# SOPHIA

**2024 Issue**

**Undergraduate Journal of Philosophy**
**Utah Valley University**

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## Letter From the Faculty Advisor

Baruch Spinoza's Ethics closes with the remark: "all things excellent are as difficult as they are rare." In the context of this treatise, Spinoza is arguing for the need to dedicate ourselves to understanding the world around us. This work of understanding is difficult because it requires us to set aside many of our preconceived notions, superstitions and established mental patterns in order to consider our role in a whole that goes far beyond us. If this kind of knowledge is good for us, it is also hard to pursue, since the perspective we have to set aside is solidified by years of habit and by the fact that our limited nature makes us susceptible to settle for false solutions to our real problems. While it is rare to encounter this commitment to understanding, according to Spinoza, it is a possibility we are each afforded, even from our very different starting points.

I think that we can read Spinoza's statement not only as registering the difficulty of philosophical insight, but also as speaking to the rarity of communities dedicated to the philosophical search for truth. One of the reasons I have always felt so lucky to be at Utah Valley University has to do with our students' powerful dedication to this task. Their studies are not limited by their coursework, but also take the form of independent study and language work, collectively organized reading groups, the maintenance of a vibrant philosophy club, and the publication of this journal. If this is an

example of an excellent philosophical community—and I believe it is—Spinoza's passage encourages us to care for its maintenance. For anything dedicated to discovering the truth of the world around us is precisely that kind of thing which is difficult to maintain. This is why I feel honored to have been able to serve as the Faculty Advisor of Sophia: Undergraduate Journal of Philosophy. My contributions to this edition, however, have been minor compared to those of editor-in-chief Keaton Cluff, managing editor Hash Brown, the rest of the editorial team, and the others thanked in the editorial note. I hope the works in this edition give you some insight into the dedication of our students and the quality of philosophy here at UVU. With any luck, these contributions will inspire future philosophers to join in the search for truth, that most excellent of all things.

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## Letter From the Editor

The woman featured on the cover of this edition is Sor Juana Inez De La Cruz. She was born in 1651 near modern day Mexico City, during a time in which women and girls were not allowed to seek formal education. They were even generally restricted from informal education such as reading books at home. There are stories about Juana sneaking into her grandfather's library to read books in secret when she was as young as three years old. From then on she became what could be considered a self-taught child prodigy mastering literature, indigenous languages, Latin, Greek logic, and mathematics. When she was a teenager, she once asked her mother if she could disguise herself as a boy so that she could officially attend school. Although she was turned

down, she continued her independent studies and eventually received recognition, accepting a position at a monastery. Her face is now undisguised and stamped on this journal, a proud symbol of dedication to academia through unequal opportunities.

Juana was chosen for this edition as a reflection on the fact that the pursuit of knowledge is not restricted to any one type of individual. Once she attained a more privileged standing, she became an advocate and activist of many important movements including, but not limited to, women's rights, sexual diversity, advocacy of indigenous peoples, and inclusion. For those who consider education and pursuit of

human knowledge a worthy avenue to seek, Juana can serve as a reminder to continue raising that bar for all people.

Many thanks are in order for this particular edition as Sophia went through a difficult transition. Nearly slipping through the cracks, it was caught by a group of dedicated people. Thank you to Thomas Bretz, who insured that the journal stayed on its course as he stepped down. Thank you to Iaan Reynolds who gracefully took on the mantle as the new faculty member. Thanks to Hash Brown, the managing editor, for the dedication to keeping this project on track and organized. A special thanks goes out to the many student body editors, past and present, two of whom require additional recognition for their help in the transition: Alex Zhou and Emily Gibson. A big thank you is owed to all the authors of the papers in this edition, without whose efforts and dedication the journal would not exist. At last, a final thank you is owed to the reader, for your time and interest in the work of undergraduate students in your community.

Keaton Cluff
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# Post-Semantic Apocalypse

NICOLAS DE HOYOS

## Introduction

Many questions concerning the cosmos and the origins of humanity have been explained by the sciences rather nicely. Nevertheless, questions of meaning and ontology remain more or less inaccessible to empirical investigation and so we continue reaching after them with fervent hope that they are sacred and uniquely human. But what if they are not? What if our desire to hold onto them is a mistake? R. Scott Bakker explores this possibility with his notion of "intentional mediocrity" in his chapter "On the Death of Meaning" to explicate the true nature of these elusive concepts. "Where cosmological mediocrity denied us our exceptional position, and biological mediocrity denied us our exceptional origins, intentional mediocrity denies us our exceptional being."[1] This quote presents a startling and perhaps horrifying comparison of intentional mediocrity to paradigm shifts as dramatic as the copernican revolution and Darwin's theory of evolution. Some may find this notion difficult to swallow – as many did during the aforementioned cultural transformations. Bakker explains why we should be weary

1 R. Scott Bakker, "On the Death of Meaning," in *New Directions in Philosophy and Literature,* ed. Ridvan Askin et al., (Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 155.

of the scientific upheaval that is potentially on our doorstep, but he neglects to acknowledge the obverse to his worst-case scenario. Contrary to Bakker's assumption, we are not capable of only heuristic cognition, and this realization is what opens the door for an alternate ending to the semantic apocalypse. I will briefly lay out the primary points of Bakker's argument and then delve into the concept of *sunyata* and explain why this is of paramount importance concerning our fate and how we have arrived at the deathbed of meaning. Finally, I will investigate how Bakker's fears might be flipped on their head and instead leave us with a future not bound by heuristics nor decimated by the extirpation of meaning.

## Heuristics: the Achillies Heel of Meaning

Bakker's intentional mediocrity posits that meaning is, at base, a heuristic. A heuristic is a cognitive shortcut that allows a cognizing entity to interact with complex environments utilizing correlation-based cues. It is enormously efficient. Heuristics eliminate the need to process and comprehend every aspect of our surroundings, and instead rely on various features of our environment. An intimate example of this is our ability to see faces in inanimate objects like rocks and trees. A few ovals and some lines can trigger the cue of 'face' when ordered in the appropriate pattern. This proves useful in many instances but as in the cases of trees and rocks, we sometimes see something that is not really there (Bakker calls this a "crash space"). This is what leaves us vulnerable to manipulation. We can contrast heuristics with algorithms. Where an algorithm allows for specific data to be input and affords reliable output due to its rigidity and formulation (not to mention it's data-intensive calculations), a heuristic – due to its loose and practical construction (and

computational frugality) – is necessarily bound to have *crash spaces*: areas where the heuristic fails to be practically effective. Thus, when we are reliant on heuristics, we risk misapplication and exploitation.

## The Beginning and End of Meaning

How exactly does heuristic misapplication relate to meaning? And in what ways does it portend the catastrophe of its disappearance? Bakker paints the picture of a semantic genesis by reflecting on prehistoric humans and the likelihood of their astonishment at the first charcoal sketches which magically superimposed animals onto the stone wall of their domicile. From this, humanity recognized the utility of *misapplying* heuristic cues. Clearly the buffalo depicted in charcoal was not *actually* a buffalo, but now they had a detailed way to refer to one. Like a rock that had broken by accident but exposed a sharp edge and been found useful for cutting, this accident led to the adaptation of an additional tool: abstraction. Art could arguably have been the first experience of symbolic representation. Once early homo-sapiens became conscious of their ability to *misapply* heuristic cues in beneficial ways, the floodgates were opened to things like meaning, language, philosophy, and politics, The misapplication of cues leads to the whole of symbolism. This novel use of misapplication has countless benefits. However, the tendency for it to be concealed due to our proclivity for equating "cognitive systematicity with cognitive adequacy" leads to, "the conviction one finds in speculative guesswork regarding experience and meaning."[2] Though humans may have discovered the utility of miscue application, the automatic nature of heuristics proved too fundamental for all of

2 Bakker, "On the Death of Meaning," 158.

the myriad miscues generated to be recognized as such. Early humans happened upon a tool more useful than fire and in their bewilderment bewitched themselves into the dream of symbolic existence.

A 'semantic apocalypse' is imminent, according to Bakker. There are two distinct types of apocalypses on the horizon: one of meaning-talk itself, and the other of meaning as an "artefact"—the artefact of meaning is the *idea* of meaning reified. The latter is on par with the dissolution that followed the copernican revolution and the darwinian revolution, but the former is a "biological upheaval, a transformation of cognitive habitat more catastrophic, I think, than humanity has ever experienced."[3]

Bakker offers a word of council in the face of this sobering realization, "only by seeing through the ancient illusions of meaning can we glimpse the present and future peril confronting intentional cognition."[4] In the same way that one must accept that the Earth is not the center of the cosmos to orient oneself accurately spatially, and one must come to terms with the evolutionary explanation for humanity's origins to avoid notions of "divine right," Bakker believes that we must see through the heuristic miscue of meaning to see the tsunami approaching from the coast.

## Absolute Emptiness

If meaning were shown to be nothing more than a heuristic, what would follow? How would this affect oneself? Contrary to Bakker's cynicism, I argue that Where meaning breaks down, a space opens up. If one allows oneself to enter that space, eventually, one will encounter absolute empti-

3 Bakker, "On the Death of Meaning," 164.
4 Ibid., 166.

ness which is called *sunyata* in Buddhist terminology (this is misleading however, because one does not *encounter* it as though it was an object). Nihility is the first glimpse of emptiness as the ground of being seen *from* the perspective of heuristic cognition. The cues that are triggered when an encounter with absolute nothingness first takes place are those of *lack*, isolation, nothingness, annihilation, etc. These cues lead to the sense that absolute emptiness is something to be avoided or resisted—perhaps at all costs. This profane reduction of absolute emptiness is inevitable when one makes attempts at categorization which is an essential aspect of heuristics. To categorize one must differentiate that which lies within a given category and that which lies beyond it. *Sunyata* cannot be limited categorically and thus, all things said about it are necessarily not it. In his chapter "Nihility and *Sunyata*", Keiji Nishitani expounds on the emptiness *of emptiness:*

> Emptiness in the sense of *sunyata* is emptiness only when it empties itself even of the standpoint that represents it as some 'thing' that is emptiness. It is, in its original Form, self-emptying. In this meaning, true emptiness is not to be posited as something outside of and other than 'being.' Rather, it is to be realized as something united to and self-identical with being.[5]

It should now be clear why words, which are a means of categorization, become an unavoidable hindrance with regard to *sunyata*: they are necessary in order to talk about sunyata; they are themselves not separate from *sunyata;* and yet, they are incapable of pinning down absolute emptiness. "It defies objective representation; no sooner do we assume such an

5 Keiji Nishitani, "Religion and Nothingness," *The Journal of Religion* 65, no. 3, translated by Jan Van Bragt (1985): 96.

attitude toward it than emptiness withdraws into hiding."[6] This often results in contradictions and confusion when attempting to grasp *sunyata* theoretically. It can be explicated theoretically to a *limited* degree, and this is helpful only when one does not take the symbolic representation of *sunyata* at face-value.

