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Cover designs courtesy of Arabella Adams.
Featuring:
Bacon, Henry. *Twilight in the Desert*. 1907; obtained via Wikimedia Commons.
Yakovlev, Alexander. *In the desert of Afghanistan*. 1931; obtained via Wikimedia Commons.

If you have questions regarding the Journal, would like to submit your work for review, or if you'd be interested in joining next year's staff, please contact the Journal at dianoia@bc.edu.
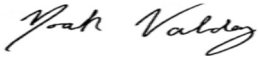
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Spring 2021

To the Reader,

Welcome to Issue VIII of Dianoia: The Undergraduate Philosophy Journal of Boston College! We hope that you have kept safe throughout the course of our fight against COVID-19, and it is our pleasure and pride to present yet another installment of our journal. We were humbled to receive over two-hundred submissions from ninety-nine different undergraduate institutions around the world, and have published what we believe, after countless hours of reading, discussion, and editing, are the six best and most thought-provoking essays. The subject-matter of these works range from: normative education to Plutatch's Lives; subjectivity in Kierkegaard to illusions and qualia; and virtue ethics to Seyla Benhabib's work on discourse. Thus, Dianoia's reputation as a diverse community of thinkers, committed to interinstitutional exchange, remains. Alongside these essays you will also find an interview with Professor Gregory Fried, who was kind enough to sit down with us last fall for a discussion over his book, Because It Is Wrong: Torture, Privacy, and Presidential Power in the Age of Terror.

This year, the managing board chose Henry Bacon's Twilight in the Desert (1907) and Alexander Yakovlev's In the desert of Afghanistan (1931) as the journal's front and back covers, respectively. The union of these two pieces—from Bacon's isolation to Yakovlev's horizon of community—is a fitting image for our gradual return to a pre-COVID-19 lifestyle, and we enthusiastically look forward to holding future publication symposia in-person, to meetings on campus, and to seeing journal friends again, both old and new.

In publishing the fruit of this year's labor, I would be remiss if I did not thank the journal's various patrons, advisors, and advocates for their support. With your generous aid and freely-given expertise, Dianoia has flourished over the course of its decade-long existence, and today boasts a premier spot amongst undergraduate philosophy journals. To my senior managing editor, Nicholas Arozarena, and to my managing editors, Brock Daylor, Melissa Mao, and Maxwell Vogliano, you all have been nothing short of spectacular, and I am grateful for both your time and talents in crafting this year's issue. To our graduate advisor, Peter Klapes, your judgment and sagacious input have guided the journal more times than I can count; without your efforts, Dianoia would be nowhere close to the institutional endeavor that it is today. The Philosophy Department—in particular, Dermot Moran, Paula Perry, and Sarah Smith—deserves our heartfelt thanks for their assistance and hospitality; furthermore, we would also like to thank Gregory Fried both for his openness to an interview and for his insightful responses to our questions. To the Institute for the Liberal Arts, we treasure your continued financial and legal support, and thank you for the opportunity, once again, to print the culmination of this year's review. To Arabella Adams, our graphic designer, we are in awe of your artistry and digital adroitness, and greatly appreciate your patience in turning six essays into a fully-fledged journal. Lastly, I would like to thank our general editorial board for their incisiveness, their philosophical acumen, and their persistence in creating this year's issue. All of my gratitude goes out to you; the managing board and I are truly in your debt.

As a senior, I will be leaving Dianoia after four years of service. My time on the journal has been the highlight of my undergraduate career, and to any future Editor-in-Chiefs, I hope that you find this publication's work as fulfilling as I have. To our readers, our submitters, and all of our supporters not mentioned here, we wish you all the best and eagerly await your thoughts on our issue. Keep safe, stay in touch, and happy reading!

Sincerely,

Noah Valdez, Editor-in-Chief

INTERVIEW WITH GREGORY FRIED

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Gregory Fried is a professor of philosophy at Boston College. He has taught at the University of Chicago, Boston University, California State University Los Angeles, and Suffolk University. He specializes in political philosophy and has a particular interest in responses to challenges to liberal democracy and the rise of ethno-nationalism. He also works in the philosophy of law, especially law and hermeneutics; philosophy and race; practical ethics, including just war theory; public philosophy; the history of ethics; Ancient philosophy; and 20th century Continental philosophy, especially Heidegger. This interview was conducted on November 17th, 2020.

Dianoia: Professor Fried, thank you for agreeing to interview with Dianoia: The Undergraduate Philosophy Journal of Boston College. We are very excited to discuss your book, *Because it is Wrong: Torture, Privacy, and Presidential Power in the Age of Terror*. Thank you for being with us.

Fried: My pleasure, thank you for inviting me.

Dianoia: Can you please give us a brief introduction to your book and highlight a few of its central claims?

Fried: The book began as a reaction to what came out of the news in the spring of 2004. I think it was April of 2004 when the first word of the torture that was being conducted in Iraq spilled out. I was very moved and concerned by that, and I, from that time on, had many conversations about it with my father. He and I were working on various aspects of philosophical and legal responses to it, and at a certain point we said, "Why don't we just do this together rather than compete with one another; let's combine forces." And, so, what that brought together were my interests in figures like Locke and Aristotle on questions of prerogative and law at the limit and my father's interests in what he had seen in the government in terms of the abuse of presidential power and constitutional issues around privacy. We wanted to have an overarching discussion of these concerns that had jumped out at the political community of the United States following the outbreak of the war on terror. So, the subtitle of the book is "Torture, Privacy, and Presidential Power in the Age of Terror." Each of those are domains of pushing at the boundaries of either moral or constitutional legal norms that were put at issue by the war on terror. I think both my father and I came at those issues through a combination of philosophical lenses—I think most prominently a Kantian lens on the question of torture. We weren't trying to force one specific philosophical lens on it, we wanted to try to analyze it with the help of philosophers who could help us articulate our points to make our own argument for an audience wider than simply a philosophy audience. So, that's the background to the book. In the book itself we make the case that torture is wrong and that it should be avoided—in fact, made both morally and legally impermissible, as an absolute. But then we look at the questions of privacy and the extent and limits of presidential power within the same framework as well. What are things that break absolute restrictions on political or individual ethical behavior? Is the invasion of privacy like torture? Or, is it a different order of things? Is a president who bends or even breaks the law for the sake of national security the in same kind of absolute situation that we are facing with the question of torture? Our answer for those is that privacy is an important moral domain that any legitimate government should respect, but it's not the absolute that the prohibition of torture is. The same, surprisingly, ends up being true of what we call executive law breaking, which means any person, not just a president, whose legitimate function within a constitutional republic is to execute the law and be responsible for seeing that the law be faithfully upheld in situations where such a person might

bend or break the law in a legitimate way. The nature of that legitimacy is very complicated, and that's what we try to address. Those are the broad parameters of the book, and I'm happy to spend as much time as you'd like talking about some of the details.

Dianoia: Moving forward to more of a future perspective on it, what changes do you anticipate in the global discourse around torture? Especially when figures like Donald Trump or Rodrigo Duterte say that torture "absolutely works."

Fried: First of all, those figures are not particularly credible sources for the claim that torture works. But, they play an important rhetorical role in the public's fear that has gained in influence over the last decade and has come to great prominence with the success of Donald Trump and figures like Bolsonaro and Duterte, and other quasi to genuinely authoritarian leaders throughout the world. I think it's important to note that for authoritarian, totalitarian or dictatorial leadership, torture plays a very important role. It is a tool in their toolbox that they want to lay claim to, but not for the stated purpose that it works to prevent terrible crime. What it works for is enhancing the power of an autocratic regime. One can give credit, even to a figure like Donald Trump, if one wants to, to say that they sincerely believe that there are certain circumstances where they think torture will work to prevent some great wrong. That may in individual cases be what's motivating them to embrace torture, but functionally, if you look at the role of torture in regimes that have used it, especially in the 20th century, whatever the initial intent, what ends up happening once torture becomes institutionalized as one of the tools of the government is that it plays a distinctly oppressive role in the work of an authoritarian or dictatorial or totalitarian (if we are going to go from bad to worse) regime. The reason for that is that the torture itself becomes the point for those kinds of regime. It is not what they can accomplish in terms of intelligence or crime prevention; it is what they can accomplish in terms of terrorizing a population and corrupting the forces of law that are part of the institutions that the authoritarian or dictator want to bring into their fold.

There are a variety of arguments one can make against torture, some of them can be deontological, as my father and I tried to do, so in other words a claim about the sheer wrongness of torture in of itself, as an act, that should be avoided, but there are other kinds of arguments that are consequentialist arguments that I think are also very important that have to do with what happens to a society when torture is institutionalized. I don't think it is particularly helpful to base policy on some fantasy or imaginary thought experiment about whether or not in this or that emergency situation it would be right to torture somebody to prevent some terrible wrong from happening. I have a very strong philosophical problem with using thought experiments in order to establish policy, and I can come back to that. But, your question was about the world that we are engaging in the future, and I think it is very important to bear in mind that the rise of authoritarians and quasi-authoritarians will be accompanied by torture regimes. Therefore, the defeat of those kinds of leaders is very important. So, the next five years are going to be decisive. Will Donald Trump have a comeback after a Biden presidency? If he has a comeback, will he come roaring back and thereby be able to tear down even more of the institutional and cultural norms in our society? If he succeeds in that, or somebody like him succeeds in the United States, it will pull down the barriers for world leaders across the globe to incorporate torture in their governance. And they will do that not because it's good for law enforcement or preventing horrible emergency scenarios. They will do it to entrench their rule. That's the goal.

I can't predict the future, but what I can predict is that torture is like a canary in the coal mine. The more it's happening, the more likely it is that you have a political community that's shifting from some form of democratic republican form of government to an authoritarian one. It's just not the tool of a democratic regime. It corrupts a democratic regime to use torture. So one way to think about that is once you institutionalize torture, what branch of the government is responsible for torture? Who are you going to be training to do the torture? What's going to happen when they come out of the military, for example, and join the police forces. It's very hard once you start down that road to contain it, as if in some toxic waste facility. That's not how institutions and governments and cultures of governance develop. Once you change a culture of governance by bringing in a torture regime you've changed much much more than just whether or not you're torturing some people in some black site somewhere.

Dianoia: In the final chapter "learning not to be good," you make the distinction between something being wrong because it is illegal and something being illegal because it is wrong. How can executive officials know where to draw the line between those two types of wrongs when they are faced with a dirty hands situation?

Fried: There is no formula, and that's what makes being involved in civic life a risky business, and it is one reason that we should be charitable to people who go into law enforcement, but we also have to be vigilant about what the boundaries are. This is really the problem if you have a democratic regime, such as ours, where the rule of law is really important and where officers of the law are just that: servants of the law entrusted to uphold it for the good of the people. We have a democracy, or a republican form of government that involves democratic elements. The idea is that it is the legislature and the people. In a regime like ours, the people are sovereign, so ultimately, it is they who get to decide. They decide on what the rules are through their representatives who make the laws, and then the officers of the law, from the parking meter enforcer to the president of the United States, are meant to be servants of the laws as they are passed by the people. That is what it means to be an officer of the law. Unlike other forms of regime, where the officer of the law can claim to be the law, especially in a monarchy. In a democracy, by contrast, the officer of the law is not meant to substitute their own judgement for the judgement of the people acting through their representatives in their law-making function. At the same time, part of the duty of an officer of the law is to attend to the common good of the community that they are serving, and it is impossible to lay out a formula in advance to be able to tell such an officer when their duty to the law will come into profound conflict with their duty to protect their community or an individual member of their community. You can try to build in all kinds of safeguards for emergency situations into the law, but it is ultimately impossible to build in enough safeguards so that you can cover every circumstance that might come up. The answer that my father and I have to this problem is that somebody who is an officer of the law, whether it is a police officer or the president of the United States, when they are faced with such a situation, must do what they think is best in terms of balancing the rule of law with the good of the community, or the good of a particular individual. They have to then come clean about that. You do not just sweep it under the rug. But the degree of responsibility really depends on the context, and there are petty situations, like parking meter violations, in which you could imagine somebody who is a parking meter attendant not giving a ticket to somebody who has parked their car to rush in to save the lives of people in a burning building, right? You might want to tell your supervisor that you did that and just make sure that there's nothing you have to

do, to fill out some paperwork or what have you.

But then there are much bigger issues like what President Lincoln faced, or President Jefferson faced, where they had to violate Constitutional norms in order to protect the nation. Let's take President Jefferson, where he faced a moment where he thought that war with England was imminent and that the United States was unbelievably badly prepared. Under the Constitution, only the U.S. Congress can appropriate funds for any purpose, such as restocking the military. Jefferson appropriated those funds and used them to secure naval defenses for the United States, because Congress was not in session to make this decision, even though he knew that his doing so was a violation of the Constitution. What he did was to go to Congress afterwards and say, "This is what I've done. I know it's a violation of the Constitution. I think it was still the proper thing to do. If you don't, punish me, impeach me, censor me, whatever it is you need to do, but if you do agree with me, let's ratify this ex post facto by you making some kind of legal determination about it, so that we repair the rule of law after this breach." I think that you can imagine ways of institutionalizing the officer of the law's responsibility to the rule of law even in the breach of law. What my father's and my concern was, in the Bush administration, was there was no such acceptance of the recognition that laws were being broken and that the executive had a responsibility to uphold those laws. Instead of being upfront about them and making the right kind of appeals to the public and to Congress, they did these things in secret and tried to paper them over. That was the problem, and those were things having to do with privacy violations. That was our concern there. Those are consequentialist concerns, but even if you are a Kantian, it does not prevent you from having consequentialist concerns about how the government is organized and how to deal with these very, very difficult positions that people in executive authority may face sometimes. We want to give them a way of dealing with it that also provides them with an out—that they don't have to feel like law breakers and then cover it up. That's the danger that we saw.

Dianoia: You frequently refer to the animalization of human beings as a negative effect of torture. You quote Jeremy Waldron's claim that "torture reduces human beings to cattle," and remark yourself that "torture causes us to look at the human body as a side of beef, ready to be flayed and butchered." Do you think it is fair that in our culture we associate being an animal with being a creature that bears brutal deforming psychologically damaging pain, and how would you philosophize about the value of an animal soul?"

Fried: This question posed itself to us when we were writing the book, and an analogy for how we could have pursued it would be what we did in the book with capital punishment. As we were working through the problem of torture, it became clear to my father that our arguments against torture were also arguments against the death penalty, which he had not been opposed to previously but became opposed to through working through this argument. What I would say is that it may well be that the argument we made has implications for the treatment of animals, and if that is the case, then our use of the language of animalization would have to be changed, but the whole point of it would be that what torture does is it renders us a kind of being that we are not supposed to be, and that is an intense violation of what we are and who we are. I do think that there are very serious critiques to be made of how we treat animals even if you do not want to go to the lengths of animal rights activism or veganism or even just the baseline vegetarianism. I think you can make such arguments. There is a very ancient set of ideas in Judaism and Islam, for example, the rules for keeping kosher or for keeping halal, that are in part designed to

protect the well-being of animals. There can be a recognition that animals are not the same as humans and do not have the same set of rights as humans, but that we ought to still behave with a minimum of cruelty towards them, and I think that's true, although these religious traditions may not provide a precise argument for what the limits of humane treatment should be. I have made a lot of decisions in my own life that move in that direction in terms of my diet. I think the question is a really good one, and it is just not the book we ended up writing, but I think it opens up the question about our responsibilities to any form of life, in terms of the pain we cause. It should be one that we examine with an open mind, and my mind is certainly still open. I have not completely resolved all my thinking, so, there we are.

Dianoia: In the chapter "The Big Ear," you mention that privacy, specifically the sensitivity to it, is more of a modern sentiment. Relating to the scenario in which a woman is keeping a Swiss bank account that is separate, is today's sensitivity to privacy more a matter of how citizens are perceiving their own government's corruption, or has having control over one's public image rather than a non-consensual display of one's private life become more relevant?

Fried: That's really complex. I want to say something about privacy as a more modern concern. By that, we do not mean to relativize it or say it should not always be a concern. It has just become something that is very much at the forefront of our conception in modern times about what legitimate government should respect. The way that my father and I present that in the book is that unless there is some zone of privacy within which one can retreat with one's own thoughts and inquiries, or to which one can retreat in conversation with other people, the possibility of a freedom that is enabled to ask the hard questions about the legitimacy of one's own government, how one might want to change it, how one might want to live even one's own life apart from political questions—all that becomes impossible. What we say is absolute is that, based on the technological and sociological state of your society, there should be an equally appropriate zone of privacy to which one can retreat with a sense of security to work through the questions that you might have about your own life or about your political life without fear of being squashed like a bug. That will depend on the kind of technology that's available, and it will depend on the kind of society you're living in. A mass society like we live in now is very different from a hunter-gatherer society, and the level of privacy that you might require in those very different kinds of societies to feel that you have the appropriate zone of privacy to have for human freedom will be very different. It's not that there is nothing to privacy—that privacy is simply a modern invention. I do not think that it is. At least, the need for it is not simply a modern invention.

I think what you are pointing to in part of your question is just how challenging the problem of privacy is in our modern world, given the rapidly changing technological situation that we are all living in. Right now, we are meeting each other through Zoom, and it is being recorded, and who knows where it is going to end up, and how much damage it will do to any one of us in our future lives. I cannot remember if we quoted this in the book, but the Cardinal Richelieu, the famous seventeenth century French statesman who worked for the king and had enormous power, said something like this: "Give me five paragraphs written by the most honest man, and I will find enough to hang him with." Here you and I have been having an hour-long conversation. It is much more than five paragraphs. If this falls into the hands of some future government, it very well could be enough to hang me

with, especially given the things I have said about Donald Trump and authoritarian rulers. To live in a free society, though, I need to feel that I have a sufficiently protected zone of privacy to speak my mind with you right now—to engage in the human freedom of philosophical reflection and philosophical discussion. What we need given the enormous pervasiveness of these technologies that capture our behavior, our location, almost our every thought at this point, is that it not become so pervasive that we are afraid of our own freedom. How we are going to do that, I am just not sufficiently adept with the technology to know. All I know is that the risks are becoming greater and greater with every improvement in the technology. The zone of privacy has to exist, but again, there's no formula for what defines it at a particular point in history because that zone is so dependent on the nature of the technology—and not just the technology, but also the kind of society you have.

There is a famous Supreme Court case from the 1930s about whether telephone calls are privileged zones of privacy based on the Bill of Rights in the American Constitution and whether or not the government can just tap your phone lines or whether or not there has to be a court order. This was a case where the government had tapped the phone line in a phone booth in a restaurant that they knew the people who were under investigation would be using. The constitutional question was, was that an unreasonable search and seizure when they tapped that phone booth? The answer was that there is not a reasonable expectation of privacy when you are out in the public world using public forms of communication. If you are in the restaurant and speaking very loudly about your plans to rob a bank, there would be no legitimate expectation in that sociological, technological situation to think that a loud conversation wouldn't be overheard. The court said the same is true of a public telephone. If the phone were in their own apartment, then it would be different. The zone of privacy and the reasonable expectations about how its boundaries should be protected would be different, but it is very hard to predict these things until you actually know the technological and sociological circumstances themselves.

Dianoia: Along similar lines, you start the chapter "No Beginning or No End" with the discussion about George Bush's decision to break the law in response to the credible intelligence that was received about Al Qaeda's plans to develop a weapon of mass destruction. Would you say that there's a reasonable threshold that, for conversation standpoint, we could have for determining how credible this so-called credible intelligence needs to be to serve as an impetus to violate the law for this public good, as you have been discussing this evening?

Fried: Our argument in the book was that prima facie Bush would have been justified in breaking the law if he had such a credible threat of such a massive, destructive event. He would still have to do what Jefferson did and Lincoln did, though, which would be to explain it afterwards and to have it publicly affirmed that what he did was acceptable by Congress or what have you. Your question is a much more specific one about what constitutes credible evidence. and I think that is almost a question for a political scientist rather than a philosopher, because I think it is a question of the institutions that we have and whether those institutions are trustworthy and what data those institutions, such as in the intelligence community, can legitimately count as evidence of a credible threat. So long as you have a minimally legitimate government with minimally dependable routines of processing that information, the president or other executive authorities are legitimately responsible for acting on the basis of that information. How I would specify what the tripwire is between legitimate and illegitimate, I am just not expert enough to say,

according to current technology and law. I just think that epistemologically, there must be such a point at which it is legitimate to say, "I think I know enough now to make this decision." The reason that you then make it public afterwards is to determine whether you improperly crossed that boundary or not. That is why as we say being a real political leader at a high level involves very serious risk that one takes upon oneself. We quote the Declaration of Independence, where the signers say that they pledge their lives, property, and sacred honor to the cause. The higher and higher up you get in political responsibility, the more important it is to remember that you have made that pledge, too, and that like a soldier you are risking something by taking on that responsibility. You are trusting in the good faith of the system that if you ever have to cross that line, and then you present your case for why you did it, the system will exonerate you and make good the rupture of the rule of law. That requires that we have a very well-functioning political society, and I think we can have that. The examples of Lincoln and Jefferson show that it is possible. Unfortunately, in the atmosphere we have now, it is hard to imagine that being the case. Being as fair as possible to Bush's administration, you could understand why they would hesitate to proclaim their lawbreaking. Still, I think it was Bush's duty to do so because it is important to prevent the presidency from becoming more and more autocratic, rather than bound by democratic norms and limits. John Locke, whom some of you have studied with me, said, "Y'know, we need to give our rulers the authority to make those tough decisions to break the law sometimes." He calls it prerogative. We also have to remember that it is extremely dangerous for those leaders to use prerogative, and he says in fact the most dangerous thing is a very good ruler who uses prerogative because then the people will come to trust that when a ruler breaks the law, they are doing it for a good reason and can account for it. Then along comes a very bad ruler who uses that same expectation to do very terrible things and then insist that they do not have to account for what they have done. That is what we have to worry about in the rule of somebody like President Trump.

There is a really good book for those of you interested in these questions. It is called After Trump: Reconstructing the Presidency, and it is by Bob Bauer and Jack Goldsmith. For those of you who are interested in law and politics as they intersect with philosophy, I really recommend this book. Jack Goldsmith is a remarkable man. He served in the Bush White House in the Office of Legal Counsel, which is a special office in the White House responsible for giving the President advice on the law so that the president doesn't break the law. Jack Goldsmith, at quite a young age, became the leader in the Office of Legal Counsel. He had taken that position after John Yoo. The name might mean something to you if you studied that period, but John Yoo had authored some memos saying that these various "enhanced interrogation techniques" did not constitute torture, and therefore if the president or his officers engaged in these activities they would not be guilty of torture. Goldsmith saw these memos and said we have to retract them. That was a very brave thing to do. He got all kinds of blowback, and so he is one of the people that my father and I talked with a lot when we wrote this book. Goldsmith co-authored this new book about the Trump presidency because—and he is interested in exactly the kinds of thing that we're interested in, which is presidential power—what kinds of problems are we now seeing as this fraying of the guardrails to excessive presidential power has proceeded under Trump well past what happened in the Bush administration. It might have been a trickle under Bush, but under Trump it is a torrent of lawlessness. This book is about what we do to bring the presidency back into the rule of law without damaging the presidency, without making it so weak that it is no longer an effective part of our government. I strongly recommend After Trump for those of you interested in these questions.

Dianoia: At the end of the book you revealed that you and your father are not completely of one mind when talking about prosecuting officials, and I wanted to ask what that process was like? How do you write with someone that you might not always see eye to eye with, and how were you able to cross that gap?

Fried: My father had a lot of training in philosophy when he was in law school. He has written works in philosophy, so at that level we could really speak the same language. I do not have the training in law that he has. I will tell you a very brief story. After my father and I finished the book, my mother told me that she had been really mad at my father for suggesting that we do this book together because she was really worried that we would have some horrible falling out over the issues. That just never ever happened, I think, because we each have a philosophical disposition to enjoy vigorous dialogue and we were willing to talk things out. Where we could not come to an agreement in that last chapter of the book, we incorporated the disagreement into the book! It all worked, and that was a really lovely experience. I have done other work like that in my professional career where I have translated philosophical works out of German with a colleague, and we constantly were going back and forth but never getting into serious arguments. When you can do that, it is one of the great intellectual pleasures in life. I think our solution in that book was the best solution, which was just to incorporate our disagreement into the life of the book itself. That way, the reader would be presented with this stark problem that faced the nation after the Bush presidency, which was, "Here are these unpunished excesses committed by the executive branch; do we let that lie for the sake of the unity of the nation, or do we do something about it to make clear that these lines shouldn't be crossed?" Now we have had the Trump administration, which seems to bear out my side of the argument, which is if you do not do something about such transgressions, they will just get worse and worse.

The fascinating thing about the After Trump book is that the two authors did the same thing. Bauer and Goldsmith end their book the same way: by one arguing that Trump should be prosecuted, and the other saying no. I teased Jack a little bit about that, saying that he had stolen our method, but I think it is a really useful thing to have in a book for conscientious citizens who want to understand just how tough these problems are. I would say we need to do something about Trump, although I think it is likely that the Biden administration will not seek his prosecution at the federal level, because Biden will not want to fray the nation's divides even further. But there is a big difference between the Trump and the Bush administration. Trump's crimes are really the crimes of a dictator, not of somebody who's done things that are wrong for the sake of the common good, which if you want to be generous, you can say about the Bush administration. That is why it was so difficult for us in that context because I still have sympathy for what the Bush administration was facing, even if I think what they did was very wrong. With Trump, it is nothing like that. He is not doing these things for reasons of the common good. It is purely for his own benefit. If you are not going to come down hard on that, what are you going to come down hard on? The difference is that because Bush was doing these things for the sake of the common good, these were federal infractions, and therefore, in principle, he could be pardoned for them if it ever came to that. For Trump, he is committing crimes in so many contexts, so even if Biden pardons him for federal crimes, Trump will still have to deal with the state of New York, and they could still take him down. That might be good enough. It is still not as much as I would like to see, because I think Trump's actions fell so far beyond the latitude that we should grant a president Although I am sensitive to

the problem that our country is really torn apart right now, and this could make it even worse, my fear is that the next president with authoritarian ambitions will be even worse than Trump if we do not set the bar somewhere.

Dianoia: Now that we are some years removed from the direct issues that you were discussing when you wrote this book around ten years ago, and now that we have the COVID-19 pandemic still ravaging our country, would you say that there are any applicable takeaways from your discussion of the necessity to take bold action in the face of an overwhelming threat to the nation that would help inform our policy-making. You have clearly alluded to the inadequacy of the Trump administration during the last four years, and especially during the climax of the COVID-19 pandemic, so are there any applicable crossovers from what you have talked about in the book?

