, an embodiment of experiences (memories, emotions, behavioural patterns and predisposed conditions, etc.). This description moves us beyond the integument, casing notion of embodiment. Furthermore the concept of Body-of-Experience as an integrated aspect of TAT captures the environmental elements that integrally contribute to the organism’s constitution as a total entity. The human being constitutionally necessarily combines the genetic compositional material, the phenotype architecture, and importantly the culturally imbibed influencing material\(^1\).

Building on this account to further develop the coexisting primary aspect, Intellect-Reflective, of the TAT, by way of a working model of the cognitive system drawn from Maturana, H.R. and Varela, F.J. (1980) based on the notion of autopoiesis as a principle of self-organisation. Even as far back as Aristotle, in *The Nicomachean Ethics* Book VI, he first described the ‘Intelect’, as having at least two fundamental aspects to its process – the ‘contemplative’ and the ‘calculative’ (Aristotle, 1980). Similarly Intellect-Reflective is a compound or unifying concept for the mind and its associated faculties. Distinctively, the faculties typically, though arguably errantly, demarcated as cerebral individuated concepts such as ‘reason’, ‘understanding’, and ‘imagination’, are faculties demonstrably overlapping and integrated, that are perhaps best referred to as second-order processes because they are not independent faculties. Conceptually then, the three most fundamental capacities are ‘memory’, ‘perception’ and ‘intellect’ which it must be observed, are also interdependent. Without these fundamental capacities (‘memory’, ‘perception’ and ‘intellect’) the ensuing second-order faculties of *reason*, *understanding* and *imagination* would be rendered devoid of ideational substance. Since what stands for the second-order faculty of *reason* emerges from the activity of engaging the combined capacities of ‘memory’, ‘intellect’, and ‘perception’.

Again what stands for the second-order faculty of *understanding* is the activity of engaging the combined capacities of ‘memory’, ‘perception’ and ‘intellect’. Furthermore what also stands for second-order faculty of *imagination* is the activity engaging the combined capacities of ‘memory’, ‘intellect’ and ‘perception’. This composition is conceptual providing the basis for advancing the primary co-conditions required to establish the appropriate grounding for the biophysical organising principle.

\(^1\)Material in the multiple senses of consumables: food and beverage and the environment relative to one’s compositional Space-Time-Event-Motion (STEM) material and ‘place’ (cf. Heidegger’s *Historicity*) that one develops within which sensibly includes the environmental conditions.
Having now outlined this aspect of the TAT - Intellect-Reflective – our attention shifts to examining the somewhat commensurate concept of autopoiesis which is said to gravitate around a matrix of concepts of ‘unity’, ‘organisation’ and ‘structure’. The most salient cognitive operation as observers, according to Maturana and Varela is the operation of ‘distinction’. The assumption that a living system can be accounted for by enumerating its properties they say is flawed because it can only be understood as a unity. The authors’ explanation suggests that what we encounter in the world is autonomous entities of immense diversity endowed with a capacity to reproduce. How do we qualify what is living and is common to all living systems? If not the idea of a vital force, or Aquinas’ soul, then, we should be looking for an organising principle arguably along the lines of the TAT.

Maturana and Varela’s approach, however, it should be noted is entirely mechanistic and human beings are construed as closed dynamic cognitive systems. Though cognitive systems have in the past been characterised as closed systems, Steven Rose (1997) among many thinkers rightly argues this view is incorrect and that living organisms are indeed open systems that share a reciprocal relationship with the environment. Rose argues that physiological mechanisms are situated within the homeostatic metaphor such that the ‘internal environment’ of multicellular organisms describes their tendency to function to regulate this environment in terms of temperature, acidity, ionic composition, etc. This tendency is functionally described as one where the organism works to a fixed point analogous to how a central heating system’s thermostat regulates the temperature in a room. Organisms, like ecosystems, as Rose describes, throughout their developmental lifelines are in deed subject to change so the set points of the homeostatic model are not themselves constant. Organisms, on this account, are active players in their own fate and to understand ‘lifelines’ Rose believes requires a new metaphor to replace homeostasis with a much richer concept he calls Homeodynamics (Rose, 1997:17). A unity in this sense consistently forms part of the interactive environment and never just an abstraction. Rose observes that evolution indicates that the internal environment of living organisms develops symmetrically with the external environment.

Regarding the human species then as self-organising systems presupposes that there is an intrinsic organising principle that underlies the development of the organism. Consider the Autonomic Nervous System (ANS) which functions without conscious, voluntary control. The ANS has two main divisions: the sympathetic and the parasympathetic. Upon receiving information about the body’s internal and external environment the autonomic nervous system “responds by stimulating body processes, usually through the sympathetic division, or inhibiting them, usually through the parasympathetic division” noting the two subdivisions can function in opposite activities (Low, P. 2006). The ANS influences the activity of most tissues and organ systems in the body. As such, the ANS makes a significant contribution to homeodynamics. Our awareness however is characterised as a conscious
aspect, yet the unconscious aspect of the ANS is a vital aspect of the body’s animated ongoing life sustaining process. The unconscious arguably is still an aspect of conscious activity, pointing to a second order of manifestation. It is unconscious in that it is not in the order of consciousness awareness though conscious through the attunement of regulatory functioning. As such conscious awareness, it is argued, is indeed a third order of manifestation. This third order of conscious awareness, though not exclusively as earlier suggested due to overlapping cerebral processes, manifests concurrently in the overarching aspects I refer to as Intellect-Reflective and Primary Consciousness within Body-of-Experience. In other words a self-organising system self-organises under the influence of an inherent organising principle i.e. TAT.

Ordinarily construed, all species of living organisms have at least two forms of intelligence operating through reciprocal existence. That is, firstly, to recognise and make use for its own maintenance from the environment i.e. consumables, and secondly, in the act of perception identifies difference (very crucial for development, recognition of ‘others’). In the case of humans that we are social creatures, reminding ourselves of Wittgenstein’s ‘no private language’ idea, we extend intellectually beyond the animal kingdom. Organisms that cannot reciprocate with their environment will perish rapidly. Organisms that perish revert to that upon which they are dependent (i.e. the environment). Underlying the process there is a level of reciprocal intelligence and this is the primary level of consciousness.

Concluding remarks, life identifies life - consciousness recognises consciousness. Consciousness at this level is primary - it is more than an emergent property of a single entity. Primary consciousness I am claiming parallels Bohm’s quantum potential that acts to put form into the system; the form is itself the Body-of-Experience and the directive capacity of the system is its Intellect-Reflective in combination a triple-aspect constitution. Consciousness, therefore, cannot be particular and so there must be a universal aspect that is perhaps neutral and only becomes particularised when in engaged or activated form emerging from the Implicate Order. Consciousness in this sense underlies the evolutionary activity of the extended Universe as I hope the argument advanced demonstrates. Reiterating that for Bohm the quantum potential acts to put ‘form’ into the motion of particles like electrons and the form of its motion is related to the form of the wave, equally valid for biological systems like human beings.

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Conceptualising the Structure of the Biophysical Organising Principle: Triple-Aspect-Theory of Being


Integral to Isaac Newton’s physics is, “[God] endures always and is present everywhere, and by existing always and everywhere he constitutes duration and space.”¹ Thus,

Absolute space, of its own nature without reference to anything external, always remains homogeneous and immovable. Relative space is any movable measure or dimension of this absolute space; such a measure or dimension is determined by our senses from the situation of the space with respect to bodies.²

Concerning “bodies,” including that of the scientific observer,

That all bodies are impenetrable, we gather not from reason, but from sensation. The bodies which we handle we find impenetrable, and thence, conclude impenetrability to be an universal property of all bodies whatsoever.³

Dismissing Newton’s universal God, Werner Heisenberg substitutes “our senses from the situation of the space with respect to bodies.” Doing this supposes, “solipsism, when its implications are followed out strictly, coincides with pure realism. The self of solipsism shrinks to a point without extension, and there remains the reality co-ordinated with it.”⁴ Apropos, “it is not possible to decide, other than arbitrarily, what objects are to be considered as part of the observed system and what as part of the observer’s apparatus.”⁵ In order to coordinate otherwise disparate individual subjective observations, probability needs substitute for necessity.

Probabilistic calculation occurs within the confines of an axiom system. Hereby, aberrant observations are inexplicable because not constituent of

²Ibid. 408-9.
³Ibid. 399.
enumerated axiomatic sequences of enumerated axiomatic elements. Constituting explanation within an axiom system is location of an enumerated axiomatic element within an enumerated axiomatic sequence. Observational variation within an axiom system is pragmatically simplified by calculation of a statistical mean.

Subsequent to Heisenberg’s Copenhagen variation of quantum theory, otherwise disparate observations are coordinated not only statistically, but substantively whereby “the entire process is quite continuous,” although unobserved.\(^1\) Introducing “an irreducible metaphysical element to all physical concepts,”\(^2\) substituting for the immaterialism of Heisenberg’s Nineteenth Century idealism,\(^3\) is the materialism of Auguste Comte’s Nineteenth Century positivism.

Hereby, “there is no real knowledge save that which rests on observed facts.”\(^4\) Rather than pursuing a compendium of these “observed facts,” to be pursued is, “the . . . scientific link by which all our varied observations of phenomena can be brought into one consistent whole.”\(^5\) This becomes ontologizing a statistical mean into a superstring, and statistical variation into quantum decoherence. Now, “the interaction between the observer and his apparatus is such that statistical fluctuations arising from the quantum nature of the interaction are negligible in comparison with experimental error.”\(^6\)

All being able to “be brought into one consistent whole,” then, at the quantum level of accuracy the entire universe (including, of course, all observers of it), must be regarded as forming a single indivisible unit with every object linked to its surroundings by indivisible and incompletely controllable quanta. If it were necessary to give all parts of the world a completely quantum-mechanical description, a person trying to apply quantum theory to the process of observation would be faced with an insoluble paradox. This would be so because he would then have to regard himself as something connected inseparably with the rest of the world. On the other hand, the very


\(^3\)Concerning, the difficulty of separating the subject and objective aspects of the world. Many of the abstractions that are characteristic of modern theoretical physics are to be found discussed in the philosophy of past centuries. At that time these abstractions could be disregarded as mere mental exercises by those scientists whose only concern was with reality, but today we are compelled by the refinements of experimental art to consider them seriously. Heisenberg 65.


idea of making an observation implies that what is observed is totally distinct from the person observing it.\footnote{Ibid. 584-585.}

Assuming an observer is “something connected inseparably with the rest of the world,” the observer disappears. Observation being a distinguishing characteristic of science, then science disappears. Physics being constituent of science, then physics disappears. Quantum theory being constituent of physics, then quantum theory disappears. Thus, a positivistic quantum theory is self-contradictory.

Considering, “the very idea of making an observation implies that what is observed is totally distinct from the person observing it,” to bring quantum theory into consistency, return need be made to Heisenberg’s idealism. Escape from disappearance of the observer into a coherent physical world requires a metaphysical world. Preservation of the scientific observer requires this metaphysical world be inhabited by a metaphysical mind. And, preservation of the inter-subjective verification also constituent of science, requires this metaphysical world be inhabited by many metaphysical minds.

**NECESSITY.** Science incorporates repeatable observation, when repeatable observations are necessarily discontinuous. Repeatable observations are not identical without being the same observation. Being unitary, the same observation cannot be a repeatable observation.

Because so, to what does repeatable observation come? In answer, it is related observation. Related observation requiring relation, to what does relation come? In answer, relation is an otherwise discontinuously observable object which occurs continuously throughout a quantum observational gap.

This requires an at least one-dimensional extension of an observed object during quantum gaps in observation, which is to manifest the superstring. A superstring being unobservable, how is the character of the extended object known within the observational gaps? Assumed is although character cannot be precisely known, it can be probably known by statistical calculation.

Metastasis always being possible, however, how is it known observations from which probability is calculated are exhaustive of the possible observations of an object? After all, at the limit of a one-dimensional extension is an infinity of immediately contiguous points. Extension to any one of these points is no more necessary than extension to any other.

Excluding all points but what Newton might identify as “uniform motion in a right line,” this could be at a juncture of two equally offset points. Now progress “in a right line” is ambiguous, constituting a diagonal movement onto one or the other offset points. Additionally, being arbitrary, neither movement is necessary.

Progressing to one or another offset point, ambiguity recurs in a new form. Is “uniform motion in a right line,” continuation “in a right line” of the diagonal away from what initially would have been “uniform motion in a right line?” Or is it away from continuation “in a right line” of the diagonal, in a
diagonal returning towards what would initially be continuation “in a right line?”

Again, what constitutes “in a right line” is ambiguous. As ambiguous, extension to either point is no more necessary than extension to the other. Thus, Newton is mistaken in thinking motion in the physical world is necessary. Rather it is unnecessary, and being unnecessary, what constitutes motion in the physical world is probable. Being so, quantum theory is affirmed. Now God does play dice with the universe.

Probability being intrinsic to the geometry of the physical universe, ontologically suspect “forces impressed upon [Every body]” are redundant. However ambiguity at the limit of a one-dimensional extension of an object is resolved, ambiguity can recur at every limit of a one-dimensional extension. Being so, the path of any physical object within space is rendered uncertain.

**AXIOMATICS.** Resolution is an axiomatic identity, constrained by enumeration of the constituents of analysis and their sequential ordering. Composed is a system of limits, recursively determining elements, and iteratively determining sequencing of elements. As such, science is a creative act of discovery. Unpredictability is rendered predictable by fixing limits to possible occurrence of an element.

Any element occurring outside fixed limits constitutes a different element. Time is introduced to preserve a well-formed extension, providing a constantly altering variable rendering return to the same point impossible. Variation in extension being accepted, probability of extension from point to point is preserved by assuming teleological advancement, this in substitution for Newton’s “uniform motion in a right line.”

Utilizing the enumerative constraints of axiomatic identity, John von Neumann integrates quantum and classical theory.¹ This integration proceeds by identifying the integral intervening two consecutive observations as composing a Hilbert space. Such a space constitutes a rational number, both terminating and periodic.²

Concerning its termination, constituents of the space initiate at one limit, and terminate at the other limit. As concerns its periodicity, constituents of the space initiate as most like one limit, and smoothly transition to terminate as most like the other limit. When carried to infinity, as Bertrand Russell

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observes, “the space which consists in relations between perspectives can be rendered continuous,” integrating limits into a whole.¹

Accepting continuity of “the space which consists in relations between perspectives,” while explaining a “body” being, “compelled to change that state [‘uniform motion in a right line’] by forces impressed upon it,” without introducing “forces,” a limited number of contiguous points at the limit of a line need be substituted for Newton’s presupposition of only one contiguous point.² Now probable calculation replaces necessary calculation. Forces exist only as axiomatically limited possible sequential extension.

Creativity of the scientific enterprise is reinforced assuming an ultimate universal singularity at the limit of classical Newtonian space. All objects being fused into an indistinguishable whole, this object is distinguishable from that object only axiomatically. Functioning within an axiom system, when an axiom system is constituted by “Explicit enumeration,” then science is necessarily a creative enterprise. Being so, science presupposes a creative “axiomatizer.”

With this presupposition, quantum coherentism is abandoned. Assuming quantum coherentism, there is nothing but a whole. There being nothing but a whole, there are no parts. Location is a part of a whole. Therefore, there is no location. Movement is sequential location. Therefore, there is no movement. Quantum analysis is the probability of movement. Therefore, there is no quantum analysis. There being no quantum analysis, there is no quantum theory. There being no quantum theory, quantum theory is self-contradictory.

David Bohm resolves self-contradiction by introducing classical observation.³ Challenging doing so is classically observation itself is inconstant. Certainty is provided physics by controlled experiments. Controlled experiments constitute contained environments. Constituting contained environments, experiments are necessarily disjoint in the classical as well as in the quantum realm. Thus, quantum theory wholly supplants classical theory.

Doing so, the observer is indistinguishable within the universe. Indistinguishable within the universe, the observer is unidentifiable. Being unidentifiable, the observer disappears within the quantum universe. This when, “the very idea of making an observation implies that what is observed is totally distinct from the person observing it.”⁴ Now observation is impossible within physics, when observation distinguishes physics.⁵ Thus, physics is self-contradictory.

²Newton 13.
³“The paradox is avoided by taking note of the fact that all real observations are, in their last stages, classically describable.” Bohm 585.
⁴Ibid.
⁵What criteria should determine our
Resolution is sought by abandoning the universalism of quantum theory, asserting in its stead, “the concept ‘observation’ belongs, strictly speaking, to the class of ideas borrowed from the experiences of everyday life.” Affirmed in this respect is Albert Einstein’s commitment to classical theory. Like René Descartes, Einstein distinguishes between objective observed, and subjective observer. Like St. Augustine, Einstein distinguishes between objective universalism, and subjective particularism. Objective universalism is without space and time. Subjective particularism is with space and time.

Assuming objective universalism, however, there is no subjective observer. There being no subjective observer, there is neither space nor time. There is also no observation. Therefore, quantum theory cannot be proven by observation. If there is observation, then quantum theory is disproven.

PRAGMATICS. Self-contradictory in this way, quantum theory is best understood not as a universal theory, as which it is self-defeating, but heuristically as a conceptual scheme. Approached in this manner, the observer is no longer indistinguishable from the observed. Proceeding thus, the subjective observation characterizing the scientist, and the inter-subjective observation characterizing science, are preserved.

Subjective observation being preserved, “Which measurements on B and in what sequence they are undertaken, is left entirely to the arbitrary choice of the experimenter.” As so, science is axiomatic, a particular claim, not a universal claim. Constitutive of science is, “Explicit enumeration of the primitive terms [and] primitive propositions” composing an axiom system. This requires an explicit enumerator, who necessarily must be autonomous of the content of the axiom system explicitly enumerated.

Thus, quantum theory does not meet Max Planck’s criterion whereby,

As long as Natural Philosophy exists, its ultimate highest aim will always be the correlating of various physical observations into a unified system, and, where possible, into a single formula. . . . The feature of the whole development of theoretical physics, up to the present, is the unification of its systems which has been obtained by a certain elimination of the anthropomorphous elements, particularly the specific sense-perceptions.

Assuming quantum theory, insofar as “various physical observations” are unidentifiable within “a unified system,” they cannot be correlated into such a system. Being so, insofar as “various physical observations” are identifiable at all, it is necessary to introduce “anthropomorphous elements.”

This is so because whether sensate or sensate-like, qualitative experience is ambiguous. It can occur as whole or parts, and if parts, different parts. Even constant qualitative experience can uninterruptedly alter from whole to parts, and from these parts to those parts. Whether occurring as whole or parts, and if parts, what parts, constitutes qualitative identity. Qualitative identity altering when qualitative experience not altering, then qualitative identity is autonomous of qualitative experience.
What is distinguishable, but neither sensate nor sensate-like, is abstract. Qualitative identity being distinguishable, but neither sensate nor sensate-like, qualitative identity is abstract. Abstraction is known by “a sense of,” not “a sensation of” or “a sensation-like experience of.” Therefore, qualitative identity is known by a sense of, while qualitative experience is known by a sensation of or sensation-like experience of.

Qualitative experience distinguishing the material, abstraction is identifiable as conceptual, not material. Being conceptual, abstraction is identifiable as mental, not material. Mental presupposing mind, when material presupposes mental, then material presupposes mind. Physics concerning the material, then physics presupposes mind. Mind being immaterial, then physics presupposes the immaterial. Constitutive of the material, qualitative experience distinguishes the substantive.

Whether the universe is one or many, then, and if many, how many, is a function of formative mind, not substantive body. Constitutive of the immaterial, qualitative identity distinguishes the formative. Constant in any form, the substantive is necessary. Necessary, the substantive is the empirical. Inconstant in any substance, the formative is accidental. Accidental, the formative is the nominal.

The empirical constitutes fact, the “is.” The nominal constitutes value, the “ought.” Composing substance and form, constituent of the empirical is both fact and value, “is” and “ought.” Thus, mutually isolating fact and value, “is” and “ought,” is false. Fact cannot exist without value. Neither can value exist without fact. Science, then, is both “ought” and “is,” nominal and real.

MIND. Mind is the “irreducible metaphysical element to all physical concepts” because, although not itself sensate, it is intrinsic to the sensate. Even logical positivism assuming science initiates with sense data, when sense data are phenomenal, and the phenomenal is mental, science initiates with the mind. Passing beyond disjoint sense data, “The abrupt change by measurement . . . . is precisely the point that demands the break with naive realism.” Mind is interpretation of otherwise disparate sensory observations into a continuum. It “fills in” the unobserved quantum supervenience, then, the observational “gap.” Proceeding thus, it is critical realism, supervening the descriptive montage of naive realism by ascription of an intervening continuum. Not constituent of the isolated sensory experience, this assigned continuum transcends the physical, constituting the “irreducible metaphysical element to all physical concepts.” Metaphysical because being real “only within the mind,” they are not “physical bodies.”

“Classes” being equivalent to sets when, “Without [set theory], not only can we not do modern mathematics, we can’t even say what we are talking about,” then “modern mathematics” exists “within the mind.” Being so, then “mathematics concerns a world that exists quite as independently of us as does the natural world, only one that is not located anywhere in space or time.” Science concerning “the [physical] natural world,” then mathematics concerns the metaphysical world “within the mind.”
Quantum theory if founded on sporadic empirical observations. These disjoint experiences, both actual and possible, are integrated by logical/mathematical operators into an abstract set. Abstract, not impenetrable, “all bodies” are constituted by mind, the default source of abstraction. As does “modern mathematics,” modern science exists “within the mind,” mind composing the scientific environmental field.

Exhibiting physicists’ unwitting presupposition of the requirement for empirical proof is,

developer of quantum theory . . . Eugene Wigner has speculated . . . .

‘It is true that under the usual conditions of experimental physics or biology the influence of any consciousness is certainly very small. . . . It is unlikely that the [small] effect would have been detected had theoretical considerations not suggested its existence.’

Indicative of the inconsiderate submission to empirical proof is Wigner’s concluding “influence of any consciousness” on “experimental physics or biology” is “very small.” Since “experimental physics or biology” only occur within consciousness, the “influence of any consciousness” on them is absolute, not “very small.”

Indeed, “the . . . effect” of consciousness is so pervasive, it quite plausibly would go unnoticed if “theoretical considerations [had] not suggested its existence.” Illustratively, Wigner seeks proof of “the influence of any consciousness” by “the usual conditions of experimental physics or biology,” which “usual conditions” presuppose consciousness. Apparently unnoticed is the circularity of “what appears convincing to this writer.” As a defining condition of experiment, consciousness perhaps goes unnoticed by scientists suffused in the tradition of empirical proof because it is definitional, not empirical.

Scientific proof presupposes consciousness, when consciousness’ source is attributed to immaterial mind, then science can be preserved only by assuming immaterial mind. Being immaterial, it is to mind quantum theory succumbs to provide the “massive scientific support” for “denying the dual character of man.” Reduction of “the spirituality of the mind” to “the materiality of the body” is self-contradictory.

CONCLUSION. Schrödinger’s “break with naive realism” clarifies significance of the observer in quantum theory. So doing, “Resolution of the ‘Entanglement’ Result [is] Dependent on the Experimenter's Intention.” Extending the observer’s role, Hugh Everett concludes,

When dealing with a system representing an observer quantum mechanically we . . . . denote . . . by appending the . . . . memory configurations which are in correspondence with the past experience of the observer.

Despite this, John von Neumann notes,
Nevertheless, it is a fundamental requirement of the scientific viewpoint – the so-called principle of the psycho-physical parallelism – that it must be possible so to describe the extra-physical process of the subjective perception as if it were in reality in the physical world – i.e., to assign to its parts equivalent physical processes in the objective environment, in ordinary space.

Although a pragmatic axiomatic qualification—“as if it were in reality in the physical world”–this “fundamental requirement” subsequently becomes converted into “reality in the physical world.” Facilitating this evolution is the cognitive scientific conversion of mind into brain. Engendered by this conversion is the “objectivity” of, “a simple unconscious mode of existence in which [people] are indistinguishable from the rest of nature.” Insofar as this is presumed constituent of quantum theory, however, quantum theory is self-contradictory. Observation, and analysis and classification of observed, being constituent of consciousness, they are impossible on this assumption, when these activities are intrinsic to science. Descended from Cartesian dualism, science must preserve the mind/body distinction if it is to be not self-defeating.