## Uncertainty and Self

I will now investigate the ways in which an understanding of *sunyata* informs our sense of self. Bakker allows himself to wander in the thought experiment of a worst-case scenario and it seems that he considers it to not only be possible, but probable. Bakker's fears stand on the assumption that science will eventually discover the very foundation of human cognition, and that this foundation will be *certain*, therefore affording absolute control of humanity. Once the base code of cognition can be mapped to perfection, complete control could take place with ease. But should we share in Bakker's certainty? If we realize that *sunyata* – our innermost reality – is fundamentally unknowable and thus, necessarily *uncertain*, we cannot. This can be extremely difficult to accept given that heuristic cognition relies on order and structure. It is for this reason that one employs metaphors to direct one to the realization of *sunyata*. "The tip of this finger cannot touch the tip of this finger" or "the eye cannot see itself" – statements like these point to that which cannot be grasped by conceptual understanding. Nishitani uses the example of fire to demonstrate this point, "The selfness of fire lies in non-combustion. Of course, this non-combustion is not something apart from combustion: fire is non-combus-

6 Ibid., 97.

tive in its very act of combustion. It does not burn itself."[7] It is precisely because fire does *not* burn itself that fire is capable of functioning as fire, and it is the non-fire nature of fire that is the suchness of fire. It requires the properties of combustion and non-combustion. All of these statements elucidate the wisdom contained in the famous passage of the *Heart Sutra*, "form is emptiness, emptiness is form; emptiness is not separate from form, form is not separate from emptiness."[8]

It is the non-self that allows for self. Self and non-self are not separate and so they cannot be dualistic. Heuristic cognition relies on a subject-object dichotomy wherein all things exist in relation to that which perceives them. Heuristic cognition cannot view *itself* objectively – this is the nature of subjective experience. That which one *is* remains forever unknowable. It is the attempt to do so that creates the illusion of ego *as* self. Here, we must distinguish what I mean by self and ego. Self is the experience of subjectivity. It is the feeling of being *something* that experiences. Whereas Ego is a reified image of self seen from a psychological third-person that contains histories, preferences, etc. All such objectifications of the self are symbols that point back to the absolute emptiness from which they arise because nothing is separate from that emptiness. That which *is* able to be viewed objectively can be known on the level of logic, but it's true suchness remains hidden from view; it is only from the experience of absolute emptiness that things are what they are on their own "home ground."[9]

Bakker assumes that there is a foundation of certainty. With the aid of *sunyata*, we discover that the foundation is no foundation at all; it is absolute nothingness and thus,

7 Ibid., 177.
8 Red Pine translation, as found in *The Heart Sutra,* Counterpoint, 2005.
9 Nishitani, "Religion and Nothingness," 118.

no structure of absolute control could ever be erected on it. This is not to say that we will not use science to collect an increasingly detailed account of ourselves and through this provide the potential for *greater* exploitation. Such a process is currently unfolding. This process, however, will never arrive at a *completely* detailed account of ourselves because it will always lack *self-knowledge.* No matter how close or far we focus the lens of investigation, something will always remain out of view – such is the nature of focus. It would *seem* at first that this limitation is purely a result of our underdeveloped tools. Once we have a means of investigation that is advanced enough, surely there will be no uncertainty left. This is the belief that Bakker appears to hold. However, the understanding that scientific investigation is not somehow separate from *sunyata*, or our evolved mode of heuristic cognition eliminates this misunderstanding. We might term a modality of cognition free of the heuristic overlay "pure cognition." The experience of being in a state of flow or being awestruck by the beauty of a sunset will help to elucidate what this type of cognition is like. It was during the time in which our ancestors stumbled into the realm of the symbolic through art or the like that pure cognition became subservient to the new modality of cognition that we will call second-order heuristic (this is the mode where *miscues* proliferate). before, pure cognition existed in a sort of parallel plane to the pre-symbolic heuristic mind. It is also at this point in evolution that the ego was born. The ego and second-order heuristic cognition are inextricably linked. It is the symbolic aspects of cognition that lead to the construction of a self with all its histories, opinions, preferences, beliefs, and thoughts. This is the beginning of the play in which humanity has found itself utterly hypnotized. Bakker believes that science is poised to

"cut our throats."[10] Empirical investigation of the brain has deconstructed many myths surrounding human cognition and it seems likely that this deconstruction will continue to advance. Once personality, belief, memory, and thought are described in a way that is as detailed as the motion of planetary bodies, a crisis of identity will inevitably follow. In fact, one has only to look to see this currently underway. If I am not what I have always believed myself to be, what am I? As more aspects of what were considered to be part of oneself are explained away by empirical investigation, this question will loom ever greater. This is how science will cut our throats, but the *us* that we are referring to here is the Ego into which symbolic cognition has continually been concentrated and calcified. In this way, the suicide committed by empirical investigation is a shattering of the *illusion* of self. In this self-destruction a space is revealed. This space leads to *sunyata*. Recognizing oneself as *sunyata* dethrones the rule of Ego. It is a return to the source of all creation – a return home.

## Meaning Reborn

Seeing now that we are not, at root, purely heuristic being's incapable of any other mode of cognition, the semantic apocalypse appears as a form of liberation. It is the belief in meaning as objective and the illusion of self that results from symbolic cognition for which destruction rapidly approaches. With these chrysalides ruptured from within, the potential for a new mode of consciousness emerges. The state of civilization has evolved to an astounding degree at the hands of second-order heuristics, but it is all too apparent that the mechanisms that lead to this state of unparalleled prosperity

10 Bakker, "On the Death of Meaning," 156.

have begun to consume their very means of subsistence. The tools of symbolic cognition have grown disproportionately in comparison to a deepening of consciousness and this imbalance has led to a state of inexorable growth. While Bakker's fears of the future are not unfounded, to consider them to be the most likely outcome would be, I think, short-sighted. If human civilization and its creation through the use of symbolic cognition is likened to the use of complex tools by one who is inexperienced, the post-semantic apocalypse can then be likened to the creative potential of these very tools in the hands of a master. As science sheds light on an increasingly detailed account of the mind, the ego will have fewer shadows in which it may hide. Seen for what it is, the ego will lose its perceived position of primacy and exist in the same order as the instrument of vocalization. The relationship we have with our tools rests on the relationship we have with ourselves. If we cling to the view that we are only what we perceive ourselves to be (or *only* that which is unseen), we cut ourselves off from the rest of life and fall out of balance. Intentional mediocrity holds the potential for the extinction of self as an object and in this we find release.

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# Philosophical Expertise

ALYSSA FRANCIS

## Introduction

Professional philosophy is hard put to prove its usefulness in the eyes of non-philosophers. Any philosopher versed in pre-socratic Greek philosophy knows very well the story of Thales being mocked by a little girl for having fallen down a well because he was too busy looking at the stars and forgot to look at the actual world around him. Any student of philosophy is familiar with the question, "what are you planning on doing with that degree?", which is always asked with a raised eyebrow. It is difficult to explain to non-philosophers why a deep study of philosophy is beneficial to society when, to non-philosophers, philosophy is full of questions which seem to have answers which make them too obvious to be asked. Everyone wonders about the origins of the world and what its fate will be, and everyone develops systems of ethics and moral reasoning, but to question whether or not the world actually is, or to wonder if morals even exist seems to most people to be taking things too far. What I will term as "lay philosophy", meaning the informal answers people find to the questions of where we're from and where we're going, seems to be all that is necessary, and perfectly sufficient for getting people through their days. To most people it seems pointless to continuously ask the same questions of existence

again and again and come out on the other side with the exact same questions still unanswered, plus a few more.

The "expertise" of philosophers seems to be manifested in their spending a lot of time thinking about concepts that seem intuitive to most, and claiming that there is great importance in questioning basic intuitions. Although it may seem that these questions are redundant, or at least, that they are something that anyone – professional philosopher or not – can answer just as well as anyone else can, there is great evidence to suggest that intuitions about many things are in reality much more questionable than even philosophers would have thought them to be.

In the first section of this paper I will discuss the ways in which intuitions (moral intuitions in particular, in order to maintain a manageable scope for the present project), have been found to be faulty and subject to biases which impede consistent and objective judgments. I will then expound research which suggests that philosophers are no more skilled at avoiding such intuitive biases than anyone else. Part two will then address the question, "if philosophers aren't experts because they know more about moral intuitions than most people, what does professional philosophy contribute to the world?". It will be argued that the expertise of philosophy is not manifest in its special ability to overcome intuitive biases, but rather that it has a particular value which lies elsewhere, in that it provides a needed source of thoughtful dissent from common conceptions, which plays a key role in the progressive development of critical thinking and good decision-making in society. All this is discussed in order to show that, whilst it seems to some that professional philosophy is a job that could be done and is done just as well by any regular joe, and while professional philosophers are,

like everyone else, heavily influenced by situational biases to have faulty intuitions, the role of professional philosophy in society is nevertheless valuable and unique from the practices of lay philosophy.

## Part I: Fallibility of Intuitions

### Moral Judgments and Moral Reasoning

The process of making moral judgments and explaining them with reasoning is key to understanding what goes on in the intuitions of both professional and lay philosophers. Johnathan Haidt compares the difference between moral judgments and moral reasoning to the difference between a judge and a lawyer.[1] A moral judgment seems to be founded on reality, and seems to constitute a judgment about the world which is based on objective reasoning, just as a judge's verdict is based on weighing the two sides of evidence placed before him. However, our moral judgments are actually based on reasoning that seems much more similar to the reasons that drive a lawyer to speak as he does. The lawyer has already chosen a side, and all evidence spoken by him will be in support of a conclusion made in his favor. Likewise, intuitions are like desired conclusions already determined. The intuition determines the moral judgment, and moral reasoning is simply our attempt to explain why we have judged the way that we have. Haidt states that "moral intuitions come first and directly cause moral judgments. Moral intuition is a kind of cognition, but it is not a kind of reasoning."[2] In other words, the intuition has already solidified the moral judgment by the time moral reasoning comes along

1 Jonathan Haidt, "The Emotional Dog and Its Rational Tail," *Psychological Review* 108, no. 4 (2001): 821.

2 Ibid., 814.

and tries to make sense of where it came from but it is not a judgment based on those reasons we put into words when asked to explain our judgment. "Moral reasoning is usually a post hoc construction, generated after a judgment has been reached."[3] Again, our intuitions are our actual moral judgments, and our moral reasoning serves to try to make sense of them, but is not itself the cause of the judgments which are made.

Joshua D. Greene builds on the arguments of Haidt and lists many other examples of when people misattribute their moral reasoning as their cause of moral judgment.[4] He expounds how two systems are at work while making moral judgments, the emotional (or intuitive) system, and the cognitive (or reasoning) system.[5] The two systems work together and are often very hard to distinguish (thus, Greene wrote this paper), but the emotional system is the more foundational, immovable one of the pair. A finding which illustrates this, put very simply says, "Psychologists have repeatedly found that when people don't know why they're doing what they're doing, they just make up a plausible sounding story."[6] Many choices are driven by emotions and intuitions and we don't ever think about those intuitive reasons until we need to give an explanation for our actions. When the requirement to explain is presented, we make up and voice reasons that seem to make sense and seem to be the cause of our behavior. However, many experiments have been conducted in which

3 Ibid.

4 Joshua D. Greene, "The Secret Joke of Kant's Soul," in *Moral Psychology, Vol. 3: The Neuroscience of Morality: Emotion, Brain Disorders, and Development,* (MIT Press, 2008): 35-66.

