

A watercolor illustration of a child with dark hair, wearing a red and white striped shirt and blue pants, sitting on a large grey rock. The child is looking out over a blue lake towards a distant shoreline. The scene is framed by large, textured green trees on both sides. Two dark birds are flying in the sky above the lake. The foreground is filled with tall, yellow-green grass. The overall style is soft and painterly.

A Priori

Brown University

Journal of Philosophy

A PRIORI

The Brown Journal of Philosophy

Volume 5

*Brown University
Department of Philosophy
2020*

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Elliot J. Negin '21

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Printed by IngramSpark

a-priori@brown.edu

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A Priori: The Brown Journal of Philosophy is made possible through the generosity of the Department of Philosophy at Brown University. The Journal would like to offer special thanks to Professor Paul Guyer and Katherine Scanga for their indispensable contributions.

Letter from the Editor

Dear Reader,

What first drew me to philosophy was its incredible relevance to everyday life. Almost anything in life can be framed philosophically, from theoretical beliefs about bigger things—like the explanatory role of social structures, the relationship between science and religion, or cross-cultural variation in ethics—to more practical decisions about smaller things—like what to buy and where to buy it, how and why to cultivate relationships, or how to spend a free afternoon. Yet, the more philosophy classes I took, the more I understood why many prospective students are intimidated by the discipline. Philosophy is often criticized for its insularity and impenetrability, and there is significant truth to this. Inaccessibility is particularly a problem for women and people of colour, who are often made to feel excluded due to the lack of representation both throughout the history of the discipline and currently in departments across the world. On top of learning, underrepresented groups shoulder a burden of proving that they belong.

Venturing into the practice of philosophy—daring to ask the big questions, even hoping to contribute something new to a millennia-old dialogue—is scary and exhilarating. Philosophy as a subject matter has widespread appeal, but academic philosophy is, in fact, a discipline, with its own terminology, practices, and conventions. Sadly, it is also a discipline that has done surprisingly little reflection on making its own practices understandable to the public. At some point, a disconnect formed between the universal relevance of philosophy's subject matter and the exclusionary character of the discipline deciding who gets to be a philosopher.

We, the editors of *A Priori*, aim to change the norm. Our ethos is reflected in the cover art, which conveys that philosophers are pensive, vibrant, and could be anybody. In the editorial process, we often found ourselves asking: “What exactly is philosophy?”. In this process, we have had the privilege of redefining and challenging traditional notions of what philosophy can include, and we hope our selections broaden your conceptions too. We are excited about the future of philosophy, and our small volume embodies our vision for the broader canon.

Christina Ge, Editor-in-Chief

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Can Early Marx Ground His Critique of Capitalism?

Yuezhen Li

I. Introduction

The period between 1843 and 1845 marks an important and distinctively formative stage in Marx's career. This period begins with *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* of 1843 and ends with *The German Ideology* of 1845, signifying his early attention to German idealist philosophy (particularly Hegel and Hegelianism, such as that of Ludwig Feuerbach) and his increasing interest in the system of "private property", *i.e.* capitalism. Indeed, it was in *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* (EPM henceforward) that Marx made his first attempt at a critique of capitalism, based on alienation from our true essence, *viz.* our human species-being.

This essay will examine the structural status of Early Marx's critique. After outlining this alienation-based critique, I will establish – against Allen Wood's commentary – that Early Marx not only has an ethical theory, but that this theory provides an important grounding for his critical apparatus. This ethical theory also describes the good life: the good life for human beings is to conduct activities suited to their nature.

As he advances the substantive claim that fulfilling, collaborative labor is essential to who we are, Early Marx identifies the good life as one in which people can produce freely and meaningfully. The evil of capitalism, it follows, is that it degenerates fulfilling labor into “alienated labor,” rendering the good life through work impossible.

I identify the underlying structure of Early Marx’s argument as similar to that in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*. They not only each give a version of non-utilitarian consequentialism, but they both base their ethical theories on appeals to their accounts of human nature. They share a normative structure that is summarized by the following valid syllogism:

P1. The good life is to do what is human – a basic normative claim;

P2. To do X is to do what is human – a metaphysical theory of human nature;

C. The good life is to do X.

However, with his methodological commitment against abstract, speculative philosophizing, Marx seems to be in no position to justify either the abstract claim of P1 or the substantive claim of P2, wherein he thinks of a certain kind of labor activities as central to human nature, nor does it appear to me that he can possibly justify them. Given his inability

to reconcile his methodological approach and philosophical substance, I argue that Early Marx's appeal to human nature – the lack of exercise of which he terms “alienation” – fails as an attempt to ground his normative and ethical claims, which gestures at an explanation for his post-1845 methodological shift to immanent critique that requires no metaphysical grounding.

II. The Conception of Alienation & Critique of Capitalism

Early Marx's general critical outlook is that capitalism makes it impossible for us to engage in such activities (for example, labor) - or to engage in them in such manners (in the case of labor, a distinct kind of collaborative “social labor”) - that are in harmony with the essential nature of our human species. The primary problem of capitalism is that it *alienates* us from who we truly are, and thus Marx's concept of “alienation” deserves some close scrutiny.

The German term for “alienation” – alternatively translated as “estrangement” – is *Entfremdung* or *Entäusserung*. They have the literal sense of making something “strange, foreign” or “external, of others.” They carry the image of externalizing something that is supposed to be internal, to make alien/strange/foreign something that is supposed to be familiar, and to make what is supposed to be of *this* to be of *other*. Taken together, Marx's use of the term “alienation” or “estrangement” should refer to the unnatural separation of

things that naturally belong together.

Much like Hegel's and Feuerbach's use of the notion of alienation to address spirituality and religious consciousness, Early Marx focuses on a specific kind of alienation under capitalism: alienated labor. Alienated labor should be taken literally to mean the unnatural separation of the worker from her labor. In *EPM*, Marx identifies four kinds of alienation for workers: 1. Alienation from the product, as it is taken away by the capitalists once the production commences; 2. Alienation from the working process itself, because the workers' labor is transformed into something for sale (so as to earn a wage for livelihood) and thus belong to others, *i.e.* the capitalists; 3. Alienation from other workers, as workers are put into competition for employment and for higher wages against each other; 4. Alienation from their "species-beings" [*Gattungswesen*], which will be examined further, because it is the most philosophically interesting and arguably primary kind of alienation for Early Marx's critique.

Early Marx's problem with alienated labor is not that the repetitious, mechanical labor process renders the workers' subjective life unpleasurable and anguished via the nature of the work itself: "robbed of all actual life content...worthless, devoid of dignity"¹. Such subjective states are surely terrible, but at best evidential or symptomatic of alienation. Instead, alienation in labor is an objective state, where the product of the worker is taken away, work is only done to earn a

wage (rather than being an autonomous activity), workers are turned against each other, etc. What each worker thinks or feels about such an objective state is irrelevant. A well-paid software engineer at Google is nonetheless an alienated worker; a pre-capitalist peasant suffering from his work may nonetheless be unalienated.

Only with this in mind can we approach the fourth sense of alienated labor, which seems the most interesting for our purposes. It refers to the unnatural separation of the worker from her species-being, or something akin to her “human nature”. Species-being literally points to the folk idea of “what makes us human”. For Marx, the species-being is not manifested statically, but only in practice/in action: a life in harmony with species-beings is a life in which we act like a human, specifically, our essential powers qua human beings are realized. In other words, for Marx we are not *just* what we are; we are what we (can) do. Somewhat anticipating the Capabilities Approach, Marx maintains that it is our powers to act that make who we are. Therefore, alienation from one’s species-being means an objective inability to realize one’s essential powers. Under capitalism, we as workers are thwarted from the full exercise of our essential powers.

What are our essential powers that constitute our species-being? Early Marx suggests that our ability to engage in labor is among them. The point of labor for Marx is objectification. Despite its negative connotation in popular usage,

objectification is indispensable for Marx. As *EPM* explains, “the product of labor is labor which has been congealed in an object, which has become material; it is [the] *objectification* of labor”². For Marx, labor is the conscious transformation of the world; we can only act upon the material world by objectifying our productive power, *viz.* by turning that power into something tangible³, material, and real. By engaging in labor, one not only objectifies one’s labor into a concrete product, but also affirms one’s human species-being by exercising one’s essential powers. This Marxian theme seems to echo Aristotle’s idea that production is the objectification of the self, as the activation of the essence, such that “his product manifest[s] in reality”⁴. We affirm our individuality as well as our humanity through our conscious productive activity and confirm them with the objectively existing products of labor, which Marx describes as “so many mirrors in which we saw reflected our essential nature”⁵. Our productive power thus belongs naturally to our species-being.

