



ABYRINTH



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Corridor in the Asylum - Vincent van Gogh (1889)

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About Us

WHY 'LABYRINTH'?

Plato uses the image of a winding labyrinth as a metaphor for the process of philosophical investigation in his dialogue Euthydemus. His image expresses his belief that unlike the arts of rhetoric or sophistry – which rely on mere assertion and counter-assertion – philosophy absolutely requires that we retrace our steps in an argument and constantly re-examine our views in order to arrive at knowledge of the true and the good. This is what we as students of philosophy aim to do, and this journal is meant to aid in that process.

OUR PURPOSE

This journal was created with a threefold purpose. First, to provide undergraduate philosophy students with the experience and opportunity of publishing a paper in a philosophical journal. Second, to give an opportunity for students to be involved in peer to peer interaction through the editorial and overall journal creation process. Finally, to showcase the amazing philosophical work that is being done by the undergraduate students at the University of Iowa

ATTENTION STUDENTS!

Please consider submitting a paper for the Spring 2020 issue as the continuation of this journal relies on students like you. All submissions undergo a blind peer review to ensure a fair selection process. For further inquiries, contact Professor Carrie Swanson at carrie-e-swanson@uiowa.edu.

On Art and Moralism

Alex Chasteen

When considering the relationship of an art work which expresses or embodies moral values, there are three main schools of thought on how those moral values relate to its aesthetic value. Framed as a question, we might ask, are the ethical flaws of an art work also aesthetic flaws? (Gaut 432). One answer, variously called autonomism or aestheticism, claims that ethical flaws are never aesthetic flaws, and that ethical flaws are irrelevant to aesthetic evaluation of a work. Another, called moralism or ethicism, states that ethical flaws are always aesthetic flaws. A third, contextualism or immoralism, follows that ethical flaws can be aesthetic flaws or aesthetic merits, depending on the work itself. In this essay, I will seek to justify moderate moralism as the correct understanding of the relationship between ethical value and aesthetic value.

I will use Berys Gaut's definition of an ethical flaw in this context as an occurrence in which a work manifests ethically reprehensible attitudes, which is separate from any causal power it may hold to influence audiences' thinking. I will address causal power later and concur with Gaut for now.

Autonomism, which finds support in Bell and Beardsley, seeks to separate ethical and aesthetic evaluations of art works. In its extreme form, it may claim that it makes no sense to morally evaluate art, a view generally disregarded (Gaut 433). Art frequently expresses views on subjects, and is frequently constructed to deliberate audiences' moral responses (Carroll 1996). Art is often praised for ethical successes, in honesty or kindness or strength of its political alignments (often framed as a work being 'important' or 'necessary'). Indeed, art has long been singled out as a particularly potent form of moral exploration, as art can uniquely "make moral

ideas evident to the senses” (Eldridge 727). A more moderate autonomist stance claims that art works can be ethically evaluated, but such evaluation is never relevant to its aesthetic value. If a work seems flawed due to an ethical failure, it is not the ethical feature itself but an aesthetic one that fails.

For example, consider Mr. Yunioshi in the 1961 film *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, a Japanese photographer and neighbor of Audrey Hepburn's Holly who, in a drastic change from the source material, was played by Mickey Rooney as a famously cartoonish racist caricature. The reliance on obviously racist stereotypes is generally seen as a moral failing that then damages the aesthetic value of the film. An autonomist, however, might argue that it was an aesthetic failure of imagination, a failure to create a complex and non-stereotypical Japanese character, that one identifies in the work. An autonomist can then still condemn aesthetic faults that are also recognized ethical faults, so long as their ethical failing clearly is engendered an aesthetic failing.

This view seeks to recognize the existence of great but immoral art, of which plenty of examples exist, and to appeal to aestheticism at large. Autonomist often seeks to separate an aesthetic attitude, whose existence is debatable enough on its own, from ethical attitudes, claiming that an attitude of pure contemplation, derived from Kantian disinterest, are disengaged from practical concerns such as ethics (Gaut 440). However, it does not follow that ethical concerns are necessarily practical. An ethical evaluation of an art work does not necessarily seek to alter, censor, ban, or, on the other hand, celebrate, publish, or canonize a work, but merely reach a reasoned conclusion about its interior moral qualities, which are as non-practical as any other interior qualities of form or subject. Bell has sought to argue that aesthetic emotions are directed purely at form, yet this seems problematic as well, since form includes modes of presentation, which can have attitudes with moral alignments (Gaut 441). The conceptual form

of *Fountain*, for example, takes a moral stance on claiming found objects with no alteration as one's own work. Thus it seems difficult to legitimately exclude ethical concerns from aesthetic evaluation.

Another stance, contextualism or immoralism, states that ethical flaws are sometimes aesthetic flaws and sometimes aesthetic merits. This view serves to praise subversive and transgressive art works. One supporting argument claims that while generally ethical flaws weaken a work, moral resistance can sometimes enhance the experience of a work. In the film *American Psycho*, for example, the argument has been made that the film aestheticizes violence against women, in the process of depicting a murderer and torturer of women. A contextualist could argue that the film's aestheticization of misogynistic violence, conjoined with Patrick Bateman's own aestheticization of his corrupt Wall Street world, makes the viewer complicit in his thinking and forces them to reckon with their own identification with him. One could respond, however, that such a film obviously condemns Bateman, and any devices used that appear morally corrupt service the larger goal, which is to more thoroughly condemn such immoral beliefs. Thus the film ultimately does not advocate unethical attitudes.

Another argument presented claims that ethical flaws sometimes aesthetically enhance a work. For example, H.P. Lovecraft redefined the fantasy genre in his cosmic horror work that powerfully leverages fear of the unknowable Other. The cosmic Other is, unfortunately, often a thinly veiled metaphor for the racial Other. The aggressive racism is unpleasant to many readers, but is precisely the fear drove his powerfully effective horror writing. To imagine Lovecraft's writing without it is not a simple matter of subtracting what is morally flawed to create a more aesthetically effective work. If one subscribes to a pro tanto approach, in which a work is good insofar as it contains ethically and aesthetically good features and bad insofar that it contains

ethically and aesthetically bad features, and that all of those features are interactive properties, then it does not necessarily follow that improving a single good property in a system of interactive properties would improve the overall whole (Gaut 445). However, a moralist may also hold this view and simply contend that for some ethically flawed art, the good outweighs the bad.

A final argument for contextualism is aesthetic cognitivism, the idea that works are aesthetically good by virtue of teaching us something (Gaut 445). This is a problematic source of support, since it seems at least as empirical as a work's causal power, but the argument goes that a work that embodies unethical views may still be capable of teaching us about the evils of those views. If we subscribe to Chinua Achebe's reading of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, we may conclude that it is a virulently racist text that endorses the dehumanization of African peoples. However, it has been argued that Marlow's disparaging of English colonialism coexisting with his racist attitudes towards the native African populations may still be instructive on the pervasiveness of racist Victorian attitudes prevalent even among vocal opponents of colonial regimes. While other critiques have been made of logical inconsistencies within the aesthetic cognitivist defense, I would argue that such a defense conflates separate spheres of a work's value. A work possesses what we may consider interior value, or value related only to the work and its own aesthetic triumphs, but it also possesses worth as a tool or resource when considered in a larger context. A bestselling sensation novel from the Victorian era, for example, may provide fantastic historical or sociological insights into Victorian conceptions of sexuality without achieving any particular aesthetic triumphs. I would argue that aesthetic cognitivism conflates the values a work itself contains and the value it may serve as an art object in the larger world, and thus does not defend ethical flaws as they serve the interior worth of the art work.

The third stance, moralism or ethicism, declares that an art work is always aesthetically flawed insofar as it possesses an ethical flaw that is artistically relevant. In Gaut's formation of what he termed ethicism, a pro tanto attitude is adopted, considering ethical and aesthetic features counting towards or against an overall, all-things-considered judgement of the work (Gaut 182). One must evaluate the real attitudes embodied or professed by the work, not attitudes presented within the work for critique (Gaut 184). He highlights two main defenses of moralism, cognitivism and merited response.

Merited response is the idea that a viewer, when experiencing a work, should not enter immoral sentiments that the work invites. When works embody attitudes, they do so by prescribing responses to its content. When Resnais assembles *Night and Fog*, the famous Holocaust documentary, he displays without ornamentation image after image of concentration camps to inspire horror, disgust, and sorrow at the events that happened there. Not all viewer responses are merited (Tommy Wiseau's death scene in *The Room* is met more often with laughter with the tears it was intended to evoke), and thus responses can embody ethical flaws in two ways. A work can prescribe merited responses that are unethical, demanding readers to align themselves with a despicable perspective, such as Roger Vadim's sex-fantasy romp *Barbarella* requiring the viewer, through its camerawork, to participate in constant sexual objectification of its protagonist. A work may also prescribe a response that is unmerited because of its ethical failure, as when one watches *Breakfast at Tiffany's* and is uncomfortable rather than amused by the racist jokes. While objections have been made specifically drawing on the examples of cruel jokes, the general stance is that, all things considered, whether pleasure is derived from a work is mediated in large part by its moral position, and viewers ought not to participate in ethically flawed responses to works.

The other primary defense mounted is that of aesthetic cognitivism, which faces major problems. For cognitivism to serve as a defense, one must show that a work's teaching capacity is a feature of artistic merit. Yet it is obvious that many teaching tools exist that are not great works of art, as discussed in reference to sensation novels, and that many great works of art are poor teaching tools. (A music student is likely to learn more about music from scale exercises than from Cage's 4'33''.) While art does seem to play an important role in many people's moral understandings of the world, and encourages us to engage in serious moral reflection, the claim that an individual work's moral instruction is an aesthetic virtue still seems dubious (Passmore 225).

In addition to concerns about empiricism, it seems that art and aesthetic experience is generally accepted to be pursued for its own sake, not necessarily for moral purposes. While a precondition of much art is that one is able to sympathetically enter another's interiority and perspective, which is often cited as a constituent of moral goodness, this is not sufficient to establish that moral goodness is required to experience art, or that art instructs on moral goodness through experiencing it (Blackwells 297). Plenty of music or abstract visual art, for instance, does not demand a morally prepared listener or viewer, and would serve as very ineffectual moral tools for education.

Finally, I would argue that while the instruction of unethical values does seem to constitute an ethical flaw, art often succeeds more in asking moral questions than providing moral answers. Ethics as a discipline is concerned primarily with a logically coherent system which provides tools for one to use as one passes through moral dilemmas (Hampshire 163). Put another way, one engages in moral argument to decide what should be done (Hampshire 163). Art often works in the opposite direction, to question existing or hypothetical moral codes and

guidelines rather than provide logically sound alternatives. As Savile has argued, a role of arts is to help prevent ossification in our moral assumptions (Savile 196). I am skeptical that providing a model of a moral code of conduct is necessarily a virtue, as such didacticism is so often disparaged in otherwise excellent works, such as in the saccharine and abruptly evangelical epilogue to *Crime and Punishment*.

While I believe that autonomist and contextualism fail to provide superior conceptions of ethical values in art, there are still many problems with moralism, even in a moderate form. An immediate concern is the historical precedent of moralist readings. While moralism today is often a tool of feminist and postcolonial critics, it has a long history of conservatism and censorship. Conservative and progressive critics have assumed the causal power of art works to affect, if not instruct, their audiences, to radicalize or corrupt its viewers. Without dissecting issues of representation in art here, we may conclude that the assumption of a causal power over audiences has been a huge motivator for groups to condemn (or celebrate, but historically condemn) works on an ethical basis.

My concern lies with the prioritization of ethical flaws over other flaws. While scholars assert that moralism does not necessarily condone censorship, because aesthetic flaws do not justify a work's censorship, one must acknowledge that ethical flaws in recent years have served a much larger role in decentralizing certain works from the canon. The Griffiths film *Birth of a Nation* is recognized by any movie buff as one of the most formally innovative pieces of cinema to ever exist, and yet it is almost never screened due to its violent racism. This is not to suggest that it should be screened more, but that this aesthetic flaw carries greater weight than other aesthetic concerns. *Moby-Dick* is certainly bloated with many dozens of dull, exhaustively informative chapters on nineteenth-century natural history and whaling practices, and while it is

difficult to defend the sheer page count dedicated to such uninspiring topics, the novel remains firmly canonized.

My concern is not that we are harsher towards racists than narrators telling us too much about whales, but that, when adopting a moralist standpoint, it seems inevitable that moral claims become preeminent. Even if we accept that ethical flaws are aesthetic flaws, it must be conceded that they are granted a different weight and discussed through a different discourse than other aesthetic flaws. The lure of alternate theories is primarily their acceptance of great but ethically flawed works of art. I wonder if the question of a duty to art ought not be more central in debates about moralism. If a work is intended primarily to effect a non-moral aesthetic experience, or if the artist's intentions are unknown, does it disregard the work's aims and self-stated interests to prioritize moral concerns above all others?

There is also a question of which moral standards one is using to evaluate works. Aesthetics contains many disagreeing theories of aesthetic value, but as a field is directly concerned with art works as its object, while ethics is not necessarily concerned with art works. Historically, we consider the efforts of many past moralist readers as morally wrong for condemning texts such as *Madame Bovary* or *Ulysses* on standards that were common of the period, but less so today. Thus one might reasonably be skeptical about who is applying which ethical models to works of art that, as often representational modes, necessitate a different discourse than lived actions. Today, as moralist readings are common in progressive circles, there is plenty of discourse around the question of immoral artists or creators. It is not a rare opinion that art, by being created by an individual who has failed to meet a moral standard as judged by popular opinion, usually along politically aligned standards (misogyny, racism, etc.), is therefore ethically flawed. A moralist with such views would have to accept then that an

immoral creator can only create aesthetically flawed works corresponding to their own ethical faults.

This clearly does not hold up to logical scrutiny, and there too are plenty of examples of immoral artists creating work that champions ethical standards they themselves fail — such as Roman Polanski, who pled guilty to statutory rape and also wrote and directed *Rosemary's Baby*, a horror film about a woman who becomes pregnant by marital rape, which disparages the despicable and terrifying ways her social circle and a systematically misogynistic medical field enact violence upon her. We cannot assume that because a moral system attempts to address issues from a progressive political stance that it will successfully evaluate ethical flaws.

Moralism, too, invites questions of the supposed ethical flaws themselves. Various theories of ethics will have different answers on whether an ethical flaw is stable, general, universally recognizable, or essential to a work. Nussbaum's particularist view seems the most comforting, stating that one must consider a work on its own terms, in its own context, provided a background of principle, and seek “the best overall fit between a view and what is deepest in human lives” (Eldridge 725). However, this offers little in terms of form, and is not very satisfying. It is also not clear that two critics with otherwise similar aesthetic values and taste would necessarily apply this view to a work and come to the same ethical conclusion. Two fans of black-and-white historical family dramas might watch *Roma* and come to very different conclusions about the film's treatment of the indigenous female protagonist.