Fried: I think the gross negligence of the Trump administration's response to COVID-19 was a conventional failure to face up to in an emergency. I do not think there was anything unconventional or illegal that was a useful option in that case. It was not like the threats coming from Al-Qaeda. This was a natural event. Maybe there would have been law breaking that a president could have engaged in order to facilitate the response. For example, maybe seizing supplies of medical equipment in order to distribute them, assuming that would have been necessary. I do not know if it would have been, but let us assume that it was. That would be the sort of thing that we have in mind. In such a case, the president would say, "Look, I did this. This was a crime. Congress of the United States, fix it by deciding either to impeach me or to confirm my actions." The problem is that if it had been Obama making such choices with Mitch McConnell's Republican Congress, they would have used it as an excuse to impeach him. That is what is driving this problem here. There is not sufficient trust between the branches of government so that a president could do what Jefferson and Lincoln did, which was to say, to put it in the vernacular, "Hey, I did this for the common good, cut me a break here." That is what is so disturbing about our present moment because let us not forget Jefferson was president when he campaigned against John Adams. That presidential election was as vicious, if not more so, than the one that we just went through. The divisions between the Federalists and the Democratic Republicans were very serious. Again, it took courage on Jefferson's part to expose himself, just as it did with Lincoln during the Civil War, when there were really serious political divisions that could have led to the end of their political careers. Lincoln's re-election was not an obvious thing. He was facing challenges from people like McClellan, who would have made peace with the Confederacy. Exposing himself was a dangerous move, but I think it was the right one. At some point, you have to draw the line in the sand on these issues of presidential power because it looks to me like successive presidents are taking more and more and tearing out the guardrails against excessive power. Give one an inch, and the next one takes the mile, and the one after that is going to take a hundred miles. Soon, the country will be covered. That is the main lesson that I take. The fact is we do not yet know everything that we need to know about Trump's law-breaking. The Mueller Report made very clear that Trump stonewalled them in gathering evidence at every turn. But I think we know enough to know Trump is deeply problematic. He has broken many serious laws, both constitutional and otherwise. We do not know everything, and more facts will emerge, I would hope, after his presidency is over —so long as he does not convince those Republican state legislatures to discard the popular votes in their states and substitute their own choice of the electors to go to the Electoral College, which is something that he has tried to get some of them to do. It is absolutely unbelievable. It has

a constitutional plausibility to it, but it would be the end of democracy if he does that. I do not think he will get away with it, though. I do not think the state legislatures will cooperate, but it just shows how far he is willing to push this in the direction of dictatorship, and the door has now been opened to the next attempt.

You know, my father is a refugee from World War II Europe. I grew up in a household which had that era very much on its mind. He became a Republican because he believed that the best defense against the kind of tyranny that had destroyed his homeland—he was from Czechoslovakia, first a Nazi tyranny, and then a communist tyranny—was to have limited government and a sense among the people that their lives are their own and that the government ultimately belongs to them. For my father, that meant you wanted to have as little government as possible while still maintaining the common good. He was a moderate libertarian Republican of the type that was very common in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. With the rise of the new Gingrich style of Republican, that more moderate Republicanism has gradually been eclipsed. That is no longer the Republican party that we have now—the kind of moderate libertarian Republicanism that is suspicious of big government programs and regulation as potentially leading to governmental overreach. But what we have seen develop instead is that the overreach is coming from the supposedly conservative party. For somebody like me, and certainly for my father, there is certainly a kind of historical whiplash that we are seeing now where the old categories do not seem to mean very much anymore. If I were to leave you with one lesson from this, it would be to ignore the categories of liberal, conservative, left and right, because I do not think they are particularly helpful right now in terms of thinking about what is in the best interest of the nation regarding pivotal issues such as reforms to make voting more accessible, fixing the Electoral College, and preventing voter suppression. These should not be liberal vs. conservative issues. They should be American issues. We have really gone off-track with that at this point. How to fix the divide, I am not sure. I am not enough of a prophet, but your generation will probably have to be the one to fix it, not mine, and not my father's.

UNIFIED FOUNDATIONS FOR NORMATIVE EDUCATION

ALEC OAKLEY

INTRODUCTION

This paper sketches a theory of normative education according to which we gain normative knowledge by first becoming disposed to correctly assess normative situations. I introduce a distinction between what I shall call 'perceptive' and 'productive' virtues, arguing that the cultivation of productive virtues is contingent upon the mastery of perceptive ones. After some brief groundwork (§0), I introduce the distinction between the two and explore some unique features that they might exhibit (§1). I then argue that productive virtues require perceptive ones, and thereafter use this relation to develop a resulting theory of normative education (§2). I evaluate the theory as it applies to three areas of normative philosophy—ethics, epistemology, and aesthetics (§3)—and then conclude with some suggestions about future avenues for further work (§4).

§0 PROSPECTS FOR A VIRTUE THEORY

I would like to begin with a brief explanation of why it makes sense to offer a virtue theory of normative education. This amounts to identifying how the acquisition of non-propositional normative knowledge is grounded in the cultivation of virtues, and then showing how propositional normative knowledge can be derived from the non-propositional knowledge that this cultivation affords.

The acquisition of non-propositional knowledge is, at least for our purposes, the development of a skill[1]. A skill is a disposition that is (at least instrumentally) valuable. This makes the gaining of non-propositional normative knowledge the development of a skill that is somehow normatively valenced. Presumably, moreover, for this skill to count as knowledge its valency must be positive. The capacity or disposition to act in a negatively valenced way should not count as normative knowledge[2]. So, the gaining of non-propositional normative knowledge is the development of a skill that is of positive normative valency. And the development of such a positively-valenced skill is precisely the cultivation of a virtue.

This reasoning identifies the acquisition of non-propositional normative knowledge with the cultivation of virtues. If we would like our theory of normative education to apply to propositional normative knowledge as well, we must show how such knowledge derives from the cultivation of virtues. While I believe such knowledge can thus be derived, we do not have the space here to give the proposal the attention that it deserves; thus, here is a rough sketch about what form this derivation might take.

It is easy to see why knowledge of propositions of the form " 'S ought to in circumstances C'" are derived from virtues. Suppose I have some virtue—say epistemic humility—which is the disposition to revise my beliefs in appropriate circumstances. For instance, suppose that I am disposed to revise my beliefs when presented with contrary evidence by experts. If I am aware that I have this virtue, I can infer the proposition that 'one ought to revise one's beliefs when presented with contrary evidence by experts.'

In other words, the cultivation of a virtue is concomitant with implicit propositional knowledge that may be inferred, upon reflection, from one's virtuous character. This proposal presupposes, and would follow from, the more general claim that dispositions are concomitant with implicit propositional beliefs that may be inferred, upon reflection, from the disposition. This claim has been defended by Ernest Sosa, but since we do not have the space to defend the claim here, I direct any suspicions to Sosa's work[3].

§1 THE PERCEPTIVE/PRODUCTIVE DISTINCTION

A virtue is *productive* if it is a disposition to behave in a normatively laudable way[4]. Productive virtues are familiar: in ethics, honesty is the disposition to tell the truth in the appropriate circumstances; in epistemology, humility is the disposition to have an appropriate level of confidence in one's beliefs; and in aesthetics, originality is the disposition to create original works. All of these behavioural dispositions are normatively laudable in their respective domains, and thus, are all productive virtues.

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1 Another kind of non-propositional knowledge is sometimes discussed, namely, knowledge of a person. Since this kind of knowledge has little bearing on what is to come, we equate non-propositional knowledge with 'know-how', the knowledge of how to do something.
2 This point is less obvious than it may seem. Indeed, it seems to presume some kind of 'motivational internalism' about normative education. That is, it seems to presume that to properly understand some normative matter, one must feel motivated to act according to one's understanding. If this point fails, the acquisition of non-propositional normative knowledge is no longer identified with the cultivation of a virtue, but rather the cultivation of either a virtue or a vice. However, nothing of substance hangs on this point.
3 *Sosa, Ernest. "The Relevance of Moore and Wittgenstein." In The A Priori in Philosophy. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.*
4 The terminology here may seem unmotivated. The terms 'productive' and 'perceptive' are most intuitive as they apply to aesthetics. As we will see, the productive aesthetic virtues are the virtues of the producer of art, the artist, and the perceptive virtues are the virtues of the perceiver of art, the appreciator. An unfortunate feature of the term 'productive' is that it casts the other virtues in a derogatory light. I should warn that the perceptive virtues are not 'unproductive' in the sense of being useless. Anyway, I hope the terminology will start to feel more natural, as we go.

A virtue is *perceptive* if it is a disposition to correctly assess normative situations. For instance, in ethics, insight into the moral characters of others is a perceptive virtue. In epistemology, being unbiased in one's credulity is a perceptive virtue. And in aesthetics, the virtues of artistic appreciation are perceptive virtues. Perceptive virtues are virtues "in the second person." They reflect our capacity to assess other normative agents with whom, and situations in which, we need not be involved.

Perceptive virtues are comparatively unfamiliar to their productive counterparts, so we should take some time to convince ourselves that they really are virtues. As we will see, perceptive virtues are important for the cultivation of productive virtues, but one might object that this is not really a virtue if this is their only value. Perceptive virtues, this same objection might say, are really only instrumentally valuable, and therefore, not really virtues at all.

There is some *prima facie* force to this objection. Perceptive virtues reflect one's ability to properly assess normative situations. But as the objection goes, being able to properly assess the normative facts is pointless unless one uses this information to behave virtuously, that is, to cultivate productive virtues.

The objection would be met if we endorsed Aristotle's doctrine of the unity of the virtues[5]. Notoriously, Aristotle thought that in order to truly have any single virtue, say, courage, one must have all of them. So the situation in which one is perceptively, but not productively, virtuous cannot arise. But we have good reason to deny Aristotle's doctrine. It is clear that in ethics, for instance, one can be honest without being brave. The disposition to tell the truth in appropriate circumstances does not require the disposition to take appropriate risks, so we should perhaps look for a solution elsewhere.

Here is what I suggest: dispositions to properly assess the normative facts are virtues because, even in the absence of productive virtues, they contribute to our wellbeing. The perceptively virtuous person has gained an understanding of *some* normative discourse. Since so much of our lives engages us in these discourses, having such an understanding of them is partly constitutive of human wellbeing.

This response presumes that having an understanding of discourses critical to human life is virtuous and, therefore, partly constitutive of human wellbeing. While the objector is unlikely to accept this, denial of perceptive virtues has inimical consequences; in fact, it would appear to delegitimize virtue epistemology altogether. Indeed, virtue epistemology is motivated by the tenet that having an understanding of these discourses constitutes human well-being[6]. Given that this thesis has led to such fruitful inquiry, it might be a good idea to accept it[7].

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5 Telfer, Elizabeth. "The Unity of Moral Virtues in Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics." *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 90 (1990).
6 Zagzebski, Linda Trinkaus. Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
7 I think this objection is best understood more generally. What the objector is really concerned about is the notion of a 'non-behavioural' virtue. Capacities, perceptual or otherwise, are useless unless they allow one to cultivate the appropriate behavioural dispositions. And so they are at best instrumentally valuable. The same response can be given to the general objection, since virtue epistemologists have demonstrated the merits of treating certain capacities as virtues.

Our response to the key objection emphasizes an important feature of the perceptive virtues. They are 'epistemic' in that they concern one's understanding of a normative discourse. I should stress that this does not mean that they only apply in epistemology. Rather, the perceptive virtues illustrate epistemic virtues to be present in all areas of normative life.

§1.1 MUTUAL EXCLUSION AND EXHAUSTION

There are more questions to be raised about the productive/perceptive distinction. First, are these collections of virtues mutually exclusive and exhaustive? It is clear that they are mutually exclusive as productive virtues concern behavioural dispositions. A person with a certain productive virtue has a disposition to behave in a certain way. Perceptive virtues are not behavioural as they concern a *capacity* to assess normative situations. Since no virtue can concern one's behaviour and not concern one's behaviour, no virtue can be productive and perceptive simultaneously.

Despite the mutual exclusion of these classes of virtues, we sometimes use one word to refer both to a productive virtue and a perceptive virtue. In aesthetics, for instance, 'creativity' may refer to either kind of virtue. For the appreciation of certain artworks—especially those more difficult to interpret—demands creativity. This kind of creativity is a perceptive virtue, but one must also remember that one can be creative in the sense of an artist, which is distinct from the former insofar as it is productive. Moreover, one can be perceptively creative without being productively creative; indeed, one can be perceptively creative without being an artist at all. This case demonstrates that even when one word is used to refer to two virtues of different kinds, the virtues can be easily discerned. So such cases are not counterexamples to the mutual exclusion of the productive and perceptive virtues[8].

The question of mutual exhaustion, however, is more difficult to answer. For a virtue to be productive, all that is required is that it concerns one's behaviour. So the question amounts to asking whether there are non-behavioural, non-perceptive virtues. While I cannot think of any examples, I am happy to leave this as a possibility. To rule this out, we would have to argue that the only way for a disposition to contribute to one's well-being is for it to describe a laudable behaviour or a capacity to assess normative situations, and I see no reason to think this to be the case.

§1.2 REFLECTIVE VIRTUES

We close our exploration of the productive/perceptive distinction by identifying two important subclasses of the perceptive virtues. First, since perceptive virtues are dispositions to properly assess normative agents and situations, we can consider dispositions to properly assess ourselves and situations in which we are involved as 'reflective' virtues. They are worth distinguishing from the other perceptive virtues because their cultivation poses challenges that are unique among the perceptive virtues and because they aid the cultivation of the productive virtues in a unique way.

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8 Another example, from ethics now, are the virtues to which 'courage' refers. Courage is most commonly thought of as a productive ethical virtue. It describes one's tendency to take appropriate risks. But the perception of certain moral facts also requires courage. It takes courage, for instance, for the privileged to acknowledge their privilege.

Before exploring what is unique about reflective virtues, we have a superficial question to answer. Notice that every perceptive virtue determines a reflective one? If p is a disposition involving the proper assessment of normative agents and situations, then p' is the corresponding disposition when restricted to the assessment of oneself and situations in which one is involved. Our superficial question is whether the cultivation of p requires the cultivation of p'? It is clear that someone who exhibits a perceptive virtue only in situations in which they are not involved is still exhibiting some kind of virtue, which we will call $p - p'$. The question, then, is whether $p - p'$ is just p, or if instead, all of these virtues, p, p', and $p - p'$, are to be distinguished. My own inclination is to say that $p - p'$ is not really a perceptive virtue, and that only when conjoined with p' does it form a perceptive virtue p. This is motivated by the thought that to be a perceptive person, one must be good at assessing normative situations without qualification. For instance, someone who is insightful into the moral shortcomings of others, but is painfully self-unaware of their own, is not 'really' insightful[9]. Given this, the reflective virtues are not strictly speaking a subclass of the perceptive virtues. Rather, every perceptive virtue is in part a reflective virtue as well. However, we can still speak as if the reflective virtues are contained in the perceptive virtues since each perceptive virtue determines a corresponding reflective virtue. Nothing substantial hangs on this point, as it is only necessary so that we can properly taxonomize the classes of virtues that we have identified.

What is uniquely challenging about the cultivation of reflective virtues is something of a mystery. We know from psychology *that* they are uniquely challenging[10], which is not all that surprising. After all, we stand in a profoundly different relationship to ourselves than we do to others, so it is to be expected that the methods by which we assess ourselves will be different from those by which we assess others. But none of this indicates what unique challenges are posed. Rather than try to settle an age-old question as a lemma, let us simply observe that the reflective virtues pose some or other unique challenges, and thus, deserve our special attention in our task to become more perceptive persons.

In addition to being uniquely difficult to cultivate, the reflective virtues are of unique instrumental value. Being reflectively virtuous allows one to gain knowledge of the status of one's own productive virtues, and accordingly, the opportunity to calibrate one's behaviour accordingly. For instance, the reflectively virtuous person can tell when she is being cowardly and when she is being reckless, and this allows her to be brave.

To summarize, the uniquely challenging and valuable nature of the reflective virtues shows that they are worth distinguishing amongst the perceptive virtues. In any case, they will play an important theoretical role in what is to come.

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9 These 'partial' perceptive virtues, if not *bona fide* perceptive virtues, are candidate counterexamples to the mutual exhaustion of the productive/perceptive distinction.
10 Ellemers, Naomi, Jojanneke van der Toorn, Yavor Paunov, and Thed van Leeuwen. "The Psychology of Morality: A Review and Analysis of Empirical Studies Published From 1940 Through 2017." Personality and Social Psychology Review 23, no. 4 (November 2019).

§1.3 RECEPTIVE VIRTUES

The second important subclass of perceptive virtues are the virtues that describe one's capacity to be appropriately receptive to criticism. These 'receptive' virtues will also play an important role in our theory of normative education.

It is plausible that the cultivation of the receptive virtues requires some type of non-reflective perceptive virtues; in fact, one of the central difficulties in the cultivation of receptive virtues is knowing which criticism to take seriously. In particular, then, the cultivation of the receptive virtues seems to require a notable perceptive epistemic virtue, namely, the capacity to discern credible sources of knowledge.

Since, as with the reflective virtues, the receptive virtues concern our own behaviour and character, their cultivation comes with similar challenges. And, as with the reflective virtues, the receptive virtues are uniquely valuable—cultivating any type of productive virtue without feedback from others is quite the task. We will see more about the instrumental value of the receptive virtues below when we set out our theory.

§2 THE CONCORDANCE OF VIRTUES[11]

At this point, I would like to identify an important connection between the classes of virtues that we have identified thus far. The cultivation of the productive virtues is greatly aided by a mastery of the perceptive virtues. Restrictions of this connection to certain normative subdisciplines have been recognized[12]. But the fact that the connection holds in general has, to my knowledge, gone unnoticed. As we will see, the general connection suggests that there is a structure that underlies the virtues broadly conceived, and that this structure affords a theory of normative education.

To establish the connection, consider how the perceptively vicious person would go about cultivating productive virtues. Say someone—let us call him Ed—wants to do well in the world. Ed wants to be morally outstanding, an excellent source of knowledge, and even the next great filmmaker. But Ed is woefully imperceptive. He gives perverse answers to ethical thought experiments, is more credulous toward white men, and watches Lynch movies while scrolling through Facebook.

The point is that Ed is going to have a hard time. He will not know how to behave morally until he learns to tell right from wrong. His knowledge will not be trustworthy until he learns whose knowledge to trust, and he cannot become the next great filmmaker until he makes an effort to learn what makes a film great.

What this case illustrates is that in order to reliably behave in a normatively laudable way, we must have an appreciation of the relevant standards. Gaining an appreciation of these standards amounts to becoming disposed to correctly assess situations in their relevant

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11 This phrase is taken from Gomes (2009) who, in the context of aesthetics, noted the findings presented here. We will discuss Gomes's paper in §3.3 when we evaluate our theory as it applies to aesthetics.
12 As we will discuss below, Woodruff (2001) and Gomes (2009) have noticed the distinction in aesthetics. It might be argued that Aristotle noticed this connection in ethics, but this is far from obvious. To my knowledge, the connection has gone unmentioned in epistemology.

applications. To many, this will seem too trivial an observation to bother pointing out. We will see that, when applied to specific normative areas of philosophy, it yields non-trivial consequences. Before carrying out these applications though, we should set out the theory of normative education that this connection furnishes.

§2.1 A VIRTUE THEORY OF NORMATIVE EDUCATION

So far, we have identified two mutually exclusive classes of virtues (the perceptive and productive virtues) and two important subclasses of the former class (the reflective and receptive virtues). We have also argued that the cultivation of the productive virtues is greatly aided by a mastery of the perceptive virtues, which when combined with the previous idea, furnishes the theory of normative education provided in this section.

The gaining of non-propositional normative knowledge is the cultivation of virtues. The cultivation of perceptive virtues leads to the capacity to properly assess normative situations and agents. Once one has this capacity, one then attempts to emulate who she perceives as virtuous and avoids emulating those that she perceives as vicious; in other words, this is what the "the cultivation of productive virtues" looks like in its practical application. If one has also cultivated the reflective and receptive virtues, then one can assess one's own attempts to be virtuous alongside constructive criticism from others. It is this reflection that calibrates one's future behaviour with such assessments.

Roughly speaking, the non-reflective, non-receptive perceptive virtues are giving the agent a place to start. Prior to having cultivated the reflective, receptive, and productive virtues, the agent has some idea of what a good person is. She has seen both examples and nonexamples and has tried with some success to apply these in order to make judgements in her own life. The reflective and receptive virtues serve to bridge the gap between these other perceptive virtues and productive virtues. Once one has some sense of the relevant standards, one can attempt to implement this understanding into one's own behaviour. And the reflective and receptive virtues allow one to assess these attempts and to improve over time.

In the following example, suppose that I am a brave person. As a child and young adolescent, I developed a certain perceptive virtue describing my capacity to discern cowardly and reckless people from brave people. Perhaps I saw my mother take the risk of leaving an abusive relationship, but only once she knew that she and her child would be safer on their own. Perhaps I saw some boys at school take needless risks and get hurt or reprimanded as a result. Through exposure to several similar examples and nonexamples, I came to a rough understanding of what it means to be brave. I implemented this rough understanding into my own behaviour and, having cultivated the reflective virtue corresponding to the aforementioned perceptive virtue, assessed my attempts. Perhaps previous experience led me to believe that driving fast was brave, so I drove fast. I then reflected on this action (or perhaps was criticized for it), and in realizing the needlessness of this risk, refrained from driving fast in the future. Through several similar experiences, I use the reflective and receptive virtues to hone my understanding of bravery and, ultimately, to become brave myself.

§2.2 TRADITION AND PROGRESS

Our theory of normative education emphasizes the role of exemplars in the gaining of normative knowledge. These exemplars will often conform to some kind of normative tradition. I will now explore the implications of this feature in our theory, and what specific implication the cultivation of productive virtues had in aiding our understanding of the relevant normative traditions.

As stated, this implication may be cause for some alarm as it fails to account for some form of normative 'progress'. Progress in the normative domain is, in virtue theoretic terms, an increase in the wellbeing of the average person engaged in the domain. For instance, moral progress is familiar; many White Americans used to think slavery was morally permissible, but now they do not. This is meant to signify some type of moral progress.

For several reasons, which are to be outlined below, some have thought that an emphasis on tradition impedes this kind of normative progress. For instance, artists of recent centuries have been dismissive of tradition, claiming that it hinders creativity[13]. Similarly, in ethics, an emphasis on tradition has been thought to stifle moral progress. However, once we gain an understanding of tradition and its role in our theory, we will see that these worries are merely apparent. Indeed, the role of tradition in our theory provides a satisfactory explanation of how normative progress is possible and even affords some practical advice as to how it is best achieved.

Consider the following two arguments to the conclusion that tradition impedes normative progress[14]. The first argument says that normative progress is catalyzed not by rules prescribed from a moral tradition, but from those with a natural endowment. For one cannot contribute to any normative discourse simply by following rules. Since an appreciation of tradition can only yield a capacity to follow those rules, it has no value toward advancing normative progress.

The second argument proceeds by example. It points to historical examples of the eschewal of tradition leading to normative progress. In ethics, the abolition of slavery can be seen as the eschewal of a tradition, and it goes without saying that this is a clear case of moral progress. In epistemology, the shift from the mythical cosmologies of Homer and Hesiod to the cosmologies based in reasoned argumentation of the Milesians and Eleatics was an eschewal of tradition, and signifies epistemic progress[15]. And in aesthetics, Shakespeare's eschewal of the Aristotelian unities gave us King Lear, and this is a kind of aesthetic progress[16]. From these examples, we see that normative progress often requires the eschewal of tradition, and so an emphasis on that tradition actually impedes normative progress.

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13 Marinetti, Filippo Tommaso, Emilio Settimelli, and Bruno Corra. "The Futurist Synthetic Theater." In Let's Murder the Moonshine: Selected Writings of F.T. Marinetti, edited by R.W. Flint, translated by R.W. Flint and Arthur A. Coppotelli. Los Angeles: Sun and Moon Classics, 1991; Pierre Albert-Birot. "Banality." In Manifesto: A Century of Isms, edited by Mary Ann Caws. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001; Noel Carroll. "Art, Creativity, and Tradition." In The Creation of Art: New Essays in Philosophical Aesthetics, edited by Berys Nigel Gaut and Paisley Livingston. Cambridge University Press, 2003.
14 These arguments, along with my critiques of them, are direct generalizations of arguments and critiques presented in Carroll (2003), section II, in the context of aesthetic progress.
15 Stokes, Michael C. " Hesiodic and Milesian Cosmogonies1 -I", Phronesis 7, 1-2 (1962).
16 Carroll, "Art, Creativity, and Tradition."

The first argument misconstrues the nature of the rules that constitute a normative tradition. It is true that there are probably no rules that guarantee normative progress, or at least none of which we are aware of. Moreover, it is probably true that there are no 'algorithmic' normative rules in the sense that their application can be isolated from other normative considerations and factors. But it does not follow from this that rules have no role to play in normative progress. Indeed, I claim that rules, properly conceived, do allow those who understand them to contribute to the relevant normative discourse. This falsifies the argument's second premise.

Properly conceived, the rules that constitute a normative tradition are virtues. They describe normatively valuable dispositions; not a normative instruction manual, as it were. The rules even in the most stipulative normative traditions (for instance, twelve-tone serialism in musical composition) are sensitive to other factors, and their application requires subtle and informed judgement. Thus, in claiming that one cannot contribute to a normative discourse through following rules, the argument mistakes a tradition for a collection of mechanical rules, rather than a body of virtues.

The second argument mistakes the role that tradition plays in the examples it cites, as none of them are wholesale dismissals of their respective traditions. Rather, they are revisions of our beliefs, and the virtues that we aim to cultivate are informed, in part, by the tradition that they revise.

These considerations demonstrate that tradition, properly conceived, need not impede normative progress. Traditions are not collections of algorithmic rules, but rather, bodies of virtues. And normative progress is not a result of a disregard for tradition, but rather, a result of a sustained engagement with tradition that leads to revision. In a familiar slogan, we must know the rules in order to break them.

So far, we have discussed normative progress as a result of the revision of normative tradition. Another kind of normative progress results from the increased coherence of the virtues cultivated by those engaged in the tradition and the tradition itself. The abolition of slavery is an example of this kind of normative progress since, even during its heyday, slavery was inconsistent with prevailing moral tradition. (Specifically, it was inconsistent with the social contract tradition of inalienable rights.) So the tradition that slave owners engaged in did not, as a matter of fact, endorse the owning of slaves. The moral progress signified by the abolition of slavery was not a revision of moral tradition, but rather, a better realization of an existing tradition.

Slavery further illuminates the distinction between these kinds of normative progress. The abolition of slavery came with the important qualification that it did not apply to incarcerated persons, which as a qualification still remains in place today. Since the slavery of incarcerated persons is wrong, this calls for a *revision* of tradition. If this revision takes place, then this will constitute the former kind of normative progress.

§2.3 ETIOLOGY

Our emphasis on the role of exemplars in normative education has yet another apparently troubling consequence. It implies that normative education requires the prior existence of normative agents, which suggests that our theory has no hope of providing an etiology of normativity.

On this point, I admit defeat. It is true that any theory of normative education in which exemplars play a central role will be unable, on its own, to account for how normative discourses were started in the first place. However, the fact of the matter is that exemplars do play an important role in normative education. Our moral sensibilities are irrevocably influenced by those close to us. The standards by which we judge our claims to knowledge are, in part, a product of the epistemic norms and traditions of our day. And, perhaps most undeniably, artists and their appreciators are forced to engage with the artworks and traditions that furnish the aesthetic landscape their artworks occupy.