Labor under capitalism is alienated precisely because this natural linkage (“belonging-together”) is cut off. An activity of labor is inhuman if it lacks *control* where one ought to have; a human activity, by contrast, is an autonomous “self-activity”. Marx seems to suggest that in order for the work to be unalienated, workers *ought* to have freedom in choosing: 1) on whether to labor at all and 2) on how and what to labor, as part of the transformation of the world. With respect to capitalism’s claim that it has brought about

unprecedented emancipation, wage-workers have become categorically freer than previously-existing serfs or slaves, but it introduces distinctly new forms of severe unfreedom that may be avoidable under a different social arrangement. Under capitalism, workers suffer from the four aspects of alienated labor at once, as they lose their products, their work, their comradeship, and their human selves as they work. Central to this picture is that workers' work, as it is under capitalism, is not truly autonomous self-activity, for they lack control where they ought to have it.

Workers under alienated labor do appear to voluntarily choose to work as they do, but that is just a mere appearance. In reality, there is no alternative to engaging in the capitalist mode of production. Since the means of production are concentrated at the hands of capitalists, the workers cannot support their own lives without constantly selling themselves, via their labor, as commodities. To refuse such a transaction is to deny oneself of the day's subsistence and thus deny oneself of life. Compelled by the threat of starvation, workers must instead spend all their days working for mere subsistence (a low level guaranteed by inter-workers alienation, *viz.* competition amongst workers). As Engels summarizes in 1847, "The slave is sold once and for all; the proletariat must sell himself daily and hourly."⁶ While workers under capitalism are objectively and categorically freer than slaves, they are still everywhere unfree.

Not only do alienated workers lack the freedom to choose whether to work or not, but they have no autonomy in deciding what and how they would like to produce. This is particularly damning for Marx, who not only names autonomous production as a central aspect of our human species-being, but also emphasizes that the degree of productive autonomy is closely linked with the human (as opposed to animalistic) form of being. Marx famously asserts in the 1860s – although Early Marx would more than likely concur – that, “what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality”⁷. Namely, Marx seems to hold that there is a characteristically, even “exclusively” (*ibid.*), human way of labor. All animals produce for their own subsistence, but it is human to have a conscious plan in the imagination and willingly realizes it into actuality; this corresponds nicely with our previous definition of unalienated labor as the conscious transformation of the world. Unfortunately, alienated labor under capitalism is characteristically un-human, because both what to work and how to work are imposed on the workers, leaving them with no room for autonomous action. One major cause for this unfreedom is the ever-present division of labor under capitalism. Marx writes in 1845 that “As long ... as activity is divided not freely but naturally, the human being’s own deed becomes an alien might standing over against him, subjugating him instead of being dominated by him.”⁸ By this Marx alludes to Adam Smith, who argues that division of labor arises naturally from each indi-

vidual's "comparative advantages". Under such a systematic division of labor, a worker cannot be said to have control over what and how to work. Instead, the worker is subjugated, dictated, and instrumentalized by an external will to achieve goals (*e.g.*, general efficiency) outside of the worker. After all, workers lack control over the social conditions that determine how labor is divided. They objectify their labor *not* out of their own conscious will, as it naturally should; instead, their labor is so alienated that it thwarts their self-actualization as individual human beings.

The problem of human alienation, in summary, is that one's life is not lived in a human fashion, insofar as one lacks control over one's life-activities. Rather than autonomous self-activities, a worker experiences his productive labor as *not* "his own activity"⁹; rather than confirming one's individuality and humanity and thus helping to realize oneself, such activities feel like a *sacrifice*¹⁰ that takes it out from the worker. Thus, an alienated worker paradoxically "feels at home when he is not working, and when he is working, he does not feel at home."¹¹ The alienated worker finds his humanity in animalistic activities, such as "eating, drinking, procreating, or at most in his dwelling and in dressing-up, etc."¹², while feeling a loss of himself when engaging in the otherwise humanity-actualizing labor. In general, one is alienated when one is unable to fully and freely¹³ exercise one's essential powers through autonomous self-activities and confirm one's human nature. This difficulty is histori-

cal¹⁴ and most prominent amongst workers under capitalism.

III. Does Early Marx Have an Ethical Theory?

Early Marx critiques capitalism on the grounds that it causes alienation for human beings (especially among workers) and prevents them from fully actualizing their humanity. This train of thought appears to be based on two intertwined philosophical projects: a normative-ethical theory of the good life and a metaphysical one of human nature. He seems to be claiming that capitalism is *bad* because it fails to do what is *good* as a social arrangement, that is, to promote the good life. Therefore, he seems to presuppose a theory of the good life. Meanwhile, he seems to claim that to live the good life is to actualize our essential (humanity-defining/confirming) powers and to align ourselves with who we truly are, thus requiring a theory of human nature.

Whether this ethical-metaphysical complex exists for Early Marx has been controversial amongst his commentators. Allen Wood, for example, argues that Marx – young and mature – never thinks of capitalism as unjust or unethical. Along with that thought, it would be quite odd to state that Early Marx critiques capitalism from an ethical theory. Yet I think this result stems from either a misreading of Wood’s position or a misunderstanding of Marx’s position on Wood’s part. It is perfectly possible to reconcile Wood’s insight that Marx’s critique is never based on justice or morality with the fact that the critique is based on a certain normative ethical

theory.

In Chapter Nine of his book, *Karl Marx*, Wood claims that “Marx bases his critique of capitalism on the claim that it frustrates many important nonmoral goods: self-actualization, security, physical health, comfort, community, freedom”, rather than basing in on moral good: “virtue, right, justice, the fulfillment of duty, and the possession of morally meritorious qualities of character.”¹⁵ Marx’s allegedly “non-moral” complaint about capitalism, as G.A. Cohen summarizes Wood’s view, consists of the fact that “it cripples human creativity and it fosters inhumane social relations.”¹⁶ By that, I think Wood has captured something important about Marx, who believes that it is meaningless to say that capitalism is unjust or unethical, because the specific formulations of *justice* and *ethics* are contingent upon the dominant form of society. This “meaninglessness” may have two senses: 1) Theories of value – justice and ethics included – are by nature “superstructures” that justify the given social order from which and ensure the survival and stability of the structure of the “economic foundation”. Our sense of justice and ethics are nothing like transhistorical natural law, but part of the self-perpetuating apparatus of capitalism that is unlikely to judge it as unjust or unethical. 2) It is possible to avoid this catch by evaluating capitalism from a different notion of justice and ethics; however, to impose certain values from outside of capitalism is jarring for Marx¹⁷. To say something is unjust seems to presuppose

that it violates some juridical rights, given the etymological link between “justice”, *iustus* in Latin, and the law. As Wood correctly notes, this kind of right-based juridicism is not found in Marx. In his late career, Marx makes it crystal clear that his critique of capitalism has nothing to do with the “equal right” to products or “fair distribution” of wealth¹⁸. The idea of justice as well as the institution of law are, according to Marx, historically contingent *superstructures*, in essence “only the juridical and ideological devices by which a given mode of production enforces its social relations”¹⁹. The workers’ alienation from their product is wrong, not because doing so is *unjust* insofar as their “property right” is violated, but because they are cut off from a natural linkage to their products, which, as above, are “mirrors in which we saw reflected our essential nature”²⁰ and thus confirm our human creative ingenuity. Taken together, Wood gets it right that Marx makes no criticism of capitalism based on justice. Instead, capitalism is accused as unnatural, dehumanizing, subject to immanent contradictions, etc.

However, it would be going too far to claim that Marx’s critique of capitalism is amoral because it is morally irrelevant, in the sense that he needs no ethical theory. To say so confounds two senses in which the word “moral” can be used: On the one hand, morality can refer to the commonly accepted system of values specific to a given society; for example, we can say “it is not moral to kill” or “it is moral to work for the most money and then donate it”. On the other hand, mo-

rality in a “meta” sense can refer to the sphere of values as such. Any “good-bad/evil” claim and any normative claim is inherently moral, in the sense of being morally relevant. If Marx is truly as morally irrelevant as this implies, he would not be able to critique capitalism, for he is not allowed to say what is wrong – which is by itself a moral term – with it. The very idea of a nonmoral critique is a contradiction in terms. Conversely, the very existence of Marx’s critique of capitalism guarantees that it is a moral critique. The very problem that Wood correctly identifies as central to Early Marx’s critique of capitalism, namely, that “it cripples human creativity” and fosters inhumane social relations and alienates them from the human species whom they truly are, is not moralizing, but by itself constitutes a moral charge against capitalism as long as it says something is *wrong* about it. With that in mind, the very fact that Marx makes a *critique* of capitalism -- as promoting the bad, alienating life is not only consistent with, but indeed presupposing a moral theory for the good life. There is nothing wrong – but everything essential – for Marx to make claims of normative ethics.