5 Ibid., 59-66; Valerie Tiberius, *Moral Psychology: A Contemporary Introduction* (Routledge, 2015), 195.

6 Greene, "The Secret Joke of Kant's Soul," 61; Haidt, *"The Emotional Dog and its Rational Tail."*

people have been proven to make decisions based on intuitions which have been heavily influenced by the conditions set up by the experimenters. When participants were asked why they acted in a particular manner they came up with perfectly rational explanations for their choices, which the experiment showed had nothing to do with the subtle changes in surroundings that were actually determining factors in the judgments that were made.[7] These experiments serve to prove that human moral judgments are influenced in ways that are not noticeable to the agent, but which are explained by the agent in terms which cause us to believe that they were rationally made. The discrepancy between actual causes and perceived/explained causes of behavior prove a fallibility in moral reasoning which proves detrimental to the human perception of the extent to which reasoning plays a part in moral judgment. Intuitions are subject to biases which subtly change them, and explanations for moral judgments that are made follow in the wake of these unnoticed biases, convincing us that we had logical reasons to make the choices we did, when in reality, our intuitions are barely even our own. Yet we hold so strongly to them, and to our false explanations of them.

## Philosophers and Biased Intuitions

One common argument philosophers will make to defend themselves against the claim that they are no more "professionals" in their field than is any other person capable of considering the ethics of their decisions, is that philosophers have developed their intuitions to be better trained to resist the influence of biases.[8] In an argument from analogy it

7 For specific conditions of studies see Greene, 60-61.

8 Jennifer Nado, "Philosophical Expertise," in *Philosophy Compass* (John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2014), 631.

is assumed that when someone claims expertise in their area they have some sort of training which gives them more solidified and founded intuitions regarding their area of study.[9] Psychologists Lee Ross and Richard Nisbett provide one of these analogies which serves to show how professional psychology can be seen as different from lay psychology by comparing it to professional and lay physics.[10] They say that, "Lay physics is undeniably mistaken in some of its main presumptions… Nevertheless, lay physics does a perfectly good job of getting us through our days."[11] Take the example of the principle of momentum. For a lay person, knowing that a car has momentum and hitting the brakes decreases it is enough, but for professional physicists there are much deeper explanations about what is going on which are necessary for actual scientific study to be effective. Ross and Nisbett compare this to lay psychology, which allows people to make sense of others' behavior, but which presents problems when someone attempts to predict or control behavior. More rigorous, professional, experimental psychology is needed. The argument from analogy seems to be good reason to say that philosophy can be seen in the same way, and that lay people have moral judgments which get them through their day perfectly well, but once the intuitions upon which they are founded are put under the pressure of systematic philosophical scrutiny, they do not hold up. If this argument were true, it would follow that since philosophers spend so much time questioning basic intuitions and thinking about morality, they should have better-trained intuitions about

9 Ibid., 632, 635.

10 Lee Ross and Richard E. Nisbett, "The Person and the Situation," in *Moral Psychology; Historical and Contemporary Readings,* ed. by Nadelhoffer, Nahmias, and Nichols, (Blackwell Publishing, 1991).

11 Ibid., 191.

morality which are less subject to the biases that lay people experience.

In order to test the soundness of this reasoning it would be required to empirically show that philosophers have bias-resistant intuitions. The experiments mentioned above by Greene were performed in groups of normal people. In other words, there was no distinction between people with philosophical training or people without. If the expertise of philosophers truly lies in their superior moral intuitions, if these types of experiments were performed on them it would be expected that their intuitions would not be influenced by the independent conditions of the experiments as were the intuitions of lay people.[12] These experiments on philosophers have indeed been performed, and Jennifer Nado compiles an analysis of how philosophical training influenced the results of these studies on moral intuitions, and how they compare to studies done on intuitions of other professionals of various disciplines. Physicists, psychologists, and paleontologists are all seen to have a particular level of expertise in their fields when their intuitions are presented with a question which a lay person would also have an intuitive answer for. For example, when asked to estimate the trajectory of a thrown object, the physicist is expected to have a better intuitive estimate of where it will land because they understand the factors which go into the moving object, and it is shown that this is really the case.[13] If the same is true of philosophers, when presented with an ethical dilemma their intuitive answer should be more objective and explainable by philosophical reasoning than would be the intuitions of others. Physicists are not affected by situational biases when they are presented

12 Nado, "Philosophical Expertise."
13 Ibid., 635.

with a question of momentum, yet philosophers were found to give different answers and arguments founded on different intuitions when irrelevant factors, such as the order in which ethical problems were presented, were changed.[14] The presence of such biases in the intuitions of philosophers are just as strong in non-philosophers, and therefore, from these studies it cannot be concluded that philosophers have a particular level of intuitive expertise that sets them apart from a "lay" philosopher.[15] While more empirical evidence could be used to support or cast doubt on the conclusiveness of these findings, they still present a scientific hurdle which any philosopher must overcome in order to claim that their expertise lies in superior moral intuitions.

## Part II: A Voice of Dissent

### The Tendency to Conform

If philosophers aren't experts because they have better moral intuitions than most people, then what does professional philosophy contribute to the world? In 1951 Solomon Asch conducted a famous psychological experiment in which a participant was asked to perform a matching task alongside other "participants", who were actually confederate to the experiment. At certain times the confederates gave obviously wrong answers, to test the tendency of the participant to conform to the group, even when the group was obviously wrong. The basic findings of the experiment showed that the participants had an extremely high level of conformity when the rest of the group unanimously gave the wrong answer. In 1971 psychologists Allen and Levine took these findings a step

14 Ibid.
15 Ibid., 634.

further to see if conformity could be reduced by having even one single person out of the many others give a dissenting opinion. The conclusion was that "The presence of a single confederate who agreed with the participant reduced conformity by almost 80%."[16] An additional astonishing factor of this finding was that the one dissenting opinion did not even need to give the correct answer, nor did the dissenter need to be seen as competent at the task in order to give the participant the confidence to not conform to the rest of the group. "Any dissent, whether it validates an individual's opinion or not– can break the spell cast by a unanimous majority and reduce the normative pressures to conform."[17] The principle drawn from these experiments is that people are more likely to make their own, individual decisions when they can see that other individuals within the larger group are doing the same. Even if people are not expressing the same difference of opinion, or even if the different opinions are worse than the majority opinion, a simple difference of opinion or difference in thought is enough to encourage others to also think differently, and avoid the tendency to conform.

In addition to this, psychologists have also found ways which are effective in helping to prevent what is referred to as "groupthink." Groupthink is a term which describes a phenomenon which occurs when a group gets so invested in itself that no outside thinking finds its way in, and each individual member of the group loses autonomy because of the strength of the group culture, habits, and tendencies.[18] While working as a team can, if done correctly, enhance the possibility for original thought and effective problem solving, it

16 Kassin, Fein, and Markus, *Social Psychology* (Cengage Learning Inc., 2017), 277.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid., 330.

can also suppress the thinking of members of the team to fit a certain standard. While cooperation and synergy within groups is desirable, it must be remembered that, especially in cases of morality, a group consensus will very rarely be reached. There will always be differences of intuition about what makes an action moral, what an ethical response would be, and why those ethics matter. Instead of complete unanimity as the desired result of discussion (as is achieved by conformity and groupthink), the goal of investigating moral judgments is more commonly a process of understanding what many different people think and working through all of those thoughts, to come out on the other side wiser than before. For these reasons groupthink and conformity should be avoided in their extremes in favor of thinking critically about the many viewpoints available. Psychologists have found that groupthink is best avoided when groups consult with others outside of the group, and when subgroups or individuals separately discuss or dwell on the issue where their own various voices can be more heard or considered. Assigning someone to play 'devil's advocate' to question any decision that is made and give counter-intuitive arguments against proposed ideas also make a group more likely to consider alternatives that otherwise may not have been considered, to think more critically, and to make better, more thought-through decisions.[19]

## Philosophers as Voices of Dissent

When it comes to considering the hosts of various viewpoints and moral judgments that are found in human intuitions, groupthink and conformity are ever-present threats. On a societal level, as on small-group and individual levels,

19 Ibid., 331.

there is a need for a voice which can be an "ally in dissent."[20] If conformity is reduced by the presence of even one dissenting voice, and if someone is needed to play devil's advocate in order to avoid groupthink and to make better decisions, who better to play that role in society than philosophers? Philosophy makes its profession out of taking (now known to be flawed) moral intuitions and questioning them. It asks questions that not everybody thinks need to be asked. Philosophy is the voice in the group that shows that there are more routes of thought than just the mainstream line of thinking. Even when people heartily disagree with what philosophers say, even if there is endless disagreement within philosophy itself, there is pure value in simply voicing other opinions and causing people to be more open and confident in pursuing their own routes of thinking. Philosophy is the 'devil's advocate' of societal progression, and is always ready to take up the role of requiring more deliberate thought before important decisions can be made.

## Conclusion

Philosophy as an institution and the professional philosophers within it are able to take basic intuitions and analyze their implications in ways which lay philosophers – distracted with their other various professions – don't take the time to do, or don't know how to scrutinize effectively and methodologically. When society is faced with questions of poverty, policy, and personhood, abortion, agency, and ability, it is also faced with the danger of dominant, dogmatic voices overrunning the media, saturating common thinking, and leaving no room for confidence in expressing anything contrary to the seemingly unanimous group. Philosophers

20 Ibid., 276.

are there to offer a professional voice of dissent. As experts in embracing the reality of biased intuitions, philosophers publish scrutiny of the popular voice and spark in the minds of individuals considerations which may have otherwise been presumed unsupported and groundless. Though the expertise of philosophers may not lie in that their intuitions themselves are better-founded than those of lay philosophers, the place of professional philosophy in society is an invaluable role of giving each individual an ally in dissent, and a spur to confidence in thinking critically.

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# How Society is Religious: The Objects of the New Faith

JOSHUA WATERS

With the rise of industrialized society, the rate at which the dissolution of religion has taken place has increased. The industrialization of mass society has sought to replace religious ideologies with increases of capital and production of commodities. Where religious faith once governed, faith in modern technology and the capitalist machine now rule unopposed. In Karl Marx's time, religion was considered the "opium of the people," whereas in today's industrialized society, technology has become the 'new and improved' opium.[1] Society has replaced the opium of religion and myth with the more potent and equally addictive opium of technology. Religion, to a great extent, has been the subject of eradication by society as a whole. However, in its haste to eradicate religion and myth in favor of the new method, the "exploitation of the labor of others, capital," industrialized society has "eradicated the last remnant of its own self awareness."[2] In its effort to disenchant the world, mass society has done violence to itself, for "only thought which does violence

1 Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right,*trans. Joseph O'Malley (Oxford Press, 1970), 3.

2 Thaodor Adorna and Max Horkheimer, *Dialective of Enlightenment,* ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford University Press, 2002), 2.

to itself is hard enough to shatter myths."[3] It is in industrialized societies haste to eradicate the "problem of religion" that a new form of religious ideology was produced. Faith in religion and myth have been replaced, as the primary source of reliance in industrialized society, by reliance on technology.

In the course of religious history, those within a particular religious tradition saw all outsiders as, at best, misguided fools in need of religious education, and at worst, those who needed to be eradicated from their community. Industrialized society has taken the same approach to religion. With the replacement of religious faith with technological achievement, society has changed religious tradition, practice, and thought into a taboo. Those who practice religious ideologies "are tolerated only as far as their wholehearted identity with the universal is beyond question."[4] Religious patriarchy has been replaced by a new form of societal dependence. The universal that replaced happiness in religious ideologies with happiness in technology was the advancement of mass culture which "gives tragedy permanent employment as routine."[5] Society, in its mission to destroy myth and religion, has itself embraced religious ideologies. Just as the religious practitioners looked to their deity, industrialized society looked to theirs—to technology. The gods of religion were replaced by the god of capitalism: by the commodity. Society in its ignorance has not removed myth and religion from its outskirts, but has instead embraced them at its core. Industrialized society is religious. The gods of the old religions are no longer the objects of devotion, that designation now rests with pop culture icons who have, themselves, become

3 Ibid.
4 Ibid., 124.
5 Ibid., 122-23

the objects of idolatrous worship.