Ultimately, while moralism seems to be the most easily defensible position regarding ethical faults in art, it raises many questions that remain to be answered satisfactorily, in a manner appropriate to the shift in progressive moralist views we see today in popular discourse.

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The Role of Elenctic Examination in the Death of Socrates

Blake Holmes

In this paper, I will examine Book I of Plato's *Republic* and I will argue that the three interlocutors Socrates discusses the nature of justice with are not suitable candidates for elenctic examination. I will do this by first explaining the nature of the elenchus, and then I will show why each interlocutor is incompatible with this nature. Plato specifically chooses to confront Socrates with these characters to demonstrate that the elenchus is primarily responsible for the death of Socrates.

The elenchus is a form of refutation. An interlocutor starts with a thesis, and through questioning, Socrates pokes holes in the thesis by showing inconsistencies in the interlocutor's answers. These inconsistencies often demonstrate that the interlocutor is not knowledgeable on the given topic. Socrates explains in *Apology* that the purpose of the elenchus is to find out what people know about the most meaningful things in life, such as justice.¹ This purpose is essential to keep in mind while evaluating elenctic dialogue. The elenchus also aims at purging false beliefs, as these false beliefs are an extreme hindrance to the pursuit of knowledge. In the *Sophist*, Socrates comments, "Not knowing, but thinking that you know. That's probably what causes all the mistakes we make when we think".² Socrates recognizes that these false beliefs are an obstacle and uses the elenchus to help remove this obstacle and bring about knowledge.

The interlocutor must have specific properties for the examination to be successful. Perhaps put a sentence or two here just listing out the different properties you will examine. Then move into the specific property of youth you examine in this paragraph. Examining someone too young can cause problems. For a typical youth, most of their knowledge consists of

¹ All translations of *Apology* are taken from G.M.A Grube (1997).

² All translations of *Sophist* taken from Nicholas P. White (1993).

what has been passed down to them by society and formal education. In Book VII of the *Republic*, Socrates acknowledges that when a young person is confronted with the question, “What is the fine?”, they will respond with an answer given to them by the “traditional lawgiver”.³ Their beliefs are entirely dependent on the beliefs of their elders. For the elenchus to work, the person being questioned must have a self-formed belief. Given the aim of the elenchus is to purge false belief and discover what a person knows, this aim could not be reached with a youthful interlocutor. Refuting a youthful person would not be purging them of their own false belief but purging them of a belief that someone else placed in them.

In addition, dangerous consequences could come about if a youthful person were to be consistently refuted. Given that the young rely entirely on the beliefs instilled in them by others, if these instilled beliefs are consistently shown to be false, the young person could become a skeptic. Socrates says in Book VII, “.and by refuting him often and in many ways, reduces him to the belief that the fine is no more fine than shameful, and the same with the just, the good, and the things he honored most—”.⁴ A young person might refuse to believe anything that is taught to them if what was previously taught to them is shown to be false. This attitude would be an obstacle to gaining knowledge, which runs contrary to the goal of the elenchus.

Another property of an ideal candidate for elenctic examination is that he/she is genuinely interested in the conversation. The interlocutor must work to give thoughtful answers to the questions of Socrates in order to discover if they have knowledge of the given topic. For example, let us say Socrates is discussing the nature of justice with an interlocutor. This interlocutor must genuinely be interested in discovering the nature of justice for the elenctic examination to work effectively. If the person is not interested in discovering the nature of

³ All translations of *Republic* are taken from C.D.C. Reeve (2004).

⁴ C.D.C. Reeve, *Republic* (2004)

justice, then the person's answers will not be aimed at discovering this nature. The person might leave the conversation before it has concluded, leaving the goal of the elenchus unfulfilled, or the person might respond in a way to please Socrates and avoid conflict despite their true beliefs.

The third property of an ideal candidate for elenctic examination is that the interlocutor must speak truthfully. This property is entailed given the goal of the elenchus. The interlocutor must answer Socrates' questions honestly, in a way that exactly represents their true beliefs. If the interlocutor does not answer Socrates' questions honestly, then it is not possible for them to be purged of false beliefs. For Socrates to discover what the interlocutor knows, the interlocutor must cooperate. While explaining the elenchus in the *Sophist*, Socrates states, "They cross-examine him when he thinks he's saying something though he's saying nothing. Then, since his opinions will vary inconsistently, these people will easily scrutinize them".⁵ Socrates explicitly states that it is necessary for the interlocutor to state "his" opinion, not the opinion of someone else. If the interlocutor does not believe in the ideas they put forward, then the elenchus will not amount to anything significant.

Now that the nature of the elenchus has been explained, I will show why the three interlocutors Socrates encounters in Book I are not suitable candidates for elenctic examination. The first interlocutor Socrates talks to, Cephalus, is not a suitable candidate for examination because he is not genuinely interested in discovering the nature of justice. Plato portrays Cephalus as a virtuous Athenian gentleman. Cephalus comments that he is glad to have escaped from sexual urges in his old age, "like a slave who has escaped from a deranged and savage master".⁶ This comment demonstrates Cephalus' moderation. Socrates also questions Cephalus

⁵ White, *Sophist* (1993)

⁶ C.D.C. Reeve, *Republic* (2004)

about his abundant wealth.⁷ Based on this background, he seems to have formulated that the definition of justice is to speak the truth and repay what one has borrowed.⁸ Almost as soon as Cephalus agrees that this is the definition he has presented, he states that he must leave to “look after the sacrifices”.⁹ This act of piety further cements Cephalus as a virtuous man.

Even though Cephalus is a virtuous man, he is not a suitable candidate for examination. Cephalus is not genuinely interested in discovering the nature of justice and views conversation with Socrates as a philosophical exercise. Additionally, Cephalus seems to have some motivation for avoiding a discussion on the nature of justice. Cephalus comments how those who are unjust often fear death in old age and have difficulty living out their days peacefully.¹⁰ If Cephalus were to be examined by Socrates and his thesis on the nature of justice were refuted, Cephalus might end up troubled and worried about death. Given that Cephalus is a virtuous man, he would worry about whether he lived a just life, and this would not be beneficial for him at his age. The presence of this thought in the back of his mind could cause disinterest in the conversation.

Polemarchus is an unsuitable candidate for elenctic examination because he is too young. When he comes into the conversation, his first statement shows his reliance on the beliefs of others. While responding to Socrates, Polemarchus says, “It certainly is, Socrates, if indeed we are to trust Simonides at all”.¹¹ As stated above, for an elenchus to work the interlocutor must express their beliefs on a given subject. Polemarchus does not do this. His presented definition of justice is that of a Greek poet, Simonides. Polemarchus presumably encountered the works of Simonides at some point in his education and now views Simonides as a moral educator.

⁷ C.D.C. Reeve, Republic (2004)

⁸ C.D.C. Reeve, Republic (2004)

⁹ C.D.C. Reeve, Republic (2004)

¹⁰ C.D.C. Reeve, Republic (2004)

¹¹ C.D.C. Reeve, Republic (2004)

Simonides' definition, the definition that Polemarchus presents in his examination, is as follows. "It is just to give each what is appropriate to him".¹² More specifically, to help one's friends and harm one's enemies. If Polemarchus were to be refuted, the goal of the elenchus would not be reached. Purgation of false knowledge would not be achieved. Socrates would simply be refuting Simonides and giving the idea to Polemarchus that Simonides might not be a person to trust.

Additionally, refuting Polemarchus in this specific situation could prompt significant skepticism from him in the future, inhibiting his ability to learn. Given that Polemarchus regards Simonides as a moral educator, it follows that he has significant trust in this figure. He quickly presented the ideas of Simonides and seemed excited to be able to jump into this conversation on the nature of justice with Socrates. If Socrates were to point out the inconsistencies in the thesis that Polemarchus presents, Polemarchus could end up very disappointed. He could potentially lose trust in anyone else he regards as a moral educator, not wanting to grab on to a false belief again. This inhibition of knowledge is not what Socrates wants the elenchus to accomplish, and because of this, Polemarchus is not a suitable candidate for examination.

Thrasymachus is not a suitable candidate for elenctic examination because he cannot be trusted to answer Socrates' questions truthfully. Thrasymachus makes a living out of teaching others to be persuasive. During any public debate, Thrasymachus is demonstrating his wares. In the *Protagoras*, Protagoras tries to impress his potential students with long speeches instead of simply answering Socrates' questions.¹³ This dialogue from *Protagoras* provides evidence that Thrasymachus, who is also a sophist, will be motivated to answer in a way that impresses others and will not be primarily focused on answering honestly. Athenians will be listening to

¹² C.D.C Reeve, *Republic* (2004)

¹³ All Translations of *Protagoras* are taken from C.C.W. Taylor (1976).

Thrasymachus and will notice if his beliefs are shown to be inconsistent. If Socrates can poke holes in the beliefs of Thrasymachus, the Athenians might doubt his abilities as a sophist.

Thrasymachus has a powerful motivation to answer questions dishonestly and to hinder elenctic progression. This idea becomes clear once Socrates has shown inconsistency in Thrasymachus' view of justice. After Socrates makes Thrasymachus appear somewhat foolish, by showing that justice is virtue and wisdom and injustice is vice and ignorance, Thrasymachus gets upset.¹⁴ Thrasymachus is forced to agree to this position, contrary to his original statement. Thrasymachus says, "But I am not satisfied with what you are now saying. I could make a speech about it, but if I did, I know that you would say I was engaging in demagoguery", and Thrasymachus also suggests that he is considering answering Socrates questions dishonestly.¹⁵ Socrates responds, "No, don't do that; not contrary to your own belief".¹⁶ Socrates makes it explicitly clear that for his elenchus to work correctly, Thrasymachus must provide honest answers and avoid the use of demagoguery. Thrasymachus demonstrates that he cannot be trusted to answer truthfully, given his direct comments to Socrates and his profession as a sophist. These examples clearly show his unsuitability as an interlocutor.

Plato confronts Socrates with three unsuitable interlocutors in order to demonstrate that the elenchus is primarily responsible for the death of Socrates. In the *Apology*, Socrates is put to death on charges of corrupting the youth and being impious.¹⁷ Socrates also states how he has been accused of "making the worse argument the stronger",¹⁸ which meant that the Athenians

¹⁴ White, *Sophist* (1993)

¹⁵ White, *Sophist* (1993)

¹⁶ White, *Sophist* (1993)

¹⁷ G.M.A. Grube, *Apology* (1997)

¹⁸ G.M.A. Grube, *Apology* (1997)

viewed him as a sophist. The use of the elenchus helped strengthen these opinions within his fellow Athenians, and Plato uses the three characters in Book I to show this.

In the case of Cephalus, it is clear how the elenchus negatively affected the public opinion of Socrates. As previously shown in this paper, Plato goes out of his way to show that Cephalus is a virtuous man. He is moderate, pious, and considers himself just. It has also been established that the goal of the elenchus is to purge false belief. The virtuous nature of Cephalus and the nature of the elenchus seem to be incompatible. This incompatibility makes the use of the elenchus on Cephalus a poor decision. Socrates' choice to use the elenchus on a man like Cephalus makes his motives for examining Cephalus a bit questionable. The Athenians could have viewed his examination of Cephalus, and other examinations like it, as Socrates engaging in sophistry. Cephalus does not have any obviously false beliefs, and he makes no claims to the significance of his knowledge. Socrates seems to be attempting to refute Cephalus for the sake of refutation itself, which could lead the Athenians to believe he is nothing more than a sophist.

In the case of Polemarchus, Socrates himself has acknowledged that it is a mistake to submit the youth to elenctic examination, yet this is precisely what he does in Book I. In Book VII, Socrates comments, "And isn't one very effective precaution not to let them taste argument while they are young?"¹⁹ He does not think young people should be subjected to argument at all but seemingly contradicts himself with the examination of Polemarchus. Turning the youth into skeptics, which Socrates has argued will be done if youth are subjected to refutation, could very well be seen as corrupting them. The hypocrisy of Socrates only provides further explanation for why the Athenians held an unfavorable opinion of both Socrates himself, and his elenchus.

¹⁹ C.D.C. Reeve, *Republic* (2004)

With the examination of Thrasymachus, Plato is demonstrating the more immediate difficulties the use of the elenchus could present. During Book I, Thrasymachus states the view that injustice is virtuous, and justice is not.²⁰ This view surprised Socrates, as it would be a strange view to hold and is doubtful that Thrasymachus believed this himself. Socrates says in response,

That is now a harder problem, comrade, and it is not easy to know what to say in response. If you had declared that injustice is more profitable, but agreed that it is a vice or shameful, as some others do, we could be discussing the matter on the basis of conventional views.²¹

The elenchus only works effectively when it is built upon a conventional view of justice. Plato is demonstrating that in the case of Thrasymachus, a different approach would be more suitable in discussing the nature of justice. The elenchus only seemed to frustrate Thrasymachus and cause him to resort to this unconventional view of justice.

The frustration that Thrasymachus felt when cornered by the elenchus would only be further increased in the case of other Athenians. Thrasymachus is used to debate and refutation, although not in this specific manner. For a typical Athenian who is less skilled at speaking than Thrasymachus, Socrates' questions could be maddening. No matter how non-confrontational Socrates tries to be, the very nature of the elenchus sets up the interlocuter to become upset. In the *Apology*, Socrates states, "As a result of this investigation, men of Athens, I acquired much unpopularity".²² Socrates realizes his own unpopularity due to the usage of the elenchus. Certain people who are philosophically inclined, and do not take it personally if refuted, are ideal

²⁰ C.D.C Reeve, Republic (2004)

²¹ C.D.C. Reeve, Republic (2004)

²² G.M.A Grube, Apology (1997)

candidates for elenctic examination. However, this is not the category that most Athenians fit in. As demonstrated by Thrasymachus' dislike of Socrates and Socrates' own comment in *Apology*, the elenchus led to severe conflict between Socrates and his numerous interlocutors, and this does not bode well for Socrates at his trial.

The purpose of the elenchus has been outlined, and the properties of an ideal candidate for examination have been shown. The three characters Socrates encounters in Book I are not suitable interlocutors, yet Socrates uses the elenchus regardless. Plato confronts Socrates with unsuitable candidates to show that the elenchus is primarily responsible for the death of Socrates. His consistent use of the elenchus caused his fellow Athenians to believe that he was a sophist and that he was corrupting the youth. Additionally, the confrontational nature of the elenchus caused some Athenians to dislike Socrates on a personal level. Plato's use of these three specific characters exhibits the significant role that the elenchus played in the death of Socrates.