IV. Does Early Marx’s Ethical Theory Have a Metaphysical Grounding?

As discussed above, Marx’s ethical theory of the good life invokes the notion of alienation, that is, the inability to fully actualize our essential powers; this necessitates a notion of human nature, or what it is that defines us as humans. This section considers Early Marx’s conception of human nature

as a metaphysical theory.

Early Marx's notion of human species-beings is somewhat fragmentary. Rather than systemizing, I summarize at least the following as its substance: Firstly, Human beings are "a tool-making animal" (per Benjamin Franklin's "definition" or, in truth, description) and productive beings. Unlike animals, humans labor beyond necessity so as to actualize their creative ingenuity, which is further evidenced by the way in which they work (i.e. conscious transformation of the world, as discussed above); Secondly, they are social beings, living and understanding themselves vis-a-vis each other, thus having a consciousness of their species as humans; Thirdly, unlike other animals, human beings are conscious of these two facts and therefore of their own species-being. Afforded by our natural propensity to work and our species-consciousness, human beings by nature cooperate and engage in social labor: even "simple co-operation" has had such "colossal effects" in history, as evidenced by "the palaces and temples, the pyramids"²¹.

This account of the human species-beings may be problematic in its metaphysical status. Is "species-conscious, socially productive animal" an exhaustive theory of human nature? Is it just part of the definition of our species? Is it just a description – if so, is it timeless and universal, or does it just describe human beings in a given time and place? Some commentators have found Early Marx's theory of human na-

ture to be of a dubious character. Brian Leiter, for example, comments that “It is certainly no part of serious biology, either then or since, and it is not clear it does any explanatory work in making sense of historical transformation.”²² I will argue against the second half of his comment later by highlighting the explanatory function – grounding the ethical theory of the good life – of Marx’s theory of human nature. Yet I should concur with the former objection that Marx’s characterization of species-being, focused on free production, is not a biological observation. Even when anthropologists have corroborated with empirical evidence that labor is found universally in all human societies, it at best shows that labor is a necessary condition for a properly human life; this is hardly a surprising observation. However, Marx’s emphasis seems to be that only free, fulfilling work – not necessary work – is part of our species-being. Thus he claims that, “the shortening of the working-day is [the] basic prerequisite ... [of] the realm of freedom.”²³ Also, Marx seems to place fulfilling, collaborative work in a central place in the definition of the human species. Neither claim seems to fall in the scope of investigation for biology and anthropology.

The most defensible response appears to be that Marx focuses on production as the central aspect of human nature because of his materialism. The chief methodological movement for the early Marx is to reject “speculative philosophy”, that is, thinking about the human sciences in abstract, without reference to historical practice; in 1843, Marx laments that this

has been the standard practice in Western philosophy since its inception²⁴. With this in mind, Marx develops his theory of human nature with a special metaphysical status. His notion of species-being does sketch the essence of human beings, but it is not an essentialist account of some unchanging human nature. That means Marx rejects the idea that every human individual inherently has an abstract, universal, or *a priori* human nature, most famously proclaimed by his Thesis VI on Feuerbach: there is no human essence as “abstraction inherent in each single individual” but “the ensemble of the social relations”²⁵. To think that the same human essence exists before each human individual, for Early Marx, is akin to thinking that God exists before humans, a “religious alienation” that Feuerbach has gone a long way to refute. Instead, both the conception of human nature and religious deity are projections of our self-consciousness and self-understanding. By that Marx overturns the tradition of speculative “armchair philosophy” postulating certain things as human nature in a metaphysical and *a priori* way, and maintains that human nature is only to be discovered – epistemologically²⁶ and metaphysically – from historical human practice in an empirical, *a posteriori*, and even inductive fashion.

Marx’s materialist theory of human nature therefore does not prescribe, but *describes* who we are. His substantive claim of the human species-being is thus a claim of *natural history*, that is, scrutinizing the life conditions and habits of human beings as a natural kind, as an animal. Following the tradition

set forth by Aristotle's research in zoology²⁷, Marx seems to imply that the single most important activity for any animal is the subsistence of itself; every animal works in some way to sustain its own life. Therefore, the basic nature of human beings – qua animals – must have to do with *how we feed ourselves* and meet our other basic needs. This gives rise to a materialist approach to conceptualizing human nature, such that the way in which we produce is central to any formulation of who we are. Thus, for Marx, the concept of human nature can only make sense in empirical-historical practice, rather than in speculative consciousness, as would be found in anthropological observations, and only in the collective “genus” (human species as productive beings), rather than in each individual. We can say that Marx attributes a central place of production to human nature, not from logico-metaphysical deductions, but precisely in an anti-philosophical, *a posteriori* and perhaps anthropological movement. It is a discovery from empirical history, rather than a postulation of armchair speculation; Early Marx thus displays an inchoate formulation of the materialist conception of history.

However, this natural-historical or anthropological account of human nature does not suffice in itself for Marx, but instead points to an ongoing difficulty in Marx's corpus: Marx seems to view only free, creative labor as truly fulfilling and truly human. However, it is unfree, subsistence work that fundamentally supports humans as an animal; it is also the prevailing majority kind of labor found in the history of hu-

man labor. For Early Marx, the incipient historical materialism appears to explain why he holds that only the uniquely human kind of labor – rather than animalistic subsistence labor (done only when there is an imminent need; carried out without a plan in mind, as conscious transformation of the world) – is essential to human labor: after all, if each animal has a unique way in which it produces, such a way would be essential to its species-being. However, it would be puzzling if the human kind of labor is the exclusion of the primary and original kind of labor, that is, that which meets basic animalistic needs. For Marx, only the secondary and in fact rarer kind of labor confirm human beings' nature as productive beings. Reversely, the majority kind of work – necessary, subsistence labor – is “ruled by ... the blind forces of Nature”²⁸ and hence unfree. As such, necessary labor appears to Marx as largely akin to alienated labor; not only is it unable to confirm our species-being, but it is likely to undermine human flourishing. Whereas Marx considers production as the essential “human function”²⁹, he seems to think that only after producing what we need is production free and truly human, rendering subsistence labor – “the realm of necessity and mundane considerations”³⁰ – in truth animal, dehumanizing functions. Marx, throughout his entire career, seems never able to resolve this paradox.

V. Non-Utilitarian Consequentialism: Marx & Aristotle

The rest of this essay considers the structure of the norma-

tive ethical claim made by Early Marx, now that it is shown that he can – and does – have such a claim. It seems that Marx *grounds* his ethical theory of the good life on his theory of human nature. I shall explain it in reference to a parallel project from Aristotle. Aristotle and Marx are unlike on a level of specific moral content, yet quite alike on the level of a normative framework.

Both Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* and Early Marx seem to think of a fulfilling human life as consisting in activities suited to the development and exercise of our essentially human capacities, which in turn make up our nature. They surely disagree greatly on what a fulfilling human life exactly looks like and what our essential capacities encompass – Marx is likely to find Aristotle’s sanctification of the contemplative life distasteful. Yet they both see fulfilled human life as the highest ethical goal; if we take happiness in the sense of εὐδαιμονία (*eudaimonia*) as flourishing, we can claim that Early Marx wants us to be “happy”, without a subjectivist reading of him. Marx’s concept of alienation, as a state of objective unfulfillment wherein such capacities are frustrated, is directly comparable to Aristotle’s concept of bad life, which is set up in terms of the good life. Aristotle’s good life, therefore, resembles Marx’s concept of unalienated life.