It was no amount of chance that led Marx to form the conclusion of religion as an opium, his various writings on class struggle are of special importance to that remarkable feat of philosophical inquiry. Marx, in a critique of Hegel, explained the origins of religion:

> Religion is the premise of all criticism…. M*an makes religion, religion does not make man*…. Man is the world of man, the state, society. This state, this society, *produce* religion, an inverted world-consciousness, because they are an inverted world. Religion is the general theory of that [inverted] world, its encyclopedic compendium, its logic in a popular form, its moral sanction, its solemn complement, its universal source of consolation and justification…. The struggle against religion is therefore indirectly a fight against the world of which religion is the spiritual aroma. Religious distress is at the same time the expression of real distress and also the protest against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of the spiritless conditions. It is the opium of the people…. Religion is only the illusory sun which revolves round man as long as he does not revolve round himself…. *Thus the criticism of heaven turns into the criticism of the earth, the criticism of religion into the criticism of law and the criticism of theology into the criticism of politics.*[6]

Religion, for Marx, was created by the proletariat and weaponized by the bourgeois. The bourgeois, not only in Marx's day, but in today's society as well, have transformed religion into a means of oppression of the masses. Today's form of oppression has taken another name but survives by the same means. Technology has become the new religion, having

6 Marxs, *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, 3 (emphasis added).

replaced the old gods with a new one.

Technology, as the object of a new faith, is endorsed by the proletariat in the hopes that it will create a more equal playing field. Instead, technology has been used by the bourgeois to do the opposite. Technology has maintained the very separation of classes that Marx viewed religion as causing. Technology, as a religious object in industrialized society, is the new 'opium of the people.' Man created it, it did not create man. Technology is "the illusory sun which revolves round man as long as he does not revolve round himself." It has replaced the old religions as the source of the "sigh of the oppressed creature" by becoming a religion itself. Those with access to the newest technologies have an evolutionary advantage over those who do not. Those who live without the newest technological advancements, due to their economic status or various other factors, (the proletariat) are thought of as outsiders by those who have them (bourgeois), much in the same manner as organized religions shun outsiders who hold different beliefs than their own. The advancement of technology did not dissolve the problem of class struggle, it encouraged it. It has thrived off it. Whatever hopes were had by the proletariat that viewed technology as potentially being the 'great equalizer' of social classes has been lost. "Technology is a way of revealing" as Martin Heideggar wrote, and what technology has revealed is that industrialized society (the bourgeois and the proletariat collectively), in its attempt to replace religion with technology, has instead turned technology into a subject of faith that perpetuates class struggle.[7] It has turned technology into an object of devotion and reverence. This idea takes form within mass

7 Martin Heidegger, "The Question Conserning Technology," in *Basic Writings,* ed. David Farrell Krell (Harper Perennial and Modern Thought, 2008), 308-41, 318.

media and the film industry.

Humankind's dependence on technology is reflected most adamantly in mass media. The strongest evidence of humankind's replacement of faith in the old religions and of any gods as the objects of worship, in favor of technology, is most clearly noticed in the film industry. The film industry creates worlds and characters that reflect the ideologies of industrialized society collectively, and those ideologies are reflected back at society distorted. In heroes and villains, we see certain information take sides. In characters like Superman, we see morality personified, yet he is not of this world which shows morality as something that is far out of reach.[8] In characters like the Joker, we observe chaos as an inevitable constant that cannot be avoided.[9] Good and evil are at odds with one another in almost every case, the heroes often become the idols that replace the gods, and the villains create a common target for the people to fight against. It is in the heroes that the dreams of society often show their face, but it is in the villains that the world is shown its reality. This is fed to the masses in such a way, however, that the villains' vanquishments and the innocents' slaughters are often attended with sincere devotion at the box offices, much as they were attended in the Colosseum in the days of the Roman Empire; and the heroes are glorified for their embodiment of the ideals that mass society has often wished for. The film industry in this way has led to the same form of "mass deception" that religion has been accused of.[10]

The beauty of religion, found in the construction of cathedrals, temples, mosques, and synagogues, has been replaced in industrialized society by technological appara-

8 Zack Snyder, *Man of Steal* (Warner Brothers, 2013).
9 Christopher Nolan, *The Dark Night* (Warner Brothers, 2008).
10 Adorno, Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 94.

tuses—by the beauty created through the cinematic camera. "Beauty", now, "is whatever the camera reproduces," by computer-generated imagery (CGI).[11] "Beauty" has also taken its shape in the fictional heroes that feed their spectators a false sense of determinism by the means of "[emphasizing] chance."[12] The film industry gives rise to the ideology that "[f]ortune will not smile on all—just on the one who draws the winning ticket or, rather, the one designated to do so by a higher power— [by] the entertainment industry itself;" and industrialized society, through mass production and mass distribution, bombards its members with false hope, the hope of change, that lies so far out of reach, only accessible by a select few.[13] The film industry repeats the same story, for "[w]hat is repeated is healthy—the cycle in nature as in industry," in its pursuit to cure the masses of the feelings of disillusionment that led to the replacement of the old religions with the new ones.[14] The film industry in the above ways has led to the same form of "mass deception" that both the enlightenment and organized religion have been accused of.[15] As Horkheimer and Adorno wrote:

> [A]nyone who is so absorbed by the world of the film, by gesture, image, and word, that he or she is unable to supply that which would have made it a world in the first place, does not need to be entirely transfixed by the special operations of the machinery at the moment of the performance. *The required qualities of attention have become so familiar from other films and other culture products already known to him or her that they appear automatically. The power*

11 Ibid., 119.
12 Ibid., 117.
13 Ibid., 116.
14 Ibid., 119.
15 Ibid., 94.

*of industrial society is imprinted on people once and for all.*[16]

Not only does "mass deception" take on a more alluring form with film through the use of CGI and enticing dramas than the enlightenment and religion are capable of, but the deception has become more methodical through the use of popular icons and familiar stories; the "opium" has become much more concentrated and addictive.

With the new forms of beauty created by the special effects of film, and the rise of more alluring subjects and objects of devotion and idolization, industrialized society, through the film industry, has provided a more addictive approach to tragedy as well. "[M]ass culture," the film industry in particular, "gives tragedy permanent employment as routine."[17] Just as various religions make use of their martyrs as inspiration, the film industry in industrialized society has made use of dramatic tragedy in the same way. Religious martyrs serve as inspiration for the members of their faith—the need to uphold their values and to stand firm in the face of adversity. The film industry, through its use of tragedy, gives a new face to martyrdom. The tragic deaths of beloved film characters have replaced the martyrs of religion with the martyrs of the movie screen. With the on-screen deaths of heroes, the film industry feeds society with false hopes of finding justice. With the deaths of villains, the false hopes of finding justice are fulfilled. This dynamic of justice, however, is not always fulfilled in society. The film industry caters to the internal dialogue of its partakers as to show them what they wish to see. The average movie goer can see themselves reflected in certain characters on the big screen, just as Christians can see their circumstances reflected in

16 Ibid., 100 (emphasis added).
17 Ibid., 123.

certain metaphors and parables in the Bible. With the replacement of religious figures with characters in movies, the film industry has popularized tragedy and martyrdom. The idea of martyrs has become a constant thought—a routine—for all who partake of the newest films.

Alongside the film industry, other forms of mass media have led to religious ideologies surrounding a deity to be replaced with religious ideologies surrounding other aspects of "mass culture." News outlets, through their sharing of 'information', have become the new Mass. Industrialized society has created a cult following surrounding the various types of news outlets. In the modern age the local news is attended to with more devotion than Sunday Masses, and the attention given to social media far out reaches the scope of what attention has been given to organized religion. Not only is the given attention towards social media and local news outlets creating a cult following of both, but industrialized society through social media and local news outlets, has "[revealed its] fictitious quality."[18] This "fictitious quality," brought on by the new religion of technology through social media and local news, has created a more subtle "cycle of manipulation" than orthodox religion, and is thereby more damaging.[19] The manipulators of technology are the new clergy; the film industry is their main source of propaganda, and the various social media platforms and news outlets are their trusted source texts of information. Religion, therefore, has been grafted into the framework of society.

When he wrote his famous critique of Hegel in 1843, Marx had already established the firm footing needed to make a statement regarding religion as an "opium"; however,

18 Ibid., 125.
19 Ibid., 95.

his work with Frederick Engels several years later titled *The Communist Manifesto* solidified Marx's position. For Marx, "[t]he history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles."[20] This history of "class struggles" has been fueled by religious ideologies. These ideologies come from both orthodox religion, and its counterpart—industrialized society—which has embraced the religious tendencies it has attempted so aggressively to rid itself of. Regardless of which came first—society or religion—the end result is the same. Industrialized society, through its use of the film industry, has not removed religion from its core, but has instead replaced the old gods of orthodox religion with the new one of technology. The film industry has replaced the subject and object of orthodox religious worship with that of created heroes who often reflect the collective ideals that mass society holds to be of value. These heroes embodying the ideals are often characters whose triumphs seem far out of reach, creating a sense of false hope in those who are invested in them, and propagating a form of deception. The same film industry has fed reality to the masses through the ideologies embodied in the villains.

The bourgeois, the owners of the newest technologies, have become the clergy who oversee their production and facilitate the adoption of a partially false need. They embrace the role of a tyrant—an unjust king or a false prophet—who...

> leave[s] the body free and sets to work directly on the soul. [They] no longer [say]: 'Either you think as I do or you die.' [They say]: 'You are free not to think as I do; your life, your property—all that you shall keep. But from

20 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," Communist Manifesto (Chapter 1), accessed April 29, 2023: https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works.1848/communist-manifesto/ch01.htm#a2.

> this day on you will be a stranger among us.' Anyone who does not conform is condemned to an economic impotence which is prolonged in the intellectual powerlessness of the eccentric loner. Disconnected from [the newest technologies], [they are] easily convicted of inadequacy.[21]

The new prophets fuel this society-created religious system, through its production, by feeding it to the very masses that were responsible for creating it. This production "hems [the masses] in so tightly, in body and soul, that they unresistingly succumb to whatever is proffered to them" through the element of repetition.[22]

Technology is the religion of the modern age. It has replaced the orthodox gods of religion with its more popularized form. Technology, as the 'new and improved opium' of mass society, has become an almost false necessity. It spins its web, using the film industry and various news outlets, to capture and then captivate its audience—feeding off of mass society—as they are almost hopeless to resist. Through distraction and manipulation, the benefactors of the technological age have, in a sense, become gods themselves. They have created a world, a religion, that has passed through their filter of maximum profitability.[23] Having tied the noose to hang religion by its throat, mass society, through its adoption of technology, has not eradicated religion, but instead has become religious. Regardless of which came first, society and religion, though their means may be different, their end result is not. Their "relationship was not one of intention but of kinship," they have become almost indistinguishable from one another.[24] Society's crowning jewel of technology is the

21 Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* 106.
22 Ibid., 106, 108.
23 Ibid., 99.
24 Ibid., 7.

new object of religious worship and the new subject of religious devotion. In its own way, technology, like the enlightenment, through its evolution or devolution into religion is totalitarian.[25] Technology, in its efforts to be set apart from religion, to replace it, "is made the same."[26] Both society and religion have the same end result: they both lead, inevitably, to "mass deception."