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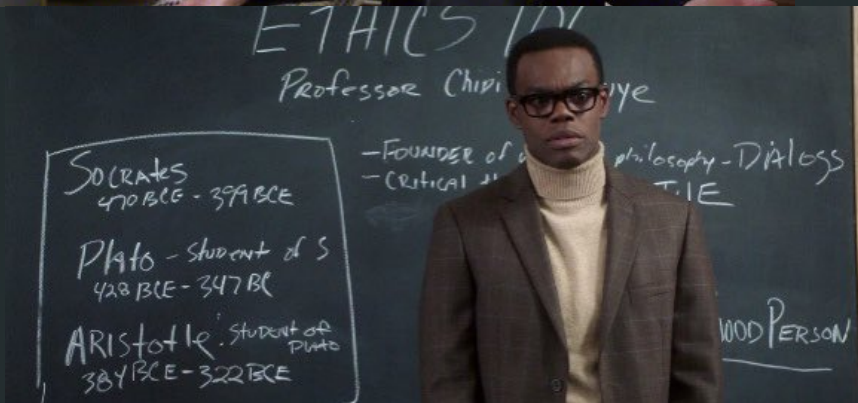
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Editor Amna Haider recommends: *The Good Place*



Available on Netflix and Hulu

A Critical Study of L.A. Paul's Diagnosis of Transformative Choice

Edwin Sim

Human life is a series of choices. What we choose makes us who we are and what we choose affects how our life turns out to be. Therefore, it is extremely important for us to make decisions rationally, especially in the situations that have a huge impact on our life. However, philosopher L.A. Paul, has seriously doubted the possibility of making rational choice with regards to, what she would call, transformative experiences. A transformative experience is the kind of experience that has a huge influence on our life, occurring situations that demand our rationality in decision-making as much as possible. Unfortunately, in her book '*Transformative Experience*', Paul argues that we have *no* rational ground when deciding whether or not we should go through a transformative experience. This is a pessimistic position – where rationality needs to raise its white flag when dealing with transformative experience. However, after a careful reading of Paul, I cannot help but raise my red flag and urge a second diagnosis. I believe Paul has made some serious mistakes and that after all, our rationality is still a qualified player in the game of transformative experience. Although Paul mention in her diagnosis that she has a remedy to the problem, I think her diagnosis has gone wrong in the first place. Thus, in this paper, I would like to resurrect our ability to make rational choices regarding transformative experiences from the axe of Paul. In section (I), I shall make some preliminaries that would be useful in our discussion. In section (II), I shall present how Paul sets up the problem and her own diagnosis. In section (III), I shall point out the problems that I identify in Paul's diagnosis and argue that a second diagnosis is needed.

Section (I) Some Preliminaries

Some preliminaries are useful for understanding Paul's position. To begin with, I believe it is safe to say we evaluate our experiences. One way in which we could evaluate an experience is by assigning it a *subjective value*; we evaluate the experience based on how it has turned out for us²³. In order to assign a subjective value to an experience, we must undergo the experience itself. Notice, the notion of subjective values is highly related to rational decision-making. When we are making decision regarding whether we should undergo an experience or not, most of the time, we will refer to the subjective value of a similar experience that we have had in the past. For example, I enjoy listening to Beethoven. When I listen to Beethoven's pieces, I evaluate the experiences and assign high positive subjective values to them. Thus, when my friends invite me to go to a Beethoven's concert, I could decide rationally – make a justifiable decision – because I can refer to the subjective values of my past experiences with Beethoven's compositions (And the decision is YES!).

Now, although I have mentioned that *transformative experience* is one of the most important experience in our life, I never truly define it. In order to fully understand this notion, we must talk about what it means by *epistemically transformative* and *personally transformative*. For an experience to be epistemically transformative, it requires its subject to know *what-it-is-like* to have that experience itself. For example, imagine a color-blind person, Derek²⁴. Derek lives in a colorless world. He never sees colors in things. Thanks to the advanced development in technology, scientists have invented a kind of glasses that will allow color-blind people to see colors. Derek puts up the glasses and finally, he experiences colors for the first time in his life. He

²³ Indeed, this is not the only kind of values that experiences have. However, the subjective values of an experience will only be relevant to our discussion here.

²⁴ The example I gave is inspired (through conversation) by the famous thought experiment 'Mary's room' which originally formulated by Frank Jackson (1982). I did not read the original paper myself; thus, I decide to give my own variant.

experiences what-it-is-like to see colors. Here, we have an important implication – the what-it-is-like kind of knowledge could *only* be rendered by experience. Derek might gain all kinds of scientific knowledge about colors – understands how they work in our perception, knows what wavelength of lights correspond to what colors and so on, but Derek will never know what-it-is-like to see colors until he has the experience by himself. In this case, Derek had an epistemically transformative experience. He finally knows what-it-is-like to see colors. However, for an experience to be personally transformative, it requires its subject to change in terms of *who he is as a person*. In other words, a personally transformative experience changes one's own point of view. It is quite frequent to hear people undergo a total change in their personality after an extreme experience. For example, let us meet Tim. Tim is an unemployed 25 years old guy. He is ungrateful, complains about the 'injustice' of the social order and a self-acclaimed utilitarian moralist! One day, he almost dies in a car accident. And after a near-death experience, Tim's world view has totally changed. He now appreciates more of his life, takes responsibility of his own failure and also starts to appreciate Kant's moral philosophy! In this case, Tim had a personally transformative experience; his near-death experience has changed who he is as a person; it has changed his own point of view. Now, we are in a good position to explain the notion of a transformative experience. If an experience is both epistemically transformative and personally transformative, then we would call this experience a transformative experience. People who undergo such an experience will know what-it-is-like to have that experience and at the same time, they will change who they are as a person. The choice of deciding whether or not we should undergo a transformative experience is called a *transformative choice*.

Section (II) Paul's Diagnosis of the Problem of Transformative Choice²⁵

²⁵ From here, all my quotations would be extracted from L.A. Paul's '*Transformative Experience*'.

To begin with, Paul believes when we are considering a transformative choice, we *should* do it from our own personal point of view²⁶ (p.18). Now, if we are going to make a decision rationally at a personal level, then we must “follow the rules of a realistic normative decision theory” (p.19). In other words, we need to make decisions according to the *normative standard*. Paul herself has a great summary of making decisions in such a way:

... you should proceed by determining the probabilities of the relevant states of the world, that, combined with your possible act, will bring about the relevant outcomes. You also determine the values of the possible outcomes of your possible acts, and, after weighting these values, determine which act you should perform in order to maximize your expected value (p. 21).

As we can see, making decisions in a normative standard requires two steps. First, we need to assign *credences* to possible outcomes. Basically, it means we should consider how likely it is the possible outcomes would actualize based on our belief of the way in which the world works and combined with our possible acts. For example, say, I am strolling around my neighborhood and have encountered a group of wild dogs. Based on my belief of the behaviors of wild dogs, combined with an act such as throwing a stone towards them, I think there is a high possibility that the event ‘being chased by a group of wild dogs’ would happen to me. In this case, I assign a high credence to one of the possible outcomes. Second, we need to assign values to possible outcomes as well. After gauging all the possible outcomes along with their values, we choose to act in the way that maximizes our values.

As I have mentioned above, Paul thinks we should make transformative choice from our personal point of view. Thus, the values that we are supposed to maximize in the normative standard would be considered as subjective values²⁷ (p. 25). However, merely meeting the normative standard in the process of decision-making does not automatically make us rational. We

²⁶ Here is an assumption that eventually that I will challenge. See Section (III)

²⁷ From now on, whenever I use the word ‘value’, it will refer to ‘subjective value’ except when I explicitly state otherwise.

must also be able to rationally justify the assignment of credences and values to those possible outcomes. It is conceivable that people might make decisions according to the normative standard but with a totally irrational assignment of credences and values. Thus, in addition to meeting the normative standard, we must be able to justify our assignment of credences and values rationally as well.

From here, one inevitably must ask: In what way, could our assignment of credences and values be rationally justified? According to Paul, our assignment of credences and values is rationally justified only if it is “based on sufficient evidence” (p. 23). Now, as we can see, the whole burden of making decisions rationally at personal level falls on the amount of evidence we have. This is where the problems emerge. In particular, we might encounter two different problems: the insufficiency of evidence for assigning credences and the insufficiency of evidence for assigning values. However, according to Paul, the former could be solved successfully within the normative standard and thus, we would focus on the latter²⁸. Some enlightened readers might already anticipate that the problem of the insufficiency of evidence for assigning values would emerge in the case of transformative choice. According to Paul, such a problem has two dimensions.

First, since transformative experience is epistemically transformative, it follows that we have no sufficient evidence to assign subjective values to possible outcomes in a rational justifiable way because we lack what-it-is-like knowledge in regards to that experience; but this is the very condition that transformative experiences preclude (think about someone who assigns value to Beethoven’s symphonies without having listened to it at all). Intricate though the problem is, Paul thinks we could still resolve the epistemic issue by reconfiguring our decisions. Although we do

²⁸ See Paul, p. 28-30, starting from, ‘This bring out ...

not have the what-it-is-like knowledge for us to assign values, we could still “know the approximate range of subjective values”, i.e. those that tell us the upper (or lower) limit of the values of the experience in consideration (p. 37). Then, we could reformulate our decisions from *whether we should undergo the experience* to *whether we want to know the experience*. We switch from taking the value of the experience as the center of our consideration to the possible knowledge of that experience as our main concern. However, it is important to note that we could only adopt such a move when there is not much at stake, as Paul comments: “we can try new experience for the sake of their newness, knowing that a bad experience would exact a relatively low cost ... [but] transformative experiences are not restricted to minor life events” (p. 39). Here, we need to consider an example provided by Paul. Imagine that neuroscientists invent a microchip that will provide human beings a new sensory ability but at the same time, will eliminate our sensory ability to taste. Additionally, if you are going to implant that chip, you will be the first person who have that experience. Will you do it? (p. 8 & p. 39). In such a case, Paul argues that we are not rationally justifiable to reconfigure our decision in the aforementioned way because the consequences involved are too big and the experience is too radical such that there is no justifiable way for us to approximate the range of the subjective values of that experience.

The foregoing move of reconfiguring our decisions is applicable to the epistemic issue only in safe and less radical circumstances, which does not cover all cases of transformative experiences. The problem becomes even more complex when we consider its second dimension – namely that transformative experiences are personally transformative as well. Even if we reformulate our decisions simply as a decision of whether or not we want to know what it is like to have the experience, we still could not rationally decide because it is possible that the person before the experience assigns one value while the person after the experience assigns another.

Furthermore, there is no way for us to compare both sets of preferences since it is possible only to know the second set after having undergone the experience. As Paul apocalyptically asks: “Which set of preferences should you be most concerned with? Your preferences now, or your preferences after the experience?” (p. 48). In sum, since transformative experience is both epistemically transformative and personally transformative, we will still have trouble assigning our subjective values to possible outcomes. Thus, we cannot rationally decide whether or not to make a transformative choice.

Section (III) The Problems of Paul’s Diagnosis

There are at least three problems that I could identify in Paul’s diagnosis. I would argue that taking all of them together, we might reject Paul’s diagnosis. I believe making a transformative choice is difficult but not to the extent that we have no rational ground to decide at all. Nevertheless, like I have mentioned in the beginning of my paper, I only want to urge a second diagnosis instead of arguing that there is no problem at all.

First of all, I would like to suggest the problem that whether we should choose the before-you or the after-you preferences is misleading. Paul suggests that transformative experience change our preference such that we have no way of comparing both sets of preferences since we can only know the after-you preferences after we underwent the experience; thus, prior to the experience, we cannot rationally choose between them. However, I would argue that once we reflect on its formulation more carefully, the problem will reveal its own nature and we will realize it is a problem in decision-making in general and that transformative experience does not stand as an obstacle on the path in which we might solve it. My aim is not trying to show that there is no problem whatsoever. There is a problem, but not in the way that Paul has described. Let us start with examining the concept of preference. I would like to suggest that it is an attitude that disposes

us to make a choice when given multiple similar type of things. The choice that we make, other things equal, must exhibit the highest positive values among all other choices. It is inconceivable that, other things being equal, one prefers something over the others because it exhibits a lower positive value. It is logically possible, but certainly against how we make decisions in our day to day life. Just think about how strange it would be if someone told you that she prefers Earl Grey Tea over Green Tea because it contributes less to her happiness (You might suspect that you misheard her or would feel a need to take her to a doctor). However, there is no requirement for us to have a fully justified reason or reasons for making such a choice in order to be considered as making a choice from preferences. What is required is merely the condition that when we encounter a series of options, we are disposed to make a choice because when we are deliberating our choice, in our first-person perspective, the object of our preference jumps at us as exhibiting the highest positive value. Now let us think about what it really means when we choose our preferences. We are choosing between different sets of attitudes that will dispose us to make a choice when we encounter multiple similar type of things because the object of our preference exhibits the highest value in our first-person perspective. Here, I would like to suggest that it is quite strange to say there is a problem at all. To see why, consider an everyday scenario of disputing about preferences. Imagine that I condemn you for preferring to listen to Heavy Metal and say this is a sign of your degenerate soul and that you chastise me for preferring to listen to Classical Music and say I am just a pretentious hypocrite. Now the matter of dispute here is not the attitude per se but rather the object of our preference. Both of us believe the object of our preference is wrongly evaluated. What really matters is which one of us could sufficiently justify her case. This is why I suggest it is strange to say we have a problem in choosing our preferences. However, we are not then totally free of problems, there is still a problem, namely things that truly

contribute the most to our happiness and that we should prefer them (Notice how the answer will settle our imaginary dispute). But such a problem will not be complicated by any transformative experience. It seems to be a genuine problem if we need to compare two preferences under the assumption that we do not have the knowledge of one of the preferences in comparison. But if we turn our attention to the object themselves then the fact that we have no epistemic access to the result of a transformative experience does not preclude us to evaluate those objects. In terms of music, I could just list out all genres; it could be a list with many, but only *that* many. Here we do not have an epistemic issue in terms of transformative experience. We might argue about the way in which our evaluation could be justified but that is not our concern here since my target is merely Paul's diagnosis and thus, I shall leave the problem to the readers.