Although material bodies, “guided by nothing but well-ordered laws is still dominant today,” this conception does not provide for a coherent quantum theory. Requisite is mirroring Newtonian mechanics insofar as substituting the mind of the observer for the mind of God. Mistaken in this respect is, “Berkeley criticizes Newton’s fundamental concepts in a way that sounds most modern.” Newton and Berkeley are of a kind.

Consistency requires quantum mechanics to be idealistic. In this way, as with Newton and Berkeley, quantum mechanics contains a panpsychic element. Substantively material, the universe is formally ideal. Here intangible mind arranges the tangible content of the universe into intangible order. Constituted is a conceptual universe in an artistic act of creation, telling the tale of the ordering of its observable parts in the language of mathematics.

Doing so, “The observer can . . . ignore the indivisible quantum links between himself and . . . the observing apparatus,” because “The observer” is not of “the rest of the world.” It is only the body of “The observer” which “must be regarded as forming a single indivisible unit with every object linked to its surroundings by indivisible and incompletely controllable quanta.” Not forming such a unit is the mind, because it is necessarily out of this “world.”
CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Confirmation and the Theory-Ladenness of Perception

Matthew Rellihan

The idea that perception is ‘laden’ with theory is widely thought to provide support for the incommensurability thesis by way of the platitude that scientific theories are constrained by perceptual data. According to the official worry, if individuals with sufficiently disparate theoretical commitments experience different percepts when affected by the same phenomena, their theorizing will be constrained by different data sets, and this means, to paraphrase Benjamin Lee Whorf, that different observers will be led from the same physical evidence to different theories of the world. Thus, even if they are acting fully rationally, and even if they are jointly committed to ‘facing the tribunal of sense experience,’ practitioners of different paradigms will find their disputes to be irreconcilable.

In what follows, I hope to show that this worry is overstated. In the context of theory confirmation, perception is significant only to the extent that it is the vehicle by means of which information is transmitted from the world to the mind, and just as there are any number of ways to signal that the coast is clear, so are there any number of perceptual vehicles capable of transmitting the same bit of theory-relevant information. Theory-ladenness entails, at most, that some of these paths to theory confirmation will be closed off, but it gives us no reason to expect that all of them will be. Thus, different observers may experience the world differently without thereby being led to adopt different theories of the world, and science can be objective and unbiased even if perception sometimes is not.

From Theory-Ladenness to Incommensurability

Attempts to preserve the objectivity of science typically address the threat of theory-ladenness directly by arguing for the theory-neutrality of perception. Thus, Fodor (1983) argues that perceptual processing is informationally encapsulated from higher cognition and therefore has access to only a very small internal database the contents of which are necessary for the disambiguation of sensory information. For example, while ‘background information’ concerning the distribution of light in the environment and the

1See Whorf (1956, 214): ‘All observers are not led by the same physical evidence to the same picture of the universe.’
geometrical properties of ambient objects is accessible to the vision module, beliefs about electrons, x-ray tubes and the like are not. ‘High-level’ beliefs of this sort cannot penetrate the vision module in order to have an effect on perceptual processing. The result is that perception is neutral “with respect to almost all theoretical disputes” (Fodor 1990b, 254). And this means that incommensurability is staved off: “two organisms with the same sensory/perceptual psychology will quite generally observe the same things, and hence arrive at the same observational beliefs, however much their theoretical commitments may differ” (Fodor 1990a, 233).

Less typical, and more desperate, are attempts to preserve the objectivity of science by rejecting the empiricist model of knowledge acquisition that gives perception—and, therefore, perceptual relativity—its overarching epistemic significance. Fodor has pursued this strategy as well. To adopt the empiricist model, according to which “observation—hence perception—supplies whatever underived contingent premises thought has access to,” is, he says, to confuse the psychological category of the percept with the epistemic category of the datum, and this is nothing less than the third dogma of empiricism (Fodor 1991, 209). For Fodor, rejecting this dogma means rejecting the standard empiricist view of experimentation, according to which “experimental observation involves having certain experiences” and “experimental laboratories are environments designed to make the having of these experiences possible” (1991, 204). According to Fodor’s more accommodating view, “the data that constrain our science don’t have to be perceptual, and often aren’t”—scientists can, and often do, appeal to already established theories in order to confirm their own (1991, 219).

Neither of these approaches is very appealing. The first is at the mercy of the empirical data, which are at best inconclusive, and at worst inconsistent with the encapsulation thesis.1 The second seems either to reduce to a form of empiricism if we demand that the theories scientists appeal to themselves be empirically confirmed or to leave scientists ‘spinning in the void’ if we do not. Fortunately, there is a third way, for theory-ladenness and empiricism lead to incommensurability only if we also assume that the perceptual experiences uniquely relevant to a theory’s confirmation are precisely those that are ‘laden’ with the theory being tested.

Consider the case of Tycho Brahe and Johannes Kepler. Hanson (1958, 5) tells us that these two men did not see the same thing in the east at dawn: Tycho saw a sunrise, Kepler an earth-spin.2 Never mind for the moment that terrestrial observations of the sun are actually equivocal between these two interpretations. Imagine that all of Tycho’s perceptions of astronomical phenomena were penetrated by geocentric theory, that all of Kepler’s were penetrated by heliocentric theory, and that, as a result, the two men experienced different percepts when observing the same astronomical

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1See Estany (2001) for a discussion of some recent work in cognitive science that lends support to the view that perception is subserved by various ‘top-down’ processes.

2Similar statements are to be found in Wittgenstein (1953), Hanson (1958), Kuhn (1962), Goodman (1978), and Churchland (1979).
phenomena. It follows that Tycho and Kepler experienced the world differently—or at least the astronomical portion of it—but if this is supposed to lead to any relativistic conclusions, the argument is enthymemic. Perceptual relativity has epistemic consequences only to the extent that it affects theory confirmation. Thus, in order to establish that Kepler and Tycho are incapable of confirming the same astronomical theories, it is not sufficient to establish that they underwent different perceptual experiences when observing the same astronomical phenomena. One must add that there are no other perceptual experiences relevant to the confirmation of astronomical hypotheses. Let ‘\(S_1\)’ and ‘\(S_2\)’ refer to practitioners of different scientific paradigms, and let ‘\(T\)’ designate some theoretical subject domain—such as, e.g., planetary astronomy—with respect to which these paradigms disagree. The argument from theory-ladenness to incommensurability must, then, go something like this:

1. \(S_1\) and \(S_2\), in virtue of their different \(T\)-commitments, experience different and conflicting percepts when directly affected by \(T\)-phenomena.
2. Percepts supply the data for scientific theories.
3. The only percepts relevant to the confirmation of \(T\)-theories are percepts of \(T\)-phenomena.
(C) Therefore, \(S_1\) and \(S_2\) will be led to adopt different \(T\)-theories.

Fodor rejects, alternatively, (1) and (2), but clearly (3) is the weak link in this chain. Indeed, we know it to be false in Tycho and Kepler’s case. In the middle of the nineteenth century, Léon Foucault realized that the heliocentric hypotheses, when conjoined with Newton’s law of inertia by way of the Coriolis effect, had an observational consequence for earth-bound astronomers. He reasoned that if a large pendulum were suspended from a ceiling and set up in such a way as to minimize friction, air resistance and the like, then, in the absence of any other forces acting upon it, it should maintain its plane of oscillation. If the earth were rotating beneath the pendulum, however, the result would be an apparent rotation of the pendulum’s axis of oscillation. The important point is that Foucault’s pendulum shows that the perceptual experiences associated with the observation of a pendulum in a windowless room are relevant to the confirmation of astronomical hypotheses, and, in the absence of some argument to the contrary, there is no reason to suppose that an individual whose perception is penetrated by celestial theories would thereby be affected in his observations of terrestrial phenomena. Both Tycho and Kepler, it would seem, can agree on whether or not a pendulum’s axis appears to be rotating.

In light of such obvious counterexamples, why would anyone, either tacitly or explicitly, endorse (3)? I suggest that much of the answer lies in tendency to confuse the percept’s intrinsic and extrinsic properties. The former pertain to the percept’s object—perception of a Foucault pendulum has the pendulum as its object—the latter to the information that it carries—perception
of the pendulum carries information about, \textit{inter alia}, the rate of rotation of the earth. Recognizing this distinction is sufficient to allay worries occasioned by theory-ladenness and perceptual relativity because theories penetrate percepts in virtue of their perceptual objects—astronomical theories penetrate perceptions of astronomical phenomena, zoological theories of zoological phenomena, etc.—while theories are confirmed by percepts in virtue of the information percepts carry. And a percept needn’t be of \textit{x}’s that are \textit{F} in order to carry the information that \textit{x}’s are \textit{F}.

\textbf{The Medium is Not the Message}

According to the semantic theory of information, some signal \textit{s} carries the information that \textit{x} is \textit{F} just in case the occurrence of the former is nomically dependent on the truth of the latter. To say that \textit{s} is nomically dependent upon \textit{x}’s being \textit{F} is just to say that there is a (not necessarily strict) law to the effect that \textit{s} wouldn’t occur but for the fact that \textit{x} is \textit{F}—that the occurrence of \textit{s} lawfully depends on \textit{x}’s being \textit{F}. Thus, newspaper headlines carry information about current events because the \textit{Times}, for example, wouldn’t print the headline that Obama won reelection if it weren’t for the fact that Obama actually won, and a tree’s rings carry information about the tree’s age because a tree wouldn’t have eighty rings unless it were eighty years old. To use an example somewhat closer to home, Foucault pendulums carry information about the rotation of the earth because Newton’s laws of motion guarantee that such pendulums won’t appear to rotate unless the platforms upon which they stand actually are rotating. As should be clear from these examples, the nomic dependence of a signal on some state of affairs is what licenses inferences from the former to the latter. It’s because a tree’s rings nomically depend upon the tree’s age, for example, that we can infer the latter from the former. What’s most significant for our purposes is that informational content, thusly conceived, is, in a certain sense, independent of the signal by means of which it is carried.

Consider the lowly thermometer. Thermometers carry information about the ambient temperature in virtue of having a number of possible measurement states \(M_1 - M_n\) corresponding to possible ambient temperatures \(T_1 - T_n\) in such a way that being in state \(M_1\) is nomically dependent upon the temperature’s being \(T_1\), being in state \(M_2\) is nomically dependent upon the temperature’s being \(T_2\), and so on. Anything satisfying this abstract description counts as a thermometer—or at least can be used as one—because anything satisfying this description will carry information about ambient temperature. Thus, standard mercury thermometers, taking advantage of the fact that the volume of a metal is nomically dependent upon its temperature, signal the temperature by means of the height of a column of mercury in a glass tube; Galileo thermometers, taking advantage of laws relating the density of a fluid to its temperature, signal the temperature by means of the relative depths of weighted glass bubbles; and infrared detectors, taking advantage of laws relating an object’s
temperature to the intensity of its electromagnetic emissions, signal the
temperature by means of gradations in luminous intensity. Thermometers are,
as one says, multiply realizable.

There are a few lessons to be drawn from this example, lessons that apply
to all information-carrying systems. First, it is necessary to distinguish between
a signal and the information that it carries. This distinction is made obvious by
the fact that there are a number of different signals that can transmit the same
bit of information. Signals are multiply realizable and cannot, therefore, be
identified with the information they carry. To paraphrase Dretske, the height of
mercury in the column is the signal, that the temperature is 30°C is the
message. Moreover, a signal carries the information it does in virtue of its
nomic dependencies, and this means that there are as many ways of
transmitting the information that $x$ is $F$ as there are possible signals that are
nomically dependent upon $x$’s being $F$. The number of possible signals
increases significantly when we consider that the ‘carries information’ relation
is transitive. The air conditioner’s ‘on state’ is nomically dependent upon the
thermostat’s bimetallic strip being in state M, and the thermostat’s bimetallic
strip’s being in state M is nomically dependent upon the ambient temperature’s
being at least 30°C. Thus, the air conditioner’s coming on carries the
information the ambient temperature is at least 30°C. And if Fido growls at the
air conditioner whenever it turns on, Fido’s growling carries this information as
well. Moreover, a signal’s intrinsic properties are irrelevant to its information-
carrying function. If two signals $S_1$ and $S_2$, in virtue of being nomically
dependent upon the same state-of-affairs, carry the same bit of information
about $T$, the differences between them are irrelevant for purposes of learning
about $T$. What matters is the information carried, not the signal by means of
which it is carried. Finally, and most importantly, informational relations,
being a species of nomic relations, are knowable only a posteriori. One can’t
deduce a priori that mercury can be used to tell the temperature. Rather this had
to await the *discovery* of a law of nature linking temperature and metallic
expansion.

These observations are significant because—in the context of theory
confirmation, at least—our perceptual faculties are best thought of as
instruments for carrying information about the configuration of distal objects.\(^1\)
Our perceptual system consists of a number of possible perceptual states (or
‘percepts’) $P_1-P_n$ corresponding to possible configurations of distal objects $C_1-
C_n$ in such a way that being in state $P_i$ is nomically dependent upon state-of-
affairs $C_i$, $P_2$ is nomically dependent upon state-of-affairs $C_2$, and so on.
Scientific theories are, moreover, descriptions of possible configurations of
distal objects—the sun revolves around the earth, the earth revolves around the
sun, massive objects affect the paths of light rays, etc.—and theory
confirmation is therefore best thought of as the process whereby we arrange
things so that we will experience one set of percepts if the configuration of
objects is as predicted by the theory and another if it is not. *Pace* Fodor (1991,

\(^1\)See Feyerabend (1963) where a similar position is defended.
209), the purpose of scientific experimentation is precisely to make the having of certain kinds of experience possible, namely, the kinds of experience that carry information about the theory being tested. This is not to say that any specific kind of perceptual experience is singled out as being necessary. As with the thermometer, the signal by which information is conveyed is itself irrelevant. A particular theory is confirmed by a given percept in virtue of the percept’s nomic dependencies rather than in virtue of the percept’s intrinsic features. From the perspective of theory-confirmation, these intrinsic features are epiphenomenal; any two percepts that are nomically dependent upon the same state-of-affairs are epistemically equivalent. Confirmation, like the thermometer, is multiply realizable.

Consider an illustration. Suppose the theory that we’re trying to confirm is that Mr. Smith was at the scene of the crime on the evening that Mr. Body was murdered. What sort of observations would be relevant? Well, clearly, any observation of Smith at the scene of the crime on the night in question would be pretty damning. But, as Sherlock Holmes will tell you, this is only the beginning of the story. Smith’s footprints, his fingerprints, a few locks of his hair, lingering traces of his favorite cologne, ashes from his distinctive cigar, scratches on the floor that could only have been caused by his cane, and even the silence of his favorite dog—the famous ‘dog that didn’t bark’—are all relevant to determining Smith’s whereabouts. But, of course, the story doesn’t end here either, for, as modern forensic science has discovered, the crime scene is teeming with information. A bullet can be traced back to the assailant’s weapon, a stray bit of fabric can be linked to one of his garments, and a bit of bodily fluid can be used to identify his DNA. From the information-theoretic perspective, any of any and all of these observations can be used to confirm the theory in question, for from the information-theoretic perspective they are all signals carrying the same bit of theory-relevant information—namely, the information that Smith was present at the scene of the crime.

**Theory-Ladenness and Theory Confirmation**

This detour through information theory reveals that the third premise in the incommensurability argument must be rejected. That premise, recall, states that the only observations relevant to the confirmation of a given theory are observations of phenomena in the theory’s domain. This premise being assumed, we seem forced to accept incommensurability as an inevitable consequence of theory-ladenness, for it appears all but inevitable that theories will penetrate the very observations that are uniquely relevant to their confirmation. But when we distinguish the information carried by a signal from the signal by means of which it is carried—when we distinguish the medium from the message—we find that an observation needn’t be of an x that is F in order to confirm the hypothesis that x’s are F. Indeed, for a percept to be relevant to the confirmation of a given theory, it needn’t even be of an object in the theory’s domain; terrestrial motions, recall, are relevant to the confirmation
of celestial theories. All that’s necessary in order for a bit of observable data to be relevant to a given theory is that the data lawfully depend on the theory’s being true. Thus, a theory’s observable consequences transcend its theoretical domain because confirmation relations are a species of nomic relations and, of course, nomic relations stretch across theoretical domains. Terrestrial motions, for example, are causally affected by celestial ones.

Not only does the argument for observational incommensurability fail, it’s unlikely that any emendation of it will succeed, and this is because it’s quite simply implausible that a theory could penetrate all of the observations relevant to its confirmation. Consider first the transitivity of the information-carrying relation. If $a$ carries information about $b$, and $b$ about $c$, then $a$ carries information about $c$. Indeed, these transitivity chains can be as long as you like without affecting the content of the final signal, as Dretske’s nice example illustrates:

> The acoustic waves emanating from a radio speaker carry information about what is happening at the broadcasting studio because they carry information about what is happening in the audio circuit of the receiver; these events, in turn, carry information about the modulation of the electromagnetic signal arriving at the antenna; and the latter carries information about the manner in which the microphone diaphragm (in the broadcasting studio) is vibrating. The microphone’s behavior, in turn, carries information about what the announcer is saying (1980, 58; italics omitted).

The point is that if $z$’s being $H$ is nomically dependent upon $y$’s being $G$ and $y$’s being $G$ is nomically dependent upon $x$’s being $F$, then one can confirm that $x$ is $F$ by observing that $z$ is $H$. Indeed, this sort of arrangement is the rule rather than the exception in most scientific laboratories. From the information-theoretic perspective, scientific instruments are devices designed to exploit these sorts of nomic dependencies in such a way that information concerning events we can’t perceptually experience (falling barometric pressure, high levels of radiation, the pH of a solution) will be carried by means of signals we can (the reading on a barometer, the clicking of the Geiger counter, the color of litmus paper). And we can think of scientific experiments in general as ways of perceptually encoding information concerning otherwise imperceptible phenomena. The point is that these chains of informational dependencies can be long and complex, allowing for situations in which a theory is confirmed by observations far removed from its content domain and thus making it unlikely that perception of these signals will be penetrated by the very theory being tested. Fodor (1991), for example, tells us that in his lab confirmation often comes in the form of a p-value reading on a computer printout. Surely, no proponent of theory-ladenness would claim that one’s psycholinguistic commitments affect one’s ability to read!

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1See Fodor’s (1987, chapter 4; 1995, 34-35) discussion of scientific instruments in the context of informational semantics.
What makes the existence of observational incommensurabilities so implausible, however, is the fact that confirmation relations are a species of nomic relations—any phenomena that lawfully depends on \( x \)’s being \( F \) can be used to confirm the hypothesis that \( x \)’s are \( F \). This is significant because, of course, nomic relations are knowable only a posteriori. Lawful relations between worldly phenomena have to be discovered and can’t be deduced a priori. Fodor and Lepore put the point nicely in their dismissal of verificationistic reductionism:

[W]hat confirms what is a matter, not of linguistic convention, but of what is actually (for example, causally) connected to what in the world. If the pinkness of the litmus confirms the acidity of the fluid, that is not because “is acid” means (as it might be) “turns litmus pink,” but rather because being acid and being a cause of pinkness of litmus paper are lawfully connected properties of acids. But if confirmation relations depend on how things are in the world, then presumably our knowledge of confirmation relations must be a posteriori (1992, 39; italics omitted).

Verificationists, recall, believed that a statement’s confirmation conditions were among its analytic entailments, and, hence, knowable a priori. Indeed, some verificationists went so far as to say that the meaning of a statement was its method of verification. On either version, a theory’s observable consequences would be known to anyone who knows the theory, thus making it plausible that theory-ladenness would affect all of the observations relevant to a theory’s confirmation. But, as Fodor and Lepore point out, this view of theory confirmation is wildly implausible. Indeed, from the information-theoretic perspective, it’s demonstratively false. If confirmation relations are a species of nomic relation, the only way in which a theory’s observable consequences could be knowable a priori would be if its lawful relations to other phenomena were knowable a priori, and if anything qualifies as a posteriori it’s knowledge of lawful relations between worldly phenomena. One can’t, for example, deduce the relevance of Foucault pendulums to the debate over heliocentrism merely by meditating on the meaning of the theory. Rather, one has to know a few contingent facts about the world—most notably, Newton’s laws of motion.

There are countless examples of the failure to circumscribe a priori the supposedly unique range of ‘sensory events’ associated with a given hypothesis. The cosmic microwave background radiation that sealed the case for the Big Bang hypothesis originally appeared as noise on a radio receiver, thus revealing that ‘sensory events’ associated with developments in radio technology are, in principle, relevant to the confirmation of cosmological theories. Again, astronomers often consult with archeologists when attempting to confirm the dates of particularly spectacular cosmic events, such as supernovae—the assumption being that these exceptional events would have been recorded by earlier societies. This shows that ‘sense data’ particular to
archeological investigations are in principle relevant to the confirmation of astronomical theories. And, to hearken back to our murder case, forensic scientists have discovered that facts about the developmental timelines of scavenging insects can be used to determine time of death. But if the observational consequences of a theory can reach from fields like cosmology, astronomy, and forensic science into such ostensibly unrelated fields as radio engineering, archaeology, and entomology it would appear doubtful that there are a priori constraints that can be placed on the type of sensory evidence relevant to the confirmation of a given hypothesis.

We can put this point about the a posteriori nature of confirmation relations somewhat more precisely as follows. Suppose \( T \) is some theory that needs confirming and \( o \) is some randomly selected observation that, at least at first glance, has nothing to do with the truth or falsity of \( T \). For purposes of the illustration, we can imagine that \( T \) is the theory that Smith was present at the scene of the crime on the evening of Mr. Body’s murder and that \( o \) is the observation that Fido was not heard to bark. What determines whether \( o \) is relevant to the confirmation of \( T \)—and, more specifically, what determines whether \( o \) confirms \( T \)—is whether or not a relation of nomic dependence holds between \( o \) and \( T \), for if it does, one can infer the truth of \( T \) from the occurrence of \( o \), as described above. Thus, however unrelated \( o \) and \( T \) seem to be, all that’s required in order to make \( o \) relevant to the confirmation of \( T \) is a single correspondence rule of the following form:

\[
(C) \quad o \text{ is nomically dependent upon the truth of } T.
\]

Now, some nomic dependencies are knowable a priori. For example, it’s analytically true that squares have four sides, and it’s therefore the case that being a square is analytically dependent upon having four sides. Since, moreover, nomic dependence is a weaker relation than analytic dependence, it also follows that being a square is nomically dependent upon having four sides. But these sorts of trivial exceptions aside, the vast majority of propositions that have the form of (C) concern genuine lawful relations between natural phenomena, and are thus knowable only a posteriori. It follows, of course, that the confirmation conditions for a given theory cannot be circumscribed a priori, and from this it follows that there is no guarantee that a theorist will know all of the observable consequences of her theory simply in virtue of knowing the theory. And, of course, if some perceptual experience isn’t thought by a theorist to be relevant to the confirmation of her theory—if it’s not known to fall within the domain of this theory—there’s no reason to expect that it will be penetrated by that theory. Thus theory-ladenness entails at most that some paths to theory confirmation will be closed off, but it gives us no reason to expect that all of them will be.

Not only is there no guarantee that a theorist will know all of the observable consequences of her theory, it’s all but guaranteed that she won’t, for in order to know this one would have to know the truth value of all of the relevant correspondence rules—\( o_j \) is nomically dependent upon the truth of \( T \),
\(o_2\) is not nomically dependent upon the truth of \(T\), etc. It goes without saying that it’s extremely unlikely that any theorist would ever be in a position to have this kind of knowledge, for the world is a complex causal network and new laws are constantly being discovered. Indeed, the accounts that link Foucault pendulums, by way of Newton’s laws of motion, to the confirmation of heliocentrism or microwave background radiation to the Big Bang are subtle and incredibly complex. Even the account linking the dog that didn’t bark to the identity of the murderer required a Sherlock Holmes for its discovery. Thus, the a posteriori nature of confirmation relations all but ensures that not every observable consequence of a theory will be known to the theorist and thus that not every observable consequence will be laden with the theory being tested.