Plainly, the fact that our use of exemplars makes the etiology of normativity mysterious should not lead us to deny or to ignore our use of exemplars. Rather, I suggest that we bracket the etiological questions until we have a fuller understanding of the current workings of our normative discourses are.

§3 THE VIRTUE THEORY IN PRACTICE

§3.1 ETHICS

We now evaluate our theory as it applies to some areas of normative philosophy, beginning with ethics. When restricted to ethics alone, we might say that we become good people by first learning how to tell right from wrong, and then apply these standards with the help of reflection and criticism to our own lives. The perceptive virtues describe this capacity to discern right from wrong, and the productive virtues describe one's disposition to do the right thing in the right circumstances. The best way to shed light on this theory of moral education is to contrast it with another theory that shares some of its most important features, namely the theory presented in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.

Aristotle famously thought that we become good people through a *mimesis* of the moral leaders of our community[17]. This proposal immediately raises two related issues. First, it seems even less able to give an etiology of ethics than our own theory, as not only does moral education require the prior existence of moral agents, but it also requires the prior existence of a moral community with moral leaders. In other words, though the use of exemplars requires the prior existence of moral agents, Aristotle's use of *mimesis* and moral leaders requires the prior existence of a fully functioning moral discourse. So, though the prospects for our theory to provide an etiology of morals are bleak, Aristotle's are definitionally hopeless[18].

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17 Kraut, Richard. "Aristotle's Ethics," May 1, 2001. https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/aristotle-ethics/.
18 Of course, etiological questions would not have occurred to Aristotle, given his belief in the eternality of species.

Second, Aristotle's theory of moral education seems to overemphasize the role of tradition. Indeed, for Aristotle, an understanding of moral tradition not only helps in moral education—it is all that is required[19]. So as long as one grasps the relevant tradition, one can simply copy them and, in turn, become a good person. Thus, Aristotle's theory seems unable to account for moral progress as it requires some discrepancy between tradition and the cultivation of virtues.

These problems suggest that Aristotle's use of *mimesis* forces moral knowledge to be undesirably uniform over time. Our theory replaces the *mimesis* of exemplars with the development of a capacity to assess exemplars, and hence fares better on these problems. This is the central difference between our theory and a purely Aristotelian virtue ethics.

§3.2 EPISTEMOLOGY

When restricted to epistemology, our proposal is that we become good epistemic agents by first gaining a rough understanding of the standards against which one ought to judge one's beliefs, and then apply these standards with the help of reflection and criticism from others to our own belief-formations. The perceptive virtues describe a capacity to assess the epistemic virtues of others and the justificatory status of their beliefs. The productive virtues describe dispositions to form beliefs and to engage in epistemic discourse in a laudable way.

The perceptive epistemic virtues can take a moment to wrap one's head around. Recall that perceptive virtues are all 'epistemic' insofar as they describe one's understanding of a normative domain. The perceptive epistemic virtues, then, are 'epistemic' in two senses. First, they are 'epistemic' because they describe one's understanding of a normative domain. Second, they are 'epistemic' because the relevant normative domain is epistemology. This double entendre is to be expected, since the theory presented, when restricted to epistemology, is a theory of 'epistemic education'; that is, a theory about how we gain 'epistemic knowledge'. This sounds somehow redundant, but it is not since the theory presented is a theory of how we gain knowledge about epistemic matters.

§3.2.1 REASSESSING INTERNALISM AND EXTERNAL-ISM ABOUT JUSTIFICATION

Indeed, understanding 'epistemic education' turns out to be crucial to the traditional questions of epistemology; specifically, the internalist-externalist debate about justification can be framed as a question regarding epistemic education since it regards how we gain knowledge through the justification of our beliefs. The internalist says that we can always gain such knowledge through reflection whereas the externalist denies this.

We can construe this debate in terms of our theory. Dispositions to form beliefs that are justified correspond to productive epistemic virtues, which we will call J-virtues. Virtues describing one's capacity to assess the status of one's J-virtues, then, are reflective epistemic

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19 As with the etiological problems with Aristotle's theory, this problem would not have occurred to Aristotle, given his unabashed Greek supremacism. A proper treatment of this matter would investigate the relationship between tradition and *endoxa*, Aristotle's 'reputable opinions' that figure so importantly in his thinking.

virtues, which we will call RJ-virtues.

The internalist-externalist debate regards whether there are RJ-virtues. The internalist says yes and the externalist says no. If there are RJ-virtues, then the justificatory status of one's beliefs can be reliably determined through reflection (i.e. internalism). Otherwise, there is no reliable way to access, through reflection, the justificatory status of one's beliefs (i.e. externalism).

This formulation of the debate is importantly different from other formulations. Specifically, the debate is often formulated extensionally. Internalism is the thesis that there is no belief the justificatory status of which is reflectively inaccessible to the believer, whereas externalism says that there are such beliefs[20]. I think that our virtue-theoretic formulation gets closer to the heart of what is at issue; namely, the nature of the mechanism by which we reliably gain knowledge of the justificatory status of our beliefs.

The virtue theory of epistemic education does not tell us whether there are RJ-virtues, but the proponent of the theory will likely lean toward a positive answer. She has already accepted a notion of reflective virtues corresponding to other productive virtues, and it is not clear what considerations would set J-virtues apart from these. The proponent of the virtue theory denies the existence of RJ-virtues, which nonetheless constitutes an unwarranted theoretical asymmetry[21].

§3.3 AESTHETICS

Our proposal, when restricted to aesthetics, takes on a rather different character. For unlike in the other normative disciplines, the cultivation of the perceptive aesthetic virtues and productive aesthetic virtues constitute distinct activities. The perceptive virtues correspond to the virtues of the appreciator, and the productive virtues correspond to the virtues of the artist. Given that artistic appreciation and artistic production are distinct activities, the general connection espoused in §2 is most informative in aesthetics. It proposes that in order to be a great artist, one must be a great artistic appreciator.

Our theory of normative education restricts to aesthetics as follows: we become great artists by first learning what makes art great, and then applying this understanding, with the help of reflection and criticism from others, to our own artistic creations. We first become insightful, perseverant, creative appreciators of art, and this affords us a rough understanding of what we think constitutes great art. We then implement this rough understanding into our own artistic creations, and through reflection and criticism from others, hone our understanding of great art in the hopes of one day becoming great artists ourselves.

In aesthetics, the connections between tradition and progress identified in §2.2 can be made

20 Pappas, George. "Internalist vs. Externalist Conceptions of Epistemic Justification." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, January 24, 2005. https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/justep-intext/.
21 Given this, it is natural to ask what is 'internalist' about our theory of epistemic education. A plausible answer is found in Bach (1985). For Bach, internalists are focused not on what makes beliefs justified, but rather what makes a believer justified. This diagnosis is probably correct in our case. We are focused on J-virtues, dispositions to form justified beliefs. For this reason, the objects that are being assessed are agents, not beliefs. If Bach is right, this is likely why our theory lends itself toward internalism about justification.

more explicit. For there are productive aesthetic virtues that correspond to dispositions to incite aesthetic progress, namely, creativity and originality. Thus, the central finding of §2.2, when restricted to aesthetics, is that creativity and originality are not at odds with tradition, but rather, informed by it[22].

§3.3.1 SAVING VIRTUE AESTHETICS

As noted above, the connection between the productive and perceptive virtues has already been noticed in aesthetics. It was noticed by Woodruff and developed further in Gomes[23]. They proposed the connection in order to account for the fact that aspiring artists are advised to engage with their artform as appreciators. For instance, Gomes recounts some advice commonly given to novelists: "If you want to write a book, read a library."

Gomes presents the connection as a problem for the virtue-theoretic approach to aesthetics pioneered by Woodruff and Goldie[24]. Gomes's worry is that this connection, what he calls the 'concordance of virtues', is not present in ethics. Since virtue aesthetics relies heavily on analogies between ethics and aesthetics, if there is no structure in ethics analogous to the concordance of aesthetic virtues then it seems to discredit the whole approach.

One payoff of our theory is that it soothes Gomes's worry about virtue aesthetics. We have seen that the structure of aesthetic virtues noticed by Woodruff and Gomes is in fact present in all areas of normative philosophy. Indeed, this structure is furnished by the humdrum observation that in order to go about becoming a good person, one must have some sense of what one is trying to do.

§4 FURTHER WORK

This paper has been exploratory in spirit. I hope to have established nothing more than the fact that developing a general theory of normative education is worthwhile, and that the virtue theory presented is a good place to start. Indeed, the paper is best understood as a call for a research programme which investigates the virtue-theoretic structure underlying our normative discourses. The task of developing a virtue theory of normative education is monumental, and the required tools (especially non-propositional knowledge) have not yet been sharpened. For these reasons, the paper suggests several avenues for further work. We close by identifying some of these avenues.

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22 As in note 10, this is precisely the finding of Carroll (2003), of which the thesis of §2.2 is a direct generalization.
23 Woodruff, David M. "A Virtue Theory of Aesthetics." *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 35, no. 3 (2001). Gomes, Anil. "Goldie on the Virtues of Art." *British Journal of Aesthetics* 49, no. 1 (2009).
24 Woodruff, "A Virtue Theory of Aesthetics." Goldie, Peter, "Towards A Virtue Theory of Art." *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 47, no. 4 (October 1, 2007). Goldie, Peter, "Virtues of Art and Human Well-Being." *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes* 82 (2008).

§4.1 METHODOLOGY FOR NORMATIVITY:

The theory presented points to important methodological questions in studying normativity; specifically, it forces us to ask whether theoretical unity is desirable, or to be expected in studying normativity. If theoretical unity is desirable, then this buttresses the theory. If it is undesirable, then this weakens the theory. If we should be ambivalent on the matter, then this methodological question will not affect our theory. These methodological questions must be answered if we are to properly assess the theory's plausibility.

The converse question also arises: if our theory is correct, does this suggest that theoretical unity is desirable, or to be expected, in studying normativity? According to the theory, there is a structure underlying all normative education. This plausibly suggests that richer theories could be developed that describe normativity. While the strength of the theory does not depend on the converse question, if the answer turns out positive, this would be a notable consequence of the theory.

§4.2 REALISM ABOUT NORMATIVITY:

Another avenue for further work is the reassessment of realism in normative domains in light of the theory presented. We have offered a theory of normative knowledge, but we have not explicitly discussed what justifies the knowledge our theory describes. This is largely because the notion of non-propositional knowledge is still underdeveloped; that is, conditions on non-propositional knowledge that correspond to the justification condition on propositional knowledge have not yet been identified.

In light of our theory, the realist's challenge is to demonstrate why the non-propositional normative knowledge gained through the cultivation of the virtues is "justified", in whatever way that might mean. Hence, the full development of our theory will require a notion of justification for non-propositional knowledge to be identified, as well as an argument that the virtues afford suitably justified non-propositional knowledge.

§4.3 MORE ON PROGRESS

Perhaps the section of this paper that is at once most exciting and most underdeveloped is §2.2 on tradition and progress. It was said that normative progress occurs when a normative tradition is expanded on or revised, rather than eschewed. A propitious avenue for further work would be to develop this idea in a way that engages with the literature on normative progress. There is a vast literature on moral progress and the proper assessment of the virtue theory presented here will require sustained engagement with this literature.

CONCLUSION

We presented a theory of normative education according to which we gain normative knowledge by first becoming disposed to properly assess normative agents and situations. Some broad lessons regarding normative philosophy were drawn, about the relationship between our normative traditions and normative progress, as well as the etiology of normativity. We saw that our theory not only solves some important problems with Aristotle's theory of moral education as it applies to ethics, but that it also provides some critical insight into the internalist-externalist debate as it applies to epistemology. And lastly, we saw that our theory as it applies to aesthetics saves virtue-theoretic approaches to aesthetics from otherwise formidable objections.

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ON ADMIRATION AND WONDER:
Should We Accept Plutarch's Lives in the Platonic City?

GABRIEL AINSA

Which mental attitudes contribute to justice? And what cultural practices can we foster to cultivate them? This is to say, what is the relationship between character, politics, and art? In Book X of *The Republic*, Plato's Socrates concludes that poetry cannot be allowed in a just and well-functioning city since "the only poetry that we can accept into our city are hymns to the gods and verses in praise of good men" (607a)[1]. The Platonic censorship of poetry may seem odd to a modern, liberal audience, especially if we are to interpret *The Republic* as a political work, but a careful reading of Plato's text reveals the censorship of poetry to be a crucial thesis in the dialogue with a serious philosophical defense. The psychological effects of art, the Platonic thesis states, corrupt the moral character of the individual and threaten political justice. If we are committed to ethics and politics, we must reject aesthetics—or so the argument goes. But those of us feeling drawn to all three commitments may find a champion in the first-and-second-century CE Platonist Plutarch and his biographical writings, the *Parallel Lives*. This rich and complex set of portraits of the "great men" of ancient Greco-Roman history pays particular attention to the interactions between the soul (*psuche*) of individuals, political structures, arts and cultural artifacts, and,

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1 Unless otherwise stated, I use the Griffith translation of Plato's *Republic* and the John Dryden translation of Plutarch's *Lives*. Citations of the Dryden translation are by Life and page number of the Modern Library Edition. On occasion, I will employ the Loeb translation or provide my own and specify which translation it is. Citations to the Loeb and Greek are by book and chapter.

ultimately, philosophy. In this essay, I read Plutarch and his *Lives* as a text of moral and political philosophy responding to the Platonic tradition to which Plutarch feels in debt yet free to challenge and improve[2]. As I will argue, although Plutarch's description of poetry (and other activities and arts, including political ones) follows Plato in his analysis of their psychological risks, he does not exclude them from human life. Instead his *Lives* seek to imitate those psychological effects while inviting the reader to adopt a critical attitude towards arts and politics. In this reading, the *Lives* are an exercise in cultivating wonder of the good and the beautiful (*to kalon*) through an aporetic inquiry into human psychology and community.

I will begin with an overview of Plato's arguments against mimetic poetry in his *Republic*. I then turn to Plutarch in the second section, which will begin with a discussion of the Platonic theses that led Plato to ban poetry and how Plutarch responded to them. This second section includes Plutarch's discussion of the psychological effects of poetry as well as other activities like rhetoric. The third section considers Plutarch's analysis of the end of politics in *Numa* and *Lycurgus*. I then compare in the fourth section Plutarch's aesthetics and politics, noting how they both cause an almost identical passion of "admiration," though in distinct ways. This notion of admiration becomes the heart of the discussion in the fifth section, for it is this sort of passion that leads Plato to censor poetry. To respond to the problems that come with admiration, I argue Plutarch needs to transform it into a more philosophical "wonder," which, like admiration, includes not only a perception of the good in the object and a desire to imitate, but also an inquisitive impulse to scrutinize and learn the truth behind all appearances. I conclude that the *Lives* intend to cultivate this passion towards public life and history, and that it presents a threat to neither human flourishing nor political justice

Plato against Poetry
We may be inclined to dismiss Plato's dislike of poetry as an outdated capriciousness that ought to be ignored. But a careful reading of Plato's text reveals the censorship of poetry to be a crucial thesis in the dialogue (if not the central one). Socrates first suggests that the *Kallipolis* should be wary of poetry early in the dialogue and eventually returns to it in the concluding book. In fact, these arguments against poetry bind the dialogue together, for it is in poetry, or in what poetry represents, that we find the relation between "city and soul" become tangible. Thus, in order to grasp what we should make of the Platonic critique of poetry, we must reconstruct the arguments with Socrates not only one-by-one, but also as a whole.

I would like to begin with the whole. What is *The Republic*, and what does it put forth? Platonic dialogues are individuated by the question into which each inquires; in this case, what is justice (*dikaiosune*)? The question, as it begins in the first two books, concerns justice

2 As Babut (1994) concludes, the evidence for Plutarch's New Academic approach is not to be explained away as a momentary or instrumental approach to dismantle the arguments of the Stoics or Epicureans. This seems to be Nikoladis (1997) approach, who professes that in Plutarch we see a return to the Old Academy of Plato. But for the French scholar, these moments in Plutarch reveal a deeper philosophical commitment to Socratic inquiry, as "*la marque d'une expérience authentique, l'expression d'une réflexion sérieuse visant à justifier rationnellement, fût-ce de manière négative, la validité d'une foi religieuse en une Vérité supra-rationnelle*" (1994, 581). I do not commit to either interpretation and leave others to settle this issue; however, as it seems to me, Plutarch is more of a Socratic than a Platonist in the *Lives*, committed to dialectical inquiry into the good, treating Plato and the Greek philosophical tradition as interlocutors on the hand and political history on the other.

within the individual as an ethical virtue. To the extent that it inquires into the nature of justice as a virtue of the individual, *The Republic* seems to be a work of moral philosophy. As such, it is concerned with what individuates human beings and their character; this is a question of what makes them good and what makes their souls wholesome and healthy. This dialogue would need to look at human beings "from the inside," to provide a *psychology* (in the literal Greek sense of an account, *logos*, of the human soul, *psuche*). However, justice is a predicate of an individual as well as of a political structure; as John Rawls put in his *Theory of Justice*, it is the "primary virtue of institutions." This realization early in the dialogue prompts Socrates to propose that in order to discover what justice is in the individual and whether it makes individuals happy, we must first discover what it is in the city. As such, they embark on the project of founding a just and well-functioning city—the Kallipolis—in speech. To this extent, *The Republic* is a work of political philosophy. Some may even use it as a manual for lawmakers. But somebody who reads the text merely as a political manual would miss that Socrates does return to his defense of the thesis that justice as an ethical virtue makes a person happy in itself. This is his end goal, and it is quite telling that the beginning and concluding books are concerned with the defense of justice as a virtue to be desired for its own sake, while its middle books inspect political regimes. As such, it would seem that Plato's political proposals merely serve an argumentative function in his defense of the moral virtue of justice. Under this view, the success of *The Republic* is the application of the concepts and predicates of the Greek's political lexicon to psychology. If this is so, we might see the relation between city and soul to be a mere analogy[3].

However, I resist an interpretation that would paint Plato as an "individualist" in the sense of being merely interested in the "inner city" of human beings. Instead, I read Plato (and Plutarch) as an astute observer of human nature, who notices that things outside of us, whether art, politics, or personal relationships, can have a strong effect on our psyche. For we have good reasons to think that, for Plato, the city-soul relation is one of cause-and-effect[4]. We see this fact in Socrates' attention to education, as it is through education that law-makers can influence the character of the citizens. The question of what will constitute such an education begins Socrates' attack on poetry (*poesis*). This first attack is against the poetry of Homer and the tragedians and takes place in Book III, where Socrates outlines pedagogy as part of his political project. Thus, these arguments serve to justify the censorship in a political community. But his complete attack does not come until Book X, where Socrates argues that all arts that perform "imitation" (*mimesis*) are problematic. I understand both instances of imitation to be the same,[5] and while the latter argument justifies the ontological

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3 In his famous critique of *The Republic*, Bernard Williams (1973) seems to think along these lines. For him, the method of Plato relies on the assumption of the "analogy of meaning," that "the explanation of a city's being F is the same as that of a man's being F" (159). Along with some other premises in Plato's argument, he considers that there is a tension in the background of *The Republic* which threatens the whole project. For, in the last analysis, the contradictions he points out bring forth that "there are grave obstacles to Plato's reading back into the city what he needs for his political conclusions" (167).

4 In his interpretation of Plato's *Republic*, and as a response to Williams (1973), Jonathan Lear (2001) proposes that Plato's problems with poetry and Socrates' education program have to do with the psychological "internalization" of "cultural influences" and the importance of ensuring that the young do not have any morally harmful externals "for Plato, humans enter the world with a capacity to absorb cultural influences. The young psyche is like a resin, able to receive the impress of cultural influences before it sets into a definite shape" (171). I follow Lear in his interpretation of the causal relation between city and soul as being a dynamic process of internalization and externalization.

5 This is the conclusion of Gabriel Richardson Lear (2011) study in which she argues that, against the standard interpretation, the

and psychological problems with *mimesis*, the former justifies why these problems are also political.

The argument in Book X lies in the Platonic distinction between the "reality" (*to ōn*) of the object and the "appearance" (*to phainomenon*) of it—an artist can only depict the latter (598b). This is true of craftsmen, painters, and even poets. A product of art, then, is an imitation of the appearance of reality. The object of the imitation of the poet is human and divine life and action—but this is an imperfect imitation, for "they produce an apparition (*phantasmata*) and not the reality (*onta*)." This ontology has psychological consequences in Socrates' argument—since poets like Homer can neither depict truth nor possess moral knowledge, consumption of art cannot take place in the intellectual part of the soul as this is the part that engages in true knowledge and reasoning. Instead, when we listen to poetry or look at a painting, this activity belongs to the "element in us which is far removed from intelligence (*phronesis*) " (603b). It is for this reason that we may rationally grasp that human misfortunes are bearable and yet feel great pity for a tragic character in a play. By stirring up certain pleasures and pains related to these passions of anger, pity, love, and so on, art cultivates the more passionate part of the soul—it incentives mental habits in the audience. Therefore, all mimetic arts, insofar as they are in the business of appearance-making, are morally problematic.

Let us now turn to Socrates' argument in Book III, where he takes on the role of city-founder. Soon after Socrates founds his city, he turns to the education of the guardian class, for he needs to ensure that they will be courageous, gentle, and serve the city well. As far as they are asking these questions *as the founders* of the *Kallipolis* and for the sake of justice in the *Kallipolis*, the Platonic education program is a political program as well. For the cultivation of certain moral and physical characteristics is an institutional interest, and so, the fact that Socrates immediately turns to the education of the guardians is quite telling. The *Kallipolis* must provide special attention to what its students are learning if it is to raise them to fulfill their appropriate task. As such, we can detect the background assumption that certain education leads to certain characteristics; therefore, if institutions control education, they control character. Hence, through education, political structures mold the psychologies of their citizens. Socrates then starts out with the Greek model of physical and musical education, slowly examining what to keep and what to throw out (376d); it is here that his attack on Homer begins. His argument here is more specific to epic and tragic poetry: it is pleasing to perform and listen to because of its rhythm, meter, and musical qualities; and so, when students learn Homeric poetry, we risk that "enjoyment of the imitation gives rise to enjoyment in reality" (395c). Yet, his argument in Book III does not amount to much more than his later argument in Book X outlined above.

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imitative poetry discussed in book III is an instance of the mimetic arts of book X. The problem, she argues, has to do with the "appearance-making" of *mimesis* and the psychological habituation it has on the audience. So, people who often listen to a performance of Homer's *Iliad*, for instance, may make a habit of finding pleasure in the courageous, proud, and violent character-type of Achilles. I follow her in my reading of Plato and Plutarch.

Socrates notes that there are two reasons why they, as founders, need to pay as much attention to musical and poetic education: (a) music and poetry have the greatest effect on character because they penetrate the psyche through tunes, rhythms, and imagery, and (b) anybody with the right artistic education will be brought up to have a certain knowledge of what is good and beautiful (401d-402a). It is no coincidence that Socrates' artistic education program ends "where it ought to end. Music and poetry ought, I take it, to end in love of beauty (*eis tà toū kaloū erōtika*)" (403c). It is worth noting that, as some of Plato's other dialogues like *Symposium* show, this "love of beauty" is not to be considered as something base, as some may interpret erotic desire, but as a certain orientation of the soul towards what is truly worthy of one's desire, the kalon. In other words, poetry can influence one's desires and values, or, in a more Platonic sense, one's conceptualization of the good. And if a city can only be just when each citizen has an appropriate notion of what is good for them and the community, founders and rulers must ensure that whichever forces in the city may influence the intentional attitudes of the citizens do cultivate the proper desires and loves. Therefore, since none of the art that he has experienced truly impresses him, Plato has Socrates conclude that their city must censor mimetic art. Homer, Hesiod, the tragedians, whose authority Greece has followed for centuries, need be overthrown, for only prosaic writing depicting true moral knowledge can serve institutional goals of political justice.

Plutarch on Poetry

In summary, these are the Platonic arguments for banning poetry from the city that I argue Plutarch engages:

> (1) The moral character of a human soul has partial causes in external forces.

> (2) The end of politics is to cause good moral characters.[6]

> (3) Poetry is an external force which can cause a vicious character.

If we interpreted these theses as Socrates does in *The Republic*, we would suppose that censoring poetry is in the interest of those who structure the political community. Regardless of whether we accept them in this manner, these observations become part of the Platonic legacy that lurks in the back of Plutarch's works. For instance, his aesthetics suggest a certain critique of the arts, but unlike Plato, Plutarch seems more open to the benefits of mimetic poetry. And so, in his essay *On How the Young Man Should Listen to Poetry*, Plutarch is both wary of poetry's falsehoods and its damaging effects on youths who listen to it without a teacher *and* critical of those philosophers who turn their backs on poetry and do not take advantage of its use (15F)[7]. As I shall argue, Plutarch seems to believe in the three theses

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6 This thesis is also argued in the *Gorgias*.
7 In her study of Plutarch's essay, Gómez Cardó (1999) comments on Plutarch's attempt to reconcile his Platonic tendencies and poetry; for her, Plutarch asserts that the hedonic task of art is independent from morality, even though it is subservient to it. As such, it is the task of the reader to turn the work into something morally productive. She furthermore suggests that something similar takes places in Plutarch's composition of the *Lives*. While I agree with most of her conclusions relating Plato and Plutarch, I cannot help but wonder whether Plutarch really does think of himself as stirring up the irrational part of the soul as Gómez Cardó portrays Plutarch's interpretation of poetry.

stated above, and yet, in a heroic attempt, he takes up the Platonic challenge "to speak in prose on her [poetry's] behalf" (607d-e). His *Lives*, as a work in itself, constitutes a philosophical defense of art.

How does Plutarch view these artistic forms and their influence on people—e.g. thesis (1)—in the *Lives*? In this Platonic tradition, what distinguishes arts like poetry and painting is that they are, *prima facie*, mere appearances of objects[8]. They may *represent* an object that is real and true, and the product itself may be a physical object. But we do not say that mere ink on a page or colors on a frame constitute the art. Its *content* constitutes the art and individuates its causal power over our mental events. To consume art is an activity that takes place within the mind, and so, it is a mental state with certain intentionality. In this sense, art is an appearance; its essence is phenomenal. As a subjective experience, it sits in the soul and molds our psychology by creating certain upheavals of pleasure, pain, and passion; for Plato, this takes place in the non-rational part: "this [irrational] part of the soul he [the poet] arouses and feeds, and by making this strong destroys the rational part" (605b). This is to say, if we are not careful, poetry may recolor our conception of what is good and beautiful (*to kalon*), inciting desires and behaviors contrary to what justice and virtue demand.

I do not see how we could deny the phenomenology and psychology of art which Plato depicts. Plutarch does not, for although they evaluate poetry differently, their description of its powers does not differ. His most pre-eminent lawgivers, for instance, freely use the psychological effects of poetry for moral and political good. Note Plutarch's emphasis on Solon's use of poetry to "to justify his own actions, and sometimes to correct, chastise, and stir up the Athenians to noble performances" (*Solon* 108). He does not even criticize Lycurgus for introducing Homer to Spartan pedagogy, for "the few loose expressions and actions of ill example" of his poems "were much outweighed by serious lessons of state and rules of morality" (*Lycurgus* 56)[9].