Secondly, I would like to protest that the microchip thought experiment is too radical. *Prima facie*, I appear to be missing the point. People might defend Paul and argue that although the microchip case is quite remote from our daily experiences, there are many situations in our life which are *structurally* resembling to it, where we have to decide whether we should undergo an experience that is both epistemically and personally transformative. However, I believe if we consider more implications of the microchip thought experiment, we will see such a defense is untenable. One thing that sets it aside from other transformative experiences is that in the microchip case, you are the *first* person who is going to experience it. Even for some crazy imaginary transformative experiences that Paul herself entertains, like becoming a vampire, are under the condition that there are testimonies out there in the world²⁹. Even in the case of becoming a vampire, we could still gather some information from the people who have become vampires. But in the microchip case, we not only lack the what-it-is-like knowledge, but we lack

²⁹ See Paul, p. 1 & p. 42-47.

any kind of knowledge about the experience at all. I would argue that it is dubious that in the course of an ordinary life, we need to make a decision that is so different that in the history of humanity, no decisions can possibly be parallel with it. Indeed, we have to make various transformative choices in our life, like becoming parents, going to graduate school, getting a new job and so on, but none of these are radical to the point that no one has ever experienced it before. Although the microchip case satisfies the requirements of being a transformative experience, I think we should ignore such an extreme case due to the low probability of facing it in our life. Becoming a vampire might resemble some events in our life but becoming the first vampire (and actually do not even know what vampire is) is extremely unlikely to occur.

My third objection to Paul's diagnosis is closely related to my second objection. Perhaps in some extreme transformative experiences, we have no rational ground to assign subjective values. Perhaps Paul is right, we are not able to make decisions rationally at the personal level. If that is the case, is it not irrational to stick with the idea that we should make transformative choices at the personal level? I would argue that in the cases of extreme transformative choices, the epistemic gap is too big to the extent that it renders decision-making at the personal level irrational. As we all know, decisions in our life are important; that is why we want to be rational as much as possible. If we are able to find rational ground to make transformative choices from other points of view, then I would suggest that we should jettison the idea of making transformative choices at the personal level. Let us revert to the microchip case. I would argue that we are able to make a rational decision based on *objective* values. For example, I value the microchip case as a further step of scientific development and take myself as a part of our scientific endeavor. Such an assignment of the value is not subjective; it is not about how the experience has or will turn out for the subject, which necessarily requires going through the experience or similar experiences,

but I assign the value independent of the experience and also be indifferent to how the experience will turn out for me. If what really matters is to make a decision rationally, then hopefully I have shown that in some cases of transformative experiences, we actually should not make decision at personal level, which challenges the core assumption that Paul makes in her position.

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Adaptive Preferences: An Account Born from the Social Imaginary

Elizabeth Zupancic

The idea that humans are intricately shaped by the frameworks, relationships, political environments, and social imaginaries that surround us as we develop is not a new one; in fact, it is widely accepted. Take, for example, the lyric from Broadway's *Wicked: Because I knew you, I have been changed for good*. This is reflective of the dialogical character of human life, through which “we become full agents, capable of understanding ourselves, and hence of defining our identity, [by] acquisition of rich human languages of expression” (Taylor 1994, 32). Notions similar to those found in pop culture also pervade public conscious. Consider renditions of the aphorism: *we become what we behold*. These observations show, in general, people are sympathetic to the idea that who we are as individuals—including the decisions we make, preferences we hold, and thus, what we assume to be our agentic capacities—is formed, in part, by the social imaginary (Medina 2013, 67). It is the project of this paper to argue that our agentic capacities are inextricable from the social imaginaries we find ourselves amidst, and further, to direct this inextricability towards normative questioning on oppressed peoples' agencies. Ultimately, I argue that the social imaginary affects people of all social positions—both advantaged and disadvantaged—and, thus, that all people ought to be understood as exhibiting the phenomenon of adaptive preferences. In this way, a framework for an acceptable understanding of the oppressed person's compliance with or functioning under oppressive norms may be formed, and a philosophical account which undermines the oppressed person's agency may be avoided.

I understand the *social imaginary* as José Medina defines it: “the repository of images and scripts that become collectively shared” and that “constitutes the representational background against which people tend to share their thoughts and listen to each other in a culture” (Medina 2013, 67). Further, I understand the social imaginary as universal—not in its effects, but in its affecting all humans. I thus use the term *stratified* to reflect its hierarchical nature. I define *adaptive preferences* as human preferences

that are unconsciously informed by and shaped under the social imaginary. I reference concepts as being *universal* insofar as we might apply the concept inclusively, or to all humans regardless of social status. Because I understand the social imaginary as a universal phenomenon, I also understand adaptive preferences as a universal phenomenon.

Serene Khader, Martha Nussbaum, and José Medina all have great bearing on my account, whether I borrow from or reject their philosophical material. Nussbaum, in *Women and Human Development*, asserts that “international political and economic thought should be feminist, attentive (among other things) to the special problems women face because of sex” (Nussbaum 2001, 4). Similar to Khader’s account of human flourishing, Nussbaum asserts that the best approach to the “idea of a basic social minimum is provided by an approach that focuses on *human capabilities*, that is, what people are actually able to do and be” (Nussbaum 2001, 5). In order to pursue this enterprise, she first acknowledges that “...unequal social and political circumstances give women unequal human capabilities” (Nussbaum 2001, 1). I agree with some of the underlying assumptions of both Khader’s and Nussbaum’s projects—especially that it is possible to “describe a framework for such a feminist practice of philosophy that is strongly universalist...” (Nussbaum 2001, 7); however, what both seem to overlook is adaptive preferences as affecting people across social status, albeit in a stratification.

Nussbaum’s chapter, “Adaptive Preferences and Women’s Options,” begins with two epigraphs (Nussbaum 2001, 111):

To those with low self-regard, neglect does not seem unjust...

—Rabindranath Tagore, “Letter from a Wife”

When we see women like us who have done something brave and new, then we get the confidence that we can learn something new too.

—Lila Datania, SEWA, Ahmedabad

Using these epigraphs as an introduction to her understanding of adaptive preferences—preferences that are deeply entrenched and often manipulated by tradition and intimidation—seems supportive of my general argument upon first inspection, yet fails to represent an important foundational element of my

account. I will examine Nussbaum's presentation of adaptive preferences and Medina's presentation of the social imaginary more closely, then explain why Nussbaum's failure to universalize the concept is detrimental to her project.

As imagined by Nussbaum, adaptive preferences developed by an agent are processual; they arise after "lifelong habituation" (Nussbaum 2001, 80). She offers the anecdote of a woman, like many women, who "seems to have thought [her] abuse was painful and bad, but still a part of women's lot in life, just something women have to put up with as a part of being women dependent on men..." (Nussbaum 2001, 112). I agree that the approach we assume should entail taking issue with this sort of preference, one that puts up with abuse; however, it is relevant while we contemplate adaptive preferences that we understand the same phenomenon can occur for the privileged person as well. This is not to say that adaptive preferences manifest equally (or are born from equal social conditions, for that matter) between advantaged and disadvantaged groups—instead it is to say that the social imaginary is unavoidable. Thus, I find it necessary to involve adaptive preferences with the social imaginary. Medina defines the social imaginary as the "background against which people tend to share their thoughts and listen to each other in a culture." This background seems to have great bearing on the lifelong habituation Nussbaum references. I argue that how humans habituate or to what we become accustomed is necessarily married to that background, the "repository of images and scripts that become collectively shared," and against which we are connected in a culture (Medina 2013, 67). So, my argument is not to downplay the experience of oppressed groups (particularly women across the globe), but instead to strengthen the foundation of an argument which seeks to do the opposite—by both affording gender oppression the serious considerations it calls for and by avoiding any undermining of women's agentic capacities. For example, to argue women exhibit adaptive preferences while men cannot ultimately undercut women's agencies.

I acknowledge the hesitations one might have in understanding the phenomenon of adaptive preferences as universal, occurring across status and identity: might it only do the opposite of what we seek to do? Might it undermine the disadvantages of oppressed peoples, especially women? In thinking about these hesitations, one still can—and ought to—understand the necessity of such universalizing by

looking at the fluidity of status. One's advantages and disadvantages are not static. For example, over time one may lose a privileged status, or gain it; in the same way, oppressions may diminish or emerge anew. Of course, some oppressions and privileges are unchangeable, inextricable from unchanging identities or statuses; but given that many statuses can change, or may constantly be changing, such as age, social class, location, ability, or religious affiliations, it seems sensible that preferences might change consequently. If someone who was once privileged in social class suddenly became disadvantaged in social class, we can assume that person's preferences—as directed towards economic and social policy—would adapt in their own favor. In the same way Nussbaum conceptualizes it for oppressed people, privileged people's preferences may be also informed by tradition and in the interest of maintaining one's privilege.

Such universalizing also allows us to understand that a privileged person typically makes decisions and holds preferences which contribute to the maintenance of their privilege, and why these adaptive preferences can be harmful. Thus, I make the argument that understanding adaptive preferences as universal does *not* undermine the harms of oppression; instead it acknowledges the social imaginary as a mechanism often fostering epistemic vices in the privileged. Vices Medina identifies include 1) epistemic arrogance, or a cognitive superiority complex; 2) epistemic laziness, or the “socially produced and carefully orchestrated lack of curiosity”; and 3) closed-mindedness, or an avoidance mechanism “systematically closed to certain phenomena, experiences, and perspectives” (Medina 2013, 33-34). Medina analyzes Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* as an example of the sexist and racist social imaginary prevalent through much of American history which perpetuated these vices in the privileged and nearly precluded meta-lucidity: an epistemic virtue, the “capacity to see the limitations of dominant ways of seeing” (Medina 2013, 47). The dominant social imaginary in the novel resulted in maintained social hierarchies and manifested varying preferences based on how those hierarchies interacted with the various situations of people.

In revising Nussbaum's account, instead of saying “people's preference for basic liberties can itself be manipulated by tradition and intimidation,” (Nussbaum 2001, 115) we might go further and say

that people's preferences may be also unconsciously informed by the hierarchies that reassure, encourage, and preserve one's liberties and status. In fact, the dominant social imaginary mimics the structure of institutions and those that live in a given culture—specifically the dominant group—and all are thereafter beholden to it in some respect. We thus cannot reasonably sustain an argument that social imaginaries may be selective; instead, we can see that they affect the people living under them in unique, complex ways. It follows that the adaptive preferences born from a social imaginary may also not be selective and that each person's preferences are informed by the social imaginary in unique, complex ways.

As previously mentioned, the approach we ought to assume should entail taking issue with preferences that are clearly harmful so as to not undermine the oppressed person's oppression; recall Nussbaum's anecdote of the woman who put up with marital abuse under the impression that it was simply her luck of the draw as a woman. To argue the social imaginary and adaptive preferences ought to be recognized as universal phenomena requires a discussion on whether or not adaptive preferences are harmful, and if so, when. This question is one which a number of philosophical accounts attempt to answer. For the purposes of this paper, I will briefly outline elements of Serene Khader's account, then explain how it might necessarily be changed to include both advantaged and disadvantaged peoples.

Khader prefaces her discussion of adaptive preferences with the argument that the term itself seems to suggest its problem: "...they are 'adapted to'—in other words, 'formed in reaction to'—social conditions" (Khader 2011, 74). She shifts, however, from the term *adaptive preferences* to *inappropriately adaptive preferences* (IAPs) to highlight this harm; a harm born from the fact that "because people have a tendency toward basic flourishing, IAPs are likely not their deep preference" (Khader 2001, 109). What is inconsistent between Khader's analysis and my own is her choice to focus solely on disadvantaged people's preferences; advantaged people are therefore excluded from having adaptive preferences or inappropriately adaptive preferences. While I value Khader's focus on how adaptive preferences are born out of social conditions (or as I imagine it, the social imaginary) and think it not to be entirely at conflict with my account, her failure to ascribe the concept to privileged people is even more harmful to the disadvantaged. Without spending time getting caught up in her account of

human flourishing, I am compelled to revise Khader's definition. Just as I have understood the social imaginary and adaptive preferences as being universal social phenomena, I also take Khader's understanding of adaptive preferences—"nonconductive to basic flourishing"—as needing to be universal in that it is applicable for both oppressed and non-oppressed people (Khader 2001, 42). To clarify: it is not typically the flourishing of the privileged person to which their adaptive preferences are nonconductive. Instead, along the lines that Medina conceptualizes epistemic vices of the privileged, the privileged person's adaptive preferences work in their own favor, and then are often nonconductive to the flourishing of some oppressed persons. The adaptive preferences of the oppressed person, however, are often in an attempt to make the best of the structures under which they live. In this way, adaptive preferences can be both beneficial and harmful in their effects. This is a reason why Khader's distinguishing between *adaptive preferences* and *inappropriately adaptive preferences* may be appropriate, especially when applied to my account. To make this distinction is to articulate the stratification of adaptive preferences under the social imaginary, while still accepting both terms allows room for the concept to be necessarily universal.

One of Aesop's fables which is widely referenced by scholars who have written on adaptive preferences is "The Fox and the Grapes." In this fable, the fox, craving grapes but unable to reach them, decides they are sour. This moral is used to argue that people often alter their preferences based on what is attainable and what is not. The fable, in its original form, may be understood in the context of Nussbaum's anecdote where the fox may be likened to a woman, and the grapes may be likened an abuse-less marriage. Because the woman, like the fox, is trapped with what she has, she simply assumes that her marital abuse is acceptable, unchangeable, part of a woman's fate. However, as I have iterated, what the action of assigning such a fable only to oppressed peoples does is undermine or even refuse their autonomy as agents even further.

A reversal of the fable shows how we might understand an advantaged person as having adaptive preferences, too, and further clarifies how adaptive preferences do not manifest equally from person to person. In this reversal we might say the fox, knowing he is not a fan of grapes from previous encounters

yet having easy access to them, decides the grapes must be sweet. In the original fable, it is clear the fox is being denied something that would contribute to his ‘flourishing’; this denial leads me to liken this fox to a disadvantaged person. In my revised version, the fox is simply making the choice to consume what is available to him; not because he is forced to, but because it became an easily accessible option to him. This fox, then, may be likened to an advantaged person. Both versions display the fox as a distinct agent, and both versions demonstrate adaptive preferences at work at a micro-level. However, as my account recognizes, the effects between the advantaged fox and the disadvantaged fox are unequal, despite their both experiencing adaptive preferences and even in a similar context. In presenting two versions, I characterize both foxes at an agentic base-level. Then, by my philosophical account, the disadvantaged fox gains some level of equality with the advantaged fox. While we still ought to recognize the differences that come from the foxes having to make distinct choices in distinct situations, we have first done the important work of ascribing equality to one’s capacities to exercise agency, and therefore, their identities as agents.

Based on Medina’s discussion of epistemic responsibility, I also argue that our view ought to be “sensitive to context and to social positionality, one that rejects any one-size-fits-all approach, and one that argues... [assessments] have to be done piecemeal, case by case, and not by applying the same analysis to all agents equally” (Medina 2013, 119). Such an approach encourages an understanding that adaptive preferences can be either harmful or beneficial, or both, but also that they tend to reflect the disproportionate harms oppressed groups face. Further, along the lines of Medina’s analysis of meta-lucidity as something we might work towards in closing a harmful gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged, I also see meta-lucidity as a goal in my own framework. The epistemic vices which perpetuate a privileged person’s adaptive preferences must be faced by the privileged person; it is necessary in order to dismantle the disproportionate, harmful effects of the social imaginary. Part of this process, moving towards lucidity, requires improving both self-knowledge and knowledge of others—my account of the social imaginary and adaptive preferences is necessary for looking at others’ places under the social imaginary in comparison to oneself. This account becomes a place where the privileged, who

“have more or stronger epistemic obligations given the epistemic advantages they enjoy,” but often fail to meet these obligations, might be able to see multiple groups up against the same social imaginary (Medina 2013, 187). Then, in this space, work towards developing knowledge of the self and others in fulfilling epistemic obligations may occur.