Aristotle and Early Marx are also alike in their way of justifying such a life as the good life. To put it bluntly, they both

understand the good life as one in which we act and actualize ourselves as human beings, because we should want to distinguish ourselves from animals. This may sound like a version of “naive humanism”. For Aristotle, we should act in accord with our exclusive essence – that is, our rational soul guided by virtue³¹. Marx’s species-being is also a concept concerning what makes us unique among animals, not by reason, of course, but by unalienated, fulfilling labor – through conscious objectification of the world and of the self. This vision fits nicely into Aristotelian teleology: the labor process is clearly about bringing the envisioned telos – a transformed world and an actualized self – into reality. Marx’s dual telos ensures that the end of the activity (i.e., the product) is harmonized with the act of the activity (i.e., a worker engaging in production).

Following this train of thought, Richard Miller proposes that Marx and Aristotle are alike not only in rejecting Kantian juridicism – based on discourses of *rights* – and utilitarianism of Bentham and Mill, but also in giving two rare examples of non-utilitarian consequentialism³². Namely, they both envision the good life as consisting in the exercise of capacities suited to human nature – contemplation for Aristotle, unalienated labor for Marx, as activity in accordance with human excellence (although Aristotle’s comment in NE that the contemplative life is *godly* does complicate the picture). They disagree with Kant on normative ethics: they insist value judgments over social arrangements and actions be made

on their consequences, rather than their “right” or “lawfulness” by themselves. They disagree with Bentham on the ultimate human good. Rather than aiming at promoting subjective happiness (pleasure, a *sense* of meaningfulness, etc.), they strive for what may be called objective happiness, that is, flourishing in an essentially human way³³. Subsequently, both Marx and Aristotle “evaluate social institutions based on the consequences they have for promoting the good life”³⁴. The central problem that Early Marx has with capitalism, after all, is that it causes alienation, thereby rendering people unable to exercise essential powers, actualize species-being, and lead good lives.

VI. Can Early Marx Justify His Normative Theory?

Early Marx lacks the ability to critique capitalism from his conception of the good life, *not* because he cannot appeal to a metaphysical communistic standpoint – namely, “can’t have the beliefs or the consciousness of the agents in such a society, [or] that there is a metaphysical bar to doing so”³⁵. Instead, the problem is the lack of justification: there is no good reason to accept Early Marx’s critique of criticism without superimposing certain ethical commitments as given – a move that is inherently unjustifiable. Early Marx has a normative theory that is structurally similar to that in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*. They each ground their ethical theory in a theory of human nature. Namely, they both tacitly employ a valid syllogism:

P1. The good life is to do what is human;

P2. To do X is to do what is human;

C. The good life is to do X.

Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* works toward the conclusion that the best human life is contemplative life from the general argument that contemplation is the kind of activity most in line with what is human, which further presupposes that it is good to do the kind of activity proper to what is human. Aristotle states this explicitly, in what some commentators call the "function argument": Aristotle asks for the function [*ergon*] of the human being in order to find out what kind of life they should lead. By identifying that function as "a life of action of [the part of] the soul that has reason"³⁶ in accordance with virtue³⁷. Aristotle bridges the is-ought gap and is able to ground contemplative life as the good life, insofar as it is the most *human* kind of life.

Contrasted with Aristotle, Early Marx's similar project is of dubious character. Going back to the syllogism, for Marx it should be specified as P1. The good life is to do what is human; P2. To engage in fulfilling social labor is to do what is human; C. The good life is to engage in fulfilling social labor. Taking together bits of thoughts developed earlier in the essay, neither P1 and P2 seems possible to be sufficiently grounded for Early Marx, rendering the conclusion – Early

Marx's normative theory – impossible to justify.

Firstly, that the good life is to do what is human roughly resolves to the claim that it is good to do what is human. Marx has implicitly invoked this idea throughout his career, but nowhere other than for Early Marx has this idea occupied an essential locus. Unfortunately, Marx leaves the following questions unanswered: Why is it better to be like a human than just an animal? More generally, why is it good to act according to what we truly are and strive to realize ourselves in the first place? Aristotle can dodge this difficulty in bridging “is” and “ought” by postulating it as a metaphysical fact that each thing – human beings included – has a function toward which it should strive. He is able to resort the claim (A) that our function – what sets us apart from animals – is good for humans because of the claim (B), that the function of anything – what sets that thing apart from everything else – is good for that thing. However, this is not an option for Early Marx; he is not in a position to use the claim (B) to justify the claim (A), because the claim (B) is way too metaphysical for his methodological commitment against speculative abstract thinking about humans. However, it is not clear to me that any permissible alternative could justify the claim (A). Since Early Marx's entire critique implicitly hangs upon the idea that it is good to do what is human, his entire normative project becomes dubitable.

Secondly, the idea that humanly activities in fulfilling, con-

scious (planned) social labor is no less curious than the first premise. As we have hinted in previous sections, it is unclear how Marx could justify the idea that only free and creative labor corresponds to the truly human way of life, while anthropological observations indicate that subsistence labor – of which Marx not only thinks lowly, but uses a reference point to critiquing unalienated labor – is the primary and predominant kind. Aside from that, it is also unclear how Early Marx justifies – or can possibly justify – the claim that a certain kind of productive work is the complete essence of human nature – not just an aspect or a prerequisite of it. Marx does not seek to vindicate that claim philosophically because he thinks of it as a natural-historical claim on the empirical basis of historical human practice, rather than armchair speculation into a certain unchanging essence of our species. However, the claim does not seem to withstand philosophical scrutiny: if “engaging in fulfilling, conscious social labor” captures the essence of human nature, it can be said to define (rather than simply describe) the human species. Namely, any animal that engages in fulfilling, conscious social labor would be identifiable as human beings. Such a thought is weird, because it is not difficult to imagine a non-human animal engaging not only labor, but also that specific kind of labor. Even though Marx claims that the human way of production, in the architect-bee example, is “stamp[ed] as exclusively human”³⁸, that way of labor has no built-in marks of humanity when examined alone. Defenders of Marx are certainly inclined to dismiss this entire thinking

as exemplary of the kind of speculative metaphysics of human nature with which Marx avows to do away. However, a query lingers on: To what degree does Marx's theory based on creative labor grasp the very essence of human nature, rather than just giving a description of an important aspect thereof? With what can he justify this essential status? Without consulting certain metaphysical claims as Aristotle does, Early Marx seems to be left with no resource to sufficiently address these questions, which are nonetheless foundation to his entire normative theory.

In summary, Early Marx's critique of capitalism is inherently an ethical critique, on grounds that it engenders alienation of people (particularly workers) from their true human nature. This critique is inversely based on an ethical theory, best described as non-utilitarian consequentialism (which finds a parallel in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*), by which Marx assesses social conditions by the effects they have on promoting the good life. Capitalism is bad by that standard, because the alienation it causes is detrimental to the good life. Early Marx further resembles Aristotle in that they both hold that, normatively, the good life of human beings is to conduct humanly activities. However, unlike Aristotle, Early Marx has insufficient resources to justify the normative structure underlying his ethical claim. Aristotle proposes as a metaphysical claim that the good life is about acting in accordance with the human functions. However, given his important methodological attitude that rejects abstract

thinking about human nature in an *a priori* fashion, Marx is unable to justify that same claim. While Aristotle identifies contemplation as the most human activity, Marx identifies fulfilling, cooperative productive activities. Unlike Aristotle, however, Marx seems to be in no position to sufficiently justify that choice, either. These difficulties combined, Early Marx's entire normative theory is exposed as barely grounded. The weakly-based status suggests why Early Marx's alienation-based critique of capitalism would fade out of fashion: it is not so much refuted, as never having been fully vindicated. As Marx's thought develops, alienation retreats from a central explanatory role of the evils under capitalism to a diagnostic one and from the hallmark evil of capitalism to just one of its immanent contradictions. Instead of some cleavage in the style of Althusser's "epistemological break", the insufficiency in early Marx's moral philosophy gives an indication that explains the mature Marx's turn to political economy and scientific socialism.

Notes

1. MEW 3:67, via Allen Wood, Karl Marx, 9.
2. MER, EPM, 61.
3. It is noteworthy that although the idea of objectification evokes material objects as its products, it has no real difficulty in encompassing mental/intellectual fruits of labor as real products.
4. NE, IX. 7.
5. MER, "Comments on James Mill", 228.
6. Engels, "The Principles of Communism".

