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Message from the Editor:

There is no common theme to the essays in this edition of Codgito.

I've foregone some formalities for the sake of brevity and printing space: some contractions are included, italics are preferred to emphatic quotes where possible, and footnotes to parentheses. I've done little to alter each author's writing style, correcting only minor grammatical mishaps to render the prose more readable.

This edition of Codgito used Garamond font with 1.15 line spacing.

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Robert Breen

Message from Kyle Rees, Philosophy Society President, 2009

It's been a fun year. After lying dormant for an uncertain amount of time, the Philosophy Society re-emerged with the efforts of last year's president, who began a Student Colloquium as well as resumed printing *Codgito*, and I have been happy to continue with both of these initiatives. The Student Colloquium this year was more popular than ever, offering ten thought-provoking lectures on everything from Authenticity to Aristotle. This issue of *Codgito* is even more expansive than ever, including contributor biographies and photos, as well as an unprecedented number of submissions. The increase in profit from mixers as well as easily accessible funding from MUNSU and the University meant that the society has more money than ever, so, like all academics who find themselves with a windfall of cash, we spent the whole lot on books. We purchased more than a dozen important and useful texts for the undergraduate library, ranging from Dawkins and Dennett to Heidegger and Aristotle.

Of course this sort of initiative doesn't just come out of thin air, and, consequently, there are a number of individuals and groups who deserve our thanks. Firstly, we need to thank Memorial's Student Affairs and Services as well as MUN's Student Union for providing the capital which was invested into these projects. Secondly, we extend thanks to Dr. Bradley and the Philosophy department as a whole, for providing us with the space and resources conducive to an active academic and social environment. I would also like to personally thank all of the dedicated members of the Philosophy Society's pseudo-executive, including the incoming president Chris Wass, for their help with all the tedious tasks associated with society business. Finally, my thanks to Robert Breen, the editor of this year's volume of *Codgito*. Rob has brought a level of professionalism and sophistication to a journal that would have been lacking without his editorial skills.

Once again, I thank everyone for their help this year, and I wish the society the best of luck in 2009-2010.

Kyle

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Introduction

Immanuel Kant has had an enormous influence on Western philosophy, but his work has to be taken as a continuation of the Western tradition. It is our intention to demonstrate Kant's indebtedness to Aristotle, in the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, with specific reference to the four causes. Kant makes use of the four causes throughout the sections that constitute the 'Transcendental Doctrine of Elements'. It is quite clear where Kant makes use of two of Aristotle's causes, matter and form, but the other causes, efficient and final, are obscured by the particular philosophical issues that he is trying to address with the Copernican revolution, his attempt to prove how the mind contributes to our experience. The Copernican revolution is the lever that moves the world; it situates nature as a feature of the mind as opposed to the mind as a feature of nature. Kant's investigation, within the scope of this essay, discusses two faculties of the mind: the sensibility and the understanding. By examining the process of creating a cognition, something we can experience, as outlined in the B edition of the *Critique*, the four causes can be seen as the framework in which Kant constructs the form of the human mind.

Aristotle's Four Causes and the Forms of Life

Aristotle used the four causes to understand the world around him; using them, one can provide intelligibility to the world, and this includes us.[1] Aristotle's four causes, as outlined in book two, chapter three of the *Physics,* are material, formal, efficient, and final. They address the question, 'why*?'* (240). But the 'why' of a thing is not simply one question, as 'why' can be asked in a variety of different ways; depending on the circumstances, different answers are more satisfactory. For example, consider the question, 'why is Jimmy overweight?'. The answer may depend on the circumstances in which it is asked. 'Jimmy has a thyroid problem' is an acceptable answer and so is 'Jimmy is training to be a sumo wrestler'. The first cause Aristotle outlines in the *Physics* is material or "that out of which a thing comes to be and which persists" (ibid.). The material or matter of a thing is simply that of which it is made: Pinocchio, for example, is made of wood, and when someone asks why Pinocchio floats, the answer would be different than if they ask why a human boy floats.

The second cause outlined by Aristotle is "the form or archetype" of an object (ibid.). This cause is the shape of the object as well as what it is to be. For example, a tadpole has its own structure and shape, but that it will *likely* become a frog means that is also is the form of the frog.[2] The form of a thing provides the structure to the material of which it is composed, thus they are only found together. Let us return to Pinocchio. He is a toy that is made of wood and, prior to Geppetto's fashioning him, could have been a

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1The status of the worlds intelligibility prior to Aristotle's investigation, is not an issue here as many people who are ignorant of how many things function. This does not mean that these things are not intelligible, as their function could eventually be explained later.

2This is the pattern that occurs with natural objects. Their form is related to their development; as the change over time as well their current structure. Aristotle's distinction between potential and actual allows a thing to have a current form as well as a radically different shape later in life while avoiding contraction.

toy boat, a piece of fire wood, or a pair of clogs. But the wood has none of these forms; it has the form of a doll. Only through the activity of Geppetto, insofar as he is a craftsman, could a piece of wood acquire the form of doll. The activity of Geppetto, the carving of the features of a child into a block of wood, is an example of Aristotle's third or efficient cause. Aristotle explicitly defines the efficient cause as "the primary source of the change or coming to rest" of an object (241). Geppetto's actions changed the shape of the wood and, as a result, the doll, known as Pinocchio, came into being.

The relationship between the material, formal, and efficient causes becomes clear when one examines natural objects. Living things, such as trees for example, are made of the same material and share the same form as that which is their efficient cause – other trees. Natural objects cause each other through reproduction. As a result, they recreate the particular arrangement of a kind of matter into the form they share with others of their *kind*. In fact, Aristotle states that it is "the most natural act is the production of another like itself" (561). As each generation is a continuation of the last, life itself can be viewed as a motion that is perpetuated through the reproduction of living things. Ultimately, life creates and sustains itself through the actions of the living things that instantiate it.

As particular kinds of matter are necessary for particular forms, the actions which each type of organism performs require that each generation attempt to acquire similar matter as the last generation. This regularity of activity allows Aristotle to identify what he calls the final cause or "that for the sake of which' a thing is done," the purpose of the thing (241). With respect to Pinocchio, he was created because Geppetto wanted a child, and carving one out of wood was the best he could do.[3] But with respect to natural objects,

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3   It should be noted, however, that not every application of the final cause is related to the intentions of an actor. For example, it could be said that human beings have hair for the purpose of keeping them warm, but we do not simply will our hair to grow. The growth of our hair is independent of intentions (ask

all their activities have self-nutrition and reproduction as their purpose or end. As there are different arrangements of matter into different forms, how these ends are manifested depends on the particular type of organism. Humans, for example, manifest the final cause as happiness or "living well and doing well," while frogs may manifest it by catching a lot of flies (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 937).

Aristotle on Functional Identity

As the activity of natural objects leads to the recreation of their particular form with a particular type of matter, these matter-form combinations also carry out their own patterns of activity. These patterns are forms unto themselves; what was an individual unity from one perspective (i.e. as a member of a city state) becomes part of a larger unity from a different perspective (i.e. when discussing wars between city states). With respect to a city state as a form of life (for simplicity, let us call large-scale entities, that is cities or species, macro-lives), individuals live and die and are replaced through reproduction in much the same way as human skin cells. As a human being can be both an individual with its own form and a part of the matter of a larger form, Aristotle has to link identity to the activity being performed. Observation has revealed that this activity is directed to a regular occurring end; thus it is not simply random activity but that which functions for specific purposes all leading to the larger final cause of formal replication.[4] This emphasis on activity can be seen in the following passage:

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anyone who is balding!).

4   The purposiveness of natural objects is not to be mistaken for intentional action. It is more about the intelligible character of the actions, as oppose to direct deliberation, that humans *sometimes* employ.

> Further, the state is by nature clearly prior to the family and to the individual, since the whole is of necessity prior to the part; for example, if the whole body be destroyed, there will be no foot or hand, except in an equivocal sense, as we might speak of a stone hand; for when destroyed the hand will be no better than that. But things are defined by their working and power; and we ought not to say that they are the same when they no longer have their proper quality, but only that they have the same name. (Aristotle, *Politics*, 1129-1130)

Without the body, the hand is not a human hand: it does not participate in the activities of the human form as it cannot perform the activities that human hands perform. A thing only has an identity other than its parts through their unified action towards a final cause; thus, for a thing to be a whole there has to be a unity through the action of its parts. In the case of Pinocchio, simply having the shape of a boy did not make him one. It is only through the right combination of matter, form and activity that one can be identified as an *actual* boy. But activity is change, and change for Aristotle is motion. Thus there is a historical aspect to Aristotelianism. When Geppetto created Pinocchio he did not create a real boy: Pinocchio is the result of the art of wood working; he is not a natural object; he does not have "within [himself] a principle of motion and of stationariness (in respect of place or of growth and decrease, or by way of alteration)" (Aristotle 236). It is the motion of life that Pinocchio lacks: that motion that is perpetuated with each generation of living things, for life is an expression of this fundamental motion. The different forms of life are related through the common source of motion, what Aristotle calls the unmoved mover. This unmoved mover is the cause of the motions in the world but has no cause of its own; it is responsible for the motion of the cosmos and with it everything that participates in the cosmos. As each generation is the perpetuation of the motion created by the unmoved mover, all activity of living things take part in this perpetuation. The individual

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components or pieces of matter may die or lose their form, but they will be replaced by those who perform the same activity, functional equivalents. Thus, the identity of a thing is related to its function within the cosmos.

The Copernican Revolution and the Necessity of Identity through Function

In the preface to the second edition of *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant asks the reader to "whether we [will] not get farther with the problems of metaphysics by assuming that the objects must conform to our cognitions" (110). Kant is suggesting that many of our metaphysical problems may be resolved if we drop the position that "all our cognitions must conform to the objects" (ibid.). Instead of being a passive recipient of the objects in the world, humans have an active role in creating what they experience. Kant is not suggesting that we have absolute control over the world, such that we could simply *will* something into being, but that the regularity and structure of our experience are the result of the activity of our faculties. Since we contribute to our experience in some way, then there should be at least two separate processes taking place: Kant calls these processes or "stems of human cognition ... [the] sensibility and understanding, through the first of which objects are given to us, but through the second of which they are thought." (135). Like Aristotle's, Kant's investigation requires a functional view of identity as he is trying to discover what is necessary for the possibility of experience. Since the answer cannot be found through an empirical investigation of the world, its discovery seems only possible through positing epistemological entities.[5] These entities have to function in such a way as to provide parts of what constitutes an experience. To do this,

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5   Kant is not concerned with ontology in this situation, as ontology is something that would have to be addressed by empirical research.

Kant has to utilize Aristotle's final cause; he needs to posit functional entities that will be related to the end of necessitating experience. Kant also has to posit multiple entities since his Copernican revolution requires that he define a function for receiving information from objects and a second function to manipulate or cognizance it. Without a second function we would be like blank slates inscribed with only what chance provides us.

Sensibility and its Role in the Formation of Cognitions

In the 'Transcendental Aesthetic', Kant defines the first major function of the mind, the sensibility, as the "capacity (receptivity) to acquire representations through the way in which we are affected by objects" (172). The sensibility is the part of the mind that is receptive to the world outside it. But before Kant even defines the sensibility, he provides for it a final cause or end. In the very first line of the 'Transcendental Aesthetic' Kant states that "in whatever way and through whatever means a cognition may relate to objects, that through which it relates immediately to them, and at which all thought as a means is directed as an end, is intuition" (ibid.).[6] The intuition is the very first entity that stands between our experience and the world in itself. As an intuition relates immediately to an object in itself, it must belong to the sensibility. In addition to this we can say that at least in part the efficient cause of an intuition is the object in itself.

To provide significance for the term 'intuition', Kant has to provide other terms through which he can establish or identify different relationships. Given that Kant has only one entity between the world and our experience, how does he arrive at other entities

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6   This particular philosophical manoeuvre may not have been avoidable, as Kant has to make a series of inferences; he needs a way to relate the elements of his system to experience. As a result, this similarity with Aristotle may not specifically be a point about Kant's Aristotelianism since it could be about any inferential investigation in general.

which he can discuss? To do this Kant applies two of Aristotle's causes, material and formal, thus deconstructing the intuition into entities that are as necessary as the intuition. The first part of an intuition is the matter, or what Kant calls an appearance or an "undetermined object"[7] (ibid.). These appearances are the contribution of the world to our experience; they are the *matter* to an empirical intuition. The form of the appearance is that which exists prior to the matter, "in the mind *a priori,*" what Kant specifically calls "the pure form[s] of sensibility itself [or] pure intuition[s]" (173). To arrive at the pure form of sensible intuitions, Kant examines the concept of "body," and by separating "from the representation of body that which the understanding things about it" he is left with "extension and form," things that occur in space (173). To illustrate this point Kant reminds the reader that "one can never represent that there is no space, though one can very well think that there are no objects to be encountered in it" (175). Space is a necessary condition even for simply imagining an object. All of our appearances partake in the form of space, but this does not mean that space is composed of parts in the same way that the form of a frog is composed of parts. In fact, Kant specifically denies the possibility that its parts "as it were precede the single all-encompassing space as its components" (ibid.). Consider the case of the hat in front of me: it is tempting to say that it is in space in the way in which the hat is in the room, as if to say that objects are displacing space or space is the relation between them; but as discussed above, Kant rules these out as possibilities. Since empirical intuitions participate in the form of space, they are not displacing space, but are themselves space![8] The

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7   The object is referred to as 'undetermined' since it is not an object in the sense of which we could experience it.

8   A possible objection to this claim can be found at B161 of the *Critique,* where Kant states that "even unity of the synthesis of the manifold outside or within us, hence also a combination with which everything that is to be represented as

empirical content of an intuition merely creates limitations on space much like cubicles in an office divide the room into pieces but still share the same single space of the room.[9]

Initially it may appear that Kant differs from Aristotle here, but it is not the case. For Aristotle, the forms are a part of the natural world and "the so-called 'formal' nature [of a thing]...is specifically the same" despite there being multiple individuals (*Metaphysics* 792). Which types of matter that will become part of a new instantiation of a form depends on the activities of existing instantiations (parents). But the particular bits within a type of matter are unimportant. And whether the mouse eats the piece of grain to the left or to the right is also not important, only that they eat one of them. The matter used by the form of mouse is only important if it is a difference of kind. For Kant, each object, insofar as it is an object, instantiates the one form, space. With regards to space, the individual things all function in the same way – they are functional equivalents. The reason Kant and Aristotle appear to be in conflict on this issue is the result of the scope of 'difference of kind'. With respect to Kant, he is investigating objects in general; as a result, space as a form is limited to those appearances that belong only to outer sense, not inner sense.[10] With Aristotle the 'difference of kind' reflects the many forms of the empirical world. One could say that for both Kant and Aristotle what constitutes suitable matter is relative to the form.

Having thus established the matter and form of our

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determined in space or time must agree, is already given *a priori*, along with (not in) these intuitions." However, this could also be read as stating that space and time must be seen as the grounds for objects and not dependent on them.

9 Another example could be the case of eating of a donut, it would be absurd to say that I was eating space and yet this reading of Kant seems to be implying that to be the case. When we eat the donut there is no doubt that it is being consumed.

10 Inner sense is the realm of feelings and thoughts. Our thoughts and feelings certainly take place in time but as of yet no one has been able to physically point to sadness in space. Philosophers such as Wittgenstein have made great use of pain since it seems to belong to both inner and outer sense.

empirical intuitions, Kant has outlined the function of the sensibility and provided a context in which the term 'empirical intuition' has significance. Using the four causes one can see that an empirical intuition is composed of matter, which comes from without, and the forms of pure intuition.

Having thus constructed a model for the creation of empirical intuitions, Kant is one step closer to constructing an object in general. As one may recall from our section on Kant's Copernican revolution, Kant needed to divide the formation of objects into at least two processes that will explain how we can experience objects. Having explored the sensibility and, with it, empirical intuitions, he has one of these processes explored, but without the second, what Kant calls the understanding, he has no touchstone to experience. Without this basis in experience, the very idea of an empirical intuition is nothing more than an idle fantasy.[11]

The Understanding and the Original-Synthetic Unity of Apperception

In our examination of the sensibility, we have tried to illustrate how Kant, using Aristotle's four causes as a model, created the functional entity called an empirical intuition and provided a context in which it can have meaning. However, the efficient cause of the unification or synthesis of the form of an intuition and its matter was conspicuously absent. Because of the receptive nature of the sensibility, "the combination (*conjunctio*) of a manifold in general can never come to us through the sense and therefore cannot already be contained in the

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11 It may be tempting to suggest that we do in fact have access to empirical intuitions and that we see them all the time. We could never know if what we are experiencing, what we are putting our attention on, if we could even put our attention onto something. Could we discriminate between left or right? Could we conceive of left and right? Or would we be no more than insects, simply living machines only capable of small sets of stimulus-response behaviours, pure reactivity. The point is we cannot know one way or the other, for if we could, it would be an issue that could be resolved with empirical investigation. As there is no criterion for us to decide one way or the other, such a question could spend an eternity in the battlefield of metaphysics.

pure form of sensible intuition" (Kant 245). The *act* of combination, regardless of what is being combined, "whether it is a combination of the manifold of intuition or of several concepts...., is an action of the understanding" (ibid.). This act "can be executed only by the subject itself since it is an act of its self-activity" (ibid.). For Kant, the very idea of combination implies that it is a "representation of the synthetic unity of the manifold" (246). Thus, combination is not added to the representation of the manifold, as it itself is only possible after the synthesis of the manifold has taken place.

Kant calls this synthetic unity the original-synthetic unity of apperception or transcendental unity of self-consciousness. Beginning his discussion (in the second edition) of the original unity of apperception, Kant states that "the I think must be able to accompany all my representations; for otherwise... it would be nothing for me" (246). Kant is stating that all of our representations must have something that ties them together, and what that thing is the original apperception. Kant also states that the 'I think' "is an act of spontaneity" that "cannot be regarded as belonging to sensibility," as it is only a receptive faculty (ibid.). What Kant is suggesting is that all our representations have to take part in a unity. At B39 Kant states that "it (space) is therefore to be regarded as the condition of the possibility of appearances." Here, Kant is making use of the inferential nature of his project. Just as his whole project would be nothing if he could not relate it back to experience, any intuition that could not be brought under the unity of self consciousness would be less than nothing, as even our idle thoughts belong to the 'I think.' In addition, each representation is not accompanied by "consciousness, but rather my adding one representation to the other and being conscious of their synthesis" (Kant 247). Kant is saying that this representation of a single consciousness "is only possible under the presupposition of some synthetic one, which is the original-synthetic unity of apperception (ibid.). If the original-synthetic unity of apperception is the fundamental synthesis in which combination

takes place in the understanding, does this also provide the synthesis found in the formation of intuitions? The answer to this question is yes, but, strangely, this is not discussed until section 26 of the deduction (B edition), where Kant states that "even unity of the synthesis of the manifold outside or within us... everything that is to be represented as determined in space or time... is already given *a priori* ... as condition of the synthesis of all apprehensions" (262), which Kant defines as "the composition of the manifold in an empirical intuition" (261). In a footnote Kant says that the synthesis of apprehension "is one and the same spontaneity that, there under the name of imagination and there under the name of understanding, brings combination into the manifold of intuition" (262). Kant has effectively created an overarching unity through which the sensibility and understanding are a part.

Once again we see Kant using Aristotle's matter/form distinction with respect to the single consciousness or the analytical unity of apperception. The analytical unity of apperception is a formal structure that has no instantiation unless there is a synthesis of representations. The 'I think' is a pure unity, an act of spontaneity; it simply cannot be divided through. In this respect it is similar to Aristotle's unmoved mover. Just as the unmoved mover is a spontaneousness source of motion, so too is that which creates the original unity of apperception. The major difference between these concepts is Kant's Copernican revolution, which can be seen as moving the unmoved mover away as an ontological entity and into the position of an epistemological entity, simply the source of the spontaneity of the understanding.

The understanding for Kant is the "faculty of cognitions," where cognitions are "the determinate relation of given representations to an object" (249). But in this context an object "is that in the concept of which the manifold of a given intuition is united," not what acts upon the sensibility (ibid.). When we experience a cognition, we are experiencing a unity that is the result

of a synthesis of a concept, as form, and an intuition, as matter. However, as was discussed above, for us to be aware of something it has to be unified in one consciousness. Kant expresses this point when he states that "the unity of consciousness is that which alone constitutes the relation of representations to an object, thus their objective validity, and consequently is that which makes them into cognitions and on which even the possibility of the understanding rests" (*ibid.*). Kant describes this process in the B edition as "an exercise of spontaneity... [that] determine[s] the form of sense *a priori* in accordance with the unity of apperception" (257). Kant is simply saying that, before we can have an experience, there must be spontaneous action of the understanding that applies a form of thought to intuition, to matter, and thus creates a cognition.

The combined activities of the sensibility and understanding can be seen from an Aristotelian point of view as being the acts that participate in a larger act. The sensibility can be discussed separately of the understanding, but they are united through the larger final cause of creating cognitions. The ultimate source for this activity is not clear for Kant but it does resemble the unmoved mover once we remove the effects of Kant's Copernican revolution. In Aristotelian terms, Kant creates a form of the human mind, and, as he himself suggests, it could exist alongside other types or forms of minds, and it sounds remarkably similar to the coexistence of different forms of life in the natural world.

Concluding Remarks

The process of creating a cognition, for Kant, leans heavily on Aristotelianism. The very project of providing an explanation of *a priori* processes, by means of a Copernican revolution, requires Kant to adopt a functional as opposed to ontological view of the mind. To explain the creation of a cognition, Kant has to utilize Aristotle's final cause, as he has to bridge the gap between a cognition, something we can experience, and the outside world. Every functional or

epistemological entity Kant purposed had to be either directly related to experience, or related to experience through a series of processes. As a result of the Copernican revolution, Kant needs at least two faculties for bridging the gap between experience and the world, one to be in direct contact with the world, the other to manipulate it. These processes can be seen as stemming from Aristotle's four causes. The sensibility, which is in direct contact with the world in itself, has the givenness of the world as its matter, and this givenness is taken up into the forms of space and time, thus creating an intuition that is the final cause of the sensibility. The first efficient cause is the activity of the world itself on our senses, but once we have this givenness (we cannot experience this givenness in itself), the process Kant proposes begins. The second efficient cause is that which is the source of the original-synthetic unity of apperception, as it is responsible for all the synthesis in the mind. The second faculty of the mind is the understanding; it is here where the gap between the sensibility and experience is bridged. Again, the efficient cause is the source of original-synthetic unity of apperception, for this activity is the source of the spontaneity which unites the concept as form with the intuition as matter. The two different faculties follow the model of Aristotle's four causes, but together they are a macro structure, or series of actions, that is in itself a form. Kant may indeed be revolutionary for his contribution to philosophy, but he can still be seen as *part* of a larger form of life, namely Western culture.

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Substance in Aristotle's Logic

Petter Hurich

Throughout his works pertaining to logic, Aristotle identifies two ways of knowing. One way of knowing he refers to as scientific knowledge or demonstration. Demonstrative knowledge is always of universal truths, never of individuals. Aristotle outlines a logical process known as syllogism which seeks to link two separate terms together by virtue of a common middle term. The consequence of the syllogistic process is that all demonstrative knowledge is based on pre-existing knowledge. Thus, to avoid an infinite regress, the starting points of demonstrative knowledge, known as the first premises or *archai*, must be found through a second way of knowing. This way of knowing is generally referred to as intuition. Intuition can be thought of as the capacity to recognize universal truths in the individuals that we experience through sense-perception using a process known as induction. There is a split as to how exactly this process occurs. It is my view that the process is little more than contemporary induction, taking individual examples and suggesting that some common trend is probably universally true. If we take this view, the basis of Aristotle's demonstrative knowledge is built on a degree of uncertainty, as the primary premises of demonstration are the "probably universally true" universals known through intuition. However, authors such as Sir David Ross present an alternative view: he suggests, "Essentially, induction is for [Aristotle] a process not of reasoning but of direct insight, mediated psychologically by a review of particular instances" (41). This view seems to go beyond the process of contemporary induction and seems to allow a greater degree of certainty in the knowledge of universals by virtue of some innate capacity. In either case, the basis of intuition is still our

experience of individuals. It is here that substance becomes most important (this point is actually debatable as it is possible to argue that demonstrative science is superior to intuition, despite the fact that intuition is prior to demonstration). The only things we can experience through our senses are individual substances. Therefore, any knowledge that we can hope to possess begins with the individual substance. For this reason, it is best to begin our study of Aristotle's logic with his treatment of substance outlined in the *Categories*.

Early in the *Categories* Aristotle outlines expressions that are in no way composite. These are "substance, quantity, quality, relation, place, time, position, state, action or affection" (*Categories* 1B25F). The next chapter of the *Categories* (chapter 5) focuses specifically on substance. He begins the chapter with this definition: "Substance, in the truest and most primary and most definite sense of the word, is that which is neither predicable of a subject nor present in a subject" (*Categories* 2A11F). As examples he suggests the individual man or horse. He then proceeds to give a second definition: "But in a secondary sense those things are called substances within which, as species, the primary substances are included; also those which, as genera, include the species" (*Categories* 2A13F). As examples, Aristotle suggests the individual man is included in the species 'man' and the species 'man' belongs to the genus 'animal'. The species 'man' and the genus 'animal' are regarded as secondary substances. At this point we have been presented with two types of substance: primary and secondary substance.

Primary substance should be regarded as the most *real* form of substance. This is because primary substances are individuals, and it is only individuals that we experience through our senses. Aristotle also gives the following clarification about secondary substance: "Of secondary substances, the species is more truly substance than the genus, being more nearly related to primary substance" (*Categories* 2B7F). To illustrate, it is more instructive to talk about man than animal in so far as you are trying to render an account of what

Socrates is. Aristotle uses the term 'infima species' to describe the species closest to the individual. He states, "The basic element of them all (all being the genera and species) is the definition i.e. The simple infima species" (*Posterior Analytics* 96B24F). Sir David Ross elaborates: "In so far as they can be known, the members of an infima species are identical, and it is only those properties of them which flow from their specific nature that can be grasped by science" (24).

There are those who argue that the infima species is in fact more important than the individual. Ross writes, "While primary substance for him is the most real thing, secondary substance and in particular the infima species, is the central point of his logic" (24). Aristotle does in fact state that "the commensurate universal is precious because it makes clear the cause; so that in the case of facts like these which have a cause other than themselves, universal knowledge is more precious than sense-perception and intuition" (*Posterior Analytics* 88A5F). This seems to suggest that knowledge of universals and thus the infima species may be more important than knowledge of the individual. He does, however, qualify this statement with the following: "as regards primary truths there is of course a different account to be given" (*Posterior Analytics* 88A8F). Here he does seem to leave an opening for the argument that knowledge of the individual is prior to universal knowledge and thus it is the individual that is most important.