Plutarch even generalizes Plato's thesis—for him, though poetry is paradigmatic, any sort of art or activity which creates a similar impression on the mind may cause a moral-psychological change (*i.e.* in beliefs or desires about the good). Although his philosophical ancestor shows a strong contempt for the sophists and orators, Plutarch notes both the psychological effects and moral advantage of rhetoric. Rhetoric is "in Plato's language, the government of the souls of men, and that her chief business is to address the affections and passions, which are as it were the strings and keys to the soul" (*Pericles* 215). On the other hand, Plutarch shows it may serve as moral motivation: "Panaetius, the [Stoic] philosopher, said that most of his [Demosthenes] orations are so written as if they were to prove this one conclusion, that what is honest and virtuous is for itself only to be chosen" (*Demosthenes*

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8 This is in line with Plato's ontological argument in book X of *The Republic* against art outlined above. He takes it further than we do here, for he states the painters and poets imitate not the truth of the matter but the appearance (598b). Homer and the tragedians, then, are "twice removed" from the actions of human beings and, as such, poetry stands too far from moral goodness to contain any moral knowledge (598e-600a).

9 Plutarch may be responding to Socrates' comments against Homer in book X of *The Republic* when he mockingly compares Lycurgus to Homer: "Sparta is better governed because of Lycurgus, and so are many other cities, great and small, because of many other individuals. What about *you* [Homer]? Which city says that you are its great lawgiver, or attributes it success to you?" (599e).

396). Plutarch invoking the authority of a Stoic as famed for his ethical and political works as Panaetius signifies that he is not just moved by the illusions of an orator. Rhetoric serves a profound moral and philosophical function here, and it can only fulfill that function because it creates an appearance of virtue which, like poetry, leaves a psychological impression on the audience.

His *Lives* are full of such examples, but I will not go on. It makes sense that Plutarch would feature these moments, considering how rhetoric, poetry, and similar arts are esteemed in both his culture and in the cultures that he wrote about. But Plato lived in similar circumstances; in fact, he chose Homer as his target because he was such an important part of Greek pedagogy at the time. We must suspect, then, that his interest in these arts reveals something distinct about Plutarch's psychology and politics as well as his project in the *Lives*.

Plutarch on Poetry
So far, Plutarch obviously grants *thesis 1*, but seems to reject a strict interpretation of *thesis 3* (though he eventually will partially accept it). Let us now move on to *thesis 2*. Perhaps Plutarch could have rejected the censorship and contempt for poetry if he thought that the feelings, thoughts, and mental habits of people are the business of politics; this certainly seems to be a view that modern audiences might be more inclined to believe. But quite obviously, this is not Plutarch's view. The ethical ends of politics are a background assumption in Plato and more explicitly stated in Aristotle's *Ethics and Politics*. We should not be surprised if Plutarch, who knows these two quite well, thinks similarly.

Now, it is no coincidence that Plutarch chooses to write biographies of statesmen. These are figures whose characters and actions distinguished them because of their rarity and publicity. They acted in the public sphere and invited others to assess their actions[10]. For Plutarch, this is a philosophical and moral assessment; he tells us: "my design is not to write histories, but lives. And the most glorious exploits do not always furnish us with the clearest discoveries of virtue or vice in men" (*Alexander* 139). The *Lives* is an ethical inquiry, and if one is to examine what the best life is for a human being, the lives of people known by all is a good place to start.

Is it an accident that they are statesmen, then? Or does there exist an intrinsic relationship between politics and the human good? On the one hand, Plutarch often considers the private lives of his actors and examines their virtue independently of politics; on the other, as a glance over the *Comparisons* would show, his interest lies in their actions in the public sphere and how these actions relate to the sort of moral characters these agents have. And though any number of the accounts demonstrated in the *Lives* hides a complexity worthy of inquiry on its own, this does not undermine Plutarch's method of examining goodness through political actors.

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10 I mean this is in the Arendtian sense. The Plutarchian Life is an imitation of Arendtian action, which reveals the agent; and note, furthermore, the emphasis on the "public sphere" and "space of appearance" in Plutarch's choice of writing on statesmen. It is no coincidence that Arendt theorizes the space of appearance in which human life takes place from the Greek *polis*. Though perhaps we should respect Arendt's distinction between the imitation of character and action already present in Aristotle's *Poetics*. In this sense, the Plutarchian Life differs greatly from Arendtian action and Greek tragedy. On the other hand, Plutarch's *Lives* might problematize this distinction, regardless of his emphasis in the *Alexander* on character portrait rather than glorious deeds.

But our question is not what the human good is. We are assuming that Plutarch shares the commitment of his predecessors to moral virtue and its cultivation as necessary for human flourishing. Our question here is whether politics has anything to do with such cultivation in Plutarch's theory, either for the statesmen or for the citizens. As such, for now let us focus on *Lives* which analyze the political projects of its protagonists as separately as possible from their other personal and social projects, the *Numa* and *Lycurgus*. We can read these as discussions of the proper ends and means of the lawgivers.

According to Plutarch, the Romans appointed Numa following the death of Romulus, a Sabine, who, in his almost-absurd piety, is unwilling to enter politics. The story goes that his father and kinsman exhort him to political activity by convincing him that it is a divine command to improve the character of the war-like Romans (*Numa* 86). Numa's initial reluctance resembles that of Plato's philosopher in *The Republic*, who does not want to "return to the cave" and engage in political life, even if her city were better for it. These reasons convincing Numa to join politics also do not substantially differ from the kinds of quasi-lies that Socrates constructs in order to compel the philosophers of the *Kallipolis* to rule (520b); both appeal to a duty grander than themselves. Thus, Numa's story gives us an insight into the correct final cause of political activity. For Numa, this cause "of bringing the hard and iron Roman temper to somewhat more of gentleness and equity" (*Numa* 87) motivates his actions throughout his life. His introduction of public religion and such offices, his distribution of the Romans and Sabines by trade rather than ethnicity, the formation of his calendar, all are done with this end in mind: to instill a certain moral character in the individuals and the community overall. In Plutarch's account, Numa exceeded all expectation, thereby "[softening and charming] into a peaceful temper" not only the Romans, but also the whole of Italy, for "*the love of virtue and justice flowed from Numa's wisdom as from a fountain*, and the serenity of his spirit diffused itself, like a calm, on all sides" [emphasis added] (98-99). If Plutarch considers Numa to "join political power and the wisdom of a philosopher" (*ibid*), it is because he can construct the appropriate structures in Roman society so as to inspire them to "the love of virtue and justice." Therefore, he is a praiseworthy statesman, for "he is the truest ruler who can best introduce it [such a moral character] into the hearts and practice of his subjects" (*ibid*). His success lies there—the end of politics is in the soul of the citizens.

It is no coincidence that Numa is paired with the other lawgiver whom Plutarch praises most, Lycurgus. When he takes over Sparta, he radically changes the structure of their *polis* with a moral end in mind. He leaves no aspect of Spartan society unchanged, affecting institutions, private property, and sexual relations. However, Lycurgus' greatest success lies with the education system that he sets up; he does not write any laws, believing that he could secure just citizens for posterity by merely habituating the youth well through an effective moral education (*Lycurgus* 63). For Plutarch, Lycurgus takes the Platonic model to heart: politics is not a matter of setting laws and policies, but of psychological conditioning. Rulers are the teachers of the ruled; in this model, justice and the well-functioning society do not

arise from a well-laid-out social contract, but from a nation raised to love and desire the right things. Plato's Socrates has the same attitude towards his education program in *Republic* II-III. If we believe Plutarch, Lycurgus' heavily inspired "all those who have written well on politics, as Plato, Diogenes, and Zeno, have taken Lycurgus for their model" (80). Yet, he adds, political philosophers left merely words behind, while Lycurgus was the "author, not in writing but in reality" of a government supposedly oriented towards virtue (*ibid*). Philosophers contemplate the good and live according to virtue in this way, but statesmen, too, share in the good, for their actions need to be guided by a higher model of being. Plutarch goes as far as comparing Lycurgus to the Platonic God (78): Sparta is the product of his work as the universe is that of the Cosmic Maker. The politics of Lycurgus are world-building with the purpose of creating the right conditions for virtuous activity. In the human world, this well-ordered space is as beautiful as the cosmos. There must be something truly fine about such a work, and therefore, the hand behind it must have a special knowledge of human life and skill comparable to that of the divine.

Furthermore, when Plutarch compares Lycurgus and Numa, he praises them both for their performances as rulers. They succeed in giving the Romans and Spartans respectively a proper moral character, even though only Numa does it by persuasion (*peithō*) alone and without force. On the other hand, Plutarch seems to prefer Lycurgus, for Numa fails to cement these moral changes long-term—once he is gone, so is the Romans' serenity. So, if Plutarch assesses their performances according to their ability to cultivate virtue and their failure to sustain it, it follows that a good statesman has a functional end in the moral character of the citizens. In Plutarch's account, therefore, politics and laws are not to ignore any component of the community which could have moral-psychological effects.

Plutarch on the Art of Politics

Given the end of politics, if we see art as an obstacle to human flourishing, as Plato does, should we not censor it? Plutarch's *Lives* offer a subtle response: this tension between arts and politics does not stand. Art and politics are not merely extrinsically related, but share an intrinsic nature. In this section, I argue that Plutarch views political activity as a sort of art that molds character through its phenomenological nature.

It is worth noting that Lycurgus and Numa cultivate moral virtue in the Spartans and Romans not only as lawgivers, but also as examples. Had they been invisible, silent policy-makers, behind the scenes, they would have failed. In praising Numa for not needing force to achieve his goals, Plutarch says: "the multitude, seeing an example of virtue in the greatly manifest and shining way of life of their ruler, they voluntarily follow reason and join him in friendship and concord" (Num. 20.8, tr. my own)[11]. What makes Numa a statesman close to Plato's philosopher-king is not only his policies and virtue itself, but also that these are open to the Romans, that they *see* those traits they are to imitate in his "the way of life" (*tōi biōi*), qualified by the adjectives "greatly manifest" (*eudelōi*) and "shining" (*lampōi*). Numa's

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11 Since my analysis depends on my translation of the Greek, I provide my own here, "αὐτοὶ δὲ τὴν ἀρετὴν ἐν εὐδήλῳ παραδείγματι καὶ λαμπρῷ τῷ βίῳ τοῦ ἄρχοντος ὁρῶντες, ἑκουσίως σωφρονοῦσι καὶ συμμετασχηματίζονται πρὸς τὸν ἐν φιλίᾳ καὶ ὁμονοίᾳ τῇ πρὸς αὐτοὺς"

life is not just visible (*delos*), but "abundantly visible" (*eudelos*), and it stands out as a torch (*lampas*) in the night. Plutarch points us, then, to the publicity and perceivability of political actors.

The public, in witnessing the virtuous actions of these statesmen, experience what I call "admiration" (*thauma*)[12]. The topic for the remainder of the discussion will be exactly what admiration is for Plutarch, so I cannot give an exact definition here. For now, we can understand admiration as a mental state focusing on the noble qualities of some object that is seen or perceived in some way. This object stands out from the rest, as if it were not supposed to be there, because of its excellent qualities. Admiration, then, involves pleasure and awe. And if the object of admiration is some action, admiration also implies a desire to imitate. For these reasons, as we are about to see, the images of great political actors leave a certain impression on the souls of those who gaze at them. The end of both political and artistic performance is showing the good, noble, and beautiful (*to kalon*), even if not all such projects succeed (they often fail); in addition, they both leave phenomenological imprints on the soul. In this sense, the art of politics truly is an art like poetry.

In his preface to *Pericles*, Plutarch includes a revealing discussion of the difference between our attitudes toward artists and virtuous people. He begins with the observation that, since the soul (*psuche*) of human beings "by nature has acquired a love of learning (*philomathes*) and a love of seeing (*philotheamon*)," we ought not focus on objects unworthy of our senses but only those which are "good and beautiful" (*tōn kalōn*) (Per. 1.1, tr. my own). As the eye is nourished by the pleasantness and perception of certain colors, so there must exist objects which call our inner eye (*dianoian theanasiv*) to its "proper good" (*to okeion auten agathon*). For Plutarch, these objects lie in "virtuous deeds" (*tois areteis ergois*). He compares these to a secondary type of deed which does not cause imitation, artistic activity. But he describes the feeling of gazing on these two objects as "admiration" (*thauma*). Both refer to the mental state, and a pleasant one for that matter, of a person whose soul is contemplating a certain object which seems beautiful, colorful, and even good. It nourishes our inner eye through the perception of the appearance of something which the perceiving part finds worthy of its attention; namely, noble objects (*ta kala*).

Regardless of the subjective similarity, there is a fundamental difference between the two admirations of virtuous and artistic deeds. Nobody, "at the sight of the statue of Jupiter at Pisa, ever desire to be a Phidias [...] for it does not necessarily follow that, if a piece of work please for its gratefulness, therefore he that wrought it deserves our admiration (*thauma*)"; on the other hand, "virtue (*arete*), by the bare statement of its actions, can so affect men's minds as to create at once both admiration (*thauma*) of the things done and

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12 "Admiration" is often a translation for the family of words of θαῦμα in Plutarch's *Lives*. Its semantic field is varied and requires some distinctions, which I make throughout this paper. Overall, it refers to the attitude of people towards an object or person when they perceive great and rare qualities in them, sometimes to the point of surprise, puzzlement, curiosity, or desire for imitation. For example, Ariadne "was filled with admiration (ἐθαύμασε) at Theseus' athletic prowess" (Thes.19.3, Loeb trans.); when Theseus and Perithous meet, each "was filled with admiration (ἐθαύμασε) at the beauty (τὸ κάλλος) and was astonished (ἠγάσθη) at the bravery (τὴν τολμάν) of the other" (Thes. 30.2); in an argument between Eurybiades and Themistocles, Eurybiades is "struck with admiration (θαυμάσαντος) at his calmness" (Them.11.3); and so on.

desire to imitate the doers of them" (*Pericles* 202). Art moves the psyche by inciting pleasure, by making us contemplate something seemingly beautiful. This we might call "aesthetic admiration." On the other hand, "ethical admiration" stems from the appearance of noble actions *and* includes a desire to imitate the actor. Phidias built great things, but none of his works intrinsically suggest that he possessed virtue or motivated his audience to *praxis*. Our aesthetic admiration is for the statue of Jupiter, not Phidias, himself. Furthermore, if we desired to be like Phidias, we would desire to be like Phidias the sculptor, not in himself. On the other hand, the actions of Pericles cause ethical admiration, and, *perhaps*, admiration for the soul of Pericles himself. Thus, we would not want to live the life of an artist like Phidias, but we would want to observe and imitate the life of somebody who acts according to justice like Pericles. Or at least, that is the hypothesis tested in the *Life of Pericles*.

And so, Plutarch, like Plato, separates aesthetics from ethics. However, Plutarch makes the former secondary to the latter, for the good person possesses something that the mere artist lacks. The noble (*to kalon*) present in ethics is not merely apparently good, but is also *actually* good, in the sense that it is the proper good of human beings; it is that thing that everybody implicitly desires. When manifested in a political actor, a person whose actions take place in public, it causes a sort of admiration which, unlike mere aesthetic admiration, inspires the spectators to act nobly and, thus, to live well. This explains how Numa could pacify all of Italy, even though he only legislated in a single city. In contrast, that noble and beautiful object present in aesthetics is more ephemeral, and never necessarily actual, for it is, presumably, a mere imitation of the actual good.

Note that the difference between the artist and statesman is the difference between technical knowledge and practical wisdom[13]. For Plutarch, a good artist never needs to have any practical wisdom to be a good artist, but the technical knowledge needed to produce art that will inspire generations to come. A good ruler requires practical wisdom, for she needs to be acquainted with the proper ends of human lives and all sorts of activities in order to structure the *polis* well. The statesman inspires noble actions because of this quality. In this sense, the human good is more present in the political actor than in the artist. For this reason, to gaze upon the Parthenon gives Plutarch a sense of admiration for Pericles—who organized the whole project at a political level—and not for Phidias, who merely designed it. For a modern American audience, this admiration is akin to the awe that a visitor to Washington D.C. may feel when she gazes on the Washington Monument or the statue of Lincoln.

Nevertheless, I suggest that once we return to the subjective point of view, this objective difference fades. Like aesthetic admiration and pleasure, ethical admiration is still a passion, an affective upheaval disturbing our spirit, desire, and impulses. Psychologically, it seems almost identical to aesthetic admiration, as they both play with our mental phenomena

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13 This difference is best outline by Aristotle in book VI in *Nicomachean Ethics* as the difference between techne and *phronesis*, but it also appears in Letter 90 of Seneca's *Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium* and book V of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*. This is to say, there is a long philosophical tradition in the Greco-Roman world of making this distinction.

and appearances of the good. But this indiscernibility at a psychological level is quite useful for us. For if this identity does hold, which it seems to, it follows that if the arts are psychologically problematic, then so are politics. Plutarch shows that the psychological effects of politics may turn us to the good for human beings. Therefore, by this *modus tollens* argument, we have no reason to be as suspicious of art and to exclude it from human life. In this analysis, admiration is a passion, but one whose intentionality turns it towards the noble and beautiful (*to kalon*).

Skepticism

Our argument states that aesthetic admiration is psychologically problematic if, and only if, ethical admiration is; since ethical admiration aims at the noble and beautiful in human actions and inspires virtuous activity, it is not problematic, but even positive. It follows that aesthetic admiration is not as problematic as some would make it. This argument sufficiently challenges Plato's attack on poetry, which lied on the moral problems brought about by the psychological effects of appearance-making. But as the protagonist of the public stage, on the eye of all, the political actor also needs to be an exemplary figure and, thus, an expert in appearance-making; nevertheless, she does not cultivate vice, but virtue.

It is not enough to say that a political actor is different from a tragic or epic poet in that the former displays the actual good for human beings while the latter mere appearance. For in fact, both are illusions in one way or another. Whether the admired virtue lies in real people or in imaginary characters is not an epistemic distinction which the audience can completely make. From the audience's point of view, Numa, Demosthenes, and Homeric poets are all performing, causing awe at their actions and pleasure in the contemplation of these scenes. Now, perhaps we could say that only truly good actions can *cause* truly unproblematic admiration; but still, the subjective experience of the audience would not register that as we could easily imagine that a person admiring Numa and another admiring Alexander could have identical mental states. If they do differ, we might still object that this is not knowable to them. And it is in the inner upheavals that the arts reveal their dark colors. However, this response leads us to an even more dangerous path, so we should let an interlocutor speak on Plato's behalf.

Politics, the Platonist objector proposes, is psychologically problematic. For politics is a space of appearances[14]. This creates a problem: politics is about our admiration for people who, because of their appearance as noble, move us towards a good life, yet ethical admiration can also aim at a deceptive object, as aesthetic admiration often does.

For example, the Platonist objector points out, Plutarch does tell us that Pericles, in order "to avoid any feeling of commonness, or any satiety on the part of the people, presented

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14 I mean this is in the Arendtian sense of the word: "[the *polis*] is the space appearance in the widest sense of the word, namely, the space where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men exist no merely like other living or inanimate things but make their appearance explicitly" (2018, 199). However, for Arendt agents reveal themselves through action and speech in the space of appearance, whereas for us now, action in the space of appearance is not sufficient.

himself at intervals only" (206). In this way, Pericles can preserve a certain mystic image of excellence before the Athenians. We stand at awe at his public works and oratory, but as far as his actual virtue goes, we have no reason to think that we have any true knowledge of it. It is a problem of *skepticism*: how are we to know that those whom we admire are worthy of admiration? Presumably, we could say, we can distinguish the admirable from the unadmirable because we have some sense of what the ethical is. But the point of ethical admiration in political life is to imitate good characters and learn ethics that way; if we already had such moral knowledge, then we would not need political actors to guide us. On the other hand, if we do not have such moral knowledge, then it is mere chance that we are impressed by the right thing. This is all to say that admiration of virtue seems to be necessarily prior to virtue, if Plutarchian politics is to have any purpose, but unless some act virtuously purely by chance, virtue is necessarily prior to the admiration of virtue. If we rightly admire by chance, even if we have some true opinion about those whom we admire, we will never know whether we properly know that such-and-such is the right object of admiration. This Menoan paradox, still as theoretical as it may seem, does have practical consequences. Younger people, for instance, are the most impressionable, but are also those who know the least about good character (insofar as they have not been raised yet); on the other hand, they are the ones whom a political leader needs to pay the most attention to in her activities and world-building. But once we grant this skepticism as a problem for youths, we may realize that, from the epistemic and ethical point of view, those of us who are not yet sages are effectively children. The threat materializes when we realize that we have no tools to distinguish between what seems good and what is good, especially when it comes to "other minds." As such, we are prone to confuse the two. Therefore, the Platonic argument follows: if our communities are to cultivate good characters, they cannot risk having deceptive objects like poetry, art, rhetoric, or anything that might create the semblance of the good.

Plutarch sees this threat, for instance, in *Alexander*. Having described an episode in which Alexander gets into a disagreement with Aristotle over publishing some of his works, Plutarch tells us, with some degree of irony, that "[Alexander] was naturally a great lover of all kinds of learning and reading," for he sleeps with the *Iliad* and a dagger under his pillow, "declaring that he esteemed [the *Iliad*] a perfect portable treasure of all military virtue and knowledge" (*Alexander* 144). The good for Alexander is disguised as military, so Alexander's engagement with the poem becomes an admiration for the figure of Achilles, "whose gravestone he anointed [...] and crowned it with garlands, declaring how happy he esteemed him, in having while he lived so faithful a friend, and when he was dead, so famous a poet to proclaim his actions" (150). It is no coincidence that Alexander's vices lie in his love of glory and explosive temper; perhaps had the *Nicomachean Ethics* lay under his pillow, he would have turned out differently. That Alexander thinks of himself as a devout lover of wisdom but also carries the *Iliad* around suggests the extent to which the problem of skepticism goes. For poetry disguises itself as presenting something desirable and alike to the good and beautiful, but reality might be quite different.

Now the Platonist can turn our earlier conclusion against us: since admiration in art is problematic, then it must be in politics as well. In fact, the *Lives* are full of such examples of vicious public figures inspiring others, sometimes to virtue, other times to vice. Like his own hero, Alexander the Great goes down in history as admirable by many; at least Plutarch's Caesar, who imitates Alexsander as a hero in an imperial campaign, seems to think so (Caesar 206). Similarly, Demosthenes' rhetoric inspires virtuous actions in the Athenians, but Demosthenes is revealed to be corrupt. While Plutarch sometimes calls Numa a philosopher-king, at other times he mocks Numa's ridiculous religious habits and his failure to secure long-term virtue in Rome. For those of us that grew up listening to the bravery of Columbus, it is akin to then learning of the genocides caused by European colonialism in America. The list of *aporia*-inducing ethical ironies goes on. Plutarch's masterful presentation of the nuances of the *Lives* of these so-called "great men" invites a similar reading to Plato's reading of poetry; politics, like poetry, disguises itself as presenting something desirable and alike to the good and beautiful, but the fact may be quite different. Plutarch, thus, might take the third and final Platonic thesis stated earlier and generalize it to not only art, but also politics. They exist, after all, in the world of appearances, which feed our soul in ways that corrupt its conceptions of what is good.

Is Plutarchian moral and political philosophy, then, as some have recently called it, a "Renaissance of Spartan philosophy"?[15] The Spartan response is insufficient, I suggest, for even Plutarch has his own doubts about the Spartan *polis*. Commenting on their slavery practices and cruelty towards the Helots, he says, "So that it was truly observed by one, that in Sparta he who was free was most so, and he that was a slave there, the greatest slave in the world" (*Lycurgus* 78). But, Plutarch reasons, these practices of hunting Helots, for instance, must have begun after Lycurgus, for Lycurgus is too virtuous to have instituted them (*ibid*). Still, with no other evidence to back this claim, Plutarch raises the question to the reader: was Lycurgus just because he did not hunt slaves, or did he not hunt slaves because he was just? In *Lycurgus*, Plutarch first suggests that Lycurgus did not begin the hunting of Helots, but he refuses to commit to his opinion, bringing this possibility back in the *Comparison of Numa with Lycurgus*, "if we must admit the treatment of the Helots to be a part of Lycurgus's legislation, a most cruel and iniquitous proceeding, we must own that Numa was by a great deal the more human and Greek-like legislator" (*Comparison of Numa with Lycurgus* 102). Plutarch intentionally leaves readers in doubt. As far as we can know, Lycurgus may not have been such a figure to imitate. To dismiss the Spartan objector, not even our best example serves to surmount this moral skepticism.

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15 Liebert (2016, 226). In this political theory analysis of the *Lives*, Liebert suggests that Plutarch rejects all of Plato's and Aristotle's criticisms of Sparta for being a timocratic state with a "psychological foundation" on "*philotimia*" (the love of honor) (104); as such, Plutarch's Lycurgus' Sparta "redeems timocracy" (124). I highly respect Liebert's comparison of Plutarch's analysis of Sparta as a response to Plato and Aristotle, and it seems that he is quite right; furthermore, I take his theory of political form in Plutarch to be very insightful. But I cannot help but disagree with his reading of *Lycurgus*; so, I take Liebert to somewhat represent the Spartan objector (though his work contains more nuance).

On the other hand, this case illustrates how Plutarch's method may solve skepticism as a problem for admiration. If he cannot give a definitive answer to whether Lycurgus was a virtuous person and legislator in the last analysis, it is because he does not conjure him up as a novelist does in crafting characters. In writing historical biographies, he needs to compare sources and draw inferences about *factual* truths, from which he makes moral conclusions. He does not intend to construct false narratives, as we sometimes do with children when we need a didactic story. The *Lives* do not present a mere appearance, but a genuine inquiry into the facts of what happened in the past and how to interpret them. Plutarch may be writing lives, but these are historical lives. He seeks to know the actions of each figure and their moral worth, whether they were *in fact* worthy of admiration and remain as admirable. This is to say, we may grant to the Platonist that a fifth-century Athenian may not know whether Pericles is truly admirable. Still, readers of *Pericles* may have a better grasp of the morally relevant facts, dispelling our moral skepticism and thereby bringing us closer to the truth about the human good.

The *Lives*, hence, make us admire correctly. But why have this end? The preface to *Timoleon* suggests that this work is a moral pedagogy for adults; one which proceeds through a critical method (325):

> It was for the sake of others that I first commenced writing biographies; but I find myself proceeding and attaching myself to it for my own; the virtues of these great men serving me as a sort of looking-glass, in which I may see how to adjust and adorn my own life. Indeed, it can be compared to nothing but daily living and associating together; we receive, as it were, in our inquiry, and entertain each successive guest, view [their stature and their qualities] and select from their actions all that is noblest and worthiest to know.

The *Lives* aim to teach virtue through political history, not unlike the way in which the Greeks read Homer. But note that there is a selection process taking place—not at an editorial level as much, but at a cognitive and psychological one in the part of the reader. Each life in *Lives* requires a *critical examination* followed by a discriminative process of what we ought to learn and what we ought to avoid. For if we could just learn from Lycurgus what it means to be good and just, then why write *Numa*? Why all these comparisons? So, the inquiry is not merely historical, but ethical and dialectical. For a dialectic examines the appearance from all sides and pierces through it to find a real, latent object. This explains why a reader of any "Life" can neither draw a simple conclusion nor fall in love with its hero. We cannot completely admire any of these men once Plutarch has planted the seeds of doubt. Was Lycurgus truly just? Was Numa a fool? Did Dion's and Brutus' bad fortune destroy their eudaimonic projects? The apparent good of these statesmen cannot stand Plutarch's critical scrutiny. He extirpates our passion of admiration for the "great men" of the past, and with this gone, so is the possible skeptic confusion.