7. Capital, vol. I, Ch. 7.
8. German Ideology, via Allen Wood, Karl Marx, 50.
9. EPM, “Estranged Labor”.
10. Adam Smith, in his Wealth of Nations, maintains work must be a sacrifice for those who do it.
11. Ibid.
12. EPM, “Estranged Labor”.
13. Not just voluntarily, as in a merely formal sense of freedom.
14. Alienation is a historical problem, largely specific to capitalism. For alienation points to the gap between human essential powers and their actual (lack of) exercise; since our productive powers vary greatly throughout history and across societies, alienation rarely occurs in pre-capitalist societies. It is by the greatly expanded productivity under capitalism that alienation comes to rise and it is, in Marx’s vision for communism, through the greatly expanded productivity that drives out the realm of necessities that alienation is abolished and thus enter a realm of freedom (c.f. Capital, vol.3, Chapter 48).
15. Wood 2004, 129.
16. Cohen 1983, 442.
17. Some may suggest we evaluate capitalism by the ethical standards of communism. However, doing so gets Marx wrong in an upside-down fashion: for Marx, communism is not a state of affairs, but a reversal movement (or the synthetical resolution for the contradictions) of capitalism. Therefore, it is not just epistemologically but ontologically impossible to critique capitalism by communism.
18. Marx, “Critique of the Gotha Program”.
19. Wood 2004, 128.
20. MER, “Comments on James Mill”, 228.

21. Capital, vol. 1, Ch. 13.
22. Leiter 2018, 24, footnote.
23. Capital, vol. 3, Ch. 48.
24. For example, in “Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right”, Marx comments that whereas Hegelians think of Hegelianism as the highest form of Western Philosophy, it is in truth the worst symptom of abstract, a priori thinking of the same tradition.
25. “Theses on Feuerbach”, Thesis VI.
26. This, I should add, is uniquely consistent with Early Marx’s central rejection of the idea that philosophers have certain privileged standpoints by which they “know better”. They are unlikely to know human nature from practice better than, say, historians and anthropologists.
27. Aristotle, History of Animals.
28. Marx, Capital, Vol. 3, Ch. 48.
29. EPM, “Estranged Labor”
30. Capital, vol. 3, Ch. 48.
31. NE, I.2.1094a.
32. Miller 1981.
33. They also differ from typical consequentialists in that they do not look at the end of an action alone; rather, they both foreground the action in process, alongside the ending results: Aristotle stresses that a good action must showcase virtuous character, while Marx pushes for the harmonization of ends and means – product-alienation and species-alienation are equal features of alienated labor.
34. Miller 1981.
35. Brudney 2001, 364.
36. NE, 1094a.
37. NE, 1097b22–1098a20.

38. Capital, vol. I, Ch. 7.

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***Divine Foreknowledge and Free Will:
A Response to the Boethian Solution***

Joseph Lembo

The relationship between Divine Foreknowledge and Free Will has troubled philosophers and theologians for centuries. The problem arises from the apparent incompatibility of the two claims; it seems as though an omniscient God who knows all future actions and deliberations negates the possibility of an individual freely undertaking an action. The term Theological Fatalism describes the refutation of free will given an omniscient God. Before proceeding, it is necessary to provide a working definition of Free Will, as there is not a singular conception of this term upon which philosophers unanimously agree. From a theory-neutral perspective, and for the purposes of this paper, *Free Will* is defined as “the unique ability of persons to exercise control over their conduct in the manner necessary for moral responsibility.”¹ Additionally, the term *Divine Foreknowledge* will refer to God’s infallible knowledge of all future events. One could engage in a significant ontological debate about the nature of the future, but a reasonable minimum requirement is that it be ordered *subsequent* to an occurrence in question. Theological Fatalism poses a major problem for

Christians such as Boethius, as it presents two major axioms as incompatible. In his *Consolation of Philosophy*, Boethius denies Theological Fatalism by arguing that God exists out of time and without any temporal properties, therefore rendering his absolute knowledge compatible with free human action. In this paper, I will assert why Boethius' solution to this problem is inadequate, focusing on how God's timelessness does *not* resolve the opposing necessity of a future action occurring.

In principle, the argument for Theological Fatalism is rather intuitive but contains some subtleties that are important and worth discussing in more detail. In the *Consolation*, this problem is proposed when the character Boethius notes that if God foresees all things and cannot be mistaken (a position taken for granted in the Christian conception of an omniscient God), everything that God has foreseen must necessarily happen. If events can end up transpiring differently than as they were foreseen by God, His foreknowledge ceases to be infallible. And, as Boethius notes, knowledge cannot have the characteristic of uncertainty, so there cannot be any room for individuals to change their action which was foreseen by God. From this base, Boethius states the problem that "if from eternity He foreknows not only what men will do, but also their designs and purposes, there can be no freedom of the will, seeing that nothing can be done, nor can any sort of purpose be entertained, save such as a Divine providence, incapable of being deceived, has perceived be-

forehand.”²² More generally, one could propose an argument for Theological Fatalism along the following lines. As a consequence of our definition of Divine Foreknowledge, God believed with certainty *in the past* that you will do action x. Because God’s foreknowledge is infallible, it is necessary that action x will occur. Therefore, you are unable to act in any other way besides performing action x. If you are unable to act differently, action x is not performed out of Free Will, and, accordingly, Free Will is not compatible with Divine Foreknowledge.

Lady Philosophy, who is Boethius’ partner in discourse in the *Consolation*, points out that perhaps foreknowledge does not necessarily preclude free choice, as it seems as though we can have knowledge of events that are about to occur without negating the freedom of their occurrence.² Aristotle discusses a solution to this problem in his sea-battle example in *De Interpretatione*, where he argues that it is impossible to determine the truth of a statement until the contingency is actualized.³ However, this solution is inadequate when applied to Divine Foreknowledge, as allowing room for events to be contingent seems to contradict the nature of infallible knowledge. Philosophy recognizes this problem and responds to her own claim by noting that “For here there seems to thee a contradiction, and, if they are foreseen, their necessity follows; whereas if there is no necessity, they can by no means be foreknown.”⁴ As articulated by Philosophy, the problem seems to be a logical contradiction resulting from

the tension between the concepts of necessity and knowledge. Some would argue that the necessity of an action does *not* preclude the possibility that it was undertaken freely.⁵ Though a strict compatibilist could accept that there is no option to act otherwise yet still call an action free, Boethius is attempting to reconcile the kind of Free Will where an individual has the ability to act otherwise with Divine Foreknowledge.⁶ If some indeterminacy were not necessary for free will, Boethius' argument would prove inconsequential. Yet Boethius himself notes that "rather than knowledge, it is opinion which is uncertain."⁷ Uncertainty is contrary to the essence of knowledge, yet certainty is contrary to the essence of (Boethius' conception of) Free Will. Consequently, the apparent incompatibility of Divine Foreknowledge and Free Will remains unresolved.

This argument presented a real problem for Boethius, as a Christian who believed steadfastly in both Divine Foreknowledge and Free Will. Ostensibly, a rejection of Divine Foreknowledge necessitates a rejection of the Christian conception of God, since Christianity teaches that God is both omnipotent and omniscient. Boethius affirms his belief in God's Divine Foreknowledge when he states "He who seeth all things from eternity beholdeth these things with the eyes of His providence, and assigneth to each what is predestined for it by its merits."⁸ Conversely, a rejection of Free Will creates a situation where many of the Church's most fundamental teachings lose their meaning. Lady Philosophy points out

a number of troubling consequences that would result from a world without free choice. She notes that without Free Will, there would be no way of assigning moral responsibility. A lack of Free Will would necessitate a world where prayer is rendered meaningless, as there would be no hope for changing the future from its predestined state. Additionally, without Free Will, God is the sole cause of man's evil and sin. Boethius concludes that these consequences are too intolerable for a Christian mind and that full freedom of will must exist.⁹ It's clear that in order to stay true to the principles of his faith, a Christian like Boethius is unable to reject either claim and must find a way of reconciling the two.

Boethius' solution to the problem is to deny God's existence in time, thus rendering statements about his temporal beliefs illogical and invalid. This argument is perhaps Boethius' most important contribution to contemporary philosophy, and it strongly influenced St. Thomas Aquinas' views on the matter.¹⁰ In the *Consolation*, Lady Philosophy responds to the character Boethius' statement of the problem by arguing that God's "knowledge, also transcending all movement of time, dwells in the simplicity of its own changeless present, and, embracing the whole infinite sweep of the past and of the future, contemplates all that falls within its simple cognition as if it were now taking place." Philosophy's (and henceforth Boethius') position here is to deny the premise that God believed with certainty *yesterday* that you will do an action x -- a temporal distinction crucial to Aristotle's

sea-battle argument. Boethius argues that God's knowledge has no temporal properties, as the nature of God's being places him outside of any temporal constraints. God does not conceive time; He infinitely conceives all of eternity. Thus, according to Boethius, it is a mistake to say that God believed yesterday that something will occur tomorrow. Consequently, God's knowledge of future events implies only that they are conditionally necessitated by God's knowledge, not that they are actually necessitated by their nature.