All of this suggests that incommensurability is, at best, temporary phenomena, giving rise to what are only temporary impasses. There will be episodes in the history of science in which the data in support of a given theory will be contested. Different theorists, in virtue of their different theoretical commitments, will interpret this data differently, leading to a period of uncertainty reminiscent of Kuhn’s description of ‘revolutionary science’. Because such data do not have a univocal interpretation, shared by practitioners of the competing paradigms, rational agreement is temporarily impossible. However, the implication that such disagreements are insurmountable, that transitions between paradigms must necessarily be irrational and without empirical foundation, is entirely without merit and extremely implausible. This is because the contested data is likely to comprise only a partial subset of the theory’s observable consequences. Ending the theoretical impasse and reaching rational agreement thus requires simply that theorists discover further consequences of their theory, consequences that are not laden with the theory being tested and which can therefore serve as a neutral touchstone for their competing views. The preceding arguments—as well as actual cases from the history of science—suggest that such data are always available if one is clever enough to find them.

Works Cited


PART C
Ethics, Value Theory, Phenomenology and Existentialism
Spinoza was the first modern philosopher to introduce the idea of ethics without God. After refuting the existence of a transcendent God, he suggests a new approach to life in which human morality and happiness are no longer a function of faith but of understanding. He claims that the intellect, which he proves to be the only active aspect of the human soul, should guide us in our ethical life by formulating universal laws of morality that serve to advance human happiness.

Nietzsche rejects Spinoza's moral universalism but continues to elaborate the idea of ethics without God. "The death of God," which, for Nietzsche, marks the end of our belief in a cosmic moral order, makes moral universalism untenable. Nietzsche's new ethics argues for moral particularism, in which our sensitivity to the life of individuals should replace our obedience to universal moral laws.

The atheistic existentialists can be read in this context as the followers of Spinoza and Nietzsche. They share with Spinoza his belief in the power of human understanding but, like Nietzsche, they emphasize the importance of individuals over universal laws. Their ethics is based on the active engagement of individuals in human situations. Sartre formulates this approach in terms of the individual's freedom and responsibility, while Camus focuses on the interconnections between human revolt and human solidarity.

The juxtaposition of these various approaches allows me to set up a productive conceptual framework for discussing the issue of ethics without God, an ethics based on the power of individuals rather than on external authority. The main challenge posed by this ethical position is the existential empowerment of the individual. This paper discusses the respective responses of Spinoza, Nietzsche, and the existentialists to this challenge.

**Spinoza: Universalism without God**

Spinoza introduces a new ontology on which he bases his novel approach to human life. He claims that there is no transcendent reality, thereby rejecting the traditional world view of both philosophy and religion. This rejection bears directly on ethics since traditionally, both in religion and philosophy, ethics was transcendentally founded. Spinoza, in contrast, claims that in the absence of any other reality, ethics should be based on our understanding of the reality
in which we live. Thus, although the concept of God is central to Spinoza's ontology, his ethics is not based on a belief in God and hence can be referred to as "ethics without God."

In the first part of his Ethics, entitled "On God," Spinoza sets out to prove that the idea of God is nothing but our idea of infinite and absolute being. This being necessarily exists, and it is necessarily one, or whole. Therefore, everything necessarily exists in it. Spinoza pictures the world as a total unity, with nothing beyond it and nothing accidental in it; this unity can, he writes, be named either God, or nature (Deus sive natura), or infinite substance. All these names refer to the same entity, which is the whole being. Based on this ontology, Spinoza demonstrates his new ethics:

*I pass on now to explain those things which must necessarily follow from the essence of God or the Being eternal and infinite; not indeed to explain all these things, for we have demonstrated (Proposition 16, part I) that an infinitude of things must follow in an infinite number of ways – but to consider those things only which may conduct us as if it were by the hand to a knowledge of the human mind and its highest happiness.*

Spinoza argues that the essence of the human mind is the intellect and that the highest human happiness is the intellectual love of God (amor Dei intellectualis). The intellect, in other words, forms the center of Spinoza's ethics. He discusses at length its power and limitations, and tries to prove that only it should guide us in our life. Only the intellect, Spinoza argues, leads us to true knowledge of reality and therefore to a better existence in reality. Spinoza's moral universalism is based on this recognition: on the knowledge of our essence, rather than of the existence of universals of good and evil or of a moral cosmic order. Spinoza defines good and evil accordingly:

*By good, I understand that which we certainly know is useful to us.*
*By evil, on the contrary, I understand that which we certainly know hinders us from possessing anything that is good.*

These definitions feature two important aspects of Spinoza's moral view: first, moral judgments are not about the world but about what is good and what is bad for our existence in the world. Second, knowing what is good is prior to knowing evil. That is to say, good and evil are not symmetrical and mutually defined. One knows what is morally good when one knows what is good for the existence of human beings. Only on the basis of this knowledge can one know what evil is, since evil is that which hinders human beings from possessing the good.

Spinoza's moral universalism derives from the claim that human beings share a common essence, not from the assumption that the world is good in

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1 *Ethics*, 2, Preface.
2 *Ethics*, 3.D 1,2.
itself. The world itself is neither good nor evil: it exists according to its self-
determination.¹ Moral judgments, therefore, are not knowledge of the world,
but judgments of the world made from the existential interest of human beings.
Hence, although moral judgments should be ontologically founded, they
constitute knowledge not about the world but about human interest in the
world. One might name this position "universal egoism." Moral judgment,
however, does not relate to personal interests or to the calculation of personal
interests of human beings, but to their common interest as sharing the same
essence. This is why Spinoza can argue that 'when each man seeks most that
which is profitable to himself, then are men most profitable to one another.'²
The most profitable to each of us is what best fits our common essence.
Therefore when an individual seeks out what is truly good for her, she
necessarily advances the common good of humanity. This goal, however, can
only be achieved by one who knows the essence of human existence.

Spinoza introduces an ethics based on our intellect by demonstrating that
our morality and happiness depend on our understanding of our own essence.
This is an alternative to religiously founded ethics, which are based on faith.
For Spinoza there is no God to depend on or to obey, but only our intellect to
guide us in a world that is indifferent to our existence.

By cutting the Gordian knot between human ethics and God, Spinoza
marks the beginning of modern ethics. Spinoza himself was excommunicated
by his Jewish community that rightly understood the threat of his stance to
their ethics. Yet, it took more than two hundred years before the philosopher
Friedrich Nietzsche continued Spinoza's project of an ethics without God by
declaring "the death of God" loud and clear. Nietzsche himself regarded
Spinoza as his precursor, although their ethical views are different in a crucial
aspect: while Spinoza argues for moral universalism, Nietzsche argues for
moral particularism.³

Nietzsche: Particularism after "the Death of God"

"There are no moral phenomena at all,' Nietzsche writes in Beyond Good
and Evil, 'but only a moral interpretation of phenomena."⁴ This statement,
usually quoted as evidence of Nietzsche's moral radicalism, can serve in the
present context to draw a connection between Nietzsche's thought and that of
Spinoza. Long before Nietzsche and his declaration of "the death of God,"
Spinoza argues that the concepts of good and evil have no reality outside

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¹It is important to note, as Don Garrett does, that Spinoza is not a fatalist. 'His view,' Garrett
explains, 'is not that the same events would occur whether we acted or not, but rather that the
causal determination of what we do contributes to the causal determination of what event will
occur.' (Garrett 1996, 298).
²Ethics, 4, 35, C2.
³Nietzsche 1969, 177.
⁴Nietzsche 1989, 85.
human thought.¹ Nietzsche agrees with Spinoza on this point, yet rejects Spinoza's moral universalism in favor of moral particularism. In his preface to Beyond Good and Evil, Nietzsche criticizes dogmatic philosophy for planting misleading ideas in our thoughts. The most terrible among them, he argues, are Plato's ideas of 'the pure spirit' and 'the good as such.' Already in his earlier book The Gay Science, Nietzsche claims that the will behind these ideas, which he names "the will to truth," may be conceived of as "the will to death":

Charitably interpreted, such a resolve might perhaps be a quixotism, a minor, slightly mad enthusiasm; but it might also be something more serious, namely, a principle that is hostile to life and destructive – "will to truth" – that might be a concealed will to death.³

This identification between "the will to truth" and "the will to death" marks the direction of Nietzsche's thought in general, and his ethics in particular. Nietzsche negates metaphysical ideas, such as "pure spirit" and "the good as such," as dangerous illusions that lead us to condemn our life and praise the afterlife, which is actually death. From the perspective of traditional thought, our life at best consists of a shadow play of real truths and hence has no value in itself, if indeed it has any positive value at all. Nietzsche reinterprets Socrates' final request before he was executed as expressing this hostile attitude towards life: "O Crito, I owe Asclepius a rooster." This ridiculous and terrible "last word" means for those who have ears: "O Crito, life is a disease."⁴ Socrates, Nietzsche ironically claims, thanks the god of medicine for healing him of life. Nietzsche proposes an ethics of life in place of this traditional ethics of truth, which he interprets as an ethics of death. Our ethical life, he claims, is not threatened by metaphysical mistakes but by the danger of degeneration; for Nietzsche, this is an unavoidable recognition following the acceptance of "the death of God."

Nietzsche's declaration of "the death of God" is primarily a social observation, a claim that the idea of God lost its status as ultimate truth in nineteenth-century Europe. This event, as he defines it, sends him on a philosophical journey through which he examines the idea of truth, especially our need for metaphysical truths. His conclusion is that our metaphysical truths reflect our existential weakness rather than our epistemological or logical power. Nietzsche presents them as existential crutches that help us stabilize our fragile existence:

How much one needs faith (Glaube) in order to flourish, how much that is "firm" and that one does not wish to be shaken because one

¹Ethics, 4, Preface.
²Nietzsche 1989, 2.
³Nietzsche 1974, 282.
⁴Ibid, 272.
clings to it, that is a measure of the degree of one's strength (or, to put the point more clearly, of one's weakness). ¹

Our existential weakness, Nietzsche argues, explains our need for faith. While this claim is obvious in religions, Nietzsche uses it for undermining religious ethics as well: if faith is the result of existential weakness, then its truth status becomes dubious. This is well illustrated, he argues, by the way in which we insist on the truth of our faith: 'For this is how man is: an article of faith could be refuted before him a thousand times – if he needed it, he would consider it 'true' again and again, in accordance with that famous 'proof of strength' of which the Bible speaks.'²

Since existential need, not truth, determines our faiths, it causes us to be blind to reality and even leads us to deceive ourselves—should the need arise—in order to preserve our faiths. “The death of God,” Nietzsche states, enables us to free ourselves from this deluded existence:

*Once a human being reaches the fundamental conviction that he must be commanded, he becomes a 'believer'. Conversely, one could conceive of such a pleasure and power of self-determination, such a freedom of the will that the spirit would take leave of all faith and every wish for certainty, being practiced in maintaining himself on insubstantial ropes and possibilities and dancing even near abysses. Such a spirit will be the free spirit par excellence.*³

For Nietzsche the rope dancer symbolizes the non-religious existence: the existence of an individual who has overcome the need for metaphysical certainty, and is thereby released from the shackles of faith. This individual's existence is less firm but more vital. Lacking stable ground, she must be more sensitive to life around her; her attention, once wholly directed at universal principles or truths, can now be channeled to life in its particularities.

This is the ground for Nietzsche's ethics: an ethics that rejects universal concepts of good and evil by going beyond them. Yet beyond good and evil (*Gut und Böse*) does not mean beyond good and bad (*Gut und Schlecht*), as Nietzsche writes in his book *On the Genealogy of Morals*.⁴ Nietzsche argues that the opposition between good and evil, or more precisely between evil and good, characterizes religious ethics. This is the ethical stance held by those who conceive of life as a threat and therefore define everything that threatens their existence as evil. In this ethical position, the concept of evil precedes the concept of good. Nietzsche names this ethics a "slave morality" since it derives from human beings' weakness and fears. As an alternative to this ethical stance, he proposes a "master morality" to which the concept of evil is foreign—hence he calls it an ethics beyond good and evil. This position is held by those who

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¹Ibid, 287.
²Ibid, 287.
³Ibid, 290-291.
⁴Nietzsche1989a, 55.
see life as a field of opportunities, not a threat. The good precedes the bad in this ethics, and it is not universal. As Nietzsche puts it: "'good' is no longer good when one's neighbor mouths it. And how should there be a 'common good'? The term contradicts itself: whatever can be common always has little value."\(^1\)

The good cannot be common in Nietzsche's individualism because the common denies the individual's uniqueness. Nietzsche, like Spinoza, rejects ethics that founds itself on men's weakness and fears, and argues for ethics based on men's power; both philosophers emphasize that in such an ethics the concept of the good precedes that of the bad. Yet, while for Spinoza the existential power of humans lies in their common intellect, so that the good is necessarily common, for Nietzsche this power lies in the uniqueness of each individual, therefore the good cannot be common. Ethical improvement, according to Nietzsche, is a result of the individual's ability to overcome her need for common truths by becoming more sensitive to her unique existence and to life around her.

Nietzsche's central lesson from "the death of God" is that the ethics of truth should be replaced by an ethics of life. According to this ethical stance, the objects of our ethical thought should be the lives of individuals rather than universal truths. Once the religious view of the world is abandoned, there is no longer room for the beyond or the afterlife, the sites where religions anchor their universal and eternal truths. Our ethical efforts, then, can be redirected solely to our actual life. The value of each individual life increases when it stops being a mere shadow of pure spirit with consolation or salvation to be found only in the afterlife.

Nietzsche suggests we measure good and bad in terms of the flourishing and degeneration of individuals rather than in those of eternal or universal truths. This befits a world without God and it provides a more intimate link between ethics and actual life. "The death of God" teaches us that our belief in a cosmic moral order, whether we call it "God" or any other absolute truth, is nothing but wishful thinking. To enslave our actual life to such illusions instead of living it as best we can, Nietzsche argues, is ethically wrong.

**Existentialism: Existence with no God**

Sartre and Camus take the godless ethical view of Spinoza and Nietzsche a step further. Whereas Spinoza rejects the religious concept of a transcendent God but still speaks in terms of metaphysical truth, and Nietzsche rejects the idea of metaphysical truth but still struggles with the psychological resistance to "the death of God," Sartre and Camus present ethical views that are wholly free of any concept of God. One can find the origin of Sartre's ethics already in his first book *Being and Nothingness*, where he examines the relations between human freedom and responsibility.\(^2\) Camus presents his ethics later, in the

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\(^1\) Nietzsche 1989, 53.

\(^2\) I focus, in this short discussion, on the existential origin of the philosopher's ethics. This is the
works written after World War II in reaction to what he interpreted as the dreadful results of modern nihilism.  

Sartre argues that human beings' existential freedom inescapably implies their responsibility:

_The essential consequence of our earlier remarks is that man, being condemned to be free, carries the weight of the whole world on his shoulders; he is responsible for the world and for himself as a way of being._

Man is condemned to freedom because man's being is conscious of freedom. One can ignore this sometimes by deceiving oneself, and this is what Sartre calls bad faith (mauvaise foi); yet he goes on to claim that even this act itself reveals man's existence as freedom. Even our very ability to hide our freedom from ourselves is an expression of our freedom. This ineluctable consciousness of freedom confronts us directly with our responsibility, since we experience the world as dependent also on our own choices. In Sartre's terms, human beings experience the world as their world.

Sartre defines responsibility as 'consciousness (of) being the incontestable author of an event or of an object.' In other words, when one feels responsibility, one experiences the world as being the outcome of one's choices. This is the point of connection between Sartre's existential ontology and his ethics. It is man's mode of being as conscious of freedom that gives birth to the feeling of responsibility. This feeling of responsibility is the origin of our ethical life, since ethical life depends on our readiness to take responsibility for our deeds.

Sartre's ethics is constituted by our confrontation with the experience of freedom. This confrontation prevents us from seeing human situations as mere deterministic facts, and is thus the origin of our ethical responsibility. Our ethical life, if so, depends on our experience of freedom and not on fixed moral imperatives. Sartre illustrates this in his well-known speech _Existentialism and Humanism_, in which he recounts the story of a student who approached him with a dilemma during World War II: whether to stay with his mother, a sick widow, or to join the Résistance. There is no answer to such a dilemma in Sartre's ethics, not even a criterion for deciding it. It is not the answer but rather the individual's confrontation with his freedom to choose for himself that situates him within the ethical sphere. Sartre's answer to the student expresses this idea: 'You are free, therefore choose – that is to say, invent. No rule of

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reason why I refer mainly to Sartre's _Being and Nothingness_ and not to his later works on ethics.

1Thus Camus in the introduction of _The Rebel: If our time admits with equanimity that murder has its justification, this is because of the indifference to life which is the mark of nihilism._ (Camus 1971, 14).

2Sartre 1998, 553.

3Sartre discusses this issue in length at the first part of the book: Ibid. 47-70.

4Ibid., 553.
general morality can show you what you ought to do: no signs are vouchsafed in this world.\textsuperscript{1}

In Sartre's godless world, our values are nothing but our inventions. This does not reduce their importance, Sartre argues; quite the opposite. Since values have no objective status or ontological guarantees, but are determined only by our choices, it is our choices that determine the subjective world in which we live. There is nothing in the world to save us from our choices, and this is true for each individual as well as for humanity as a whole. He claims, therefore, that the key to a good ethical life is a continuous awareness of our freedom, especially in complex, difficult situations when it is our tendency to hide this freedom from ourselves.

Sartre, like Nietzsche, thinks of ethics in terms of individuals and particular situations. Yet, Sartre's ethics is based on human freedom, which Nietzsche rejects as mere illusion. In this respect Sartre is closer to Spinoza. Though Spinoza refutes man's ontological freedom, he argues that human ethics is based on the intellect—the active aspect of human soul.

Camus takes a different track. Troubled by the devastating results of modern nihilism, he tries to discover the authentic ethical attitude of man with no god. He finds the answer to this question in the act of revolt. Camus claims that man's refusal to accept human suffering or humiliation opens the door to the ethical sphere in human existence. Because this refusal might lead to violence and terror rather than ethical improvement, it has ethical value only when it is directed for, not against, humanity.

Camus's novel \textit{The Plague} illustrates this approach. In the novel, Dr. Rieux refuses to accept the terrible results of the plague through his rejection of the priest's interpretation of the epidemic as God's punishment. He does everything within his power to fight the plague, both as a physician and as a human being, refusing to endow it with transcendent meaning even after failing repeatedly. The fact that Rieux' revolt is directed against a physical disease rather than a specific political situation emphasizes Camus's idea that true revolt is a struggle for humankind, not a political conflict between human beings. Camus explains this idea in his essay \textit{The Rebel}: 'What is a rebel?' he asks, and answers that he is 'a man who says no: but whose refusal does not imply renunciation. He is also a man who says yes as soon as he begins to think for himself.'\textsuperscript{2} The act of revolt, Camus argues, is not only an act of negation, as it might be perceived, but also an act of affirmation. The rebel cannot be motivated to act without possessing a sense of justice. He does not necessarily \textit{know} justice, and cannot always define what exactly is wrong in the situation, but he acts from a sense that humanity has been injured. When the rebel says no, it is not for the mere purpose of negating something or someone, but in order to affirm humanity. The individual's struggle for humanity is the central axis of Camus's ethics.

Revolt is, for Camus, primarily the act of an individual. It comprises an existential state in which one's sense of justice is stronger than one's personal

\textsuperscript{1}Sartre 1977, 38.
\textsuperscript{2}Camus 1971, 19.
interests or fears. He argues that the readiness of the rebel to lose everything, sometimes even her life, proves that the rebel acts for the sake of something beyond her personal good. Yet he adds that we should not confuse this with a general calculation of personal interests or with psychological empathy. Revolt is not an economical or emotional act, but an act of value creation and is therefore metaphysical in nature: 'When he rebels, a man identifies himself with other men and, from this point of view, human solidarity is metaphysical.'

Camus thus reaches out towards metaphysics to explain the origin of our ethical life. This puts him very close to Spinoza, since both explain ethics as being grounded in the common nature of human beings and not in their individuality, as is the case in the ethical position of Nietzsche and Sartre. Camus even states this explicitly, albeit apologetically: 'An analysis of rebellion leads us to the suspicion that, contrary to the postulates of contemporary thought, a human nature does exist, as the Greeks believed. Why rebel if there is nothing worth preserving in oneself?'

And yet, while Spinoza argues that the common nature of human beings can be proved, for Camus it is only implied by the unique existential experience of revolt. This marks the difference between an ethics based on abstract knowledge and one that finds its origin in the actual experience of individuals. In this respect, Camus is closer to Nietzsche than to Spinoza. For both Camus and Nietzsche, ethics depends on the individual's sensitivity to particular situations and not on an understanding of human nature. Yet, Nietzsche ethics should be positive in nature, whereas Camus argues that the ethical attitude is based on refusal.

Like Nietzsche, Camus also distinguishes between religious ethics and modern ethics. The ethics of revolt, he claims, could not arise in a religious world:

*If, in the sacrosanct world, the problem of revolt does not arise, it is because no real problems are to be found in it – all the answers having been given simultaneously. Metaphysics is replaced by myth.*

The different approaches of Dr. Rieux and Father Panelo to the plague in Camus's novel reflect this point: Father Panelo interprets the plague in mythical terms, which eventually leads him to refuse medical aid; for Dr. Rieux, in contrast, the plague is absurd, and he fights against it with all his might. Father Panelo and Dr. Rieux live in different worlds. This difference is not empirical but metaphysical: it is the difference between one who lives in the world of God and one who lives in a world with no master. Camus is very explicit on this point:

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1Camus 1971, 22-23.
2Ibid, 22.
3Ibid, 26.
It would be possible to demonstrate in this manner that only two possible worlds can exist for the human minds, the sacrosanct (or, to speak in Christian terms, the world of Grace) or the rebel world. The disappearance of the one is equivalent to the appearance of the other, and this appearance can take place in disconcerting forms.\footnote{Ibid, 26-27.}

Camus argues that the rejection of the world of faith, which Nietzsche calls "the death of God," necessarily leads to an ethics of revolt. The origin of this ethics is a refusal to accept religious explanations for devastating human situations. This is, in fact, a revolt against the dominance of God. While it leaves man without the hope of transcendent relief, it increases human solidarity. In a world with no God, the lives of human beings are in their own hands. Camus compares this recognition to Descartes's Cogito:

\begin{quote}
In our daily trails, rebellion plays the same role as does the Cogito in the category of thought: it is the first clue. But this clue lures the individual from his solitude. Rebellions is the common ground on which every man bases his first values. I rebel – therefore we exist.\footnote{Ibid, 28.}
\end{quote}

While Descartes's Cogito is manifested in the individual's revelation of his existence as a separate thinking being (thinking substance), Camus's rebellion relies on the individual's revelation of his common existence with other human beings. In a godless world, Camus suggests, human solidarity is the origin of ethical life. Whether one rebels against human evils or against natural diseases, therefore, does not matter: rebellion is an act of human solidarity.

Conclusions: Ethics without God

Ethics without God is the ethics of unbelievers, and hence an ethics that cannot be based on faith. Spinoza, at the very start of the modern age, is the first to point in this direction when he argues for an ethics based on rational understanding rather than on faith. This claim is consistent with his ontology, which rejects the idea of a transcendent God and along with it the idea of a cosmic moral order. This line of thought, which I name Ethics without God, becomes further focused in the late nineteenth century with Nietzsche's declaration of "the death of God." However, Spinoza's ethics argue for a universal good, whereas Nietzsche rejects this idea. He argues that the "death of God" frees us of our illusion of universal good in order to make space for a greater sensitivity to the life of individuals. In so doing, Nietzsche replaces the ethics of truth with the ethics of life. In the mid-twentieth century, Sartre and Camus continue Nietzsche's line of thought by arguing that the deeds of individuals determine our ethical world rather than well-established values or truths. Sartre argues that we should recognize the fact that our values
are nothing but our own inventions and depend solely on our choices. Camus draws a clear dichotomy between the world of faith and the world of revolt, and argues that only the latter advances human solidarity.