The distinction between primary and secondary substance is key to understanding Aristotle's logic. Aristotle writes: "primary substances are most properly called substances in virtue of the fact that they are entities which underlie everything else, and that everything else is either predicated of them or present in them" (*Categories* 2B15F). Primary substances are the individuals that physically exist in terms of what we can experience; secondary substances exist solely as a predicate of the individual. For example, Socrates is an animal. The point that needs to be illustrated by this

distinction is that primary substance deals with the individual and secondary substance deals with the universal.

It is perhaps necessary to clarify what exactly is meant by 'the individual' as opposed to 'the universal'. Any individual that we know by our senses is unique. While two individuals may possess a common classification in terms of secondary substance (i.e. species or genus), two individuals who belong to the same species are not identical. What make them unique are additional properties that are predicated of them. Two particular properties that must be predicated of any physical individual are place and time. So long as you accept the assumption that two individuals cannot be in the same place at the same time, something that seems to be impossible under the law of non-contradiction, then any physical individual will be unique. It should be clarified that this is my own observation based on Aristotle's logic; Aristotle does not take this approach when discussing the individual. A universal is an abstraction of what is common in a set of individuals. The universal does not consider the various predicates that make individuals unique, but looks for what is universally true of the set of individuals, if there is something that is universally true. This is how we can belong to the same universal species and still be unique individuals.

The distinction of primary and secondary substances – the former being of the individual and the latter being of the universal – relates directly to the two ways of knowing that were outlined at the beginning of this essay. The first way of knowing identified, scientific or demonstrative knowledge, deals only in universals. Thus, when engaged in demonstration it is only appropriate to discuss substance in its abstracted form, such as species and genus. However, in terms of our sense-perception we cannot experience just a species or genus; rather, we experience an individual who belongs to a species and a genus. The intuitive way of knowing is how we cross the gap, by starting with the individual and trying to find a universal. Thus, it is only when we are engaged in intuitive knowing that it makes sense to

discuss the individual. As the individual is the most prior aspect of our knowing, we will begin by elaborating upon the intuitive way of knowing. In the *Posterior Analytics,* Aristotle writes, "since it is possible to familiarize the pupil with even the so-called mathematical abstractions only through induction – i.e. only because each subject genus possess, in virtue of a determinate mathematical character, certain properties which can be treated as separate even though they do not exist in isolation - it is consequently impossible to come to grasp universals except through induction" (81B). It is fairly clear that Aristotle is advocating the process of induction as the only way to grasp universals. The more controversial question is: what does the word translated into English as induction actually mean?

However, before we answer this question we should first discuss sense-perception. It is reasonable to suggest that the process begins with what Aristotle refers to as sense-perception. He writes, "Induction is impossible for those who have not sense-perception. For it is sense-perception alone which is adequate for grasping the particulars: they cannot be objects of scientific knowledge, because neither can universals give us knowledge of them without induction, nor can we get it through induction without sense perception" (*Posterior Analytics* 81B2F). So, we grasp particulars through what is known as sense perception. However, this alone is not enough, as we can see from the following passage: "Scientific knowledge is not possible through the act of perception. Even if perception as a faculty is of 'the such' and not merely of a 'this somewhat', yet one must at any rate actually perceive a 'this somewhat' and at a definite place and time: but that which is commensurately universal and true in all case one cannot perceive since it is not 'this and it is not 'now'" (*Posterior Analytics* 87B27F). This is where the question of induction comes into play. As an aside, one might note that in this passage Aristotle seems to be describing the individual/particular in terms of place and time, similar to the way the individual was described earlier in the essay.

In the *Posterior Analytics*, Aristotle describes the process of induction: So out of sense-perception comes to be what we call memory, and out of frequently repeated memories of the same thing develops experience; for a number of memories constitute a single experience. From experience again- i.e. from the universal now stabilized in its entirety within the soul, the one beside the many which is a single identity within them all - originate the skill of the craftsman and the knowledge of the man of science (100A4F). There is more than one way to interpret this passage. It is possible to read this passage as a description of contemporary induction. First our sense-perception of an individual furnishes us with a memory. After we create several memories of the individual it is possible to posit a trend common amongst a set of individuals. Recognizing this common trend gives us experience, the universal knowledge that can be the object of scientific thought. In his discussion of definition, Aristotle outlines a process that seems to resemble this mode of induction:

We start by observing a set of similar – i.e. specifically identical – individuals, and consider   what element they have in common. We must then apply the same process to another set of individuals which belong to one species and are generically but not specifically identical   with the former set. When we have established what the common element is in all members   of this second species, and likewise in members of further species, we should again   consider whether the results established possess any identity and persevere until we reach   a single formula, since this will be the definition of the thing" (*Posterior Analytics* 97B7F).

The method in this passage seems to be that of induction: we start by observing individuals by virtue of our sense-perception and then we search for a common element or trend.

There is a second way we can interpret the process of induction. D.J. Allen writes, "It is an assumption of his physics and metaphysics that our minds are naturally able to assimilate and

understand the order which prevails in the external world" (119). Furthermore, Allen adds, "a few instances sometimes suffice to reveal a general truth with a certainty which will not be increased by further experience" (119). The second interpretation differs in that it seems to suggest some sort of innate capacity of our mind to abstract universals from a set of individuals. This innate capacity seems to go beyond simply suggesting that a trend will probably continue. As we can see in the second quotation, this innate capacity is sometimes able to find truths that are certain, something the first interpretation of induction cannot provide. One example that seems to support this interpretation is the law of non-contradiction. The law of non-contradiction states that contradictory statements cannot both at the same time be true. This seems to be an example of something we know through induction as certain. (Without accepting this statement it is impossible to have any scientific knowledge, thus it cannot be known demonstratively). However, it might be suggested that we really have no basis to say that the law of non-contradiction is actually certain, despite how unlikely the possibility of it being false seems. The debate about Aristotle's theory of induction seems to be reducible to how certain we can be of the knowledge provided through induction. Under the first account, inductive knowledge would always be uncertain because it is impossible to know with absolute certainty that the suggested trend will always be the case. The implication of this is that, because the first premises of demonstrative knowledge are known through induction, demonstrative knowledge is built on uncertain premises and is therefore uncertain itself. The second account allows for certainty in the induction process which in turn allows for the possibility of certain demonstrative knowledge. The weakness of this interpretation is that it relies on some poorly explained innate capacity to achieve certainty.

The question of certainty aside, both interpretations agree that intuition, that is the process of gaining universal knowledge from

the experience of particulars, is essential to having scientific knowledge. Aristotle states, "Thus it is clear that we must get to know the primary premises by induction; for the method by which even sense-perception implants the universal is inductive" (*Posterior Analytics* 100B5F). The primary premises that we know by induction are extremely important because they are the basis of scientific knowledge.

A description of scientific knowledge can be seen in the following remark of Aristotle's: "We suppose ourselves to possess unqualified scientific knowledge of a thing, as opposed to knowing it in the accidental way in which the sophist knows, when we can think that we know the cause on which the fact depends, as the cause of that fact and no other, and, further, that the fact could not be other than it is" (*Posterior Analytics* 71B8F). So, to know something scientifically is to know something's cause. We can know something's cause by demonstration. Aristotle describes demonstration a few lines later: "All events we do know by demonstration. By demonstration I mean a syllogism productive of scientific knowledge, a syllogism, that is, the grasp of which is eo ipso such knowledge" (71B18F). Aristotle defines syllogism in the *Prior Analytics* as "discourse in which, certain things being stated, something other than what is stated follows of necessity from their being so. I mean by that last phrase that they produce the consequence, and by this, that no further term is required from without in order to make the consequence necessary" (24b18f). The certain things being stated are referred to as the premises. If we wish to know something scientifically we must know the premises that necessitate the cause of the thing. However, to know those premises we must know what caused them. This would lead to an infinite regress if we didn't have the primary premises that we know through intuition. This is why we make the statement that the primary premises are the basis of scientific knowledge.

To reiterate, scientific knowledge is to know the cause of something. However, to avoid an infinite regress the primary

premises of scientific knowledge must be known in some other way. This other way of knowing is known as intuition, which, by the process of induction, infers universal truths from particular individuals. The particular individual is known as primary substance. Primary substance is the most real substance because we can only experience individuals through our senses. Although there is some debate over whether primary substance is the most important form of substance in Aristotle's logic, it is my position that, as the perception of primary substance is prior to all knowledge, primary substance is the most important form of substance.

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Fundamental Difficulties in Social Epistemology

Stuart MacDonald

Because we are highly intelligent animals, we face a very paradoxical situation. On the one hand, our curiosity and our desire to make better sense of the universe renders necessary (or, at the very least, desirable) the pursuit of some ideal notion of what is 'true' and what is 'not true'.[12] On the other hand, various other aspects of human nature such as scepticism, irrationality, and selfishness produce numerous difficulties that hinder this aim. This essay will explore those difficulties that I believe to be the most fundamental hindrances.

Subjective Empiricism

I believe I can safely say that to have any notion whatever of 'truth' or 'knowledge' we must have some sort of empirical experience. Even the ultra sceptics cannot arrive at their positions if they close their eyes, ears, noses, and mouths, and refuses to touch anything. Also, we cannot have any notion of objectivity until we have some notion of subjectivity, for we must acquire these objective developments from the subjective collecting and analyzing of tidbits of information.[13] It seems, then, the place to start is at our subjective

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12 I hope the reader will be satisfied with my definition of 'truth' as being 'something that can be utilized in the justification of further claims', and 'not truth' as the converse. Also I would define 'knowledge' as 'truths that one holds'. This, of course, leaves a large area of unjustified/unjustifiable claims as having no designation, but I would argue that it is the purpose of epistemology to attempt to reduce or eliminate this area.

13 I.e. "The world is there before any possible analysis of mine, and it would be artificial to make it the outcome of a series of syntheses which link, in the first place sensations, then aspects of the object corresponding to different

empirical experiences. One may argue contrarily that we should start from the objective, since there is nothing to contemplate without it. It is true that if nothing existed, we would have no subjective experience. However, I would point out that once we have *something* (whatever that may be), the emphasis cannot possibly be on the objective. Note, for example, that if we are brains in a vat being stimulated by some evil genius, the objective as we know it vanishes, while the subjective persists. Our objective 'reality', after all, is constructed from subjective representations.

Now, I believe that I can say with some certainty that we each have a subjective empirical epistemic construct that is absolutely 'true'. When I say that I see a pink elephant, I *know* whether or not I truly see something that seems to be a pink elephant. It is inconsequential whether or not this pink elephant is actually there before me. Even if I say that I see a pink elephant when I actually saw what looked to me to be a red phone box, I would immediately know that I did *not* see a pink elephant. Where we run into problems, then, is when we try to make the leap from 'I see a pink elephant' to 'there is a pink elephant'. A statement such as 'I think there is a pink elephant' is also subjectively either irrefutably true or irrefutably false (I know immediately whether I truly think that or not); the chasm exists between the self-referential and the objective. One may argue that I cannot have complete certainty that what I subjectively see falls under my category of pink-elephant-ishness or that my seeing may not be seeing at all but a stimulus performed by an evil genius. But, again, because it is self-referential, it is watertight. To show the infallibility, I could, for example, generalize the statement to say 'this that I believe to be a visual image I believe falls into such-and-such a category of previous things I believed to be visual images'. If this is

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perspectives, when both are nothing but products of analysis, with no sort of prior reality." M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, tr. Colin Smith (London; Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1962) p. x.

not truth, one would be hard-pressed to find something 'more truthful'.

The question becomes, then, if we all have the same infallible intrinsic notions of truth, what is the difficulty? There are two main problems: correspondence to reality, and correspondence to one another or intersubjectivity. An exposition of the former is outside the domain of this essay; thus I will not analyze it further and refer to it only very rarely. A simple example of the latter (which I shall from here on refer to as 'social epistemology') is the consideration 'when I see a horse how do I know that you see a horse and that everyone else who is not visually impaired also sees a horse'. It is, of course, humanly impossible for me to get inside someone else's subjective realm to see if the images correspond. In other words, how do I know that there is intersubjective acceptance of the claim? I believe this example shows that 'simple' notions of truth are highly complex even if we discount the question of whether or not a horse exists in the domain we term 'reality'. How then can we possibly 'know' at all if it is seemingly impossible to 'know' on such a superficial level?

At this point, both the solipsist and the absolutist may object to social epistemology being important. Why, they will ask, does intersubjective correspondence matter? If it really is truth, then the opinion of others will be declared moot by the absolutist or non-existent by the solipsist. The absolutist I leave to his devices. It may be that infallible objective truth exists in some Platonic realm, but I feel this claim to be rather unconvincing especially if I am asked to accept it with very little evidence. Besides, how am I to know a 'fact' when I see one? As for the solipsist, he does not care for my opinion anyway. If he does, he must be acknowledging my presence, and this renders his position very precarious indeed.

If one considers social epistemology as an inquiry into the subjective epistemic realm of others, then the problems in social epistemology that are a direct result of our human condition fall into three groups. At the outset, I have the problems that are associated

with normativity and bias: who can give me an accurate account of the situation to which I wish to attempt to correspond my own? Then, when accumulating my evidence, I must rely heavily on trust: is this person being genuine or trying to mislead me? Finally, once I have completed my analyses, will I be able to accept the 'truths' that I may have arrived at?

Normativity and Bias

It is all well and good to say that everyone has a subjective epistemic system that is infallible (i.e. that we know immediately the subjective truth value of every claim we might make), but how do we know that our system even remotely resembles the next person's? I cannot ask a colorblind person whether he sees a pink elephant, let alone asking a blind person if he sees an elephant at all. To do so would be nonsensical. Thus we must either establish a conception of a 'normal' human being, or be able to decide who is allowed to submit an opinion on what claim.

Alluding to the above example, it might seem that such bias is nothing short of hypocrisy when trying to establish an 'objective epistemology': why should a blind person have to subscribe to a different epistemology than the rest of us? Such an argument is misinterpreting the task at hand. Though I will use the horse example regularly, one must remember that the question is not whether each person *sees* a horse, for this will lead us back into subjective realms. Rather (again, considerations of 'reality' aside), the question is can we, on a social level, *accept that a horse is truly there in the 'objective realm'* (that is, outside of ourselves)? It is not about *seeing* but rather about *knowing*. Consider a more complex example: how might we ever be able to *know* that quantum physics gives an accurate rendition of the physical world? To ask the average person on the street whether he accepts quantum physics as accurate seems pointless. No matter what his or her reply may be, it would be foolish to use this to justify our own position, for there is very little (if any) solid justification for

this claim. I think it to be equally useless to suspend judgement in the hope that someday everyone will have a complete understanding of the underpinnings of quantum physics. We must designate a weighting schema for beliefs depending on their sources, for it seems only natural that the opinion of the physicist who has first-hand justification (for example through empirical observation or mathematical theorizing) carries more weight than the opinion of the layman. After all, the only reasonable justification for the claim of the person who has no formal background in quantum physics is some rendition of the hearsay of those very physicists (as I do not consider portents or hunches to be reasonable justification). How, then, does this weighting schema come about and who has the authority to produce it? At first glance, it would seem that the opinions of those who occur earlier in the chain of communication (i.e. closer to the original source) should have a greater influence on the truth-value of the claim. However, as I will explain shortly, problems result because of possible bias on the part of the individuals making the claim.

Hand in hand with the notion of normativity is that of bias. Each of our subjective domains is completely unique. It is a combination of all the experiences we have experienced coupled with the thoughts that we have thought. The fact no two bodies can occupy the same space at the same time makes it impossible that I will ever face a given situation the same way as anyone who has lived or could live. Thus, even if another did precisely the same things that I did, they would either have to have done them at a different time, meaning that their exterior circumstances were different, or have sensed things from a slightly different position than I. This means that I will have lived a different life and have a different *bias* than every other person. If we think of the quantum physics example, even if I was to have sat through all the same classes and got exactly the same marks as another person, I would be affected differently by my experiences. Perhaps my past made me despise one of the professors that my 'twin' enjoyed. This might cause us to have

different views of the subject matter that he taught us. But which one of us has a view that is closer to the truth? My bias may mean that I missed a key argument for (or against) quantum physics. But then it is also possible that my friend's willingness to accept what he was taught made him buy into some mistake (or it could be that the professor deliberately attempted to mislead us and his gullibility was his weakness, but more on that later). Who is to know?

Feminist epistemologist Sandra Harding suggests the way around this problem is via standpoint epistemology.[14] She argues that we can best approach a situation like the one presented above by looking at it from another person's view. Thus, in this scenario I should reconsider my position from the viewpoint of my 'twin' and decide whether I might be inclined to change my view. I argue that if we take Harding's argument literally, such an attempt would give us a poor result at best. To get inside someone else's head is impossible, and thus to 'know' anything about his point of view seems equally impossible. Rather, considering 'his standpoint' can be nothing more than me considering what I have observed of him, and, with the help of some assumptions and piecemeal logic, arriving at some dubious construct of what his approach to a given situation might be. It is my opinion that standpoint epistemology should be revamped to make a more succinct claim: that we should *practice a greater degree of self-criticism.* This we are more than capable of doing, for this is an entirely subjective act. If we use Harding's example of Hegel's master-slave relation, the master cannot see from the slave's point of view. It is humanly impossible. What he *can* do is *subjectively* criticize his own actions, and ask himself why he is acting as he is. As part of this self-criticism, he can also ask the slave's opinion. If he can find no justification other than self-importance, or perhaps tradition, he should have cause to change his ways (though whether he actually does change his ways is a different story). This is perhaps why

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14 See "Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What is Strong Objectivity?" from *Knowledge* (as above)

Harding suggests that we 'take the standpoint' of those subcultures that are 'oppressed'. They have the greatest reason for criticizing their 'oppressors' (whoever they might be) and thus 'putting ourselves in their shoes' maximizes our self-criticism.

In this section, I have outlined what I believe to be the challenges we face as humans before we begin our 'social' analysis of an objective situation. The generally indefinable norm that we seek in a given circumstance makes it difficult to decide not only whose opinion we should value but which opinions should be weighted the heaviest. Our personal history and bias also affect which people we believe can give us useful information, and this produces further complications. First, I may not be qualified to know who to talk to. Second, if I find these people I may not be able to understand what they say, leaving me to either accept things without proper justification or reject them because I am not capable of justifying them. Third, I may already have preconceived notions of who to talk to that are misinformed. If the master asks only the opinion of other masters, he can get all the 'justification' he needs.

Trust

In his essay on the role that trust plays in our search for knowledge, John Hardwig states that "knowledge of many things is possible only through teamwork… If [knowing] is a privileged state at all, it is a privileged social state."[15] In his essay, Hardwig limits his focus to scientific and mathematical knowledge, and assumes that "if I can show this, most epistemologists will agree that we must make room in our epistemologies for trust."[16] My intention in this section is to provide a brief exposition of how I think trust plays a role in epistemic analysis.

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15 "The Role of Trust in Knowledge", John Hardwig from *Knowledge* p. 408-9
16 Ibid. p. 406.

I agree with Hardwig that knowledge of most things is possible only through teamwork. In childhood, we are led to certain beliefs by our caregivers, which we have no option but to take in and act upon (for we lack the ability to scrutinize), and thus we are definitely not independent when we begin to sow the seeds of knowledge.[17] From that point on, knowledge comes to us from many sources, and I would argue that those that come from non-human sources are not 'knowledge' unless there is some human verification, for, again, the contrary position would put us back into the equivalent of the subjective realm. Here, trust enters the picture, for we have reached the age where we are able to filter incoming information. Though I would say that all incoming information is considered to some extent, trust decides where the onus lies. If a claim comes from a trusted source, we accept it unless there is reason to reject it, whereas if it comes from a distrusted source, we are sceptical of its truth-value until we can get further justification from another source (even if this source is our own introspective scrutiny).

Consider again the horse example. If another person tells me he sees a horse in the middle of the field, I cannot possibly *know* that he truly sees a horse; I can only know that he told me he saw a horse and consider whether I should accept this claim as accurate. If the claim has come from a trusted source, my close friend for example, I would accept that this is an accurate account of what he sees. If it had come from someone whom I knew was trying to sabotage my epistemic inquiry, I would have good reason to be sceptical of this claim. Of course, with a simple example such as this, there are many ways that I can test my hypothesis of whether there truly is a horse there. I can ask someone else or go closer and move my hands over it. My point, however, is that *I cannot possibly know* whether the information given to me is genuine. Consider the quantum physics

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17 I consider it implausible that a newborn could survive without at least an elementary exposition of survival habits from some sort of (human or animal) overseer.

example: I do not have the option of going around trying to see or feel for bosons. I must ask someone else if his results correlate with mine, and although I can search through his notes if I do not believe what he tells me, I cannot be sure if the observations that he had written down were truly what he had observed. Perhaps the empirical data did not fit with his calculations so he fudged the results (more on this later). Suffice it to say that there is *some* trust involved when we ask someone else of their opinion, and, I would argue (as, I believe, would Hardwig), this is a necessary part of the epistemic process. Note that I have not considered whether what he saw was what he *should* see (i.e. it is entirely possible that he has made an honest mistake in his experimental design, in his ability to obtain the observable information properly, or even that he made a simple transcription error). These concerns can be criticized only through other methods, and here I refer the reader back to the discussion on normativity and bias.

Decision-Making

> Three and a half centuries ago, Francis Bacon decried the human tendency to maintain preconceived beliefs in the face of seemingly overwhelming logical or empirical challenges to their validity. Few complaints about human frailty are as consistently confirmed by everyday experience.

So begins Ross and Lepper's study on the perseverance of beliefs.[18] Although we may have an intrinsic notion of who to ask and who to trust, humans have a poor record of obstinacy and self-interest when it comes to accepting a given conclusion. One may try to pursue the

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18 "The Perseverance of Beliefs: Empirical and Normative Considerations" by L. Ross and M. R. Lepper. Taken from *New Directions for Methodology of Social and Behavioral Science*, (pp. 17-36, issue 4, 1980). The first study I cite is located on pp. 20-21, the second p. 22.

doctrine of 'devote oneself to the truth' but not be able to deal with the conclusion, should it differ from his preconceived one.

In their studies, Ross and Lepper conducted numerous experiments. I shall draw attention to two of them. In the first they took in two test groups: one of people who believed capital punishment to be a deterrent to murderers, the other believing it to be no deterrent. They then distributed amongst each group the same studies, half arguing for and half against capital punishment as a deterrent. Despite the fact that they considered *exactly the same* studies, each group felt that their position was strengthened by the studies for their position, that they were 'more convincing' and 'better conducted', and proceeded to pick apart those against. In the end, both groups had actually strengthened their individual positions. In the second study I wish to consider, two groups were brought in to distinguish between authentic suicide notes and inauthentic ones. Each group was then given feedback on their performance. No matter who picked which letters, one group was told that they were performing at a higher level and the other at a lower level than average. Following this, each group was debriefed, *being told of the scheme and how they had been lied to and manipulated*. Indeed, they were even shown the experimenter's instruction sheet and how the results had been fixed before the study, seemingly *proving* that they should take nothing from the evaluations. Nonetheless, at the end when questioned about their 'actual performance', the general consensus was that the self-evaluations of both groups reflected the false evaluations of the experimenters!

The results of these two experiments (notice that I must *trust* that they are genuine) may seem a bit scary. They may also seem a bit contradictory. The first seemed to show that humans are inherently obstinate, the second that they are overly gullible. The main point I want to stress is the point that Bacon stresses in the quote above. Once our epistemic analysis is complete, we may not be willing to accept the possibly insurmountable evidence against our

preconceived notions of the issue at hand. In his book "Phantoms in the Brain", V. S. Ramachandran surmises that this phenomenon relates to brain structure:

> …the left hemisphere's job is to create a belief system…and fold new experiences into [it]. If confronted with some new information that doesn't fit…it relies on Freudian defense mechanisms to…preserve the status quo. The right hemisphere…questions the status quo and looks for global inconsistencies. When the anomalous information reaches a certain threshold, the right forces a complete revision of the entire model…a 'Kuhnian paradigm shift'…whereas the left clings tenaciously to the way things were.[19]

He then recounts anecdotes of stroke victims with right hemisphere damage. When asked to move a paralyzed limb, they would reply that they were too tired, or that they had just done so. In another instance, he approached a patient who's left arm he knew to be dead and asked why the patient had just moved that arm. Though it is obvious that he could not have just moved it, the patient calmly replied 'I was gesticulating to make a point!' The question becomes, then, how can we possibly pursue 'truth' when our hard-wiring makes it difficult to accept possibly insurmountable evidence or criticism for or against our own ideas? Would we be better off if the reasoning of individuals were more logical and less obstinate?

I believe it depends on whether this obstinacy is negative (i.e. despite evidence to the contrary, the individual doubts his own position and maintains the position of the community) or positive (despite evidence to the contrary, the individual maintains his own position). For a 'negative' example, suppose Poincaré had not

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19 "Phantoms in the Brain", V. S. Ramachandran and S. Blakeslee (New York: William Morrow, 1998), p. 136. Details of the examples that follow can be found in Chapter 7: *The Sound of One Hand Clapping*.

rejected an early version of special relativity (believing that, since it went against Newtonian mechanics, it 'had to contain an error'). This may have put gravitational physics slightly farther ahead, but not so much farther as to make a large difference. In fact, to some extent it is this negative obstinacy that makes science such an attractive medium for knowledge. From simple results to great revolutions, scientific 'acceptance' does not come about without a very firm foundation, and this allows for a greater degree of certainty when a result is finally accepted. Thus, scientists are less likely to waste their time pursuing theories and experiments that are dependent on ambiguous data or results. However, that is not to say that there are not instances where science is led on a wild goose chase because a group of scientists observe a result that goes against their own beliefs. This 'positive' obstinacy (which is the type alluded to in the examples mentioned earlier in this section) causes them to either waste their own time repeating the experiment to achieve a result they are satisfied with, or publish phony results that undermine the general scientific community. Unfortunately, obstinacy is obstinacy; we cannot have the negative without the positive. However, I will point out that in the first instance, the 'problems' that arise do so because self-criticism is being practiced, whereas in the second, problems arise because of a *lack* of self-criticism.

Utopia: Necessary or Insufficient?

To conclude this paper, I wish to reiterate that the purpose of it was to bring to light the challenges we face as humans in social epistemology, something I believe to be fundamental to our epistemic practice. When we attempt to make the leap from our infallible subjective to the objective, it is a jump that is laden with numerous hurdles even if we discount questions of 'reality' itself. Although I do not have all the answers, I believe that, in order to further the epistemic cause, we must diligently practice some form of

self-criticism. Though this does not dispel the issues at hand, I believe it to be the best way to minimize the challenges that our social epistemic practices face. It is the only subjective methodology that can go some way to allow us to avoid the many pitfalls that our objective analyses present. It would also seem that, because these intersubjective flaws are part of our human make-up, there *is no way* to completely dispel these issues short of developing some sort of telepathic ability that melds the subjective and intersubjective together. Thus, however utopic our society may become, however genuine, logical, unselfish, and informed we may be as individuals, these 'human' problems will remain.