But Plutarch cannot turn his readers into cynics, lest we learn nothing good. Indeed, that deceptive admiration is gone, but Plutarch leaves us with a justifiable, philosophical *wonder*. This is the *thauma* familiar to readers of Plato's *Theaetetus* or Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. It borders admiration in its being a psychological predicate. For Plutarch's language suggests that he judges his own work to have a certain psychological effect as well (*Timoleon* 325):

> "My method, on the contrary, is, by the study of history, and by the familiarity required in writing, to habituate my memory to receive and retain images [in the soul (*tais psuchais*)] of the best and worthiest characters."

Like Homer's poetry, Lycurgus' policies, or Numa's prayers, Plutarch's *Lives* are meant to leave certain impressions on our minds. In that sense, they have a phenomenology and, thus, incite passions. However, Plutarch distinguishes them from the phantoms of Democritus (*ibid*), granting his characters a greater ontology than that of Homer's Achilles or the Demosthenes of the *Crown*. "These images of the best and worthiest" are somewhere in between imitation and reality and fluctuate between the two. As such, Plutarchian wonder is a mental state which, puzzled by the appearance of a seemingly great life, contains a desire to inquire and learn what lies beneath—it is an admiration transformed by *aporia*. As a sub-species of admiration, it aims at the ethical good and noble actions, but, perceiving the aporetic tensions lurking in human affairs, this wonder incites to seek the truth in moral and political life. As such, none of Plutarch's "heroes" sufficiently portray virtue on their own; instead, they collectively form an exemplar of virtue for us to recollect and imitate when needed. Once deconstructed, the "images of the best and worthiest characters" constitute a picture which an active intellect needs to put together. Arguably, an infinite amount of Lives would be needed to find a perfect account of goodness, but the asymptote nature of virtue merely confirms which attitudes we should have towards those who exhibit them. The right way to engage with great deeds, then, is not to merely rejoice in them as a beautiful painting, nor to imitate them as perfect models, but to investigate them. For, as Plutarch concludes his preface to *Pericles* discussed earlier, "the Good" (*to kalon*) inspires "the spectator (*ten theaten*)" and "forms his character" not merely through "its ideal representation (*ti mimesei*) alone, but through the *investigation* (*tei historiai*) of its work it [*to kalon*]" [emphasis added] (Per. 2.3, Loeb trans.). Only then can the appearance of goodness become something less deceiving than mere poetic phenomena[16].

Thus, as Plutarch teaches us to read poetry in *On How the Young Man Should Listen to Poetry*, in the *Lives* he teaches us how to properly admire political actors. Still, the *Lives* are not essays, but a form of literature not dissimilar from Homer. Plutarch's writing imitates the ways of life, actions, and souls of human beings—he often compares himself to painters or sculptors creating a portrait. The *Lives* are more than mere prosaic hymns to good

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16 Ultimately, this interpretation would place Plutarch with the New Academics like Arcesilaus, Philo, and Cicero than the supposed orthodoxy of the Old Academy. This is not to say that Plutarch has no Platonist dogma, as Babut (1994) resists or Nikolaidis (1997) insists; rather, this interpretation is in line with Hadot (1995)'s placement of Plutarch with these New Academics (it is worth noting though that Hadot does not analyze Plutarch's works himself but merely follows Babut): for Hadot, what characterizes these Academics is a return to a more Socratic philosophical discourse that is "*critique, interrogatif et aporetique*" (1995, 217). We might imagine the dialectical examination of Lives as a "spiritual exercise" in the Hadotian sense.

people; Plutarch embellishes his writing with his skills in rhetoric and poetry, and his subjects are ethically complex at best. And through this imitation of their ways of life, he provokes psychological upheavals, the passions of admiration and wonder. But this latter passion does not completely lie in a part of the soul "far from the intelligence (*phroneseōs*)," as Plato thinks all passions induced by imitative arts do. Plutarchian wonder does have a phenomenological nature identical to a dangerous passion, whether it aims at artistic sublimity or moral and political excellence; still, ultimately, this wonder is an inquisitive disposition, cultivating a love of goodness and wisdom in the person. It is what the Stoics called an "ethical emotion" (*eupathos*). In a word, Platonic philosophy may begin in Plutarchian wonder. As a pedagogical exercise in critical thinking, Socratic inquiry, and moral formation, this aesthetic work is not a threat to either ethical or political life. Perhaps Plato would not welcome *Antony* or *Alexander*, and perhaps a certain reading of the *Lives* would dismiss it as promoting an ideology of "great men". I propose a contrary reading: the *Lives* critiques ideology and forms neither admirers of "great men" nor lovers of honor and power, but critical thinkers who want to discover what is good and just, and are aware of our individual moral fallibilities and epistemic limitations. Therefore, it also serves as a blueprint of how to engage with art and poetry, our political history, and, ultimately, one another. Even Homer's *Iliad*, American presidential debates, conversations at a bar, or Zoom dates may have some goodness, if done correctly. Plutarch exhorts us, on the one hand, to not let our admiration and love of objects mesmerize us and destroy our sense of what is good. On the other, he also tells us not to expel them either from human affairs, but to engage with these wonderful things in our everyday life as interlocutors. Certain Platonisms may tell us that this passionate engagement is dangerous to our mental health and communities. But our conversation with Plutarch's Platonism concludes that the wonder we may feel for poetry, politics, and even other people in our lives, when cultivated correctly, is not just conducive to philosophy, but to ethical flourishing and political justice as well.

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THE SHADOW OF HEGEL
in Kierkegaard's Notion of Subjectivity

MATTEO DE DONATO

The philosophy of Søren Kierkegaard is fundamentally the philosophy of the individual. Born to an affluent family in Copenhagen in 1813, Kierkegaard was greatly influenced in his intellectual development by the prevailing notions of the Danish Golden Age, an age featuring new creativity in the arts and sciences, including painting, architecture, and chemistry. Kierkegaard witnessed nihilism growing in spite of these achievements, however. Poets and literary critics such as Ludwig Tieck and August Wilhelm Schlegel used (or misused, according to Kierkegaard) the philosophy of Johann Gottlieb Fichte to justify their ironic and solipsistic relativism. The centrality of the subject in Fichte's philosophy was attractive to the German Romantics, who looked for philosophical justification for their nihilistic and relativistic rejection of the objective world[1]. In an age where long-held traditions and beliefs were slipping away, Kierkegaard worked to revitalize the concepts of truth, faith, and subjectivity.

Kierkegaard's canon defies easy categorization. He has been characterized as an existentialist and essentialist, a progressive and a reactionary, a proponent of German Idealism and one of its harshest critics. The question of Hegelian thought in Kierkegaard's work, then, is one of enduring interest for scholars. Kierkegaard was the first in a long tradition of critics to reject Hegel's absolute idealism as a philosophy of identity that effectively

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1 Jon Stewart, "The Crisis of the Danish Golden Age as the Problem of Nihilism," in *The Crisis of the Danish Golden Age and Its Modern Resonance*, eds. Nathaniel Kramer and Jon Stewart, New edition (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2020), 125-127.

"swallows" the individual[2]. The beginning of *Sickness Unto Death*, in which Kierkegaard posits that the "self is a relation that relates itself to itself or is the relation's relating itself to itself in the relation," has been interpreted as parodying Hegel's obtuse writing style. Other parts of Kierkegaard's authorship appear more explicitly anti-Hegelian: in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Johannes Climacus (Kierkegaard's pseudonym) boldly asserts "[dialectical] mediation is a mirage."[3] In spite of this pervasive anti-Hegelianism, Kierkegaard owes much of his philosophical foundations to the German idealist. What Kierkegaard called his "Socratic task"–the task that structured disparate works across the authorship–is fundamentally Hegelian. Not only is it Hegel's Socrates that Kierkegaard uses as his model for subjectivity, it is Hegel's absolute knowing subject that Kierkegaard uses to situate this notion of subjectivity as the *telos* of his philosophical project.

In his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy,* Hegel interprets Socrates as the world-historical inventor of subjectivity. Socrates, Hegel maintains, was the first to ground the subject–as opposed to external social mores and laws–as the site of the discovery of the ethical. Hegel identifies Socrates's *daimonion* as central to the invention of subjectivity. In the *Apology*, Socrates justifies his actions by explaining that when he is about to make a mistake, he is warned by this *daimonion*: an entirely negative force that is neither completely internal nor completely external, but is nonetheless personal[4]. With this concept, Socrates "posited the Individual as capable of final moral decision, in contraposition to Country and to Customary Morality."[5] The Socratic concept of *maieutics*, or "the art of midwifery," further demonstrates the subjectivity of Socrates's method. Socrates fashioned himself as a "midwife of ideas," who, rather than promoting any specific positive doctrine, helped his pupils reach their own conclusions through their individual, internal reason[6].

The Athenians of the time, however, derived their ethics from outside of themselves rather than from inward reflection; to receive guidance they looked not to their own subjective reason, but to tradition, law, and the gods. Hegel identified "public religion" as the basis for the Athenian State; Athenians are bound together by their shared reverence for this objective source of ethics. It is up to the broad sphere of tradition, religion, law, etc.–*Sittlichkeit* or "ethical life"–to decide how an individual should behave. *Sittlichkeit* is built upon "Objective Spirit," the objective patterns of social interactions and cultural institutions. When seeking direction, the ancient Athenians would ask the Oracle of Delphi for the right course of action[7]. There was no notion that ethics could be discovered through individual introspection.

The invention of subjectivity, then, signified a denial of the entirety of Athenian society.

2 Rebecca Comay and Frank Ruda, *The Dash: The Other Side of Absolute Knowing* (MIT Press, 2018), 1.

3 Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans. Alastair Hannay, 1st edition (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 166.

4 Plato, *Apology* in *Five Dialogues: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Meno, Phaedo*, ed. John M. Cooper, trans. G. M. A. Grube, Second Edition,2 (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2002), 31c-d.

5 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Frederick C. Beiser, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Volume 1: Greek Philosophy to Plato*, trans. E. S. Haldane (Lincoln: Nebraska, 1995), 346.

6 Plato, *Theaetetus*, ed. Bernard Williams and Myles Burnyeat, trans. M. J. Levett, UK ed. edition (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1992), 27.

7 Georg W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. S. W. Dyde (Mineola, N.Y.; Newton Abbot: Dover Publications, 2005) § 145 and G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 358.

For this reason, Hegel diagnoses Socrates's pedagogy as purely negative. In calling Socrates a "negative" figure, Hegel is not saying he has a pessimistic disposition; rather, Socrates rejects the validity of the world as it currently is, but does not provide a positive (*ie.*, substantive) replacement. Socrates's *daimonion*, for instance, functions entirely negatively. In Plato's *Apology*, Socrates explains that it is a "voice" which "turns me away from something I am about to do, but it never encourages me to do anything."[8] The *daimonion* "turns away" from the false, but does not directly posit the true. The concept of *aporia* further illustrates the centrality of negation in Socrates's subjectivity. In the "aporetic" dialogues, which include the *Meno*, *Euthyphro*, and *Gorgias*, Socrates challenges his interlocutors to explain their positions on truth, justice, or other philosophical concepts. Through questioning, Socrates reveals how the notions of his interlocutors are ill-conceived and contradictory. Socrates does not, however, offer a replacement for these mistaken judgments; rather, the dialogues end in *aporia*; having demonstrated the contradiction, Socrates provides no positive replacement for the flawed concepts.

Hegel asserts that Aristophanes's play *Clouds* offers a true account of Socrates because it demonstrates the radicality of this negative method. It seems strange that Hegel has a favorable judgement of Aristophanes's work; indeed, the play viciously lampoons Socrates's thought as not only buffoonish, but dangerous. It is precisely the degree to which Aristophanes condemns Socrates that he demonstrates "the truth of Socrates." Hegel maintains that Aristophanes understood Socratic philosophy as negative and that his play elucidated the Athenian's reaction to Socrates[9]. In *Clouds*, Socrates tells Strepsiades: "If one idea comes to nothing, let it go, retrace your steps, then give those thoughts another good shake."[10] The word "shake" emphasizes the disarray caused by Socrates's method; when Strepsiades reaches *aporia*– when "one idea comes to nothing"–he must reject all his premises and try again. Socrates's negativity was, to use Kierkegaard's terminology, "absolute infinite negativity." This sort of negativity does not negate "this or that particular phenomenon" but the entire social whole, the entire world of the object[11]. Aristophanes shows that this negativity was so overwhelming that it necessitated Socrates's death–because it could no longer be integrated into ethical life.

Aristophanes understood, Hegel contends, how this radical negativity endangered the totality of Athenian life. Standing in opposition to the numerous commentators before him, Hegel asserts that the Athenians acted correctly in convicting Socrates[12]. Hegel criticized the historian Wilhelm Gottlieb Tennemann for arguing that Socrates's treatment was "revolting to humanity." Hegel rejects this interpretation of Socrates's trial because it downplays the radical nature of Socrates's philosophy; Hegel believes that, based on the ethic of their time, Athenians were "bound to react against [Socrates] according to their law."

8 Plato, *Apology*, 31c-d.
9 Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 347.
10 Aristophanes, *Clouds*, ed. John Claughton and Judith Affleck, Cambridge Translatio edition (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), lines 743-6.
11 Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Ebook edition (Princeton, N.J. Great Britain: Princeton University Press, 2000), 261.
12 Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 350.

[13]Aristophanes's account is invaluable because it illuminates why Socrates deserved execution under Athenian law: his subjectivity entailed a complete negation of objective situation.

Kierkegaard is openly indebted to Hegel's treatment of Socrates as a negative figure. His doctoral thesis, *The Concept of Irony,* is in constant critical dialogue with Hegel's account of Socrates. In his discussion of the titular concept, Kierkegaard identifies irony as a qualification of subjectivity, and it is in this ironic rejection of the objective that the subject is *negatively* free[14]. Kierkegaard's explicit definition of irony elucidates the Hegelian connection between negativity and subjectivity:

> [W]e have irony as the infinite absolute negativity. It is negativity because it only negates; it is infinite, because it does not negate this or that phenomenon; it is absolute, because that by virtue of which it negates is a higher something that still is not. The irony establishes nothing, because that which is to be established lies behind it. It is a divine madness that rages like a Tamerlane and does not leave one stone upon another.

The world-historical invention of subjectivity, then, required irony's complete negation of the ethical order. In *The Concept of Irony*, Kierkegaard explains why "Socrates can very well be called the founder of morality in the sense Hegel thinks of it, and that his position still could have been irony. The good as task, when the good is understood as the infinitely negative, corresponds to the moral, that is, the negatively free subject," clearly echoing the sentiment expressed in Hegel's *Lectures*.[15] The moral is "infinitely negative:" it contains no positivity within it. Hegel asserts that Socrates's negative method could not amount to any sort of speculative[16] philosophy, but remained "ein individuelles Thun," an "individual doing."[17] Just as Hegel did, Kierkegaard saw Socrates as stopping short before speculative, positive, thought, because Socrates did not negate his negativity. Socrates did not reach a sublation, or a dialectical mediation, of the positive and the negative–of objectivity and subjectivity. Negativity, for Socrates, was infinite and absolute.

In reconstructing Hegel's argument, Kierkegaard pays special attention to the anti-speculative character of Socrates's method. For Kierkegaard, the fact that Socrates made no attempt to transcend the opposition between subject and object is "the mark of truth." Kierkegaard, then, largely accepts Hegel's treatment of Socrates, with one key modification: for Hegel, in remaining in negativity, Socrates had erred, but for Kierkegaard, it was that very impasse that Socrates achieved–his *aporia*–that was to be emulated. For Kierkegaard, it is precisely this negativity which allowed for Socrates to interrogate the truth. Though they may differ in their evaluation of him, the Socrates of *The Concept of Irony* is, at its core, the Socrates of Hegel.

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13 Ibid., 362.
14 Kierkegaard, *Concept of Irony*, 29.
15 Ibid., 235.
16 That is, providing an account of the Absolute.
17 Ibid., 227.

Kierkegaard would later reject the blatant Hegelianism of *The Concept of Irony.* Indeed, the philosopher characterizes the work as a misgiving, riddled with Hegelian concepts he would only later discuss dismissively in the works Kierkegaard saw as comprising his "authorship."[18] In spite of his apparent rejection of Hegel, the Hegelian notion of Socrates that Kierkegaard advanced in *The Concept of Irony* grounds his broader formulations of subjectivity, truth, and faith. After treating the ancient Greek philosopher at length in *The Concept of Irony*, Kierkegaard continues to use Hegel's Socrates as a model, especially in the structure of his work *Either/Or*.

Kierkegaard divides his work *Either/Or* into two parts, ostensibly written by two different authors. The first part of the work is attributed to an anonymous esthete called A., who, embodying contemporary subjectivity, notes that when he became an adult he found "that the rich delight of love was to acquire a well-to-do girl, that the blessedness of friendship was to help each other in financial difficulties, [...] that piety was to go to communion once a year."[19] A. advances an ironic detachment from traditional conceptions of love, friendship, industriousness, and even faith. It is negativity that engenders this denial of the universal ethic of the day: "I have, I believe, the courage to fight against everything; but I do not have the courage to acknowledge anything."[20] Kierkegaard is clearly sympathetic to this account of contemporary life, especially its account of the superficiality of modern faith, which echoes Kierkegaard's critique of the bourgeois lifestyle of the clergy in the last issue of *The Moment.*[21]

The author of the second half of *Either/Or*, the fictitious Judge William, rigorously defends the ethic of the day by explaining the virtues of bourgeois society and morality. He defends the virtue of marital love as divine, in direct opposition to A.'s unequivocal, "[m]arry or do not marry you will regret it either way."[22] William continues his defense of the universal ethic in opposition to the Esthete when he lauds Objective spirit as "a social, a civic self," and emphasizes the importance of ethical responsibility as it relates to civic duty.[23] Just as Kierkegaard is sympathetic to the Esthete's point of view, he equally accepts that of Judge William; many of Judge Williams' arguments mimic those that Kierkegaard gives against the German Romantics in the *Concept of Irony*.[24]

The dualistic structure of the work reflects Hegel's Socratic lesson: Judge William acts as the *Sittlichkeit*–in this case 19th century bourgeois ethics–which A. rejects. Kierkegaard does not favor one view over the other; rather, the two viewpoints must exist in contradiction despite the impossibility of their mediation. As evidenced by Kierkegaard's other writing, both positions offer valuable critiques, in Kierkegaard's mind, and to privilege one over the other would be foolish. Even though both positions provide insight, however, mediation

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18 Lore Hühn, "Irony and Dialectic: On a Critique of Romanticism in Kierkegaard and Hegel's Philosophy," *MLN* 128, no. 5 (2013): 1063.

19 Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* in *The Essential Kierkegaard*, ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Later Printing edition (Princeton, N.J. Great Britain: Princeton University Press, 2000), 42-43.

20 Ibid., 39.

21 Søren Kierkegaard, "My Task" in *The Moment*, 10 in *The Essential Kierkegaard,* ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Later Printing edition (Princeton, N.J. Great Britain: Princeton University Press, 2000), 347.

22 Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* in *The Essential Kierkegaard*, 43, 7.1

23 Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* in *The Essential Kierkegaard*, 82.

24 See the chapter "Irony after Fichte" in *The Concept of Irony*.

of the two is impossible. Kierkegaard stresses that truth appears not when an opposition is mediated, but when that opposition is first confronted. Indeed, the title "Either/Or" refers to a passage in Hegel's *Science of Logic* where he stresses the importance of sublating a dichotomy (an "either-or") through dialectical mediation. Kierkegaard, however, did not wish to go beyond the dichotomy, and suggested that truth results not from sublating or mediating contradiction, but from confronting it. In this manner, Kierkegaard follows Socrates's emphasis on negativity, specifically *aporia*. There is no mediation between the two viewpoints; rather, they remain in irresolvable contradiction. A.'s position–in spite of its value–cannot be integrated into the bourgeois universal because of its inherently subjective dimension. The *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* describes *Either/Or* as "a polemic against truth as knowledge."[25] That is, the work stresses that the subjective rejection of objective Spirit offers an equally valuable form of truth as objective knowledge does.

Privileged among the authorship as a work to which Kierkegaard attached his real name (albeit only as the editor), the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* offers one of the most comprehensive accounts of Kierkegaard's notion of subjectivity and truth. Much of the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* uses Hegel's language of dialectics against itself. Even the title of the work may be targeting the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, intended by Hegel to be the beginning of a "science of experience."[26] It seems strange, then, to assert a fundamental Hegelianism in the *Postscript*. The relation between subjectivity and truth–that subjectivity *is* truth, and truth subjectivity–is derived from the Hegelian Socrates formulated in the *Concept of Irony*.

Central to the task of the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* is explaining the connection between truth and subjectivity. Climacus asserts that a certain type of truth can only be achieved through subjectivity, and that subjectivity can only achieve that type of truth. This truth is the truth of our most important personal ethical commitments, including, above all, faith. The author posits that, "reflection of inwardness is the subjective thinker's double reflection. In thinking, he thinks the universal, but as existing in this thinking, as assimilating this in his inwardness, he becomes more and more subjectively isolated."[27] The individual considers the universal ethic ("thinks the universal") but through her consideration of it becomes alienated from it. Her self-discovery requires an anti-objective form of inquiry. This description reflects Hegel's notion of Socrates as not focused on particular objects, but on the universal. Just as Socrates is said to "know nothing" because he lacked the knowledge of particular objective pursuits, the "subjective thinker" is not focused on knowledge of particulars. In his double-reflection, that is, his reflection on his own reflection ("subjectivity to the second power"), the subjective thinker becomes separated from the 'objective Spirit.'

Climacus's assertion that subjectivity cannot be expressed through direct communication further illustrates the *aporia* of subjectivity. The subjective truth, Climacus contends, cannot

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25 Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans. Alastair Hannay, 1st edition (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 211.
26 Georg Wilhelm Fredrich Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Terry Pinkard and Michael Baur (Cambridge University Press, 2019), 6.
27 Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript,* 62.

be integrated into objectivity through direct language–it must be expressed through indirect means, including art and poetry.

Just as there was no mediation between Socrates's subjectivity, and the objectivity of Athenian *Sittlichkeit*, to directly express double reflection is "precisely a contradiction." [28]Climacus relates this explicitly to Socrates's method: "Everything subjective, which due to its dialectical inwardness eludes a direct form of expression, is an essential secret."[29] This assertion of not only the subjective as a realm of truth, but of the impossibility of mediation between subjective and objective truth, helps Climacus ground his argument on the importance of subjectivity in "becoming a Christian."

After his assertion of the truth in subjectivity, Climacus explains the steps towards "becoming a Christian" through an assertion of the paradox of subjectivity: Hegel's Socrates is essential to this pursuit. To become a Christian, the author contends, one must first pass through the stage of "Religiousness A." The subject of Religiousness A is not concerned with what is "out there," but with "inwardness," with subjectivity.[30] Climacus explicitly identifies Socrates– as opposed to the speculative Plato–as the paradigm of Religiousness A. The paradox of Socrates–that the individual becomes unintelligible to the external–is the paradox of Religiousness A. Climacus's Socrates is Hegel's Socrates: his negativity and subjectivity are preconditions for religious experience. To be open to Religiousness B–Christianity–one must have complete faith in what lies beyond the objective.

One of Kierkegaard's most extended discussions of faith and morality centers on his concepts of the 'knight of infinite resignation' and the 'knight of infinite faith' in *Fear and Trembling*. The work, written by Kierkegaard under the name Johannes de Silentio, closely examines the Biblical story of the binding of Isaac to discover the relation between ethics and faith. More specifically, the work aims to explain the "paradox of faith:" namely, how the individual can be higher than the universal. The work's discussion of the individual–as exemplified in the knight of infinite resignation and the knight of faith–uses Hegel's Socrates as a model for the gulf between subjectivity and objectivity.

Kierkegaard's interpretation of Abraham as a 'knight of faith' for man to aspire to is deeply indebted to Hegel's discussion of Socrates. Though a step beyond the 'knight of infinite resignation', the knight of faith shares the former's "movement of resignation."[31] Both knights are resigned from their objective situation: they not only maintain their subjective commitments, but also accept the gap between these commitments and the external world. Johannes notes Abraham's silence after receiving his directive from God to sacrifice his only son Isaac: "He said nothing to Sarah, nothing to Eleazar. After all, who could have understood him? Hadn't the test by its very nature extracted an oath of silence from him?"[32]

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28 Ibid., 63

29 Ibid., 67.

30 Ibid., 466.

31 C. Stepehn Evans in the Introduction to Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling,* trans. Sylvia Walsh (Cambridge University Press, 2006), xiv.

32 Søren Kierkegaard and Johannes de Silentio, *Fear and Trembling,* trans. Alastair Hannay, Reprint edition (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England : New York, N.Y., U.S.A: Penguin Classics, 1986), 55.

Abraham's silence emphasizes the infinite subjectivity of his position: his highest duty to God cannot even begin to be explained to the external world. His silence is an acceptance of the impassable void between the subject and the object. From this discussion of Abraham, Kierkegaard develops his famous "teleological suspension of the ethical." In order to act upon his supreme ethical commitment–his commitment to God–Abraham must rebuke the particular, the historical actuality. Abraham's infinite spiritual (moral) commitment is irreconcilable with the objective Spirit because it is a completely subjective negation.

Kierkegaard contends that Abraham would deserve the punishment society would give him. This assessment seems contradictory given Kierkegaard's praise of Abraham as acting in a supremely ethical manner. From an objective perspective, however, Kierkegaard maintains, Abraham has indeed done wrong: he intended to murder his son. According to the universal ethic, Abraham has broken one of the most sacred duties: that of a father to his son. Abraham himself recognizes the unethical nature of his divine directive and prays that God forgive him.[33] Kierkegaard is not diminishing the duty of a father towards his son, nor is he advocating for a relativist rejection of universal ethics. Johannes emphasizes that Abraham's commitment to his son–and his commitment to Objective spirit more broadly–while of utmost importance, cannot be reconciled with his equally important subjective commitment to his faith. He is faced with, in the most Socratic sense, an "either-or": Abraham is at *aporia*.

Kierkegaard's treatment of Socrates as an ironic and negative figure evokes his formulation of the 'knight of infinite resignation.' Johannes imagines a situation in which a knight has fallen in love with a princess but his circumstances prevent him from ever acting upon such love. The knight is simultaneously resigned to this objective situation, but does not give up on his subjective commitment–that is, his love–even though it can never be realized. Johannes describes the knight of infinite resignation as an archetype to aspire towards, a person who, "does not give up the love, not for all the world's glory."[34] Just as Socrates rejected objective totality in favor of subjective truth, the knight of infinite resignation rejects the ethic of the day in favor of his own subjectivity.