I believe that a discussion concerning ethics without God is of special urgency today, when postmodern confusion at one extreme and a return of religious fundamentalism at the other pose distinct threats on the important ethical achievements of modern thought. Postmodern thought replaces the idea of the individual with the idea of power relations, while religious fundamentalism reinstitutes faith to God before solidarity between human beings. The ethical views of Spinoza, Nietzsche and atheistic existentialism can, I believe, offer us a conceptual framework for human ethics that is not confused with politics or subordinate to religious faith.

References

It is commonly assumed that men are capable of acting freely, in the sense that is required to make them morally responsible, and that determinism (the view that every event has a cause) is true. But these seemingly unproblematic assumptions lead to a puzzle known as the metaphysical problem of free will and determinism. If every event has a cause, then it follows that every action, and in particular every human action, is the end of a causal chain – a sequence of events leading up to the action -- where each member of the sequence causes its succeeding member to come about (e.g., the stumble caused the fall that caused the fracture that caused the visit to the doctor, etc.). This causal chain stretches back in time to events prior to the agent’s existence. But if every action is the end of such a casual chain, then it appears to follow that no human action can be voluntary or free. Hence, if determinism is true, it is unclear how any act can be free. Part of the challenge that the problem presents is to reconcile our everyday consciousness of ourselves as agents (the belief that we act freely), with the best view of what science tells us that we are (a collection of molecules).

There are two general positions that have been taken on the problem of free will and determinism:

1. Incompatibilists (or hard determinists) hold that free will is incompatible with determinism. So if determinism is true, we are not free.
2. Compatibilists (or soft determinists) hold that free will is compatible with determinism. So we can be free even if determinism is true.

The standard incompatibilist argument (rehearsed above) can be summed up as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Argument from determinism against freedom and responsibility</th>
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<tr>
<td>i. If determinism is true, then every human action is caused by events and states of affairs that occurred or obtained prior to its agent’s existence. (follows from the definition of determinism)</td>
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<td>ii. If every action is caused in this way, no one could ever have acted otherwise.</td>
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<td>iii. One has free will only if one could at least sometimes have acted otherwise.</td>
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<td>iv. So if determinism is true, no one has free will.</td>
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<tr>
<td>v. Determinism is true.</td>
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<td>vi. So no one has free will.</td>
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<td>vii. Acting freely is a necessary condition for being responsible.</td>
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<td>iii. Therefore, if a person’s action is determined, he is not responsible for having done it.</td>
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Ayer’s Critique of Incompatibilism

A. J. Ayer is a compatibilist – he believes that freedom is compatible with determinism – hence he rejects this argument. According to Ayer [1954], incompatibilists overlook a crucial distinction between causation and constraint. If I am constrained to perform some act, then there is a cause for my act. But the converse, Ayer maintains, does not hold: from the fact that there is a cause for my act (i.e., from the fact that my behavior is capable of being explained, in the sense that it can be subsumed under some causal law), it does not follow that I was constrained to perform it. All that is needed for one event to be the cause of another is that, in the given circumstances, the event which is said to be the effect could not have occurred without the occurrence of the event which is said to be the cause, and vice versa, depending on whether causes are interpreted as necessary or sufficient conditions. [1954 p. 479] Though we tend to form ‘an imaginative picture of an unhappy effect trying vainly to escape from the clutches of an overmastering cause,’ there is not compulsion, when there is causation, in any but a metaphorical sense. [1954 p. 479-80] Premise (ii) of the incompatibilist argument assumes that an act is free only if it is not caused. According to Ayer, this is mistaken. The correct thing to say instead is that an act is free only if it is not constrained. Thus, freedom is compatible with determinism because freedom is essentially just a matter of not being constrained or hindered in certain ways when one acts. In sum, according to Ayer:

Ayer illustrates what he takes constraint to be with three examples [1954 p. 478].

(1) (I am compelled by another person to do what he wants.) The compulsion, Ayer says, need not be such as to deprive me of the power of choice. It is not required that the other person should have hypnotized me, or that he should make it physically impossible for me to go against his will. ‘It is enough that he should induce me to do what he wants by making it clear to me that, if I do not, he will bring about some situation that I regard as even more undesirable than the consequences of the action that he wishes me to do.’ Thus, if a man points a pistol at my head I may still choose to disobey him.
But this does not prevent its being true that he can legitimately be said to have compelled me.

(2) (Someone obtains habitual ascendency over me.) Here I do not act freely for the reason that I have been deprived of the power of choice. This is because I have acquired so strong a habit of obedience that I no longer go through any process of deciding whether or not to do what the other person wants.

(3) (I am acting under a psychological compulsion.) For example, a kleptomaniac is not a free agent in respect of his stealing, because he does not go through any process of deciding whether or not to steal. He has been deprived of the power of choice. Or rather, if he does go through such a process, it is irrelevant to his behavior. Whatever he resolves to do, he would steal all the same.

The fact that my action may nevertheless have a cause in all these examples, Ayer maintains, is irrelevant to whether I act freely. For it is not when my action has any cause at all, but only when it has a special sort of cause – i.e., when it is constrained -- that it is reckoned not to be free. To bring this out, he contrasts the kleptomaniac with the ordinary thief. ‘Unlike the kleptomaniac, the ordinary thief does go through a process of deciding whether or not to steal, and no doubt it does affect his behavior. If he resolved to refrain from stealing, he could carry his resolution out.’ [1954 p. 479] The kleptomaniac is constrained by his desire to steal, which is so overwhelming that he cannot use reason to control it, hence his acts of theft are not free.

Critique of Ayer

Though this is a promising strategy for rejecting premise (ii) of the incompatibilist argument, a problem remains for Ayer. Ayer never explicitly defines what ‘constraint’ is; he merely gives examples of what it is. But examples only illustrate a definition, they cannot serve as a substitute definition. Because Ayer never explicitly defines what constraint is, his account of what makes an act free is incomplete.

We might try to fill in this gap by looking for common features in his examples, and taking the conjunction of those features as his definition of constraint. One thing that all his examples have in common is that the agents in question cannot fully control their behavior, they cannot completely direct their own actions. In examples (2) and (3), this is because, as Ayer puts it, the agents have been ‘deprived of the power of choice’. Is this also true of the first example? According to Ayer, the agent does choose in the first situation, but the reason he is not free is that his choice is compelled. But what is it for one’s choice to be compelled? The only thing Ayer says is that the agent recognizes that if he does not do A, some situation will be brought about that he ‘regards as even more undesirable’ than the consequence of doing A. However, the problem with Ayer’s describing why he does not freely choose to do A in this manner is that it would follow, e.g., that you do not freely choose to purchase a
pack of gum. Why? Because if you don’t pay the amount it costs to buy the pack of gum, ‘some situation will be brought about that you regard as even more undesirable’ than parting with your money: not having the pack of gum. But surely you do freely choose to purchase a pack of gum!

Aristotle’s discussion of ‘mixed acts’ in his Nicomachean Ethics, Bk III, can be useful here. According to Aristotle, an involuntary action is either forced or caused by ignorance. (III.1) An action is forced when its cause is external and ‘the agent, or rather the victim, contributes nothing, if, for instance, a wind or people who have him in their control were to carry him off.’ (III.1) The idea here is that if, e.g., a wind were to blow me into a glass door, and it were to break, it would not be appropriate to say I was the source or cause of the breaking of the class; rather, it is the wind that was the source and I its vehicle (a mere passive victim rather than an agent). For Aristotle, ‘mixed acts’ are acts that are neither entirely voluntary nor entirely involuntary. Here is Aristotle’s description and example of such acts:

‘Suppose, for instance, a tyrant tells you to do something shameful, when he has control over your parents and children, and if you do it they will live, but if not they will die. … The same sort of [unwelcome choice] is found in throwing cargo overboard in storms. No one willingly throws cargo overboard without qualification, but anyone with any sense throws it overboard to save himself and the others.’ [1110a5-10]

‘Mixed acts’, according to Aristotle [NE III.1] are partly voluntary because, unlike forced acts, (1) they are done willingly on this occasion (e.g., when the ship is sinking) and as the price of these goods (e.g., abandoning the cargo), and (2) the source of the movement of the limbs, which are the instruments of the of the action, is in the agent, and hence it is up to him to do them or not to do them. ‘Mixed acts’ are partly involuntary because (1) no one would choose any such action in its own right, no one would choose it ‘without qualification’ (e.g., no one would willingly throw cargo overboard, but anyone with any sense would willingly throw it overboard to save himself and others), and (2) they involve pain and regret.

Employing these Aristotelian distinctions, we might, on behalf of Ayer, define a compelled act as follows:

An agent is compelled to do A if and only if:

1) He desires B, and A is a means to getting B.
2) He doesn’t see a less painful way of getting B than by doing A.
3) It pains him to do A (he finds it repugnant, not merely unwelcome).

On the basis of these observations, we might define acts that are not done freely as ones where the agent has been deprived of the power of choice, or

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1As Irwin [1999, notes to BK III.1] expresses it.
where he does choose but his choice is compelled in the sense defined above. Cases where one has been deprived of the power of choice would include, among others, cases where he is forced to perform some action (he is physically overpowered) or where he acts under hypnosis, a psychological compulsion, or a blind habit of obedience. Cases where one is compelled to do A are cases like those offered by Aristotle. Whether this definition works is left as an exercise for the reader. (Of course, even if one disagrees with Ayer and insists that in his first example, the agent does act freely, it does not follow that he is responsible for his behavior: freedom and responsibility can come apart.)

**Strawson’s Argument against Responsibility**

Galen Strawson [2003] belongs to the same tradition as Enlightenment philosophers like Spinoza, Diderot, Voltaire, and Holbach, who challenged ordinary conceptions of freedom, and doubted whether we could be morally responsible. On his view, while it may be of great pragmatic value to hold people responsible for their actions, and to employ systems of reward and punishment, no one is really deserving of blame or praise for anything. Claims of autonomous agency are really just figures of speech.

Though Strawson denies that we are ultimately responsible for our actions, he is not an incompatibilist: he does not use determinism as a premise in his argument that we are not ultimately responsible for our actions. Rather, he appeals to facts about our DNA and upbringing. Here is how his argument runs.

**Summary of Strawson’s argument against ultimate responsibility**

| You do what you do -- in the circumstances in which you find yourself -- because of the way you are. |
| So if you’re going to be ultimately responsible for what you do, you’re going to have to be ultimately responsible for the way you are. |
| But you can’t be ultimately responsible for the way you are. This is a product of your genetic inheritance and upbringing that you had no say in. |
| So you can’t be ultimately responsible for what you do. |
| So, no one is ultimately deserving of blame or praise for anything. Ultimately, it all comes down to luck: luck — good or bad — in being born the way we are, luck — good or bad — in what then happens to shape us. We can’t be ultimately responsible for how we are in such a way as to have absolute, buck-stopping responsibility for what we do. |

**Critique of Strawson**

Strawson assumes that ‘the way you are’ determines what you do in any given circumstance. But what exactly is packed into this expression? Presumably, at a minimum, your wants and beliefs constitute ‘the way you are’. To illustrate, suppose you grab your umbrella on the way out the door (some bit of behavior). This can be explained (partly) in terms of your belief that it is raining outside, and your desire/want not to get wet. Suppose you go
to the tap for a drink. This can be explained (partly) in terms of your belief that there is water in the tap, and your desire/want to quench your thirst. But are all our wants and beliefs products of our DNA and/or upbringing, as Strawson assumes?

Let’s focus on wants to begin with. Some wants may indeed be products of your DNA. If, for example, you are deficient in a certain protein, your body may cause you to crave food with that protein. Some wants may also be a product of your upbringing. You may, e.g., have acquired a desire to go to college because your parents continually emphasized the importance and value of a college education. Some wants may also be a product of your environment. You may, e.g., have acquired a want for Nike sneakers after seeing a Nike sneaker commercial, or a desire for a slice of pizza as a result of the smells wafting from the pizza parlor. In all these cases, it may be correct to say that you ‘couldn’t help’ having the want.

But are all our wants generated in this way? Can’t we create wants we don’t have, and hence wants that are not products of our DNA, upbringing, or environment? Suppose, for example, that you’re lazy and unfit and you want to acquire a want for exercise. You can force yourself to do it every day and hope you come to like it. And you just might: you might even get addicted. Perhaps you can do the same if you dislike olives, etc. If we can create wants we don’t have, then how can all our wants be products of our DNA and/or upbringing, as Strawson maintains?

Strawson [2003] considers this objection, but, he asks: Where did the first want – the want for a want (e.g., the want to acquire a want for exercise, olives, etc) -- come from? It’s theoretically possible that you had a want for a want for a want. But then the question just re-arises: where did that want come from? This chain of wants can’t go on forever. At some point, Strawson concludes, your wants must just be given: they will be ‘products of your genetic inheritance and upbringing that you had no say in’. The point is a general one. About any agent and act, we can ask why the agent performs that act, and though we may begin to answer this question in terms of the agent’s beliefs and desires, we can always press beyond these beginnings and ask why the agent possesses those beliefs and desires. If this question in turn is answered by reference to still other beliefs and desires had by the agent, we can press further and ask why the agent possesses those beliefs and desires. Eventually, we will reach a set of beliefs and desires that must be explained by features beyond the agent’s control (such as heredity and environment) for nothing can be causa sui (the cause of itself). An agent, for example, performs some action – gets married -- because she wants to perform it. Why does she want to perform it? Because she wants something else – to have a family -- to which the action in question – getting married -- is perceived as a means. But why does she want that something else? Perhaps because she sees the pursuit of that goal as offering the best chance of ‘satisfactorily realizing her complex system of values’1: she believes having a family is essential to living a

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1As Susan Wolf expresses it in 1990.
What Makes an Act Free?

complete and fulfilling life. But then we may ask why she has that complex system of values. Strawson would say: because of her heredity and upbringing. She acts in accordance with her values, but her values are a result of forces beyond her control. The desire to get married may cohere with other desires she has in ways which desires that are implanted in her by a hypnotist do not. Nevertheless, for Strawson, the source of that desire is no less external (beyond her control) than a hypnotist who may have implanted it, and if the agent identifies more with the desire to get married than with a desire that is implanted in her, it is not because the desire to get married is ‘up to her’. The latter case (implanted desire) seems exceptional only in being a case in which the agent’s ‘lack of freedom is dramatically evident’.¹

The main problem with Strawson’s argument, as I see it, is that it fails to account for the fact that we can and often do use reason to evaluate our desires/wants before acting on them. It’s not as if the environment triggers a want in us -- if we weren’t born with it or it wasn’t instilled in us through upbringing -- and we act on it automatically and spontaneously, like programmed automatons. Reason plays a crucial mediating role in this process. Man is a complex animal, and he is capable of reflecting on his beliefs and desires before acting on them. We use reason to assess our non-basic desires (desires for things beyond food, shelter, and clothing), and once we have decided they are worth pursuing, we again use reason to determine the path we will take to satisfy them. To illustrate, suppose you had a desire to take a holiday trip, and suppose after reflection you decided that it’s worth pursuing this desire. You then need to figure out how to satisfy it. You may have had a number of options open to you. You engaged in a cost benefit analysis -- weighed the pros and cons of each of the places you wished to visit -- and finally chose to visit Greece. So, we can say to Strawson that you are responsible for your act of taking a trip to Greece because you are responsible for the deliberative procedure that constituted your evaluation of the desire to take a vacation and the path you took to satisfy it. In so far as you knowingly and willingly worked yourself into the frame of mind that produced the decision or choice to take a trip to Greece, you are responsible for it, and for the act that resulted from it.

Of course, our upbringing and environment generates not only desires but beliefs in us, and it is our responsibility, as critical thinkers, to evaluate our fundamental beliefs (beliefs that play a fundamental role in how we live and who we become) just as much as it is to evaluate our desires.

Now, let’s consider some objections Strawson might raise:

Objection #1: Visiting Greece satisfied the highest number of wants, and that is what caused you to choose it.

Reply: This rejoinder misses an essential part of the story: that you engaged in a rational decision procedure to arrive at the result that visiting Greece satisfies the highest number of wants. This result didn’t just magically

¹As Susan Wolf puts it in 1990.
pop in your head. You may have spoken to some travel agents, googled various cities, discussed the idea with friends, etc. Of course, some people may fail to evaluate their desires before acting on them, and simply allow the one with the strongest pull, the one that is most intense, to determine their behavior. But this is not true of all or even most people. We don’t simply act 'blindly' on our desires. Ditto for our emotions. You may find yourself overcome with a certain emotion (say, anger) but not act on it. Reason can help put breaks on action.

Objection #2: Presumably you had a want to reflect on your want or belief. But where did that want come from? Ultimately it’s a product of DNA and/or upbringing.

Reply: This rejoinder misses an important part of the story: the desire to reflect is not by itself sufficient for producing reflective activity. I might have the desire to reflect on my beliefs before acting on them but not be able to (I simply lack the intellectual discipline needed to execute the task), or not be able to do it well. What matters is performing the deliberative activity itself, not the mere want to perform it. Deliberating well is a skill, just like playing the flute well is a skill; it is something you can do well or badly. You are not born with this skill, nor is it something you acquire in an instant, as you might a want after seeing a commercial. Like all other skills, it is something that can improve with practice, and deteriorate with neglect. And like all other skills, it requires energy and focus and attention to be performed well. [The real purpose of an education, and in particular of a philosophical education, I would add, is to train us to deliberate well.]

Objection #3: Deliberation is subject to the same mechanical laws that govern all objects in space, and just as we cannot control the behavior of the world around us, we cannot control our thought processes.

Reply: To the contrary, deliberation is something that is fully within our control, at least when it is done well. We are not passive spectators of our thought processes. We control our mental life / the operations of our mind. Of course, some people have very little control over their thought processes, so in some sense they are passive spectators of their mental life, in the same way that we are passive spectators of a dream, or our environment, in so far as we cannot control the content of a dream or what goes on in our environment. But given that our thought processes are for the most part within our control we are responsible for them, and in turn for any decision based on them. Indeed, if there is one thing that we are capable of controlling in the world, it is our thought processes. And hence we are responsible for the actions they lead to.

Objection #4: Whether a person deliberates well or badly is a product of DNA and upbringing; hence, you can’t blame them for being inattentive and behaving foolishly.

Reply: Here, I would have to repeat Aristotle. In so far as we think of deliberation as a skill, then everything Aristotle says about the virtues of
What Makes an Act Free?

character, which he, along with Socrates and Plato, took to be skills, applies equally well to deliberation.

“He is himself responsible for becoming this sort of person, because he has lived carelessly. Similarly, an individual is responsible for being unjust, because he has cheated, and for being intemperate, because he has passed his time in drinking and the like; for each type of activity produces the corresponding sort of person. This is clear from those who train for any contest or action, since they continually practice the appropriate activities. … Further, it is unreasonable for someone doing injustice not to wish to be unjust, or for someone doing intemperate action not to wish to be intemperate. This does not mean, however, that if he is unjust and wishes to stop, he will thereby stop and be just. For neither does a sick person recover his health [simply by wishing]; nonetheless, he is sick willingly, by living incontinently and disobeying the doctors, if that was how it happened. At that time, then, he was free not to be sick, though no longer free once he has let himself go, just as it was up to someone to throw a stone, since the principle was up to him, though he can no longer take it back once he has thrown it. Similarly, then, the person who is [now] unjust or intemperate was originally free not to acquire this character, so that he has it willingly, though once he has acquired the character, he is no longer free not to have it [now].” [NE III.5]

In sum, our environment may create desires or beliefs in us, but we are capable of evaluating those desires and beliefs before acting on them, and since this evaluative process, this mental activity, is in our control, so too is any decision and in turn action based on it. Pace Strawson, the fact that your action was caused by a want that is generated by your environment or upbringing is irrelevant to whether you act freely. It is only when it is caused by a special sort of want that it can be reckoned to be free. The special sort of want, I submit, is one that is a product of reflective deliberation. It’s not simply doing what we want, as some like to think, that makes us free (otherwise the kleptomaniac would be a free agent), but acting on wants (or beliefs) that survive, or are a product of, deliberation or reflective evaluation – what Aristotle calls ‘deliberative desires’ [NE III.3] -- that makes us free. Recall that, for Ayer, the kleptomaniac, unlike the ordinary thief, goes through a process of deciding whether or not to steal, and no doubt it does affect his behavior. The kleptomaniac, on the other hand, does not go through such a process, or rather, if he does, it is irrelevant to his behavior. He is a slave to his kletopo-desires: he will steal no matter what he ‘chooses’ to do. And this is why he is not a free agent. Rational deliberation does not play a role in his behavior. He acts ‘blindly’, so to speak. Insofar as we fail to allow our behavior to be determined, at some stage, by rational reflective processes, and act impulsively – like the unreflective voter, or the compulsive shopper -- we are not initiators or sources, but mere carriers or vehicles of change in the world. The ads create
desires in us, and we act blindly on them. If there are forces beyond our control that create desires in us and we act blindly and impulsively on them, then our control of our behavior is only superficial.\(^1\) There is a sense in which the desires we act on are not really ours: the ads operate like a hypnotist who has implanted them in us. Though we speak of the desires being ‘in’ us -- and thus create the illusion of any acts that they trigger as being free ones -- there is a sense in which they are not ‘really’ ours. They are ours only in so far as reason makes them ours; insofar as they survive rational scrutiny. This is why Socrates famously said that ‘The unexamined life is not worth living’. It’s not worth living because without reflection, we are not free beings. Examining ourselves will require us to engage in discourse with our selves: weighing pros and cons before acting. By doing so, we are bringing forth consciousness or awareness, we are moving beyond routine thoughtless modes of living that most people get stuck in -- and quite happily at that -- and are taking steps toward transforming ourselves into free agents. Plato writes in the Republic Books VIII and IX that even if a just man is misunderstood and persecuted, he will still be at peace with himself, while the unjust man, even if he is successful in worldly terms, will not be at peace with himself: he will live in a state of fear, agitation, and insatiable desire. Since he lives in an obsessive addictive state, a slave to his desires, he is not truly free. Reason is the instrument that is essential for mastering our desires and turning us into free agents. Freedom is a matter of degree, in the manner illustrated by the following diagram.

\[\text{free}\]

- The agent acts as reason prescribes, and does not feel pain in doing so. There is no clash between reason and desire.
- The agent acts as reason prescribes, but he feels pain in doing so. There is a clash between reason and desire.
- The agent fails to act as reason prescribes, and caves in to his desires, even though he recognizes that satisfying his desires is bad for him.
- The agent follows his desires blindly. Reason doesn’t prescribe anything because he fails to reflect on his desires. He has created a habit of blindly following his desires.
- The agent is forced to behave contrary to his will because he is, say, physically overpowered, or he acts under hypnosis, etc.

\[^1\text{If I have made a habit of engaging in some routine, then I must at some point have reflected on it if this routine for my behavior to count as free.}\]
Insofar as we fail to allow reason to take charge of our behavior and act blindly on our desires, we are not truly free. In some sense, we are not even ‘deciding’ to act the way we do, because ‘decision’ assumes that a rational calculation over options has been undertaken. It is not mere chains, or imprisonment, or hypnosis, or being drugged, or having a gun held to your head -- canonical examples of constraint – that pose a threat to our freedom. We lose grip on our freedom in the most profound sense when we become a slave to our desires, blindly follow their demands, and fail to allow reason to take charge of our lives.¹

References

Ayer, Alfred Jules (1954). ‘Freedom and Necessity’ in Philosophical Essays, New York: St. Matin’s Press. [Page references are to EP where this essay has been reprinted.]