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THE ORGASMING HEART:
The productivity of Schelling's law of identity

SJ Woodworth

> *Such misunderstandings, which,*
> *if not intentional, require a*
> *degree of dialectical immaturity*
> *that Greek philosophy left*
> *behind practically in its infancy,*
> *make the recommendation of a*
> *thorough study of logic an*
> *urgent duty.*
>
> F.W.J. Schelling,
> *Freiheitsschrift*

Though he has long been interpreted as a mere intermediary figure on the way to Hegel, recent scholarly activity, including some masterful work by none other than Slavoj Zizek, has done much to show that Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling is an important philosopher in his own right. Indeed, he develops throughout his entire middle philosophy a logic that offers German idealism a serious alternative to the Hegelian dialectic. The current paper divides into three unequal sections, all revolving around the structure and implications of Schelling's logic and of his conception of a productive law of identity: (i) a review of Edward Allen Beach's distinction between the dialectic of sublation and the dialectic of production, in the aim of clearly distinguishing Schelling from Hegel; (ii) a more

technical exegesis of Schelling's arguments for a productive law of identity, particularly those found within the *Freedom Essay* and the *Stuttgart Seminars*, in the aim of further clarifying the dialectic of production as well as Schelling's larger middle philosophy; and (iii) a gesture towards the intrinsic teleology of the Schellingian project in the aim of avoiding a potential postmodern misinterpretation.

THE DIALECTIC OF PRODUCTION

In his book, *The Potencies of God(s): Schelling's Philosophy of Mythology,*[20] Edward Allen Beach distinguishes between Hegel's *Aufhebungsdialektik* (the dialectic of sublation) and Schelling's *Erzeugungsdialektik* (the dialectic of production). Beach's nomenclature refers to technical terms, *aufheben* and *erzeugen*, that are distinctive of each philosopher. Let us review the differences highlighted by Beach in order to gain a preliminary understanding of Schelling's logic.

In the Hegelian dialectic, concepts are sublated (*aufgehoben*) to give rise to higher concepts. Due to its own internal inherent negativity, a concept will collapse into its antinomy under the scrutiny of the understanding. The concept is then sublated by a more inclusive concept that manages to cancel the inconsistencies of the former concept and its antinomy while retaining their kernel of truth. The movement makes explicit what was merely implicit and undeveloped in the previous determinations.

A typical example of this dialectic proves to be very instructive. In the 'Doctrine of Being'[21] Hegel picks out pure being

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20 Edward Allen Beach, *The Potencies of God(s): Schelling's Philosophy of Mythology* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994).
21 G.W.F. Hegel, *Science of Logic* in *The Hegel Reader*, ed. Stephen Houlgate (Blackwell Publishing Inc., 1998).

as that which is entirely without determination. Since it is indeterminate, it neither has any properties of its own nor any outside reference. However, being pure indeterminateness and emptiness, "there is *nothing* to be intuited in it" (Hegel sec. 1 ch. 1 A). There is absolutely nothing to be thought in it, as otherwise it would be determined being; 'pure being' turns out to be nothing more nor less than 'nothing'. The concept of 'nothing' likewise passes into the concept of 'being'. Pure nothing is "simply equality with itself, complete emptiness, absence of all determination and content – undifferentiatedness in itself" (Hegel sec. 1 ch. 1 B). However, to think 'nothing' has a meaning; 'nothing' appears to us and hence exists insofar as it is intuited. Yet it is empty intuition, or, more precisely, thought without any further determination. Hegel concludes: "Nothing is, therefore, the same determination, or rather absence of determination, and thus altogether the same as, pure *being*" (*ibid.*). The dialectic of sublation overcomes this dichotomy with a new concept, that of 'becoming'. Pure being and pure nothing *become* each other from nothing else but their own immanent immediate instability, yet they are still distinguishable since there are two directions of movement contained by becoming: that of coming-to-be and that of passing-away. The concepts of 'being' and 'nothing' are therefore only comprehensible as moments subsumed under the concept of 'becoming' – their truth is unfolded in and through the dynamic play of the dialectic.

Beach argues that, "[w]ithout denying the validity of universal laws of reason, Schelling sought to do greater justice than Hegel to the roles of contingency, particularity, and the free acts of individuals" (84). Schelling's dialectic thus seeks to impart a volitional component into the process of reasoning. Since volition is not reducible to abstract thought-determinations, the dialectic is played out only in experience. Dialectic merely '(re)produces' (*erzeugt*) this volitional movement that carries itself out in the unfolding of the

universe. All of its conclusions "must remain incomplete until they can be exemplified in direct historical experience" (Beach 85).

There are accordingly three main differences between Hegel's and Schelling's dialectic: (i) Firstly, the lower terms in Schelling's dialectic will not have any less reality than the higher terms. While 'becoming' completely replaces 'being' and 'nothing' for Hegel, there is no sense in which this is true for Schelling, for whom each determination is self-subsistent. Due to their own inherent negativity, Hegel's concepts pass over into their antinomies when simply examined by the understanding. Conversely, the movement in Schelling's dialectic is voluntaristic and consequently dependent upon experience. Moreover, determinations always remain as true powers for Schelling. Should he be forced to adopt Hegel's concepts, Schelling would say that 'being' and 'nothing' remain just as ontologically real and hence just as potent in the world as 'becoming'.

(ii) Closely related to this first difference is the fact that the higher terms in Schelling's dialectic are not simply implicit in the lower, as 'becoming' resides implicit in 'being' and 'nothing' for Hegel. As we have seen, there is no inherent negativity in Schelling's concepts; each determination is self-subsistent, and in no way can one say that the latter determination is already contained in the former. For Schelling, each determination brings something wholly new and unpredictable; "[i]t is not just a question of finding more adequate expressions for the same inherent content" (Beach 86).

(iii) Finally, as is already apparent, Schelling's dialectic depends upon experience, thereby supporting a realist conception of the world. As Beach writes, "The successive (re)production of Schellingian principles, unlike the successive sublation of the Hegelian ones, always presupposes a context or medium of the progression, within which the principles, so to speak, *occur*" (ibid.). Since each determination brings something wholly new, and since each progression depends upon a procreative will, the dialectic must be verified by experience, experience which presupposes a

preconceptual world irreducible to logic. Schelling's dialectic of production is not the autonomous monolith that Hegel claims the dialectic of sublation to be.

In a word, we see that while the dialectic if sublation is circular and self-grounding in its nature, the dialectic of production is wholly linear. Although Hegel's dialectic is at least quasi-historical, a point that brings it closer to the dialectic of production, Schelling charges that it is essentially abstract and lifeless. Indeed, without a volitional element included within the all-encompassing dialectic, Hegel's system borders on panlogicism. Ultimately there is simply not enough emphasis in Hegel on the historically finite human individual, and on the positive potency of nature.

SCHELLING'S LAW OF IDENTITY

It is my conviction that Beach has made a great contribution to the literature on Schelling by distinguishing between the *Aufhebungsdialektik* and the *Erzeugungsdialektik*. This distinction reinforces the point that, far from being a simple link in the chain from Fichte to Hegel, Schelling is by his own right a major philosopher of German idealism, who prefigured many of the later critiques against the movement as a whole by Marxism and existentialism. I now wish to enhance the preliminary understanding of Schelling's dialectic that we have just gained by exploring those passages where Schelling addresses his logic explicitly. This section will also serve as a crash-course in the overarching concerns of Schelling's middle philosophy while providing the conceptual framework that will allow us to compare Schelling to Derrida.

Addressing the question of pantheism in the *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom and Related Matters* (the *Freedom Essay*), 22 Schelling maintains that the erroneous reduction of

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22   F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom and Related Matters* in *Philosophy of German Idealism*, ed. Ernst Behler (New York: The

all individual difference to the self-same essence of God by then-contemporary interpreters of Spinoza "lies in the general misunderstanding of the law of identity or of the meaning of the copula in judgment" (*Freedom* 223). For example, it is obvious that by the statement 'this body is blue', one does not mean that 'this body = blue' or that by the simple virtue of being a body, this body should be blue. The statement rather means: "that same thing which this body is, is also blue, although not in the same regard" (*Freedom* 224). In other words, there is an ontological difference between the subject and the predicate that is grossly glossed over when one construes the copula as mere equality.

Of course no one has ever construed the copula as mere equality; even the most austere analytic philosophers accept the polysemy of the small word 'is'. In standard symbolic logic, the statement 'Samuel Clemens is Mark Twain' is symbolized by 'A = B', where 'A' stands for 'Samuel Clemens' and 'B' stands for 'Mark Twain', though the statement 'Mark Twain is American' is symbolized by 'F(B)', where 'B' continues to stand for 'Mark Twain' and 'F(a)' is a shorthand for 'a is American'. There is, accordingly, a difference between the identity or the sameness of two subjects, and the identity between a subject and a predicate.

Yet the above distinction does nothing to help us understand the use that Schelling assigns to the copula. Schelling notes: "Ancient, profound logic differentiated between subject and predicate according to what preceded and what followed (*antecedens et consequens*), and thereby expressed the real sense of the law of identity" (*Freedom* 224). With this subtle move Schelling has grafted the law of sufficient reason onto the law of identity, thus making the latter productive. For Schelling, identity is *never* simple sameness, nor is the law of identity *ever* reducible to the equals sign. Rather, the law of identity expresses a relation of ground and grounded between two

entities that are part and parcel of the same structure though not thereby reducible to each other. The statement 'this body is blue' thus says that the blueness is grounded by the body in some manner, though in no way is this blueness reducible to the self-sameness of the body in question. By pointing out that the body is blue, one produces information that was neither previously present nor implicit in the body simply by virtue of its being a body.

For Kant, "[t]he law of identity is the necessary but not sufficient condition for knowledge (the *conditio sine qua non*), even though a prior synthesis is required for its formulation" (Freydberg 23).23 Since it is only analytic, Kant's law of identity is in no way productive, but merely expresses the agreement of thought with itself. Conversely, the law of sufficient reason is synthetic, according to Kant, and thereby able to formulate judgements of the empirical world. For Schelling, both laws are equally originary, i.e. equally synthetic: "The unity of [the law of identity] is immediately creative. In the relation of the subject to the predicate we have already shown the relation of the ground to the consequent, and the law of [sufficient] reason is therefore just as original as the law of identity" (*Freedom* 227). The law of identity can accordingly produce genuinely novel knowledge through nothing more than its own movement.

Nowhere is Schelling's conception of the productive law of identity more evident than in his discussion of the tautology. In order for a tautology not to be completely meaningless, the subject and the predicate must mean something different. According to Schelling, in the statement 'the body is a body', one thinks "by the former the unity, by the latter the particular qualities contained in the concept of body, which are related to it as the antecedent to the ground" (*Freedom* 224–5). Although symbolic logic would symbolize all tautologies as 'A = A', Schelling would contend that this formalization entirely misses the crucial productivity of the law of

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23 Bernard Freydberg, *Schelling's Dialogical* Freedom Essay (New York: State University of New York Press, 2008).

identity and that it thus misses the ontological difference between subject and predicate, between ground and grounded.

So far our discussion of the law of identity has only included very simple statements such as tautologies and 'This body is blue'. Let us now turn to a more complex statement, found at the start of the *Stuttgart Seminars*,24 where the necessity of conceiving of the law of identity in a productive manner takes on some urgency. In the section titled 'What is the principle of my system?', Schelling attacks a perennial question of philosophy in his argument for an absolute identity of the Real and the Ideal. However, as should by now be apparent from the above, this ought not be taken as the crude statement 'Real = Ideal'. Rather, each of the terms can only be said to be the same because they are found in the same ground, though neither is reducible to the other. We would be much closer to the truth were we to symbolize the relation as

$$\frac{A}{B = C},$$

where 'A' symbolizes the Absolute, 'B' the Real, and 'C' the Ideal. 'B' and 'C' are equal only because they are both grounded in 'A', but in and of themselves they differ from each other. Furthermore, they are both equally entitled to existence by virtue of the fact that 'A' individualizes itself in both of them. Contrary to Hegel's triad, neither term can be sublated by either of the others.

Even if we do nothing more than to try to grasp the state of a rational being, or, better yet, of God who is fully present to itself (the formal structure of a tautology, 'A = A'), we must distinguish

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24 F.W.J. Schelling, *Stuttgart Seminars* in *Idealism and the Endgame of Theory: Three Essays by F. W. J. Schelling*, trans. Thomas Pfau (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994). Cited throughout as '*Stuttgart*'.

between the 'A' as subject and the 'A' as predicate. The self-presence of 'A = A' is thereby converted to 'A = B', though both of these are still unified in and through the absolute being of God. We thus arrive at the formulation

$$\frac{A}{A = B},$$

which involves a bifurcation of the original essence. Although Schelling will greatly develop this formula in an attempt to formalize the structure of God, he has already adequately summed up the fundamental structure of his productive law of identity.

Schelling concludes his discussion on logic in the *Freedom Essay* by noting that the crucial failure to account for the ontological difference between subject and predicate by pantheists resides in Spinoza's belief that "there are *things* in the abstract concept of the world's beings, instead of infinite substance itself" (*Freedom* 230). One must conceive of the infinite substance itself, i.e. God, not as thing, but rather as an *act* if one is to properly grasp the living system of philosophy that includes freedom; "God is not a God of the dead, but of the living" (*Freedom* 228). Similarly, all thinking must be thought of in the same way, as an act: "Thoughts are certainly engendered by the soul; but *the engendered thought is an independent power*, continuing to *act* by itself, indeed growing to such an extent in the human soul that it vanquishes its own mother and subjugates her" (*ibid.*, emphasis added). Only now are we in a position to understand Beach when he says that the dialectic of production is fundamentally volitional; because judgements are acts, they presuppose volition and thus freedom. Furthermore, there is a great similarity between God and human thinking, as both are essentially creative acts. The only difference is that while God presupposes infinite freedom and is thus

an infinite act, human thinking finds its being in and through God and accordingly only presupposes finite freedom, thus making human thinking a finite act, hence the importance of empirical observation and of revelation for human knowledge.

Schelling's productive law of identity has colossal implications all throughout his middle philosophy, particularly in the *Ages of the World*.25 In the this work, Schelling radicalizes his preoccupations, turning directly toward perhaps the biggest enigma of all philosophy: 'why is there something instead of nothing'? The only possible explanation according to Schelling is that eternity must have, for whatever the reason, *freely* chosen to beget time. The archetypes of time must therefore have been contained within the eternal.

Conceiving of eternity in this fashion requires a transmutation of the everyday way in which we consider time. When one makes the statement 'the eternal is time', one normally conceives an eternity stretching on indefinitely in both directions, with the present moment simply shuttling along. However, this conception understands the law of identity in its crude formulation. Rather, the statement 'the eternal is time' means that time is grounded in the eternal and that there is a qualitative difference between the two; as Schelling writes, "[t]he eternal must also be a ground in an immediate manner, just as it is in itself. That of which the eternal by its essence is ground, is, to this extent, a dependent, and from the viewpoint of immanence, is also comprehended in the eternal" (*Freedom* 227).

The structure of time grounded in the eternal is formally the same as the structure of the law of sufficient reason grounded in the law of identity. Bernard Freydberg writes, "The law of sufficient reason directs thought backward and forward temporally, in search of antecedent conditions and looking out for future ones" (24). Meanwhile, "[t]he law of identity directs thought to grasp this succession atemporally, simultaneously" (ibid.). However, by unifying

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25 F.W.J. Schelling, *The Ages of the World*, 1815 draft, trans. James M. Wirth (New York: State University of New York Press, 2000). Cited throughout as '*Ages*'.

the two laws, calling them equally originary, Schelling has kept succession within the law of identity, though a succession that is eternal; it is the succession of ground-grounded, a qualitative difference. The creative synthesis of the law of identity with the law of sufficient reason "has the crucial function of fashioning the ground-consequent relation as fundamentally independent of time. Antecedent-consequent does not imply temporality" (Freydberg 24). The archetypes of time (the law of sufficient reason) are hence to be found in eternity itself (the productive law of identity). In a word, we see that the productive conception of the law of identity lies in many ways at the heart of the system developed all throughout Schelling's middle philosophy.

SCHELLING'S INTRINSIC TELEOLOGY

This last section of the current paper merely wishes to dispel a potential misinterpretation of Schelling by those seeking to claim his philosophy as a precursor to their own. At first glance, Schelling's productive law of identity resembles Jacques Derrida's notion of dissemination. According to dissemination, meanings (the base units of which are called '*sèmes*') have an inherent ability to engender new meanings simply by their own internal mechanism. This dissemination of *sèmes* is comparable to the dissemination of semen: once released, the paternal *sème* loses all ability to re-appropriate the diffused meanings and the progeny take on a life of their own. Furthermore, the dissemination of meaning is in no way cumulative as old, archaic meanings disappear only to be replaced by new ones. The meanings of words are therefore not stable, as the *sèmes* of words will always engender new *sèmes*, and at no point is it possible to reach an original *sème* that connects a word to anything but the always-differed linguistic web of meaning.

To the untrained eye, it may appear that Schelling's productive law of identity has the exact same formal structure as Derridean dissemination. As we have seen, the law of identity for

Schelling produces new knowledge by nothing more than its own movement. The tautology 'A = A', by the simple fact that the first 'A' is a subject and the second 'A' is a predicate, is bifurcated as 'A = B'. Yet the two philosophers differ greatly on the question of teleology, a question that is essential for understanding Schelling's project. For Derrida, the dissemination of meaning is aimless; meaning differs all by itself and to no clear end ('end' here taken in both the temporal and teleological sense). For Schelling, the productivity of the law of identity always has a goal in mind, namely unification. 'A = B' is only 'A = B' insofar as it is inseparable from the unity 'A';

$$\frac{A}{A = B}$$

is the complete structure of the law of identity. As Schelling writes, "a transition from unity to contradiction is incomprehensible. For how should what is in itself one, whole and perfect, be tempted, charmed, and enticed to emerge out of this peace? The transition from contradiction to unity, on the other hand, is natural, for contradiction is insufferable to everything and everything that finds itself in it will not repose until it has found the unity that reconciles or overcomes it" (*Ages* 219). Unity is hence always the end goal.

Why, then, does Schelling posit the original moment of difference if all is for the sake of the future unification? He answers: "a separation, a difference must be posited if we ever wish to make the transition from essence to existence" (*Stuttgart* 200). In order to reveal himself, God must pass from pure indifference to a personal God with a nature and difference. Yet this movement cannot be seen as God disseminating himself indefinitely without end; "[t]his transition from identity to difference has often been understood as a *cancellation of identity*; yet that is not at all the case, as I intend to

demonstrate without delay. Much rather it is a doubling of the essence, and thus an intensification of the unity" (*Stuttgart* 200). God does not reveal himself in nature for the sake of pure difference, but rather for the sake of a stronger, more intense unity between himself and his nature.

In order to further our understanding of the last quote, Schelling provides an instructive example that is worth quoting in its entirety:

> Consciousness arises only with the separation of principles that existed implicitly in man beforehand, such as the rational and the irrational. Neither of the two is meant to be erased. It is precisely in this discord between the two, and in its eventual resolution, that our humanity must prove itself. If, then, we become conscious of ourselves–when light and darkness begin to separate within ourselves–we do not properly transcend *ourselves*, [for] the two principles remain within us as their unity. Nor are we deprived in any way of our essence, but, instead, we attain ourselves in a twofold form, namely in unity and in separation. The same [holds true] for God.[26]

The productive movement of God is always directed towards this higher, redoubled unity. To ignore this aspect of Schelling's God and of the structure of the productive law of identity is to misinterpret his philosophy simply to make it more in line with the atheist currents of contemporary thought that find solace in viewing God and logic as ultimately absurd.

Schelling's teleology carries over from his conception of the organism worked out in his earlier philosophy of nature. As John Watson notes, "[o]rganisms are at once under the invincible sway of mechanical law, and are inexplicable apart from the idea of final

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[26] *Stuttgart* 200.

cause" (184).27 Although much more work is needed than this current paper could offer to work out how freedom, contingency, and finitude are thinkable with teleology, the answer surely resides in the organism. It is for this reason that I call Schelling's productive law of identity 'the orgasming heart'; it is productive like Derridean dissemination, engendering difference as if by an orgasm, and it is at the heart of his system as the mechanism that makes everything work, though it is ultimately all for the sake of a higher teleology, just as the heart only finds meaning as the inner life force of the whole.

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Jesus and Socrates: A Comparison of Farming Techniques

Justin Osmond

Introduction

I find myself cautiously, not quite trustingly, adapting to Plato's idea of love, as if I were standing in a department store trying on an audacious pair of sunglasses that I would have never before imagined myself wearing in public; the risk of embarrassment and the opportunity of newness combine as one and the same force driving me out to see with and be seen in brand new shades. To see and be seen are supremely political issues, as far as I am thinking right now, and the audacity of Plato that makes me cautious is manifest in his severe abasing of the technology of writing, and this through the written word. I feel uneasy with Plato's political message. It speaks straight to me with clarity and force, but that is just the problem—it speaks. I have never been more aware of the weakness of language and the seductive power of words, yet my encounter with Plato over the last few months—an initiation into reverence for the gap between word and its referent—has been mediated through words.

As a result of this tension, I feel disillusioned. Technology, specifically the written word, is spinning every thread of thought into a firm rope which, dangled in front of me, appears to offer a lift to safety, but, when tested, breaks at every twisted juncture and delivers no such aid. Even now, the words I am typing, like dry grains of wheat blown from a seed head by an autumn gust, seem to tumble down to the bottom of my computer screen, onto my keyboard and down into the dark slits between the keys where they are threshed to

a powder by the continuous pounding of my fingers as I strain to type the next unworthy germ of meaning. If many more fall down there, the keys might completely jam! Is there hope in the political sphere for sharing meaning through words? That is my question, and I have a suspicion—taking a clue from Plato's own technological mastery and superlatively artistry in his dialogues, by which he pays homage to Socrates' political verbal engagements with friends and the knowledge that is begotten—I will uncover a living, generative, and shareable understanding of words in politics.

As well, at this point in my life, it is old hock for me to take into account one particular lens through which I see everything. In specific terms, I am used to admitting that when I encounter new ideas I proceed from my understanding of Jesus; this is simply by virtue of my upbringing, but also by my own choice. So, this exploration will not be any different. Jesus' parable of the sower is relevant to the topic at hand simply because Socrates, in the *Phaedrus*, discusses oratory using the same metaphor. Jesus' sower, brought together with Plato's orator, will be the prime generative opposition by which I hope to dialectically thresh and recollectively gather my very own harvest—my very own *tokos*.

Socrates and Jesus—sowers both

In the political sphere, the fact and value of words (i.e., their function as bridges to our objective and subjective realities) is a topic of great importance. For Socrates and Jesus, how and why we use words to navigate our shared reality—to know our self, others, and the world around us—is a centrally important issue in their teachings. Both men constantly address communicational dynamics, and comparing their teachings, which trickle down to us through distal history, is a fruitful project if the differences and similarities between them are rigorously separated out and then recollectively gathered in.

A powerful political message emerges from this dialectic: Love demands that we keep our words in a living dynamic opposition

to other words, such that every word is exposed as incomplete and indebted to every other word, so that, by then gathering them up into an erotically desired, mutually satisfying unity in our memory, a fuller understanding of the whole of what it is good for a thing to be can be grasped. The screaming importance of this project of erotic division and collection is clear in (1) Plato's *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, where love and discourse fundamentally need each other; (2) Plato's *Seventh Letter*, where the gap between appearance and being is gestured at; and (3) Jesus' parable of the sower, where an important twist to the seed metaphor changes everything.

In the *Symposium*, a conversation Socrates once had with Diotima about her ideas on Love is recounted by Socrates to his five buddies, Phaedrus, Pausanias, Eryximachus, Aristophanes, and Agathon, after each of them has delivered a speech in praise of Love. Phaedrus has said Love is the oldest and greatest of the gods; Pausanias has explained Love as the binding code in legal and military might; Eryximachus has described Love as the harmony in bodies; for Aristophanes, Love is the emptiness that drives desire; and for Agathon, it is the fullness that defines satisfaction. In general, each speech has gone about saying what Love is (i.e., defined Love), and this is precisely the accomplishment against which Socrates invokes the lessons he learned from Diotima. He begins his account of his conversation with Diotima by showing how Agathon's idea of Love leads to the conclusion that Love is ugly. By making this point, Socrates transitions directly into quoting the teachings of Diotima, through which Socrates himself was once shown to believe the same absurdity as Agathon. Diotima sees Love as the child of poverty and plenty. As such, Love is one of the many mediating spirits who are "halfway between mortal and immortal" or "man or divine" (*Symposium* 202d-e). These powerful spirits fly between the polar opposites "and weld both sides together and merge them into one great whole" (203a). All the previous speeches placed Love on one side or another, naming it a 'this' or a 'that', but Diotima frustrates

them all by placing Love in a kind of 'no man's land' such that Socrates asks her, "But in that case, what good can Love be to humanity?" (204c).

In response, Diotima describes how Love plays out in human activity. After Socrates explains to Diotima how he understands Love to be the desire to possess the beautiful, he finds that he cannot say any further what that could actually mean. Diotima then shows him that, inasmuch as love is the desire for happiness, and happiness is caused by the presence of the good, love is in fact the desire to possess the good forever. Moreover, she explains, the only human activity that fulfills this desire is begetting. She says, "To love is to bring forth upon the beautiful, both in body and in soul" (206b). Further, she explains that love is "A longing not for the beautiful itself, but for the conception and generation that the beautiful effects" (ibid.). The essence of her teaching is that in giving birth to both children and/or knowledge, man transcends himself and so participates in eternity. Diotima explains:

> This is how every mortal creature perpetuates itself. It cannot, like the divine, be still the same throughout eternity; it can only leave behind new life to fill the vacancy that is left in its species by obsolescence. This, my dear Socrates, is how the body and all else that is temporal partakes of the eternal; there is no other way. And so it is no wonder that every creature prizes its own issue, since the whole creation is inspired by this love, this passion for immortality. (208a-b)

By her account, we can see that Love drives everything toward generativity. In the context of the speeches given by Socrates' friends, there has not been given a more unifying description of Love that accounts for all activity.