The knight's love for the princess is a denial of the objective situation. Even though he knows that such a love cannot materialize in this world he "does not give up on this love," thus denying historical actuality. In this manner, Kierkegaard connects subjectivity to the eternal. The love for the princess–that purely subjective love–becomes an "expression of an eternal love," an expression of the Absolute.[35] This movement of resignation is a qualification for true inwardness. Johannes asserts, "[f]or only in infinite resignation do I become transparent to myself in my eternal validity, and only then can there be talk of laying hold of existence by virtue of faith." Only in this infinite resignation can the individual come to understand herself and her relation to the Absolute, or God. Subjectivity or "inwardness," then, is an intrinsic part of knowing the Absolute. Kierkegaard forms his conception of the highest forms of subjectivity–the knight of infinite resignation and of faith–around the Hegelian absolute knowing Subject-Substance to place the individual at the center of his philosophy.

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33 Ibid., 47.
34 Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, trans. Alastair Hannay, 35.
35 Ibid., 37.

The Absolute is necessary for true subjectivity and true subjectivity is necessary for the approaching Absolute.

In this explicit connection between subjectivity and the experience of the Absolute, Kierkegaard reveals another latent Hegelian form underlining his authorship. Kierkegaard uses the Hegelian "absolute knowing"–and its resemblance to the irony and subjectivity of Socrates–to situate the individual as the center of his philosophy. More specifically, the Hegelian notion of the 'absolute knowing' subject as the *emptied subject*, as illustrated by Slavoj Žižek and Catherine Malabou (among other contemporary commentators) elucidates Kierkegaard's understanding of infinite subjective commitment. The "emptied" or "abrogated" subject of absolute knowing reflects Kierkegaard's negative subject, as exemplified by both Socrates and Abraham.

Hegel's Absolute is not simply "the unity of all things" which transcends existence. It is in his critique of such a notion in Schelling's philosophy that Hegel gives his famous description of "the night in which all cows are black."[36] Such a cancellation of all difference, Hegel maintains, amounts to an idea bereft of meaning. The Absolute does not transcend existence but *is* existence as a "whole" understood as a dynamic system in which each element relates to all the others.[37] The Absolute, then, gives "grounding" to all being: it is the fundamental, irreducible reality upon which any concept can be built.

The Absolute is not only substance, as it was for Spinoza, but subject as well. For Hegel, the presence of a subject necessitates the presence of an object (since consciousness is always consciousness of something). The fact that in the Absolute the subject and object become unified raises the question of what the object of the Absolute is. Hegel, following Aristotle, asserts that the Absolute's object is itself. The Absolute is pure thought that, encompassing everything or "the whole," thinks on itself. When philosophers discuss the 'absolute knowing' subject-substance, they refer to unmediated knowledge of "the whole."[38] In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel aims to demonstrate that all different forms of human consciousness have attempted to give an account of reality as a whole, through art, religion, and now Hegel's speculative philosophy[39]. Hegel reveals that it is the *telos*–the end goal–of Spirit (roughly, a collective human consciousness) to achieve absolute knowing.

Because Hegel's method follows a circular trajectory, the beginning of his philosophy–the irreducible "grounding"–illuminates its end–the Absolute. Breaking from Descartes, Hegel does not interpret the subject's existence as self-evident. What must be, Hegel believed, was only being itself. By definition, *being* is: existence exists. To be presuppositionless, philosophy must begin with "indeterminate being," or being about which nothing other than its existence can be asserted. Hegel's logic begins

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36 Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 12.
37 Glenn Alexander Magee, *The Hegel Dictionary*, 1st edition (Continuum, 2010), 20
38 Ibid., 171.
39 Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 409.

with this "pure being" as its concept and works, dialectically, to develop all others.[40] It is this same "indeterminate being" that is the content and form of absolute knowing.[41] In absolute knowing, the separation between subject and object is overcome in order to comprehend the whole; the object for absolute knowing is no finite thing, but the Absolute itself. For Hegel, absolute knowing is its own subject; that is, it is thought catalyzed by itself (as opposed to how we usually think about thought, as originated from a subject separate from that thought). Absolute knowing is knowledge of absolute knowing itself.[42]

At the most basic level, Žižek's interpretation of the dialectic resembles Kierkegaard's notion of the origin of subjectivity. Žižek asserts that "the fundamental operation of *Aufhebung* is reduction: the sublated thing survives, but in an abridged edition, as it were, torn out of its life-world context, stripped down to its essential features, all the movement and wealth of its life reduced to a fixed mark."[43] Socrates, too, could be described as "torn out of [his] life-world context" in his denial of Athenian society's ethics. Moreover, Socrates's method involved locating the essential core of concepts such as truth and justice, not merely particular instances of it. This congruity between Socrates and the dialectic follows, of course, given that the "labour of the negative" is the process by which the dialectic functions, and it is this same negativity that Socrates embodies. The connection between the Hegelian subject of 'absolute knowing' and Kierkegaardian "inwardness" runs deeper, however.

Žižek undermines the traditional interpretation of Hegel's "absolute knowing" or "Absolute knowledge," and advances an interpretation of the concept as a sort of "void." Žižek identifies the common criticism of Hegel as a system builder whose dialectics are "bloated" by their integration of the entirety of reality. Žižek asserts that this interpretation does not fully account for the precise mechanism of dialectics. The philosopher argues that sublation (the process by which dialectics occurs) does not stop once the totality is integrated into the System; that whole itself is negated as well in "sublation's sublation." To avoid the spurious infinity of an unending sublation, the process of sublation must come to an end with its counter-move: to release the entirety of the content, leaving the Absolute-knowing subject-substance *emptied*. Žižek cites the end of the *Science of Logic*, where "reaching the full circle of the absolute Idea, the Idea, in its resolve/decision, 'freely releases itself' into Nature, lets Nature go, leaves it off, discards it, pushes it away from itself, and thus liberates it."[44] Malabou, noting the synonymy between the verbs *aufheben* ('to sublate'), *befreien* ('to liberate'), and *ablegen* ('to discard'), argues that this "abrogation" or "emptying" is not only subsequent to the sublation of totality, but is its immanent conclusion.[45] This argument reflects the aforementioned "circularity" of Hegel's logic: the indeterminate being–both at the beginning and the end–is "neither more nor less than nothing."

40 Georg Wilhelm Fredrich Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, trans. George Di Giovanni, Reprint edition (Cambridge University Press, 2015), §130-132.
41 Magee, 45.
42 Ibid., 27.
43 Slavoj Žižek, "Hegel and the Object, Or, the Idea's Constipation," *Gramma: Journal of Theory and Criticism* 14, no. 0 (September 13, 2006): 21–26, https://doi.org/10.26262/gramma.v14i0.6510, 1.
44 Žižek, "Hegel and the Object," 1, 22.
45 Catherine Malabou, *The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality, and Dialectic* (Psychology Press, 2005), 156.

[46]Kierkegaard's subjective thinkers–Socrates and Abraham among them–parallel the abrogated subjects of absolute knowing. The philosopher agrees with Hegel's analysis that Socrates was not engaging in mere rhetorical irony when he claimed to "know nothing."[47] The statement was not a mere rhetorical ploy to expose his interlocutors ill-conceived notions. While his irony did have this function, Kierkegaard contends, it is also essential to note that Socrates genuinely did know nothing in the sense that he had no positive knowledge of the object. In his quest to discover the truth of subjectivity, Socrates became ignorant of particulars; indeed, his aforementioned negativity must be ignorant of any possibility of positivity. As a subject, Socrates has been "emptied" from the knowledge instilled by the objective realm. Unlike the "unwise men," however, Socrates *knows* that he knows nothing. He has a sense of what he is lacking, what he has emptied himself of, just like Hegel's abrogated subject. Just as the labor of the negative does not bring the positive back to its starting point, but to somewhere new, the emptied subject is not synonymous with the subject that had never been "filled."

This abrogation is a passive process. Žižek asks, "[i]s the subject of what Hegel calls 'absolute Knowledge' not also a thoroughly *emptied* subject, a subject reduced to the role of pure observer (or, rather, registrar) of the self-movement of the content itself?" Hegel's *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* answers in the affirmative: "The Idea's absolute freedom consists in [the fact] that it resolves to freely let go out of itself the moment of its particularity."[48] "Particularity" in this sense corresponds to Kierkegaard's conception of "this or that thing"–the facts and ethics of the universal, the objective. Kierkegaard stresses the opposition between this and the individual's absolute commitment, his duty to God. The subjective thinker, it can be said, "lets go" of the moment of its particularity in its denial of historical actuality. This further illuminates the structure of Kierkegaard's Absolute and its relation to subjectivity.

Passivity characterizes Kierkegaard's subjective thinkers; it is through this passivity that they open themselves up to experience the Absolute. In Kierkegaard's "infinite resignation," the subject accepts his complete inability to actualize or even anticipate the infinite. Abraham's directive comes from God; he is merely a passive receiver of and actualization of His will. Moreover, the order goes against all of Abraham's intuition: he would never have been justified to predict or actualize such a directive through consideration of his place in Objective spirit. Similarly, Socrates's *daimonion* spoke out to Socrates as a voice, preventing him from making mistakes: Socrates as a subject is passive, then, subject to this force that is simultaneously personal but not his self-consciousness. He does not "ask" his *daimonion*; it presents itself autonomously.[49] Thus, Kierkegaard's subjective thinker is passive in that she accepts the absolutely ethical must come to her from *without*; that is, from God, excluding her personal intervention. In order to receive the Absolute, the subject must "empty" herself; she must completely negate her historical actuality. This connection illustrates Socrates's

46 Hegel, *Science of Logic*, §132.
47 Kierkegaard, *Concept of Irony*, 169.
48 Slavoj Žižek, Preface to *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, Second Edition (London: Verso, 2009), xii, xvi.
49 Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 347.

function as a knight of infinite resignation. Unlike Abraham, however, Socrates has no faith, and therefore is not able to reaffirm finitude through his acceptance of the absurd. However, his connection to subjective truth through negativity is the same. By taking philosophical negativity to its absolute, Socrates rejects the universal and asserts the infinity of subjectivity. As a figure of philosophical discussion, then, he reflects the Substance-Subject of absolute knowing: he is the *telos* of subjective inquiry.

This passivity seems strange, given Kierkegaard's assertion of the courage required to deny the universal and embrace subjectivity and the Absolute through the teleological suspension of the ethical.[50] Hegel understands the seemingly paradoxical nature of this passivity, however; Žižek writes, "this utter passivity simultaneously involves the greatest activity: it takes the most strenuous effort for the subject to 'erase itself' in its particular content, as the agent intervening in the object, and to expose itself as a neutral medium."[51] For both Kierkegaard and Hegel becoming passive, paradoxically, requires the utmost activity. To be passively open to God, Abraham needed the courage to actively reject his most fundamental objective duties.

In spite of the similarity in their concepts of the Absolute, Kierkegaard and Hegel differed in their beliefs on how knowledge of the Absolute is attained. Hegel believed that absolute knowing is achieved through time through dialectics culminating in an Absolute Spirit–speculative philosophy–which could rationally explain totality through the mediation of the subjective and the objective. Kierkegaard, conversely, stresses the paradoxical potential of the individual to "open herself up" to an incomprehensible experience of the Absolute. Put otherwise, Hegel's Absolute is a "process" of the unification of subjectivity and objectivity, while Kierkegaard's is a one-sided "moment" requiring only subjectivity.

This distinction culminates in the thinkers' respective assessments of the concept of "appropriation." Kierkegaard uses "appropriation" to refer to a certain type of subjective understanding; while objective truths–historical and scientific facts, for instance–could be taught, the individual must relate subjective truths to her own experience. An individual appropriates a subjective truth when she bases her understanding of herself as subjectivity upon it. The truth of Christianity requires appropriation. Kierkegaard was unconcerned with dogmatics–the "content" of Christianity–that could be learned. The importance of Christianity was in the individual's subjective experience of it, *ie.* the individual's appropriation of it. For Hegel, conversely, "A true cognition is thus not only the notional "appropriation" of its object: the process of appropriation goes on only as long as cognition remains incomplete."[52] Appropriation is incomplete because Hegel's dialectics centers on the reconciliation of the subject and the object; thus, the subject should be able to be expressed objectively, and vice versa.

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50 Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, trans. Sylvia Walsh, 41.
51 Žižek, "Hegel and the Object," 24.
52 Ibid., 23.

At the same time, the phenomenological information that Mailer conveys is while Hegel's dialectic focuses on the system, placing the subject as a constitutive element therein, Kierkegaard's dialectic is the reverse: he centers the individual. Put crudely in Hegelian terms, Kierkegaard's "Absolute Spirit"–Spirit which has become conscious of itself–would not be a speculative philosophy in which subject and object are unified, but an individual "leap" on the part of the subject. This is the same dichotomy that appears in Kierkegaard's original extended discussion of Hegel, *The Concept of Irony*. While Kierkegaard borrows Hegel's Socrates, he identifies Socrates's great strength where Hegel finds his flaw: his unflinching negativity and resulting rejection of speculative philosophy. In spite of the difference in his evaluation of the ancient Greek, Kierkegaard's Socrates is Hegel's Socrates. It is this Hegelian Socrates–and Hegelian absolute knowing–that situates Kierkegaard's notion of the individual as the center of his philosophy. According to Kierkegaard, it is only through subjectivity–the complete negation of the objective world, as first posited by Socrates–that an individual can examine and affirm her most important commitments: the commitment to the Absolute.

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THE POSITIVE ILLUSION OF QUALIA

NIKKI IVIE

This summer I went trail running. After a couple of miles my toe snagged on a root and I fell, cutting and bruising both of my knees. It hurt. As I hobbled home, I encountered my friend, Heidi. She commiserated with me as I showed her my bloody, dirt-covered knees. I am grateful to have a friend like Heidi. Once home, I took a hot shower, basked in the warmth, and cleaned my knees. Pain, gratitude, warmth, and regret—these are terms which philosophers categorize as *qualia*. Qualia are qualitative, phenomenal properties of conscious experiences. They include things such as sensory data (*e.g.* feeling the hot water of a shower), bodily sensations (*e.g.* the pain of bruising one's knees), emotions (*e.g.* the regret of running on that trail), and moods (*e.g.* gratitude for a friend) (Tye 1995, 4).

In "Quining Qualia," Daniel Dennett challenges the assumptions regarding qualia. He believes, "that conscious experience [have] no properties that are special in any of the ways [that] qualia have been supposed to be," and through the use of "intuition pumps," which are case studies involving qualia, the reader is forced to question traditionally held views on qualia (1988, 43). For example, Dennett presents us with two Maxwell House taste testers, Chase and Sanborn. After six years of sampling coffee, Chase realizes that he no longer likes the coffee even though the taste of the coffee has not changed; in other words, his preference for the coffee has altered over time. Sanborn also realizes that he no longer

likes the coffee, but his reasoning is that the taste of *it* has changed rather than himself; it no longer tastes the same as it used to. In applying qualia to this situation, we find that Chase's perception (or quale) of the coffee has remained the same, but that his judgment about it has changed. In the case of Sanborn, his judgment has remained the same, but his quale has changed. Dennett's point is that it is impossible for us to know whether it is our qualia that have changed or whether it is our judgment about the experience; meaning, therefore, that we are not infallible when it comes to knowing our own experience. He states, "[t]he idea that people might be mistaken about their own qualia is at the heart of the ongoing confusion" (52). If we cannot verify either Chase's or Sanborn's claims, then perhaps their claims are empty, supporting what Dennett refers to as "theorists' fictions" (55).

In addition to our fallibility with regards to our experience, Dennett also attacks the definition of qualia. Instead of understanding qualia as ineffable, intrinsic, private, and directly apprehensible in consciousness, Dennett argues that qualia are "relatively or practically ineffable public properties [that] we can refer to indirectly via reference to our private property detectors" (1988, 74). By showing that there is no consistent definition for qualia and that our views of our own qualia are not trustworthy, Dennett effectively dismantles the concept, writing, "'qualia' is a philosopher's term which fosters nothing but confusion, and refers in the end to no properties or features at all" (49). It is important to note that Dennett is not arguing against the reality of conscious experience, but against the existence of any properties of consciousness "that are special in any of the ways [that] qualia have been supposed to be special" (43).

For the purposes of this paper, the question of whether qualia are real phenomena will not be addressed; rather, I will assume that Dennett's claim that "there simply are no qualia at all" is correct (1988, 74). The next question then must be why certain philosophers claim that we have qualia? After all, the experience of falling on the trail certainly felt to me like a private, ineffable, and intrinsic experience? How is it that we intuitively believe that we experience something that Dennett claims does not exist? It must be that qualia are illusions (Dennett's "theoretical fictions"), and in this paper, I contend that such illusions are not only useful, but also necessary.

Before proceeding, I would like to clarify that by the idea of illusion I do not mean something that does not exist. Clearly, the pain that I experienced when I fell was real. An illusion in the context of this paper is something that exists, but that is not what it appears to be; it is a misinterpretation on our part (Blackmore 2002, 17). For example, I may think that my experience of pain was private, ineffable, and intrinsic to me, but Dennett would argue that there is nothing special or unique about my experiences, and that I simply "want[ed] to reaffirm [my] sense of proprietorship over [my] own conscious states" (Dennett 1988, 49). In this way, the quale of pain (or of gratitude or of regret) does not really exist.

BACKGROUND ILLUSION

The concept of illusion is not a new one in philosophy. In "Free Will, Fundamental Dualism, and the Centrality of Illusion," Saul Smilansky introduces the idea of "Illusionism, which claims that illusion on free will is morally necessary" (2011, 425). Smilansky maintains that libertarian free will (having perfect control over determining all aspects of one's actions) does not exist, but yet, we are still under the illusion that we do have control over our actions. For example, I believe that my choice to run on the trail was fully within my control to make. But even if I am incorrect in my belief, and it was not my choice to run on the trail, Smilansky states that "illusory beliefs are [nonetheless kept] in place and [...] the role they play is largely positive" (433). One example of this might be the idea of personal responsibility, which Smilansky explains:

> Psychologically, the attribution of responsibility to people so that they may be said to justly deserve gain or loss for the actions requires (even after the act) the absence of the notion that the act is an unavoidable outcome of the way things were […] Morality has a crucial interest in confronting what can be called the "Present Danger of the Future Retrospective Excuse," and in restricting the influence of the ultimate hard determinist level (436)

In other words, without the belief that we are in charge of our behavior we would not take personal responsibility for our actions. The potential negative impact on society without responsible behavior is obvious. Smilansky tells us, "[h]umanity is *fortunately deceived* on the free will issue, and this seems to be a condition of civilized morality and personal value" (436). In this case, free will as an illusion is useful and plays a positive role.

Psychologist Shelley E. Taylor has spent many years studying positive illusions, and explains that we have overly optimistic perceptions about ourselves, our futures, and our ability to impact the world (1989, 7). These perceptions (also referred to as "adaptive fictions") actually promote a mentally healthy outlook (46). Because of these illusions, we believe that we have control over our circumstances, which improves our happiness and self-esteem, motivates us to accomplish tasks, and encourages optimistic attitudes (59-62). If someone had told me that there was a chance that I would fall while running on the trail that morning, I still would have gone; after all, almost everything has an associated risk. "I'm sure it won't happen to me," my (optimistic) thinking might contend. Taylor explains that because these illusions are seen to be particularly strong in childhood, they are intrinsic to humans and have always been a part of our evolutionary history (44). One might respond that it seems strange that illusions would play such a remarkable role without our noticing them, but Taylor argues that such illusions go largely unnoticed because they are so effective at supporting mental health (229). Smilansky and Taylor both believe that illusions play a positive role. Illusions are adaptive behaviors that have evolved with us because they provide

distinct advantages. But what about qualia? As illusions, do they also provide us with distinct benefits? I will address a number of areas where I believe the benefits of qualia are evident.

QUALIA AS NECESSARY EVOLUTIONARY DRIVERS
Interpersonal Relationships

When I encountered Heidi after my disastrous trail run, why was I glad to see her? Why did I consider her to be a friend? Heidi and I have been neighbors for many years, and as such, we have a number of things in common: children, home improvement projects, and hobbies. But it is not this commonality that builds friendships; rather, it is the sharing of these experiences over time which builds a feeling of mutual understanding. Heidi and I both have a history of qualia referential to one another. Over time, these referential qualia often include compassion, empathy, trust, admiration, and respect. The cumulative effect of these referential qualia is loyalty. Because we believe our qualia are private and subjective, referential qualia play an important role in sustaining relationships. Does anyone feel the same way about Heidi as I do? She, obviously, has other friends, but I am led to believe that no one feels *precisely* about Heidi the way that I do. The subjective nature of qualia leads me to believe this and to give special value to that relationship.

What about familial relationships? Commonly people marry after falling in love. Over time, the range of qualia experienced with one's partner widens (we live, eat, and sleep together; we age together; we experience the vicissitudes of life together) and we build, once again, a history of referential qualia. This common history results in strong attachments and lasting commitment. Similarly, the experience that a mother has when carrying a child within her for nine months creates a range of referential qualia that develop into a bond with the child. The months and years of care following the birth of the child deepens that bond even further. When difficulties arise in familial relationships, we fall back on this history of qualia to reinforce the reasons for continued loyalty. All of these examples beg the inevitable question: how could any relationship possibly be sustained without the assistance of qualia?

From an evolutionary perspective, the benefit of a child's bond to its mother is self-evident. Similarly, the bonding amongst groups of people is beneficial for creating a social structure that offers its members the advantages of shared resources and mutual protection. Since all humans live in social structures, this trait of loyalty must have evolved with us over many generations. Evolutionary biologists studying group selection have developed an equation, *the coefficient of relationship*, which quantifies the strength of one's loyalty to another (Harman 2010, 79). But when a parent sees that his or her child is in danger, do they first calculate the coefficient of relationship? Of course not. It is qualia that drive a parent to protect the child. Qualia are necessary to help us form, sustain, and value relationships.

VALUE AND MEANING

Because we believe qualia are private, subjective, and ineffable, they reinforce in us a belief in our uniqueness. The pain that I experienced when I fell on the trail was uniquely mine. The regret I felt afterwards about running on that trail was also uniquely mine. In addition, the experience of actually taking that fall was somewhat indescribable. I have a slow-motion picture of the experience in my mind (feeling my toe snag, feeling the position of my body as it is thrown forward, *etc.*), but the experience as a whole is difficult to describe. In this way my experiences are special. These two qualities of qualia—uniqueness and ineffability—reinforce in me the idea that there is no one like me, and that I have intrinsic worth because of this. This understanding not only affects the way that I perceive myself in the world, but also how I perceive others; they, too, have intrinsic value because they also have qualia. This understanding creates respect and civility among people.

It could be argued that individual value is not intrinsic, but that it is related to one's positive contributions to the world—behaving charitably or contributing to pursuits that benefit humanity. It is true that these types of activities can give one's life value, but what about those whose capacities are limited (*i.e.* infants or handicapped persons) and are unable to contribute in conventionally-meaningful ways? Certainly, the parent sees value in the infant. If non-contributing individuals have value, then we must look to factors other than their ability to contribute. We must look to intrinsic qualities; specifically, the qualities that make them unique.

In addition to value, qualia also provide us with a source for finding meaning. When beliefs are felt strongly, they evolve into guiding beliefs, which then in turn evolve into actions. If one feels strongly that racial justice is important, they will be moved to take action against it because of their guiding belief that "racial discrimination" is unjust. Likewise, if one feels strongly that being a parent is important, then one will act in such a way that makes parenthood a priority. These guiding beliefs direct our actions and will provide us with lives that are meaningful. It is the strength of the qualia that provide the impetus for forming a belief system that provides a person with meaning.

One might claim that meaning does not require the use of qualia; rather, one can simply rely on reason to adopt a belief (or set of beliefs). I might believe that 1 + 1 = 2, but that particular belief does not give my life meaning. While meaningful beliefs can be based on reason, I believe that they demand more. Meaningful beliefs incorporate ideas of purpose and direction, which force us to introspect and evaluate their application in our lives. Can one imagine a vegan whose beliefs are completely void of qualia? How about a Christian? Or a Libertarian? These types of beliefs, I would argue, have a foundation in qualia. It is interesting to note that our language actually supports this idea. We say, "I *feel* strongly about…" when referring to a belief, and I would further contend that the relative strength of the qualia impacts the strength of the devotion to the belief.

But why is it important to have meaning and value in one's life? Is there an evolutionary advantage to such traits? According to research, people who feel they have meaning in their lives are better able to cope with the challenges (and even the tragedies) of life; they are more resilient (Lyubomirsky 2007, 163). But it is not just mental health that benefits from having meaning in one's life. In addition to being resilient, "the benefit of finding meaning in a loss extends to physical health as well" (163). So from an evolutionary perspective, having a life with meaning makes one more fit for survival as compared to one whose life lacks meaning.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

When I saw that my knees were scraped and cut I realized that I needed to do what I could to help them heal. Once home, I cleaned them, put ointment on them, bandaged them, and kept ice packs on them. The reason that I care for my body is because I own it. But in addition to owning my body, I also own all of its experiences (again, the effects of qualia being private and subjective). Even in extreme cases, the principle of ownership is clear: a soldier suffers from post-traumatic stress because the devastating experiences of combat are owned by the soldier.

Because I own all of the experiences of my body, I am invested in taking care of it. I clean my wounds when I have an injury, I feed myself upon feeling hunger, and I put on more clothing when I am cold; I take ownership and act responsibly. This same idea can be drawn to many aspects of human life: we are responsible for the care of a child because of the experiences we have with that child, we are responsible employees because the *owned experience* of working at a job invests us in the work, and we are responsible students because the experience of getting an education is owned by us.

There, however, are a couple of objections that might be voiced to this idea. First, one could argue that a child who sustains an injury is not responsible for his or her care; rather, it is the child's caretaker who makes sure the child is safe. This sounds like a valid point, but then one must wonder how does the caretaker know when the child has been hurt? Whether it is a cry or a non-verbal indication, the child takes responsibility by alerting the caretaker to his or her distress; ultimately, the child is responsible because the child owns the experience. Second, one might argue that responsible behavior is simply the desire to see results (*e.g.*, working hard at a job to earn money). But in this case, there is still the quale of desire (desire for money, fame, prestige, *etc.*) that is driving the responsible behavior.

Ultimately, we must ask whether responsible behavior is possible without qualia. Would I go to work if I never felt the satisfaction of doing a good job or the happiness of receiving a paycheck? Would I clean my house if I never felt disgust with messy living conditions? Would I eat if I never felt hunger? Is it possible that all of these tasks *could* be accomplished without one experiencing qualia? But from a practical perspective, *why* would they be

accomplished? Humans are not robots; we need to have reasons for our behavior. I maintain that qualia are the driving factors behind such responsible behavior.

ENJOYMENT

I run because it makes me feel good—it provides me with positive qualia. There are many things that provide me with positive qualia, but there are, of course, qualia that are quite the opposite effect: falling on a trail, having to take a cold shower, or experiencing the death of a loved one. It is the full range of qualia that gives life its richness, and a life without any of them would be rather empty. And because I believe my qualia to be uniquely mine, I take the responsibility of pursuing experiences that give me positive qualia, such as enjoyment. It is interesting to contemplate just how much of our time is spent with the preoccupation of enjoyment (*e.g.* where we will go for dinner, what we will watch on Netflix, when we will get together with friends, *etc*). But despite the amount of time we spend in such pursuits, it is not obvious that enjoyment provides us with an evolutionary advantage (*e.g.* how am I more fit because I can enjoy dark chocolate?) My claim is simple: a life that can be enjoyed is a life that is worth living—a life that has the drive to continue. A life void of these things would lack the motivation and tenacity to endure any significant challenges or obstacles, and thus, would fail to maintain a mentally healthy outlook.