Boethius' solution rests on a couple of key claims about the kinds of necessity and knowledge that we are dealing with. The first key distinction Boethius raises is the distinction between conditional and actual necessity. As explained in *Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius* from the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,¹¹ *actual necessities* are events that are necessary due to physical realities and the laws of nature, such as the mortality of human beings. *Conditional necessities*, on the other hand, are necessities that are contingent on knowledge, such as "if you know that someone is walking, he must necessarily be walking." Boethius' principle claim is that "from this conditional necessity it does not follow that it is simply necessary that I am walking."¹² The second key ingredient, as discussed in detail by Robert Sharpley in his *Fate, Prescience and Free Will*, is the principle that "the nature of knowledge is determined by the nature of the knower rather than by that of the thing known." Boethius defends this claim by using the example of sense perception and

universals; the senses perceive particulars, but we are able to use this sense perception in a way that “transcends their own nature” to identify universals (whose existence Boethius takes as a given).¹³ The final piece to Boethius’ solution is the difference in the way time unfolds to God. He writes that people are mistaken when they use Plato’s description of the universe as “eternal” as reason that its eternity is the same as God’s. Rather, God has knowledge of all events (which we perceive as present, past, and future) concurrently. He argues that “to grasp simultaneously the whole of unending life in the present; this is plainly a peculiar property of the mind of God.”¹⁴ With these three ingredients established, we can now see how Boethius logically combines them to piece together his argument. He argues that the combination of the nature of knowledge and the “eternal present” allow God to know about future actions in a way that necessitates them conditionally, but not actually. Future events necessarily happen in the way that present events must be happening, but this necessity is not a constraining one. There is nothing constricting individuals from acting otherwise, yet because God has infallible timeless knowledge of their actions they will always be acting in a way that is coherent with God’s beliefs about how they will act. Thus, according to Boethius, God has complete knowledge over all future occurrences, yet this knowledge does not restrict the freedom of individuals to choose their own action.

The first thing to note when examining Boethius’ solution

is that it does not truly reconcile the problem of foreknowledge and Free Will. What Boethius has done is separate the ideas of foreknowledge and *Divine Foreknowledge* in a way that makes the two entirely different. What his claim about Divine Foreknowledge presupposes is actually a repudiation of God having foreknowledge at all. Because of God's existence outside of time, his Divine Foreknowledge exists in a way that makes it *not* foreknowledge in a temporal sense, as the temporal nature of his knowledge has been explicitly removed by this claim. If time does not pass at all for the agent with whom we are concerned, it seems impossible to ascribe any sort of temporal properties to the agent's knowledge. So, Boethius' solution has not solved the problem of the compatibility of Divine Foreknowledge (when treated as infallible foreknowledge) and Free Will, as he offers no evidence that contradicts the previous charges of the logical incompatibility of the two concepts. However, the question of whether Boethius' solution allows for the compatibility of Free will and Divine Foreknowledge, when it is treated as a special type of knowledge that is not, as Boethius argues, foreknowledge at all, remains open. Initially, one would assume that if foreknowledge could be proven compatible with free will, Divine Foreknowledge would follow suit, and vice versa. Given Boethius' explicit distinction between the two, however, it seems that the discussion must focus on his concept of Divine Foreknowledge specifically, and whether it has enough distinguishing characteristics that allow it to still be characterized as knowledge while leaving open the possi-

bility of Free Will.

In response to this implication of Boethius' claims, I will argue that Boethius is unable to establish his conception of Divine Foreknowledge as a concept that both classifies as true knowledge *and* allows for a true concept of Free Will. In his book, *Philosophy of Religion: A Reader and Guide*, Alvin Plantinga proposes a refutation of Boethius' position that is quite compelling. He postulates an individual named Paul mowing his lawn in 2005. Boethius' conception of Divine Foreknowledge lends itself to claims of knowledge such as "God eternally knows that Paul will mow his lawn in 2005." This claim, as Boethius intended it to be understood, means that God's infallible belief exists outside of time. However, Plantinga argues "That proposition, furthermore, was true eighty years ago; the proposition *God knows (eternally) that Paul mows in 2005* not only *is true now*, but *was true then*." He then points out that if it were true eighty years ago that Paul mows in 2005, it's logically necessary that Paul mows in 2005. By inventing a concept of God's time, Boethius is evading the question of what God knew about Paul's future actions eighty years ago. However, Plantinga submits that avoiding this question is impossible, and "the claim that God is outside of time is essentially irrelevant."¹⁵

Plantinga's argument is simple but persuasive. While Boethius argues that God exists outside of time, the problem hinges on the fact that human actions and experience exist inside

of a temporal structure. Returning to Plantinga's example of Paul mowing his lawn, the key question is "eighty years ago, did God believe or not believe that Paul would mow his lawn in 2005?" If the answer to this question is yes, we have returned to the original problem of the incompatibility of foreknowledge and Free Will, to which Boethius has not presented an adequate refutation. If the answer to the question is no, and God did not believe eighty years ago that Paul would mow his lawn in 2005, then there are multiple significant problems for our conception of God. First, if God did not believe that Paul would mow his lawn, it seems as though God can no longer be characterized as omnipotent. I assume that a Christian like Boethius would be deeply unsettled by such a conclusion, though it doesn't necessarily preclude the possibility of God having foreknowledge at some point prior to the event. More troubling, however, is the conclusion that if God did not have foreknowledge of Paul mowing his lawn eighty years ago, it seems as though he will never be able to acquire this knowledge before the event occurs without restricting the freedom of Paul's action. If God develops this infallible belief at all prior to Paul mowing his lawn, we return to the problem of the incompatibility of foreknowledge and Free Will. Yet if God does not develop this belief prior to the occurrence of the event, it seems He does not have any prior knowledge of the event, and God's Divine Foreknowledge could not, in fact, be characterized as knowledge at all.

Again, Boethius' defenders would attempt to exempt God

from holding beliefs at specific moments in time. Assuming time does indeed exist for human beings, then at a minimum, events have to be ordered, even if there is not a metaphysically privileged “present.”¹⁶ And if time is ordered, then time changes, at least in a “relative, perspectival sense. Each time is present at itself, just like each spatial location is here relative to itself.”¹⁷ Since God is omniscient, God knows what time it is, and since time changes, God’s beliefs must change. Since God’s beliefs change, God changes, and God cannot be entirely atemporal. The conclusion here is that even if one rejects that there are true tensed facts, God still cannot exist entirely outside of the logical ordering of time.¹⁸ If God does not hold a belief at all about Paul’s future actions prior to when he performs them, the only logical conclusion we can reach is that Boethius’ conception of Divine Foreknowledge is not really knowledge at all. By placing God outside of time and introducing a blanket “conditional necessity” over the result of His knowledge, Boethius does not prove that claims about God and His knowledge are *incorrect* at a given time.