But what is politically significant about the unfolding of these various accounts of love in the *Symposium* is how mutually necessary all the previous speeches are in the comprehension and appreciation

of the fact and value of Diotima's speech. Plato has made no mistake in meticulously laying out all the previous definitions of Love. They serve to compellingly carve Love into many parts, all of which hold weight and truth, and all of which provide meaning to Diotima's ideas. In fact, Diotima's account mentions all the aspects of love previously raised—the high divine-like power of Love, the binding force of Love, Love as the balancing within bodies, Love as poverty, and Love as plenitude. The fact that all these conflicting definitions of Love are held together in Diotima's speech impresses upon us Plato's message: we ought to laud the mediation of differences into a unity.

As a final point about the *Symposium*, the political implications of generativity glitter in this account of friends speaking about love together. Simply from the fact that Plato has given us such a masterfully complete verbal expression, in which nearly every viable and thinkable definition of love is strongly presented and then drawn together into a mutually resonating whole, and this through the dynamic opposition of inadequate orators balancing their definitions against each other's, we can conclude that conceiving of a better notion of Love within and verbally communicating that conception without are, according to Plato, necessarily political processes. By direct implication, therefore, words are factual and valuable for all those who implicate themselves in the political process. Yet no matter how complete Diotima's account seems to be, she, somewhat ironically, assures Socrates, especially by her rapturous account of how difficult would be any man's journey to a conception of beauty itself, that she has not said the complete word on Love. Everything remains, in a very real way, yet unsaid.

Now this raises more acutely the issue of words, their capabilities and their function—all issues dealt with in Plato's dialogue *Phaedrus*. Both the structure and the content of this dialogue juxtapose spoken and written speech in an effort to bring out the nature of each. Phaedrus reads a speech to Socrates written by

Lysias, but Socrates is not impressed. The speech derides the lover and praises the non-lover, claiming that the former is insane. Socrates, forced by Phaedrus to respond, delivers an improvised speech which makes the same point, only his is much more beautiful than Lysias'. Phaedrus is impressed. But Socrates does not stop there. He then repents of having wrongly spoken of the lover and then delivers an even more beautiful speech in praise of the lover. In one voice, he fully makes one charge and, in the next, he fully makes the opposite charge. At this point, Socrates has demonstrated the severe fluidity of the spoken word, and Phaedrus is suddenly concerned that the written word has no merit at all. He says, "It makes me afraid that I shall find Lysias cutting a poor figure, if he proves to be willing to compete with another speech of his own" (257c). By bringing the dialogue to this point where Lysias' written speech has been unable to compete with Socrates' spoken word, Plato is pointing out the weakness in writing. Socrates and Phaedrus then continue their discussion in search of "the nature of good writing and bad" (258d).

The rest of the dialogue describes the written word as a mere image of the spoken word, so that writing is only a way of reminding those who already know, whereas discourse can actually produce knowledge. As Socrates and Phaedrus began to map out proper speaking and writing, they discover that knowledge is the key component. In other words, knowledge in the mind is the presupposed component of any good speaking, and because in a piece of writing no mind is present, neither is knowledge present. This is why writing can only be said to remind a person who already knows. Discourse, on the other hand, can actually teach another soul because speakers can mold and adapt their words to suit the needs of their auditor, and they can defend their auditor's claims when they are misheard, misunderstood or misspoken. Socrates likens written words to paintings which have the appearance of life, but when

questioned "…maintain a most majestic silence." (275d). He continues:

> Socrates: But now tell me, is there another sort of discourse that is brother to the written speech, but of unquestioned legitimacy? Can we see how it originated, and how much better and more effective it is than the other?
>
> Phaedrus: What sort of discourse have you now in mind, and what is its origin?
>
> Socrates: The sort that goes together with knowledge, and is written in the soul of the learner, that can defend itself, and know to whom it should speak and to whom it should say nothing.
>
> Phaedrus: You mean no dead discourse, but the living speech, the original of which the written discourse may fairly be called an image.
>
> Socrates: Precisely…. (276a-b)

The aim of good speech, therefore, is to bring forth knowledge in the auditor. This kind of discourse, Socrates goes on to say, can be considered "a man's own legitimate children" (278a). And this is the key here: the generative use of words (spoken words) is paramount, fuller, and more fitting to our political lives.

The final political message of the *Phaedrus* resides in the structure of the dialogue itself. All their talking about speech has raised so many issues that it is difficult to remember what has been said. Phaedrus then confesses the obscurity within his memory. Several times, as the dialogue cadences, he asks Socrates to remind him of what has been said. As Socrates gathers up the various fragments of thought that have been laid out, a more complete conception of speech begins to come clear. This is strikingly fitting in the context of their discussion because previously they agreed that good speaking divides a subject as far as possible and then gathers it back together. Socrates recounts all the points they have made and

so helps Phaedrus and us give birth within our own memories to the whole knowledge that Socrates has. The experience of knowing through words has been a wholly political affair needing Socrates, Phaedrus, and us.

But a deeper question emerges from both the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*: why is the process of generating knowledge through words necessarily political in the first place? In the *Seventh Letter*, Plato discusses how a certain difficulty faces us because of a metaphysical gap between appearance and being. John A. Scott, in discussion of this letter, summarizes Plato's philosophy in the following way. Knowledge of an object is preceded by three components—word, description, and image—and these constitute appearance. Knowledge, in a primal state, as the fourth component, sits on top of these three things. But there is a fifth component to existence that must be known: the being itself. Knowledge, propped up on its first three parts, reaches out across the gulf between appearance and the actual being of the thing it wants to know. A particular knower, straining with all his or her might, and working at a communal, living dialectic with other people who are also reaching toward being from their own unique positions on appearance's side, suddenly comes to know the existence of an object itself (Scott 4).

It is because of this metaphysical theory that Plato composes written works such as the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*. The reason why these vastly exhaustive and artistic accounts of Socrates' discussions with his friends are written is because, for Plato, written words remind him of the experience of having strained with others, using living speech, toward knowledge of the actual being of a thing. What Plato has experienced in observing Socrates' political engagements has impacted him deeply. Knowledge has sprung up in Plato's soul and he desperately wants to remind himself of the process by which it happened. He wants to keep the divided verbal fragments collected in his memory. Therefore, believing that writing can only remind, Plato carefully composes the dialogues for his own

memory's sake. Our encounter with them is fruitless if we do not see ourselves as part of the discussion. If we take the dialogues as statements of truth, we will never, as Diotima would say, bring to bear any knowledge upon their beauty. But if we enter in and argue our own position, we actually strain with these interlocutors of the past and gain, as they gained, apprehension of being.

As John Scott also points out, words are for Plato the beginning of it all. They are like seeds for a crop of knowledge. Plato knows well this metaphor when he records Socrates as saying to Phaedrus:

> But far more excellent, I think, is the serious treatment of them [words], which employs the art of dialectic. The dialectician selects a soul of the right type, and in it he plants and sows his words founded on knowledge, words which instead of remaining barren contain a seed whence new words grow up in new characters, whereby the seed is vouchsafed immortality, and its possessor the fullest measure of blessedness that man can attain unto. (277)

Note the primacy of spoken words as further evidence for the necessity of verbal political engagements. Spoken words, in every way, are what we experience and share together. But, more importantly, note the generativity of living speech. These spoken words function within the structure of love outlined in the *Symposium*, where the highest human expression and activity is giving birth upon the beautiful. In speaking as well as we can to each other, we are in fact loving each other.

Jesus also knew the generativity of spoken words. In one of his parables, a sower goes out scattering seed which, depending on what type of soil it lands on, brings forth a crop or not. In complete accordance with all that Socrates has said, the resultant crop is directly dependent on the receptivity of the soil, or, as Plato would say, "an inborn affinity with the subject" determines if any knowledge

will be generated on the soul (*Seventh Letter* 344a). Apparently, Jesus is acknowledging the same frailty of language. Not even God's Son speaks such that truth is unequivocally knowable through his words alone (Assuming the sower is analogous to Jesus—a safe assumption considering how when he explains the parable to his disciples, he says that the seed represents the word of God.). As well, notably, a political, dialectical process concerning the meaning of his teachings seems equally important to Jesus. We see this later in the same passage when, with exasperation, he details to his disciples the meaning of the parable and seems disappointed that they could not work it out among themselves. And he is doubly saddened by the fact that the general population hearing his words seems unable to discuss and discover the knowledge he longs to plant in the lives of its members. Jesus here laments and quotes Isaiah saying, "They will be ever hearing but never understanding" (NIV Mark 4:1-20).

It is an intriguing feature of history that Jesus is not remembered to us by his own written words. Indeed, his biographers only tell us of one occasion in which he wrote; the medium, finger-in-street-dust, was, needless to say, very fragile, and the details of what he wrote are left out of the account (NIV John 8:1-11). In that Jesus is not an avid writer, he seems to echo the Socratic aversion to written words described above. In much the same way that Plato erotically divided and collected in the written dialogues Socrates' political mediations of truth, Jesus' followers, desperately wanting to remember his message, recollected what they saw and wrote it down. And, to name one final parallel, Jesus' message, like that of Socrates, went out in dialectical opposition to the religious and political powers of his day, namely, the Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, Zealots, Essenes, and Romans, to name only the major influences of Jesus' time and place. What we have in the written account of Jesus message is very much like the written account of Socrates—the fact and value of the message is borne upon our memory as the opposing voices in the written accounts interact with each other and with us.

In both cases, to grasp the teachings, we must for the love of truth participate in the discussion laid out before us in the written accounts. As fruitless as it would be to read Plato's dialogues as expositions of truth, so would it be to read the Gospels likewise. When we participate in the conversation about the value and fact of Jesus' or Socrates' words, the seeds begin to come alive. We bring to bear a very certain good upon the beauty of Socrates' and Jesus' messages.

There is, however, a noteworthy difference between Socrates' and Jesus' use of the seed metaphor. Whereas Socrates suggests that the prudent farmer ought to be selective of his auditor, Jesus' sower scatters the seed everywhere. There is no hierarchical or prejudicial selection of who gets to hear the words. Socrates would like to ensure that only the one with an inborn affinity to the knowledge is exposed to it, but Jesus' parable of the sower does not affirm this kind of censorship. In fact, Jesus' parable depicts a decidedly non-discriminatory dissemination of words; some seed falls on all the types of soil.

Is not this the kind of world the West has been aiming for since the time of Jesus? Is not this the redeeming flavour in an otherwise slightly unsavoury Platonic political recipe? What I mean is that our Western taste seems naturally adverse, as if immune, to the kinds of hierarchical categories of the ancient Greeks. For example, their treatment of women and their keeping of slaves. But this immunity is not natural. It was taught to us at a great price. Have we perhaps forgotten the origin of an almost universally appreciated feature of our culture, a feature which has helped us all? Thank Plato's Good that Jesus' sower gave to every kind of soil the chance to bear fruit. Yet does Jesus' seed continue to struggle against stubborn soil!

New Shades or Cleaned Lenses?

The caution with which I began is now thrown to the wind, as all chaff should be. Left behind is the good grain: an understanding of the value and power of the political dialectic; a vision of the parched soil around and within me; a passion for words, their beauty and worth; a hope that shared meaning is possible. As well, I am thankful for knowledge that is as audacious as Plato's and as gener(ous/ative) as Jesus'. Linking Socrates with Jesus has actually not been, as I expected it would be, a process of trying on audacious new shades. The majority of us wear these exact same lenses that I have been trying to analyze in this paper. But I hope that you and I are now more aware of what constitutes their audacity—words are only valuable within a politic of love and ought to be universally generous. I suspect that many of us have been unawares looking at the world through these lenses our whole lives. I know I have. Rather than search for new audacious shades, perhaps we need to stop and clean the lenses we currently wear so that the vibrancy of words and love can come through again.   This would be no small tokos!

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Six-Figured Slaves: Understanding and *Phronesis* in Aristotle's Writing

Rob Seabright

Finding truth in today's information-saturated world is by no means an easily accomplished task. Distinguishing sound judgments from weak ones and making informed choices based on appropriately adjudicated evidence is challenging even for the most seasoned of critical thinkers. This problem, however, is not unique to contemporary society, as Plato and Aristotle, among many others, make clear.

Aristotle's writings, especially when viewed as complimenting Plato's, provide a sustained reflection on how we can achieve informed judgment through a logically structured analysis of what the world reveals that leads to effective understanding. Neither philosopher, in my view, offers any solution to the riddle of what there is to know, but their dialectical strategies of argument constitute a detailed plan for reconciling ourselves with the world and our place in it. Aristotle's use of the middle term and analysis through four causes, and Plato's encouragement to risk the Good in order to realize what it can produce, are both displayed by the individual who, Aristotle claims, practices *phronesis*, or practical wisdom.

Juxtaposed to the *phronimos*, in Aristotle's view, is the slave, a person who does not act upon his or her knowledge because of limitations imposed by others or by themselves. Plato's philosophy also provides us with an example of a group of people who do not follow this strategy but instead use argument, not as a means to achieve understanding, but as a means to bully others into accepting

the view of the world that best serves their conventionally agreed-upon interests. These are the sophists.

These issues have a very practical importance in contemporary society, but before exploring this, we must first examine Aristotle's method in comparison with that of Plato, its use by the *phronimos*, and how the slave or sophist fails to adopt it.

Aristotle and Plato's writings are largely taken up with finding what Aristotle calls the 'middle' and what Plato calls the 'Good' or 'what is best for something'. Generally speaking, the Good and the middle term do the same thing; that is, they complete and unify any necessary, naturally existing thing and its concept, or rather, that which best completes it. Aristotle claims in his *Nicomachean Ethics* that "in everything it is no easy task to find the middle" (1109a25). He makes this complaint because for everything there is not one manifest thing which completes it; many different "middles can truly play a causal role; but some enable us to say things that are more worth saying than others" (*De Anima* 403b21).

Socrates' death is presented in Plato's *Phaedo* as having had a number of reasons: he died *as an animal* because he drank hemlock, which is poisonous; he also died *as a citizen of Athens* because he was condemned to death by the state; and, finally, he died *as a man* dies because he chose to die when he could have escaped. Each of these reasons for his death is quite true all at the same time; each serves as a middle term that completes the question about why Socrates died. What makes finding the middle so difficult is that it is our task to find which of these terms is the best middle to use when discussing Socrates' death, if we want to explore it more comprehensively, to find any meaning it may disclose about life, death, or Socratic understanding.

If a doctor happens to enter the room just before Socrates dies and has the intention of saving him, then the best middle term to use in addressing the situation had better be Socrates' death as an animal due to drinking hemlock. If a lawyer enters the room, then the

best middle term to use to address Socrates' death would be his Athenian citizenship. In understanding when each of these is the best term, we achieve an understanding not just of the matter to be addressed, *but also – and centrally – of ourselves as addressing it*; self-knowing is an element of dialectical knowing. Talking to the doctor about Socrates' death as a citizen is not going to help him, nor is asking the lawyer about suitable antidotes for hemlock. Here we can see how the middle term, described by Aristotle as what best completes something, is closely linked to the Good, described by Plato as what is best for something.

The distinction to be made between the two philosophers on this issue is the use of Aristotle's syllogism. The syllogism is a tool for helping one find the most universally commensurate middle term. The famous example, used in later philosophy and drawn from the *Phaedo* itself, is the one cited above that explores why Socrates dies: Socrates is a man, all men are mortal, therefore, Socrates is mortal. What differs in the approaches of the two philosophers is how each uses this tool. Aristotle designed the syllogism as a tool for recollectively alert "listening," to identify which of the possible middles is the more worth saying (*Post. Analytics* 1, i). However, Plato was still afraid that technology was very dangerous, as he outlined in many of his dialogues – in the *Symposium*, for instance, where he discusses a myth about the use of language leading to forgetfulness – and thus outlawed the use of Aristotle's syllogism in his Academy. Perhaps Plato was right to fear. The syllogism became not a tool for listening but primarily a tool for persuasive exposition, eclipsing the possibility of facilitation, the dialectical search for middle terms and their evaluation, which is the objective of teaching as both Plato and Aristotle saw it. This undermined the dialogical method Plato sought to use to understand the world by taking advantage of what he believed was an inherent weakness of language – its capacity to say many things (*Letter* VII). Aristotle faithfully followed the dialectical method Plato proposed, despite his invention and use of the

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syllogism. Again, Aristotle never devised the tool as one for inferring new information but instead as one for checking already present information. In other words, according to Aristotle, the syllogism was only meant to be an analytic tool, not a synthetic one.

Aristotle's use of dialectical teaching is closely tied to his method of scientific learning. His application of what he calls the four causes – material, efficient, final and formal – aims at exploring the same thing as the dialogues of Plato, that is, the best middle term. The four causes are linked to Plato's own approach, using his four categories of understanding: name, description, particular instance and understanding (*Letter* VII). Both of these methods are employed by the person seeking understanding, so she may be able to say something that is worth saying about the object or concept at issue.

Neither philosopher suggests that either method will lead to final truths about the world; to claim that would undermine exactly what both Plato and Aristotle were attempting to do, namely open communication between individuals in which judgments can be freely shared between two or more people. What both methods attempt to do is find what is best to be said, or more specifically, find the best middle term.

Aristotle describes the person who is able to accomplish this task, and who is also able to use what is gained from this method, as the *phronimos*. Using the above example, this is the person who understands that it is best for the doctor to help Socrates as an animal, and the lawyer to help him as a citizen. However, in order to have practical wisdom, *phronesis*, it is not simply enough to have knowledge; it must also be used. Aristotle focuses on bodies in action, positing that the application of knowledge is as important as having the knowledge itself.

This action is exactly what Plato refers to in his writing as risk. It is the engagement of the dialogue which opens up true opportunities to learn, and therein all participants must risk, or

engage with one another practically, for all to benefit. Socrates describes this notion in Plato's *Theaetetus* when he says that "the arguments never come out of me; they always come out of the person I am talking with" (161b). Through the triangulation used by two or more people, knowledge can be found, not simply through rhetoric, or one person simply professing truth to another. The *phronimos* is the person who practically understands this and can apply it to everyday situations. As Aristotle suggests, they can use the methods described by both philosophers to find what is most valuable or worth saying, or not saying, and enter into dialectic with other people.

The fact that the *phronimos* knows what is best not to say is a very important point for both Aristotle and Plato, first because they know not to tell lies, and also understand that sometimes it is best not to say anything at all. The practicality of their wisdom allows them to realize that sometimes instead of saying something, a simple action must be taken. If a Mack truck is headed toward someone who realizes that Mack trucks kill what they hit, finishing the syllogism is a silly and suicidal act. Instead the *phronimos* understands that he or she needs to stop talking and start moving, appropriately, in order to avoid being hit by said truck. In other words, knowledge without application is useless.

In his *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle states that "it is thought to be the mark of a man of practical wisdom to be able to deliberate well about what is good and expedient for himself, not in some particular respect... but about what sorts of thing[s] conduce to the good life in general" (1140a25). By coupling this with the first line of the same work – "every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit, is thought to aim at some good" – it can be seen that the *phronimos* is able to understand what things are able to make him or her happy (*NE* 1049a1). This 'happiness', to which all actions aim, is what Aristotle argues allows humans to engage in the most important acts for any organism, self-reproduction and nourishment.

Essentially happiness is what human beings need, what best completes their defining act, in order for them to sustain themselves as a species. The practicing *phronimos* is one who understands that one must act in the path of a Mack truck, and is doing the very same thing here as one does when acting toward one's survival as an organism.

This brings us to the slave and the link between Plato, Aristotle, and our contemporary conditions. In his *Politics* Aristotle writes about the slaves and how they are not actual human beings because they do not possess the ability to act on their own interests and initiatives as human beings. Where the *phronimos* can take into his or her own accord what he or she needs in order to be happy, eat, and reproduce, the slave has no control over his or her actions. The sophist, on the other hand, does have his or her own principle of movement; however, he or she does not understand how to *practically* use that movement. For the sophists, information is a form of power to be manipulated and controlled. As Plato would put it, they do not risk anything and do not enter into the dialectical learning process. The sophists are the individuals who simply employ rhetoric, who attempt to sell truth and who do not give back and take from the experience of learning. Both the slave and the sophist are exempt from *phronesis* and both pose a great threat to practical learning each time their ranks grow.

There are sophists and slaves among us today; in fact they vastly outnumber the people who practice *phronesis*. They are the people who believe that one can buy truth at any newspaper stand, the ones who are locked in a cycle of paycheck to paycheck, the ones who hoard their salaries for the new boat or big-screen television. One would be very wrong to assume that there are no slaves in contemporary society, for they are everywhere: enslaved to the media, government, and corporations, to their careers or to religious institutions. What makes these people slaves? They have stopped

asking questions and have stopped looking for answers. The dialectical method in which Plato pleads with us to engage in fails outright when people fail to engage critically with one another. The human condition cannot sustain itself in a state where people fail to do this.

There are those who fail to engage with others in a different way as well: the 'would be' experts who sit in their ivory towers, who spout truth at anyone who will listen but fail to listen themselves when others attempt to engage in a dialectic. In many cases these are the very institutions that the contemporary slaves blindly follow. The Greek notion of mediation is key here. *Phronesis* is a *practical* wisdom, an engagement in dialectic where both parties risk something in order for all to benefit. As a society we need to critically examine the information presented to us, but also be willing to revise our own beliefs.

This was Plato's fear in the *Republic*, that people would fail to further both themselves as individuals and therefore the society of which they are part. If people do not realize, as did Glaucon and Adimantus in 372b of the *Republic*, that they are at great risk themselves and as a society as a whole, and if they do not start participating in an open dialectic then the human condition or species cannot sustain itself; it cannot continually reproduce itself as one of Aristotle's organisms. If this does not happen, then we simply reside in Plato's 'city of pigs', where needs and wants are fulfilled but no knowledge is gained.

Aristotle's discussion of the organism's reproductive act as a circular act, particularity in the *De Anima*, also applies here, with people filling the void in their lives with more and more wants, continuously until their death. This is a circle that must be broken, as too many people live in the city of pigs, and too few practice *phronesis* or represent the philosopher kings of the *Republic*.

In order to break this cycle we must adopt some version of Plato and Aristotle's methods of learning, and begin to engage with one another as a society. Instead of searching for an absolute truth people must attempt to say what is best to be said about a particular object or issue. Above all, people need to cease living solely for themselves and start thinking critically for society as a whole. This means breaking out of the city of pigs and initiating a philosophical approach to life, an open dialectic with others and a search for understanding of the world around them.

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Meme Machines and the Death of the Human Project

Kyle Rees

This is an essay about a model of culture. Not culture as a way of looking at the traditions of others, not culture as a survey of quaint tribes in the Amazon, and certainly not culture as a neat collective of cells dividing in your yogurt or a plate of Agar gel, although this may indeed turn out to be the closest approximation. The model of culture I will be describing is one that is akin to a runaway freight train, yet one that struggles, reproduces, and dies with the passionless apathy and the equal degree of self-awareness exhibited in a slime mould (not that I can tell you for certain whether slime moulds are self-aware, whatever self-awareness means). This is a discussion about memes, a mimetic model of culture, and what memes are good for.

In Douglas Adams' five-part-trilogy *The Hitchhikers' Guide to the Galaxy* (which somehow finds its way into all of my philosophy papers), the protagonist, Arthur Dent, discovers that the planet Earth was created by a race of super-intelligent, pan-dimensional beings who built the Earth as a gigantic super-computer, with all of the organic life on it forming the computational matrix. Everything was going swimmingly until human beings arrived from another planet and colonized the Earth, bringing with them digital watches, film documentaries, and customized ring tones. This threw the entire experiment into chaos. The carefully designed system could no longer execute its pre-programmed instructions with all of these loud, curious humans bumbling around inventing, composing, and blowing each other up. We certainly do seem as if we are from another planet;

all kinds of strange behaviours mark us as separate from the rest of the animal kingdom. We spend hours gossiping about celebrities we are unlikely ever to meet; we expend vast quantities of energy building ornate pyramids which we then stuff with dead bodies (which are unlikely to appreciate the decor); and we (or some of us) exert much effort dressing our bodies in ridiculous, impractical clothing (what exactly is a tie for?). There's something strange going on here. we call it culture, and we're quite happy with it, thank you very much. The ability to represent things with objects and signals, especially speech, has been invoked to explain why we differ from the rest of nature. The incantation of the word *logos* permits many of us to harness and exploit the rest of nature without feeling too bad about the whole thing, and to be able to exempt ourselves from the causal laws we proscribe to billiard balls and rats in mazes. But why exactly is culture considered an exception to the rule? Can we create a 'hard' science to model, and study culture the same way we study atoms in a collider? Almost certainly not. But I'm going to try anyway (now that your expectations have been reasonably deflated), and I'll see if I can't get anything out of the attempt to do so.

Walking to class a few weeks ago, I was embarrassed to find myself humming a song you may have heard of, 'Womanizer'…you'd know if you heard it, since the chorus is the song's title repeated 4 times. I wasn't humming the song through any deliberate (as far as I knew) choice, or because I thought it had any particular artistic merit; it just seemed to stick in my brain. It was a catchy song. I'm sure you've all had these moments where you get a song stuck in your head and you just can't stop humming it. Maybe you've even caught the tune from somebody else who was arrogantly humming it while you were waiting in line somewhere. Maybe you've even added your own variations on the tune or lyrics, and passed that variation onto another listener, sort of like the children's game 'telephone'. Whatever the case, it's evident that there is some sort of chain of cultural transmission going on here. Some authors would refer to

cultural information that passes on in such a way as a 'meme', a term first introduced by Richard Dawkins in *The Selfish Gene*. The term has since found its way into popular usage, ironically becoming a meme itself. Wikipedia (that great purveyor of memes) gives the following definition: "A meme comprises a unit or element of cultural ideas, symbols or practices; such units or elements transmit from one mind to another through speech, gestures, rituals, or other imitable phenomena. Memes act as cultural analogues to genes in that they self-replicate and respond to selective pressures."[28] There are volumes written on so-called 'mimetic theory', covering a vast variety of topics, but the key point is that memes replicate, pass on, and effect changes in behaviours like genes. But the most important difference is that they are not physical entities. You can't see a meme under a microscope, but you can observe an associated behaviour in the affected person (some animals can also be affected by memes, but let's leave that for now). If you want to be really scientifically precise about it, you could theoretically observe changes in the physical makeup of the organisms' brain caused by the processing of a piece of mimetic information. Memes is a concept (which is not a physical entity), but it is through changes in brain structure (on a very tiny, tiny level) that the concept manifests itself in particular instances.