¹Nevertheless, we are responsible for our behavior, precisely for failing to allow reason to take charge.
Martin Heidegger is perhaps the most prominent philosopher who gives human finitude a central place in his thought. In particular, he contributes a rigorous analysis of Dasein’s death in his work *Being and Time* (1962). Among the various readings of Heidegger on this subject matter, Hubert Dreyfus (2005) found those of John Haugeland (2000) and Carol White (2005) eminently interesting. They ‘have each discovered a general structure of finitude which has both an individual and a cultural instantiation’ (Dreyfus’ Foreword in White, 2005, p. xxxii) in the following manner (ibid.):

\[
[D]eath is world-collapse, and authentic dying means both resisting world collapse by preserving and trying to make sense of anomalies, while at the same time, remaining open to possible world-collapse, thereby being able, should it happen, to accept it as making possible a new beginning.
\]

In this paper, exegetical merits or demerits are not my main concern. However, such a Heideggerian understanding of human finitude strikes me, not only because of its profundity but also because of its acute implications on the unsettling character of meaningfulness and on the potential radical transformations in human lives, which will be explained in the following discussions. Moreover, this Heideggerian notion acknowledges the tension between maintaining a person’s or culture’s whole set of commitments and discernments, and realizing that these commitments and discernments are not entirely secure because they are historically conditioned. This does not suggest that life has no integrity; rather, as I shall show here, a very subtle conception on the integrity of life, in which the personal, intellectual and moral dimensions of integrity are interwoven, can be drawn from such a notion of human finitude.¹

I share Emmanuel Levinas’ concerns regarding Heidegger’s thoughts on morality (see Levinas, 1969, 1998; Cohen, 2006). However, what I question in this paper is the implicit Heideggerian understanding of the moral dimension of life’s integrity that is attendant to that of human finitude. In addition, my

¹Integrity is not merely a kind of virtue or moral purpose or standing for something, etc. See Cox et al. (2008) for an account of various theories on integrity, which is rather comprehensive but unfortunately lacks Heidegger’s notion of integrity.
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objective in this context is to present what I find on a crucial aspect of human finitude and integrity, on which Heidegger and Wittgenstein diverge, and on which, I contend, Wittgenstein’s standpoint is more pliable.

Like Heidegger, Wittgenstein puts forward a dynamic notion of practices. He remarks: ‘Certain events would put me into a position in which I could not go on with the old language-game any further. In which I was torn away from the sureness of the game’ (OC, §617). A crisis occurs when a language-game no longer makes sense to me. However, in shedding light on our moral practices, the views of Heidegger and Wittgenstein are divergent. I will explain that Wittgenstein’s view of moral forms of life would not be structured by possible radical changes such as world-collapses.¹

Heideggerian notion acknowledges the tension between maintaining a person’s or culture’s whole set of commitments and discernments, and realizing that these commitments and discernments are not entirely secure because they are historically conditioned. This does not suggest that life has no integrity: rather, a very subtle conception on the integrity of life can be drawn from such a notion of human finitude.

I share Emmanuel Levinas’ concerns regarding Heidegger’s thoughts on morality (see Levinas, 1969, 1998; Cohen, 2006). However, what I question in this paper is the implicit Heideggerian understanding of moral integrity that is attendant to that of human finitude. My objective is to present what I find on a crucial aspect of human finitude and integrity, on which Heidegger and Wittgenstein diverge, and on which, I contend, Wittgenstein’s standpoint is more pliable. To begin with, let us recall some relevant points of the Heideggerian notion of human finitude that Dreyfus attributes to both Haugeland and White.

Resolute being-towards-death: A Structure of Human Finitude

According to Heidegger, what possible wholeness I have is essentially constrained by a feature of my life, that is, that it will end (see B&T, pp. 233–234/276–277). Without realizing the fact of my mortality I would not be able to conceive my life as a whole or understand myself as responsible for my entire

¹In my recent paper (Huen, 2011), I aimed to reveal and develop the much neglected dynamic feature of Wittgenstein’s notion of form of life in his later philosophy as the groundwork for his conception of critical thinking (‘critical thinking’ is not the term he uses). That piece of work dealt with, among others, the issues concerning updating of the content of a rule or principle that guides our practices in critical thinking, particularly in moments of radical uncertainty. One of the points I made in the paper is that the notion of seeing things aright and its subsequent emphasis on practical judgments in Michael Luntley’s interpretation (2003a and 2003b) are problematic because the significance of human finitude in Wittgenstein’s rule-following considerations is ignored. By contrast, for instance, Saul Kripke (1982) very clearly perceives the finitude aspect of Wittgenstein’s arguments. Wittgenstein’s favorite metaphor of numerical series is highlighted in Kripke’s exposition. Also see Kripke’s discussions on dispositional theories (ibid.).
life. It is not only a matter of self-understanding, for I do not attempt to evade this finitude of mine as many people do; I am resolute towards my death.

It does not follow from my resoluteness towards my death that I would thus have already had a complete or coherent understanding, picture or narrative of my life. I have to ‘re-resolve’ constantly because whether my life functions in the right manner does not only depend on me. No rigid determination is offered to me owing to my finitude. My decision must be held open and free. That means that, at some point, I might have to take it back or give it up entirely. An interesting facet is that, while I have been so involved and determined to lead a life of my own, I am continuously holding an open attitude. Thus, as Haugeland (2000, p. 73) writes, on behalf of Heidegger, ‘Taking responsibility resolutely means living in a way that explicitly has everything at stake’ (cf. B&T, p. 264/308).

My orientation towards my finite life carries along with it my readiness for anxiety. It is a mood signifying a profound breakdown in a person’s way of life. Haugeland explains this mood analogously by using Thomas Kuhn’s term ‘crisis’. It refers to the condition of a scientific practice in which confidence is completely lost in its existing paradigm (disciplinary matrix) for solving some worrying puzzles because its established theories are found to be inconsistent with some newly discovered facts. A paradigm comes along with a world; its crisis is the harbinger of this world’s collapse.

Carol White’s reading of Heidegger is very close to Haugeland’s. She makes an even stronger claim than Haugeland that Heidegger’s notion of death, which remains basically the same throughout his career, pertains to human cultures rather than individuals. One important indication of this, among other evidence she provides, is that, in commenting on Trakl’s poem of death, Heidegger explicitly suggests: ‘this death is not decay but rather a matter of leaving behind the form of man which has decayed’ (Heidegger, 1971, p. 167f./46, quoted in White, 2005, p. 22). She also reminds us that in his ‘Letter on Humanism’ Heidegger notes: ‘The sentence “Man ek-sists” is not an answer to the question of whether man actually is or not; rather, it responds to the question concerning man’s “essence”’ (Heidegger, 1977, p. 207/326f., a citation provided in White, 2005, p.72). White remarks that for Heidegger, the character of the being of Dasein is existence, whose defining feature is not merely being an actual entity but rather ‘standing open’ for ‘the openness of being’” (p. 74) or ‘standing out into’ a revelation of being’. Due to the openness of being, Dasein has possibilities of understanding being. However, Dasein no longer exists when these possibilities are closed. She provides the following crucial statement on Heidegger’s notion of death as the possibility of the impossibility of existence (p. 75, emphasis added):

Authentic Dasein is the one who reaches into the depths of this well to find a new star, a new way of understanding the being of what-is, that becomes the culture’s new focal point as it navigates the twilight between its old world and the new way of disclosing its world that glimmers on the horizon.
Death is comprehended as the end of Dasein’s existence—the end of this understanding of being and itself. It indicates a finitude that we all essentially share. The message is congenial to Haugeland’s explanation provided through Kuhn’s paradigm shift. Both are concerned with the replacement of the old world by the new one, or more precisely, with the way we exist.

At the core of this fundamental vision of human life is death as world-collapse, that is, the breakdown of the entire network of significance. Most of us as either unique individuals or culture transmitters/preservers cherish our lives, but we have to live in a manner that foreruns our death.

Integrity of Human life: an issue on the moral dimension

The structure of human finitude discussed above suggests a profound sense of integrity. It highlights both the wholeness and ownedness (or authenticity) of life and the disclosure of being, which has an essential bearing on ‘getting things right’ or nonarbitrariness. However, this notion of integrity is not simply about an adherence to principles or commitments that are judged as correct and important, as integrity is widely taken to be (for example, see McFall, 1987, for this widely accepted view). Above all, there is a tension in my existential responsibility to lead a life of my own between maintaining what I find just and precious on the one hand, and being ready for the possibility of giving it up on the other. At the level of cultural practices, integrity is, as White borrows Wittgenstein’s metaphor in On Certainty (§97) to explain the Heideggerian notion, like that of the river-bed’s condition, being continuous but possibly with radical turns: unexpected shifts and erosions.

Here integrity is primarily concerned with a truthful relation between a person or culture (who/which has a life) and things in the world (including the person him or herself, or the culture itself). We take entities as entities and this involves our undertaking ‘to get the entities in some sense “right”’ (Haugeland, 2000, p. 50).

It is crucial to note that the disclosure of the being of entities is inseparable from self-disclosure. Our comportment towards ourselves as ourselves requires disclosing the being of ourselves. This means that we need to consider the ways in which we can live (so-called our ability-to-be). Our possibilities are to a great extent governed by norms and practices of our societies in which we have certain social roles to fulfill. My ability to project myself onto my possibilities implies my ability to project other entities onto their possibilities. I am not only responsive to something external to me but also to my own actions or rule-following. Haugeland emphasizes that it is a kind of responsibility, not responsiveness. In order to put my responsibility into practice, I cannot but have a comportment in which entities in my life should mostly be ontically true. In other words, not only am I bound to getting this entity—myself—‘right’, but I am also bound to getting other entities ‘right’ as well. As it is Dasein who undertakes to get entities ‘right’, so in any beholdenness to entities it is related with ontical truth’s bindingness on Dasein.
Integrity and Human Finitude as a Way of Life

(see Haugeland, 2000, Section III; also B&T, in particular, Section 44 ‘Dasein, Disclosedness, and Truth’.)

Dasein’s responsibility to itself can only make sense if it gets itself ‘right’, and getting itself ‘right’ can only be possible if its disclosure is about its self as a whole. Besides, such wholeness cannot be obtained if Dasein does not think through its life to its end, that is, towards its death (see B&T, p. 305/352). It is a finite whole. The essential element of getting itself ‘right’ is that Dasein should not hide away from its finitude. When the responsibility is regarded as such, it is an owned responsibility that involves a moment of taking it over. From a fallen state and normality, Dasein has to wake up, to choose the possibilities inherited from its culture and history, and to double-check whether they ought to be maintained or changed. Realizing its own finitude, the authentic Dasein should also be aware of and care about its fallible nature and, thus, the possibilities of taking it back or giving it up entirely. Therefore, its responsible way of life is risky and bears the possibility of the systematic breakdown of its world (see Haugeland, 2000, Section IV).

What is personal or cultural integrity like in this Heideggerian notion? It is more than consistency within a person’s or culture’s set of principles or commitments, more than that between principles and actions and more than that between beliefs and expressions. The internal coherence involved is determined by the essential aim of self-disclosure (and thus disclosure of being), that is, to get it ‘right’—it may be stated that any motivation should be subordinate to this overall motivation. With this aim, the content of the principles or commitments is necessarily constrained: a coherent form alone will not suffice. It must be a coherent life with propriety that matters to the person or culture and have resoluteness towards its whole life that will cease someday.

A kind of ‘intellectual integrity’ is entailed in the Heideggerian conception of personal or cultural integrity. Basically, the term ‘intellectual integrity’ is commonly meant to be ‘a kind of concordance of the will with the intellect’ (Hack, 2004, p. 12). For instance, self-deception is to be avoided, accordingly, because it involves some willfulness against the intellect. As Hack remarks (following Peirce), ‘intellectual integrity is, at its heart, a matter of conducting your intellectual life from the motive of truth-seeking’ (ibid., p. 13). This characteristic of intellectual integrity is actually highlighted in the Heideggerian notion. However, the latter’s use of the term ‘truth’ is not restricted to discovered facts (‘ontical truth’) but has a much wider scope that includes disclosed possibilities (‘ontological truth’). What is at stake is the being of entities, ‘in terms of which they are intelligible as entities’ (Haugeland, 2000, p. 47). It is not only an issue of our responsiveness to evidence. Dasein ‘reawakens the question of being’ (ibid.), lets entities be, lets them show themselves, and brings them out of hiddenness into the open, in order to have a proper discernment of their possibilities, and to get them ‘right’ (see ibid., p. 55). Dasein must function with the intellectual resources (theories, concepts, languages, methods, etc.) inherited from its tradition. These resources are not alien to it; it has to deliberate whether to accept them. Accepting them
implies that it has faith in them. However, its finitude does not allow it to come
to a settling point. Thus, it has to bear the risk of ‘the potential intrinsigence of
intraworldly entities’ (ibid., p. 73).

It is evident that here ‘intellectual integrity’ and ‘personal/cultural
integrity’ are mutually implied. In order to achieve the former, Dasein must be
intellectually honest and sincere. The essential condition is to have a pure will
towards the intellect in obtaining understanding, knowledge and truth with
regard to itself and other entities: this will is precisely the core of
‘personal/cultural integrity’ that constrains what is regarded as important for
the person or culture. On behalf of Heidegger, Haugeland suggests that the
existential responsibility in question is a responsibility to Dasein itself, ‘to that
very disclosing of self and being that, as a resolute decisiveness, resoluteness
as such is’ (ibid., p. 71). There are no external norms; what is called ‘right’
must not be determined by any principle, standard, evidence, judgment or
vision, etc. towards which Dasein does not really feel compelled.

Needless to say, a person or culture, does not find only intellectual
principles binding. The ‘right’ that matters should extend to the entire scope of
being, and in particular, to moral practices. In most cases, moral purposes,
principles, conceptions, intuitions, virtues, sensibilities, and commitments, etc.
define, and constitute, the core of humans’ lives. In the Heideggerian view, all
these aspects of morality are domains of being’s disclosure (and at the same
time Dasein’s disclosure of itself). Ontical truth and ontological truth make
authentic moral lives possible. Discerning that these moral principles are the
appropriate ones, following them whole-heartedly, and standing for these
principles in the public, are features of a good life and are what is termed
‘moral integrity’. This way of life is not added to ‘personal/cultural integrity’
and ‘intellectual integrity’ as an extra requirement. If the personal/cultural and
intellectual dimensions of integrity of life are construed in terms of ‘right’, and
if ‘right’ is what is derived from being as a whole, then the moral dimension of
integrity of life is necessarily interwoven with the other two dimensions. The
moral principles that are adhered to would not be simply conventional or that
which define the personal or cultural identity. These principles come along
with moral justifications, thinking, judgments, sensibilities, etc.—a whole set
of conditions of intelligibility (sense-making) and of sofoundingness that must be
fulfilled (Haugeland employs the term ‘sofoundingness’ to translate Heidegger’s
word ‘Befindlichkeit’ that indicates humans’ evaluative and caring orientation
in their making sense of a current, concrete situation [see Haugeland, 2000,
p.52]).

There must be a learning process on the part of Dasein in order to adopt
the intellectual practices defined by its tradition and to be able to become itself.
Moreover, because of its finitude, its practices are historical. Whatever ends
and norms that guide and govern these practices are subject to change—not
only content updating but also possibly a complete breakdown. It is not so
difficult to connect such a possibility of radical transformation to both
personal/cultural integrity and intellectual integrity. For human beings, we can
exist, at most, in this manner. The disclosure of our possibilities and
impossibilities is determined by the historical era we are living in. We cannot be persons of another time nor can we make sense of all possible worlds. Our moral practices are also historical, in the sense that novel ethical problems have emerged (such as the problems of global justice and ‘coreponsibility’, see Apel, 1993).

Justice, love and peace, etc. might not have the same meanings in different times, and their contents are evolving. However, no matter the sense in which these moral ideals are observed, they are rarely qualified (not even implicitly) by any clause specifying any temporal restriction. It would be odd to be committed to a moral imperative to love others, such that its content is supposed to pertain to this world only. Yet, in Heidegger’s view, any moral concern of mine rests on my affirmation to live my finite life as explained in the foregoing. Moral principles thus have no scope beyond my being towards death.

Using a favorite metaphor of Wittgenstein to explain the issue, if we are given a finite segment of numerical series, there can be various rules governing its continuous progression. Now the Heideggerian notion contends that it makes no sense to consider Dasein’s potential progression beyond the limiting point. Based merely on the finite segment of the numerical series, can we tell which rule is followed? The Heideggerian reply would be that the given numerals are all we have, and that only in this context can we determine which rule we intend to apply. However, how can the significance of love be restricted within a person’s or culture’s lifetime? The beloved may still be alive after the lover’s death; the well-being of the beloved is what the lover wants. If the identity of the lover is due to her love, then the lover does not simply amount to what she gives through her love when she is alive; the lover should be conceived as one who would continuously give her love if she had not died. Should Mother Teresa be still alive, she, being the follower of the moral imperative ‘Love others’, would behave in the same way, other things being equal. As a matter of fact, in moral practice, people are quite commonly guided by idealized principles, while Heidegger’s notion of human finitude tends to exclude these norms.

A Wittgensteinian View for Comparison

Unlike Heidegger, idealized rules that are practiced in human lives have their place in Wittgenstein’s perspective. For Wittgenstein, philosophy is basically descriptive and ‘leaves everything as it is’ (PI, §124; see also ibid., §126). Yet, he is concerned with the fact that we are succumbed by the picture that terminating and nonterminating procedures differ in extension or size. That is a wrong emphasis, according to Wittgenstein. ‘To say that a technique is unlimited does not mean that it goes on without ever stopping ...; but that it lacks the institution of the end, that it is not finished off’ (RFM, II-45). Wittgenstein asked ‘how many numerals have you learned to write down?’ Turing answered: $\aleph_0$ (that is, the first order of infinity). Wittgenstein agreed
with this way in which ‘ℵ₀’ is used. For the question is not ‘How many numerals are there?’ It does make sense to build a street as far as you can and number the houses in this street with a different ℵ₀, ‘[b]ut not “There are ℵ₀ trees in this row”’ (LFM, p. 70). (See Fogelin, 2009, pp. 129-132, and also PI, §§208-209). These remarks in philosophy of mathematics shed light on moral practices, in which nonterminating (idealized) principles are followed.

Like Heidegger, Wittgenstein puts forward a dynamic notion of practices: ‘a language-game [i.e. a practice] does change with time’ (OC, §256). ‘When language-games change, then there is a change in concepts, and with the concepts the meanings of words change’ (ibid., §65). In Heideggerian terms, the possibilities and impossibilities would undergo holistic transformation.

However, even though Wittgenstein considers human finitude, his explanation of moral forms of life would not be, in the same manner as Heidegger’s, structured by possible radical changes such as world-collapses. Apart from the point just indicated concerning Wittgenstein’s distinction between terminating and nonterminating procedures, the reason for this has to trace back to the profound difference between the two philosophies in that Wittgenstein does not hold a visual model as Heidegger does but, rather, a model of action.¹ White places much emphasis on Heidegger’s use of the term ‘resolution’ (‘Entschlossenheit’). She recommends that we ‘consider the optical meaning of “resolution”’ (2005, p. 116). With Heidegger’s overall project in mind, that is, the attempt to account for the disclosure of being, Dasein’s resoluteness is like adjusting a microscope’s resolution in order ‘to see what the thing in question is’ (ibid.) and to bring ‘a new answer into focus’ (ibid.). According to Heidegger, Dasein’s capacities of seeing are historically conditioned, and thus the ‘right’ that it can disclose (‘see’) is bound: it always stands open to being with risk.

As for Wittgenstein, my practical commitments (most basic ones included) exhibit themselves in a rule’s making it ‘possible for me to hold by it and [to] let it compel me’ (RFM, VII-66; see also ibid. VII-47) and in my adopting a concept (see RFM, VI-8; this is mostly done gradually”), etc., including the concept of (im)mortality—my affirmation to live this life is conceptual through and through. These principles and concepts are the grammar of my practice. What I learn from practice is more than what I can see: ‘someone who has had practice will pause and sense that there is a difficulty close by even though he cannot see it yet’ (CV, 29e). Socrates gives the words ‘life’ and ‘death’ their senses through his action (practice). Religious faith ‘is a trusting’ (ibid., 72e); such a way of life, pace Heidegger, could not be always at risk albeit with the limitation of ‘visibility’. ‘Christianity is not based on a historical truth; rather, it offers us a (historical) narrative and says: now believe! … believe, through thick and thin, which you can do only as a result of a life. Here you have a narrative, don’t take the same attitude to it as you take to other historical narratives! Make a quite different place in your life for it’ (CV, p. 32e).³

¹(2011)
²[A musical phrase] insinuates itself into my life. I adopt it as my own
³D. Z. Phillips’s works (in particular, Death and Immortality [1970]) illuminate further this
Wittgenstein emphasizes the role of decision in his dynamic notion of rule-following. ‘We decide spontaneously … on a new language-game’ (RFM, IV-23). Such a decision is not simply a judgment based on past experience and learning, but a commitment to a new practice. Moreover, the decision in question is not some ‘third thing’ that is supposed to bridge the gap between a certain norm and its application, which is famously considered as problematic. Rather, the spontaneous decision indicates my taking up a new concept and rule in my life. (See Huen [2011] for further discussion on Wittgenstein’s sophisticated notion of decision in normativity.) This type of decision differs from any perceptual judgment on what there is: the Heideggerian notion of resolution suggests. For Wittgenstein, the decision in a radically novel situation or crisis is an indicator of the moment when a rule has been modified and reflects the agent’s commitment towards the future and his/her courage—such ‘future’ need not be restricted by some terminating end. ‘To the extent that there is courage there is a link with life and death’ (CV, 39e). Here reasons and justifications are exhausted. Laden with a sense of ‘right’, it is ‘one of my foundations’ (RFM, VI-46). My foundations evolve through my acceptance of an updated norm or concept, including the notions of mortality and eternal life. This suggests a deep meaning of integrity of life. Wittgenstein would contend that a Tibetan Buddhist or a converted Christian adopts a concept of death, which functions as one of his/her foundations and which cannot be separated from other concepts that he/she lives within his/her religious life. ‘A confession has to be a part of [his or her] new life’ (CV, 18e). For Wittgenstein, albeit death will come someday, such a confession involves a commitment to principles nonterminating in nature.

References


point, of course. See also Burley (2009), which is a Wittgensteinian attempt to argue for the compatibility between eternal life and the finality of death.


I propose to examine the mysterious case of Arthur Conan Doyle in order to try to find out why a trained doctor in the empirically-minded intellectual climate of Edinburgh in the late Victorian Era could have become a fanatical advocate of spiritualism, a believer in fairies, and a self-described prophet of the "New Millennium." Doyle was an intelligent, well-educated, and widely-read man who became the highest paid fiction writer of his generation. His advocacy of spiritualism was disastrous for both his reputation and the main source of his income. How could he have come to believe in such utter nonsense? Oddly, Doyle saw no contradiction between his scientific and his religious beliefs, because he regarded spiritualism as a science or, at least, a natural extension of science. His intellectual and spiritual development is interesting to study as an example of how someone with an inquiring mind could become dogmatically fixed on an ideology in a way that is similar to contemporary scientists who adopt "intelligent design" as a scientific theory.