Perhaps one would respond that only in the modern era and in the West can this argument be made, since many parts of the world do not enjoy such a high standard of living. But even in remote or less-developed nations, people still have events or activities that they enjoy; dancing, drinking alcohol, feasting, and festivals have existed for a very long time, and appear to be a part of every culture. This would suggest that these traditions have been with us from early on because they played an important role in our evolutionary history. One could claim that it is the anticipation of such enjoyable events that provides an effective strategy for enduring times of hardship; in other words, the quale of enjoyment is necessary not only for human flourishing, but also for evolutionary survival.

NAVIGATING LIFE

Since my fall this summer, I have not returned to that trail. I can still remember the experience of falling, and it compels me to avoid the behavior that might recreate that experience. The evolutionary benefit for having such a trait is obvious. One might argue, however, that qualia have nothing to do with my decision—that I am using reason to perform a cost/benefit analysis and determining that the risks of running on the trail outweigh the benefits. But upon introspection, I do not think rational thought has anything to do with my decision to not run on the trail. I only have to think about the trail in order to immediately have a very visceral, almost stressful, response, and it is this response that informs my decision.

Social psychologist Jonathan Haidt has done extensive research on how humans make

judgments, and while much of his research is specific to moral judgments, his principles can be applied more generally as well. Haidt tells us, "[t]he first principle of moral psychology is *intuitions come first, strategic reasoning second*" (2012, 82). People make judgments quickly and intuitively, and only then do they use *post hoc* reasoning to rationally justify the judgment that they have made (64). Haidt refers to this as the doctrine of "affective primacy". He also states, "[a]ffect refers to small flashes of positive or negative feeling that prepare us to approach or [to] avoid something" (65). These affects mingle with our perceptions and influence our judgments and decisions. If Haidt is correct, then it is qualia that initially determine our judgments (the importance of which cannot be overstated). I am careful running, because, in the past, I have fallen. I read books because I love to learn. I eat chocolate because it tastes heavenly. In this way, qualia keep me safe, enhance my intellect, and contribute to life enjoyment. Qualia directs the entire decision-making process, beginning with the initial choice, and ending with the conveyance of feedback on whether or not the choice was good or bad.

CONCLUSION

The mind has constructed the illusion of qualia, which has, in turn, aided human development. But these illusions are not just useful—they are necessary. Qualia are the drivers for much of our behavior, and ultimately, drive evolution by providing us with traits that are advantageous in selection; as such, they are essential to us. But is there a downside to believing in illusions? Does this undermine our ability to understand the world (*i.e. losing my grip on reality*)? Perhaps by acknowledging the presence of illusions one is encouraging mental illness? After all, mental health consists in embracing reality, does it not? According to Taylor,

> One reason why illusion is not generally recognized as a feature of normal human functioning is that our theories of mental health are, ironically enough, derived largely from studies of mental illness. Psychiatrists and psychologists have portrayed the mentally healthy person, at least in part, as one who avoids the distortions so obviously present among the disturbed (1989, 229).

So although we may believe that mental health entails believing in a fact-based reality, this is not actually the case. As previously discussed, Taylor's research confirms that illusions are adaptive and produce states that are more, not less, conducive to mental health. But even if we decided that we should encourage belief in a fact-based reality, it is not clear that this is actually feasible. Adam Elga has also written about positive illusions, but he is interested in why we do not correct our perspectives once we are confronted with evidence of these illusions. Referring to test subjects, he states that "positive illusions persist even when they are told about the prevalence of such illusions" (2005, 118). He explains that we have two belief states: one that is reflective and takes into account our distorted perspectives, and a non-reflective state that does not. And although we have this reflective state, which gives us a more accurate representation of ourselves and the world, it is the non-

reflective state that we default to in our day-to-day interactions (120-21). We are not just disposed to believing these illusions, but these illusions are the normal state of experience.

There is one final issue that I must address: when we take a step back and survey the landscape, the necessity of illusions looks particularly troubling. If free will is an illusion, my self-image is an illusion, my perception of the world and the future is an illusion, and even my own qualia are all illusions, then where exactly does reality lie? Perhaps illusions alone define life, as we can understand it. From here we can only conclude that if everything is an illusion, then illusion is our reality.

In summary, illusion is a core tenet in a number of different areas: free will, self-concept, the world, and the future. And in this paper, I have argued that qualia are also illusions. But, I have shown that although they are illusions, qualia are also fundamental to living meaningful lives, lives that have interpersonal relationships, and lives with responsibility and enjoyment. Furthermore, qualia play a vital role in steering our decision-making processes. If qualia are illusions, then they are necessary illusions vital to human life. Dennett's argument that qualia do not exist is an interesting theoretical idea, but because these illusions are the only way to define our reality, we can use them to ensure that we continue to be careful running on trails, to be grateful for friends, and to enjoy hot showers.

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VIRTUE ETHICS AND CARING:
The Ethical Presuppositions of Taking Mortality Seriously

ALICIA NILSSON

INTRODUCTION

In his most recent book, *This Life: Why Mortality Makes Us Free*[1], Martin Hägglund argues that life is finite and that the certainty of death endows our life and our time with intrinsic value. He claims that without death to relate to, all questions about value and prioritization would lose their relevance, and then attempts to trace the plausible and practical implications that would follow if we took mortality seriously both as individuals and as a society. According to Hägglund, the main implications of such a consideration would be the emergence of secular faith and the endorsement of democratic socialism. While Hägglund is clear in explaining both of these points, he does not explicitly discuss the ethical presuppositions of his theoretical commitments. He does argue, however, in ways that are compatible with a virtue ethical perspective, and advocates, for example, a practice-oriented view of human flourishing. Thus, this essay attempts to make explicit the connection between Hägglund's ideas and a virtue ethical standpoint; in particular, I argue: (i) Hägglund's position is more compatible with a virtue ethical standpoint than a deontological or consequentialist standpoint, and (ii) it is compatible with the view of caring as a virtue. The essay is divided into three parts: first, I will give a brief overview of Hägglund's philosophical position; second, I will present the virtue ethical framework that lays the groundwork for my arguments;

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1 Martin Hägglund, *This Life: Why Mortality Makes Us Free*, (London: Profile Books, 2019).

third, I will attempt to demonstrate why Hägglund's philosophical standpoint is most easily accommodated within a virtue ethical framework which includes the idea of caring as a virtue.

I. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THIS LIFE: WHY MORTALITY MAKES US FREE

The main idea of *This Life: Why Mortality Makes Us Free* is that life has intrinsic value because it is finite and that we appreciate our time because it is limited. Mortality is what fills our lives with meaning and value, and it keeps us committed to everyone and everything that we care about.[2] Our motivation to sustain whatever we value comes from realizing that it can be lost and that, therefore, the flourishing of anything we value depends on our actions.[3] If we were infinite, we would never feel a need to pursue any goals or to spend time with loved ones since we would be fundamentally indifferent to everything given the infinitude of immortality and possibility.[4]

The belief that the finite is valuable because it is unique and in need of sustenance is called secular faith[5]. Such faith must always manifest itself in practice. For example, in order for a friendship to exist, it is not enough to simply state that someone is your friend; that friendship needs to be mutual and maintained in order to both survive and flourish.[6] To have secular faith is to realize that we ourselves are responsible for the flourishing or withering of what we value. It is also to realize that the justification of our actions depend on us, and that what we value and who we think ourselves to be is expressed in what we do.[7]

The ability to take responsibility for one's actions in this fashion presupposes that agents have will, can form intentions, and possess the freedom to choose and prioritize what projects to cultivate and strive for (a freedom of this kind is called spiritual freedom[8]). It is also important to note that one of the preconditions for being able to ask questions about "who to be" or "what to do" is that there exist no determinate answers in advance. If there were, there would be no point in asking in the first place. Thus, to have spiritual freedom is to be capable of treating the material, social, and historical conditions for one's existence as dynamic rather than predetermined[9]. This does not mean, however, that we are atomistic individuals. On the contrary, if we seek to transform or maintain our historic-normative framework, we are then bound to take a stand in relation to it and towards one another.[10]

The opposite of secular faith, as one might expect, is religious faith. This kind of faith interprets life as eternal and our earthly existence as a mere trial in the attempt to attain

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2 Hägglund, *This Life: Why Mortality Makes Us Free*, 43–44.
3 Ibid, 45–51, 68–74.
4 Ibid, 44, 62.
5 Ibid, 46.
6 Martin Hägglund, "Utblick: Martin Hägglund och det ändliga livet", interview by producer Thomas Lunderquist, *Filosofiska rummet [podcast]*, SR, November 10, 2019, https://sverigesradio.se/sida/avsnitt/1385980?programid=793.
7 Hägglund, *This Life: Why Mortality Makes Us Free*, 176.
8 Ibid, 175.
9 Ibid, 176–177.
10 Ibid, 177–181.

eternal salvation from fragility and loss.[11] One of the most famous examples is perhaps that of Abraham, who was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac upon God's command given his belief in the existence of an eternal state (*i.e.* "Heaven") after death. By showing that he is willing to sacrifice Isaac, Abraham demonstrates how his devotion to an eternal God is greater than his devotion to his mortal son.[12] However, the reason for Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac is that God has promised that Isaac will flourish if he is sacrificed. This is, of course, fundamentally paradoxical since it means that Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son stems from his faith in the eternal. His action is only sensible in the light of his implicit conviction that life is finite since only that which may perish may also flourish.[13]

The story of Abraham and Isaac therefore demonstrates how an eternal god cannot teach us anything about responsibility on Hägglund's account since such a being cannot comprehend vulnerability or the binding nature of commitments. Thus, religious faith inhibits spiritual freedom since if God's word is law, we stand in no legitimate position to question it.[14] Another example of how religious faith inhibits spiritual freedom is illustrated through a thought experiment in which two children are left alone with an artwork that they are told not to touch. One child is told not to touch the artwork because it is unique and fragile, and because many would be upset if it were to be broken. The other is told that the piece is being monitored and that he or she will be severely punished for either touching or breaking it. While neither child touches the work, it is easy to discern that they are motivated for quite different reasons (one by a sense of responsibility; the other from a fear of punishment). Without the presence of a monitor, the latter child would lose any trace of responsibility since he or she is not taught to use spiritual freedom for personal orientation[15] like the first child.

In the same way that we are subordinated to the eternal in a religious faith, we are subordinated to capital growth in capitalism. As the Marxist argument goes, when capital growth is seen as the measure of social welfare, our life and our time are only instrumental and valuable insofar as they give birth to a productive kind of labor. Consequently, capitalism undermines democracy as an institution because it inhibits discussions about value, as well as those related to reform, since "making a profit" has already taken over as the incontestable value that society ought to follow.[16] Unlike capitalism, Hägglund claims, democratic socialism promotes democratic discussions since the means of production are owned collectively by citizens, and social welfare is measured in terms of socially-available free time. This is time freed to cultivate our spiritual freedom, either by engaging in pursuits that we find intrinsically valuable, or by confirming and challenging each others' perceptions about what is inherently valuable.[17]

One particularly important idea in democratic socialism is that a person's freedom

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11 Ibid, 52.
12 Ibid, 125–128.
13 Ibid, 134–138, 150, 164–167.
14 Ibid, 169–170.
15 Ibid, 208–210.
16 Ibid, 250–251.
17 Ibid, 275, 301–303.

is dependent upon other people's freedom since we cannot have spiritual freedom in isolation.[18] Thus, the purpose of democratic socialism is to minimize alienating labour so that we can both spend time on what we value and become active citizens responsible for answering to each other. This explains, in part, the importance of collective ownership under democratic socialism, and is meant to replace all forms of abstract ownership where property can be classified as any random range of various commodities. Instead, collective ownership is a type of concrete ownership wherein one can only own an object if they possess a concrete relation to it.[19] For example, in capitalism one can own artwork as a status symbol without actually caring about its intrinsic worth as an art piece, whereas in democratic socialism, only those that sincerely appreciate the artwork can be said to properly own it.[20]

II. THE VIRTUE ETHICAL FRAMEWORK

The two main ideas of virtue ethics are, first, that virtues are commendable character traits that guide us in different situations, and second, that we lead "flourishing" lives by acting virtuously on a continuous and voluntary basis.[21] Consequently, people's actions are seen as comprehensible in light of their intentions and motives – a view which seems almost second-nature today. To lead a virtuous life is to achieve one's *telos, which means "final end" in Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*. Aristotle contends that this *telos* is biological and universal. He holds that we flourish when we use our *phronesis* (*i.e.*, practical wisdom[22]), and claims that this means that there must be some natural hierarchy in society where only a small elite[23] are privileged enough to cultivate all of their virtues. The rest are natural slaves who need to sacrifice themselves so that mankind, as a species, might strive towards its *telos* through the victories of the elite.[24]

Contre Aristotle, Alasdair MacIntyre argues instead for a social and dynamic understanding of our *telos*. He thinks that humans are story-tellers who understand actions based on the historical and social situations that make their endeavours meaningful and sensible.[25] This would mean that we interpret actions in light of the various narratives that give us context, and that it is in course of writing these narratives that we lead "good lives". Additionally, one important aspect of such narratives is that they can never be fixed or predetermined, and therefore, always require some element of uncertainty in order to motivate action[26]. Thus, living the good life is to constantly search for what it is *to live a good life*, and the virtues that one gathers along the way constitute the inner compass that guide such a search.[27]

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18 Ibid, 225–231.
19 Ibid, 305–307.
20 Ibid, 319–320.
21 Aristotle, "Nicomachean Ethics", in *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The reviewed Oxford translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, vol. 2, Bollingen Series: 71:2, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 1746–1752.
22 Aristotle, "Nicomachean Ethics", 1734–1737.
23 The elite were mainly seen as the citizens of the polis, the ancient Greek city-state.
24 Aristotle, "Politics", in *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The reviewed Oxford translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, vol. 2, Bollingen Series: 71:2, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 1989–1992.
25 Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 2nd edition, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame press, 1985), 204–205.
26 MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 215–218.
27 Ibid, 219–220.

MacIntyre's view of virtues in the good life stems from his view of their role in practice, the latter of which being defined as such[28]:

> Any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity.

Music, for example, is a practice with internal goods. These internal goods are certain skills and abilities that can only be cultivated through practicing one's instrument, and all of those who partake in the practice of music can develop the necessary skills and abilities of music (or of the musician). However, many practices also have contingent goods attached to them, such as money or status.[29] If someone is motivated by contingent goods instead of internal goods, the practice is simply an instrument for one's own interests and treated as an arena in which one competes for resources.[30]

The alternative is to treat the practice as a social community of intrinsic value that can only flourish and advance through cooperation. Those who revere a practice strive for the internal rather than the contingent goods, and thus, have a relationship to its members, history, and tradition characterized by virtues like honesty and justice.[31] They are active in discussing what the internal goods actually are and take part in the narrative development of the practice, which in turn reflects the practice's unique history. If society as a whole was considered to be a practice, MacIntyre thinks that a capitalist society would be one in which the political, economic, and social focus were focused on contingent rather than internal goods constituting the good life.[32] Thus, competition and social atomism prosper in a capitalist society since the idea of psychological egoism is legitimized through political and social institutions. In the same vein, MacIntyre criticizes the consequentialist inclinations of modern capitalist societies, which results in legitimizing indifference to internal and contingent goods. [33]

The deontological trait of modernity is also criticized from a virtue ethical standpoint. According to Anscombe, the idea that one should follow the law for the sake of the law presupposes that there exist a superior authority that can impose and enforce that law[34] (*i.e.* God). But since so much of modernity hinges on the non-existence of such an authority,[35] moral duties become anachronistic and lose their relevance; in other words, they become disconnected from the context that initially made them comprehensible. Therefore, Anscombe thinks that human beings in modernity face a dilemma: either re-establish God as "the superior authority," or embrace a virtue ethical standpoint based on the

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28 Ibid, 187.
29 Ibid, 188.
30 Ibid, 190.
31 Ibid, 191, 194.
32 Ibid, 226–228.
33 Ibid, 198–199.
34 Elizabeth Anscombe, "Modern moralfilosofi", trans. Joel Backström, in *Filosofin genom tiderna: Texter 1900-talet. Före 1950*, 2nd edition, ed. Konrad Marc-Wogau, Staffan Carlshamre and Martin Gustafsson, (Stockholm: Thales, 2010), 453–456.
35 Anscombe, "Modern moralfilosofi", 459–460.

assumption that our responsibility resides in our relationship with our fellow human beings.

Since virtue ethics frees us from pre-established principles, it is essential that we cultivate virtue through practical experience. That is, we need to practice how to apply our experience and different virtues under unique circumstances. According to Philippa Foot, some virtues might also be considered more genuine if they come naturally rather than reluctantly.[36] For example, someone whose benevolence derives from an innate sense of empathy and kindness might be considered more genuine than someone whose benevolence originates from a mere sense of duty.[37] Caring, as defined by Nel Noddings, might be considered a virtue in this sense. To care is to be receptive to, and wholeheartedly engaged in, another person without projecting one's own preferences, feelings, or conditions onto that person[38]; additionally, to feel cared for is to feel recognized as a subject.[39] When we feel recognized as subjects, our inspiration and motivation to pursue and to cultivate what we value can be expected to grow.[40] On the contrary, when we are treated according to pre-established, rigid, and abstract principles, our reality is overlooked, and we risk being reduced to objects.[41] Caring is thus an essential virtue in the realization that our choices and actions affect other people as subjects.

While it might be easier to genuinely care for those whom we love, our motivation to also care for others comes from what Noddings calls our *ethical ideal*. The ethical ideal is the memory image from our experiences of caring, both shown and received.[42] When we look inward to the ideal and remind ourselves of the affinity that we can have with other people, it motivates us to care. Since the ethical ideal consists of memories, it is not abstract, but deeply personal and dynamic.[43] If we do not cultivate it, it will fade, and we might become more inclined to objectify others or to act in self-interest.[44]

III. HÄGGLUND'S MOVE TOWARD THE VIRTUE ETHICAL STANDPOINT

Anscombe's dilemma stems from her argument that we cannot incur moral duties if we do not submit to a superior moral authority, as we cannot be both superior in authority, but also subordinate to the mandate of that authority.[45] While Anscombe says that God's laws do not belong in a secular context, Hägglund holds that human beings have no choice but to reject God as a moral authority since God cannot teach us anything about responsibility. Because God is eternal, and thus lacks an understanding of fragility and commitment[46],

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36 Philippa Foot, "Virtues and Vices", in *Virtues and Vices: and Other Essays in Moral Philosophy*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 8–11.
37 Foot, "Virtues and Vices", 11–12.
38 Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, 2nd edition, (Los Angeles: University of California press, 2013), 14, 16, 30–35.
39 Noddings, *Caring: A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, 19–21.
40 Ibid, 74.
41 Ibid, 65–67.
42 Ibid, 49–51.
43 Ibid, 79–81
44 Ibid, 83–85, 113–120.
45 Anscombe, "Modern moralfilosofi", 455.
46 Hägglund, This Life: Why Mortality Makes Us Free, 169–170.

He cannot understand mortality either conceptually or definitionally. Thus, Hägglund's stance against God in Anscombes' dilemma is clear: if morality does exist, it cannot be reaffirmed by God's command without also being entirely incomprehensible to Him

Having rejected divine authority as a possible source of moral authority, Hägglund opts in favor of Anscombe's second alternative: we should embrace a virtue ethical standpoint wherein we realize that our responsibility stems from our commitment to our fellow human beings. This position appears quite evident in Hägglund's advocacy for collective ownership since the very reason for advocating collective ownership in the first place was to promote a type of democratic discussion where citizens are answerable to each other.[47] The same conclusion follows from the argument that our mortality makes us dependent on each other for sustenance, and makes us realize that we have a responsibility to treasure our fellow human being's uniqueness given their mortality and intrinsic worth.[48]

Furthermore, Hägglund seems to agree with Anscombe that judgements should be well-grounded, and that motives, intention, and will should matter in the assessment of any person's actions (a point which rings particularly true in the case of the two children with the artwork). Though neither one of the children touch the work, Hägglund argues that the one who is motivated by a sense of responsibility and care for the fragile has a more well-grounded argument for refraining to touch the artwork[49]; that child would act just as carefully regardless of the presence of an external authority. But the child who acts out of fear of punishment is instead motivated by a thinly substantiated argument, as he or she could, in theory, act quite carelessly with the artwork in the absence of authority. Thus, being guided by spiritual freedom can be compared to giving well-founded arguments for one's actions.

The reason why one should consider aspects like motive, intention, will, or circumstance is that our actions are only comprehensible in light of their context, which in turn is grounded in the previous conviction that human activity is teleologically-motivated. When Hägglund says that our motivation to act comes from our desire for a future in which everything that we find intrinsically valuable flourishes, he argues *teleologically*. Crucially, such teleological reasoning can be interpreted as Hägglund taking a virtue ethical stance.

Before such a conclusion can be drawn, it is important to note that actions are also evaluated teleologically from a consequentialist standpoint since consequentialists justify actions based on their actual or expected consequences. Hägglund's argument about how value should be measured in socially available free time instead of capital growth can actually be interpreted as a consequentialist perspective (mainly in utilitarian terms). From a utilitarian point of view, Hägglund's criticism of capitalism is that we are optimizing the wrong good, and not, challenging the idea of evaluating actions based on the benefits which they produce.

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47 Ibid, 225–231.
48 Ibid, 43–51, 62, 68–74.
49 Ibid, 208–210.

We must not forget, however, that Hägglund says all that we value must be sustained in practice in order to not perish.[50] For instance, Hägglund claims that the activities of spending time together and showing interest in one another are constitutive of friendship.[51] Friendship does not follow contingently from such activities, but is directly dependent for its existence on them; that is, Hägglund thinks that actions have a value in-themselves since they are manifestations of the things that we value. Consequentialism cannot account for this kind of reasoning as it focuses only on the contingent result of actions and can only evaluate actions in purely instrumental terminology. In general, the flourishing of that which we value is not a contingent result of our actions, but is constituted by the actions themselves. In sum, Hägglund distances himself from a consequentialist standpoint where the ends justify the means, and he can be rightly described as moving towards a virtue ethical standpoint. In advocating for socially-available free time as the true measure of value, he portrays ends as time-bound and as expressed rather than maximized by actions.

Moreover, Hägglund opposes capitalism because it inhibits us from seeing our own activity as an end-in-itself. Capitalism forces us to assume an instrumental position in relation to capital growth.[52] In Hägglund's view, it allows us to accept a reversed relationship between what has instrumental and intrinsic value since the value of our life and our time depends on how much capital growth we generate. This Marxist standpoint can be reconciled with MacIntyre's equally Marxist critique of the consequentialist trait in capitalism. The gist of that critique was that capitalism legitimizes a preference for contingent goods, like money or power, over internal goods constituting the good life.[53] As such, Hägglund seems to share some of MacIntyre's concerns regarding consequentialism.

Hägglund also argues for a virtue ethical and teleological standpoint in his account of spiritual freedom. According to Aristotle, our primary *telos* is to use our *phronesis* since it enables us to be virtuous and to flourish.[54] Likewise, Hägglund proposes that our overall purpose is to practice spiritual freedom since it is this that enables us to take responsibility for our actions and to sustain and cultivate what we value. Aristotle's view of *phronesis* as merely based in biology, however, leads him to conclude that there is a natural hierarchy in society where the elite prosper at the expense of natural slaves.[55] Hägglund is not willing to sign on to such a biologically-grounded teleology, and he also opposes capitalism and religious faith as teleological determinants since they cannot account for the intrinsic value of human life and time given their subordination to capital growth[56] or the eternal[57]. When Aristotle says that there is a predetermined hierarchy in society deriving from human biology, he argues in a way that is similar to the idea of seeing capital growth or God's law as the predetermined purpose of society. As one might expect, Hägglund rejects this type

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50 Ibid, 176.
51 Hägglund, interview.
52 Hägglund, *This Life: Why Mortality Makes Us Free*, 250–251.
53 MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 226–228, 198–199.
54 Aristotle, "Nicomachean Ethics", 1734–1737.
55 Aristotle, "Politics", 1989–1992.
56 Hägglund, *This Life: Why Mortality Makes Us Free*, 250–251.
57 Ibid, 10.

of reasoning since it prohibits us from seeing the historical-normative framework of our existence as dynamic and changeable.

To view the terms of our existence as biologically predetermined inhibits spiritual freedom and stands in direct contrast to the conviction that life is finite. If everything were already predetermined, we would not be able to prioritize different values or feel motivated to act in order to sustain and cultivate what we value. Thus, if the terms of our existence were rigid, it would not be possible to set out one of Hägglund's main arguments for democratic socialism; namely, the argument for the interdependence of free subjects who can validate or challenge each other's different perspectives and standpoints.[58] The notion that human flourishing presupposes a natural hierarchy in which some people's freedom is made possible by the objectification and alienation of other people is irreconcilable with Hägglund's perspective. One person's spiritual freedom and flourishing is directly dependent on the recognition of other people as subjects with spiritual freedom. If Aristotle had taken full account of mortality, he would have regarded the conditions of existence as dynamic rather than predetermined.

While a biologically-based teleology does not seem compatible with Hägglund's account, a socially-based one might be. MacIntyre, for instance, says that there cannot be any determinate answers as to what our *telos* is since we are narrative beings who understand themselves, their pursuits, and their companions in relation to their historical and social situation.[59] This reasoning appears to be echoed by Hägglund's belief that humans have spiritual freedom which enables them to treat the material, social, and historical conditions of their existence as dynamic.[60] There are also clear similarities between MacIntyre's conception of the human *telos* as an overall narrative involving an element of uncertainty as a source of motivation and Hägglund's description of secular faith. This description emphasizes that our motivation to sustain and to cultivate certain aspirations comes from realizing that these aspirations are dependent on our action for their existence and flourishing. While MacIntyre views uncertainty as a motivating force[61], Hägglund views the constantly present risk of loss as an ever present source of motivation to act.[62]

Furthermore, the entire point of democratic socialism is to give citizens the ability to participate in, and to influence, discussions about the very form of society and what goals one ought to pursue in accord with what they find intrinsically valuable (something that cannot be fully embraced in capitalism given that the object of society is already set in advance). Thus, the point of democratic socialism is for people to constantly inform themselves about what the good life is and what they ought to pursue. This notion is comparable to a socially-based teleology according to which the internal good of the human *telos* is to try to discern what the good life consists in. Democratic socialism can,

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58 Ibid, 225–231.
59 MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 204–205.
60 Hägglund, *This Life: Why Mortality Makes Us Free*, 176–177.
61 MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 215–218.
62 Hägglund, *This Life: Why Mortality Makes Us Free*, 46.

therefore, be seen as a practice whereby its members (*i.e.* its citizens) strive to realize and to promote internal goods together. By the same token, MacIntyre says that it is virtue that commits us to such internal goods and that it plays a primary role in practices. They keep us committed to cultivating the practice and its community instead of treating it, or its members, as instruments for opportunistic ends.[63] Therefore, virtues can be said to play a primary role in Hägglund's vision of democratic socialism as a practice too.