It may be difficult to conceive of an 'incorporeal' entity that transmits from brain-to-brain to alter an individual's actions, so perhaps it would be helpful to start with a (clearly) physical, behaviour-altering organism. The Lancet liver fluke (*Dicrocoelium dendriticum*) lives in the liver of cattle, depositing eggs in its feces. Gross, I know, but it gets even better. Snails consume the cattle feces and leave the fluke eggs behind in a slime trail, which is in turn consumed by foraging ants. Once in the ant's digestive system, the liver fluke eggs, still unhatched, cause strange behaviour in the ant

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28 'Meme' Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia, accessed at
   http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Memes on March 9, 2009

through a not yet entirely understood mechanism. At daybreak (the prime grazing time, apparently), the ant climbs to the top of blades of grass and clings there by its mandibles, motionless for hours. Often, the ant is eaten by a grazing cow, where the fluke eggs hatch and infect the cow's liver, beginning the cycle anew. If the ant is not eaten, the parasite 'releases control' at evening, and the ant goes about its business until the next morning, when it is again 'taken over' by the fluke. This fluke, at least in its larval egg stage, is hardly an organism at all – it is incapable of survival and reproduction without the bodies of snails, ants, and cattle. But perhaps what is most important is that the fluke infects the brain of the ant in such a way as to cause a change in behaviour in order to assist in its own replication. While the fluke egg is a physical object, the mimetic similarity is clear. Like a fluke egg, a meme alters the brain state of its host (although memes are not necessarily destructive/parasitic like flukes) in such a way as to further its own replication. Some, such as Richard Dawkins, like to use this sort of parasite analogy to talk about memes, especially religious ones. Dawkins would claim that religion is to people like the liver fluke is to the dangling ants: the religious memes infect our brain and cause behaviours that are destructive to the human host, but are helpful in furthering the religion's replication. But it seems to me (and to Daniel Dennett and others) that Dawkins has overlooked the great potential of mimetic theory and instead has tried to convert it into another weapon in his anti-theistic arsenal. There's so much more that can be done with a mimetic world-view, a fact which I would like to highlight in this essay.

So a mimetic model of culture gives us a nice story of how our information gets passed on, and we can probably think of all kinds of personal examples where this seems to be taking place. I have maintained that memes are like genes in many ways, most importantly in the way that they face selection pressures under which some memes thrive and others die out. But how exactly does this

process occur? As previously argued, memes thrive or die depending on their ability to infect (restructure) brains in such a way as to produce a behaviour in the individual that will cause other brains to be restructured in a similar way. But not all memes get passed on, and not all that get passed on do so to the same degree of success. As any student busy cramming for final exams is aware, our brains have a limited capacity for information, and we tend to have short attention spans. As such, we cannot incorporate and pass on every meme that comes across our daily experience. There is, then, tremendous competition within the memosphere, and the memes that we do pick up and pass on have won out in vying for our limited attention – they must be well-advertised and easily transmittable. In a world where there are more memes than brain-space for them to inhabit, selection-pressure is high.

But is there any point in taking a mimetic view of culture? What exactly can we 'get out' of it? I think one useful application for mimetics is in the philosophy of science. There has been some debate over the past 50 years or so in the philosophy of science about the component bits of scientific knowledge. Is science, as many of us are taught in grade school, a combination of logic and experience, or is it made up of a host of other factors, such as social context, politics, economics, and so on? Many authors, such as feminist primatologist Donna Haraway, are keen to point out the social factors involved in the formulation of scientific knowledge, but do not want to deny the role played by logic and experience. A mimetic approach to scientific knowledge may offer something of a solution to the problem of balancing logic and experience with social factors. What happens to scientific knowledge when evaluated from a mimetic standpoint? The viability of scientific communication becomes contingent upon its ability to transmit from one brain to another. Scientific knowledge, on the mimetic model, is not primarily concerned with providing accurate reflections of the world, or about developing useful technology; it is concerned only with infecting brains. But these

brains have been pre-conditioned, both by biology and other memes, to be more vulnerable to some sorts of information than to others. New scientific theories have to compete within the contested mimetic/narrative field of our cultural predispositions in order to thrive as knowledge. Strictly speaking, science is *only* a result of social factors, and emerges depending on the mimetic composition of society. As Kate Distin comments:

> Science can be seen as a system in which novel ideas emerge via the recombination and mutation of existing hypotheses and are subject to selective forces such as the very existence of those current ways of thinking, as well as politics, funding availability and ad hominem considerations.29

This accounts for the acceptance of differing incommensurable theories explaining the same phenomenon. It is not that phlogiston theory was objectively 'true' at one point but false now, or that observations were inaccurate. Instead, the mimetic field (and the brains that inhabited it) were such that the meme of phlogiston theory was compatible with the memosphere of the time. At some point, a mutation arises (mass chemistry, for example) that is more successful in a given mimetic environment, and replaces the old meme, while giving rise to a new mimetic field where mass chemistry memes will be successful in the future. Science becomes a shared cultural project where concepts of race, gender, and religion combine with the demands of popular science and others to create a mimetic environment where some memes will be selected and others will not. There is no deliberate construction of the world around us, or of our scientific knowledge base. Like the fluke-infected ant, we have no vote in what memes will thrive and which will not, but there is a sphere of constructed scientific knowledge nonetheless. With such a

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29   Kate Distin, *The Selfish Meme* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 188.

model, it is the memes that are doing the design work, not us, constructing an environment in which later memes must compete.

What about logic and experience? Do they still play a role in the mimetic model of science? Usually, philosophers who tout the importance of social factors do so while minimizing the importance of experience and logic; but under a mimetic model, these two factors are important secondary considerations. As argued above, the viability of scientific knowledge is contingent upon its ability to replicate in the memosphere. In order to achieve such infectiousness, a theory must be amenable to the narrative cultural field at the time. For example, the memes associated with disco music, bell-bottom jeans, and John Travolta were viable and infectious in the memosphere of the 70s, but not anymore. This is not because the memes themselves changed, but the memosphere around them did, and they were no longer compatible with it. Looking at the history of modern science, it seems clear that theories that contain high amounts of logic and experience-related content tend to thrive. The contested mimetic field is such that brains are primed (through natural selection) to be infected with theories that follow a certain logic, and have been adequately tested through empirical observation. It is not the case, however, that logic and experience deserve some sort of special consideration outside of the mimetic structure – both of these concepts are memes themselves. They have, however, an effect upon the memosphere to such an extent that theories that do not conform to the narrative they have constructed tend not to thrive. It is also worth noting that logic and experience do not necessarily exert the same narrative force at all times. Depending on the way in which the cultural winds are blowing, a factor such as religious ideology can play a more important role (such as when creationism/intelligent design – I'm told there's a difference – are taught in a classroom alongside natural selection, although one does not accord with logic and experience). Under such a model, it is clear that logic and experience are themselves social factors in the broadest

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sense, albeit ones that tend to exert a regular influence in the contested narrative field.

The influence of the cultural narrative field as an environment where some memes thrive and others fail is evident in the popular support commanded by the social Darwinism theory of the nineteenth century. Perhaps this example can help put the point I am making in some sort of context. The social Darwinism meme found a suitable environment in a culture where the capitalism meme was well-established, and the contested narrative field was shaped by a society that was intent on exploiting the colonies. Coupled with the prevalent meme of racial superiority, social Darwinism "could be called in to justify the conquest and even the extermination of the native populations of the territories the whites coveted around the world."[30] The radically re-envisioned narrative field that emerged after the atrocities of Nazi Germany fostered scientific exploration into fields such as behaviourism and developmental psychology that were based around the notion that social conditions and environment played key roles. This shift in the memosphere meant that Social Darwinism gave way to other theories, such as behaviourism, and others that focused on the influence of environment instead of genetic destinies. A mimetic model of scientific knowledge highlights the cultural elements of science, and brings the discrepancy between the world and our model of it into sharp relief. It emphasizes the placement of the scientist in a broader social context, dispelling the notion of the individual (clad in a non-committal white lab coat) studying the world, free from social conditioning, in an effort to objectively model the world. There is no longer any sort of objective truth. There is instead a selective environment, and theories that conform to it.

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30   Peter Bowler and Iwan Morus, *Making Modern Science: A Historical Survey* (Chicago: University of Chicago
Press, 2005), 342.

I have to admit, this discussion is just a way to get my foot in the door; it's a gateway drug towards some even more extreme consequences arising from mimetic theory, a conclusion which some of you may have anticipated. Keeping mimetic theory in mind, I want to take another look at the hackneyed philosophical question, 'What is truth'? Remember, a theory of memes purports that the status of any information is contingent upon its ability to infect (restructure) brains in such a way so as to produce behaviour that will aid in its own replication. It would seem as if there is no room at the inn for truth in such a construction-- are truth and beauty relevant in a world where first class honours are instead bestowed upon the infectious and the catchy

(womanizerwomanizerwomanizerwomanizer)? While I don't purport to be able to give a clear and comprehensive definition of either truth or beauty (sorry to disappoint), I do think we can find a key role for such concepts in a mimetic model. While keeping in mind that information is only as viable as it is transmittable, we must ask what are some of the factors that make information easily transmittable in the first place. Here is where truth can play a role: truth can be seen as a sort of meme survival characteristic, a trait found among many memes that helps them to replicate and spread. Again, so that no one thinks that I'm positing Forms or a strange sort of dualism, truth is not some sort of mind-independent artefact; it is, under a mimetic model, a term used to describe a common way in which brains are altered, an alteration which proves helpful for memes to get around. This would be an instance where memes would be acting not as a parasite but as a mutualistic agent. We organisms benefit when we receive information that is accurate, since it is more likely to produce correct, survival enabling, behaviour. This notion of 'helper-memes' seems nice at first; after all, wouldn't it be nice to have a bunch of brain-state enabling guardian angels enforcing correct behaviour, even if it is out of their own self-interest? There's a dark side to this,

and it just might mean the death of the human project. We call that foreshadowing, take note.

Helping to keep the host alive is a strategy used by all sorts of behaviour-altering entities, most notably by genes. For Dawkins, and many others, genes are the ones driving natural selection, and individual organisms are mere vehicles or, even better, 'survival machines' which the genes 'produce' in order to further their own replicative goals. Even more importantly, genes aid in the construction of brains, which come pre-installed with behaviour programs to ensure replication for those brain-forming genes. As Ernst Mayer tells us, the genetic programming of proper behaviour programs is essential since "Natural selection does its best to favour the production of programs guaranteeing behaviour that increases fitness. A behaviour program that guarantees instantaneous correct reactions to a potential food source, to a potential enemy, or to a potential mate will certainly give greater fitness in the Darwinian sense than a program that lacks these properties."31 In the socio-biologist view, the purpose of the human project, by necessity of natural selection, is to perpetuate itself, a process which is driven by those 'selfish replicators', our genes.

It is a standard line in socio-biology that all of our current behaviours are still in the service of our genes, no matter how hard we try to rebel against our, in the words of Dawkins, 'selfish replicators'. But this line of inquiry runs into difficulties when trying to address such genetically non-productive activities such as celibacy, adoption, contraception use, and World of Warcraft. Many of the advocates of Mimetic theory (most prominently Susan Blackmore) hold that, since the evolution of the Big Brain, it has been memes that have been driving the human project, not genes. Memetic replication is happening at a much faster rate than that of genes, which take a generation to generate, and it has even overwritten

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31 Ernst Mayer. *Evolution and the Diversity of Life* (London: Belknap, 1976), 365.

genes in some cases: consider how the importance of the set of genetic information for good eyesight has diminished since the meme for how to produce eyeglasses proliferated across a society. Memes, according to Blackmore, are *off the leash*; they have superseded genes to become the driving force behind the human project. We no longer live to perpetuate our genetic information, by necessity of natural selection, but to serve as Meme Machines.

This theme is echoed in the myth of Theuth and Thamus. The story goes like this: the Egyptian god Theuth invents writing. The king god, Thamus, was unenthusiastic about the invention of writing, to say the least: "If men learn this, it will implant forgetfulness in their souls; they will cease to exercise memory, but for reminder."32 In the symbolism of this myth, words are the death of Thamus, and, while he is reborn, he loses his reproductive potency (his penis goes missing). The only organ Thamus retains is his eyes. Thamus has become a voyeuristic receptacle due to the technology of writing. Is the expansion of human power through the technology of writing, and other forms of cultural replication, a possible threat to the human project? There certainly are ways that we could be relegated to the sidelines as mere copying machines instead of being the progenitors of new ideas. The lab scientist follows a scientific method, conforms to lab protocol, and acts as one cog in the machine of a large genetics corporation. Instead of giving birth to ideas, our ideas have become a self-generative superstructure that infects human brains to produce behaviour that furthers mimetic self-proliferation.

Depending on your viewpoint, it could indeed be the case that the human project is in its death throes. If we are, as Blackmore suggests, meme machines, then there is no chance of claiming control over the mimetic runaway train any more than the earth is in control of its own rotation. Blackmore states:

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32 Plato, *Collected Dialogues* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005), 520.

New books are written, new gardens laid out, and new films produced. But the generative power behind this creativity is the competition between replicators, not a magical, out-of-nowhere power such as consciousness is said to be. The creative achievements of human culture are the products of mimetic evolution, just as the   creative achievements of the biological world are the products of genetic evolution. Replicator power is the only design process we know of that can do the job, and it does it.33

There is no recourse to a Cartesian indubitable mind since "a human mind is itself an artefact created when memes restructure a human brain in order to make it a better habitat for memes"[34] The structure is mechanistic and inferential, and gathering speed as communication networks expand. When our technology has advanced to the point where "[a] scholar is just a library's way of making another library,"[35] we must assent that the human project's days are numbered.

Alternatively, it could be the case that the human project has undergone a dramatic change, a paradigm shift, with the emergence of a self-perpetuating culture. It could be that the mimetic superstructure is the logical next step for our species. Imagine a society of microscopic, philosophically-inclined cells, existing separate from one another in an environment open to the world (not inside a larger organism). For these individual philosopher-cells, their generative, dialectical project would be self-replication, which would happen individually and without regard for other cells in the vicinity. All of a sudden, a group of these cells come together, by accident, to comprise a larger organism. This organism is a vehicle which allows for much more dependable replication (at least at first), and gives rise

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33 Susan Blackmore, *The Meme Machine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 240.

34 Daniel Dennett, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 365.

35 Ibid., 346.

to a new form of life.[36] From the point of view of a single philosopher-cell, the cells who have come together to form the organism superstructure have become part of a process in which their individual goals of replication are assimilated into and redefined by the emergent agent of the organism. And, from the cell's-eye-view, it is indeed the case that they have ceased to be philosopher-cells and are now instead cogs in the organism-machine.

There is, however, a way of looking at the collection of cell-cogs as a whole system, and ascribing philosophical/generative agency to the system instead of the component parts. This is what we do when we look at human beings instead of collections of heart cells, skin cells, and neurons. If we take this analogy and apply it to the methodological processes of modern science and culture, it may become clear that it is the generative process of the whole social/cultural/scientific system that we should be evaluating as the next phase of the human project. The invention of writing – and communication and culture and methodology – does not signify the end of *our* generative power; it is a transition towards a replicate that is far grander than the individual. But now that this progeny of ours has been born, what role do we have to play? Are we to die in childbirth?

The answer to this question hinges on what exactly is meant by 'we'. If we are talking about human beings as biological entities, we are hardly in jeopardy. Memes require human brains for their replication (until the science-fiction robo-pocalypse, at least) and our brains require bodies to nourish them and feed them information (and transmit the information later). But what about our creative *selves*? Do we lose our identities as wholly creative beings? Many of those who espouse the mimetic standpoint, myself included, believe

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36 I should be clear and say that this is in no way an explanation of how cells came together to form organisms. This is just what Dennett would call an 'intuition-pump'.

that there is no freely creative self to lose its identity in the first place. As Blackmore contends:

> We once thought that biological design needed a creator, but we now know that natural selection can do all the designing on its own. Similarly, we once thought that human design required a conscious designer inside us, but we now know that mimetic selection can do it on its own. […] If we take mimetics seriously [admittedly, there are some good reasons not to] there is no room for anyone to jump into the evolutionary process and stop it, direct it, or do anything to it. There is just the evolutionary process of genes and memes playing itself endlessly out—and no one watching. In this sense we can be truly free—not because we can rebel against the tyranny of the selfish replicators but because we know that there is no one to rebel.[37]

This is her haunting conclusion. Other authors such as Daniel Dennett and Richard Dawkins have levelled similar arguments against the 'self-meme'. A conception of the self as a collection of memes and genes produced by universal processes re-frames the level of complexity at which we look for generative processes. If we accept such a version of naturalism, then *we* were never dialectically generative beings in the first place, and the increased systemization of our communication is a process whereby the influence of mimetic superstructures asserts increased dominance over the genetic ones.

Admittedly, the cornerstone of this paper is built upon uncertain ground. The concept of mimetics is still in the early stages, and it has yet to be decided whether it is a viable concept or a mere 'wind-egg', to use appropriate Platonic terminology. There is a number of uses for mimetics, and a vast amount of evidence supporting memes as a valid model of culture, although I do not have

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37 Blackmore, *The Meme Machine*, 246.

the space to outline all of the arguments here **(**perhaps this is indicative of the academic superstructure that I can submit as a paper on the effects of mimetic theory on the human project without giving a sound defence and evaluation of mimetic theory beforehand**).** Whatever the status of mimetic theory, it is clear that the advent of self-executing communication/culture puts the generative status of the creative human being in jeopardy… presuming there is such an entity in the first place, a presumption which mimetic theory would deny.

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The Question of Hermeneutical Responsibility

Joseph Carew

I. The Indivisible Remainder of Historical Artifacts

Mainstream contemporary philosophy could be said to be characterized by a very specific relationship to the past. The past is not a problem for them, not in any classical, hermeneutical sense. The engagement with the history of ideas seems *passé*, old-fashioned or, at best, of only secondary use to philosophers. In effect, a knowledge of the tradition is seen to be suspect – indeed, those who have faith in its truths are looked upon as too conservative, or as blind to the radical implications of the breakthroughs of philosophical theory and research in the last hundred years, which deflect the primacy of its questions and answers. The idea of an indivisible remainder to the historical – and with it, a sense of wonder, admiration and respect, a set of feelings which do not preclude criticism, rejection, or self-distancing – is lost. There is no sense of a positively-charged foreign kernel lodged in the past, whose impenetrability is to be preserved and cherished because it is ultimately disclosive of basic facts of human nature.

       Let us take two prominent schools as a way to lead us into the matter at hand. Both deconstructive and psychoanalytical (particularly in terms of Lacanian schools) readings of ancient and modern texts tend to concern themselves with upholding a distinctively negative relation to the previous products of human activity. Whereas deconstruction attempts to show the inherent instability evident within the very conceptual fabric of age-old systems, psychoanalysis is at pains, if not to reduce, in some form or

other, the greater triumphs of human reason and the strife of intellectual creativity to a more primordial interaction of an upsurge of impersonal forces at the heart of the human psyche, then at least to reread a text in light of the implications of such insights. Both read the tomes of the past only through their own mediating lens.

These relations to the past are not, however, without their merits. No one would deny that. Not only can they reveal previously unthinkable possibilities implicit within a text and therefore bring it into a new unpredictable light, but – and perhaps more importantly – they are revelatory of the conceptual horizon within which we live, breath, and are given the gift of life itself as historically-situated beings. Perhaps unknowingly, to the trained eye they give evidence to the dispositional field of pre-meaning (*Vormeinung*) that without our awareness structures the very essence of our experience and thought, and gives currency to our concepts. The relation to the past that they convey often tells us more about ourselves than about the past that they invoke. So what, then, is so peculiar about these approaches? What binds them together?

The mainstream contemporary approaches to the past can be broadly divided into two categories: (1) annihilation and (2) reactualization. Although a philosopher in a single text may oscillate between these two possibilities in his reading of a given historical artifact, nevertheless any specific engagement is always motivated by one or the other as its ultimate goal. Within 'annihilation' falls any reading of a text that attempts to destroy or render ineffective its meaning or significance to our contemporary world. It can do this in a multitude of ways: by showing its implicit inconsistencies, in light of recent (largely linguistic) philosophical achievements; by reducing the profundity of its insight to more primordial activities which displace the primacy and legitimacy of its claim; by arguing that its presuppositions cannot be granted by our current rationality; or, finally, by revealing negative personal, social, and political implications of the acceptance of its basic philosophical position.

Annihilation amounts to a radical critique and removal of the past, largely in light of retroactive readings of artifacts in light of historical events or philosophical theory. In the end, the voice of the past withers away and fades into the darkness of obscurity, unable to hold its own because it has not been cultivated, merely attacked. Like a shy, timid man who needs a friend to speak for him, once accused, he lets the enumeration of the crimes fall upon his head, without arguing for the innocence of his position or demanding to be spoke to on his own terms.

Although 'annihilation' is, strictly speaking, a radically negative attitude towards the past, 'reactualization' is distinctively more positive. Where the former seeks to use the criticism of the past to pave the way for future philosophical and cultural progress, the latter believes that the kernel of such activity may remain hidden in the past. It has either been covered up by the tradition (we take one thing to be its meaning, when it is really another thing), or remained undeveloped because the person who produced the artifact lacked the logic and categories necessary to give it full expression. In this sense, texts appear often in tension with themselves: there is, as it were, a manifest and latent content, a surface logic, and a true, hidden deep-structure. Often reading philosophers against themselves, the thinkers who perform this kind of interpretation proclaim the radical untimely nature of the texts themselves. There is something unthinkable about them, something highly original. Struggling within language of their own age, the writers of these texts saw the glimmers of the impossible beyond their own existential, conceptual horizons. Intensively feeling its presence but lacking the categories to give it full life within the preserving openness of speech, the philosopher instead has tried to bring it down or to fight it off within the confines of an incommensurate conceptual horizon. The result is a text that belies itself. It is the slips, the eccentricities, and the turmoil of self-conflict within a text that are interesting, because it is retroactively revelatory of the contradictions of the present. There remains

something leftover that can only now be understood and grasped. Reactualizing the subtext, the hidden logic of an artifact unlocks not only previously unthinkable possibilities of the past, but also gives the present and the future a new or enhanced battery of philosophical vocabulary to advance.

But this has not answered my question. What is so distinctive and characteristic of these approaches? Although themselves not illegitimate, there is something suspicious about them. There is an obvious lack of respect for the words, intents, and purposes behind these texts themselves, their *lived character* as it were. It is not only that these interpretations are non-hermeneutical, but at times they tend to molest the intricacies and subtleties of the lived horizons of the past. Here there is no attempt to let the voice of the past speak for itself, to let it give its own word; there is no dialogue with a character from our own historically situated past, often resulting in a mere self-informed monologue that uses random tidbits of past systems as a vehicle of spontaneous philosophizing and philosophical critique. In a frantic attempt to rehabilitate the present, it uses the past as a resource for ideas, either negatively, hoping that in the shadow of their deconstruction the outline for how we should precede will emerge, or positively, by claiming that there is an unrealized, unseen, unspoken kernel of truth that lies hidden within it, merely waiting to be brought into the light. Both methodologically proceed by the same process: the (dis)integration of past *existential* horizons through the filters of the present, grasping the past radically in terms of the now. The criterion of legitimacy and the only recognized language is that of the now. Suddenly the apparent radicality of their procedure, the rejection of the tradition as dogmatic or in error, inconsistency or confusion, the surface extremist tearing-open of the inherited past, shows itself to be really nothing else but a consequent fact of a immoderate conservatism. The slogan is 'Of course we are right', and there is no attempt to, in the encounter with the past, to genuinely legitimate and risk one's own horizons.

My question, however, is not, as such, of the validity of these approaches. Nor am I concerned with the veracity/truthfulness of their claims or the attempt to render them philosophically impotent (indeed, they are largely insightful areas of philosophical research and will continue to be so). My question is far more rudimentary, far more basic. The past is not littered with detached, impersonal objects to be merely evaluated according to scientific procedures: *it is littered with corpses, the rotting flesh of men, their bloody equipment, and abandoned towns.* These objects that we dissect and rip apart were once living monuments, the arena were countless lives were lived out, where an innumerable amount of people were given the gift of life and found a structured, unified world of experience. To forget the existential nature of these testaments to past civilizations, now forgotten ways of being human seems largely unphilosophical and, even more so, *immoral.* Not only does it show a kind of naïvety by attempting to speak with the past in an incommensurate language and demanding its reaction; it defiles the tombs of the dead. This does not mean that the past is a place of mere reverence. We do have a right to be critical. This is not glorification. Rather, we must do homage to the past and realize that these ways of life were once real. The object is the artifact of a human Other, a dead face whose expression lies hidden in the sands of time. Hermeneutics, in this sense, is the attempt to phenomenologically rescue the Other of the past. It is the attempt to engage and welcome it. The Other, speaking to us dimly from the shadows of the forgotten recesses of abyssal time, calls us to responsibility.

When we look at the question of hermeneutics in this way, a few questions emerge to the front. What kind of *responsibility* do we have to the past? To what degree are we responsible for it? How can/do I act responsibly? What is the grounding of this responsibility? What can such questions teach us about ourselves, both ontically and ontologically?

II. The Meaning of the Hermeneutical Task

Although popularly conceived as such, hermeneutics is more than an art or methodology of interpreting historical artifacts. This is not to suggest that the hermeneutician does not concern himself with proper procedure, or practice rigorous constraint and therefore pursue his line of thinking arbitrarily according to his own whims, but to more strongly claim that there is something much more at stake in the reading of an ancient Greek philosophical text, the attempt to understand a Renaissance painting, or in the deciphering of early Anglo-Saxon epic than a rubric of rules that determine the legitimacy and truthfulness of his results. Hermeneutics is not a purely impersonal science, a mere brand of objective historiography that attempts to retrieve the lost meaning of the past; it is an activity constitutive of a fundamental aspect of our own self-understanding by being synonymous with the ontic investigation of the essence of factical life in its self-historizing. Because it is revelatory of the intricacies of the historical nature of life, what is at stake is never the meaning of a text, but rather what it is to be a being interpenetrated in its core by a irremovable relation to the distant past as a primordially defining characteristic of its own existence.[38] It concerns itself with the trajectory and logic of traditions, the meaning of cultural memory, and the forgotten possibilities of being human lodged in the labyrinth of the past. Any procedural mechanism for its own activity would have to be derived from the nature of ontology, since it is only through an understanding of man as a

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38 In this sense, hermeneutics is a *universal* discourse insofar as it is grounded within human ontology. It is lodged within ontological space between Dasein's essential historicality, its being-toward-the-beginning, and its projective ecstatic futurity, its being-toward-death. (Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time.* Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. HarperSansFrancisco, 1963. §72, 372-78p.) It is the medium of self-understanding through which Dasein comes to wholeness by relating to its own heritage authentically.

historically-situated being that hermeneutics as an art could be substantialized.[39]

The past can only address us because we still belong to it. Its voice may be faint; it may speak in a dead tongue whose original vitality and distinctiveness has been long since forgotten; the sociocultural milieu from which it emerged and was given the gift of life and its peculiar intensity may be obscure, concealed and hidden by an inexhaustible array of conceptual and existential hindrances that prevent it from showing itself: but there still remains something open to us of that primordial experience. Because of this there is something uncanny in the past, something which unavoidably escapes our own understanding, but which, paradoxically, is at the same time unexplainably familiar, something inexplicably near to us. It is the task of the hermeneutician to preserve while bringing forth the distance between us and the historical past.[40]

This stipulate stems from more than the fact that the conceptual and existential horizons of the past are different than our own. There of course remains a transcendence or alterity that cannot be reduced to the immanent horizons of our own culture, but this separation between us and a historical object, the in-between (*das*

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39 "Wether the *historiological disclosure of history* is factically accomplished or not, *its ontological structure is such that in itself this disclosure has its roots in the historicality of Dasein.* This is the connection we have in view when we talk of Dasein's historicality as the existential source of historiology. To cast light upon this connection signifies methodologically that the *idea* of historiology must be projected ontologically in terms of Dasein's historicality." Ibid. §76, 392-3p.