25 Ibid., 4.
26 Ibid., 8.

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# The Spatiotemporality of Consciousness and its Projects

JUAN PALENCIA

Maurice Merleau-Ponty defines phenomenology as "the study of the appearance of being to consciousness."[1] The study of phenomena helps us elucidate the structures of consciousness and its relationship to the world that exists for us in appearance. Merleau-Ponty, in particular, highly focuses on the body and its faculty of visual perception in his works. One of his contemporaries in the tradition of phenomenology, Martin Heidegger, places a higher importance on the ontological essence of reality as it relates to consciousness. However, after a close analysis, it becomes clear that Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty's doctrines of transcendental phenomenology both place emphasis on the spatiotemporality of the subject in relation to the world as a space for creation, or as Heidegger calls it, *building*. I argue that building is a metaphysical act which allows us to grasp the spatial world through the act of perception and projection; the two also playing a major role within Merleau-Ponty's notion of consciousness. Therefore, objects within the periphery of our perception and spatiotemporality give us a space which consciousness demarcates for itself in order to create in.

Close analyses of Heidegger's *Building Dwelling Thinking*

1 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (Routledge, 2013), 62.

and sections from Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* will be conducted in order to grasp the resonances between both regarding the relation between consciousness and space for creating and building. Before analyzing the role of building and creating in a broader sense, I will first explain the way consciousness and perception relates to objects within a totality and how they correlatively create space for us according to Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger.

In the Phenomenology of Perception, Merleau-Ponty sets out to describe the world of phenomena as it relates to consciousness. He emphasizes the essential role of the body in this relation, for the body is what grants us the faculties of perception—the sensory experience of external stimuli. Our communication with the world around us is enacted through perception insofar as it renders the world present to us as a familiar place within our lives. Coinciding with perception, consciousness has intentionality insofar as it is always conscious of something. The objects that we perceive in the world owe their texture and composition to sensing. They are what the intentionality of consciousness seeks to dissect.

As a result, our knowledge of the world becomes upheld by our faith in perception and in turn, collects itself throughout history with value that we ascribe. Thus, our knowledge becomes constituted by consciousness with this gathering of phenomena while our lived experiences of the world are ones that are immediate to perception. As Merleau-Ponty states, "Perception opens onto things. This means that perception is oriented - as if toward its own end - toward a truth in itself in which the reason for all appearances is found."[2] This again demonstrates the intentionality of

2 Ibid., 54

consciousness which directs itself towards objects in space. Moreover, this intentionality is an end for consciousness, for it grasps each object and afterwards, attaches a meaning to these appearances for itself.

The world of objects and appearances are what Merleau-Ponty refers to as *the phenomenal field*. It is a world of phenomena which is given to consciousness as a totality; "the layer of living experience through which other people and things are first given to us, the system 'Self-Others-things.'"[3] Thus, the world of objects in appearance is one given to us in each moment of sensation. With perception, consciousness grasps a given object in space for its intentional structures. This shows us the unity between intentionality and perception that unifies consciousness with spatiotemporal objects.

However, while consciousness does, in a sense, aggregate the world of appearance as a total system, it does not immediately perceive nor comprehend the entire whole. Rather, the world that exists for us in experience is the one which constitutes our field of vision at a given time. The world we perceive is the one in which consciousness enters. Describing this, Merleau-Ponty says, "to see is to enter into a universe of beings that show themselves, and they could not show themselves if they could not also be hidden behind each other or behind me."[4] Therefore, the world of objects is hidden from us until our body faces these objects in space. Through each of these moments, nature reveals itself to us by its spatiotemporality and our position in it. What is not present at one moment is visually hidden for the time being.

Therefore, the spatial field which we perceive is established by the objects in our periphery depending on where

3 Ibid., 57.
4 Ibid., 70.

we are in space. Objects, for Merleau-Ponty, are what he refers to as *geometrical plans* which include all the possible perspectives that an object holds. These possible perspectives are made possible by one's position in space. A house, for example, can be perceived from the interior, from a location blocks away, or from an airplane hundreds of feet up in the air. The perspective of this house reveals a distinct truth for each individual located in these three distinct points on this spatial field. While the house is still a house in each of these perspectives, the appearance of it from each location is an experience of the house. Its surroundings are peculiar to each individual's own spatiotemporality.

An object is always in the margins of our visual field; it is with the act of focusing that we firmly secure ourselves in position to it. We reach the object with our "gaze"; an act which is just as indubitable as thought, for in every waking moment of consciousness, we are seeing and thinking. Similarly, the relation between seeing and objects opens our space and immediate surroundings. As Merleau-Ponty states:

> To see an object is to come to inhabit it and to thereby grasp all things according to the sides these other things turn toward this object. And yet, to the extent that I also see those things, they remain places open to my gaze and, being virtually situated in them, I already perceive the central object of my vision from different angles.[5]

When we see an object, we are also seeing its surrounding planes that constitute the whole of the object's positionality at a given time. The object is not just perceived as the object alone, but as an object positioned in a space beside others. When I look at the bookshelf located in my room, I not only

5 Ibid., 71.

perceive it as a bookshelf, but as a bookshelf that takes up a space in my room which also reveals to me the nearby desk and chair given to me for the use of reading the books placed on the bookshelf. Thus, an object establishes an entire spatial field at a given moment.

These structures in Merleau-Ponty's work are also found in Heidegger's phenomenology. In *Building Dwelling Thinking*, for example, Heidegger also touches upon the spatial totality of our world with a primal oneness he calls the *fourfold*. This oneness of the totality relates to the belonging of the individual's being with other objects in space.[6] The earth serves us by giving us space and we are brought together in this space by a gathering of its dimensions. He writes, "On the earth already means 'under the sky.' Both of these also mean 'remaining before the divinities' and include a 'belonging to one's being with one another'...the four - earth and sky, divinities and mortals - belong together in one."[7] This demonstrates the way in which the fourfold is a spatial totality which includes humans and their environment. We are one with the earth and with the divine structures in the world that we create and ascribe meaning to.

In parallel with Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger maintains that we only experience this totality as it presents itself to us in a spatial-temporal setting. We receive what is given to us and yet we leave what is concealed to their own devices until they become revealed to us. He writes, "Mortals dwell in that they receive the sky as sky. They leave to the sun and moon their journey, to the stars their courses, to the seasons their blessing and their inclemency."[8] During the day, for example,

6 Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," *In Basic Writings,* ed. by David Farrell Krell (Harper Perennial and Modern Thought, 2008).
7 Ibid., 351.
8 Ibid., 352.

the sky reveals itself to us in its expansive openness. We know that the stars and the moon are hidden behind this image, even if we do not see them directly in the moment. When the sun sets, these celestial bodies reveal themselves to us in the darkness and our spatial situation changes. Here, we see the instances of revealing and concealing that the world of objects undergoes in our visual field.

Moreover, Heidegger demonstrates how an object opens a spatial field for perception with the grasping of an object and its sides. He provides an example of a bridge to demonstrate this. A bridge over a river stream connects two banks together. These two distinct banks, however, do not exist on their own but are rather created and given to us by the presence of the bridge itself. The bridge emphasizes the separate locations of the two banks and opens each one up to us by allowing us access to both. In this way, "The bridge gathers the earth as landscape around the stream."[9] The presence of the bridge in space, therefore, gathers the fourfold together in its own way. It brings together the sky, the river, and the banks in its landscape. This relates to Merleau-Ponty's view of objects in which an object reflects upon others to create a spatial setting which consciousness then perceives.

As demonstrated with the example of the house, one's position on a spatial field determines the meaning of the object to the individual. The bridge is a thing but depending on one's spatiotemporality in relation to the bridge, it holds a different meaning. For the commuter or traveler during noon, it is a means for getting to the other side. For the observer who sits on the meadow near the bridge during the golden hour, it is an elegant landscape in which the striking hues of the sky

9 Ibid., 354.

glimmer onto the bridge's arch, bringing forth awe-inspiring pleasure. This is the way space gives itself to consciousness; in turn, consciousness establishes a meaning to the scene depending on the spatiotemporal position of itself.

Having thus established the relation of consciousness and space within a phenomenal field, we must now establish how consciousness utilizes this space for its creations. As noted, consciousness creates a space with perception when it gazes towards an object. This perceptive act demarcates a space present for consciousness when it faces it. However, not only does consciousness and its perceptive faculty enact this, but the objects themselves in space and their surroundings give themselves to consciousness. From this point forward, consciousness is directed by its intentional structures to what is given to it and is now able to ascribe meaning to sensory experiences of its world. Thus, not only do objects give us space to perceive, but they give us space to create.

Merleau-Ponty elucidates the act of creation by a spatiotemporal subject when examining its *situational spatiality*. This spatiality is one distinct from that of the house or the bridge. For these external objects have a positionality that is positional, in that they are mere external coordinates. While the house and bridge do envelop their surroundings side-to-side in order to create a landscape or a spatial field, they do not carry the intentional structures which consciousness possesses. The intentionality of consciousness along with the bodily constitution of the subject allows the individual to possess a freedom in which they can direct themselves towards a project. Here, by project, we mean any causal situation which involves creation and movement with objects. As a result of intentionality, consciousness and the body integrate the objects around it according to the purpose of

its own projects. Merleau-Ponty demonstrates this when he writes:

> If my body can ultimately be a "form" and if there can be, in front it, privileged figures against indifferent backgrounds, this is insofar as my body is polarized by its tasks, insofar as it exists toward them, insofar as it coils up upon itself in order to reach its goal, and the "body schema" is, in the end, a manner of expressing that my body is in and toward the world.[10]

The body as a subject in space exists towards the spatial totality. By the perception and sensation of objects, it becomes orientated towards a project by its bodily movements.

Furthermore, the body itself allows us to settle into these surroundings without any adherence. Its parts are ready for designation towards any potential project at hand given the situation. The body's surroundings are the collection of possible points for the body's active powers to be applied to. These powers of the body are mobilized by the perception of objects related to familiar tasks. Once perceived, these objects become the central point of the intentional threads which link consciousness to the objects present. In an example of a sewing project, which Merleau-Ponty uses, "The workbench, the scissors, and the pieces of leather are presented to the subject as poles of action; they define, through their combined value, a particular situation that remains open, that calls for a certain mode of resolution a certain labor."[11] Here we see yet another example of how an open situation in space gives itself to us in our situational spatiality which allows our body to act. Thus, any project or creation one pursues becomes possible with the space and objects given

10 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 103.
11 Ibid., 108.

to us in a situation.

Alternatively, we see this same concept of creation in space with Heidegger's notion of *building.* His main project in *Building Dwelling Thinking* is to elucidate the way in which dwelling belongs to building. The mortal on earth, for Heidegger, is one who dwells. To dwell is to inhabit a space, whether it is in a home or in a location where one feels situated. As he states, "the way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans are on the earth, is *buan*, dwelling."[12] Therefore, the domain of dwelling extends over all buildings and spaces. While dwelling, one is also perceiving and sensing, since we perceive the world by inhabiting it. Thus, one requires perception and sensation to build.

Building, here, takes on a variety of meanings; building is an edifice in space and the act of making things in the broadest sense, but as Heidegger shows, building also means to dwell, or to inhabit a space. We dwell on this earth as individuals in a spatial field and by building, we also cultivate this space for our own survival and protection.[13] In turn, we protect this space so that we may continue to dwell and build. As beings who dwell, we are also beings who build, and in order to build, we must have a space to dwell.