Furthermore, Hägglund actually argues in ways similar to MacIntyre's advocacy for internal goods in his argument for collective and concrete ownership of the means of production. In concrete ownership, we can only be said to own that which we have a relationship to, which excludes objects that we merely have a commercial self-interest in.[64] You can, for example, only own artwork insofar as you appreciate and value it both as an end-in-itself and with respect to art-in-itself (*i.e.*, not as a sign of status or riches)[65]. If this were the case, then there would be no incentive to treat art as commerce since one would not be able to make a profit from it. It would only be a manifestation, expression, or part of *art as a practice*, which would belong only to those truly interested in caring about it.

So far, I have argued that virtues find their primary function in the striving for and in the constitution of the internal goods in various practices. However, I have also said that caring as a virtue finds its primary purpose in close relationships. Taking Hägglund's main premise that life is finite, I think that *caring* is a virtue in-itself and should be acknowledged as such. Caring as a virtue is namely compatible with the idea that we should value the finite above the eternal since it is the fragility in the finite life that keeps us committed to one another. For example, viewing caring as a virtue strengthens Hägglund's criticism of religious faith in the example of Abraham and Isaac. In Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac, he demonstrates that his faith and loyalty to God are greater than his love for his mortal son, even though his motive appears to stem from a conviction that Isaac's life will flourish. In Nodding's words, Abraham was not wholeheartedly receptive to Isaac; he does not view Isaac as the subject in focus, but himself, since he projects his own preferences and beliefs onto Isaac. Even though Abraham is motivated by fatherly love, he treats Isaac based on a predetermined principle which objectifies him in favour of his own religious belief and conviction.[66] He does not truly act with care since he does not realize that Isaac is a subject affected by his choices and actions.

Furthermore, caring fosters spiritual freedom, which in turn makes us free subjects and enables us to take responsibility for our pursuits. One could even argue that it is by caring that we make our counterparts feel recognized as free subjects, which enables and encourages them to find motivation to grow as persons and to engage in the things or pursuits that they value. In capitalism, the reverse prevails insofar as capitalism commodifies and objectifies people, which means that our spiritual freedom is diminished both when

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63 MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 191, 194.
64 Hägglund, *This Life: Why Mortality Makes Us Free*, 305–307.
65 Ibid, 319–320.
66 Noddings, *Caring: A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, 43–44.

we are not cared for and when we do not care. By not caring for one another, we are more easily objectified and treated by predetermined, rigidly enforced principles.

Since caring is mainly expressed in the concrete meeting between two people who have a close relationship, one might worry whether such a virtue applies to non-interpersonal or institutional contexts. After all, discussions about people on the collective level are very difficult since it requires that we take into account the complexity of everyone's personal situations and needs. In these contexts, our ability for rational problem-solving justly and indiscriminately seem to take center stage. So, perhaps, the same thing should also be expected under the conditions of democratic socialism. Nonetheless, if the main reason for advocating democratic socialism is that it recognizes humans as spiritual creatures who are dependent on, and stand in relation to, other humans, then caring should be considered to have a legitimate place in democratic socialism. It keeps us committed to people as subjects with spiritual freedom, and as such, it enfranchises citizens as *subjects* who have a voice that deserves respect.

Although it might be too demanding to ask of members of society to care for each other in the same way that they might care for their loved ones, it is important to remember that caring as a virtue can be expressed in one of two ways: either through genuine care in relationships, or through the ethical ideal.[67] So, in relation to those to whom we are not close, or to whom we do not even like, our responsibility is to act based on the ethical ideal. And since the ethical ideal is personal and dynamic, and requires maintenance in practice,[68] one could argue that it is the citizens' personal responsibility in democratic socialism to try and cultivate his or her ethical ideal. Adherence to that ideal is required to establish individuals as subjects of intrinsic value, which all inevitably boils down to Hägglund's main argument that life is finite, and thus, precious.

IV: CONCLUSION

I have presented four arguments to show that Hägglund's position is best compatible with virtue ethics, or at least significantly more so than with deontological or consequentialist ethics. Firstly, Hägglund rejects a strictly deontological standpoint as he questions God as a moral authority. Duties presuppose an independent superior authority, such as God, but he rejects theism for all of the complications that Anscombe gives. Secondly, virtue ethical teleology does a better job than consequentialist teleology of accounting for actions that have intrinsic value and for viewing pursuits as temporal and as dependent for their flourishing on human activity. Thirdly, Hägglund shares MacIntyre's idea of a socially-based teleology in which humans are story-tellers, and the good life is thought of as a narrative with an element of uncertainty. Fourthly, Hägglund thinks that modern humans lack the right conditions for cultivating a virtuous approach to social practices in a capitalist society. I have also presented two arguments for the thesis that Hägglund's position is compatible with viewing caring as a virtue. Firstly, I have argued that the fragility of the finite makes

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67 Ibid, 79–81
68 Ibid, 79–81, 83–85, 113–120.

caring important since it is by caring that we sustain all that we value. This means that focusing on the virtue of caring does justice to the idea that all we have is the time that we spend together in this life. Secondly, caring is the virtue that nurtures and cherishes spiritual freedom since when we care about them, we treat our counterparts as subjects. In conclusion, these arguments indicate that virtue ethics, and specifically caring as a virtue, undergird Hägglund's complex account that life is finite, and that democratic socialism is the best form of society for recognizing the intrinsic value and spiritual freedom of humanity.

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THE JUSTIFICATION-APPLICATION SPECTRUM:
Exploring Seyla Benhabib's Reconciliation of the Generalized and Concrete Others

MEGAN WU

INTRODUCTION

A former athlete at my local badminton club recently posted an article on *Medium* alleging sexual harassment against one of the coaches at the club. Her article included descriptions of her personal experiences with the coach, as well as the first-person testimony of other teenage players at the club, who alleged that the coach had given inappropriate massages and made sexually suggestive comments to the teenage badminton players at the club. In the article, the author wrote that she had reported her experiences with the coach to *SafeSport*, the governing body that oversees athletes' safety. Unfortunately, SafeSport had failed to complete an investigation into the coach at the time when the author's complaints were reported; local law enforcement also failed to find evidence of a crime.

Almost immediately after it was posted, reshares of the article erupted on Facebook. Some female athletes shared the article and added stories of their own experiences with the coach that corroborated the narrative put forth in the *Medium* article. Yet others— many of whom were the victims' classmates and training mates—posted long Facebook statuses attesting to the coach's character and asked readers to give the coach the "benefit of the doubt". The overarching thrust of their argument was that judgment should be withheld until the coach had a chance to publish a statement in defense of his actions.

Both views present compelling arguments that have been defended at length in philosophical literature about the rights of sexual assault survivors and the rights of the accused, respectively.

To be a feminist and a supporter of the *#metoo* movement requires that survivors of assault and their personal narratives be taken seriously. Yet, one might still wonder how it can be just to deny the accused a chance to defend their action. Contemporary problems, like the treatment of sexual assault in the media and popular culture, are as discursive as they are social because they raise questions about what perspectives are most important in a dialogue about each incident, and what form our public conversations about events ought to take.

In particular, the responses to the article present an important tension between competing values: personal experiences, which come already grounded in a framework of identity and power central to subject positioning, and universal and purportedly identity-independent principles that govern justice in societies. To navigate the relationship between both of these values, I turn to Seyla Benhabib's work on discourse ethics. Refining our discourse, she argues, is the best way to mediate and balance abstract principles of justice with attention to non-abstract experiences, emotions, and identities.[1]

BENHABIB'S COMMUNICATIVE ETHICS

Seyla Benhabib, in her exploration of the embodied self, writes of two different conceptions of identity: the Generalized Other and the Concrete Other.[2] For Benhabib, the study of subjectivity is an important consideration for the study of ethics because philosophers like Kant and Rawls have historically derived normative claims from their descriptive assumptions about the subject.[3] In this tradition, universalist philosophers assume the standpoint of the Generalized Other; that is, subjects are constituted by rationality and should be subject to the same formal laws of reciprocity and equality that we would ask of ourselves.[4] Disparities like those that race and gender can only be remedied by a system of norms that require one to abstract from their personal identities so that they can objectively consider the interests of others and society as a whole. However, in opposition to the universalist tradition, moral psychologists like Carol Gilligan have identified the necessity of adopting the standpoint of the Concrete Other; a subject for which individual history, identity, and desires are important.[5] As Benhabib puts it—in the context of the Concrete Other—one views subjects in terms of their "concrete history, identity, and affective-emotional constitution […] we abstract from what constitutes our commonality."[6] The female badminton players referenced in the introduction spoke from Concrete standpoints, which can be corroborated through their use of personal narratives, emotions, and their discussion of power imbalances in their experiences with the coach. Those in defense of the coach took a Generalized standpoint wherein they drew on abstract, Rawlsian principles of justice like the rights of the accused and of formal legal inquiry. Though it may be compelling to think of the Generalized and Concrete Others as diametrically opposed conceptions of subjectivity,

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1 Seyla Benhabib, "The Generalized and the Concrete Other: The Kohlberg-Gilligan Controversy and Feminist Theory." *PRAXIS International*, no. 4 (1985): 416.
2 Benhabib, *The Generalized and The Concrete Other*, 415.
3 Benhabib, *The Generalized and The Concrete Other*, 408-409.
4 Benhabib, *The Generalized and The Concrete Other*, 414.
5 Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936), 100-101.
6 Benhabib, *The Generalized and The Concrete Other*, 411.

Benhabib's argument is that reconciling the two is necessary for any moral theory; both conceptions of the self are important in different scenarios. As a way of reconciling or navigating an interplay between the Generalized and Concrete others, Benhabib proposes the idea of *communicative ethics*, which consists of the following four principles:[7]

> 1. That participants in the dialogue inquire about what others would want if they were the affected party.

> 2. That there exist no epistemic constraints within the dialogue; in other words, factors related to either universal principles, or to particularized, historically contingent principles, ought to be recognized as important in good dialogues, and ought to thereby give merit to both the Generalized and Concrete Others.

> 3. That there be no restrictions on the moral domain, which is to say, that all choices merit ethical consideration by virtue of the fact that one of them could involve either value judgments from, or interactions with, others.

> 4. That the "rules," practices, and guidelines of the dialogue are subject to change.

Benhabib defends the communicative ethics from critics in her work, "In Defense of Universalism: Yet Again!", by clarifying that the act of deliberation *itself* sufficiently solves the problems that critics believe would arise in her discursive framework.[8] Benhabib's thesis, which I will elaborate and expand on in the next section, is that when misrecognition of the Concrete Other occurs, having a conversation about it and correcting the misunderstanding is a prerequisite to resolving disagreements, both factual and moral. A communicative ethics is therefore an innately self-correcting system.

ANSWERING ASYMMETRICAL RECIPROCITY

Iris Marion Young responds to Benhabib's "The Generalized and The Concrete Other" in "Asymmetrical Reciprocity: on Moral Respect, Wonder, and Elongated Thought," wherein she argues that the process of universalizing, or imagining what another agent would want, goes awry when agents *substitute* their perception of another agent's desires over what those desires actually are.[9] In some cases, substitution may be a well-intentioned misunderstanding, such as a person mistakenly buying a gift that is already owned by the recipient. Other cases of substitution, like paternalistic substitution, are far more concerning; this would be akin to going on a service trip to an underdeveloped country without actually helping the country's residents, but still benefiting from the appearance of humanitarianism and charitability. This thereby shows how models based on reciprocity can become problematic when they

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7 Benhabib, *The Generalized and The Concrete Other*, 417.
8 Seyla Benhabib, "In Defense of Universalism. Yet Again! A Response to Critics of Situating the Self." New German Critique, no. 62 (1994): 176. doi:10.2307/488515
9 Iris Marion Young, "Feminism and the Public Sphere: Asymmetrical Reciprocity: on Moral Respect, Wonder, and Enlarged Thought." Constellations 3, no. 3 (1997): 354.

occur across imbalances of power. Young argues that paternalistic substitution causes agents to either impose or to assume their notion of what others want over and against the *actual* experiences, desires, and perspectives of the Other, which precludes the *communicative ethics* from striking a balance between honoring the perspectives of marginalized individuals in dialogues and maintaining Generalized principles like reciprocity and fairness.

To resolve this issue, Young advocates for "asymmetrical reciprocity,"[10] which argues that understanding and recognizing the other is necessary for reciprocity to work correctly. An asymmetrical understanding of reciprocity considers both the history of power dynamics present in the relationship, and the participants' unique positions along the intersections of different identities like race and gender.[11] Functionally, asymmetrical reciprocity requires prioritizing the Concrete Other over the Generalized Other because recognizing the asymmetries of a relationship involves giving an account of the relationship in terms of the Concreteness of the participants (rather than Generalized ways in which the participants may interact). I argue, however, that evaluating the standpoint of the Concrete Other prior to that of the Generalized Other is made functionally impossible given the complexities of different intersections between identity categories. I additionally defend Benhabib's communicative ethics by arguing that their adherence alone is sufficient to resolve the deficiencies of Young's asymmetrical reciprocity.

The first deficiency of asymmetrical reciprocity is that it cannot account for the interpersonal relationships between members of a marginalized group, and between members of a marginalized group and another group (whether marginal or otherwise). Attempting to describe the relationship in terms of an "asymmetry" ultimately fails because the particularities of identity cannot always easily translate into a simple, scalar comparison of privilege. One such example is that of colorist prejudice: many in the East Asian community are prejudiced against dark-skinned Asians for a number of reasons including darker skin being associated with low-class labor, Black skin, and opposition to Eurocentric beauty standards.[12] However, though an asymmetry between light- and dark-skinned East Asians certainly exists, the size of the asymmetry is too difficult to quantify since its degree occurs on a sliding scale according to the individual color of one's skin, rather than on a binary opposition between *being* or *not being* a member of a given racial group. Intersectionality, too, poses a problem for asymmetrical reciprocity: each person has a number of characteristics (*e.g.* economic class, gender, level of education, *etc.*) that make it difficult to clearly tell which participants are the most disadvantaged relative to others in real, asymmetrical relationships. Ultimately, I contend that a communicative ethics is perhaps the best framework for apprehending the asymmetries posed by differences in identity: even if recognizing one's structural privilege relative to others' is impossible to know, the first principle of communicative ethics is that participants attempt to view problems from

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10 Young, *Asymmetrical Reciprocity*, 343.
11 Young, *Asymmetrical Reciprocity*, 347.
12 Trina Jones, "The Significance of Skin Color in Asian and Asian-American Communities: Initial Reflections." *UC Irvine Law Review, University of California Press* 3 (2013): 1114-1120.

the standpoint of another. Not only does the first principle serve as a mechanism through which participants in a dialogue can abstract from their own unique positions, but it also allows for a better understanding of the positions of others. This abstraction avoids the problem of substitution because participants do not speak from the perspective of others; they use substitution as a heuristic for openness to others' ideas. Additionally, participants avoid the problem of having to calculate asymmetries between participants because all participants are equally obligated to understand others, independent of asymmetries. In doing so, participants are then able to open up a space to understand and to consider problems holistically—therefore mitigating the problem of asymmetries in discourse—and avoid relying solely on one standpoint which might be epistemically and socially-privileged.

Though it is certainly important to consider subject positioning in discourse ethics, relying on an understanding of subjectivity based on material features of a person's identity can be infinitely regressive. Each individual can point to any number of characteristics (*e.g.* Chinese, woman, fan of Harry Potter) that they consider to be an integral part of their identity and classification, and it quickly becomes evident that no clear line exists for differentiating a person's identity from the properties that describe them. The implication of the difficulty in defining or parameterizing identity is that identity then becomes an impossible, or at least incomplete, basis for a dialogical framework, which poses a significant issue for Young's Asymmetrical Reciprocity. Furthermore, this suggests that Benhabib is ultimately correct to view both Concrete and Generalized standpoints as important features of ethics *contra* Young.

The ability of identity to encompass a near-infinite number of descriptors may suggest James Sterba's objection that fully knowing the Other is impossible.[13] In situations that require immediate action, or those in which specific knowledge may be necessary, a requirement to engage in discourse may present certain challenges. Moreover, as Sterba argues, to tell another participant in a dialogue one's complete personal history and identity requires a level of vulnerability, trust, and time that participants may not have or be willing to share[14]; nonetheless, I believe that the communicative ethics is immune to this objection. Though a person's identity properties may very well prove infinite, and full knowledge of the Other is impossible, participants do not need to know each other absolutely and entirely. Under a communicative ethics, participants in a dialogue compelled to share their perspective must simply isolate or define what segments of their identity and lived experiences are relevant to the problem at hand and do their best to make that description fungible.

Another objection to asymmetrical reciprocity is that it positions subjects with greater socio-political privilege in dialogues with participants that possess less power and actually incentivizes them to mis-substitute, or wrongly assuming the needs of the Other. Such a dialogue would allow malicious actors with privilege to promote positions in the name of

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13 James P. Sterba, "Benhabib and Rawls's Hypothetical Contractualism." *New German Critique*, no. 62 (1994): 149-64. doi:10.2307/488513.
14 Sterba, *Benhabib and Rawls*, 152-153.

the worst off that do not actually benefit them and removes any institutional discursive check against this practice. For example, documented incidents of police brutality routinely spark societal discussions about increased police training and the use of body cameras. Police departments have in fact framed the need for increased funding to conduct trainings in terms of the goal of decreasing police violence.[15] Yet, these increases in funding, despite claiming to be in the best interest of communities most at risk of police brutality, are in fact directly in conflict with the aims the recent movement to defund the police and re-invest into communities.[16] The central issue with asymmetrical reciprocity which this example demonstrates is that listening to marginalized perspectives and responding to their general concerns does not necessarily imply that either the outcomes of dialogue will be in their best interest; in fact, their demands can be twisted or misinterpreted to give license to outcomes that contradict their goals.

On the other hand, the communicative ethics does have a structural method of restricting such a practice. Under the communicative ethics, participants in dialogues are allowed to define the terms of their engagement by sharing exactly those parts of their experience which they determine to be relevant to the discussion and also to define what that means in terms of shifts in practices and policies. Where the dialogue about police brutality has gone wrong is that the dialogue recognized an asymmetry without actually empowering the speakers whose voices had been disadvantaged: police departments generally listened to communities' concerns about police violence, but did not then actively seek out, follow, or prioritize the leadership and policies of organizers. Should participants in dialogues with others give the highest credence to voices other than their own, as they do in the communicative ethics, participation in a dialogue can actually serve as a powerful tool that restores autonomy to speakers who have historically been denied agency. It allows them the advocacy and discursive space to reclaim ownership of their identity and desires from others.

The second deficiency of asymmetrical reciprocity is its dependence on what Young calls *temporality*, which makes it challenging for asymmetrical reciprocity to guide judgements and actions.[17] As Young defines it, temporality concerns the historical processes (change, continuity, and interaction with other groups) that have contributed to *group identification*;[18] it is therefore essential, Young argues, that dialogue participants consider temporality in their comprehension of asymmetries between participants. Nonetheless, problems may arise when temporality plays into how groups self-identify. First, many identity groups have historical ramifications that must be grappled with, but under the framework of asymmetrical reciprocity, it is unclear what an individual's responsibility for the temporality of his or her identity group should be. Tamara K. Nopper writes that Asian Americans first began to collectively identify as the racial group 'Asian' rather

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15 Matt Vasilogambros, "Training Police to Step In and Prevent Another George Floyd," The PEW Charitable Trusts, June 5, 2020, https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2020/06/05/training-police-to-step-in-and-prevent-another-george-floyd.
16 Grace Dickinson, "What does 'defund the police' mean, and what would it look like in Philly?" The Philadelphia Inquirer, June 10, 2020, https://www.inquirer.com/news/defund-the-police-black-lives-matter-what-does-it-mean-20200610.html.
17 Young, *Asymmetrical Reciprocity*, 352.
18 Young, *Asymmetrical Reciprocity*, 352.

than be ethnically divided into such groups as 'Chinese' or 'Japanese' in order to give weight to the Model Minority Myth—a stereotype that was intentionally used to elevate the perception of Asian Americans at the expense of Black Americans.[19] Yet, if simply identifying as Asian American is intrinsically antiblack, then this raises a litany of questions such as: which identities are acceptable and which are not, what constitutes an identity, and what are some of the reparations participants in dialogues may owe each other? These are all necessary questions to think about, but then again, only considering the context of "fruitful discourse" seems to stymie and to gatekeep an active and lively discussion. As such, navigating the complex relationships between different asymmetries makes the task of recognizing temporality in asymmetrical reciprocity difficult. In fact, recognizing the complexities of historically contingent relationships of power may point to the need for a system like the communicative ethics, where participants will inevitably be called on to acknowledge temporality under the framework of an epistemically boundless dialogue.

Second, while the history of relationships between groups is in one sense constitutive of asymmetries between groups, looking solely at history to define power relationships may run the risk of abstracting too much from the lived experiences of participants in dialogue. By its nature as a historical descriptor, temporality is something that is constantly maturing and never static. The relationships between different communities might best be described as *itself* a constantly shifting dialogue, which indicates the utility of developing a system like the communicative ethics rather than rely on asymmetrical reciprocity as a framework.

THE JUSTIFICATION-APPLICATION SPECTRUM

Though I believe that Benhabib's communicative ethics present a better model than Young's asymmetrical reciprocity, I find Benhabib's description of appropriate contexts for the Concrete and Generalized Others lacking. In response to James Sterba's objections, Benhabib writes that she considers two "contexts" in which action occurs: the moral standpoint (which corresponds to the Concrete Other) and the standpoint of institutional justice (which corresponds to the Generalized Other).[20] For Benhabib, the moral standpoint encompasses scenarios where norms are applied, making them contexts of application, whereas the standpoint of institutional justice refers to scenarios where abstract principles are justified, making them contexts of justification. Below, I have grouped the different concepts and descriptors that Benhabib aligns with the mutually exclusive contexts of application and contexts of justification into their respective categories.

Contrary to Benhabib, I believe that contexts of application and those of justification ought to be conceptualized as two ends of a spectrum, rather than separate contexts with no overlap. The spectrum model is best understood as a model that explains how people's obligations and perspectives change as new information is gathered through participating

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19 Tamara K. Nopper, "The Unexceptional Racism of Andrew Sullivan," Verso Books. Web. https://versobooks.com/blogs/3172-the-un-exceptional-racism-of-andrew-sullivan.
20 Benhabib, *In Defense of Universalism*, 183.

Benhabib's language and classification of concepts:

Contexts of Application	Contexts of Justification
The Concrete Other	The Generalized Other
The individual/moral standpoint	The standpoint of institutional justice
Emotions, experiences, history, motivations, claims that are individualized	Abstraction, principles, Kantian/Rawlsian, applicable to society as a whole

in discursive formulations such as the communicative ethics. In essence, participants may enter into dialogues from a standpoint that is very close to either application or justification but will move towards the other side as the dialogue continues; perspectives become either more Applied or more Justified. I also contend that discourse causes conversations and participants to converge towards the middle of the spectrum, wherein the conclusions reached through conversations have elements that are both Applied and Justified.

The spectrum model indicates how principles can exist in between purely justified contexts and purely applied contexts—that we can have nuanced principles that reflect material realities, but are still principles, rather than exceptions. For example, a professor who modifies the norm that "extensions on papers will not be granted" to include "unless in the case of a documented family emergency" can still retain the Justified Principle of wanting to give all students an equal amount of time on the assignment, while still accounting for the Applied contexts in which students may face constraints on their time that are personal and uncontrollable. Under the spectrum model, a maxim can include an exception for specific cases, while retaining its universal normative force as *any* student, through no fault of his or her own, might encounter an unforeseen emergency that meaningfully hampers his or her ability to write papers without extensions. The spectrum model might suggest that exceptions to maxims are desirable if they could apply that the maxim would affect and be directly relevant to the appropriateness of the maxim's primary subject.

To illustrate what I mean, consider a classroom setting where teachers and professors must establish fair rules that govern how the class will operate, such as deadlines and consistent grading scales that are shared by all members of the class. Professors construct class norms in contexts of justification, where they legislate with the understanding that the norms they set will be the same for all of the students regardless of the students' identity, educational history, or experiences; norms are enacted without reference to, or exceptions for, any particular student. But most classrooms are not so simple: as the class progresses, students may ask for extensions on assignments or for grades to be rounded up to an A. Students make those requests based on concrete features of their experience unique to them, ranging from disability accommodations to hardships that they may have experienced during the pandemic. In changing or making exceptions to class policies, teachers must take a middle-ground stance between the contexts of justification and application and must view their students as both

Generalized and Concrete. The resulting dialogue that occurs between teachers and students and the outcome of most class norms by the end of the semester shows that there is a middle-ground between contexts of Application and Justification, and demonstrates how stances that are in-between the ends of the spectrum are often both realistic and desirable.

Finally, returning to the introductory example of the badminton coach, the athletes entered the dialogue (the online conversation surrounding the coach's actions and their allegations) from a context of Application. The *Medium* article made note of the power imbalances present between coach and student, and quoted the athletes' accounts of harassment, indicating an attention to individualized experiences. Those who defended the coach by attesting to his good character and citing the principle of "innocent until proven guilty" approached the conversation from a context of Justification because the norms they cited were abstract and not tailored to the particulars of the situation. However, as conversations continued, participants on Facebook representing both sides of the divide seemed to reach a consensus on several stances: that the coach's character should be evaluated in light of the plethora of accusations against him and that the testimony of the athletes held comparable weight to the coach's defense of himself. The terms of the dialogue shifted to a middle-ground between a context of Application and a context of Justification. And, as dialogues continued, the overall evaluation of the coach seemed to become more nuanced: participants, whether in defense of the coach or not, seemed to agree that his *intentions* of "joking around" and "getting comfortable" with students were separate from the *effects* of his actions on the athletes.

CONCLUSION

Shortly after the article was published, the coach published a post on his blog apologizing for his actions and was terminated by the Badminton Club. But, as conversations brought about by *#metoo* continue, the importance of discursive frameworks such as Benhabib's communicative ethics cannot be understated. Historically, rights and laws have been created from the standpoint of the Generalized Other, which can foreclose important dialogue about whether principles that presuppose equality can be applied to situations where material inequalities and power imbalances are the norm. The communicative ethics, which I have defended from the competing framework of asymmetrical reciprocity, not only provides an appropriate framework for understanding political discourse, but it also gives theorists a method of reconciling the seemingly opposite conceptions of subjectivity encompassed by the Generalized and Concrete Others.

To construct this defense of Benhabib's position, I have argued that the way that the Generalized and Concrete Others are reconciled in real-life discursive formulations aligns best with a spectrum between Justification and Application, rather than a binary construction where situations are either Justified *or* Applied. The spectrum model adds flexibility to Benhabib's communicative ethics as it applies to the process of creating real rules, policies, and laws. Put together, the spectrum model and Benhabib's communicative

ethics establish legitimate procedures for respectful and productive dialogue with other subjects, and can extend from typical, everyday encounters to societal policymaking.

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