40 Although in its colloquial use, hermeneutics often merely refers to the act of interpreting a text, of bringing meaning from obscurity to a state of relatively more lucidity, I am applying it only in the sense of the simultaneous preservation and opening up of *historical* distance, and is not inclusive of *distance as such* in its various embodiments. A case may be made for hermeneutics to be concerned with all the facets of experience insofar as they deal with interpretation, but the scope of this work limits me to a discussion of it in terms of its ontological grounding within human historicality and its ontic import of this intrinsic relation to the past without explicitly dealing with the nature and implications of distance within the present and the multiplicity of existential horizons they imply.

Zwischen) that upsets our understanding by instituting a radical disjunction between us and the past, is grasped in terms of its ultimate significance for being human.[41] *It implies a rift within the very matrix of human being, an intrinsic self-lacerating activity* within the fabric of existence, as it disperses itself along the ecstasies of temporality. Human being, by projecting itself in the future and coming to meet itself, necessarily leaves something behind, the traces of which slowly fade away because of the ravages of time. This self-diremption that occurs within the movement of historical time is not to be seen as a mere negative fact or implication of our ontology that limits and constraints thought. As the fundamental characteristic of life itself and finite human reason, it should be embraced and its intricacies mapped out so that we can come to a greater understanding of the nature of human self-understanding.[42]

History constitutes the factical horizon that generates the prejudices (*Vorurteile*) of our cultural milieu. It forms their basis by producing the space for their own expansive, creative, and ecstatical (that is, future-oriented) activity, though at the same time it conceals itself. The dispositional horizon must itself withdraw, if it is to bring forth the objects of cultural vision, the possibilities of action. It brings forth this space from itself by in some sense producing and making possible these prejudices, acting as a kind of matter from which they are ultimately formed. Our prejudices exist only by means of the historical forces that give rise to them, so that one could say that history itself acts as a kind of hidden, contracted kernel within our endeavours, usually pre-theoretically unbeknownst and unconscious to us, which enables the excessive richness of concrete

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41 Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method.* Trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall. Second Edition. (Continuum Books: New York, 2004), 290.

42 "[P]hilosophical thought should not consider history and the historicity of our existence as a constraint, but rather that it should raise this, our very ownmost impulse in our lives, into thinking." Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "Martin Heidegger's One Path." *Reading Heidegger from the Start.* Ed. Theodore Kisiel and John Van Buren. (SUNY: New York, 1994), 21.

socio-political and personal life.[43] History is not a mere impersonal area of investigation that exists separated from us, but flows throughout the entirety of our being and structures the matrices of its activity. It is an operative element in experience and should not be forgotten. To forget the historical, is to forget oneself.

But human activity is not static: the kernel of history that constitutes our own cultural milieu is ever elusive, as it itself changes and transforms in accordance with the vicissitudes of concrete temporal existence. As the future comes to meet us, the stratum of the past slowly fades away and becomes unrecognizable. The kernel endlessly dissipates into the labyrinth of time and becomes more distant, vague, and obscure in light of new cultural activity and movement. Our own past becomes alien, strange, and increasingly Other as our own origins slip into the dregs of time and are covered up by various nuances that change the nature of our own understanding. Things that were once familiar – a colloquialism, the true meaning of a historical event, a great work of art – appear foreign, sometimes more foreign than a stranger on the street speaking an unknown tongue. The ever-increasing distance problematizes the task of the hermeneutician because voice of the forgotten possibilities of being human that he attempts to bring forth become more and more difficult to perceive and grasp within the noise of his own cultural clatter. They risk becoming so incommensurate with his own existential horizon so as not be recognized as such: they risk falling into utter unintelligibility. The past, if it is not to be forgotten, demands great effort if we are to bring about its own self-realization, if we are to let its voice speak and be heard. But this voice cannot be heard *within* our existential horizons: it cannot be integrated as merely another element within them strictly speaking. It can only be experienced; it can only be brought into its own essence, in an encounter with that which lies

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43 Gadamer, *Truth and Method,* 278.

beyond the symbolical-conceptual stratum of the now. We must experience it as something *impossible* (unheard of, unthinkable, alien) to us.[44]

When this distance is encountered, a limit-situation is experienced. We realize we lack a language commensurate with the tradition and through which we can understand it. In this sense language should not be understood merely as a common tongue, an identical system of syntax and set of vocabulary, but as the very vehicle by which the world is opened up to me, the nonsubjective source of the blossoming of the world itself in all of its sociocultural and personal richness.[45] It is not that we lack a Rosetta Stone through which we can translate the foreign hieroglyphs of culture into the familiar space of our own language: we lack a direct experience of that ancient world in its primordial intensity, an intensity to which we can no longer easily mediate ourselves because of the radical disconnect between our horizons. The conventional logic of the understanding has no place there. It cannot aid you if you are to truly experience this terrain as it is. Hermeneutics arises within this chasm of the understanding, within this uncertain area between us and the historical artifact, where there is no longer any understanding (*Verständnis*) because the act of agreement (*Einverständnis*) fails insofar as there is no immediate accord between subject and object.[46]

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44 I, of course, do not mean an *logical* impossibilty. I merely wish to emphasize the radical distance and alterity of the task. Its impossiblity can cause a *change* within our own existential horizon, what Gadamer calls a 'fusion' of horizons, but the initial encounter itself must have a halo of impossibility around it, a tinge of the unexpected, as when one thinks 'I cannot believe they thought like that' or 'Was it possible that this was commonplace?'.

45 "Our inquiry has been guided by the basic idea that language is a medium where I and world meet, or rather, manifest there original belong together." Gadamer, *Truth and Method*. 474.

46 The close connection of understanding and agreement in the German is here worth passing over. Whereas *Verständnis* implies an act or process of understanding, which often approaches a kind of sympathy, *Einverständnis*

But the object, understood fully, is *us*. The encounter of the uncanny in history brings forth a clash within our self-experience. It lets itself sneak in the foreign strangeness at the heart of our own past, letting us experience a taste of the richness of our cultural heritage and the manifold of previously potentialities of human nature. It therefore breaks our self-enclosed familiarity, our default ways of living through the taken-for-granted values of our own culture, by opening us to something foreign that can only be experienced with a kind of uncanniness and distance. There is a radical difference and incommesuratibility explicit. In the hermeneutical experience, the categories of our understanding fail as we lose ourselves within a terrain where our standard navigational tools do not suffice to survey the surrounding land. It forces us to dialogically encounter this Other in a manner that simultaneously highlights our own cultural prejudices by bringing them into utter self-transparency, and enriches our own self-understanding by bring us face-to-face with the intrinsic infinite distances and the forgotten plurality of horizons lodged deep within our historical facticity.

Accordingly, hermeneutical analysis is in a two-fold sense liberating.[47] Hearkening back to the etymologically original sense of the word among the ancient Greeks, analysis (*αναλυειν*) is within the

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suggests an active agreement between individuals. It is arrived only though a kind of dialogical process and is therefore noninterchangeable with the *Verständnis*. As with a conversation, a failure of understanding is not necessarily meaningless. *Einverständnis* is also in be constrasted with *Übereinstimmung* in the sense of an agreement or correspodence as, for example, in the definition of truth as agreement (*Wahrheit als Übereinstimmung*), which merely expresses a coinciding of things without a kind of personal process of mutual deliberation among people. Here a failure merely means that there was an erroneous subjective act unable to attain a proper degree of truth: it cannot be a source of higher understanding as such.

47 Although no hermeneuticians refer to their work as 'analytical', I nevertheless believe that the term, once considered in its original meaning, clearly expresses the true essence of their task.

scope of the hermeneutical experience never a merely ratiocinative, calculating process of logical deduction and inference. Its intent is never the pure scientific observation of its object, but its emancipation from its captivity within the void of forgetfulness, its release from the chains of factical obscurity and dissolution. To emancipate is to create a site of welcoming, an area within one's self-experience where the object can enjoy a glimmer of its previous intensity and primordiality, and therefore show itself to us in its former glamour. It is two-fold not merely because this liberation presupposes the setting free of the self in terms of its becoming open to other existential horizons of experience and putting its own into play, thereby breaking its self-secure cultural immanence through reaching out to the "impossible." The process of self-openness only happens *alongside* the encounter with the liberated tradition. They both mutually condition one another in a dialectical dance, each informing the emancipation of the other. To truly understand yourself, you must tackle the tradition from which you have emerged.[48] The self is not an individual atom existing in discrete external relations to others, but has its origins in the obscure labyrinths of the past.

The experience of distance brings forth an ontic space where at once a genuine legitimation, dismantling, expansion, and making-transparent of our existential horizons is possible through a dialogue with and reacquiring of the richness of our heritage and a relearning of the uncountable ancient possibilities of being that have been lost. The conflict/discord (*Missverständnis*) that is the condition of the

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48 "[A] person trying to understand a text is prepared for it to tell him something. That is why a hermeneutically trained consciousness must be, from the start, sensitive to the text's alterity. But this kind of sensitivity involves neither 'neutrality' with respect to content nor the extinction of one's self, but the foregrounding and appropriation of one's own fore-meanings and prejudices. The important thing is to be aware of one's own bias, so that the text can present itself in all its otherness and thus assert its own truth against one's one fore-meaning's." Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 271-2.

possibility of hermeneutics is a source of movement: the infinite distance between myself and the past is not a mere ontological constraint upon human thinking and activity, but a structuring presence that compels us to act of self-knowledge.[49] To grasp the possibilities ingrained in the past, I must risk myself;[50] to overcome the distance of the limit-situation, I must be willing to let a genuine experience of the past *as* past make play of my own horizons and highlight my factical fore-theoretical stratum. It is only in dialogue with this truly Other that I really begin to come into my own, that I truly become as self-conscious as I can of myself and my own being-in-the-world. My hermeneutical responsibility to the past, therefore, is co-simultaneous with my responsibility to myself. They are interchangeable. My knowledge of myself is dependent on my knowledge of the past: unless I am going to harm myself, or do injustice to myself by purposefully leaving part of myself unexamined, unscrutinized, unknown, I must engage the fullness of my tradition, its distance, its alterity, it transcendence.[51] The demand

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49 "Time is no longer primarily a gulf to be bridged because it separates; it is actually the supportive ground of the course of events in which the present is rooted." Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 297.

50 "[T]he history of philosophical research will be there as object in a relevant sense for present research on it when and only when the latter aims to provide not diverse historical curiosities but rather radically simple *monuments that evoke thinking*, i.e., only when it does not divert understanding within the present into the goal of merely enlarging knowledge about the past but rather forces the present back upon itself in order to intensify its questionability." Heidegger, Martin. "Phenomenological Interpretations in Connection with Aristotle: An Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation (1922)." Trans John van Buren. *Supplements: From the Earliest Essays to* Being and Time *and Beyond.* Ed. John Van Buren. (SUNY: New York, 2002)

51 The nature of his responsibility is difficult to summarize. It is not as such ethical insofar as we can assume that someone can act ethically to another without knowing the fullness of his own past. It is not necessary, although in some cases it could be beneficial. It seems from a responsibility to oneself, an almost ontological responsibility that resides in the call to self-hood and self-

of self-responsibility and its equipimordial concept of existential wholeness is, in this respect, contaminated with the responsibility for this dialogical Other. Unless we gain sight of him, unless we keep him safe, we risk losing ourselves. The task of the hermeneutician is to aid us.

II. An Ontology of Distance

The task of hermeneutics is to preserve while opening up the distance between us and the historical past. But this statement of the task still leaves a few fundamental philosophical questions unanswered, leaves them lying unspoken and unheard. How is this goal accomplished? And how exactly (in formal terms) is this accomplishment related to/grounded upon human ontology? Essentially: how is *das Zwischen* related the ontological matrix of being human and what is the significance of the latter for the experience of the former?

The in-between tries to bring to the front what is often forgotten in historiographic, classical, and even philosophical research: that this otherness that is encountered within historical research is not a separated, detached object, or the mere recipient of scientific curiosity. The object, as said, is really *us*. It cannot be spoken of in isolation from this: to abstract the discussion of the object from our own search for ontic fullness and complete selfhood is to ignore the structure of understanding that conditions its possibility and the ontological openness of human existence to the past. This means that the in-between is located within the 'connectedness' of life, lodged deep within the ontological space between the contrapositional momentums of human existence, its being-towards-the-beginning (natality) and being-towards-the-end

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realization. To be what you can be, to become who you are – all these platitudes of self-help psychology really require a direct confrontation with the facticity of life in its manifold meaning.

(death), and therefore represents an irremovable aspect of human striving towards wholeness by being at its center.[52] However, this does not imply that the in-between is located within the present as a kind of discrete point where two contrary forces are felt (the infinitely past of the historical and the unknown anxiety of the future), but that it exists as a kind of zone that always and already exists ecstatically outside-of-itself in both movements and therefore moves in both directions simultaneously. The hermeneutical in-between holds an instable, undecidable position; it oscillates between both, but it is the movement of this oscillation (from the future/now to the past) that gives strength, intensity, and ontic importance to its action. Moreover, the undecidability is not a mere defect of our intellect, a kind of negative limitation where we cannot say which is which because of an epistemic uncertainty that precludes indubitable knowledge. The ecstasies of time, the facticity of my concrete tradition and my own personal experience of death, are so interrelated and interpenetrated that it is impossible to give a phenomenological account of one without implicating the other. The past is never dead but always remains ontically operative through experience through the ontological unitary matrix of being-in-the-world. To forget the past, to deliberately ignore its human primordiality or to intentionally ignore the true nature/import of temporal distance would result in the loss of one's own being. To deliberately ignore this primordiality, to intentionally ignore the true nature/import of temporal distance, would result in the forgetting of one's own being. In this sense, hermeneutical analysis is never a merely formal interpretational exchange between part to whole and whole to part, but persists positively within the temporal dispersal of human being. This ontological grounding not only has profound implications on the nature of historical research and knowledge, but brings us nearer to the universal role of hermeneutics in terms of its

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52 Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time.* Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. (Harper: San Francisco, 1963), §72, 372-3.

engagement with the ambiguities of factical existence and our own self-knowledge.

If human being is phenomenologically characterized with an irremovable reference to the not yet and has been, the transparency of conscious activity to itself is problematized. Opening upon an absence, human being ecstatically exists within the obscure uncertainty of the future. The fullness of its intimate self-presence is breached by a trace of the unexpected that threatens the security and closed immanence of its own existential horizons with the surprise of an unforeseeable event. The claim is not just that, because consciousness is radically spread across the ecstasies of time, the categories of the present must be aware of their ultimate grounding within the temporality of existence. The claim is stronger. As a being of possibility, man cannot be reduced to mere present-at-hand actuality and must be understood in the full richness of its existence;[53] the lack of self-coincidence, this distance of myself from myself (I come from the unknown dregs of the past, I exist ecstatically in an undetermined future and therefore in suspense), instils a peculiarity to human self-knowledge and activity. Yet this Heideggerian notion of being-as-possibility seems insufficient. It is a necessary formulation, but it fails to articulate the true nature of human existence as a no-thing. It cannot give expression to the underlying truth embedded within the self-lacerating, self-dispersing activity of humanity. Why does the category of actuality (understood in terms of present-at-hand scientific observation) not suit man?

The upsurge of human life[54] is characterized by ontological vagueness. This is not to be confused with any epistemic notion of unclarity, which implies that by closer examination and with a more

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53 Ibid., §9, 42.
54 It seems to me that a phenomenological account of nature could result in the same conclusion for life itself, but obviously that does not lie within the scope of this essay. Is a self-constituting, self-developmental, artistic productivity at the core of everything?

secure methodological procedure complete knowledge could be reached. The "plurivocity" of this term's meaning should be seen as entrenched internally within the object itself, so that its inner core as it shows itself in itself should be made "into an explicitly appropriated and transparent uncertainty," as its ontological substratum and ontic signification are brought into openness.[55] The divergent rivers of meaning implicit with the concept are not to be rejected, but to be embraced as comprehending the diverse showing of a phenomenon that is spontaneous, creative, and self-moving. Vagueness is not to be seen as a defect, but as an achievement, a positivity.

The ontological foundation of human existence, the temporal matrix of being-in-the-world, is such that human nature is never ontically finished, done, complete, wholly realized. A single Dasein never exhausts the possibilities of its cultural facticity, nor can it ever create the last nuance in the movement of life. Every Dasein is nonrepeatable and exists within time. The non-coincidence of elements of selfhood (the factical past, the uncertain future, and the in-between which now precariously hovers within both) creates a space where an infinite set of potentialities can ontically realize themselves in a plurality of different forms, taking on various possibilities for their own movements within concrete existence. This has several implications for this study. It means that the self-activity of the realization-movement of potentiality is itself a source of distancing, as new ontic possibilities of self-understanding are brought forth and enacted, making older ones slowly dissipate into increasing unintelligibility. *It is not merely the forward march of time that makes the voice of the past faint and the original intensity of its language lose luster; it is the intrinsic activity of human self-diremption through time as the realizations of our nature distance themselves from one another and undergo the*

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55 Heidegger, "Phenomenological Interpretations in Connection with Aristotle: An Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation (1922)," 114-5.

experiential modifications within the new operative form of a different existential horizon. Yet insofar as these ancient, forgotten possibilities are still historically embedded within the factical abyss of the tradition, and they represent various ways of being human once taken up, something remains open to us of that original experience handed down in a, perhaps now, obfuscated form. The play of familiarity and alterity cannot be out-stripped: it is an omnipresent condition of human existence and it only exists in degrees. As I move on through time, the age of my youth will appear distinctively more foreign to me, its horizons and attitudes lost to newly realized possibilities as old ones fade away with the vicissitudes of experience; and so it is with a culture, a country, a continent, the histories of the world. At times chains fall infinitely away, never to be recalled into consciousness. At other times, they appear dimly, but only by intuition. No matter how foreign these experiences are to us, insofar as they are human possibilities they can never be completely lost. Yet two things remain evident and indisputable: the indivisible remainder of the historical artifact, and the call to responsibility in the rotting face, the skull, or the dust of the Other as he is abandoned to the fate of abyssal time. Human transcendence remains an alterity, even in death.

If our relation to ourselves, to our own nature, is characterized by a degree of spontaneity and inexhaustibility, then this must also apply to the hermeneutical experience of distance and the keeping up of the in-between. Insofar as our present conditions do not contain the seeds of future possibilities (they cannot be deduced from them, the future is not a logical development from the past), lodged within the past are long since forgotten ways of being human that can speak to us now in novel, never imagined ways because of their disparity to each other. The superiority of one possibility to another is not obvious: the radical transformative character of human nature and culture means that the old can ever be creatively reused, or that the present has drifted from a possibility

that could benefit it now. Human nature is elusive: always looking forward, it can easily lose track of itself and fail to see the true significance of various ontic possibilities now or in the past.

But what does this mean? The answer is breath-taking. It is both a joy and a burden. The clash that erupts in our self-understanding through the distance of the past and the difference of existential horizons means that the hermeneutical task is infinite: it is never-ending and endlessly generative. Historical artifacts are not merely dead objects, but are living entities whose meaning can never be caught or made static.[56] They stand in for a face that cannot show itself anymore in direct solicitation. The face appears like a trace. Moreover, the ontological essence of distance shows that finitude is not a curse, a limitation or constraint, but that facticity itself can be the place where human culture and personal life blossoms into new forms in its struggle towards wholeness, always in dialogue with the past. The fact that historical knowledge can never be complete attests to its ability to reveal itself anew. Human activity has the possibility to relate itself to the already realized ontic possibilities of its own inexhaustible nature in a plurality of radically new ways; the hermeneutical space of the in-between not only mediates the past to the now, but simultaneously opens an interlocution which can operatively change the future by proliferating a variety of new experiences of our self-understanding.

IV. Hermeneutic Responsibility

The vagueness of life, its never-ending proliferation of new ways of being human and its capacity of Protean transformation, show that historical knowledge is in a radical sense non-progressive. This does not mean there are not technological inventions and political revolutions that have brought man into a better age by giving more people access to basic rights and means of life, but rather that the

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56 Gadamer, *Truth and Method,* 298.

actual activity of self-understanding shows itself to be amorphous, ever-shifting. Our own 'conception' that our age is better than previous ones because of its omnipresent usage of reason or the rise of natural science over religion reveals itself on a closer historical examination to be a mere prejudice among many. Because of the finitude of reason, it is difficult to absolutely legitimatize a single historically-risen standpoint. The past from which it is arisen always threatens to break loose; the existential horizons of our experience constantly bears witness reawakened spirits, conjured up from their dependence on their theological and philosophical origins.

How can other ways of being human be taken to be wrong, inferior, or less worthwhile point blank? This sense of contemporary superiority is a remainder of an Enlightenment ideal which proclaims not only a progressive notion of history, but smacks of a kind of conceptual imperialism. To speak metaphorically, the march of empire has not only stopped at the geographical borders of continents, but as expanded to the abyss of our own facticity. There is no "politics of recognition" here: the voices of the past are reduced to the uniform language of the person performing the historical research. In so doing, not only is the object reduced to a mere 'plaything', but the faces of the culture it helps preserve, even if only vaguely, obscurely, forever in the distance, are completely lost – and so is the object itself.

The question of hermeneutical responsibility shows itself to be many-sided. It is never merely a matter of being faithful to the texts you are reading in order to recognize the Other in the artifact, the lost faces of a distant tradition. Our openness to the past is only possible through our ontology, through primordially belonging to it. It calls us and continues to have a presence as the obscure origins of our own thought. To truly be faithful to yourself, you must not only authentically embrace your own death, but also your birth: the two implicate one another in a phenomenological dance of equiprimordiality. The object of the hermeneutical analysis is an

intricate web, which includes us in intimate and dynamic relationship with the whole temporal flux of being-in-the-world as constitutive of who we are and can become. The great philosophers, poets, and artists of the ancient and recent past have played a decisive and irremovable role not only in the genesis of our culture but also thereby of our own personality. They are to be treated with respect, reverence, and courtesy, even if in the end we hold a critical stance toward them. Our quest for wholeness, unless it is to be one-sided, must actively engage the past *as* past by opening while preserving its distance. It is this play of alterity and familiarity that is important for us: its familiarity shows us that the forgotten how of a past being-in-the-world is not so foreign and alien to be completely unrealizable in a modified, contemporary form, while its alterity expresses that there is always something lost in our conceptualizations, in our attempts to bring forth the richness of its primordial experiences. There is always an indivisible remainder, always something to be returned to. Any loss of this remainder is a loss of not merely of ancient voices, urprimordial faces, and different ontic configurations of the possibilities of being-in-the-world, but also the potentiality that lies at the heart of our nature. Its resistance is a conflict that serves as a forward movement, acts as the source of the infinite proliferation of transformations that is the essence of the human being, the actualization-realization activity of the unfolding dynamism of our existence.

The question, 'What kind of responsibility do we have to the past?', is therefore difficult to answer. Insofar as our relation to the past is conditioned by our ontology, and the trajectory of the tradition exists implicitly within our own historical facticity as an ever-operative force the shaping of our own horizons of meaning, hermeneutical responsibility is written into the very essence of our being. Although formally conditioned by ontology, the responsibility must be activated by the intensity of our own ontic personalities – it

must be striven for, it must be achieved. It exists in a limbo between responsibility to ourselves and responsibility to the infinite Other.

The degree of our responsibility is likewise endless. It is limited only by the intensity of power personality, how much of it we can sustain in the subjective pole. The call, in this respect, never grows stops, although we ourselves may grow weary of its demand. There is no sense in which we can stop being responsible or just give up the burden of our responsibility; we may run away from it, choose to ignore it, or try to cover up its trace through a merely negative relation to it, but nevertheless it still persists. Similarly, since we are intrinsically temporal beings – since we, by the very nature of our own activity, dirempt ourselves over the ecstasies of time as the condition of our existence – the act is never done as long as we continue to persist. The hermeneutical distance never closes: the in-between remains forever active within our self-understanding. Our greatest efforts can never complete it: its incompletion, in a certain respect, is its condition of possibility. It must be repeated endlessly, even though the repetitions never exhaust its meaning.

Hermeneutic responsibility teaches us about the ontic possibilities of being human that have been forgotten, given up, or transformed in the self-movement of human potentiality through time. It not only therefore highlights our own prejudices by bringing them in stark contrast with radically alien ways of being-in-the-world, but it also reminds us of their ultimate permeability and transience. A new wave of cultural activity could sweep them away; it calls us to not be so absolute, so rigid in our own existential horizons, but to leave them open to play. Being aware of their genesis and other possibilities already lived through is a way through which we can march into the future. We do not merely have to look forward; the dregs of the past can aid us, where our own current self-understanding has stagnated its own possibilities. Yet, at the same time, hermeneutical responsibility reminds us of the ultimate melancholic state of being human. There is an indivisible remainder

to the historical artifact, something that is forever lost to us, something that cannot be translated into the present and experienced in the intensity of its primordiality. It eludes our grasp – as we extend our arm out to it with a welcoming voice, it retreats, resists our advance. There is an impenetrability to its presence, something that cannot be brought forth by our own analyses. Within the great products of these traditions, something is lost, and there is no hope to achieve it. As we encounter the past, the best we can at times do is hear its voice brokenly, as, at times, it falls fragmented and disjoint on our ears, only a scattered word here, an isolated there. The riches of the past, the original intensities of those primordial experiences, are as such lost. And so too will be our fate. Generation after generation, the riches fall to spoil, and only a glimmer of greatness remains. As our faces wither away like whispers in the wind, it will be our successors who keep the flame of our culture alive.

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Scepticism and the *A Priori*

Robert Breen

This one is for all the marbles.