Born in Edinburgh in 1859, Doyle was raised in an Irish Catholic family and attended a Jesuit boarding school, but he became an agnostic by the age of 16. He studied medicine at the University of Edinburgh, and his character Sherlock Holmes is based on Dr. Joseph Bell, a professor of clinical surgery who was a legend among medical students for his astonishing powers of diagnosis based on observation of minute details and logical reasoning and to whom Doyle dedicated The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes.¹ In the early years of his medical practice, Doyle described himself as a "convinced materialist," who regarded spiritualism as "the greatest nonsense upon earth" and wondered "how any sane man could believe such things."² At this time of his life, he believed that "when the candle burned out, the light disappeared," but his father, a talented artist, was confined to a mental institution for alcoholism and delusions, and Doyle struggled with the question of what happened to the soul of a man whose head was bashed in or who became addicted to alcohol or drugs. In a spirit of scientific inquiry into the uncharted potential of the mind,

he read dozens of books on spiritualism, explored theosophy, mesmerism, occultism, and Buddhism, and participated in table-tipping sessions and experiments in telepathy.¹

The Victorian era was enthralled with pseudo-sciences. The modern spiritualist movement began in Hydesville, New York in 1848 when Maggie and Katie Fox, known as the "Rochester knockers," claimed that they were able to communicate with a spirit that inhabited their home. By the time of Doyle's birth, the movement had millions of American followers, and Abraham Lincoln and his wife were said to have participated in séances. The fad spread to Britain, its reputation being greatly enhanced by Queen Victoria's support, and it attracted a number of leading scientists. The Society for Psychical Research was formed in 1882 by a distinguished group of Cambridge scholars to examine paranormal phenomena in a rigorously scientific manner, and its members included the future Prime Minister Arthur Balfour, the philosopher William James, the naturalist Russell Wallace, the astronomer Nicolas Flammarion, and the physicist William Crookes, inventor of the radiometer. Doyle was impressed by the scientific support that spiritualism was attracting, in spite of the fact that mediums were regularly being exposed as frauds. Even after Margaret Fox publicly exposed spiritualism as a sham in 1888, admitting that she and her sister had staged all of the dramatic events at their home in Hydesdale and that the knockings were caused by an apple on a string, there were too many true believers to kill the movement. Doyle's faith in spiritualism remained unshaken to his death in 1930.²

It is an often-noted paradox that Doyle became a convert to spiritualism soon after creating the ultra-rational Sherlock Holmes. He wrote his first Holmes story, "A Study in Scarlet," in the spring of 1886, and in June, 1887 at a séance at his house with a professional medium, he was convinced that "it was absolutely certain that intelligence could exist apart from the body." The medium flattered Doyle by telling him that "he had a great brain, was full of magnetism, and had a gift for healing," and the turning point came when he produced an example of "automatic writing" specifically intended for Doyle: "This gentleman is a healer. Tell him not to read Leigh Hunt's book." Doyle was astounded, because he had been debating whether to read Hunt's Comic Dramatists of the Restoration, but was put off by its lewdness, and he had not mentioned this to anyone. Believing that he had found "conclusive proof of some power at work," Doyle noted in his journal, "This message marks in my spiritual career the change of 'I believe' into 'I know.'" He wrote in a letter to the magazine Light, "After weighing the evidence I could no more doubt the existence of the phenomena than I could doubt the existence of lions in Africa."³

After the death of a son, a brother, two brothers-in-law, and two nephews during the First World War, Doyle sank into depression and found some

² Lycett, 95-96; 135-139; Miller, 350-357; 414-415.
³ Lycett, 140-141; Miller, 358.
comfort in spiritualism. The war persuaded him to go public with his message and offer consolation to the millions of bereaved by writing books on spiritualism and lecturing to audiences of thousands. At a memorial service at Albert Hall in 1919, he drew loud cheers by announcing that spiritualism was "the greatest movement that had been seen for the last 2,000 years." In *The Vital Message* he described spiritualism as "absolutely the most important development in the whole history of the human race." He wrote, the "inner reason" for the war was to "shake mankind loose from gossip and pink teas, and sword-worship, and Saturday night drunks, and self-seeking politics and theological quibbles--to wake them up." He believed that God had placed him in a special position for conveying his knowledge to the world and boasted in a letter to his mother that he was being called the "Saint Paul of the New Dispensation." By this time, Doyle was off the deep end, carried away by an exaggerated sense of his importance and convinced that he had arrived at the ultimate synthesis between science and religion.¹

According to the narrator of an early story, "The Mystery of Cloomer," "Science will tell you that there are no such powers as those claimed by the Eastern mystics. I, John Fothergill West, can confidently answer that science is wrong. For what is science? Science is the consensus of opinion of scientific men, and history has shown that it is slow to accept a truth. Science sneered at Newton for twenty years. Science proved mathematically that an iron ship could not swim, and science declared that a steamship could not cross the Atlantic."² Doyle derived the surname for his famous detective from Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., the doctor, poet, and the father of the Supreme Court Justice, of whom he was a great fan. As a student, Doyle had gone without lunches to buy Holmes' books, and he wrote, "Never have I so known and loved a man whom I had never seen."³ Dr. Holmes' hypothesis that puerperal (or childbed) fever was carried by the attending physician from one delivery to the next was vehemently resisted by many doctors before the germ theory of disease was eventually accepted. Doyle also admired Sir James Simpson, the inventor of chloroform, whose discovery was at first rejected as contrary to God's will. In a letter to the *Evening News* he wrote, "When any new form of knowledge arises above the mental horizon of the human race there are always a certain number of well-meaning but narrow-minded men who are ready to denounce it as being opposed to Scriptural teaching."⁴ Doyle was correct in pointing out that scientists are often slow to accept new discoveries, but he made the fateful mistake of associating the opponents of spiritualism with the narrow-minded men whose orthodox religious beliefs obstructed the growth of scientific knowledge.

²Lycett, 146.
³William S. Baring-Gould, 10.
⁴Lycett, 158.
Sherlock Holmes' philosophy is quite different from his creator's, and Doyle portrays him as one who fits into neither the category of the true pioneers of the growth of knowledge nor the category of the conservative religious obstructionists. Holmes' genius is not the discovery of new facts or theories, but what he calls "the science of deduction." In the first Holmes story, "A Study in Scarlet," Holmes explains the value of his method by saying that most people reason forward from events to their result, but "the grand thing is to be able to reason backward" from a result to the steps leading up to it.\(^1\) Purists have pointed out that his method is more correctly called neither "deduction" nor "induction," but rather "abduction," which is a distinctive type of reasoning from observations to the most probable hypothesis to explain the facts. In the 1880's C.S. Peirce, the American philosopher who was the founder of pragmatism as well as semiotics, the study of signs, was doing the most original thinking about abduction since Aristotle, and his work had probably attracted Doyle's attention through his articles in *Popular Science Monthly* and his notoriety resulting from being dismissed from Harvard for having an extramarital affair with a French gypsy woman.\(^2\)

Although Holmes claims to be a practitioner of science, Doyle describes him as a person whose mind is closed to vast areas of common-sense knowledge, as well as to what he was convinced are the most important spiritual truths. Holmes is first introduced by Watson's friend Stamford as "a little too scientific for my tastes--it approaches cold-bloodedness. I could imagine his giving a friend a little pinch of the latest vegetable alkaloid, not out of malevolence, you understand, but simply out of a spirit of inquiry in order to have a definite idea of the effects . . . He appears to have a passion for definite and exact knowledge . . . but it may be pushed to excess. When it comes to beating the subjects in the dissecting-rooms with a stick . . . to verify how far bruises may be produced after death." Holmes' knowledge is highly specialized and selective. Watson says, Holmes' "ignorance was as remarkable as his knowledge. Of contemporary literature, philosophy, and politics he appeared to know next to nothing. . . My surprise reached a climax when I found incidentally that he was ignorant of the Copernican Theory and of the composition of the Solar System. That any civilized human being in this nineteenth century should not be aware that the earth traveled round the sun appeared to me to be such an extraordinary fact that I could hardly realize it." Holmes replies, "What the deuce is it to me? . . . You say that we go round the sun. If we went round the moon it would not make a pennyworth of difference to me or to my work."\(^3\)

In the second Holmes story, "The Sign of Four," when Holmes says that he did not notice the attractiveness of Miss Morstan, one of his clients and

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\(^2\)Lycett, 125-126.

\(^3\)"A Study in Scarlet," 21.
Watson's future wife, Watson says, "You really are an automaton--a calculating machine . . . There is something positively inhuman in you at times." When Holmes asserts that "Women are never to be entirely trusted--not the best of them," Watson comments, "I did not pause to argue over this atrocious statement." Holmes accuses Watson of spicing up his rendition of "A Study in Scarlet" with romanticism, "which produces much the same effect as if you worked a love-story or an elopement into the fifth proposition of Euclid." Watson protests, "But the romance was there. I could not tamper with the facts," and Holmes replies, "Some facts should be suppressed, or, at least, a just sense of proportion should be observed in treating them. The only point in the case which deserved mention was the curious analytical reasoning from effects to causes, by which I succeeded in unraveling it." Doyle is suggesting that Holmes is so tough-minded that he paradoxically becomes positively unscientific by committing the cardinal sin of advocating the suppression of evidence. This argument had recently been made by the American philosopher William James in "The Dilemma of Determinism" and would later reappear in his famous essay "The Will to Believe." As James puts it, "It seems a grudging and sickly way of meeting so robust a universe to shrink from any of its facts and wish them not to be." A rule of thinking which would absolutely prevent me from acknowledging certain kinds of truth if those kinds of truth were really there would be an irrational rule."

Doyle portrays his detective as a kind of Nietzschean nihilist who uses cocaine to escape from the meaninglessness of life. Holmes says, "I cannot live without brainwork. What else is there to live for? Stand at the window here. Was ever such a dreary, dismal, unprofitable world? See how the yellow fog swirls down the street and drifts across the dun-coloured houses? What could be more hopelessly prosaic and material?" In one of the last Holmes stories, "The Adventure of the Retired Colourman," Holmes laments, "But is not all life pathetic and futile? . . . We reach. We grasp. And what is left in our hands at the end? A shadow. Or worse than a shadow--misery."

Although he admired Holmes' logical methods, Doyle found Holmes' nihilistic philosophy utterly abhorrent and unbelievable, the kind of "grudging and sickly" approach to the universe that James mocked as ridiculously irrational.

Doyle wrote to his mother in 1891 "I think of slaying Holmes in the last and winding him up for good. He takes my mind from better things." His mother replied, "You won't! You can't! You mustn't!" and correctly predicted that his readers would not take this lightheartedly. In December 1893, Doyle wrote in his journal, "Killed Holmes." He thought that the Reichenbach Falls in

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1"The Sign of Four," The Complete Sherlock Holmes, Vol. I., 90; 96; 129.
2William James, "The Dilemma of Determinism" (1884), Essays in Pragmatism (New York: Macmillan, 1948), 55.
3William James, "The Will to Believe," (1896), Essays in Pragmatism, 107 (James' emphasis).
4"The Sign of Four," 93.
Switzerland, which he had recently visited and described as a "terrible place," was "a worthy tomb for poor Sherlock, even if I buried my banking account with him." There followed an outpouring of public grief and outrage such had not been seen since the death of Dickens' "Little Nell" fifty-two years earlier. One newspaper reported that "a collective gasp of horror could be heard from Land's End to John O'Groats." Furious letters poured into the office of the Strand, begging for more stories, and 20,000 canceled their subscriptions to the magazine in which the stories had appeared. He was called a "brute" by one reader, and another allegedly hit him with her handbag. London workers wore black crepe and armbands, and "Keep Holmes Alive" societies were formed in New York. Doyle defended himself by saying, "I have much been blamed for doing that gentleman to death, but I hold that it was not murder, but justifiable homicide in self-defense, since, I, if I had not killed him, he would certainly have killed me," explaining that after writing twenty-six Holmes stories, dreaming up new plots and chains of inductive reasoning had become a "trying occupation." "Poor Holmes is dead and damned," he wrote in a letter to a friend. "I have had such an overdose of him that I feel towards him as I do towards pate-de-foie-gras, of which I once ate too much, so that the name of it gives me a sickly feeling to this day." Due to popular demand as well as financial considerations, Holmes reappeared in "The Hound of the Baskervilles" and "The Adventure of the Empty House" eight years after his alleged death. Decades later, after resurrecting Holmes and writing 30 more stories, Doyle described Holmes as a "monstrous growth from a comparatively small seed... The curious thing is how many people there are in the world who are perfectly convinced that he is a living human being. I get letters addressed to him. I get letters asking for his autograph. I get letters addressed to his rather stupid friend, Watson. I've even had ladies writing to say that they'd be very glad to act as his housekeeper." To an enthusiastic reviewer of the collected Holmes stories, he wrote that he sometimes hated Holmes and wished he had never created him, because his popularity had prevented a proper appreciation of his more serious work. At the end of "The Final Problem," in which Holmes has apparently met his death along with his arch-enemy Moriarty, Watson gives him a noble eulogy as "the best and the wisest man whom I have ever known." As George Orwell and others have pointed out, these are the exact words in which Socrates is described after his death, as recounted in Benjamin Jowett's translation of Plato's dialogue the "Phaedo." Watson is often an unreliable narrator, and Doyle did not share this view of Holmes, who, unlike Plato and Socrates, had

1William S. Baring-Gould, 14-15; Miller, 158-159.
2Miller, 158.
3William S. Baring-Gould, 16; Miller, 160.
4Miller, 465; 472.
6Samuel Rosenberg, Naked is the Best Disguise: The Death and Resurrection of Sherlock Holmes (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1974, 185.)
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no inkling of the mysteries of the afterlife. Doyle is poking gently erudite fun at Watson as well as his audience for poor judgment of character. It is clearly Socrates, rather than Holmes, whom Doyle was intending to eulogize in his first killing of Holmes.

While Doyle's stories got better, his intellectual powers deteriorated into infantile credulity. He was so sincere in his gullibility and need for the certainty that he would be united with his loved ones in the afterlife that even his critics respected him for his honesty and his zealous courage in the face of opposition. In the words of Harry Price, a leading opponent of spiritualism, "Poor, dear, lovable, credulous Doyle. He was a giant in stature with the heart of a child." 1 Why was Doyle incapable of facing up to the realities that life is not always fair and that no human relationships last forever? Some explain his conversion from an open-minded, scientific attitude into ideological fanaticism as a result of the social climate of the time and the influence of many of his friends and colleagues, as well as his second wife, who became a convert to spiritualism and practiced automatic writing. Others emphasize his particular temperament and his psychological difficulties in attempting to reconcile his father's madness and creativity with his mother's conventional religious belief.2

Whether we lean towards the sociological or the psychological type of explanation, a few things are clear. In his own life Doyle lacked the observational skills that he described so vividly in Sherlock Holmes. He was oblivious to the tricks of the mediums that Houdini and many others who were not magicians found easy to catch. On the occasion of his conversion to spiritualism at a séance in his home, it does not seem to have occurred to him to look and see if an unread copy of the book that the medium warned him against was open to view in his study. Although he was a trained doctor and had studied tuberculosis in Berlin, he was so immersed in his work that he failed to diagnose the disease in his first wife.3 He had an extraordinarily powerful imagination, which led him to leap easily beyond facts to theory, as the great scientists of the past had done in challenging prevailing paradigms. His strong need to believe in perfect justice is apparent in his description of the afterlife in The Vital Message as a place of laughter and joy where there are no poor and no rich, deformities are removed, the ugly is made beautiful, the weak are made strong, limbs lost in the war are replaced, and aging does not occur, but children who died in infancy grow up to be united as adults with their parents.4 In the Holmes stories Doyle created a world in which logical methods always result in certainty and justice is always done, but he became dissatisfied with a merely imaginary realization of perfect Truth and Justice and had a compelling need to believe that these ideals actually exist in a real world beyond the grave. After his death in 1930 a front-page headline in the New York Times declared “Widow Indicates Hope of Message,” and 6,000

1Miller, 409.
2Lycett, 140; 143.
3Miller, 154.
4The Vital Message, 41-42.
people in evening dress packed the Albert Hall to witness Doyle’s expected appearance in an empty chair placed on the stage. Although Lady Conan Doyle and the medium Estelle Roberts claimed to sense his presence, many disgruntled members of the audience walked out during the service while the chair remained empty.¹

The philosophical implications of this poignant tale of decline into fanaticism are far from “Elementary, my dear Watson,” but one possible way of interpreting it occurs to me. Nietzsche’s metaphorical contrast between the Apollonian and the Dionysian is well known, but it is less widely recognized that in addition to giving a profound analysis of conflicting elements within culture, he also anticipated recent discoveries in neuroscience about the different modes of thinking of the right and left hemispheres of the brain.² In *Human, All Too Human*, an early work written in 1878 when Doyle was a young man who had recently lost his religious faith, Nietzsche wrote with astonishing prescience about the bicameral human brain as follows: “A higher culture must give man a double brain, two brain chambers, as it were, one to experience science, and one to experience nonscience. Lying next to one another, without confusion, separable, self-contained: our health demands this. In the one domain lies the source of strength, in the other the regulator. Illusions, biases, passions must give heat; with the help of scientific knowledge, the pernicious and dangerous consequences of overheating must be prevented.”³

Nietzsche saw threats to society from two directions—on the one hand, nihilistic paralysis resulting from over-emphasizing science and neglecting the Dionysian right hemisphere, and on the other hand, unbridled passion resulting from over-emphasizing “nonscience” and neglecting the Apollonian left hemisphere. According to one biographer, “The idea of a bicameral system flashes up again and again in Nietzsche’s work, and then vanishes, much to the detriment of his philosophy. If he had held to it, he might have spared himself some of his mad visions of grand politics and the will to power.”⁴ Iain McGilchrist has recently argued insightfully in *The Master and his Emissary* that contemporary philosophy and science have succumbed to the first danger in that the left hemisphere’s way of thinking has vanquished the right’s, forgetting that, as Nietzsche put it, the domain of the right hemisphere is the source of warmth and power.⁵ Doyle illustrates the second danger of allowing

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⁵Iain McGilchrist, *The Master and his Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Modern World* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2010). McGilchrist’s title is taken from a story in Nietzsche, but I have been unable to find the reference in Nietzsche’s works.
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... illusions, biases, and passions to operate without acknowledging the need for the scientific regulating function of the left hemisphere. In finally killing off Holmes for the second time, Doyle symbolically rejected his left brain, which left him free to embrace spiritualism whole-heartedly and uncritically. As Nietzsche predicted, without the control that science provides, Doyle’s powerful intellect overheated and burned out, and his creative genius degenerated in the later Professor Challenger stories into tedious proselytizing.

Among the many ironies in this story, one of the most striking is that Holmes’ creator, who bet everything on the hope of living forever, is largely forgotten, while his fictional character, who did not believe in the afterlife, achieved a kind of immortality in literature. The enduring popularity of the Sherlock Holmes stories may be due to Doyle’s brilliantly imagined personification of the two brain hemispheres. Holmes represents in extreme form the focused, razor-sharp intellect of the left hemisphere, while Watson represents the compassion and broad-mindedness of the right. The tension between Holmes’ and Watson’s attitudes of mind is held in balance by Doyle’s convincing portrayal of their improbable friendship. Without Holmes, Doyle finally lost his own intellectual balance, which was the source of his genius as a story-teller as well as his sanity. Perhaps it was Doyle's ambivalent relationship with his detective that made Holmes such an eccentric, vivid, and unforgettable character. Doyle portrayed Holmes as a mind oblivious to all of the realms of scientific and humanistic knowledge that were not directly related to his work as well as tone-deaf to ordinary human emotions. Doyle himself was the mirror image of Holmes, equally closed-minded in his certainty that his imaginary world of perfect justice was the ultimate reality. McGilchrist writes, “Certainty is the greatest of all illusions: whatever kind of fundamentalism it may underwrite, that of religion or of science, it is what the ancients meant by hubris. The only certainty, it seems to me, is that those who believe they are certainly right are certainly wrong.”

Spiritualism is no longer fashionable today, but there are plenty of enemies of the left brain--religious fundamentalists, global warming deniers, believers in aliens, and conspiracy theorists of many forms--about whom Nietzsche warned in calling for a balance between the Apollonian and the Dionysian elements in the bicameral brain. My interpretation of Doyle’s philosophy does not address, let alone solve, the larger mystery of why the two parts of our asymmetrical brains often lose their ability to work together and how to cure the imbalance, but it seems to me that Doyle’s stories not only entertain us but also help us to understand the archetypal conflict between the ways of thinking of Holmes and Watson that exists within ourselves.

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1McGilchrist, p. 460.
On Getting Real: Stoicism and Psychoanalysis

Mathew Sharpe

In *Philosophy as a Way of Life* and *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, Pierre Hadot has drawn scholarly and wider attention to the notion of a certain primacy of practice, if not of “practical reason”, in ancient philosophy. Far from a solely theoretical endeavour, Hadot claims that ancient philosophy aimed at a transformation of subjects’ passions, desires, perceptions, and judgments. This transformation was rooted in a rational ascent of the student towards knowledge of the whole, and man’s place within it. However, in order to constantly re-impress their theoretically enlightened perspective upon the philosophical student, each school recommended a series of what Hadot calls “spiritual exercises” to be repeated by students: from forms of meditation and dialogue to anamnetic practices and forms of bodily ascesis.¹

Yet, as Michel Foucault notes in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* (Foucault 2004, 30), in the 20th century psychoanalysis emerged as a theoretically-informed therapeutic practice predicated on a similar connection as interested Hadot in the ancients, between subjects’ search for knowledge and a promised transformative effect of this pursuit. As the work of psychoanalytically-informed classicist like Jonathan Lear has explored, a possible, unlikely link between modern psychoanalysis and ancient philosophy thus suggests itself: a link built around the notion that certain species of rational reflection can play a role in the therapy of subjects’ desire. Pursuing these leads, this paper explores the possible *rapprochement* of ancient Stoicism and modern psychoanalysis suggested by their common ambition to therapeutically use “our god *logos*” (Freud 1927, 54) as a means to promote self-knowledge and human flourishing. In particular, we shall focus upon Jacques Lacan’s, most philosophically sophisticated, conception of psychoanalysis. While there is a growing awareness of the debt modern cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) owes to ancient Stoicism (Robertson 2010; Evans 2007), we will hence be breaking new ground in claiming that Stoicism’s philosophical therapy also anticipates that post-Freudian school of psychoanalysis apparently farthest distant from CBT.

The paper has two major parts, followed by some brief concluding remarks. In the first part, obstacles facing any over-sanguine, over-simplistic “reconciliation” between Lacanian psychoanalysis and Stoicism are directly

¹Hadot’s position corresponds to overwhelming evidence of philosophy in the Hellenistic period, and has informed other contemporary authors on Stoicism in particular, such as John Searls, Richard Sorabji, Martha Nussbaum, and A. A. Long.
stated. In the second part, four claims of increasing force are made which suggest that nevertheless there are meaningful links between Stoicism and Lacanian thought, at the levels of (i) therapeutic practice, (ii) cognitivist conceptions of desire and the affects, (iii) the normativity of each position, and finally (iv) their more fundamental ontological claims. So let us proceed.

We begin by raising the specific obstacles that seem to stand in the way of a meaningful comparison of Stoicism and Lacanian thought, which we will then have to contest.

First of all, despite Lacan’s formidable philosophical erudition, he always contrasted classical philosophy with psychoanalysis, in his career-long attempt to delineate psychoanalysis’ epistemic status, between philosophy, science, revealed religion, medicine, and poetics. From his earliest texts and Seminars, Lacan accuses philosophical discourse of being founded on a kind of desire to disavow anything concerning the manifestations of the unconscious. Classical philosophy, Lacan claims in Seminar XX, is founded on what he terms an “ame-amet” (in English “soul-love”) deeply at odds with the meaning of Freud’s disclosure of the unconscious. (Lacan 1998, 88/81) This “soul-love” rests on the supposition of a primordial, mirroring harmony of nous (mind) and cosmos (world), intellectus et res (Lacan 1998, 105/96, 127/115)¹. On the basis of this fundamental supposition, it follows that to know is always a good thing, since it amounts to a kind of return or anamnesis of the mind to its mirroring rapport with the primordial Hen (One). (cf. Hadot 1995a, 158-165)² Yet for Lacan, this philosophic ame-amet is an illusion, and this is what he argues that psychoanalysis’ disclosure of the unconscious most fundamentally shows.