This *building* which Heidegger talks about is not merely a construction of edifices but is also a metaphysical act of the intentionality of consciousness. He acknowledges the way consciousness projects itself onto the external objects given in space. Returning to the example of the bridge, the bridge exists as an object that is afterwards read into. It represents to us an unknown in which we attach properties and meaning to it. As stated, the bridge is a thing that gathers the fourfold.

12 Heidegger, *Basic Writings, Building Dwelling Thinking*, 349.
13 Ibid.

We primarily view the bridge as a thing, but it is possible to ascribe different meanings and uses to it afterwards, in which case the bridge becomes a symbol.

Having established this, the bridge is a thing that gathers the fourfold in a way in which it allows a site for it. This then introduces the idea which Heidegger refers to as a *locale*. A locale is a site in space which allows for projects and creation. Before the bridge, the meadow and the river are mere lots of space open for occupation. The construction of the bridge creates a locale which gathers the fourfold and allows a site for it. Therefore, this allows there to be a place in which humans can cross from side to side in order to instantiate projects or to gather and meet with each other, all while being under the sky and on the earth and under the "divinities" which we hold over our heads. Therefore, not only does consciousness as a being who dwells create space with the aid of perception and meaning, but the physical construction of a locale is also what gives it space for dwelling and building.

In the end, these analyses show that for both Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger, objects gather a space for us in which consciousness gazes towards. By doing so, it builds in this space a project of its internal activity. In a more humanistic example, humans need their space. The artist needs their studio; the space in which objects of creation and inspiration are brought forth, so that when one steps into their studio, the objects will reflect upon each other to reveal a space for creation. Henceforth, the subject with their bodily powers, will mobilize at the sight of these objects in order to create their painting or song with the necessary tools laid out in front of them. One can turn any room into a practical workspace, for consciousness attaches meaning to a location

vdepending on what the space provides. Without a space, one is limited in fulfilling their own projects. Similarly, without a given locale for the body to move towards, there lacks a situation. Consciousness is a spatiotemporal being, but consciousness is also a being with the freedom and bodily powers to create its own locale for whatever means necessary.

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# Language-Games and Schizophrenia

DAVID MAXWELL

## Introduction

This paper applies Ludwig Wittgenstein's conception of language-games and rule-following to Elaine Chaika's empirical research on the disorganized language production common in schizophrenia.[1] This analysis, I argue, will allow us to clarify certain aspects of how language-games interrelate with each other. At its most extreme, schizophrenic discourse can give the impression of a general breakdown in the individual's capacity to follow grammatical rules in their discourse. From a Wittgensteinian perspective, because the meaning of a term simply *is* its rule-governed, contextual usage, it is tempting to conclude that the capacity to participate in language-games has been lost, and that in such cases, the discourse produced by afflicted individuals is meaningless. However, I argue that a more careful interpretation based on Chaika's analysis of schizophrenic discourse suggests that this aspect of the disorder does not reflect a general loss of the capacity to follow rules, but instead a specific difficulty in following what we will term *relevance rules*,[2] rules which

1 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations,* trans. G.E.M. Anscombe,(Macmillan Publishing Company, 1953); Elaine Chaika, *Understanding Psychotic Speech: Beyond Freud and Chomsky,* (Charles C. Thomas Pub Ltd, 1990).

2 Space considerations have forced me to omit a discussion of rele-

guide us in determining *which* rules are applicable at a given time, i.e., which game is being played right now.[3] This in turn broadens our understanding of language-games and how they interrelate with each other, showing us that the types of language-games Ludwig Wittgenstein analyzes also gain their meaning and function from their relation to broader games which determine what discourse is relevant to a given context. Thus, relevance rules are closely related to the capacity to fully participate in the social order, but failure to follow them does not itself imply a breakdown of the capacity to follow rules in general, even in extreme cases. To establish this, I begin by describing Wittgenstein's understanding of meaning and rule-following. Then, I will describe how the features of schizophrenic discourse (using specifically "glossomanic" discourse as a paradigm) are explained by Chaika. Finally, I look at how schizophrenic discourse can be best understood in terms of a lack of relevance rules, drawing on Wittgenstein's Lectures on Religious Belief to discuss how we recognize when someone is playing a different language-game than we are.

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vance theory, a contemporary approach in linguistic pragmatics, which has greatly influenced my thinking here. Relevance theory argues that Grice's (1975) four conversational maxims, which allow us to infer intended meaning based on whether or not they are violated in discourse, can all be reduced to the single maxim of relevance (Wilson and Sperber 2002). For an example of research on schizophrenic discourse which utilizes Gricean maxims and which, on my view, supports the arguments of the present paper, see Corcoran and Frith (1996)..

3 As will hopefully become clear in what follows, I do not mean to claim that relevance rules constitute rules for interpreting rules, or rules which teach us how to follow a rule. Wittgenstein is clear that the capacity to follow a rule cannot itself be reduced to rules for interpreting rules (Wittgenstein 1953, §198). As we shall see, rather than telling us how to follow a rule, relevance rules guide us in understanding what rule ought to be followed.

## Language-Games and Rule-Following

In *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein argues that the meaning of a word is determined by its use in a language-game, much as the "meaning" of a chess piece is determined by the possible moves one can make with it while playing chess (§31). "Language-game" denotes the relation between grammar and social practice, and is meant "to bring into prominence the fact that the *speaking* of language is part of an activity, or of life" (§23). The concept of the language-game thus usefully allows us to speak of the grammar of a practice in much the same way that we can analyze the rules of a game such as chess. Thus, the correctness of a word depends on its conformity to the rules of the relevant language-game, and so a word can be meaningful only if there are criteria by which to determine whether it follows those rules. Conversely, we only say that someone understands the meaning of a word if they can apply it correctly (§155). To clarify the relation between rule-following and meaning, we now turn to the so-called rule-following section of the *Investigations*.[4]

Because we ordinarily assume that the meaning of a word is the thing or concept to which it refers,[5] we tend to imagine that to understand a word means that some mental process has occurred linking the word and the referent. For example, we may assume that the word "cube" is understood when a mental image of a cube appears when a person hears

4 The rule-following section has received much attention over the decades since Saul Kripke published his interpretation of it (Kripke 1982). Although my reading of this section is largely influenced by Kripke, it is beyond the scope of this essay to enter into the debate over precisely how to interpret this section; see McGinn (1997) for a review.

5 For the sake of brevity, I have omitted an analysis of Wittgenstein's discussion of this approach to language, which he refers to as the "picture theory" and takes to be paradigmatic of Western philosophical approaches to language (§1).

the word. However, because meaning is determined by use, even if a mental image of a cube does come before us when we hear the word, this does not mean that this image itself inherently "means" one use or another. It may "*suggest* a certain use to us, but it [is]… possible… to use it differently" (§139). For instance, although these uses are by no means unrelated, what is meant by "cube" depends on whether it is used in a discussion about art, geometry, or cooking. Understanding the word means grasping its application in the relevant context. To illustrate how we know when a rule has been grasped, Wittgenstein gives an example of a pupil learning to correctly write a series of numbers based on a formula given to them (in this case, $a_n = a_{n-1} + 2$). In this language-game, understanding the formula (i.e., the rule) entails the capacity to independently go on writing out the series correctly. A few mistakes do not indicate total misunderstanding, but "a *systematic* mistake" will tempt us "to say that he has understood *wrong*" (§143). But if by that we mean that understanding rightly or wrongly is a mental process which links the rule to a correct interpretation, we will never be certain whether they have understood correctly, as there are perhaps infinite ways of interpreting a rule. As Wittgenstein points out, much as there are many possible applications for the word cube, "we can think of more than *one* application of an algebraic formula; and every type of application can in turn be formulated algebraically; but… this does not get us any further. – The [correct] application is still a criterion of understanding" (§146). Suppose the pupil has correctly applied the rule up until the digit 1000, and which point they begin to write "1000, 1004, 1008, 1012," and when we stop the pupil and tell them they are misapplying the formula, they respond that they assumed we meant "'Add 2 up to 1000, 4 up to 2000, 6

up to 3000, and so on." In this instance, Wittgenstein argues, there is nothing we can point to in their previous applications which would indicate that they misunderstood the rule (§185), nor would it be any use to simply remind the pupil of the formula. The upshot of this is that the meaning of a rule cannot depend upon an interpretation of past applications or an interpretation of the rule itself, "because every course of action can," on some interpretation, "be made out to accord with the rule." Hence, if meaning depended on such interpretations, "no course of action could be determined by a rule" (§201).

To solve this problem, Wittgenstein instead compares rules to sign-posts, and argues that what "the expression of a rule— say a sign-post— [has]… to do with my actions" is that "I have been trained to react to this sign in a particular way… A person goes by a sign-post only in so far as there exists a regular use of sign-posts, a custom" (§197). In other words, correct use depends on the agreement of the group of language-users who play the language-game in question. We are trained by the group to respond to particular words in particular ways, much as we are trained to learn any game. As Marie McGinn explains (in her explanation of Saul Kripke's interpretation of this section), taken in isolation, there is no way to determine if an individual is using a word correctly: "the distinction between a correct and incorrect use of a word… only enters in when we consider the individual in relation to a wider community of speakers."[6] What makes it incorrect for the pupil to write "1004, 1008, 1012," etc., is that it simply is not how the participants in the language-game of arithmetic are trained to respond to the

6 Marie McGinn, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Wittgenstein and the Philosophical Investigations* (Routledge, 1997), 86.

particular rule expressed by the formula.

But one still might wonder about what is happening with the pupil who misunderstood the formula in §185, who makes "systematic mistakes" (§143). Suppose, as seems to occur in schizophrenic discourse at its most extreme, it is not only with this particular game that they have made a systematic mistake, but apparently with most or all games. Again, a tempting conclusion is that they have lost the capacity to play language-games altogether. However, the pupil's response to correction in §185 suggests that it is not that they were simply misapplying the rule, but rather that they were applying a different rule and thus playing a different game. If the latter is the case, this suggests that there may be broader, meta-language-games, which do not determine *how* to interpret a rule, but rather *what* rules to apply at a given time. For examples of apparent systematic mistakes, let us turn to Chaika's interpretation of schizophrenic discourse.

## Not Knowing Which Rule to Follow

Chaika argues that the features of schizophrenic discourse, which include gibberish, neologisms, erroneous word retrieval, and other grammatical mistakes, reflect a loss of control over the inhibition of irrelevant speech.[7] To explain this, although there are certainly many other forms that schizophrenic discourse can take, for the sake of brevity we will use glossomania as our main paradigm.[8] Glosso-

7 Chaika, "Understanding Psychotic Speech," 7.

8 An important limitation to this paper is that there is evidence that the precise ways in which disordered language manifests in schizophrenia seems to be related to which cluster of symptoms predominates. Michael Covington and colleagues review several studies which generally associate glossomania with the positive symptoms of schizophrenia (hallucinations and delusions) (Covington et al. 2005, 88-90). Consequently, what is said in this essay may only apply to schizophrenic individuals for

mania is "a chaining [of words] in which shared meanings of words progress linearly… from one phrase to another, getting progressively further and further away from whatever meaning was apparently intended."[9] This manifests itself in sentences or phrases which seem to only be loosely connected with each other. Chaika gives the following example:

> Did that show up on the X-rays?
> You'll see it tonight.
> I've been drinking phosphate.
> You'll see it in the dark…
> Glows.
>
> We all glow as we're glowworms.[10]

As one can see, each sentence is more or less coherent on its own, but one fails to see how they fit together to form a coherent whole. Importantly, the words involved need not be semantically related, but can be related in a purely syntactic way, "triggered by chance repletion of morphemes with or without shared meanings."[11] For instance:

> Das ist vom Kaiserhaus, sie haben es von dem Voreltern, von der Vorwelt, von der Urwelt, Frankfurt-am-Main, das sind die Franken, die Frankfurter Wurchstchen, Frankenthal, Frankenstein.[12]

As Chaika puts it, "this passage consists of words that are

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whom positive symptoms are predominant.