-Robert Breen

Contemporary epistemologists in the analyst tradition are hell-bent on the notion of *a priori* knowledge. The main issue of *a priori* knowledge is justification: roughly defined, justification is the securement of the knowledge one possesses. The way in which one secures or justifies one's knowledge determines its epistemological and, in some cases, metaphysical status. The general level at which human knowledge may be justified or secured is either empirical or non-empirical. Rationalists of the blatant kind like Laurence BonJour argue that "the vast preponderance of our knowledge" is secured by a non-empirical rational intuition that allows us to discern the basic, logical structure of reality (54). That the intuition is rational, a product not of experience but pure reason unaided, confers an *a priori* status upon the knowledge it secures; this is in contradistinction to the 'moderate' empiricist view that the mere analytic relation of ideas provides a sound foundation for *a priori* justification. Of the few theses expounded by BonJour, his focus upon the relation between rational intuition and statements of logic may be problematized and cast in a sceptical light, with the result of invoking either a pragmatic shift towards naturalism, or at least a reformulation of our justification of logic and conception of rationalism.

BonJour's intention with his manifesto is to defend a rationalist account of *a priori* justification through an elimination of general empiricist accounts of such justification. He does not, in other words, offer arguments *for* a rationalist account, but rather points out that the shortcomings of the accounts bequeathed to us by the empiricist tradition leave us no choice but to adopt a rationalist version of *a priori* justification and save ourselves from scepticism about human knowledge overall. His theory of rationalism, however, is unique, so much so that he sees in Kant's denial of the human capacity to know noumenal structures a theory of empiricism, however idiosyncratic. For him, rationalism is a matter of metaphysics as much as it is a matter of epistemology; it represents a theory of knowledge "about the nature or structure of reality," or noumena in Kantian terms (56).

Having drank his analyst blitz™ for breakfast, BonJour demolishes the empiricist dogma of analyticity on the count of its reductionist veneer, attacking the view that *a priori* justification is restricted to cases of analyticity, finding among its different expressions the single problem of a presupposed act of rational intuition. Analytic statements express the relations among our ideas; the truth of the statement's predicate elucidates nothing more than what is true of its subject. In a reductive sense, analyticity explains "the *a priori* epistemic justification of some [content-specific] statements by appeal to that of other statements" more general in content (65). Presumably, though BonJour gives us no reason to believe in any 'other statements' than logical statements, the appeal is made to logical statements. So, "I am able to recognize *a priori* that 'it is not the case that the table is both brown and not brown' is an instance" of the logical truth of non-contradiction; my belief in the statement is true because it is buttressed and justified by a necessarily true statement of logic (65).

We may also see a reductive element in cases of analyticity wherein a statement's *a priori* status is broached with the

consideration of its denial's vacuity. In other words, if the denial of any statement manifests an explicit contradiction in terms of the form 'P and not P' – for example 'it is not the case that all bodies have extension' – then that statement may be deemed analytic and hence, for the moderate empiricist, one with *a priori* justification. But, again, the foregoing case of analyticity does not explain but only presuppose the *a priori* justification of the logical statements needed to derive such contradictions.

Following this reckoning, BonJour extends this reductionist reading of analyticity into cases of statements whose truth is guaranteed by one's linguistic competence with the terms contained therein. We know, for example, the truth of the claim that 'nothing can be red and green all over at the same time' by virtue of our grasp of the terms 'green' and 'red'. But "how…is the appeal to one's grasp of the meaning of such a claim supposed to avoid the need for the rationalist's allegedly mysterious intuitive insight into necessity" (67)? In other words, how can the moderate empiricist refute the possible existence of a nascent, rational intuition at work in their discerning linguistic meaning? How can it be shown that linguistic understanding employs no *a priori* component, and that there is no difference between analyticity and rational intuition? To make theories of analyticity, in the end, tantamount to all that is needed for *a priori* justification is "a failure to grasp clearly what the central epistemological issue really is," according to Larry BonJour (64).

The real epistemological issue at work in each case, for BonJour, is clearly an issue concerning logic, and in particular how recourse to the necessary relations betwixt our ideas as the source of *a priori* justification does not explain how we are justified in employing the logical rules that make such relations possible in the first place. But an examination of the justification of a basic logical law seems to me to imply, at least in theory, an epistemic quandary at the base of BonJour's rationalism, and thus a compulsion to shift towards a more pragmatic justification of logic.

Take, for example, the most basic law of logic, that of identity (A=A), and consider the justification for its truth. It certainly seems like one just intuits the necessity contained therein, but the fact is that there is no illuminating principle that one can approach as a criteria for deciding whether a rationalist or empiricist view of its justification is correct. Asking whether A=A is discerned through rational intuition or plain experience is a question that puts philosophers, no one else, into epistemic quandaries. Where are the criteria to appease the philosopher? And is one a philosopher about things by saying one simply *feels* the necessity, as BonJour does? Kant certainly felt this way about some *a priori* knowledge: space and time formalize experience to the extent that we cannot even doubt our feeling them, or conceive of experience without their providing the conditions possible for that experience.[57] Despite his relocating Kant's philosophy to empiricism, BonJour is like the Prussian in this respect.

With that said, the theoretical appeal of a more pragmatic, perhaps naturalistic, position is clear enough: since we cannot, in principle, gain access to a rational intuition, how could we change it in the face of possible recalcitrant experience? Experience at least gives us public access to our source of justification as something contingent and therefore revisable. And making it the sphere of justification precludes us from a kind of 'intellectual suicide', to use BonJour's prose: that, in the possible scenario where *a priori* knowledge faces recalcitrant experience, we would not have to blame our own sweet reason. We take reason to be something whose mediation to the world is a necessary one. But the kind of scepticism that one can raise – as I have above – about what we believe to be the most direct instance of that mediation, which we believe in practice to be logical-mathematical reasoning, creates an epistemic

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[57] This is, in effect, why in the Kantian transcendental philosophy of Kant's first *Critique* the exposition of space and time as *a priori* forms of intuition (experience) is called a 'transcendental *aesthetic*'.

predicament once the question of that mediation's justification arises. Making reason the security blanket or justification for our potentially revisable knowledge runs the risk of our own intellectual suicide.

What I have tried to do in this brief essay is problematize the theoretical underpinnings of BonJour's account of a rational source of *a priori* justification. Though the turns and arguments BonJour uses against empiricists to get at the heart of the central epistemological issue are sound, they may nevertheless turn out dubitable if one takes seriously scepticism about the justification of logic. What seems to be needed is a different definition of rationalism, or an inquiry into the justification of logic,[58] because on BonJour's account believing in rational intuition is as theoretically tenable to *the analyst* as believing in God – it gets them through the harsh drag of epistemology but seems, in principle, impossible to prove.

References

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[58] On a personal note, a *philosophical* theory about *a priori* knowledge actually seems palatable to me, so long as it is not on the same footing as BonJour's, positing a mere feeling of necessity as a source of justification for a priority. I would be more inclined to accept a more revisionist theory of *a priori* ('revisionist' in that it has followed Quine's dictum in revising the concept of 'a priori', but nevertheless tries to maintain a stolid attitude about the privileged status of *a priori* judgements, however (un)successfully).

An Exploration of the Ethical Issues Surrounding Animal Rights and the Usage of Animals for Human Benefit

Faseeha Sheriff

In the contemporary world, the ethical issues surrounding animal usage for human benefit are the target of great controversy. There is no doubt that animals can be used for many practical purposes. However, society remains deeply divided about what can and cannot be done to animals in the name of practicality. Peter Singer has argued that we treat animals as we would wish to be treated if they were in our position of dominance. At times we find ourselves trying to ascribe strong moral status to animals, while at other times we deny them any moral status at all as they seem to lie on the borderline of our moral concepts.[59] Intuitively, we shun operators of puppy mills, as most of us would agree that these animals deserve more consideration than is shown to them in such an environment. However, we do not seem to react as adversely to factory farms where animals are often housed in even shoddier conditions. This raises the pivotal question: what place should animals have in an acceptable moral system?[60] Through the course of this essay, I will elucidate the difficulties in comparing animal rights to those of humans. To do this, I shall address several interlocking questions: are there any limits to what we may do to animals? Do animals have the

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[59] L. Gruen, *Standford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, s.v. "The Moral Status of Animals."

[60] Ibid.

moral status of mere objects? Are there certain purposes for which we cannot justify animal usage? Finally, what entitles us to use animals at all?[61]

Background: Some History of the Contemporary Animal Rights Movement

In the 1900s, two animal rights movements began; the reformist humane movement and the radical antivivisection movement. These groups arose due to social reactions to increasing technological change and were primarily concerned with the "symbolic position of animals as liaisons and mediators between humanity and nature."[62] Most of these groups were reacting in part to increasing human exploitation and intrusion into the natural world. Until recently, the humane movement reflected a utilitarian ethical position on animal based research, therefore, it did not pose a significant political threat to science, particularly the use of animals for scientific purposes. However, contemporary animal rights movements call into question all uses of animals including those for scientific purposes.

The emergence of these contemporary animal rights movements can be linked to the publication of Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* in 1975 which provided a rational foundation for those who object to human use of animals. In 1981, the animals rights movement received much publicity when the founder of PETA (People for Ethical Treatment of animals), Alex Pacheco, exposed the cruel treatment of primates at the Silver Spring Research Centre.[63] Soon after, in 1984, video footage of head trauma experiments from the University of Pennsylvania fostered both further outrage within activist groups and a greater awareness among

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[61] Ibid.; N. Shanks, "The Origin of Speciesism," http://www.stpt.usf.edu/hhl/papers/speicies.htm.

[62] P. Singer, "Animal Liberation," *New York Review of Books* (1975).

[63] Ibid.

the public. Since that time, animal rights movements have played a significant role in animal protection (Rowan 1989). There are extremists within the animal rights movements that have carried out raids against scientific institutions where animals are used as research subjects. A particularly well publicized example occurred on April 2, 1989 at the University of Arizona, when several buildings were set on fire to free thousands of animals. Such exhibitions clearly display that activists believe society mistreats animals to such an extent that individuals are willing to risk their livelihood for animal rights.[64]

Many scientists believe animal activists act out of sheer ignorance, studies have found this claim to be largely unfounded. However, data collected by Jasper and Nelkin in 1992 did not support this contention. Surprisingly, the majority of people against animal research were predominantly from urban areas; in fact 65% were from metropolitan cities, cities of more than 50,000 people, 19% lived in towns of 10,000-50,000 people, and less than 10% lived in a town consisting of less than 10,000 people. Subsequent studies such as the one by Ranney in 1983 examined the sources of information activists subscribe to. Most scientists believe that activists are swayed by movement magazines or direct mail distributed by animal rights groups.[65] When questioned about the sources on which activists based their opinions, television, magazines and newspapers were identified. This may have been somewhat unexpected as the use of multiple sources of information is indicative of not only a greater depth of education but also a higher level of

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[64] Ibid.; C. Matlack, "Animal Rights Furor" *National Journal* (September 7, 1991).

[65] R. Barke, *Science, technology, public policy* (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1986).; J. Bronowski, *The Common Sense of Science* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1978).; S. Kopperud, "The Animal Rights Movement Exposed," *The National Cattlemen Annual Report* (Denver: National Cattlemen Association, 1989).

interest in public affairs. Thus, it is difficult for scientists to dismiss the concerns of these animals' activists straightforwardly. Hence, scientists must continue to think about what warrants these concerns, and how to reach a compromise that is accepted by society at large in regards to animal use for scientific purposes.

In recent years the animal rights movement in the United States has experienced tremendous success. This movement is primarily concerned with monitoring animal based biomedical research and animal use in recreation, entertainment, and agriculture.[66] Lobbyists for this group actively pursue amendments to the Federal Animal Welfare Act in an attempt to ensure better regulation of animal usage in scientific research. This movement has grown rapidly, as illustrated by an unprecedented march that consisted of twenty five thousand participants during the summer of 1990 in Washington DC. This march was publicized as a "day of compassion, celebration, and commitment."[67] In an interview, these marchers voiced their scepticism about the value and virtue of science. Most of them "perceived scientists as authority figures whose power is not legitimate as science does not represent the interests of the public at large."[68]

Attitudes toward Animal Ethics

Numerous people have tried to understand society's attitudes towards animals. Due to the influence of religious sphere in our life, humans have seemed to always believe that they have dominion over the environment. It seems that we have always believed that 'dominion means people have religious and ethical authorization to use animals for food, fibre and as beasts of burden'. Beyond this, the concept of humanity having a certain right to control the lives of

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[66] Barke, *Science, technology, public policy.*
[67] Ibid.; Kopperud, "The Animal Rights Movement Exposed".
[68] Barke, *Science, technology, public policy.*

animals appears in the bible: "You shall have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the heaven, and all creatures that move on the earth" (Genesis 1:28). Another study was conducted by Bronowski in 1978 to better understand the mindset of activists. The results yielded some data in support of the claim that the main cause of animal exploitation is our belief in human dominion over the environment.[69]

Over the last fifteen years, the number of protests against animal-based research has greatly increased. Numerous studies have tried to measure the reactions of animal activists to different levels of animal based research. It was found that activists tended to oppose research that use animals regardless of the harm to animals or benefit to human beings. The main focus point of animal activist argument has been the invasive procedures that cause the animal great harm. This raises the question, what is the activist perception of use of animals for scientific purposes? A study carried out by Barke in 1986 tried to capture the activist perception of animal usage in the name of science. Barke found that 26% of the respondents felt that research done in the name of science does more good than harm while 52% felt research in the name of science does more harm than good. Contrary to the general public, activists perceive research in the name of science does more harm than good. As Sperling aptly says, "in times of rapid technological change and social displacement, animal abuse (including animal research) becomes symbolic of humanity's estrangement from and intrusion into nature."[70]

Based on the activist's data, most of us would agree that it is unfair to subject animals to such undue abuse even in the name of science as this is merely another form of racism; speciesism. In fact,

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[69] A. Linzey, *Christianity and the Rights of Animals* (New York: Crossroad, 1987).

[70] Barke, *Science, technology, public policy.*; Bronowski, *The Common Sense of Science.*

activists repeatedly point out how animals akin to us must have an interest in not suffering as they clearly possess the capacity to feel pain. Hence, if they have the capacity to suffer, it makes sense that their interests need to be taken into account when assessing actions that affect them. Thus, even animals deserve moral consideration as they are capable of being pained. When we say a being deserves moral consideration we mean 'there is a moral claim that this being has on those who can recognize such claims.'[71] Often, we try to ascribe moral consideration to only humans; however, this is not justifiable. Why is it thought that only human being deserve moral consideration? Some base it on membership in *Homo sapiens*. But species membership fails to explain why there is a moral claim made by those that belong to this species and not other species? Even though this is a distinguishing feature of humans, this is 'simply unimportant from a moral point of view'. The fact that humans belong to the *Homo Sapiens* species cannot be considered a morally relevant characteristic. It is no different than the chance of one being born male or female, thus, species membership cannot justify ascribing one species moral consideration while denying it to the other one. Others respond to this by saying that it is not membership to a biological category that matters but rather it is humanity that grounds our moral claims. This is a daunting task; for it is very difficult to identify the capacities we possess that ground moral consideration. Numerous capacities such as the ability to form family ties, problem solving skills, using language, engaging in sexual pleasure and the ability to socialize have been suggested, however, all of these traits are not even found evenly spread throughout human kind.[72] In addition to that, nature provides us with ample evidence that these traits exist in many animals as well. For instance, in nature

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[71] Bronowski, *The Common Sense of Science.*; Shanks, "The Origin of Speciesism."; L. White, "The Historical Root of our Ecological Crisis," *Science* (March 10, 1967).
[72] Shanks, "The Origin of Speciesism."

many primates are capable of exhibiting many of these characteristics mentioned above, so how can we justify giving human moral consideration and not extending the same courtesy to non-human animals such as primates? Contemporary utilitarian's such as Peter Singer (1990) claimed that moral consideration should be grounded in the capacity to suffer.[73] Any being that has the capacity to suffer must be sentient, in turn, deserves moral consideration, thus, it has direct moral status. The argument in support of the claim is as follows:

1. If a being is sentient, it has direct moral status.
2. Most animals are sentient.
3. Therefore, most animals have direct moral status.

Various philosophers have brought forth the idea of equal consideration of interests, a principle which applies to all members of all species including our own, as the basic principle guiding all animal research. Any being that has an interest in not suffering deserves to have that interest taken into account; this should include the domains of both humans and non humans. Korsgaard aptly describes this by saying, "When you pity a suffering animal it is because you perceive a reason. An animal expresses its pain, and they mean there is a reason, a reason to change its conditions. And you can no more hear the cries of an animal than the words of a person. An animal can obligate you in the same way another person can... so of course we have obligations to animals."[74] Around this time, Jeremy Bentham wrote a very forward thinking paragraph:

> The day may come when the rest of the animal creation may
> acquire those rights which never could have been witholden

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[73] Gruen, *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*.
[74] S. Sperling, *Animal Liberators: Research and Morality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

from them but by the hand of tyranny. The French have already discovered that the blackness of the skin is no reason why a human being should be abandoned without redress to the caprice of a tormentor. It may one day come to be recognized that the number of the legs, the villosity of the skin, or the termination of the sacrum, are reasons equally insufficient for abandoning a sensitive being to the same fate. What else is it that should trace the insuperable line? Is it the faculty of reason, or perhaps the faculty of discourse? But a full-grown horse or dog is beyond comparison a more rational, as well as a more conversable animal, than an infant of a day, or a week, or even a month, old. But suppose they were otherwise, what would it avail? The question is not, Can they *reason*? nor, Can they *talk*? but, Can they *suffer*?[75]

In this passage, Bentham identifies the capacity of suffering as the characteristic that gives a being the right to equal consideration. The capacities for suffering and satisfaction are conditions that need to be addressed to talk of interests in any meaningful way. Bentham uses the stone example to better illustrate this point: a stone does not have an interest because it cannot suffer. On the other hand, a mouse clearly has an interest in not being tormented or abused. If a being can suffer, we must take that suffering into consideration. According to the principle of equality, all suffering needs to be counted equally between different beings.[76] Bentham was the first to propose that the capacity to suffer is the only defensible boundary of concern for others. According to him, all other characteristics such as intelligence, rationality or skin color would mean marking this boundary arbitrarily.

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[75] Gruen, *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy.*
[76] Barke, *Science, technology, public policy.*; R. Nash, *The Rights of Nature* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).; Gruen, *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy.*

Concerns from the Animal Rights Groups

Animal rights activists have repeatedly accused animal researchers of unjustly discriminating against members of other species. Most animal experimenters denied this accusation, but since the publication of "The Case for the Use of Animals in Biomedical Research" in the *New England Journal of Medicine* by Cohen, experimenters have been more aggressive in their reply. Many agree with Cohen's chain of thought that Speciesism is essential for right conduct.[77] Cohen believes there are profound differences between human and non-human animals. According to Cohen, animals do not and simply could not have the same rights as humans and more so, animal pain does not have the same moral weight as human pain. He is of the belief that both utilitarian's and animal liberationists wrongly mistake speciesism with racism and sexism. Although Cohen thinks this comparison is unsound, this comparison does not seem illegitimate. It is possible that Cohen's view sparked a tradition where we continue being speciesists such that we allow the interests of our own species to override the greater interests of the members of other species.[78] In addition, most major religions have advocated the view that humans are superior to other life forms due to divine intention which has further promoted speciesism.[79] These engrained views make willing to treat animals as a means to our ends. We are willing to inflict undue pain onto them even simply for the sake of our taste-buds as their well being seems to be 'subordinate to our tastes for a particular kind of dish.'[80] Science has established that there is no reason to turn to animals for our nutritional needs as soy

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[77] Shanks, "The Origin of Speciesism."; White, "The Historical Root of our Ecological Crisis."

[78] Gruen, *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*.; White, "The Historical Root of our Ecological Crisis."

[79] Ibid.

[80] Singer, "Animal Liberation."

bean and other vegetable products meet our dietary requirements. However, the food industry seems willing to inflict suffering on animals throughout their lives by keeping them in cramped cages and rearing them in unsuitable conditions to increase meat production. According to PETA, animals on the farm are commonly subjected to cruelty, but there are no laws in place to protect them. If this treatment were inflicted on dogs or cats, it would not only be illegal, but cause outrage in more than just animal activists as these farm animals are forced to suffer from genetic mutilation, genetic manipulation, neglect, and drug regimens that cause chronic and crippling pain. Even though farm animals are just as capable of feeling pain, farmers do not even cringe when inflicting obvious harm on them. So, why is it that we are less willing to subject such suffering on dogs and cats, our cherished companions?[81]

The factory farming system raises especially problematic ethical issues. Animals raised on factory farms spend their entire lives in filthy sheds with thousands of other animals. Intense crowding and confinement leads to outbreaks of disease. Cows, calves, pigs, chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese, and other animals are kept in small cages containing filthy feedlots, with so little space they cannot even turn comfortably. They are deprived of exercise so all their bodies' energy goes toward producing flesh, eggs, or milk for human consumption. They are fed drugs to fatten them faster and to keep them alive in conditions that would otherwise kill them.[82] Quite often, they are genetically altered to grow faster or to produce much more milk or eggs than they would naturally. The conditions lead to heart attacks, organ failure, and crippling leg deformities. Over time, many of these animals become crippled under their own weight and

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[81] Gruen, *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*.; Barke, *Science, technology, public policy*.

[82] Barke, *Science, technology, public policy*.; C. Myers, "A Life Affirming Ethics: People for Ethical Treatment of Animals," *Chronicles of Higher Education* (October 10, 1990).

die within inches of water and food. By the age of 6 weeks, 90 percent of factory farm chickens are so obese that they can no longer walk, and at this age they are crammed into cages and sent to the slaughter house.[83]

The animals most subject to human exploitation on factory farms include chickens, cattle, pigs, and turkeys. The majority of animal activist groups subscribe to the Golden Rule: "we should treat them as we would wish them to treat us, were any other species in our dominant position."[84] So, would we accept the fate that we subject them to if we were a chicken? We typically think that a chicken lives a pretty meaningless existence. Contrary to this, however, Dr. Chris Evans, administrator of the animal behaviour lab at Australia's Macquarie University, claims that chickens are inquisitive, interesting animals who may be just as intelligent as mammals like cats, dogs, and even primates.[85] Even though this seems bizarre to most of us, these chickens certainly seem to have interests that should be taken into account when using them for our purposes. There is some evidence suggesting that chickens are one of the more intelligent and adaptable animals, which in fact makes them particularly vulnerable to factory farming because, unlike most birds, baby chickens can survive without their mothers as they come out of the shell ready to explore and experience life. There are over 9 billion chickens raised in farms every year that never have the chance to do anything natural a chicken.[86] These chickens never take dust baths, feel the sun on their backs, breathe fresh air, roost in trees, build nests, or ever meet their parents; these are activities they would otherwise indulge in if they were not subjected to factory farming. However, chickens are not only commonly abused for their meat;

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[83] Sperling, *Animal Liberators: Research and Morality*.

[84] Gruen, *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*.

[85] Myers, "A Life Affirming Ethics."; Nash, *The Rights of Nature*.

[86] Ibid.; *Everyday Wonders* (New Jersey Association of Biomedical Research, 2006).

they are also harboured under adverse conditions for their eggs. Chickens exploited for their eggs, known as laying hens, live in crammed cages where they do not even have room to spread a single wing. These cages are typically stacked on top of one and another so that the excrement from the higher cages falls on those below.[87] Quite often, the beaks of chickens are cut off so they do not peck each other out of sheer frustration created by the unnatural confinement.[88] In the past, farmers have been known to deprive birds of food for as long as 14 days in order to shock their bodies into producing more eggs. This practice is called forced-molting.[89] When their bodies are exhausted and production drops, they are shipped to slaughter, generally to be turned into chicken soup as their flesh over time has become too bruised and battered to be used for much else. Clearly, this isn't a fate any of us would accept if we were a chicken.

Even at the slaughter house, humanity's tyranny toward chickens continues. Here, their legs are snapped into shackles, their throats are cut, and then they are immersed in scalding hot water to remove their feathers. Since there is no federal legal protection for birds, most are still conscious when their throats are cut open, while others are burnt to death in the feather-removal tanks. The severity of the conditions is described by a staff writer for the New Yorker, Michael Specter: "I was almost knocked to the ground by the overpowering smell of feces and ammonia. My eyes burned and so did my lungs and I could neither see nor breathe....There must have been 30,000 chickens sitting silently on the floor in front of me. They didn't move, didn't cluck. They were almost like statues of chickens,

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[87] A. Ranney, *Channels of Power* (Washington: American Enterprise Institute, 1983).

[88] Singer, "Animal Liberation."

[89] Ibid.; *Everyday Wonders*.

living in nearly total darkness, and they would spend every minute of their six-week lives that way."[90]

According to a report from the USDA, 98% of chicken carcasses are contaminated with *Escherichia Coli* by the time they reach the market, as they are housed in such filthy conditions. These chickens are also pumped with four times the amount of antibiotics relative to humans and cattle so that they can survive in adverse conditions. They are also genetically modified so that they grow significantly faster; a chicken breast of an eight week old is seven times heavier today than it was 25 years ago.[91] This unnatural accelerated weight gain causes these birds to frequently die young from heart attacks and collapse of the lungs, something that rarely occurs in nature. Of the various factory farm animals, chickens are arguably the most abused animals. Each year in the United States alone billions of chickens are killed for their flesh, and roughly 300 million hens are raised for their eggs. It has been observed that about ninety-nine percent of these animals spend their lives in total confinement from the time they hatch till the day they are killed.[92] It seems that more chickens are raised and killed for food than all other farmed animals combined, yet not a single federal law protects chickens from abuse even though a survey has indicated that two-thirds of Americans say that they would support such a law.

If we happened to be a chicken, is this a fate we would willingly accept? The answer is 'No'. Can we justify subjecting a chicken to such a fate? If we were placed in the chicken shoes, it would certainly inhibit our ability to carry out that which we have an interest in, such as interacting with our parents, reproducing, and experiencing the pleasures of life such as a sunny day. Unlike a stone,

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[90] *Everyday Wonders.*

[91] Myers, "A Life Affirming Ethics."; Nash, *The Rights of Nature.*; Singer, "Animal Liberation."

[92] Linzey, *Christianity and the Rights of Animals.*; Singer, "Animal Liberation."

a chicken clearly has interests which we are depriving it of, and thus inhibiting the life it desire to live. In addition to this, they also have an interest in not suffering. Would we want to be subjected to the horrendous conditions chickens are subjected to in factory farms? Most of us would quickly respond 'No'. Just like us, chickens shriek when we pinch them, thus they are clearly responsive to abuse and deserve our moral consideration. We have no justifiable reason to only extend moral consideration to humans and not non humans. Many animal experimenters have tried to argue that only humans deserve moral consideration, however, most capacities proposed such as ability to form family ties, thinking, ability to communicate, and ability to indulge in sexual pleasures is not unique to only humans. Most of these capacities are exhibited by animals to some degree, thus it is unfair to neglect their interests. Since then, contemporary utilitarians proposed the only characteristic that truly matters is can they suffer?