“The discordance between knowledge and being is my subject,” Lacan claims (Lacan 1998, p. 120/109):

being is, as they say, and nonbeing is not. There is or there isn’t. Being is merely presumed in certain words—“individual,” for instance, and “substance.” In my view, it is but a fact of what is said (un fait de dit). The word “subject” that I use [in contrast to “individual” or “substance”] thus takes on a different import. I distinguish myself from the language of being. (Lacan 1998, p. 118/107)³

¹As Lacan presents it, this philosophical stance is given its first, unsurpassable statement in Parmenides’ poem that “what is for thinking and for being are one” (B3) (Lacan 1998, 22; Baumgardt 2002, paras. 11, 21, 25-29).
²Equally, as Plato’s Socrates proposed in the Protagoras, there can on this model be no sin but ignorance: bad conduct reflecting a lamentable break in the rapport between mind and world through error or passion-bred illusion, which philosophy aims to overcome. (Plato, Prot., 352b ff.; Epictetus, Discourses III.8.4; Manual, V; cf. Hadot 1998, pp. 223-225)
³Although we cannot pursue this here, in a series of reflections on the history of science, Lacan argues that this ideal of “ame-amet” is underscored in the nearly unshakable pre-eminence of the sphere as figure of the cosmos and natural model for all motion in Western cosmology up to Kepler and Newton. Lacan argues that this millennia-long cultural fascination with the sphere as an image of perfection and the divine—maintained in Ptolemaic astronomy even in face of the growing difficulties it produced to “save the phenomena” of planetary retrogressions— involves a kind of cosmological projection of the ego’s idealised self-image, which operates
Lacan’s claims in the history of ideas (heavily influenced by Alexandre Koyré), undergird his famous, provocative statements from around 1963 that the subject of psychoanalysis is the subject of modern science: the post-Galilean, -Cartesian and -Newtonian world. This chronological claim, that psychoanalysis is definitively modern, stands as a second apparent Lacanian obstacle to bringing his strand of psychoanalysis together with any ancient philosophy, let alone the Stoics. Lacan’s claim, like most of his formulations, condenses a series of different ideas. But one basic register of it, explored at length in the decisive seventh seminar on The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, is that Freud’s metapsychological model of the brain, from Entwurf einer Psychologie (1895) onwards, was predicated on Helmholzian 19th century biology in turn predicated on the new physics of the 17th and 18th centuries, and its breaking with the ancient notion of a teleonomic, finite, spherical cosmos. For Freud, all organisms (including human beings) operate as kinds of “stimuli-reduction” apparatus, independent of any teleology, except what he would later call the “death drive”: the aim to reduce or remove all stimulation. As Lacan stresses by contrasting the Entwurf with Aristotle’s conception of human desire in the Nicomachean Ethics, this Freudian “subject” is very distant from the psyche or “soul” of classical thought, including Stoicism, with its own specific place in the furniture of the closed, spherical cosmos. (Lacan 1992, 26-38) It is a subject, moreover, whose desires can and manifestly do include those “brutish” impulses Aristotle explicitly says are “not human” in Nicomachean Ethics VII, and excludes from consideration. (Aristotle, NE VII.5 1142b15-25, 31-35).

Such desires, ranging into the criminal and the incestuous, indeed form the basis of psychoanalysis’ raw material, in subjects’ dreams and unconscious fantasies. (Lacan, 1992, 5)

From the side of Stoicism, further causes for caution in suggesting any rapprochement between it and psychoanalysis immediately present themselves. From the perspective of their philosophical therapy, firstly, we can imagine the Stoics would oppose a therapy of desire which seemingly encourages individuals to concern themselves with events deep in their own past, over which they have no (present) control. This seemingly violates what can be called the first, golden Epictetan rule, to which we will be returning,

also in the philosophical ideal of perfect wisdom. In the Stoic tradition, Marcus Aurelius thus exactly enjoins us, in order to achieve a Sage-like peace “free from perturbations”, to “make thyself like Empedocles’ sphere,— All round, and in its joyous rest reposing”. (Med. XII.3) The ontological falsity of this projection has of course now been scientifically demonstrated, first by Kepler’s revelation of the elliptical orbits of the planets. Secondly, although Lacan’s remarks on this subject are themselves characteristically elliptical, Lacan suggests that Newton’s equally-mathematical formulation of the law of inertia, and the primacy of linear motion, also served to shatter the assumption that the spherical motion has any ontological primacy in physics. (eg: Lacan 1992, 75-76; 1998, 43/43)

1See previous note. One register is just chronological: psychoanalysis emerges in the modern period. But Lacan wants to claim, more strongly, that psychoanalysis’ theoretical claims about subjectivity could only emerge in a world wherein the old notion of ame-amer had been fundamentally challenged by Newtonian physics. If there is an unconscious, the claim is, it forever will disappoint the hopes of a perfectly peaceable rapport between conscious mind and world.
concerning the constant need to distinguish between things which are *epi hemin* (dependent upon us) and those we cannot control. (Epictetus *Ench.* I.1) What matters for Stoicism is not the originating, efficient cause at the root of some bad habit or passion-tainted misperception of things, although the Stoics did construct detailed theories about where people’s errors originated. (cf. Graver 2007, 155-158) What matters is the present reality of such dispositions or habits, and the erroneous evaluative judgments (concerning what is good or bad for the individual) these attitudes embody.

Secondly, what psychoanalysis sets out to uncover (symptoms, aberrant desires and impulses) as formations of the unconscious would fall under the heading of what the Stoics termed the *pathē*. But it is foundational for the Stoic that even the *pathē* are within conscious control. The reason lies in the Stoic claim that the ‘passions’ or ‘emotions’ involve not simply an impression or appearance (eg: ‘this person wishes to harm me’). They also involve a conscious, evaluative and propositional assessment on the part of the individual’s ruling faculty or *hegemonikon* (eg: ‘... this harm is bad’). This evaluative assessment licenses a consequent ‘assent’ to some emotive and behavioural response as “appropriate”—‘since this harm is bad, it is *appropriate for me* to scream, seek revenge...’. In other words, to postulate with the psychoanalysts that there are a plethora of mental events which are not conscious, but which shape conscious behaviour, seems from a Stoic perspective a rationalisation of *akrasia*, which downplays the shaping role of our *hegemonikon*. As Lacan highlighted in Seminar VII, subjects’ experience of unconscious symptoms, and compulsions to repeat, involve a register of experiences much more like what Saint Paul, no Stoic, lamented with his “what I would do, that I do not; what I do, that I would not ...’.

These apparent divergences between Stoicism and Lacanian thought can be underscored by comparing the two schools’ contrasting attitudes towards tragic poetry, and the ancient quarrel between philosophy and the poets. A recurrent claim of the Stoics, who follow Plato (eg Aurelius *Meds.* III.7; Epictetus, *Disc.* I.4; Graver 2007, 112-115), is that the characters and actions represented in tragic poetry are the highest expressions of unreformed, pre-philosophic passions and their potentially disastrous personal and social consequences. (cf. Plato *Rep.* III-IV; also IX). The tragic poets are numbered by Chrisippus and Calcidius (as by Cicero) amongst the social causes of human ignorance and error (Graver 2007, 155-158)

Yet everyone knows that Lacan’s teacher Freud’s central metapsychological notion of the Oedipus complex is drawn from Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannus*. In his Seminar II, typically going beyond Freud, Lacan identifies *Oedipus at Colonus* as a model for the end of psychoanalysis, insofar as the wandering hero at the end of this strange tragedy assumes without reserve his terrible destiny, before he is grasped by the gods. (Lacan 1988, 214, 245, 252-257, 271-2) The poets then are more insightful or truthful for Lacan than the classical philosophers, bound to their illusory ideals of *ame-amer*. If figures like Oedipus (or Antigone, in the more famous Seminar VII) remain so fascinatingly compelling, Lacan indeed contends, this is because they are
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figures who do not give way on their desire at whatever cost, where most of us are content to complainingly compromise. As troubling as these examples of tragic drama are, that is, Lacan’s claim is that they represent ancient precedents for modern analysands’ own, Oedipus-like searchings out of the truth, aided by their psychoanalysts. (Lacan 1992, 323) Yet for Stoicism, this cannot be a salutary teaching. As Marcus Aurelius writes, concerning “great” men like Alexander and Philip, untrained in true philosophy:

They themselves shall judge whether they discovered what the common nature required, and trained themselves accordingly. But if they acted like tragic heroes, no one has condemned me to imitate them. Simple and modest is the work of philosophy. Draw me not aside to indolence and pride. (Aurelius Med. IX 29)

Having stated the reasons for caution about any proposed rapprochement of Stoic and Lacanian thought, in the second half of the paper we will now pitch four claims, of increasing force, that seem to us to finally outweigh the preceding counsels of caution.

i. We begin from a first observation, reflected in Freud’s elevation of the “god Logos” as psychoanalysis’ patron deity, that both psychoanalysis and Stoicism are, remarkably, kinds of “talking cure”. Stoic meditation techniques, for instance, were cognitive and analytic, aiming at consolidating the student’s rational assent to the school’s dogmata, rather than focussing on emptying the mind (as in Buddhism). It is through reason and self-awareness that Stoic philosophy holds we can temper the passions and approach the tranquillity of the sage, even when faced with great adversity.

Similarly, psychoanalysis as a distinct practice (as against other forms of psychotherapy, including today’s psychiatry) stands or falls on the possibility that the analysand’s free spoken associations in the presence of the analyst, and the latter’s timely interpretative interventions, can effect a therapy of desire—without drugs or physical techniques. In his early writing “Aggressiveness in Psychoanalysis,” thus, despite all of his associations of analysis with the tragic poets, Lacan significantly claims a philosophical lineage for Freudian clinical practice in the Socratic elenchus. This same philosophical lineage is then underscored in 1959-1960, when Lacan’s devoted the entire first half of his year-long Seminar on Transference to a reading of Plato’s Symposium. In this Seminar, begun immediately after his famous analysis of Sophocles’ Antigone, Lacan holds up not a tragic hero but the philosopher Socrates as a consummate proto-psychoanalyst. (Lacan 2011; see below) It is just that the intransigence of a Thrasymachus or the narcissism of an Alkibiades demands the Freudian radicalisation of Socratic technique, if therapeutic effects are to be achieved—or so Lacan argues. (Lacan 2005, 86-87/106-107) The “analysand” can no longer be face-to-face with the analyst, just as the latter’s interpretations must now be directed at formations of the unconscious (slips and breaks in the analysand’s associations, symptoms, and dreams), rather than aiming at
eliciting “the better reason” from the other to correct their conscious opinions. (Lacan 2005, 87/106-7)

ii. A second point of comparison between Lacanian and Stoic thought lies in their accounts of mind, and theory of the emotions, desires, or passions. It is remarkable that both Stoicism and psychoanalysis see our affects and “animal passions” as meaningfully linguistic, or even propositional in kind. That is to say, both schools of thought have “cognitivist *theories of emotions*—which is of course not to say that Lacanian theory in particular is a species of “cognitive psychology”. We have already touched upon how the Stoics famously depict the *pathē* as kinds of propositional attitudes about the world, and what it is “appropriate” for the agent to do within it: “that is unjust, so it is appropriate for me to be angry ...” (see above).¹ Contrary to popular representations of the Freudian unconscious, however, Lacan insists that Freud’s crucial notion of the *Trieb* (drive) has been disastrously mistranslated as “instinct”, in a way which shows Lacan’s conception of the psyche close to this Stoic, cognitivist position. Lacan stresses in particular that the Freudian *Trieb* (which he renders in the French ‘pulsion’) is a very different thing than animal, somatic instinct, and is explicitly identified by Freud instead with the “ideational representation” in the mind of such somatic *instinkts*. As Freud clarified in “Instincts and Their Vicissitudes (1915)”:

> ... the *Trieb* appears to us as a concept on the frontier between the mental and the somatic, as the psychical representative (*vorstellungen*) of the stimuli originating from within the organism and reaching the mind, as a measure of the demand made for work in consequence of its connection with the body.”²

This is why Lacan programatically argues that Freud depicts the unconscious as “structured like a language”. It is made up of *psychical representatives* of the drives, not a whirlpool of primal animalistic, Byronic passions. And these psychical drive-*vorstellungen*, Lacan famously argued, amount to *linguistic signifiers* formed from the natural language(s) with which the child has been surrounded since its first moments—signifiers which can thus force their way to the surface in distinctly *linguistic* parapraxes like slips, puns, and the missaying of particular words, as well as the rebuses and garbled speeches of dreams.

Without some such position linking drives to language, Lacan notes, it would be impossible to account for how any merely talking cure could effect subjects’ erotic wishes and impulses. The idea is that therapeutic efficacy presupposes that the “talking” in the psychoanalytic clinic allows subjects to *tap*, then with the aid of the analyst’s interventions to *reshape*, the drives’

¹This is indeed one view which positions the Stoics as the ancient ancestors to contemporary forms of “cognitive science” and CBT.

linguistic “psychical representatives” in a way which will in turn reshape the
analysands’ impulses and actions. But in Stoic philosophy, as in Lacanian
psychoanalysis, the linguistic-rational cure reflects the comparable account of
the apparently irrational parts of the psyche responsible for unhappiness as at
base propositional, and subject therefore to rational assessment and change.
For the Stoics, our passions embody false evaluative assessments of things. It
follows that we must first of all rationally correct our false evaluative
assessments of what things are good or bad for us, and then strive to reorient
our habitual forms of thought or judgment, speech and action—for instance, by
underscored repeatedly that, whatever situation and first impulse suggests, it is
not rational to become upset over things we cannot control. (eg Epictetus Disc.
III.3)

iii. This thought brings us to the third, more fundamental comparison of
Lacanian psychoanalysis and Stoicism. Consider again this fundamental Stoic
rule, which advises us to constantly assess all of our judgments, since “the
unexamined representation is not worth having,” as Epictetus adapted Socrates.
(cf. Disc. III.12 (line 15); & I.26 end) As we have said, we must assess all our
thoughts with particular regard for the distinction between what depends upon
us, and so can be subject to our control and change, and what does not depend
upon us. (eg: Epictetus Ench. I.1) Now, most of the things human beings are
led to value as means to achieving eudaimonia are things which are beyond our
control: money, bodily pleasure, fame or honour, the good opinion of all others
we meet ... Hence, if we desire happiness, and set up possession of such
external goods as necessary conditions of this happiness, it follows that we
have made our most precious goal (viz. eudaimonia) the child of fortune.
(Ench. I.1.2) In this way, we have unwittingly set up for ourselves inevitable
appointments with disappointment, fear and anxiety.

Fortunately, the other, more optimistic side to the fundamental Stoic
position is the frequent assertion that we have, in our ruling faculty
(hegemonikon) and capacity for ethical choice (prohairesis) been given by
nature everything sufficient for us to be happy. (eg: Epictetus Disc. I.4 end; I.6;
I.9; I.14; II.6; II.8, etc.) If the Stoics claim that even our most seemingly
immediate perceptions that “I have been harmed” can be reshaped by rational
judgments (Aurelius Meds. IV.7), this is because our hegemonikon can be
reshaped root and branch, through repeated meditative, mnemic, and ascetic
exercises. Pierre Hadot has identified three species of Epictetan exercises of
this type, which Hadot argues structure Marcus Aurelius’ apparently desultory
collection of Meditations and Arian’s selections for Epictetus’ Encheiridion.
First, there is the discipline of desire (called by Hadot “practical physics,”
which aims to help us to accept what is, rather than desiring in vain), the
discipline of impulse or action (concerning others, aiming in particular to
temper the craving for fame and susceptibility to slights), and the discipline of
judgment (viz. of assessing all our judgments, as above, for their evaluative and
ontological commitments). (Hadot 1998, esp. 73-100) All three of these

1A.A. Long, Epictetus: A Stoic and Socratic Guide to Life (Oxford: Oxford University Press,
2002), 85.
“spiritual exercises” are predicated on the fundamental rule that we must divide what is in our control—namely, our judgments, affects, speech and actions—from what is not, so we can learn to withdraw all identity-constitutive attachments from what is ouk eph’ hemin.  

So, someone might ask what bearing this conception of philosophical therapy could have on psychoanalysis, which is so often perceived as a rationalisation of “shifting blame” for subjects’ present unhappinesses onto the past wrongs of others, particularly parents and siblings? This relates to both of the Stoic criticisms we mooted above. Well, Lacan stridently resists all such representations of psychoanalysis as a betrayal of “the meaning of Freud”, akin to the misunderstanding of the linguistic nature of the unconscious. In the important early Écrit “Presentation on Transference”, Lacan for example asks us to reconsider how Freud treats Dora in that famous, founding case study. Dora is in a bad situation, full of recriminations against the others who are “making her unhappy”: she believes her father has turned a blind eye to Herr K’s illicit advances to her in a kind of bargain, trading against his own guilt for pursuing an illicit liaison with the beautiful Frau K. Lacan stresses that, faced with all this testimony of the wrongdoing of others, Freud responds by straight away asking Dora to consider not these others’ conduct, which is beyond her control, but how she is contributing to the situation, and what if any pleasure or enjoyment she is obtaining from the situation. (Lacan 2005, 179/219-220) Of course, we may charge Freud callous here: ignoring the horrible nature of Dora’s situation, and the culpability of her elders, etc. Psychoanalysis, Lacan however underlines—and here we approach, it seems to us, a deeply Stoic point—is about self-transformation. While it cannot alter the past and situations it prompts analysands to recollect, what psychoanalysis can and should aim to do is to alert subjects to how they have actively responded to the vicissitudes of their own history, and what judgments and beliefs they have formed about this history and others which are shaping who they presently are. This is why every time a patient makes some claim about another (“but he hates me”), a good analyst will ask vexing questions like: “but how does it make you feel?”’, or “why do you think he hates you?”, or “what is your attitude to him?”, or “does he remind you of anyone else?”, etc. The aim is, as per Stoicism’s mode of care for the self, to redirect analysand’s attention to their own judgments, beliefs, and desires—exactly those things which are potentially subject to their own present responsibility or hegemonikon, in Stoic terms.

The same kind of almost “neoStoic” kind of thought is operative in Lacan’s later claim—significantly dating from around Seminar VIII on

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1It is not that we, somehow, wholly withdraw from these external or “indifferent” things, which for Stoics are neither good nor evil. Such is an approach more akin to the ancient Cynics’ mode of life than that of Stoics, many of whom like Aurelius or Arian were leading statesmen. (Hadot & Hadot 2004, 13-21; 40-46) Rather, we learn to shape our attitudes towards these adiaphoroi, with which we continue to deal, according to a philosophically transformed attitude.

2Probably the classical case against it in this vein is Philip Rieff’s criticism of psychoanalysis’ place in the “therapeutic culture” of the modern West. Philip Rieff, The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith after Freud (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987).
Socrates and transference (1965)—that the end of analysis involves the
“traversal of the fundamental fantasy”, or the “fall of the object”. The object in
question in this conception of the end of psychoanalysis is the famous Lacanian
objet petit a. This is an illusory object which the subject fantasises has been
lost to or cut from him by society, “the man”, parents, bosses, siblings,
lovers—what Lacan calls the big Other—but whose repossesssion s/he supposes
would secure his makaria. Significantly for our argument, Lacan’s conception
of this objet petit a first emerges, not on the basis of anything from the tragic
poets. It comes out of Lacan’s reflections upon the agalmata (treasures,
beautiful images, wondrous objects) which Plato’s Alkibiades in the
Symposium passionately attests exist inside of Socrates: “Whether anyone else
has caught him in a serious moment and opened him, and seen the agalmata
inside, I know not; but I once saw them ...” (Plato Symp. 216e-f)

Socrates’ famous, unmoving response is that Alkibiades must have better
eyesight than he to see such wonders inside of him, since Socrates knows that
he himself “may be nothing.” (Plato Symp. 219a) And this is the decisive point,
wherein we can see the profound kinship between the later Stoics’ adulation of
Socrates as the figure of the Sage, and Lacan’s adulation of Socrates as the first
psychoanalyst in the West’s literary canon, sensitive to the need for his
transferential erastes to give up on the fantasy that even Socrates can deliver
him virtue and happiness. For Socrates’ response to Alkibiades serves, in the
way we have described above in Freud’s response to Dora, to prompt
Alkibiades to look, reflectively, to his own psyche, desires, and beliefs about
others. (Plato Symp. 219a) For this reason, Lacan claims, Socrates’ treatment
of Alkibiades in the Platonic Symposium becomes a kind of “object lesson” for
the way modern psychoanalysts should manage analysands’ transferential love:
using it as a means to allow subjects’ desires to manifest, in order to turn them
into objects for subjects’ reflection and potential change.

iv. We come then to the fourth, most ontologically fundamental, parallel
between Lacanian psychoanalysis, as a legatee of Freud’s thought, and
Stoicism. This concerns Freud’s fundamental conception of the “reality
principle”, a robust acceptance of which is for him the marker of what he glibly
called ordinary human unhappiness, in contrast to neurotic misery. Freud’s
conception of the reality principle and its differentiation from the pleasure
principle, it seems to us, is again remarkably redolent with the fundamental
Stoic emphasis on distinguishing what is and what is not in our control, as well
as being at the basis of Lacan’s re-conception of psychoanalysis.

To see this, consider the accounts of early childhood Freud offers in pieces
like “On Negation”, “Two Principles of Mental Functioning”, and the vital
metapsychological Chapter VII of The Interpretation of Dreams. As Freud
conceives things in these key writings, the child begins life as an effectively
completely unStoic being. Unable to control its own bodily movements, it is
equally wholly unable to cognitively distinguish I from other, and internal from
external things. Its first distinctions between “internal” and “external” are
however made on a simultaneously ontological and evaluative footing. ‘Good’
are all those things which give the child pleasure, and which it would like
therefore to identify with or introject into itself (as, for example, when the child bites or eats something). ‘Bad’ are all those things which give it pain, and which it would like to parry or expel outside of itself.

The path to the “reality principle” characteristic of adult consciousness, however, is paved for Freud by loss or disappointment. In this developmental process, the child discovers that there are many things that she may desire, but cannot instantly wish into being or claim from others; and as many things again which she cannot avoid except by developing motility and the active capacity for avoiding these threats. Reality, for Freud, manifests itself to human beings first of all as what disappoints, resists, or hurts. All the forms of subjective misery that psychoanalysis confronts—from psychoses through to the neuroses—are for Freud fundamentally based on the inability of the subject to fully accede to this reality. Instead, the neurotic effectively holds onto wishes rooted in infancy that the world should be otherwise, in line with his/her own good pleasure. But to develop the “reality principle”, we see for Freud, thus means something very close to what Epictetus aimed to engender in his pupils as the founding principle of Stoic ethics. Ordinary unhappiness for Freud turns on the ability to distinguish between what is and what is beyond our present behest, so that we do not suffer unnecessarily by pining for things we can never wholly possess, or by lamenting realities we have no choice but to confront. (eg: *Ench. I.8*)

As an ethical ideal, the later Lacan’s notion of “traversing the fantasy” which we introduced above, builds on these foundational Freudian claims about the reality principle. This then is the fundamental reason why we would claim that Lacanian psychoanalysis stands in the ethical lineage of Stoic thought. That is to say that Lacan’s therapeutic ideal of traversing the fantasy radicalises the Epictetan ideal of distinguishing in the most thoroughgoing manner between what depends on us, and what does not—which we have now seen is pivotal to Freud’s account of the reality principle. Putting the thought in Stoic terms, what Lacan calls the neurotic subject’s fundamental fantasy is shaped by three judgments, all of which misconceive the boundaries of I and external, and what is necessary for the subject’s felicity:

i. That an object exists which I once possessed, and whose possession made me complete and completely content;

ii. that an other or others have taken this object from me, so I must seek it out in all my intersubjective relations;

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1As Lacan stresses in *Seminar VII*, Freud gives the same thought a linguistic framing in “On Negation”, when he hypothesises that the birth of subjects’ capacity to conceive negative judgments (“this is not x”; “this does not exist...”) presupposes “that objects shall have been lost which once brought real satisfaction.” (Freud XIX, 238; 238-9; Lacan 1992, 64) In his doctrinal paper on “The Unconscious”, we note that Freud goes to specific trouble to stress that there is no negation in the unconscious primary processes, which ultimately hearken back to our earliest forms of cognition. Negation, the capacity to perceive things or properties as *not* where we expected them to be, is one of the marks of consciousness.
iii. that the repossessing of this object alone, perhaps through some love match or position of symbolic authority, could provide me with unmarred happiness.

For Lacan as much as for the Stoics, it is a fundamental illusion that we could ever become fully content by seeking out, or even possessing, external object(s), however sublime. The end of the analysis, illustrated so beautifully by Socrates’ response to Alkibiades in the Platonic Symposium, instead comes when the analyst, having been transfenitally positioned by the subject as the possessor of this agalma, makes it apparent to the analysand that neither s/he nor anyone but the subject herself possesses the key to their own happiness. In Stoic terms again, that is, at the end of Lacanian analysis the analysand must learn a final difficult lesson in what is eph’hemin and what is not. The aim is that the subject will then be able to take an expanded responsibility for their own judgments, speech, and actions, shorn of illusory expectations and demands upon the world and others around them.