To deny adaptive preferences are universal is to refuse women some degree of equal footing they might possibly have with men while a great amount of equality is already precluded through their oppression. It is to say to those women *your agency depends solely on something you cannot control*, which is perhaps contradictory in and of itself. Further, for the privileged person to say to the oppressed person, *I understand the decisions you make are informed by a detailed complex of social investments and contexts born from the social imaginary, and that they are nonetheless agentic decisions*, is meaningful, but is so much more so when he also says: *and my own decisions are also informed by the social imaginary, and so what we share in common is not necessarily what we face under that social imaginary, but the ability to adapt our preferences and decisions as they suit us within it*. It is precisely this sort of thinking which leads to a framework dedicated to avoiding women’s or any disadvantaged person’s agencies being undermined.

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Zeno's Puzzle of Place in Aristotle's *Physics*
Andrew Jansen

Zeno's Puzzle of Place

Zeno's puzzle of place issues a fundamental question in the study of place that blocks the way to Aristotle's subsequent discussion of motion, void, and cosmology. It asks where place is, since if place is, it must be somewhere. Aristotle mentions the puzzle by name only twice³⁰, but from his terse response, much follows about the ways of being somewhere and the relationship of a limit to what it limits, as well as an indirect refutation of Eleatic monism. Zeno posits the puzzle in order to defend the theory that all things are one³¹. The threat to Zeno's theory, and the impetus for the puzzle, is that all things can't be one, since there would be nothing to contain the One, or no place for the One to be.

Aristotle mentions Zeno's puzzle in the first chapter in his book on place, among the list of challenges to the existence of place. After discussing place's relationship to matter and form, which later pertains to the solution of the puzzle³², Aristotle returns to the puzzle. He states it shortly: "Again, if place itself is one of the things that are, it will be somewhere; Zeno's puzzle needs to be given some account of: if everything that is, is in a place, clearly there will be a place of place too, and so *ad infinitum*"³³. Zeno argues that a place, being somewhere, must be in a place, and that place too, and so on. Aristotle agrees that places are somewhere³⁴, and so he must deal with this puzzle to validate his theory of place.

³⁰ Aristotle, *Physics* 209a23 and *Physics* 210b22

³¹ Morison p. 3

³² See below under "Contradicting Commentary"

³³ Aristotle, *Physics* 209a23-25

³⁴ Aristotle, *Physics* 208b1-8

Aristotle gives us a shorthand version of the argument, but he takes it seriously enough to include it in his preliminary investigation of place. He tackles these challenges before he defines place, which signals that their solutions will show us what place's definition requires. To fully recover Zeno's puzzle, and the significance Aristotle saw in it, we must reconstruct its argumentation and clarify the danger it poses to a theory of place. Zeno's argumentation proceeds by hypothetical syllogism with three presuppositions:

1. If something is, then it is in a place
2. Place is
3. Nothing can be in itself³⁵
4. Since place is, it must be in a place (prop. 1 and prop. 2, modus ponens)
5. There is a place of a place distinct from the first place (prop. 4 and prop. 3, conjunction)
6. This second place must be in a place (prop. 5 and prop. 4, modus ponens)
7. *Ad infinitum*—Therefore, every place is in an infinite number of places

The conclusion of the syllogism leads to an infinite regress. Zeno tries to show that if you believe that place exists, you must believe in this absurd consequence of an infinite regress of places where only one place should be: therefore, place doesn't exist. The syllogism follows a *reductio ad absurdum*, where, since the argument reduces itself to absurdity, it follows it must have a false premise.

The point of the argument and the force of its absurdity appear in the containment theory of place. For something to be in a place means for something to have a space that holds it at

³⁵ This premise, while only implicit in Zeno's puzzle, is defended by Aristotle in *Physics* 210a25-210b20. This is another sign that Aristotle took the puzzle seriously, and found its solution useful, since he went to trouble of legitimizing it. The defense of this premise was too lengthy to include in this paper.

its limits³⁶. A body's³⁷ limits are the points where it ceases to extend, or "...the first thing surrounding each body..."³⁸. The limit of a lake, for example, lies at the surface of the water, and at the edges of the bank: wherever water stops, so does the lake, and there is its limit, which coincides with its place. A body's place coincides with its limits³⁹, and so where a body stops, there a place contains it. Zeno's puzzle creates a regress where the limit of a body must be contained in a place, which also has a limit contained by another place, and this is endlessly succeeded by another place that contains its limit. Thus, each successor would be the container of its predecessor.

Zeno's argument invalidates the way place is supposed to contain material objects. In the puzzle, each place is contained by the next place in the regress, and so every object needs to be ringed by an endlessly expanding series of places. Each successive place would increase in size in order to contain the place before it. This would make every body infinitely distant from everything else, since the endlessly expanding series of places would push a larger and larger ring of places around the body it contains⁴⁰. Each successor would surround the predecessor's limit, and the regress of containment would spawn an infinite limit around every body.

This is especially problematic for Aristotle, as since he holds that matter is infinitely divisible, every body has infinitely divisible material parts. So the infinite places of those infinite parts lie potentially within the place of every body. Matter can't be composed of

³⁶ Aristotle, *Physics*, Hussey p. 103, footnote for 209a2

³⁷ In this paper I use "body" and "object" interchangeably, as both are used in various translations of Aristotle.

³⁸ Aristotle, *Physics* 209b1, Hussey p. 22

³⁹ "...the primary [place] should be neither less nor greater (than the object)..." Aristotle, *Physics* 211a1-2

⁴⁰ Morrison, p 9 "The infinite sequence $\{p_1, p_2, p_3, \dots, p_n, \dots\}$ is such that each p_i is in p_{i+1} . On the assumption that the relation 'x is in y' in question is some sort of circumscriptive containing [...] what we obtain is effectively a list of ever more remote containers of anything in p_1 ."

infinite limits stacked on limits, since limits are where matter stops, and this would compose material bodies out of emptiness. And because of the regress, the eternal expansion of limits would make contact between bodies impossible. Without the contact of bodies, it would be impossible to combine bodies into compounds. This would make the composition of matter from parts into wholes also impossible, which would invalidate Aristotle's theory of elements too. This puzzle, if true, jeopardizes Aristotle's entire system of physics.

Place seems to needlessly multiply the number of entities in the world. We might say there is a cat on a mat, but place makes us say that there is a place of the cat and a place of the mat, and that the cat's place is in the mat's place. Zeno sneers and asks—so if the mat is the place of a place, where is the place of a place of a place—and shouldn't the place of a place of a place have a place... Suddenly place seems like a conceptual redundancy. This is the arguments force: holding that place exists yields the absurd consequence of infinite places. Zeno's puzzle shows place spawning conceptually redundant entities that can endlessly proliferate.

Aristotle's Response

Aristotle denies Proposition 1 of the puzzle and gives a list of eight different ways of being in something, with place being the last, but most proper. Aristotle tries to show through the different ways of being in, that Zeno confuses two sense of being somewhere⁴¹. He follows his own advice in the *Topics*, where he recommends examining the definitions of the terms an argument uses to find its weaknesses⁴². Zeno's puzzle hinges on the absurdity of place being in another place—but is place really somewhere the same way that an object

⁴¹ Morison, p. 13

⁴² "If you are not well equipped with an argument against the thesis, look among the definitions, real or apparent, of the thing before you, and if one is not enough, draw upon several. For it will be easier to attack people when committed to a definition" Aristotle, *Topics* 111b13-15

is? Aristotle argues that place cannot be somewhere the way that bodies can be in place—rather places are somewhere in a different sense. Aristotle says that place is somewhere “...in the way in which health is in hot things as a state, and the hot is in the body as a property”⁴³. This corresponds to the list’s fifth way of being in something, “...as health is in hot and cold things, and, generally, as form is in the matter...”⁴⁴

The fifth way of being in exemplifies how something can be somewhere without being in a place. Where is the place of properties or states? Take health, which is everywhere in a healthy, human body. The term ‘healthy’ attaches to the entire person’s being. We could not call someone healthy, for example, in virtue of being healthy in just a part of themselves. Where health is, pervades every part of the body’s place. It would be absurd to point to a single location in the body and say that there is where its health resides. There’s no limit to how many states or properties a body can have, since they don’t take up space like how a body does.

Properties appear and behave differently than bodies in space. Properties take their places in bodies, and can coexist with infinite, other properties. They exist in extension, and can be said to be somewhere⁴⁵, but they don’t take up a place like a body does.

Contradicting Commentary

But the sense in which place is in something has been disputed. Aquinas interprets that place is in something “...as an accident is in a subject, insofar as place is the terminus of that which it contains”⁴⁶. Aristotle defines ‘accident’ as “what attaches to each thing in virtue of itself but is not in its substance, as having its angles equal to two right angles attaches to the

⁴³ Aristotle, *Physics* 210b25-26

⁴⁴ Aristotle, *Physics* 210a20-21

⁴⁵ In the bodies in which they instantiate.

⁴⁶ Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle’s Physics*, Lecture 4, 443

triangle”⁴⁷. ‘Accident’ here is used the same way as ‘property’ in Hussey’s translation of the *Physics*, which is somewhere the way that form is in matter, or the way that states instantiate in a body.

But further on in *Physics*, Aristotle says “And place will even be somewhere, though not in the sense of ‘in a place’, but as the limit is in what is limited”⁴⁸. From this, other commentators like Morison have drawn that Aristotle takes place to be somewhere as a part is in the whole, since place identical to the innermost limit of whatever surrounds a body; place is thus a part of the surround⁴⁹. Even Aquinas later writes that place is in something “...as a point is in a line and as a surface is in a body”⁵⁰. This seems to support Morison’s interpretation of place being somewhere as a part in a whole—but it also directly contradicts what Aquinas writes earlier, where place is somewhere “...as accident is in a subject...”⁵¹. But this relationship of a point to a line is different than that of a part to a whole. A point is not a part of a line, since it lacks magnitude—similarly, a limit is not a part of the surround, since it lacks extension. This relationship will later help show that Aristotle and Aquinas hold that place is somewhere in the fifth sense of being in something, as a property.

Interpreting place as a part in a whole contradicts what Aristotle writes about place’s relationship to matter and form. He states outright that “The form and the matter are not separable from the object, but the place may be...”⁵². Interpretations that call place a part of a whole make place a piece of the body that contains it. This resembles a theory of place as “the form and shape of each things, by which the magnitude, and the matter of the

⁴⁷ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1025a31

⁴⁸ Aristotle, *Physics* 212b27

⁴⁹ Morison, p. 15

⁵⁰ Aquinas, Lecture 8, 491

⁵¹ Aquinas, Lecture 4, 443

⁵² Aristotle, *Physics* 209b23-24

magnitude, are bounded...”⁵³, which is the very theory of place that Aristotle goes on to refute in the chapter before he discusses Zeno’s puzzle. Either Aristotle contradicts himself, or his commentators misinterpret him.

Can the limit be in what is limited as a part is in a whole? The commentators must be wrong, since a limit lacks extension, and resides in a body independent of its form and matter. A limit relates to what it limits completely unlike how “...the finger is in the hand...”⁵⁴, the paradigm case of part to whole. Rather the limit resembles a property of a body, not as a part of its substance, form, or matter, but as something that belongs to it in virtue of where it ceases to extend. Aquinas’s example of how points belong to a line illustrates this principle. A point is a property, not a part, of a line. A line cannot be composed of points, since geometry defines a line as the shortest distance between two points. And while there are potentially infinite points on a line, this is not the same as these points composing the line. A line is the distance *between* points: it starts and stops at the edge of the points but does not reside in them. So a point could not compose a line because a point is a limit. It indicates an end, or a ceasing of where the line extends. Likewise, in virtue of being a limit, a place cannot be a part of a body, since it’s absurd to say a part of the body is where it stops being a body. Aristotle again says outright that place is “...not anything pertaining to the object...”⁵⁵, but rather “...it should be left behind by each object [when the object moves] and be separable [from it] ...”⁵⁶. Thus a place must be somewhere in the fifth sense, as a property, and not in the first sense.

⁵³ Aristotle, *Physics* 209b3-4

⁵⁴ Aristotle, *Physics* 210a15

⁵⁵ Aristotle, *Physics* 211a1

⁵⁶ Aristotle, *Physics* 211a3

Aristotle's own example for how a place can be somewhere shows this as well. Aristotle says that a place isn't somewhere like a body is in a place, but rather "...in the way in which health is in hot things as a hot, and the hot is in the body as a property"⁵⁷. Aristotle specifies that that a place is somewhere in the way a property or a state is somewhere, and his example of health in hot things⁵⁸ corresponds to the fifth way of being in's example, of "...health is in hot and cold things..."⁵⁹. To apply the first way of being in, of part and whole, to place misinterprets the relationship of limit to what is limited, which is actually another example of a property's relationship to what instantiates it.

Conclusion

The solution to Zeno's puzzle opens the door to a further investigation of place. But interpreting Aristotle's solution incorrectly can make him seem to contradict himself. Aristotle is actually quite consistent, and his consistency corresponds to his larger theory of how properties relate to substances. An understanding of his solution helps to clarify the physical consequences of his metaphysical system, and this clarification in turn explains how Aristotle's empiricism responded to Eleatic monism's attempts to prove that all things are one—a metaphysical doctrine that invalidates any study of physics.

⁵⁷ *Physics* 210b25-27

⁵⁸ Health relates to hot things through the Hippocratic theory of medicine, which held health to be a proportion of hot and cold.

⁵⁹ *Physics* 210a20

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A Limerick by Professor Gregory Landini

Principia Follies

A logician amending *Principia*
Repented his cardinal insipia
With numbers descending
And emendments offending
He never quite solved its atypia.

If you want to learn about types
The rules, ambiguity: yipes!
In confronting a shriek
Recall Kant's *Kritik*
And e'er after you'll feel its delights.

Moral Judgements as Hypothetical Imperatives?