It is obvious that the chicken is suffering from their physiological reaction to undue stressed inflicted on them. Thus, in a morally acceptable system, we cannot overlook any animal's interests in not suffering; clearly a chicken has such an interest which they demonstrate when housed in adverse conditions. Under any morally acceptable system, we cannot justify using animals grown in factory farms for food simply inflicts unnecessary pain on them. According to Singer, using animals for our pleasures of taste, and "our practices of rearing and killing other animals in order to eat them is a clear instance of the sacrifice of the most important interests of other beings in order to satisfy trivial interests of our own."[93] The interest of these animals not to suffer supersedes our interest in eating meat. Based on the Principle of Equal Consideration, we at the minimum have an obligation to painlessly kill those beings that have an interest

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[93] Singer, "Animal Liberation."; Sperling, *Animal Liberators: Research and Morality.*

in not suffering. The fact that these animals appear to be able to conceive their existence in the future, a trait which according to Singer requires a being to be self-conscious as a non self conscious being does not have an interest in continuing to exist into the future, complicates the issue yet further.[94] The fact that an animal can conceive a future is morally relevant as means an animals is able to project into the future, think about its present in turn experience pain and pleasure to the fullest extent. Any being that has the capacity to project into the future can anticipate good and bad which means it has an interest in experiencing minimal mental and physical stresses. However, in a factory farm setting chickens are subjected to great deal of stresses, unlike their natural setting. So, if we are to apply the Principle of Equal Consideration of Interests, we will be forced to cease raising animals in factory farms for food. Failing to do so is nothing other than speciesism.

The only way we could justify killing another being is using the 'Replaceability Argument.'[95] On this line of thought, if we kill a non-self-conscious being that was living a good life, then we have reduced the overall amount of good in the world. This can be made up, however, by bringing another being into existence that can experience similar goods. According to this, non-self-conscious beings are replaceable: killing one can be justified if doing so is necessary to bring about the existence of another. Since the animals we rear for food would not exist if we did not eat them, it follows that killing these animals can be justified if these animals live good lives. However, in order for this line of argument to justify killing animals, the animals must not only be non-self-conscious, but they must also live lives that are worth living, and their deaths must be painless. It is impossible for these conditions to be met in a factory farm setting,[96] however, so called holistic farming may bring closer to

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[94] Singer, "Animal Liberation."
[95] Gruen, *Standford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
[96] Ibid.; Singer, "Animal Liberation."

this goal. On a holistic farm, animals are allowed to run freely, bath in the sun, eat natural foods, reproduce and grow at their normal rates without the aid of hormones etc. This farm setting at least allows these animals to have good lives before they are killed for the sake of humans.

Most animal rights groups would agree with Singer that animals deserve to live better lives than the lives they lead in factory farms. There is even more debate in regard to animal usage for biomedical research. Here, the answer is not as clear cut. When we look at the history of the animal rights groups, it becomes apparent that animal rights groups have repeatedly questioned the use of animals in research and are very sceptical about placing their trust in scientists, particularly when animals are involved. Another type of research most animal activists strongly oppose is the widespread practice of experimenting on other species to see if certain substances are safe for human beings, testing some psychological theories and their effects on animals, and lastly, studying the effects of various new unproven compounds on them. So, in accordance with the golden rule that forms the basis of all animal rights, we have to ask ourselves whether we would condone such research on ourselves if we belonged to members of a different species? To justify research on animals, Singer suggests that we need to ask ourselves, "would an experimenter be prepared to perform his experiment on an orphaned human infant, if that were the only way to save many lives? If the experimenter is not prepared to use an orphaned human infant, then his readiness to use nonhumans is simple discrimination, since adult apes, cats, mice, and other mammals are at least as aware of what is happening to them, at least as self-directing and, so far as we can tell, at least as sensitive to pain, as any human infant."[97] Keeping in line with this thought would require that a moral justifiable system ought to be fair to all species regardless of their biological category. Thus,

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[97] Ibid.

both human infants and apes with the same capacities should potentially be subjected to the same degree of experimentation. If we claim that scientific research is essential for the betterment of human kind then we cannot disapprove the use of human infants with the same capacities as primates if necessary.

Do Humans Have A Duty to Protect Animals?

Some argue that animals do not have equal moral status to humans. Philosophers who subscribe to this view claim that only human beings have rights because they are rational, autonomous, and self-conscious; only human beings are able to act morally; and thus, only human beings are part of the moral community.[98] It seems that a being must be able to claim a right to actively take part in the pursuit of furthering its interests. Clearly, animals are incapable of this, and therefore they have no rights. This does not mean that animals have no moral status. It is important to remember that rights come with duties, and the fact that we have these rights entails duties. If one has a right to something, then we are not permitted to infringe on this right even if it means increasing overall utility. However, the duties we have towards those without rights can be trumped for the interests of the overall good. It is this sort of reasoning that is commonly employed to justify animal experimentation, using animals for food, and using animals for our entertainment in such places as rodeos and zoos. However, this principle cannot be justified as even amidst humans there are those incapable of claiming right, yet, we believe they have rights. For instance, infants and those with disabilities are unable to claim their rights, however, we still uphold our duties towards them and we still take their interests (particularly their interest in not suffering) into consideration, so how can we justify doing otherwise when it comes to non-humans?

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[98] Gruen, *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*.

If we ascribe rights to only those capable of being represented as legitimately pursuing their interests, then we will exclude infants, and the senile. This could lead to another form of bias much like racism, and sexism. The infants and senile did not chose to be incapable of pursuing their interests, it was due to random chance. Hence, we cannot only ascribe rights to beings that can legitimately pursue interests. Other philosophers have undermined the very idea of a right. If we can agree on the concept of what a right is, then it should be ascribed to all humans and non humans with similar capacities. However, determining the capacities that are necessary to ascribe rights is nearly impossible to delineate. It was Jeremy Bentham who said that rights are "nonsense on stilts."[99] At present, much of the talk about animal ethics does not revolve around rights, as this raises serious problems, so it is based on some other property, and it is the possession of these characteristics that is a necessary condition for equal consideration. According to Singer, it is the capacity to suffer that satisfies the necessary condition. Even non human animals exhibit an interest in not suffering, thus, their interests also ought to be taken in account. Peter Singer, one of the most influential philosophers in the debate of animals and ethics, put forth the principle of equal consideration. This has shaped the way we look at the interests of animals in regards to ours. The essence of the Principle of Equal Consideration of Interests is that we give equal weight in our moral deliberations to the like interests of all those affected by our actions (Singer 1993).

Singer and the Principle of Equal Consideration of Interests

Singer provides two arguments in support of the Principle of Equal Consideration of Interests. One is the "argument from marginal cases", which goes as follows; in order to conclude that only human

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[99] Ibid.; Singer, "Animal Liberation."

beings deserve full equal moral status, there must be some property, P, that is unique only to humans. It is due to this property that humans claim a higher status. Many philosophers have attempted to sketch out this property, sadly, their efforts have been unfruitful. Any property, P that human beings possess, some will lack (argument of marginal cases). If there is such a property, P that majority of humans have, all animals most likely possess it as well. For instance, humans vastly possess the ability to form social ties, empathize, and engage in sexual pleasures, there traits are predominantly found in many higher level animals such as primates, dogs, cats and even chickens to some extent. Hence, there is no way to defend the claim that only human beings deserve full and equal moral status. So, what are the properties that only humans have that attribute to us such a strong moral status? It seems that we cannot simply ascribe a strong moral status to beings that are human.[100] What properties do human beings possess that gives them strong moral status? These properties include: rationality, autonomy, the ability to act morally, and lastly, the use of language. The problem with these properties is that not all humans possess these properties. While, in the case of others, animals also possess these characteristics to some extent. Therefore, it seems that the only property that all humans seem to share is sentience or the ability to feel pain or pleasure; therefore, these are the characteristics that should be used to ground moral status. Doing so means granting the same full and equal moral status to animals as well, as they too are sentient. For Singer, we cannot simply grant only human beings full and equal moral status. We only have two options: either one we cannot say that all humans are equal, or we cannot say that only human beings are equal. When we ground moral status within rationality and other such properties, we give rise

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[100] Gruen, *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*.

to discrimination within humans. Most of us would be discontent with the conclusion that not all human beings are equal.[101]

Another argument employed by Singer is the sophisticated inegalitarian argument. He uses this argument to counter the claim that only humans deserve full and equal moral status by focusing on the moral relevance of such properties as rationality, autonomy, and the ability to act morally. Singer argues that if we were to rely on these sorts of properties as the basis of determining moral status, then we would justify a kind of discrimination against certain human beings that is structurally analogous to such practices as racism and sexism.[102] Sexism and racism is a kin to speciesism for a speceisist believes his species deserves a stronger moral when compared to the other as a sexist thinks that about his own sex. But, by engaging in this sort of bias, we would be committing a great injustice to animals. The problem with letting a property like rationality ground moral status is that it's not evenly distributed within human beings. Thus, these properties will have to admit to degrees. Other properties like being human or having DNA are not sufficient to ground strong moral status in them. It is conceivable that we could encounter aliens who do not have DNA but live lives much like ours; we would not be justified in assigning these beings a weaker moral status.[103]

Implications for the Treatment of Animals

There are numerous practical implications when we put into action the Principle of Equal Consideration. In order to implement Singer's Principle of Equal Consideration of Interests in the practical sphere, we must be able to determine the interests of all beings that will be affected by our actions, and we must give similar interests similar weight. According to the Principle of Equal Consideration, this

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[101] Ibid.; Singer, "Animal Liberation."
[102] Ibid.
[103] Nash, *The Rights of Nature*.; Gruen, *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*.

would require us to give up eating meat, and refrain from experimenting on animals to test cosmetics and other unnecessary products. Does the Principle of Equal Consideration allow for animals to be used in biomedical research? In accordance with Singer's Principle of Equal Consideration, it seems that if we permit the use of animal subjects for such experiments, then it would actually be better from a scientific point of view to use human subjects. Doing so will eliminate the additional complications that arise due to cross-species differences when interpreting the experimental data. If we believe the benefits outweigh the drawbacks, then instead of using animals we should instead use orphaned infants that are severely cognitively disabled. If we simply prefer to use animals over humans then we are guilty of speciesism.[104]

Threats to Research

On the other hand, there are scientists who think that animal rights activists grossly misrepresent the treatment and living conditions of laboratory animals. Activists presume that animals are subject to adverse conditions in the laboratory just as in factory farms, which is far from the truth. Some scientists believe that animal rights groups are too quick to belittle the value of animal-based research. Respected organizations such as Americans for Medical Progress believe that animal activist groups have greatly hindered biomedical research. For example, many activist groups are well supported financially, and, thus, able to promote animal rights-based litigation and legislation on the local, state and federal levels.[105] This has resulted in policies that hobble biomedical research with restrictions that have little to do with animal care. The activists have also concentrated attention on the legal profession. A large number of law schools in the states now offer animal rights courses. These programs came about as a

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[104] Singer, "Animal Liberation."
[105] Nash, *The Rights of Nature*.; *Everyday Wonders*.

result of million-dollar grants paid to the schools by animal rights leaders. In addition, there has been a rise in the number of animal rights lawyers, who continue to developing further strategies to establish "legal standing" for animals in the courtroom, which in turn will give rise to further barriers to medical progress.[106] Scientists believe the rise in animal rights lawyers will hinder scientific progress as they hold misconceptions about the conditions they animals are subjected to. In turn, when dealing with cases dealing with animals rights they paint they scientists as the 'bad guy', by doing so, they discourage wide scale support for the use of animals for scientific purposes. This could mean that scientists receive fewer grants from major companies in support of their research, thereby impeding further scientific progress.

Advocates of the American Medical Progress believe that research on animals is the ideal method for scientific model system investigation, as it provides scientists with complex living systems consisting of cells, tissues and organs similar to our own. Laboratory animals are vulnerable to over 200 of the same health problems as humans, thus are clearly an effective model for medical research. It is also useful to use animal models as they are capable of interacting and reacting to stimuli. Numerous advancements in medicine would be impossible without the contributions of animals such as the guinea pig, which has contributed to 23 Nobel prizes for medicine with studies leading to the discovery of Vitamin C, the tuberculosis bacterium, as well as the development of vaccines for diphtheria and tuberculosis, replacement heart valves, blood transfusion, kidney dialysis, antibiotics, anticoagulants and asthma medicines. Today, guinea pigs are still widely used in medical research, particularly in the study of respiratory, nervous and immune systems.[107] Another example of an animal that has made significant contributions to bio-medical advancements is the pig. Stroke research is one of the areas

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[106] Nash, *The Rights of Nature.*
[107] Ibid.; *Everyday Wonders.*

where pigs have made tremendous contributions. Research with pigs holds great potential for the future, as transplanting genetically modified pig cells or organs could hold the key to treating conditions such as stroke, and brain disorders like Parkinson's disease. This process of transplanting genetically modified animal tissues, cells, and organs into humans (xenotransplantation) has potential for treating a number of diseases. Pig heart valves have been used for many years as replacements for diseased or damaged human host heart valves. Before performing such treatments, doctors must make certain the animal to be used is absolutely necessary for patient survival.[108]

Do Animal Activists Take For Granted the Wonders Developed By Animal Research?

In the last 100 years, nearly all major medical breakthroughs have involved animal research. Using laboratory animals, scientists continue to discover innovative ways to cure disease and treat illness. The discoveries of new medicines are giving millions of people longer, more enjoyable, and more active lives. Research using animals has greatly benefited the human species, and some high profile examples include work with cancer, AIDS, and birth defects. Let us examine some of the contributions animal research has made to the specific case of cancer. New cancer medications account for over half of the gains we have made in cancer survival rates since 1975.[109] These medications have contributed to a remarkable 10.7% increase in life expectancy at birth in the United States.[110] Prior to the discovery of these medications, the primary treatments for cancer-surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy, they all had severe and debilitating side effects. Due to animal research, there is a better understanding of the genetics of tumour biology that has allowed

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[108] Nash, *The Rights of Nature.*
[109] Ibid.
[110] Nash, *The Rights of Nature.*; *Everyday Wonders.*

scientists to treat and kill cancer cells more directly. It is the result of this knowledge attained by work with animals that we are better able to design drugs that target only abnormal tumorigenic cells, and this is precisely what scientists have earmarked as the new direction of emerging cancer treatments. It was research with mice that led to the development of Gleevec, the first drug targeting cancer from a molecular perspective. Gleevec is also used to treat a previously incurable form of stomach cancer known as gastrointestinal stromal tumour (GIST) and was approved by the FDA in 2001.[111] It is from breakthrough treatments tested on animals, such as those presented here for the fight against cancer, that leave us with the hope that in the near future, childhood leukemia, heart disease, cystic fibrosis and even HIV/AIDS could be no more than memories.[112]

It is of important to note that bio-medical research has not only served humankind, but has also benefited animals. Pets, livestock, wildlife and laboratory animals have had their quality of life substantially improved by taking advantage of research findings from animal model studies. Vaccines against rabies, distemper, feline leukemia, tetanus, parvovirus, infectious hepatitis, and anthrax all are beneficial to the animals of the world.

The Guiding principle for scientific research-The 3 R's

As the number of animal rights groups has increased, scientists have been forced to become more responsible with their use of animals for biomedical research. In the recent years, scientists have relied more implicitly on the guiding principle, the three R's of animal research:

Reduce the number of animals used to a minimum.

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[111] Ibid.
[112] Nash, *The Rights of Nature.*

Refine the way experiments are carried out so as to ensure animals suffer as little as possible.
Replace animal experiments with non-animal techniques wherever possible.[113]

A large proportion of scientists seem to be aware that good science and good animal care go hand-in-hand. By tolerating cruel and inhumane treatment of laboratory animals, their experimental system would not be physiologically representative of physically cared for humans, and thus they would be generating skewed results and conducting poor research. In 1966, the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) set minimum standards for the care of research animals other than rats, birds and mice.[114] The AWA requires appropriate veterinary care, housing, feeding, handling, sanitation and ventilation for research animals. The AWA requires that all registered animal research facilities have an Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) who are responsible for ensuring the usage of animals is necessary, and that if so animals are used in a humane way in accordance with all applicable guidelines.[115] Before animals are used in studies, all researchers must take all possible measures to minimize an animals' discomfort or pain. Researchers also need to show that experiments do not duplicate past work, and that alternatives to animal use have been considered and eliminated as a viable option.[116]

As the concerns of animal rights groups have intensified many researchers, laboratory veterinarians, and animal caretakers, have taken it upon themselves to participate in regular continued-education classes. Such training covers contemporary topics on how best to care for research animals is offered all across the country and

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[113] Myers, "A Life Affirming Ethics."; Gruen, *Standford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
[114] Nash, *The Rights of Nature*.; *Everyday Wonders*.; Ranney, *Channels of Power*.
[115] Nash, *The Rights of Nature*.
[116] *Everyday Wonders*.

has been very well-attended. A selection of the organizations providing this type of training are the American Association for Laboratory Animal Science, Public Responsibility in Medicine and Research, and Scientists Center for Animal Welfare. What once had been a clear physical and mental distinction between humans and animals has become much fuzzier with the understanding that 'evolution represents a continuum.'[117] Thus, it is vital that more guidelines be put in place to minimize animal suffering wherever possible, particularly to animals with advanced nervous systems such as nonhuman primates, carnivores and marine mammals as they have demonstrated other abilities that humans can relate to such as advanced social behaviour. It is clear these animals possess the ability to react to both positive and negative stimuli, are intelligent and even self-aware. Over time, the assumption that there is a clear moral distinction between humans and animals has become less defined. Thus it seems that gradations in moral value should be applied to animals.[118] Similarly, even in the case of humans we see that there are those individuals who possess a more advanced ability to react to positive and negative stimuli and are self aware. To be fair, based on the differences in these capacities mentioned above, we would have to apply gradations of moral value even to humans.[119]

It is easy to see that there are many conflicting viewpoints about to how our moral values should dictate the value of animal lives. Animal rights groups are quick to advocate a strong stance against the use of animals for human benefit, while scientists refute the arguments by pointing out how those activists take for granted each day the discoveries thus far attributed to animal research. Over time, it has become apparent that animals do have an interest in

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[117] Gruen, *Standford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

[118] Barke, *Science, technology, public policy*.; Bronowski, *The Common Sense of Science*.; Matlack, "Animal Rights Furor."; Gruen, *Standford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

[119] Matlack, "Animal Rights Furor."; Gruen, *Standford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

living pain free, and thus we should not inflict unnecessary suffering on them. However, it is still unclear where they stand relative to humans in an acceptable moral system. The dilemma lies in the fact that humanity has a position of authority. We must keep in mind the possibility that we only perceive ourselves to be more advanced because of our opposable thumbs which only came to be by random chance. Evolutionarily speaking, this position would simply be silly. If so, our actions are nothing short of a form of tyranny.[120] Nonetheless, it is very difficult to shun all animal use in biomedical research, as it has led to medical advancements we all appreciate, or even require. Even scientists seem to have an interest in the well being of non human animals for they provide great models for comparability for future results. Many benefits have come about due to animal research; it has in many ways advanced the quality of life not only for humans but for animals as well, particularly pets and livestock. So, as the debate continues, and there has never been a better time to rationally evaluate the arguments put forward herein, and in turn decide which side of the fence one wishes to stand on. As the dust settles, a lot of work remains to be done on this very controversial area of study.

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[120] Barke, *Science, technology, public policy*.; Gruen, *Standford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

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Additional Note

One extracurricular activity that has contributed extensively to my growth as a person is my various community service experiences. I have served the elderly residents of Mount Hope, patients who have had eye surgeries at St. Joseph hospital, physiotherapy patients, expecting mothers, and Emergency Room patients. Through this volunteer work I learned the true virtue of patience, and benevolence. These diverse volunteer experiences have shaped me into a

compassionate but critical thinker with a solid work ethic, and the ability to tackle problems from both a theoretical and a practical perspective. Perhaps as importantly, I was happy to have given something back to a country that had welcomed me with open arms.

The responsibilities endowed upon me at the hospital required me to take on a leadership role, fulfill obligations to others, and to be kind and compassionate. In addition to this, I spent last summer at an orphanage where I got the opportunity to interact with under-privileged kids. It was at this moment that I realized how blessed I was to have access to all the basic resources we take for granted, as that underprivileged child could have very easily been me. This realization has made me more passionate about equal distribution of basic resources such as food and water, access to education, and the right to fair trial for all. I believe everyone should be entitled to these. I would like to be part of the world of law so that I may be able to work for fair and just treatment for all. A career in law allows me to play an active role domestically and internationally to bring about a just society, where individuals and groups are given fair treatment and a just share of the benefits of society.

Numerous experiences have moulded me to become a prime candidate for the field of law. This takes me back to high school where I was very involved in debating clubs, student council, and yearbook committee. These activities instilled a hardworking attitude, forced me to take on a leadership role and helped refine my presentation skills. Such experiences provided me with an opportunity to creatively articulate my views on various subjects and defend them when necessary. This also sparked my interests in politics domestically and internationally. I became more involved in the debates revolving around the Kyoto Protocol, Biodiversity, and Genetic Engineering. These hot topics fascinated me, and I become so intrigued that I followed every new development. This allowed me to not only increase my overall knowledge of recent scientific developments, but opened my eyes to the world around me.

In University I followed these interests by taking environmental and political biology courses and biomedical and business ethics in a global context courses. I also joined BIOPED, an interdisciplinary group meeting biweekly to discuss relevant scientific findings in a global scale, and the Global Awareness Society to both learn and debate hot topics in world politics. These experiences taught me to effectively research and develop creative strategies to combat problems on a global scale.

It is not only the specific knowledge gained, but the practical experience learned by interacting with one's peers that has assisted me in becoming a well rounded individual and left me better prepared for my pursuit of future legal studies and a legal career.
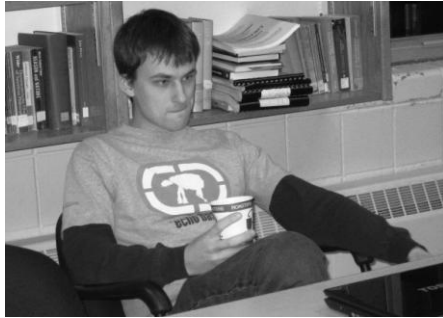
Kyle Rees

Kyle Rees is a fourth year philosophy honours major who is minoring in history and completing the Diploma in Applied Ethics program. His areas of study include moral philosophy, politics, socio-biology, and the Second World War. He was president of the Philosophy Society at Memorial in 2009 and coordinated the Student Colloquium on Society that same year. Kyle's natural habitats include Tim Horton's and the Kiefte room, where he can be found leafing through stacks of Dawkins, Dennett, and Skinner, as well as piles of Plato, Rousseau, and Hume. While outside of the ivory tower, Kyle enjoys sailing, arguing, and reading. To the dismay of his inner philosopher (but not his inner sophist) Kyle will be taking a leave of absence from the examined life in order to pursue a law degree at Osgoode Hall in Toronto. He hopes to return to Newfoundland and Labrador to practice criminal law and politics (one and the same, some may say). Kyle is grateful to the faculty of Memorial's philosophy department, especially to Dr. Oman, without whom he would never have realized the potential real-world applications of a philosophy degree. Kyle is also sad to leave the company of the Kiefte Room regulars, whose wit and passion for philosophical argument will be sorely missed.

Stuart MacDonald

Stuart completed an honours degree in mathematics at University of Alberta with a philosophy minor before transferring to Memorial University in the fall of 2008 to do his M.A. in philosophy. With his interests having leaned towards German idealism, metaphysics (especially Schopenhauer), and existentialism in his undergrad, he switched his focus to social and political Theory for his graduate research – in particular, Marxism and how existentialism ties into socio-political theory (such as in Nietzsche and Jaspers). The following paper was submitted for a second-year course in Contemporary Epistemology at the University of Alberta.

Petter Hurich

Petter was born in Bergen, Norway on Feb. 28th, 1989. When he was three years old, Petter moved to Newfoundland, where he currently resides and attends Memorial University. Petter studies both philosophy and political science at Memorial with ambitions of attending law school after graduating

Justin Osmond

Justin Osmond is a musician with a keen interest in philosophy and theology. He completed a Bachelor of Music degree from Memorial University's School of Music in 2008**,** and is now finishing a major in philosophy. His main academic interests, which are at this point broader then they are deep, lie in the area of dialectic as a common theme between philosophy and theology, as well as the creative process and the questions, stemming from Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein*, concerning the creation of and response to monsters and technology. The year 2007 was a formative one for Justin because he participated as a musician and research assistant in the first year of a three year, SSHRC-funded research and creative project called 'Frankenstein's Ghost's'. This ongoing project aims to bare the fruit of cross-fertilization between artistic expression and academic research. Justin's experience with the project left him committed to maintain the same cross-fertilization within his own studies and career. He plans to complete a Master of Arts program next year that will allow him to further explore the meeting place of music, theology, and philosophy. His ultimate aim is to share, within religious and academic contexts, the value of free creativity as a way of personally acknowledging the incomprehensible.

Faseeha Sheriff

Faseeha Sheriff is a currently completing her Masters Degree in Philosophy at Memorial University.

Rob Seabright

Rob Seabright began his University career studying English Literature and after taking his first philosophy course as an elective decided that he had found his calling. Immediately intrigued by the issues and methodology in philosophy Rob decided not only to complete his English degree, but to further pursue this newfound interest. Upon the completion of his English degree Rob entered into the honors program in philosophy and is now in the process of finishing his final year. Upon the completion of his degree Rob plans to attend Graduate school where his primary focus will be ancient philosophy with particular attention paid to the philosophy of both Plato and Aristotle. His other major philosophical interests include epistemology, philosophy of language, logic, and hermeneutics. After graduate school Rob plans to pursue a PhD in ancient philosophy with aspirations of becoming a professor, a goal that he has had since before his university career began. When not found studying (read: procrastinating) in the Kiefte room, Rob enjoys reading, listening to and playing music and indulging in copious amounts of video gaming.

Steve Woodworth

Steve Woodworth, born in St John's, Newfoundland, entered Memorial in 2005 upon his successful graduation from the International Baccalaureate program at Holy of Mary High School. He has been on the dean's list since the start of his program, a Joint-Honours Bachelor of Arts in philosophy and French, and has further distinguished himself with numerous awards including the James A. Good Scholarship in Philosophy, two John M. & Elsa S. Morgan Scholarships, the Millennium Excellence National In-Course Award, and the Graham Family Scholarship. He is slated to finish all his courses in Winter 2009 before working as an English Reader at l'Université Michel de Montaigne Bordeaux-3 for the 2009-2010 academic year.

Robert Breen

Born here, Robert has brown hair and brown eyes. In height he aspires to six feet. His influences include the shortcomings of others, Dance Mix '95, and general sentience. That is all.