Now, there is something tragic in such a comportment, which is why Lacan saw Oedipus and Antigone as literary figurings of it. The sublimity of these tragic heroes’ final moments comes from their acceptance, despite everything else—even exile and death—of their own fates, actions, and decisions, woven from before their own birth as in the oracle that presided over Oedipus’ life. Yet we see now that this fundamental acceptance of one’s own fate and condition which Lacan is interested in here, including all that which is beyond one’s control, is an attitude also definitively characteristic of the Stoic sage. As Marcus enjoined himself to recall, in face of inevitable disappointments:

Whatever may happen to thee, it was prepared for thee from all eternity; and the implication of causes was from eternity spinning the thread of thy being, and of that which is incident to it. (Aurelius, Meds. X 5)

If this reading of Lacanian psychoanalysis is correct, then, three concluding points are suggested concerning Stoicism and psychoanalysis. Concerning psychoanalysis, and repeated critical concerns about its rationality and vindication, an alignment with Stoicism suggests an ancient, ethical and rational precedent for its aim of neuroses, and their structuring beliefs. The ideal of psychoanalytic therapy is, if not Stoic apatheia, to engender the capacity for what the Stoics spoke of as eupatheia: forms of happiness which are not predicated on false ontological and evaluative beliefs, and the desire for possession of (always transient, external, and alienable) things. Concerning Stoicism, this distant kinship with psychoanalysis’ clinical aims shows again that Stoicism is far from being a wholly redundant, antiquarian curiosity. Stoicism and its contemporary adherents can indeed look to psychoanalysis as one of its distant ethical legatees, if not as one more confirming instance of its nobility as an ethical tradition. The third point concerns a meta-issue, the still-presently deeply-set tendencies in both analytic and continental philosophical
traditions towards forms of epistemic, ontological, and ethical relativism. The parallels between Lacanian psychoanalysis and Stoicism we have argued for show again that such claims for relativism can be overstated. There are parallels between ethical traditions hailing from very different times and cultures which go deep, and ancient insights moderns are bound to recover, even in ignorance of their antique sources. To end with a Stoic thought, such parallels would suggest a common human reality of different cultures share as finite, rational animals, even as they interpret and respond to it in different cultural forms.

Bibliography


On Getting Real: Stoicism and Psychoanalysis

The idea that we can be indifferent to morality without irrationality supports the motivational externalist claim that moral judgements cannot motivate unless an independent external desire is also present (e.g. Foot, 1978; Brink, 1986; Zangwill, 2008). This idea is denied by motivational internalists who claim that moral judgements must motivate agents who are rational (e.g. Smith, 1994). Morally indifferent agents have, in the internalist/externalist debate, also been characterized as those who judge that some action is morally required of them whilst seeing no reason to be moral. This characterization of amoralism has led to the division between Reasons Internalism\(^1\) and in particular rationalist claims that moral requirements are requirements of reason or rationality (e.g. Nagel, 1970; Korsgaard, 1986; Smith, 1994; Van Roojen, 2010) on the one hand, and Reasons Externalism (i.e. Foot, 1978) on the other.

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On a certain internalist interpretation, morally indifferent agents either do not make moral judgements or are irrational. Expressivists for example, who argue that moral judgements are expressions of sentiments and preferences (i.e. Ayer, 1936; Hare, 1952; Blackburn, 1984), support this view. Expressivists are thus motivational internalists; although they deny cognitivism\(^2\) and are anti-rationalists, they agree that there is a ‘practicality requirement on moral judgement’ (Smith, 1994). So, motivational internalism can be pursued independently of rationalism. Rationalism, on the other hand, as Smith argues, entails the practicality requirement and can explain why agents who are rational are motivated by their moral judgements.\(^3\) It seems to follow that if motivational internalism is false, the rationalist explanation of moral attitudes is unwarranted.

In this paper I assume that cognitivism is true and by moral judgement I will refer to moral beliefs. My claim, that moral indifference can be rationally justified, is directed primarily against cognitivist motivational internalism and by extension against rationalism. Having said this, it is important to recognize that, as rational agents, we do use the rational powers to get ourselves motivated to do what we believe is right even when we do not particularly desire to do it.\(^4\) Sometimes we succeed. Motivational successes, when

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1To be distinguished from Williams’ Reasons Internalism, the claim that the truth of what we ought to do depends on our desires (Williams, 1978).

2With an exception to a new, cognitivist expressivism (Horgan, T. & M. C. Timmons, 2006).

3See Smith, p 61.

4By getting ourselves to do what we believe is required of us I mean something like telling
described in this way, are problematic for the Human-inspired externalist claim that motivation must originate in passion. Nevertheless, motivational successes perhaps only show that moral beliefs can by themselves motivate action and this is not enough to argue that moral beliefs must motivate agents who are rational. I argue that a lack of rational effort to get motivated by a moral belief does not entail a failure of rationality. If it is true that moral beliefs are capable of motivating action, but that they do not have an absolute motivational power over agents who are rational, it seems that the possibility of rational amoralism can be plausibly considered beyond internalism and externalism.

Given the divide between internalism and externalism, the henceforth analysis of moral indifference will be located in an overlap, somewhere in ‘between internalism and externalism’.¹ The possibility of rational amoralism is consistent with this overlap. Even if beliefs alone are capable of motivating rational agents it does not follow that all cases of moral indifference involve irrationality. Equally, the intelligibility of rational amoralism is independent of the externalist claim that motivation must originate in desire.

So although it will look as if I will be siding externalism here, I will only do so to the extent that I defend Philippa Foot’s 1970s appeal to the indifference phenomenon. Foot resisted what she believed was a too comforting thought that all rational agents are always motivated by their moral judgements.² She also argued that the requirements of morality exercise an influence on the will only if the agent has certain, external desires.³ Since, in this paper, I do not deny the claim that ought beliefs are motivationally capable in themselves, I will not defend this part of Foot’s thesis. It is an empirical question as to whether an amoralist is irrational. My approach to this question is to try and reconcile the intuition that moral beliefs can by themselves motivate rational agents, with the idea that an agent’s lack of rational effort to be moral can be justified in terms of his rational effort directed at this aims and goals.

The amoralist’s lack of effort to be moral has often been referred to as motivational failure. The externalists argue that the fact that moral judgements can only motivate in conjunction with an external desire explains why the amoralists fail to be motivated by morality. An argument from external desires explains too little, if what need to be argued is that some amoralists can be

1Thanks to Jonathan Dancy for helping me think that we should, as he suggests, ‘get in between internalism and externalism’, although by saying this he did not mean to suggest, like I do here, that an analysis of a rational amoralism may be more fruitful if located in an overlap between internalism and externalism.
2Foot’s early writing, as Zangwill notes, presents the ‘bare bones of the superior version’ of the indifference argument against the internalism. See Zangwill, p 100.
3For a persuasive objection see McDowell J. (1978), pp 13-29, and also Smith, pp 80-85.
4Intentional amoralism as discussed here is to be distinguished from the way in which the intentionality of a mental phenomenon is normally understood, as being directed towards an object. See for example Brentano F. Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint, ed. McAlister L. L. (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 88-89.
5Or distinct desire, such that would exist even if the moral belief did not. See Zangwill, p 5.
rationally justified. Also, the term failure should apply only superfluously if what needs to be argued is that an amoralist’s failure to be motivated by moral consideration can, in some cases, be rationally justified. The rational amoralist I characterize here excludes cases where an agent tries to be moral but fails due to weakness or will, depression of some other disadvantageous mental state the internalists often appeal to in the relevant literature. I will start by discussing a general description of amoralists as understood by Foot and since Foot.

Foot’s Appeal to the Indifference Phenomenon

Amoralists are sometimes misleadingly described as those who reject morality. Foot argued that ‘those who altogether reject morality’ \(^1\) may not be irrational. This is not quite what she meant. Even Nietzsche, in his attempt to elevate humanity beyond good and evil, did not show that it is possible to ‘reject’ morality. \(^2\) Although at times she confusingly used the term ‘rejection of morality’, Foot’s focus was on the phenomenon of being indifferent to morality.

By moral indifference Foot meant indifference to ought beliefs. Her cognitivism implied a rejection of the idea that we can isolate an agent’s moral thought from the nature of moral reality. Foot opposed subjectivism, the idea that moral judgements express a person’s evaluative attitudes, and in particular Hume’s ‘ignorance of the reality that arouses moral feeling in us’. \(^3\) She argued that views like Hume’s, ‘having anchored moral attitudes to the will of the judge, they have cut it loose from the world’. \(^4\)

Foot’s approach was radically different from Nietzsche’s. In recognizing that he was ‘in some ways a most humane man’ \(^5\) she also charged him of being ‘a lonely genius’ whose views of human nature ‘we cannot trust beyond a very limited perspective’. \(^6\) In trying to avoid this limited perspective, Foot made the amoralist intelligible by tracing him back to the humanity to which he belongs. \(^7\)

Foot often discussed the moral culpability of the ‘cruel man’. However, she was not concerned only about those who are totally and permanently

\(^1\) See Foot, p 205.
\(^2\) Foot notes that ‘Aristotle’s description of the megalopsychos who possesses the virtue of greatness of soul and ‘deserves and claims great things’ (Nichomachean Ethics 1123 and 15) has much in common with Nietzsche’s picture of the ‘higher’ type of man.’ See Foot, p 90.
\(^3\) Ibid, p 76
\(^4\) Ibid, p 7
\(^5\) Ibid, p 94
\(^6\) Ibid
\(^7\) Foot’s confidence may have been shaken by the grotesque interpretation of her views as representing an ‘attack on morality’. Frankena, Foot notes, found himself in a state of bewilderment about her opinions, which he discusses in a paper entitled ‘The Philosopher’s Attack on Morality’. In her defence Foot notes that her suggestion is that ‘morality should be indicated for its ineffectiveness’ and she supposes that this suggestion has led some philosophers including Hare, to conclude that she was rejecting morality. In fact, Foot maintains, her aim was to expose fictions surrounding morality. See Foot, p 174.
unmoved by the demands of morality. She argued that moral indifference is quite common and that there is ‘no guarantee that on each occasion each man will have reason to do what morality requires’.\(^1\) This passage indicates that Foot’s objection to internalism is directed at the claim that all rational agents are always motivated by their moral judgements. This objection to internalism can be pursued independently of the claim that moral beliefs cannot in themselves produce the corresponding motivation. Even if moral beliefs are capable of motivating agents who are rational, it does not imply that they always will motivate all rational agents.

The above passage also shows that Foot explains moral indifference as a state of being unmoved by moral considerations and further by the fact that the agent sees no reason to be moral. An agent who sees no reason to be rational may well be irrational. In order to show that he is rational, we need further information. What are his other relevant thoughts, beliefs, intentions, etc? Furthermore, how are different parts of his mental life connected to one another? In other words, can the morally indifferent agent be justified with respect to the structure of his reasoning? This should be a starting point, regardless of what account of rationality one advocates. If an agent is not rational in this formal sense, enquiring further about a more substantive sense of rationality is irrelevant.

Foot’s early writing advocated means-end rationality. She argued that ‘sometimes what a man should do depends on his passing inclinations, as when he wants his coffee hot and should warm the jug.’\(^2\) In the moral case, what a person ought to do depends on his desires. Foot’s means-end rationality concerns structural rationality. But there is another sense of structural rationality that should be taken into account. Foot’s amoralist sees no reason to be moral. How can the amoralist’s intentions, aims, etc, for which he must have reasons, ever rationally justify his lack of reason to be moral? If he knows that his actions are morally wrong, how can he rationally think that there is no reason to act otherwise? Justifying an amoralist’s rationality in this sense of structural rationality may be particularly problematic.

Nevertheless, this could depend on the amoralist’s case itself, on the content of his reasons, goals and intentions, and also on whether we can believe that he is rational in pursuing his amoralist projects. Needless to say, an amoralist who insists that he has good reasons to destroy all humans, and that he knows how to do it, can barely be granted the first, let alone the second sense of structural rationality or a more substantive sense of rationality. Even if an amoralist’s thoughts are coherent, it is, in this extreme case at least, difficult to agree with him that there could be good reasons for destroying all humans.

Foot’s emphasis was not on the extreme cases of amoralism but rather on the fact that most agents will at some point be exposed to instances of amoralism. My contention, admittedly not an original one\(^3\), is that Foot’s

\(^1\)Ibid, p 153  
\(^2\)Ibid, p 158  
\(^3\)Nick Zangwill observers, and I agree, that Foot ‘should have been proud of and stayed true’ to what he calls ‘the bare bones of this superior version’ of the indifference argument against
appeal moral indifference allows for the possibility that some morally indifferent agents can be rationally justified, formally as well as substantively. The fact that moral indifference is a common phenomenon could of course mean that most of us some of the time will be disposed to instances of irrationality. I argue that, and this was Foot’s emphasis too, whether this is the case is an empirical question. This important point has been obfuscated with the attempts to conduct an analysis of amoralism in conceptual terms.

The Conceptual Possibility of Amoralism

The conceptual analyses of amoralism are not only undertaken by those who deny the intelligibility of rational amoralist but also by the externalists who defend the possibility of amoralism on conceptual grounds, by describing it in terms of an intellectual stance such as moral scepticism (Brink, 1986), or moral cynicism (Svavarsdóttir, 1999). These claims are not false. Rather they contain insufficient details to be either true or false. Svavarsdóttir’s description of a moral cynic, someone who completely lacks moral enthusiasm, emanates little about the cynic’s rationality. Similarly, Brink argues that it is conceptually possible for an amoralist to make a moral judgement without being motivated by it. Brink, whose amoralist challenge targets motivational internalism as well as rationalism¹, defines the amoralist as a moral sceptic who: ‘accepts the existence of moral facts and asks why we should care about these facts’.

Smith (1994) argues that Brink’s sceptic is not capable of making a moral judgement; he may be trying but failing to do so. His view is that Brink’s sceptic therefore does not threaten the conceptual claim about what it means to make a moral judgement, at least as far as rational persons are concerned.² Van Roojen (2010) also uses the concept of a fully rational agent, in defending rationalism, except that he attempts to justify the possibility of rational amoralism. He argues that we can rationally justify an amoralist who is not in a position to associate the identity of rightness with the property of being rationally required ³ and who is thus not fully rational.

In contrast with Van Roojen’s sophisticated version of internalism, his attempt to reconcile rationalism with rational amoralism, I have suggested that somewhere in between internalism and externalism these two claims can be mutually tolerated: 1) moral beliefs in themselves are capable of motivating rational agents, and 2) there is no guarantee that all rational agents will always be motivated by their moral beliefs. Part-accommodating internalism in this

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²Brink, p 30
³See Smith’s response to Brink, p 66-68. His analysis of an amoralist draws on his favorable version of the dispositional theory of value, which entails a conceptual connection between what we have reason to do in certain circumstances and what we would desire to do in those circumstances if he was fully rational.
⁴Ibid, p 517
way brings a much familiar objection: if moral beliefs are capable of motivating rational agents, surely they must motivate all rational agents? In response I have said that no conclusions about an amoralist’s rationality can be drawn without a reference to the reasons for his attitudes and actions. Van Roojen’s on the other hand thinks that we can draw a general conclusion about morally indifferent agents as being limited in some way but that this does not mean that some amoralists cannot be rationally justified. He argues that epistemological limitations can provide a source for a rational justification.

The problem is that Van Roojen’s approach, and more generally conceptual analyses which operates with a concept of a fully rational agent, cannot account for the ‘on the ground’ amoralist challenge. This conceptual approach understands the amoralist in terms of something he lacks or fails to do. But as well as being limited, epistemologically or otherwise, the amoralist can be said to have certain rational powers which he uses to pursue his ends and to convince others in the rational nature of his pursuits. Of course we can rationally justify an agent’s lack of epistemic or even psychological resources. But equally, we could say that some heroic acts are not fully rational; an agent could for example lack information or the will to live, launching himself into a certain death for a good cause. It is true that our moral attitudes and actions stand in an important relationship to our concepts of a fully or ideally rational agent. However the phenomenon of moral indifference seems to bring into focus certain questions a conceptual analysis is not best qualified to address.

One such question is: How can some morally culpable people sound convincingly rational when claiming that they are unmoved by their moral judgements and that they see no reason to be moral? One answer might be, as Smith argues, that perhaps we mistakenly believe that they have made the relevant moral judgement. Also, even if it can be granted that the amoralists are capable of making moral judgements, why should we believe that he can be rational? In the next section I try to answer these two worries.

Can we believe an Amoralist?

Let us for a moment not suppose that a morally indifferent agent is either weak willed, or that his moral indifference is ‘caused by rage, depression, grief, physical or mental illness’.¹ Let us not be prejudiced with regards to possible answers about why an agent is indifferent to his moral belief. We can have this supposition whilst also supposing, to follow the rationalist, that such an agent is less than ideally rational, perhaps in an epistemic sense if not psychologically. From this, less than fully rational position, we can quite intelligibly ask whether we can rationally justify his morally culpable views and actions. Can we rationally justify an agent in a less than ‘ideally rational’ sense of ‘rational’?

¹Korsgaard (1986), p 13
First we need to establish if the agent really is making the judgement he claims to be making. Brink’s objection to Smith’s argument that the amoralists do not really make moral judgements is to say that assuming this means not taking the amoralist challenge seriously enough. Brink wants to draw attention to the fact the amoralist does use moral terms to pick out the same properties that other people pick out when expressing their moral beliefs. The only way in which the amoralist defers to us, to follow Brink, is that he sees no reason to comply with what he believes to be morally required of them.

I will try to provide an independent argument for the claim that the morally indifferent agent can make a moral judgement. The argument is based on the premise that the amoralist, as well as the moralist, can sometimes use the moral terms to express sentiments and preferences rather than an objective judgement about what he believes he ought to do. Take the following example. Mary desires to help David. Suppose that her judgement that she ought to help David is clouded by her desire to help him. Knowing Mary quite well, John is not convinced that Mary really believes that she ought to help David. His view is that Mary only desires to help David. Contrast this with another case. An amoralist Kate believes that she ought to help David. Nevertheless, she does not desire to do so. She does not give a hoot about him, or helping anyone for that matter. Kate believes that she ought to help David because she believes he needs help, although she is unmoved by this fact. Can John, who also knows Kate quite well, believe that Kate acknowledges the fact that she ought to help David whilst remaining unmoved by it? It seems that although John has reason to believe that Mary uses moral terms to express her desires and not her genuine belief, he does not have reason to believe that Kate uses moral terms in the same way. He has more reason to be convinced that Kate, the amoralist, has made a moral judgement about whether she ought to help David. From this we can infer that we can have at least as much reason to doubt that the moralist makes a moral judgement he claims he makes, as we do in the amoralist case. It all depends on what we know and can believe about a particular case.

This example serves to vindicate my characterization of a potentially rational morally indifferent agent as someone who does genuinely believe that his actions are morally wrong but who is morally indifferent to what he believes he ought to do. To remind us, we are not supposing that such an agent’s irrationality could be due to depression, weak will or some other reason. This is because we are not supposing that he is irrational. In order to affirm our view regarding his rationality, we need to be asking further question about the agent’s intentions and purpose. Remember that Foot’s morally indifferent agent is not merely skeptical about morality; he does not refuse to be moral for the sake of it. Rather, his refusal to be moral is explained with

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1 Brink (1986), p 30
2 Although this may not necessarily follow. She can also believe that she ought to help him because she had promised she would. Also, the thought that someone needs help may or may not motivate an agent to help that person and this is regardless of his ought belief. As Philip Stratton-Lake notes: ‘It might be that I ought to φ, but that I am motivated to φ by a thought which lacks explicitly moral content’. See Stratton-Lake, (1998), p 80.
reference to his intention to pursue some goal. He has a purpose. And according to Foot, he would only be irrational if he defeats his purposes:

‘Irrational actions are those in which a man in some way defeats his own purposes, doing what is calculated to be disadvantageous or to frustrate his ends. Immorality does not necessarily involve such a thing’. 1

This is a crucial point, and a lesson to be learned from Foot. Rationally justified amoralism is possible not because it is possible for an agent to rationally refuse to be moral, but because he can do so with a further, possibly rationally conceived intention. Hence a rational justification of amoralism can only be given with respect too an intentional 2 character of amoralism.

Since rational amoralism is only possible on the grounds of reasons the agent has, it is important for a reasons externalist to force the internalist on the territory of reasons the amoralist has, and out of the internalists’ descriptions of amoralists’s disadvantageous mental states or limited epistemological capacities.

Reasons externalist of course ought to explain an amoralist’s lack of reason to be moral. Earlier, I argued that the amoralist’s formal rationality consists not only in an understanding of his means in relation to his ends but also in his ability to rationally justify his lack of reason to be moral in terms of reasons he has for pursuing his ends. How can a person validly argue that he sincerely believes that his action is morally wrong but that this knowledge gives him no reason to be moral? Foot’s effort was to explain that an agent’s understanding of his action being morally wrong is consistent with his understanding that he should do otherwise, categorically speaking. To the contrary, according to Foot, our reasons for actions are found in a hypothetical sense of ‘should’ which concerns our interests, goals and desires. So to say that you do not have a reason to be moral is to say that you do not believe you ought to act morally, hypothetically speaking. And this is consistent with saying that you do believe that you categorically ought to act morally.

Foot famously argued that morality and etiquette are analogous. Although the requirements of etiquette, like moral requirements, are categorical in a sense that they are binding on a person regardless of whether he has a certain desire, acting contrary to the requirement of etiquette/morality does not mean acting contrary to reason. 3 In support of this claim, and against the rationalist, I have argued that any general conclusion we may draw can be challenged by an individual case and what we can believe about the case. It is uncontroversial to say that very few of us would find it possible to agree with an agent who insists that he has no reason not to destroy all humans. However, even in some

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1Foot, (1978), pp 161-162
2As Davidson argues, ‘it is always relevant to questions or rationality and irrationality the description of an action under which it is intentional’. See Davidson, p 193.
3Although in her later writing Foot retracted from this view and argued that acting on moral reasons is part of practical rationality. See Foot, Natural Goodness, 2001.
extreme cases of amoralism, what we can believe is that the agent is quite rational in his thinking, intentions and actions. Zangwill illustrates this point nicely in describing a mercenary who he once met:

“All he said convinced me that he was perfectly aware that his vocation was genuinely morally wrong, not merely what people conventionally call ‘wrong’. He fully understood the wrongness of his vocation. But he was not very concerned about that. He was more concerned with his immediate interests and concerns, that is, colloquially, looking after number one…The mercenary was unusually indifferent to the demands of morality; but he share moral beliefs with the rest of us. He insisted on that.”

1 Zangwill, p 102

Foot notes that both Aristotle and Aquinas insisted wisdom should be contrasted with cleverness because the later is the ability to take the right step to an end, whereas wisdom is related only to good ends. See Foot, p 6

2 Think of Aristotle’s example of Medea who begs her own hand not to murder her children, her hand being an alien force which overwhelms her or her will.

3 In using this terminology Van Roojen follows Jamie Drier, see J. Drier, ‘Internalism and Speaker Relativism’, Ethics, 101, p 499.
rationally justified. Given these parameters, it only becomes more problematic for an internalist to respond to the amoralist challenge.

Conclusion

I have argued that the externalist defending the rationality of morally indifferent agents can confine the internalist to a tighter space by building on Foot’s account of moral indifference. Foot’s appeal to moral indifference offers an empirical argument against motivational internalism as well as rationalism. Regardless of whether an externalist is committed to the view that it can be rational not to have reason to be moral, or that it may not be irrational to be unmoved by one’s moral judgement, or both, in pursuing what I have described as intentional amoralism rather than any kind of amoralism, the externalist has a better chance of showing that the seemingly plausible responses to the amoralist challenge are in fact unconvincing. Having said this, I have remained neutral about whether the externalist is right to argue that moral beliefs can only produce motivation in conjunction with an external desire.

Bibliography

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