Samuel Lampe

In “Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives”, Philippa Foot argues that it may be reasonable to think of moral judgements as hypothetical imperatives instead of the typical assumption that they are categorical imperatives. She borrows this distinction from Immanuel Kant, who used these terms to distinguish moral judgements from other types of imperatives. In this context, a hypothetical imperative means a recommendation for an action that would be useful in getting to some goal, whereas a categorical imperative is a recommendation for an action that doesn't pay attention to the goals the recipient of the recommendation has. To argue against this idea about how we use moral terms, I'll first describe a trait unique to hypothetical imperatives; that we would retract them if we found out the people we recommend them to don't have the goals we think they do. Then, I'll show that we would not retract moral judgements in that situation, showing that these moral judgements cannot be captured as a hypothetical imperatives. Lastly, I will consider what the implications are of Foot's assertion that the categorical imperative structure of moral judgements doesn't “make sense” in the context of objective moral truths.

What trait does a hypothetical imperative have that a categorical imperative doesn't? Hypothetical imperatives assume that there is some goal we desire, and categorical imperatives don't. If it turned out that we did not in fact have the goal assumed in a hypothetical imperative, we would think the hypothetical imperative would not apply to us. Imagine that I'm driving home from school one day and notice that the road my roommate takes to get to work is blocked. I mention this to him, and say “you should take that other road, Smith street, to get to work

tomorrow.” Suppose, however, that he responds by saying “actually, I’m not going into work tomorrow. I quit that job.” Shouldn’t I be inclined to retract my judgement? If he really isn’t going to work, why would the recommendation apply to him? This hypothetical imperative assumes that my roommate has the goal of getting to work, but when we find out that he doesn’t have that goal anymore, the recommendation is nullified.

Do we think this would apply to moral judgements? If we find out that someone doesn’t share our moral goals, do moral judgements stop applying? Imagine that there’s some eccentric billionaire who has an excess of money but doesn’t give any of it to charity or do anything but indulge herself with it. We could say to this person “you ought to give some of your money to charity.” Suppose that she responds by saying “I don’t care about charities.” Would we be at all inclined to retract our statement? Would we think, like in the case of my housemate, that this recommendation no longer applies to her? I don’t think so. We would likely feel like insisting something to the effect of “well, you still *ought* to give to charity,” and possibly add “plus, you *ought* to want to give to charities.” A hypothetical imperative structure of moral judgements would be unable to capture this. If the recommendation assumed a goal, it would be that of helping charities, but the fact that the recommendation still applies after we know the other person doesn’t care means that it can’t be a hypothetical imperative, and the only alternative is a categorical imperative. This example could trivially be expanded to any moral judgement, and I doubt any of us would be inclined to rescind any one of them after realizing the person listening doesn’t care.

Foot seems to agree that this second use of ‘ought’ in this response, that the person “ought to care,” is a non-hypothetical use of the moral ought.⁶⁰ She does not admit, however,

⁶⁰ Philippa Foot, “Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives,” *The Philosophical Review* 81, no. 1 (1972): 315, accessed February 25, 2019, doi:10.2307/2184328.

that “the fact that [one] ought to have certain ends as in itself reason to adopt them” .⁶¹ A person may be moral, but is not so for that reason, and if she is not moral, that fact that she ought to do an action doesn’t give her “any reason to trouble [her] head over this or any other moral demand” .⁶² What’s unclear, however, is why Foot thinks this supports the hypothetical imperative structure of moral judgements. Suppose that she’s correct, and the fact that someone “ought to have certain ends” is not a good enough reason to adopt them. This could be explained by Foot’s semantic theory, but an alternative explanation would be a metaphysical one. Perhaps the reason this kind of moral judgement is not enough to give someone reasons to act is that there is nothing in the world which has the power to give someone those reasons. In other words, maybe there are no objectively true moral imperatives. Foot would need to say more on how this observation supports the semantic theory she proposes, and since that is not the only conclusion that can explain this assertion, it’s not obvious that we need to accept it.

One way to illustrate the difference between moral judgements and hypothetical imperatives more clearly is to compare what happens when we attempt to convince someone not to reject one. If a person rejects a hypothetical imperative like “you should chew with your mouth closed,” we give her reasons which benefit her interests. We might say “people won’t be grossed out,” or “you’re more likely to be invited back to dinner.” However, if someone rejects a moral judgement, we don’t give them reasons that play on preexisting desires. We describe the situation in the hopes that it will *inspire a new desire* in her. If a person rejects the moral judgement “you ought to give to the poor,” we show them examples of poverty; people who have no home, people who have to forego food in order to buy their parent’s medicine, people who need to decide whether to go to the doctor to treat an injury or save the money to pay next

⁶¹ Ibid., 315.

⁶² Ibid., 315.

month's rent. Our hope is that this moves the person to pity, that the situation itself has some kind of to-be-prevented-ness apparent in it. A hypothetical imperative takes for granted an existing goal. Only a categorical imperative is open to the possibility that a fact can have a reasons-giving or motivating force all its own.

Perhaps there are alternative ways we could explain our insistence in these moral situations. One explanation could be that we assume that the person we converse with, deep down, already has the same goals as us, and that we can possibly get her to realize it if we insist hard enough. This may be true, and in many cases this approach would be functionally identical to a categorical imperative, while really being a hypothetical one.

What happens, however, when a long conversation shows us that the person we are talking with seems to have a fundamentally different set of desires as us? Suppose a liberal and a conservative are discussing the issue of gun control, and that both of them have an equally complete understanding of the data, and they both know that instituting the policy will save X number of lives per year, but will cause Y number of people to be unsuccessful in defending themselves per year. The liberal might say "I'm willing to trade the ability of Y people to defend themselves for X lives," and the conservative may respond "I'm willing to trade X lives for the ability of Y people to defend themselves." The liberal could still say "you ought to support gun control, and you ought to care more about X people being killed than Y people being able to defend themselves," and the conservative could respond similarly. Even though the worldviews are fundamentally different, and we know that these people do not share the same desires or values, this form of moral judgement still seems like a correct use of the term 'ought' (whether or not you actually agree with the assertion). A hypothetical imperative could not be operating

under the assumption that the people in this example could share the same fundamental goal, and so this judgement should not be considered one.

Given the above examples, it seems like moral judgements probably take the form of categorical imperatives. What should we think, then, when Foot says that by subscribing to this view of moral imperatives, we are “relying on an illusion”, or that “it is unclear that the doctrine of the categorical imperative even makes sense”?⁶³ Suppose that she’s right about this. What does that mean for our moral conversation? Does it really suggest that the hypothetical imperative theory is better? Let’s ask ourselves, what is the point of this conversation? We are discussing moral semantics, what moral terms mean. Does it really matter to that conversation whether the categorical imperative makes sense? Not all human conversations are meaningful. When medicine became advanced enough to refute humourism, did we say to ourselves “well, we must be defining ‘humors’ incorrectly, because the current model doesn’t make sense”? No! We rejected it because it was flawed. When we discover that a theory is wrong, we get rid of it. If the concept of a categorical imperative doesn’t make sense, or is illusory, then moral judgements, being categorical imperatives, don’t make sense and are illusory. The result of this is not an alternate semantic position, but a denial of the truth of any moral judgements, since nonsense and illusions shouldn’t be labeled as true. If we accept Foot’s assertions, therefore, we would become moral nihilists. Given the above examples, either we need to accept that conclusion or find a way to make sense of categorical imperatives.

⁶³ Ibid., 312-315.

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Justifiable Terrorism

Maggie Martinson

Terrorism is a growing issue in today's society and as these threats grow in number and have become more visible to the public through media, the morality of terrorism has become an important topic to investigate. Both terrorist acts and organizations are seen as *prima facie* wrong by most people and governments, but in this paper I will provide exceptions to this belief. In this paper I will show that terrorism can be morally justified and could even be morally obligatory. To do this, I will first define terrorism in general and discuss why it is typically seen as unjustifiable. After defining the term I will give general rules and various examples in which I believe acts of terrorism could be morally justified or obligatory. From this, I will attempt to quantify the severity of the terrorism and the injustice it is trying to stop to decide when terrorism would be justified. After providing rules and examples, I will provide possible objections to terrorism in general and in particular to these cases. I will counter these objections with further arguments for the moral justification of terrorism within certain parameters. I will end the paper by summarizing my findings once more and explaining how these findings show that terrorism can be morally justifiable in certain cases.

Defining terrorism is very difficult and creates a lot of disagreement on what does or does not constitute as terrorism. One way to describe it is that it is politically motivated, targets non-combatants, is violent, uses fear to impact the actions of a secondary group, and is carried out by non-state actors (Frowe, 183). While this does describe what is commonly thought of as terrorism, it does not encompass all forms of it. Some argue that terrorism does not have to be politically motivated and that it can be carried out by states. The idea that states can commit terrorist acts is controversial but events such as the nuclear bombing of Japan in WWII could be

rightly classified as terrorism. While the United States wanted to end the war, they did so in a way that would cause panic in Japanese citizens and force the leaders of the country to surrender to save their non-combatants. Whether or not this incident was justified, the United States committed it, showing that terrorism is not a black and white subject that can be easily defined.

Terrorism is seen as presumptively wrong for many reasons. Violence is seen by many as something that should not be utilized unless it is necessary and the last resort such as in self-defense, but violence in terrorism is often seen as unnecessary. The bigger issue is that this violence is carried out onto innocent people. The victims of the attacks are not political figures or combatants and the terrorist's main goal is to strike fear into people because their choice is random within specific groups. In war, there are specific rules to not target non-combatants and when terrorists do target them it is seen as unjust. The terrorist might not see the group that their victims are a part of as innocent but they know that the people they kill would be seen as innocent to others within the group. While it would be easier to say that no terrorism can be morally justified because of the innocent lives lost, one must look into cases and see that there are instances in which it could be justifiable.

Philosophers have attempted to create guidelines with conditions that could lead to moral justification of terrorism, including Burleigh T. Wilkins. Wilkins provides three conditions to justify terrorism which are:

1. One is defending oneself.
2. One is selective whenever possible.
3. One directs terrorist activity only against those guilty of injustice (Corlett, 170).

While I agree with Wilkins that terrorism can be morally justifiable, I disagree with the conditions he states are necessary to justify it. For his first point, I agree that defense is

necessary, but that defending others should also be permitted. Some groups are not capable of defending themselves and if it was necessary for a group defending another to use terrorism it could be morally permissible. I agree with his second point, but believe more is required to make terrorism justifiable. I disagree with his third point, as one of the defining characteristics of terrorism is that it targets the innocent, which is in direct contradiction of Wilkins's final point. Wilkins does a relatively good job at creating a starting point to justify terrorism but both different and more specific conditions than he has utilized are necessary.

I have defined terrorism and explained why it is typically seen as unjustifiable and will now lay out specific guidelines that if followed would justify terrorism morally. These conditions are:

1. The person or group that person belongs to must be committing an egregious injustice against another group.
2. The group committing the terrorist act or acts must either be defending themselves or another group.
3. The act does not necessarily have to be the last resort but choosing other options would lead to an exponentially higher number of deaths and/or recipients of injustice.
4. Be as selective as possible.
5. The group must kill as few people as possible.

Now that I have listed the five relevant conditions for committing morally justifiable terrorism, I will explain the conditions in further detail. The first relevant guideline in determining whether or not terrorism can be justified is that a person or group must be committing an egregious injustice against another group. This could be a government or a

societal group committing an injustice on a disadvantaged group such as women, the homosexual population, or ethnic minority group. Historically these groups, along with others, have had horrific injustices committed against them that they have not been able to defend against properly. The fact that a group is wronged is not the only guideline that must be met to justify terrorism morally, but it is the first condition that must be met.

A second condition that must be met in order to morally justify terrorism is that the group committing the terrorist act or acts must either be acting in self-defense or defense of others. This is important because without this condition, it would be possible to commit these attacks for morally impermissible reasons. As terrorism is such an extreme form of attack, it should be restricted to being utilized in extreme situations where the group is being targeted unjustly. For example, if a group is being systematically killed off by their government, they should be allowed to defend themselves. If they are unable to defend themselves, another group should be allowed to intervene for humanitarian purposes in order to protect the group suffering the injustice. This condition is vital to justifying terrorism morally along with the other four conditions.

The third condition necessary for committing justifiable terrorism is that by not committing the act or acts, an exponentially higher number of people would either die or be further denied their basic human rights. Terrorism does not necessarily have to be the last resort for it to be morally permissible. For example, even if a group were able to employ military action and resources to fight against the unjust oppressors, it may cost far more time and lives that could be saved by committing one act of terrorism. While terrorism should not be used lightly, it should be a valid option if it could save an exponentially higher number of lives or stop the injustice being committed far more quickly for the victims.

The fourth condition is to be as selective as possible about the people killed in the terrorist attack or attacks. There are targets that should be morally impermissible such as places that are known for having children, sick people, or other defenseless groups. While targeting these types of groups may lead to the desired results from the other side at the moment, it is not a long-term solution. This will only create even more anger and distrust between the two groups, as well as lead to the deaths of children, the ill, and others that are not seen as viable targets in any situation. While it may be difficult to be selective about terrorism, places must be picked that will create a maximum amount of fear with a minimum number of deaths. Government buildings are an example of places that terrorism could be considered more morally permissible than an elementary school. This condition is difficult because terrorism is defined by many as the killing of innocents and is therefore not selective by nature but there should still be moral considerations made about where and who must be the victims of these attacks.

The fifth condition is that the group must kill as few people as possible to achieve its self-defense. Proportionality is required for a war to be considered just and should be utilized in morally permissible terrorism as well. Killing thousands of people to save ten is not proportionate or necessary. It is possible that the group committing the act would be angry and would want to kill as many people as possible, but this would not be just or permissible. Defending oneself or one's group is important against an unjust group, but it will only add violence that will hurt the process of peace and rebuilding that should be the end goal. Without forgiveness at the end of conflict, it will only continue. This will cause more deaths and will extend the conflict, which will only hurt the innocent people on both sides. It may be difficult to know how many people must die to stop their group from unjustly harming those of the other disadvantaged group, but it should be the ultimate goal to limit the number of deaths that occur

on either side. This condition is extremely important and is one that could be abused if not monitored and planned out carefully.

These five conditions must all be met in order to justify terrorism morally. While it may be difficult, there are many situations that would have the potential to

One real life example of terrorism that many argue should not be considered terrorism is the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan to end World War Two. This clearly meets the definition of terrorism as hundreds of thousands of non-combatant Japanese citizens died as a way to scare the Japanese government into surrendering the war. Calling this attack terrorism makes the United States look bad, as terrorism is seen as morally impermissible. Under the conditions I have laid out though, one could argue that the bombings were morally permissible terrorist attacks. The first condition is met because the Japanese were at war with the Axis Powers in WWII, which were actively killing millions of Jewish people and other disadvantaged Europeans, as well as committing many war crimes of their own. The second condition was met because the U.S. was defending itself and the Allies from Japan as they refused to surrender after Germany did. The third condition was met, questionably. Over one hundred thousand Japanese citizens died because of the bombings but if the United States would have invaded Japan instead, there was the potential for a much higher number of deaths brought on by the war of both combatants and non-combatants. The fourth condition is another condition that is difficult to justify, as entire cities were killed. These were not Japan's most populated cities though and were selected based on military advantage, and would be considered met. The final condition is met as well as the second bomb was only deployed after Japan did not surrender after the first bombing. This is an example that could be argued for or against, but I believe that it was both terrorism and morally justified.