A defender of Boethius’ solution, of course, would be deeply unsatisfied with this argument. In *The Dilemma of Freedom and Foreknowledge*, L.T. Zagzebski responds to Plantinga’s claims by arguing that “The concept of accidental necessity does not make it now necessary that 80 years ago a certain proposition was true.” *Accidental necessity* refers to the special kind of necessity attributed to past events. Zagzebski

argues that it is incorrect to assign accidental necessity to the truth of a past proposition, as its truth is settled by something that occurs at a point in time. So, according to Zagzebski, eighty years ago this truth had not yet been settled, so it's wrong to necessitate that God's belief eighty years ago must have been true. She uses this reasoning to conclude that despite Plantinga's argument, Boethius' point of timelessness 'is not thereby threatened.'¹⁹ This solution is appealing to a defender of Boethius, as Zagzebski is proposing a way out of the necessity of God having a belief at all in temporal reality. By claiming that it's incorrect to even look for the truth of a future proposition, Zagzebski argues that God's beliefs about future actions needn't have a truth value at all, once again avoiding the question of what God believed about Paul's actions in 2005 eighty years ago. However, while it may be true that it is not necessary for a proposition about today to be true eighty years ago, a lack of certainty at that time about the proposition in question still equates to an absence of Divine Foreknowledge. The problem still remains that while God may exist "out of time," if he *didn't* have a belief 80 years ago that Paul would mow his lawn, it seems we have to deny God's knowledge of the event and His omniscience. Conversely, if He did have this infallible belief, it would seem that we cannot say that Paul's action was done freely. What Boethius and his defenders would like to say is that by professing God's timelessness, they can avoid making a claim as to what His beliefs were at a past point in time. However, I maintain that having no belief about fu-

ture action is logically the same in this context as having a false belief: either God had a true belief that Paul would eat mow his lawn in 2005, or he did not. If the truth of this belief was not yet actualized prior to the event, as Zagzebski would claim, that does leave open the possibility for Paul to freely choose his actions. However, the truth being indeterminate at the time once again means that God does not actually have knowledge of the situation. If God's knowledge of Paul's future actions were truly infallible, the truth of his belief would not be indeterminate, because it would be a logical contradiction if Paul did not end up mowing his lawn. Consequently, God must have a true, infallible belief for his Divine Foreknowledge to truly be knowledge, yet if he has such a belief an action cannot be performed freely as there is no alternative course of action. Thus, while Zagzebski presents an interesting argument, in the end it fails to reconcile the key problems with Boethius' solution.

Boethius' solution to the problem of Divine Foreknowledge and Free Will has been incredibly influential to philosophical and Christian theological thought throughout the centuries, and his argument retains its authority in the debate that continues to this day. Other notable responses in this debate include those by Aristotle, William of Ockham, Luis de Molina, and Harry Frankfurt.²⁰ In this paper I have not explicitly examined whether Divine Foreknowledge truly is compatible with Free Will; I have only argued that Boethius' argument is insufficient to demonstrate that the two are

logically compatible. This paper has also avoided the debate over whether determinism, which has a strong relationship to foreknowledge, is compatible with Free Will, opting to take their incompatibility as a given without sufficient argument from Boethius to suggest otherwise. If it can be convincingly demonstrated that these two are compatible, as argued by Harry Frankfurt, then Boethius' argument would become logically acceptable (though its necessity and importance would be seemingly eliminated in this case). Regardless, Boethius' degree of influence over Christian thought on such an important piece of the Church's doctrine makes his arguments worth examining in great detail, and it is my hope that this paper adds a productive voice to the discussion.

Notes

1. D. Justin Coates and Michael McKenna, "Compatibilism," The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, no. 1 (Winter 2018).
2. Boethius, A.M.S. *The Consolation of Philosophy*: Translation by H. R. James. e-artnow, 2017. Book V, Chapter III. <https://books.google.com/books?id=u05ODwAAQBAJ>.
3. Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski, "Foreknowledge and Free Will," The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2017).
4. Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Book V, Chapter IV.
5. Harry G. Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility." *The Journal of Philosophy* 66, no. 23 (1969): 833.
6. For an argument for how an action could be considered free without the possibility to act otherwise, see Harry Frankfurt's *Alternate Possi-*

bilities and Moral Responsibility. The question of Free Will's compatibility with determinism is a separate but related issue to its compatibility with (Divine) Foreknowledge. In this paper I take for granted that free will requires the ability to do otherwise. If one disputes this claim and subscribes to compatibilism as argued by Frankfurt, Boethius' solution addresses a nonexistent problem from the beginning.

7. Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Book V, Chapter IV.

8. Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Book V, Chapter II.

9. *Ibid.*, Book V, Chapter III.

10. Zagzebski, "Foreknowledge and Free Will."

11. John Marenbon, "Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, no. 1 (Winter 2016).

12. *Ibid.*

13. Robert Sharples, "Fate, Prescience and Free Will" in *The Cambridge Companion to Boethius*, ed. John Marenbon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

14. Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Book V, Chapter II.

15. Alvin Plantinga, "On Ockham's Way Out" in *Philosophy of Religion: a Reader and Guide*, ed. William Lane Craig and Kevin Meeker (Rutgers University Press, 2002), 240.

16. J. Ellis McTaggart, "The Unreality of Time," *Mind*, New Series, 17, no. 68 (1908).

17. Natalja Deng, "Eternity in Christian Thought," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, no. 1 (Spring 2018).

18. This paper does not explicitly go into the distinctions between an A and B theory of time, but this argument essentially affirms that even in a B-theory of time, what God knows must change, so God still cannot

be entirely outside of time. For a more detailed explanation of this argument, see Natalja Deng's *Eternity in Christian Thought*.

19. Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski, *The Dilemma of Freedom and Foreknowledge* (Oxford University Press, 1996), 46.

20. Zagzebski, "Foreknowledge and Free Will", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (Summer 2017).

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***The Animal Response in Derrida's
'The Animal That I Therefore Am'***

Perri Wilson

Among the many distinctions and boundaries between man and animal that Derrida examines and challenges in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, the one to which he returns most frequently is the animal's inability to *respond*. His critique of the division between man and animal based on the capacity for response is situated within his broader and more well-known critique of logocentrism; Western thought, Derrida believes, has been for far too long entrenched in a hierarchy which separates the signifier and the signified, prioritizing the signified for its reality as presence. For the same reason, the logocentric tradition places speech above writing in this hierarchy, with writing taken to be merely the signifier of the more immediate speech. Derrida, however, wishes to reverse this hierarchy and reveal writing to be more than the representation of speech, but rather originally related to what he calls the "trace" of the signified.

Within this critique of logocentrism, he focuses most intently on humans' interest *not* in the animal's lack of speech, but in "the fact that it is private and deprives humans of a

response.”¹ More than simply a logocentric definition of the animal, this distinction, centered on the *humans*’ deprivation of responses to their questions, reveals an *anthropo-logocentrism*; such a division uses a version of logos which is inherently anthropocentric. The lack of response is an issue only because it cuts off the human from his expectation of an exchange. His questions go unanswered, and no matter how close he comes to the creature he so closely follows, the one he follows never turns around to acknowledge him.² It is the questioner then, and not the responder, who seems most concerned with the capability of response. He must *request* a response, and it is therefore the potential responder who holds the power to comply or refuse. From the outset of his lecture, Derrida sets himself up as this vulnerable questioner in search of a response. As he tells his audience, “everything that I am about to entrust to you no doubt comes back to asking you to *respond* to me, you, to me, reply to me concerning what it is to *respond*. If you can. The said question of the animal in its entirety comes down to knowing not whether the animal speaks but whether one can know what *respond* means. And how to distinguish a response from a reaction.”³

If the ability to give a response is only relevant when a response is requested, then it seems this power to respond should exist only in the presence of a questioner. Working within this two-sided image of response, when one is *unable* to answer, the only one deprived of anything is the unanswered questioner. All expectation is initiated by, and lies

with, the questioner's demand, while the silent responder lacks nothing. And yet, Derrida also (perhaps contradictorily) suggests that this "power" is a power in itself, one that can be isolated from the exchange as a whole and identified in a single party: the responder. With this assumption, he turns his project toward restoring some exercise of the "power of response" back to the animal, without considering that this power exists merely in being requested, or "entrusted," by another's questioning. He describes the isolated "power of response" in the first part of *The Animal That Therefore I Am*:

"All of the philosophers we will investigate (from Aristotle to Lacan, and including Descartes, Kant, Heidegger, and Levinas), all of them say the same thing: The animal is deprived of language. Or, more precisely, of response, of a response that could be precisely and rigorously distinguished from a reaction; or a right and power to 'respond' and hence of so many other things that would be proper to man."⁴

Here, it is not just the unanswered questioner who is deprived of the ability to take part in the "private" animal language, and to obtain a response to their questions. In fact, the form of response mentioned here does not even seem to include the presence of a questioner or acknowledge the two-sidedness of response. Instead, the "power to respond" lies entirely with the responder. So, to what kind of response, and what

kind of power, is Derrida here referring? He expands on this alleged power as the ability to “*pretend*, to *lie*, to *cover its tracks* or *erase* its own traces.”⁵ But do these exercises of “power” not all point toward a potential extreme — the power to *refuse* to respond all together? What makes response a power if not that it can be denied? It seems that, if he is to take response as a “right and power,” it must be possible to exercise this power in its fullest form — by refusing to exercise it at all. And thus, if Derrida aims to restore response, (with all the agency which it implies,) to the animal, he must include with it the option to refuse response.