9 Chaika, "Understanding Psychotic Speech," 13.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid., 16.

12 Ibid.; My translation: "This is from the imperial family, they got it from their ancestors, from the world of the past, from the primeval world, Frankfurt-am-Main, these are the Franks, the Frankfurt sausages, Frankenthal, Frankenstein."

especially tightly related both morphemically and semantically in certain features. It is, nevertheless, incoherent and recognizably schizophrenic because it is not subordinated to a topic."[13] Chaika explains such utterances by arguing, again, that it reflects a loss of the capacity to inhibit irrelevant material. Normally, we choose the next words in our sentences "to advance a topic," and not just because they are semantically or syntactically similar to the previous ones.[14] In glossomanic speech, however, the speaker fails to subordinate the words and sentences to any overall topic, what she refers to as the macrostructure of discourse, producing a lack of coherence.[15] Chaika emphasizes that the words being chosen are not random, however, but follow clear logical associations, just not ones which are relevant to the context. Even so, absent this context, it is difficult for the hearer to follow the discourse. For Chaika, "meaning and coherence are dependent on the macrostructure of discourse and the subordination of microstructures… to that macrostructure," and it is, at least from the point of view of the listener, this macrostructure that seems to be missing from schizophrenic discourse. [16]

## Relevance Rules and the Macrostructure of Discourse

Again, one way of interpreting schizophrenic discourse would be to suggest that no rules are being followed at all.[17]

13 Ibid.
14 Ibid., 32.
15 Ibid., 36.
16 Ibid., 39.
17 Or, more accurately, no rules are being followed at the level of language where the dysfunction occurs. As Convington et al. observed, phonologically and morphologically speaking, schizophrenic speech is generally normal, and "even 'word salad' is made of normal syntactic

Chaika certainly seems to lean that way, and argues that there is no basis for assuming schizophrenic discourse is meaningful or produced intentionally: "gibberish is gibberish because no meaning can be extracted from it."[18] Absent a discernible macrostructure, schizophrenic speech cannot be assigned a meaning. This view especially comes out in her argument against one theory of schizophrenic discourse, which is that it has the same mechanism as regular slips-of-the-tongue. Chaika suggests that this "ignores a crucial difference between normal slips and psychotic ones. Normal slips show distinct patterns and are in a sense orderly," but identifying such patterns "is not possible with… schizophrenic errors."[19] Put in Wittgensteinian terms, we could say that ordinary slips-of-the-tongue are themselves rule-governed and thus meaningful, but no meaning can be discerned in the errors of schizophrenic discourse. Hence, Chaika believes that at its most extreme schizophrenic speech simply does not follow any rules, and that it reflects a kind of "systematic mistake."[20] However, as Chaika herself observes, the glossomanic samples do not reveal a complete lack of rule-following behavior. In the German-speaking patient, for instance, the words were clearly semantically related to each other, and in certain contexts or language-games the generation of a sentence like that might have been correct. In another example, in which a schizophrenic individual was asked to name different colors from samples, the individual

components" (Covington et al. 2005, 91). Where schizophrenic discourse specifically goes wrong is at the level of semantics, discursive coherence, and lexical access, and it is here that, particularly if semantics are emphasized, the temptation arises to assume that no rule is being followed.

18 Chaika, "Understanding Psychotic Speech," 9.

19 Ibid., 12.

20 Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §143.

responded to a salmon-colored sample as follows:

> A fish swims. You call it a salmon. You cook it. You put it in a can. You open the can. You look at it in this color. Salmon fish.[21]

While, as Chaika notes, "the swimming has nothing to do with the color naming task," it would be wrong to say that there is no pattern to this response.[22] What appears to be happening in such examples are rapid shifts in what rule is being followed, and an inability to stick to the relevant context. In other words, the rule that's being violated is not within the language-game itself, but is a rule that determines what the relevant language-game is. It is as if, while playing chess, my opponent suddenly began moving the pieces as if we were playing checkers. This would not demonstrate that no rule was being followed, or that my opponent is a poor chess player, but it would show that a mistake happened on a level beyond the rules of the particular game. This interpretation is plausible even within Chaika's theory, that the deficit is an inability to subordinate discursive microstructures to macrostructures.

## Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued that, by applying Wittgenstein's arguments about the relation between meaning and rule-following to Chaika's analysis of schizophrenic discourse, we are able to specify that the rules being violated in schizophrenic discourse are relevance rules. These rules determine what language-game counts as relevant in a particular context, and are therefore key for the organization

21 Chaika, "Understanding Psychotic Speech," 14.
22 Ibid.

of the social order, as their absence can make it appear as if no rules are being followed at all. A helpful analogy may come from Wittgenstein's treatment of religious discourse in his Lectures on Religious Belief. If a group of meteorologists were attempting to predict the weather, and one of them said "based on a dream I had last night, I predict that the Last Judgment will come tomorrow," then we would, rather than saying that this is poor evidence for predicting the weather, suspect that they were not actually playing the same meteorological language-game we were.[23] As he puts it, "whether a thing is a blunder or not—it is a blunder in a particular system. Just as something is a blunder in a particular system and not in another."[24] If, as discussed above, the meaning of a word is determined by its use, and there therefore must be a criteria for its incorrect application, then it follows that a person who appears to be making a mistake in one language-game may in fact simply be playing a different language-game than expected. That is not to say that no mistake is being made; even Wittgenstein's example clearly suggests that something odd is happening with the person who brings up the Last Judgment while discussing the weather. But the mistake is not a lack in the capacity to follow rules altogether; rather, it reflects a lack of the capacity to subordinate one's discourse to what is relevant. The fact that we can speak of a mistake here at all shows that there are rules to relevancy, and that our everyday discourse is subordinated to these rules.

23 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology, and Religious Belief* (University of California Press, 1967), 61.
24 Ibid., 59.

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# *Letter to Hellenes*

AMANDA HEMMERT

Dear Hellenes,

I am Helen of Troy, and I am writing this letter on the topic of war. I have seen a war start and end in my lifetime, and it has torn our world apart. Our politics, and nothing but politics, led to it tearing us apart. As you read this letter, fellow Greecians, I ask humbly that you truly consider what led to this disaster. Ask yourselves if, subconsciously, you craved violence. Your sons have been raised to battle, your women to hide. Is this not the atmosphere a war is created in?

Yet, one woman, myself, is blamed without reprieve for this brutal war. If one person is a catalyst for a war, the war would have happened with or without the individual. We raise our children on stories of war and heroes, making battle a necessity to attain manhood. I had no hand in the conflicts, for they were bound, my mouth gagged. Citizens of Troy and Greece, I did not set this war in motion, nor would I have wished it on Troy or on Greece.

I watched in horror as my land and our homes were destroyed. My father's home is gone in the war; I have not a place to return to but the halls of Menelaus. I weep as I

walk through my once beautiful country, which has still not recovered in the many years since the war. You call me Helen of Troy, but I was born, raised, and still live, in the halls of a Spartan home, with the ruler of Sparta himself. I am Helen alone.

Am I Helen of Troy because I have touched a Trojan? Is that all it takes to gain such a title? My actions with Paris of Troy matter not, as the battles marched with or without us. I do not attempt to excuse my actions nor explain my actions with Paris of Troy. The choices I made were my own. The Gods led Paris to me as I searched for a voice in Sparta. And they have offered me one, through the circumstances of my captivity and return to Spartan soil. Not a thought of war entered my mind while in Troy, save the rumors I was afforded. Every circumstance with Paris was not a declaration of war, nor was a single action a personal attack against Sparta.

Using me as a catalyst for a war is brutality. Taking my voice to be one of war because I do not have a voice of my own in my home or society is the epitome of debasement of person. I am but a verbal concubine in a court of war. I am told my lips are but my husband's, yet they have been abused. You accuse women as if they are in a court of law, but will not give them bricks to stand on in your amphitheaters. Have the women around you had a say in the decisions of the state? I implore you to look at the war in front of you. Tell me that your children and your husbands have not been preparing for this day anxiously.

As I end this letter I implore you: raise your children to think of manhood as involvement in dikē, not the taking up of arms. Consider your women, and their role in the politics around you. But do not, for a second, blame the Trojan war on the actions of one individual in the greater state.

Sincerely,
*Helen*

# The Confucian Symphony: An Analysis of Moral Improvisation Using Musical Metaphors in the Analects

CHERISH DEGRAAF

When confronted with the idea of "morality," many tend to think of rigid ideals and uncompromising values.[1] While this image may be accurate in some cases, it seems to be the case that a sense of flexibility may be beneficial when trying to make our way through the world. In the Analects, Confucius says:

> "The Master was discussing music with the Grand Music Master of Lu. He said, 'What can be known about music is this: when it first begins, it resounds with a confusing variety of notes, but as it unfolds, these notes are reconciled by means of harmony, brought into tension by means of counterpoint, and finally woven together into a seamless whole. It is in this way that music reaches perfection."[2]

Additionally, Phillip J. Ivanhoe adds as a footnote, "Music thus serves as a model or metaphor for the process of self-cultivation: starting in confusion, passing through many phases, and culminating in a state of perfection."[3] According to this interpretation, Confucius suggests to his followers that

1 *Editorial note: all citations reference Philip J. Ivanhoe and W. Van Norden's Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy 3rd Edition (Hackett Publishing Company, 2023). The selections from the Analects cited throughout are the ones used in their collection. Page numbers have been updated to reflect the 3rd edition.*

2 *Analects*, 3.23.

3 Ivanhoe, 11..

improvisation is a crucial tenet of morality in the Analects. He uses music as a metaphor to demonstrate this idea. He teaches that there is no set code for maintaining morality; instead, the teachings on this subject act more as a guideline. The metaphor of music is used to encourage the idea of moral improvisation. This metaphor gives one the tools to properly govern oneself, understand others, and, most importantly, move through life with the ease that the Analects strives to teach.

We are all trying to cultivate ourselves to achieve a sense of wholeness. In this passage, Confucius uses music as a metaphor to describe how we move through stages of our lives in order to achieve a state of perfection, or completeness, within ourselves. It is relatively straightforward to understand this metaphor. When a song first begins, the performer needs to figure out their notes and make sense of them. After they can understand their notes, they can start to through the piece in harmony with others, which in this case, represents an understanding of how to cultivate oneself to act appropriately in reference to others. In different situations. However, a song would not be beautiful if opposing dynamics were not interwoven throughout the piece. This is also true in life—we would not be able to become whole if we had no trials to face or burdens to bear. These tensions create a deeper understanding of the musical piece, thus cultivating a more diverse melody. This melodic expansion represents the students' view of how they see the world that they move through. As we move through life with unfamiliar metaphorical notes and learn how to weave them together to create beautiful harmonies, we can achieve a state of wholeness and perfection— both within the song and within ourselves.