An interesting question that arises from the Hiroshima and Nagasaki example is whether actual terrorist groups could ever be morally justifiable. In the WWII example, the terrorist act was carried out by the United States, which is not typically viewed as solely a terrorist organization. While it seems intuitive that a terrorist group could never be morally justifiable, there are situations in which I believe they could be. If the group follows the conditions, they would be morally justified. This is unlikely to be seen often in the real world but there could be situations of ongoing injustices performed on a specific group that could conceivably lead to the formation of a group that had the sole purpose of committing terrorist acts to defend the disadvantaged people. Morally justifiable terrorist groups can exist conceptually and in rare circumstances could be applicable in real world situations.

So far in this paper I have defined terrorism, argued against Wilkins' conditions for justifiable terrorism, defined my own, and explained situations in which these conditions could be relevant. I will now discuss possible objections to my view and argue against them. One objection to the view would have to do with the openness of condition three: The act does not necessarily have to be the last resort but choosing other options would lead to an exponentially higher number of deaths and/or recipients of injustice. One plausible objection to this condition is that it does not provide specific numbers or ratios to guide the number of people that can be justifiably killed. While I understand the issue with not giving exact numbers, that would not be realistic for real world application. Unique situations call for unique examinations and decisions. The conditions provided are as comprehensive as possible without needing to go into every specific example that exact numbers or ratios should be included in the conditions to justify terrorism. This condition is not being used to show any specific mathematical proportions, but rather is used as a way to deter from pointless killing.

A second objection to morally permissible terrorism is that terrorism is never justifiable because it target innocents, which is inherently wrong. While it is important not to needlessly kill innocents, there are some situations in which it would be obviously morally unjust not to. As an extreme example, if killing thirty innocent people in a terrorist attack were to save the lives of five million people, it should be morally obligatory to kill those people. Killing versus letting die is a controversial concept because it is difficult to decide at what point it would be worth killing one over letting a number of others die. Most people would have a certain point that they would decide killing was morally obligatory and this is where the argument for just terrorism would come in. Terrorism should never be a widely used tactic because it does cause so much harm and loss of innocent lives, but there are situations that justifiable terrorism is by far the most proportionate and lifesaving strategy.

A very important objection that could be made is that justifying terrorism is a slippery slope that would lead to unjust terrorists using justifiable terrorist acts to claim that their actions are morally permissible. While this is a valid objection, unjust terrorists already believe that what they are doing is just. The implementation of these conditions would not change the behavior of unjust terrorists. They often act out of radical religious or political views and would not change their plans to fit conditions created as an international standard guide to meet moral justification. Unjust terrorists are criminals and murderers that do not follow laws, and while they could use the conditions for morally justifiable terrorism as a talking point, they likely did not get their plans because of them. The conditions would be able to operate as a standard to moderate terrorism, which is a serious issue in the world today. They would help guide groups in their decisions of how to act and under what circumstances to lead to the fewest number of deaths while also being able to defend themselves by utilizing terrorism.

Throughout this paper I have argued in favor of morally justifiable terrorism. It is important to discuss what this would look like, as terrorism has been a problem in the past and likely will continue to be in the future. Even states have participated in acts of terror in the past so it is vital to create international standards that can guide states and other groups in the future. These standards could be used to ensure that as many innocent lives as possible are protected and to punish states or groups that choose not to follow them. Terrorism must always be taken very seriously and should be utilized with great caution by all considering it. The five conditions that I have argued for in this paper have the ability to heavily restrict terrorism in a morally justifiable sense but not overrule it as an option entirely. These conditions could be used to moderate acts of terror around the world that inevitably will occur. Overall, throughout this paper I have concluded that while difficult, terrorism can be morally justified and should not be dismissed as a valid strategy in extreme situations.

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Modified Conversational Score and Ambiguous Propositions

Kate Lohnes

Introduction

In this paper, I aim to provide a synthesized account of language that provides a foundation for understanding miscommunication between speakers. To do so, I will provide a brief summary of Wittgenstein's language-games as depicted in the *Philosophical Investigations*. I will then provide a brief summary of Lewis' concept of conversational score as depicted in his essay "Scorekeeping in a Language-Game." After summarizing these two distinct but very much related theories, I will argue for a synthesis of the two that can be understood as follows: conversational score need not only be used within language-games (as put forth by Lewis), but also as a manner of determining which language-game ambiguous propositions are potentially partaking in, so as to elicit a response in-line with the conversational score at the point in time that the ambiguous proposition is made. I will also attempt to provide a more accurate account⁶⁴ of the way language functions outside the ideal—utilizing Gricean conversational implicatures and McGowanian conversational exercitives to explore the dynamic, *ad hoc* way conversation ebbs and flows between participants, while still maintaining that there exists a conversational score that functions to presuppose language-games—especially in the context of ambiguous propositions. I also propose that this can result in individualized conversational scores outside of a shared one. I will conclude that this synthesis (Wittgenstein-Lewis-McGowan-Grice) allows for potential insight into how dynamic conversation functions, and how miscommunication can occur.

A (Crudely Brief) Summary of Language-Games

⁶⁴ As Lewis' is far too systematic.

Wittgenstein's language-games are tools by which we can understand the way language is typically used insofar as it is rule-governed.⁶⁵ Language-games function only as a small mode of comparison to language as a whole—but they can be used in the case of this paper to understand how we make *ad hoc* responses to potentially ambiguous propositions.

Different types of language-games can briefly be understood as falling into such categories as “requesting” language-games (in which one participant follows learned rules of language to request something from someone else) or “statement of facts” language-games (in which one participant uses language to present information).⁶⁶

Conversational Score

Lewis introduces the notion of conversational score as a method of providing explanation for presupposed boundaries within a conversation. Conversational score can be understood as the empirical generalizations of behavior and conversational content made by the participants of the conversation which place and shift boundaries of what is “in bounds”⁶⁷ as the conversation progresses.⁶⁸ The placement of boundaries is my primary concern in regard to conversational score.

There are several influences on conversational score described by Lewis, but I am most interested in his “standards of precision”. Lewis utilizes a “flat,” “flatter” example to illustrate how standards of precision can influence conversational score: when someone asks you (in Lewis' case, Peter Unger is the asker) “is the pavement flat?” you will likely respond with “yes.”

⁶⁵ *Philosophical Investigations*, Ludwig Wittgenstein (1986), see §23 for Wittgenstein's introductory definition of language-games.

⁶⁶ There are many types of language-games, but for the scope of this paper I will be relying specifically on these two.

⁶⁷ In regard to the conversation, what is and what is not culturally, socially, informationally, and grammatically acceptable/ pertinent.

⁶⁸ “Scorekeeping in a Language-Game”, David Lewis (1979) pages 345-346.

However, Unger retorts by claiming that your desk is flatter than the pavement which has small bumps, and further that something is likely flatter than your desk, and therefore, by regress, it seems nothing is truly flat. However, as acknowledged by Lewis, this is a change in conversational score—the standards of precision change each time Unger proposes to know something flatter.⁶⁹ The bumps on the pavement were not relevant enough under typical standards of precision to acknowledge as something that would make the pavement less flat. This same understanding can be applied to determination of a language-game, which will be explored after a brief summary of Grice’s conversational implicatures and McGowan’s conversational exercitives.

Grice’s Conversational Implicatures

While the accessibility of Lewis’ baseball account of conversational score is appealing in as much as it is accessible and systematic, it seems to me that it misrepresents the dynamic, improvisational nature of conversation as it truly functions within the world. However, if we complement Lewis’ notion of conversational score with Gricean implicatures and McGowanian exercitives, we are able to maintain the systematicity of Lewis’s account while also remaining charitable to conversation as we experience it—as dynamic and seemingly amorphous.

In order to accomplish this, I will first provide brief overviews of implicatures and exercitives. I will begin with Grice’s conversational implicatures as detailed in “Logic and Conversation.” Crucial to the understanding of conversational implicatures and how they arise is Grice’s notion of the Cooperative Principle (henceforth CP), which (put crudely) asserts that, during a conversation, one must abide by maxims within the categories of Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner⁷⁰. These maxims include (but are not limited to) “Be relevant,” “Do not

⁶⁹ “Scorekeeping in a Language-Game” David Lewis (1979), page 353.

⁷⁰ “Logic and Conversation” Herbert Paul Grice (1989), page 308.

say that for which you lack adequate evidence”, and “Avoid ambiguity.”⁷¹ Implicatures, then, arise due to the assumption that the speaker is abiding by the CP. For example, if I were to ask John “Where does Sally live?” and John were to respond, “Somewhere in the south of France,” I would be able to assume that 1) John is talking about where Sally lives, and 2) John must not know exactly which town Sally lives in (based on the maxims provided above). While John did not say that he doesn’t know exactly which town Sally lives in, it was implicated by his response to my question based on the mutual understanding of the CP (namely: “do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence”).

But how does this apply to conversational score? Well, if we can operate under the assumption that “anyone who cares about the goals that are central to the conversation”⁷² will abide by the CP, and that, in most situations, this applies to all participants of a conversation, then we can consider implicatures as a mode of shifting conversational score and the CP as being a determiner of that score. Utilizing the above example of John and Sally, John’s response implicates that he does not know specifically where Sally lives, outside of the fact the he knows she lives in the south of France. Therefore, the conversational score has shifted to accommodate that fact. Thus, it holds that if I were to then ask John “Well, what’s her address?” it would be considered conversationally odd, or outside the boundaries of the conversational score (as it does not take into account the maxims of the CP and John’s previous proposition). This becomes important to the dynamic understanding of language, as the nature of implicatures holds that they hinge on constant interpretation—whether or not this interpretation be mutual. This allows for a constant shaping and reshaping of conversation based on conversational score, and can also account for misunderstandings/miscommunications on the basis of differently perceived scores.

⁷¹ “Logic and Conversation” Herbert Paul Grice (1989), page 308.

⁷² “Logic and Conversation” Herbert Paul Grice (1989), page 309.

This will be considered further after a brief summary of McGowan’s conversational exercitives—a concept that further helps explain the improvisational nature of conversation.

McGowan’s Conversational Exercitives

McGowan defines conversational exercitives (loosely) as a form of speech act that results in the shifting of the conversational score.⁷³ An important aspect of these conversational exercitives is that they are independent of intention and hearer recognition—if proposition A alters the conversational score, it does so regardless of whether I (the speaker of proposition A) intended to shift the score, and regardless of whether or not the hearer is aware that it did so.⁷⁴ It seems to me that Grice’s implicatures can be considered conversational exercitives, as they shift the conversational score (as was determined above).⁷⁵ Thus, it is not required that the hearer recognize the implicature, as it is not required that the hearer recognize exercitives. This modifies Grice’s conception of conversational implicatures, and is crucial for the dynamic and improvisational account of language, because it allows for a shifting of the score without the hearer recognizing it—which then allows for individualized perceptions of conversational score, leading to improvised responses coming about as a result of a presupposed language-game (creating a foundation for miscommunication).

Conversational Score and Determining Language-Games

Lewis’ “Scorekeeping in a Language-game” is concerned with how conversational score functions within a language-game as a shared thing between both participants. I want to expand this notion and propose that conversational score exists three-fold during a conversation between

⁷³ “Conversational Exercitives” Mary Kate McGowan (2004), page 99.

⁷⁴ “Conversational Exercitives” Mary Kate McGowan (2004), pages 105-6.

⁷⁵ To accomplish this, I looked only at the standards of precision, but there are a number of other ways conversational implicatures can shift the conversational score. See “Logic and Conversation” for more information.

two people⁷⁶: two individualized scores (one for each participant) and one score that is shared between them. I also want to establish that the conversational score works to determine what type of language-game the participants are involved in—which aids in improvising a response to an ambiguous proposition, allowing for a more dynamic, individualized understanding of conversation.⁷⁷ For the sake of this argument, an ambiguous proposition can be understood as a proposition whose language-game is not easily determined without a previous conversational score (conversational score being: empirical generalizations of behavior and conversational content up until the point of the ambiguous proposition which—as determined above—now includes the CP and is shifted by use of conversational implicatures as conversational exercitives).

Let us imagine the following proposition and its surrounding context:

It is February 15th. Speaker A and Speaker B are romantically involved. Speaker A is noticeably upset. Speaker A says: “You know, Pierre got Quinn flowers for Valentine’s Day.”

Speaker A makes a statement of fact, but is surely not participating in a “statement of facts” language-game. How do we explain this intuition systematically? Well, we must utilize the above notion of conversational score and conversational implicatures. The conversational score includes the context of the situation, that Speaker A and B are romantically involved, and that the day before was Valentine’s Day. If we assume (as we should) that Speaker A is following the CP, and thus only providing relevant information, the proposition made must be relevant to the conversation and thus the conversational score. Say Speaker A continues the conversation by

⁷⁶ For the sake of brevity I will only be considering a conversation between two people, but believe that this same concept can be applied to a conversation with any number of participants.

⁷⁷ Rather than functioning within a language-game, as proposed by Lewis—which forces a view of conversation that is far too clean and tidy to account for the majority of conversations.

saying “You never do anything for me.” This proposition shifts the conversational score in order to make the two propositions related per the CP (in Lewis’ terms, the saliency of the flower anecdote would align with the ambiguous “anything”⁷⁸). But how does Responder B likely determine how to respond to such an ambiguous proposition as “You never do anything for me”? Well, utilizing the understanding of conversational implicatures as exercitives, one could potentially map it as so:

t 1 Speaker A utters, “You know, Pierre got Quinn flowers for Valentine’s Day.”

This, in tandem with the relational/temporal context of the situations, helps establish a conversational score—which is not identical between Speaker A and Responder B, but of which there is some overlap.⁷⁹ This diverges from Lewis’ understanding of the conversational score as something completely shared between participants.

t 2 Speaker A utters, “You never do anything for me.”

This is an ambiguous proposition which forces Responder B to infer the language-game being participated in by Speaker A based on an understanding of the conversational score.

t 3 Responder B presupposes the language-game being participated in.

This is done based on Responder B’s understanding of the conversational score (all three components: the shared and the two individualized scores) at that point in time⁸⁰.

t 4 Responder B responds based on this presupposition.

⁷⁸ See 348-49 of “Scorekeeping in a Language-Game” for more information regarding Lewis’ understanding of saliency and conversational score.