There are many dimensions to the idea of the "self."

In order to be a well-rounded individuals, the students of Confucius must acquire certain character traits. The Analects read:

> Zilu asked about the complete person. The Master said, Take a person as wise as Zang Wuzhong, as free of desire as Gungchuo, as courageous as Zhuangzi of Bian, and as accomplished in the arts as Ran Qiu, and then acculturate them by means of ritual and music— such a man might be called a complete person.[4]

The Master elaborates on what it takes to be complete within oneself— he states that wisdom, courage, being free of desire, and accomplishments in the arts are all working parts of being a "complete" person. Here, we encounter the idea of harmony— these parts work in harmony with each other; they need to be refined by ritual and music. Once again, ritual gives structure to the world, but music is the key to generating a particular kind of morality— the kind of morality that creates a unique individual with a specific way of viewing the world and the moral implications they face. The student of Confucius should be able to decide for themselves what is morally right in any given situation. Again, music in this context gives rise to the metaphor of improvisation. The practitioner of Confucianism must know the rules to break them properly. Furthermore, a perfect example of this is also delivered in the Analects:

> The Duke of She said to Kongzi, 'Among my people there is one we call 'Upright Gong.' When his father stole a sheep, he reported him to the authorities.'
>
> Kongzi replied, 'Among my people, those who we consider 'upright' are different from this: fathers cover up for

4 *Analects*, 14.12.

> their sons, and sons cover up for their fathers. 'Uprightness' is to be found in this.'[5]

This piece tells of a Duke who confronts Confucius with his idea of a high moral position of turning a father in for the crime of theft, of which Confucius rebuttals and states that the opposite is true— one must protect their father, rather than turning him in. This classic passage shows Confucius's active practice of placing filial piety above the law and whatever moral obligations one has been previously taught. The family is to come first, no matter what. This display of morality may not be found within the studied texts or ritual practice; however, it is morally correct to protect those the Confucianism practitioner loves, even though they have committed a crime, in this situation. Morality has never been set in stone, it is fluid, and one always has control over how it is demonstrated.

In the self-cultivation of morality, there are oftentimes suggestions on things that can bring the student joy. Joy is an essential facet of morality— if the practitioner can feel joy in the morality they are attempting to exemplify, they are more likely to repeat those actions that brought them the joy they experienced, thus creating a more moral person. Confucius gives these suggestions of what his students should find joy in, stating, "Beneficial types of joy number three, as do harmful types of joy. Taking joy in regulating yourself through the rites and music, in commending the excellence of others, or in possessing many worthy friends— these are beneficial types of joy. Taking joy in arrogant behavior, idle amusements, or decadent licentiousness— these are the harmful types of joys.'"[6] It is notable here that Confucius

5 *Analects*, 13.18.
6 *Analects*, 16.5.

almost always pairs rituals and music together. They are forever intertwined with each other. Again, the student has to know the rules to break them. Ritual provides the structure of how one should shape their moral views, and music provides the refinement of those individually tailored moral standings.

Together, ritual and music provide the structure of how the practitioner of Confucianism needs to move through the world to obtain joy. The Analects endorse this type of moral improvisation repeatedly. For example, in Book 19, Verse 11, "Zixia said, 'As long as one does not transgress the bounds when it comes to important Virtues, it is permissible to cross the line here and there when it comes to minor Virtues.'" Again, Confucius is giving a type of moral hall pass to his followers, advising them that there are virtues that ought to be strictly kept. However, his students ought to be able to move with the current of life to make the best moral decisions for themselves and others in whatever context they deem necessary.

After the student of Confucianism has spent time contemplating and cultivating a virtuous moral standing with themself, they should be able to apply those moral principles in the real world to better understand and work with others. Morality may begin within the self, but it manifests in the treatment of others. It is all for naught if the practitioner cannot properly enact the moral standings they have cultivated within themselves. In Book 17, Verse 11, it is written, "The Master said, "When we say 'the rites, the rites,' are we speaking mere of jade and silk? When we say 'music, music,' are we speaking merely of bells and drums?'" This passage asks the students of Confucianism to consider carefully the moral actions they take up. However, footnote 148, added

by Ivanhoe in regard to this passage, is what we can draw attention to; he writes, "Just as true music requires not merely instruments but sensitive musicians to play them, so true ritual requires not merely traditional paraphernalia but also emotionally committed, sensitive practitioners."[7] This footnote provides the additional context we need to understand further how moral actions affect others. Music requires a skilled musician to create beautiful ballads; without that skill and knowledge, the music descends into chaos and madness, which produces a messy and noisy catastrophe. However, a skilled and sensitive musician knows how to move through a piece with grace. This aligns perfectly with the idea of moral improvisation and how a committed practitioner is required to achieve harmony, gain insight into the world and enact their moral standings through careful considerations and improvisations. Without a careful study and contemplation of morality through the Analects, the practitioner would end up in a chaotic spiral of regret and resentment. Morality will never just be morality; it entails careful introspection, a thorough examination of the situation, and profound respect for others. A perfect example of this is offered in the Analects when Yuan Si declines a salary. It is written, "When Yuan Si was serving a steward, he was offered a salary of nine hundred measures of millet, but he declined it.

"The Master said, 'Do not decline it! [If you do not need it yourself], could you not use it to aid the households in your neighborhood?'"[8] This passage is notable because Yuan Si presumed it would be noble and wise to decline the salary he was offered— and typically, this is ritually correct. However, Confucius thinks the opposite; many of Yuan Si's neighbors

7 Ivanhoe, 48.
8 *Analects*, 6.5.

could benefit from him having this salary, as he would be able to divvy it out to provide support for those in need. This is an act of moral improvisation, as it is ritually taught that the practitioners of Confucianism should not accept salaries, but in this case, it benefits others, so it is acceptable to take up the offer of the salary. Another case of moral improvisation comes from Book 11, Verse 22, where it reads:

> Zilu asked, "Upon learning of something that needs to be done, should one immediately take care of it?"
>
> The Master replied, "As long as one's father and elder brothers are still alive, how could one possibly take care of it immediately?
>
> [On a later occasion] Ran Qiu asked, "Upon learning of something that needs to be done, should one immediately take care of it?"
>
> The Master replied, "Upon learning of it, you should immediately take care of it."
>
> Zihua inquired, "When Zilu asked you whether or not one should immediately take care of something upon learning of it, you told him one should not, as long as one's father and elder brothers were still alive. When Ran Qui asked the same question; however, you told him that one should immediately take care of it. I am confused and humbly ask to have this explained to me."
>
> The Master said, "Ran Qiu is overly cautious, and so I wished to urge him on. Zilu, on the other hand, is too impetuous, and so I sought to hold him back.'

This passage explicitly demonstrates that even Confucius uses improvisation regarding the teachings he gives to his students. Not every student will benefit when taught a subject

the same way. Confucius deems it morally permissible in the above passage to give two conflicting pieces of advice, to two students, regarding the same matter. While Zihua first found it confusing, Confucius was able to explain his means of doing so. Typically, it would not be seen as righteous to offer alternate teachings. However, it is entirely reasonable that Confucius would recognize his student's differing needs and offer them the teachings they needed. Moral improvisation is at work even in the Master's hands as he mentors and leads his students on their shared path to individual enlightenment.

Another asset of morality is that it benefits not only ourselves and others but it allows the practitioner to move through life with a sense of ease that the Analects continuously teach. If a student can apply the teachings received within the Analects and that they are taught by the Master, they should be able to apply those teachings to any sort of moral dilemma they may face and make the most morally correct choice. Confucius desires ease and peace for his students, and morality plays a crucial role in achieving that goal. The Analects reads, " Master You said, 'When it comes to the practice of ritual, it is harmonious ease that is to be valued. It is precisely such harmony that makes the Way of the Former Kings so beautiful. If you merely stick rigidly to ritual in all matters, great and small, there will remain that which you cannot accomplish. Yet if you know enough to value harmonious ease but try to attain it without being regulated by the rites, this will not work either."[9] This section of the Analects speaks of the "harmonious ease" in which Confucius wants for his followers to achieve. It is once again notable that Confucius uses the term harmonious in this

9 *Analects*, 1.12.

passage. Harmony requires two unique and differing parts to work in tandem with one another to produce a pleasing and beautiful outcome. This is the goal that Confucius desires for his students— he wants them to create a unique, beautiful, and pleasing life. Many working parts play a role in acquiring this ease— wisdom, practice, humility, and morality. These characteristics need to be in harmony to obtain the ease mentioned. This passage demonstrates that the practitioner has to know how to balance the ritual practices without being too intense about the rules. Within the ritual, the students should be able to find joy. This balance of joy and practice will make the practitioner flow through the ritual with harmonious ease.

It is often the case that when one experiences something beautiful, they want to align themselves with that beauty, be one with it, and become a part of it. Confucius wanted this for both himself and his students. The Analects reads, "Whenever the Master was singing in a group and heard something that he liked, he inevitably asked to have it sung again and only then would harmonize with it."[10] This passage is fascinating and memorable. This piece demonstrates how in tune and at ease Confucius was with the world around him. He loved to take the time to sing with his students. He wanted to create safe spaces to harbor beautiful moments with them that they could reflect on. This passage also represents that moment of seeing an action performed that a student finds particularly moving through the lens of morality. The student then asks the performer for guidance on how to act accordingly, and then they both move harmoniously through the world together, yet in their unique way. Morality brings peace to the spaces we all exist in together, and improvisa-

10 *Analects*, 7.32.

tion brings morality into harmony with peace, thus creating an environment of ease and hope.

In the final analysis of moral improvisation through musical metaphors within the Analects, morality can be approached in many different ways— both metaphorically and in practice. Music enables the students of Confucianism to cultivate a more profound sense of morality within themselves and for others. It also encourages them to move through life with ease and harmony with all other beings and events that may be occurring. In Book 7, Verse 14 of the Analects, it reads, "When the Master was in the state of Qi he heard the Shao music, and for three months after did not even notice the taste of meat. He said, 'I never imagined that music could be so sublime.'" This passage demonstrates the effect that music can have on the soul. It can change one's perspective on life and how one moves through it. Throughout the Analects, Confucius continuously teaches that morality can be executed in many diverse practices. There has never been a standard set of moral coaching on morally determining what one should do in any number of circumstances. Once a student has been well educated on the teachings and practices contained within the Analects, it is up to them to decide how to act and react to the world's workings to demonstrate the morality they learned from Confucius.

Music brings the teachings regarding morality into a new light that allows for improvisation to be brought into practice for the students of Confucianism. Music is a powerful creative tool for those that use it. Morality can also be a source of creative problem-solving. Just as one might improvise in music, a student of Confucianism can also practice improvisation on a moral level. This moral improvisation gives the practitioners a sense of agency and accountability

for the moral actions they choose to enact. When one is given the ability to choose how they pursue any number of moral situations, it empowers them to make more meaningful, thought-out decisions. Confucius understood this concept and utilized this metaphor in the Analects. Each metaphor within the Analects is carefully crafted to guide the students of Confucianism to lead more virtuous, moral, and harmonious lives. Music plays a large part in bringing people of all different backgrounds together, and in the context that Confucius demonstrates, he wants his students to lead extraordinary lives that are both virtuous and in harmony with one another. When each student puts the teaching of moral improvisation into practice, the world becomes a place where we can live in harmonious ease with one another.

## Bibliography

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