⁷⁹ This overlap likely comes in the obvious shared information: the fact that the two are romantically involved, that it is February 15th, and the shared information about the nature of Pierre and Quinn’s relationship. However, things like Speaker A’s intentions are exclusive to Speaker A’s conception of the conversational score at that moment, and Responder B’s interpretation of Speaker

⁸⁰ A’s intention will be exclusively part of their individualized conversational score. Think of it like a Venn diagram: there is a shared portion of the conversational score, and yet also individualized portions as well.

The score seems to imply a requesting language-game—with “You never do anything for me” having the conversational implicature of “I wish you were more invested”⁸¹, which then shifts the score (it functions as an exercitive). Responder B would (if they had been keeping track of the score as we have) likely respond with something along the lines of “I’m sorry, I’ll try harder to remember important days in the future.”

Responder B responds in this way and not by saying, for example, “I have definitely done things for you before” because they acknowledge that Speaker A was not engaging in a statement of facts language-game, and thus the standards of precision are not strict (“never” does not truly mean zero times).⁸² But what if Responder B was under the impression that the language-game Speaker A was participating in was *not* a requesting game, but was indeed a statement of facts game? What if Responder B’s response to the ambiguous proposition was instead, “I did the dishes for you just yesterday!” If Speaker A is aware that they themselves were participating in a requesting language-game, this assertion made by Responder B will likely make Speaker A upset. The synthesis I am proposing helps to reconcile what is really going on when miscommunications such as these occur (as they often do).

Miscommunication and Language-Game Presupposition

As acknowledged earlier, the problem with Lewis’ account of conversational score is that it implies a tidiness in regard to conversation, which is not reflective of conversation as it actually exists. Conversation is improvisational, messy, and results time and time again in miscommunication—as depicted above in the interaction between Speaker A and Responder B.

⁸¹ This is because of the relationship between the two propositions spoken by Speaker A, which, by the CP, must be assumed to be relevant to one another. Since the first was about receiving flowers on valentine’s day, and Speaker A was upset, the ambiguous proposition “You never do anything for me” must be related, and thus has the implicature of “I wish you were more invested like Pierre is with Quinn”.

⁸² Wittgenstein himself will concede that standards of precision such as this (specifically, regarding certainty) will rely on contextual analysis. For more information on this, refer to his paper “On Certainty” (1969).

It seems to me that many instances of miscommunication in this sense can be understood in terms of conversational score. As determined above, the conversational score can differ between two participants in a conversation, as the score can shift without one or more participants being aware. This results in individualized scores as well as a shared score. It is the existence of these individualized scores that accounts for miscommunication, especially in the cases of ambiguous propositions, because participants may interpret the intended language-game of the other participant incorrectly due to different individualized scores. In the case above, if Responder B responded to the ambiguous proposition by saying “I did the dishes for you just yesterday!”, then the standards of precision would work to shift their own individualized conversational score—but perhaps would not affect Speaker A’s score, as A was under the impression that the language-game being played was of a requesting sort. This is how certain instances of miscommunication might arise.⁸³

The synthesis of Wittgenstein and Lewis in this manner (with modifications that rely on Grice and McGowan) helps to better explain potential miscommunications. It also helps to expand the notion of conversational score so that it accounts for the improvisational and messy way language functions in the real world. Ideally, this will provide a foundation for investigation into the nature of ambiguous propositions and miscommunication, utilizing the above account of score and language-games. Further investigation is still needed regarding the improvisational nature of language, but this synthesis may provide some foundation.

⁸³ It is, of course, important to note that though this proposal seems systematic and requiring of reflective thought; the way language truly functions is in seemingly instantaneous interactions. The amount of time between Speaker A uttering their proposition and Responder B responding is far too short for any of this to occur in a state of reflective awareness. I am assuming that this process described above is one that occurs typically outside of reflective awareness—since it is done so often it becomes a non-reflective act, it becomes a second nature to language-speakers.

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A Recommended Reading List by Jessica Davis

Mind if I Check You Out? : Philosophical Readings at the UIowa Library

For Readers Interested in Science and Epistemology

The Contents of Visual Experience (2010) - Susanna Siegel

Susanna Siegel is the Edgar Pierce Professor of Philosophy at Harvard University. She is best known for her work on the philosophy of mind and research on perception. In *The Contents of Visual Experience*, Siegel expands on the idea of the ‘contents of perception’, or in other words, the idea that each person experiences perception in their subjective point of view. Siegel proposes in her thesis that the contents of visual experience can be inaccurate and therefore debated in what she calls *The Rich Content View*. In her account that informs the field of cognitive neuroscience of vision, she addresses the questions that remain about the relationship between consciousness of objects and their role in the contents of experience by distinguishing perception and sensation on the bases of causation.

For Readers Interested in Psychology and Phenomenology

A Philosophy of Pain (2009) - Arne Johan Vetlesen, trans. John Irons

Arne Johan Vetlesen is a Norwegian professor of philosophy at the University of Oslo. His research mainly focuses on ethics and social philosophy. In *A Philosophy of Pain*, Vetlesen examines the “inevitable and essential aspect of the human condition” that is pain and looks to the multitudinous forms that pain that exist in modern life. Beyond his discussions on physical pain, Vetlesen explores pain in other varieties—which include but are not limited to psychic pain, anxiety and depression, and pain in violence culture—to understand the way pain shapes, among other things, societal notions of empathy, choice, and freedom.

For Readers Interested in Social Justice and Political Philosophy

Unmuted: Conversations on Prejudice, Oppression, and Social Justice (2019) - Myisha Cherry

Myisha Cherry is an assistant professor of philosophy at the University of California, Riverside. Her research interest lies at the intersection of moral psychology and social and political philosophy. Cherry’s *Unmuted*, and Cornel West’s Foreword, set forth a much-needed platform for a diverse group of philosophers to work through, explain, and contextualize their work via a series of thought-provoking, casual interviews. Putting philosophy into a modern, sociopolitical context, Cherry creates a space that welcomes all philosophers interested in questions about race, class, gender and more with the opportunity to feel like a part of the conversation.

For Readers Interested in Literary Criticism and Ethics

Proper Names (1996) - Emmanuel Levinas, trans. Michael B. Smith

Ethics and Ontology-driven French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas is perhaps most famous for his philosophy on the ethics of “the Other” —the “Other” is how the self (as in oneself) regards another human being that exists in a different social identity, more or less. In *Proper Names*, Levinas pilots the necessity of understanding the “Other”, and the nomenclature that accompanies that understanding, in the midst of the 20th century’s global and political tensions. He cites his literary contemporaries, such as Paul Celan and Jacques Derrida, as well as Jewish philosophy to reimagine our proximity to language and the way subjectivity can cause us to “lose ourselves,” or, quite optimistically, to find each other.

Featuring: the first chapter of an undergraduate thesis by Jeff Rainwater, who is now a philosophy graduate student at the University of Iowa.

The *Now* Growing Tense(s) of an Indeterminate Future

Jeff Rainwater

Chapter 1: Introduction

The concept of time has long fascinated physicists and philosophers alike. Philosophical questions about the ontology of time date back centuries. There continue today to be certain heavily debated questions regarding time. Here are some of the most vexing among them:

Does time *flow*?

Is time *directional*?

How is time measured?

These questions and many more like them have led many to search for answers as to what time is, whether it is dynamic, whether and how tense in natural languages works. There are many different theories on the nature (ontology) of time. One such theory, Growing Block Theory which states that only the past and present exist, has seen a recent resurgence of interest from philosophers. In this paper, I will address the benefits of the Growing Block theory of time and examine some of the problems that it runs into. In the first chapter, I will address the problem often referred to as the “Now-Now Problem.” The subject at issue here is not merely the question of how we can tell that we are in the present moment. It is also the question of what metaphysically constitutes the growing block’s present (edge of growing, boundary of

becoming). The metaphysical question is rather difficult to articulate exactly, precisely because the Growing Block Theory asserts that there is *growing*. For example, one naturally believes that it used to be that Neil Armstrong's stepping on the moon was at the boundary of this growing block. I will explain in detail the now-now problem and show that it is not truly a problem, but instead is simply a pseudo-problem created by a misinterpretation of the Growing Block Theory. In Chapter 2, I will explain how truthmakers and language of tense play a part in each theory of time and show how Growing Block Theory has an advantage over both Eternalist and Presentist theories of the ontology of time. I will also introduce some logical notations indicating a new way to look at the translation of sentences about time that can be used to more adequately provide an ontologically robust description of the world around us than either Eternalists or Presentists are able to do. Before I get into the issues that Growing Block Theorists run into, it will be helpful to briefly describe each of the three common views of time.

Eternalism

Eternalism is the view of time that sees time as a sort of continuum. The past, present, and future all have the same ontological status. According to the Eternalist view, words like "past", "present", and "future" are nothing more than indexical words; the world is static. The me that is at this point of time (the "present") is typing this paper, but the me that exists at a later point in time (the "future") is reviewing the final product. Both are equal parts of the totality of myself. According to Eternalism, each point in time that I exist contains "temporal parts" of me. Eternalists use the idea of slices of time that are consecutive to describe what there is at any given time. Eternalism's idea of time is sometimes described as a loaf of bread with each slice being a different slice of space-time. The world is static and unchanging according to the Eternalist.

Eternalism has long been a popular view for many reasons. The idea that everything that exists at any time exists “now” is not a difficult one to imagine. Eternalism is compatible with many monotheistic religions that have an all-knowing deity. It is also compatible with the ideas of physics made popular by Einstein’s Special Theory of Relativity (STR). Briefly, this theory states that there is no absolute space and time. What we experience depends on our frame of reference. These different frames of reference mean that we can perceive things at different time than others around us. To use the bread example, it would mean that while one slice is straight across the loaf, another may be at an angle. Eternalism is able to account for this because no matter how you slice the bread, the frame of reference will always be wholly contained within the loaf. The same can’t be said of the Growing Block View.

Eternalism is not without its own problems. The idea of every point in time being ontologically on par with the others means that every point after this point is already part of what exists. This is dangerously close to a hard-deterministic view that many would find unpalatable. If everything I will ever do is already happening, what is the point in me making good choices today? It would seem that no matter what I do now the future has already been set in stone.

Eternalism also has a hard time trying to explain motion and change or any type of process in the ordinary sense of these terms. According to Eternalism, these things simply do not exist. Some advocates of Eternalism offer the error theory that they are merely illusions created by our brains. For example, L.A. Paul argues in “Temporal Experience” that our concept of the passage of time, “could arise from the way the brains of conscious beings experience and interpret cognitive inputs from series of static events.” (2010, 339) The idea here is that the situation is analogous to what happens when one is watching a flipbook. Each picture presents a static image that, when combined with the others, the brain fabricates into a sense of motion of

the figures on the pages. But this doesn't explain away the neural motions involved in the *process* of interpretation the brain is involved in. Nor does it explain away the flipping motion of the static pictures. These both seem to be motions ignored by the error theory given by such Eternalists. But even if we were to grant that this error theory is successful, this still does nothing to offer an error theory to explain similar processes of our other senses. Is there some sort of flip book for sounds, smells, and other physical sensations? So, while some advocates proclaim that the Eternalist appears to have a theory of time that best fits with current relativistic physics, it can seem to be a very unintuitive view.

Presentism

Presentism is the theory that only the present exists. The past and the future have no ontological existence. Presentists admit that we speak as though the past *did* exist, and the future *will* exist, but hold that only the present exists. Dean Zimmerman attempts to give an explanation of the appeal of Presentism in his "The Privileged Present: Defending an 'A-Theory' of Time": Consider some event that is happening, right now – for example, your reading the words in this very sentence. Too late! That event is over; it is already past. Consider some individual that exists now but soon will not – for example, a positron within the sun. Too late again! It collided with an electron, and both were annihilated in a violent explosion that left behind only a neutrino. The neutrino, with its tiny mass, could hardly be composed of the electron and positron that went into the reaction. So our poor positron is no more; it has utterly ceased to be. I expect that most of my readers would happily agree to the following claim about the two short-lived things I described: because they are entirely in the past, both the event that was your reading of the sentence, and the positron, do not exist. Another sensible-sounding claim: the event of your

reading the final sentence in this paper does not exist; nor do the positrons that will be created by proton fusion within the sun later today. (Zimmerman, 2008, p 212)

It might, at first, appear that Presentism is the more common-sense view when compared to Eternalism. It makes sense to think that yesterday *did* exist, but not that there *is* (present tense) an event of being yesterday such that it once existed! However, Presentism runs into several problems that Eternalism does not. Firstly, Presentism must completely deny Einstein's STR. According to Presentism, there is only one frame of reference and that is the privileged present. This is a major blow to Presentism, if we are to believe that STR is the true and accurate depiction of space-time. But Presentists run into yet another large issue when trying to talk about the truth-conditions of true statements purporting to be about anything past or future. For a statement to be true, there needs to be something that makes it true. For the Presentist, yesterday does not exist; only today's present moment exists. So, if a Presentist were to acknowledge that the statement "It rained yesterday" is true, they would not be able to appeal to an event of being yesterday to find the truthmaker for their claim. They would need to find something about today's present moment that makes that statement true. This has led to several different attempts to overcome the problem, but I think that each has their own insuperable problems. I will not get into each attempt here for the sake of time, but each one must appeal to either some property that currently exists (Haecceities), a hyperplane of existence, or a denial of certain singular propositions altogether. None of these solutions seem to save the theory without bringing in several other issues.

Growing Block

Growing block theory is the view that while there are events that are past and there are events that are present, no events are situated in the future. Its beginnings are attributed to C. D. Broad who first talked about *becoming* in his 1959 book *Scientific Thought*. The view that the past is real, and the future is not yet real is appealing because it seems to reflect what we as humans naturally believe. While I am right now experiencing the sensations of typing on my computer and sitting in my chair, there are also events that occurred previously about which I have memories which I can bring to my mind. While these memories may exist in the present, the events that they relate to are from the past. This connection I have to events of a time other than the present seems to only be available with respect to the past. This point applies not only when it comes to events remembered, but every event that occurred (has an ending) does not go out of existence; it simply becomes an event situated permanently in the past. Observe well that there are now no events situated in the future to bring to mind. It is not merely that I cannot now know (with certainty) which events will be situated in the future. The problem is that *now* there are no such events!

These common-sense sorts of views are what lends initial support to accepting the Growing Block view of time. Growing block theorists believe not only in the ontological existence of the past and present, but also that the time that is the present moves as events change from present to past. The idea that the moment that is the present moment changes is not unique to Growing Block. Growing Block Theory is sometimes considered a combination of the two main theories of time, Eternalism and Presentism. This is often seen as a detriment to the Growing Block Theory, as many would argue that it carries all of the problems of both of the other theories without reaping any of the benefits of them. I will try to argue in what follows that this is a confusion.

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Sincerely and with great pride,
Kate Lohnes
Editor-in-Chief