But Derrida seems to lose track of the two-sidedness of response — of response as a power to respond to the requests of a questioner — falling instead into the tradition of isolating the “power to respond” from the presence of a questioner. He sets out to determine “not whether the animal speaks but whether one can know what *respond* means.”⁶ Thus, he seems to begin his investigation, his “following” of the animal, with an assumption that, if the animal *can* respond, it will. Further implied is that our inability to recognize this response is due to an insufficiency in our understanding of “what it is to *respond*.” But why conclude, or begin with, this and not consider the possibility that the animal truly does *not* respond — not out of an inability, but out of a *refusal*? This possibility seems to maintain the animal’s silence without denying it any power reserved for man — and in fact, it exhibits the animal’s exercise of that very power to its fullest.

What might the explanation for the animal's willful silence be? Firstly, it avoids certain consequences and risks of response, including those surrounding *name*, which Derrida explores elsewhere. A response must follow an address, and by addressing one, (in this case, a particular animal,) as an individual, Derrida seems to suggest that one is named. But, perhaps, in refusing to identify with a name, one avoids the risks associated with it, namely the mortality inherent in a name. As he mentions in part I, "from the moment that it has a name, its name survives it. It signs its potential disappearance" (9.) So perhaps, if refusing to respond allows one to successfully avoid identification with a name, then the animal does not "sign its potential disappearance."⁷ It would thereby remain a potentially immortal creature, one left uncommitted to a symbol whose relative immortality threatens to render its own lifetime finite.

Derrida deals more directly with the question of "silence," or "mutism" in *Abraham, the Other*, where he considers the case of a different kind of cautious silence. Perhaps, the animal's silence is not an involuntary mutism, but rather a reluctance to claim the responsibility of answering for a name. As he concludes in this piece, "anyone responding to the call must continue to doubt... whether it was in fact his name that was heard, whether he is the only or the first addressee... whether he is not in the process of substituting himself violently for another... It is possible that I have not been called,

me, and it is not even excluded that no one, no One, nobody, ever called any One, any unique one, anybody.”⁸ There is a “responsibility” inherent in responding to one’s name, and in answering too hurriedly to a “call,” one risks the shame of “being ridiculous, like someone who, hard of hearing, would come to answer ‘yes,’ ‘here I am,’ without having been called himself, without having been designated.”⁹

But even in refusing to respond, can the animal truly deny the responsibility of its name? And even if it can, is simply being given a name by *another* enough to make the animal mortal and responsible for that name? It seems, according to Derrida, that the autobiographical animal is inherently the signatory of its “trace.” As he argues in *Abraham, the Other*, any form of response, even a “disavowal,” contains within it an “originary ‘yes’”— an “acquiescence given to some self-presentation.” For Derrida, this “self-presentation”¹⁰ is contained within the autobiographical trace--a trace which is inscribed by every living thing through the mere act of living. Thus, even the act of *refusal* to claim a name is an act which presents the trace, and with it, the signature, of every “autobiographical animal.” And further, even if the “erasure” of one’s “traces” is possible, Derrida seems doubtful that one “*can of his own accord* erase his traces.”¹¹

But, perhaps the pussycat, “my pussycat,”¹² who faces Derrida as an “irreplaceable being” does not make the same claim to a name for herself, as an “unsubstitutable singularity.”

While Derrida cannot help but see the cat as an individual, as “*this* irreplaceable being that one day enters my space,” he feels the need to clarify the cat’s singularity only in contrast to a long and anthropocentric tradition which has imbued the “pussycat” with “immense symbolic” weight. In feeling the need to point out its individuality then, Derrida seems to be working within this tradition. Yet, this seems to be a contrast that the cat herself would not feel the need to make, as it is an inherently anthropocentric distinction. Further, by adding the detail of the cat as an individual “that one day enters my space,” Derrida seems to suggest that it only becomes a named singularity in relation to himself and *his* personal space. At the moment of their coincidence, the cat becomes namable *for him*. But, while Derrida has a name *for* the cat, does this necessitate that the cat *has* a name? What allows Derrida to assume that the animal claims an outlasting name simply because he himself has recognized one when it happened to “one day enter” *his* space? If naming is not, in fact, as reciprocal as Derrida seems to assume it to be, then perhaps the name goes unclaimed by the named one, like a gift offered but not accepted. In this case, the animal would be able to exist as a living “singularity,” leaving a trace of itself in itself, without “signing” a name that might be called to prompt a response.

None of this is to deny the cat’s *ability* to respond or to defend in any way the Cartesian distinction between man and animals based on this capacity. And it is not to deny the cat

its existence as a singular living creature, either. It is simply to point out that perhaps there are ways to explain the animal's silence — such as a willful refusal to respond — without denying it the response capacity altogether.

Derrida's anecdote of standing naked before his cat might perhaps be used as an example of man's habitual responding — of mistaking the *ability* to respond with the *need* to respond. Standing before the unquestioning cat, (the cat who merely gazes, who looks “just to see,”¹³ not to question or to challenge,) Derrida cannot help but respond. His ashamed response is not asked for, or triggered by, the “other” in the room. In fact, it is superfluous. In his shame, he “dares therefore to posit” himself, claiming the “I” of the one who is naked.¹⁴ But his self-positing is redundant and unnecessary, because his very nakedness has already involuntarily and unknowingly presented him to the other in the room. As Derrida has previously explained, “I am presented to it before even introducing myself. Nudity is nothing other than that passivity, the involuntary exhibition of self.”¹⁵ His shame, then, is a sort of redundant introduction. It is as if his need to posit his “power of response,” a power stressed by the word “dare,” is so deeply ingrained that he cannot help but respond even in the absence of a questioner, and even when he has *already* been “presented.” He charges on with his self-positing response of shame, ignoring the fact that it is both unsolicited and unnecessary. Is this sort of response perhaps what Derrida meant when he warned that autobiography always

risks becoming “auto-immunizing,” “auto-infectious for the presumed signatory who is so auto-affected”?¹⁶ Perhaps this power of response becomes “auto-infectious” when we habitually and impulsively *display* the capability, losing sight of the fact that, implied in the power of response is the power to *not* respond. The self-positing shame, then, would look much more like a “reaction” than a response.

But there is another layer of shame, a secondary sort, that Derrida explains as emerging when the cat leaves the room. It is a more “acute” shame. Might this be his pure *reaction* to the realization that he has “responded” without being questioned? Maybe the “mirror of a shame ashamed of itself”¹⁷ is simply representative of the self-containedness of this particular “question-answer coupling”; it is an “exchange” that lacks two parties, an unnaturally one-sided exchange that he only comes to see, and be secondarily ashamed of, through the mirror of the cat as witness. In recognizing, on some level, that his response is both unsolicited and unnecessary, and that it has been given passively or impulsively, perhaps Derrida has also come to realize that his “power” of response is in fact relatively powerless.

As I have argued thus far, there are two possible explanations for why Derrida does not seem to consider this alternative — a choice of non-response. Either he has mistaken the power of response with the power *to* respond. This would explain why he does not thoroughly examine the advantages

that come with refusing to exercise that power, or through exercising its negative. Additionally, it would explain why he neglects to fully consider the many risks that one takes in so consistently responding — that is, in responding so habitually that response itself becomes almost a reaction. Alternatively, in taking the signature to be inevitably included in the “trace,” the animal *cannot* refuse a name any more than any other autobiographical animal does. This would make the refusal to respond, even if possible, a futile exercise of the “power to respond” and would render irrelevant any supposed reasoning for this willful silence.

But we should not too quickly conclude that the animal really *does* respond simply because a refusal is not “useful.” There is yet another possible explanation for the animal’s silence that Derrida does not seem to consider. Perhaps the animal remains unresponsive simply because it has not been *summoned* to respond. This would shift the focus of his analysis from the interpreter to the questioner. In the *Animal that Therefore I Am*, Derrida identifies the communicative gap as existing somewhere between the animal’s response and our interpretation of this response, with the insufficiency lying in our definition of “what it is to respond.” But in this explanation, Derrida leaves out an examination of the first step in any response: the question. If a response is always to something — some summoning, question, or request — then it seems the first hurdle in the way of there being a successful response is a *successfully posed question*. Could

it not in fact be *here* that the breakdown occurs, only later to be misinterpreted by philosophers such as Descartes as an *incapability of response*, and then reinterpreted by Derrida as an *insufficient understanding of response*? Perhaps, then, it is not for a lack of a sufficient definition of “response” that we consider the animal unable to respond; rather, the animal could be capable of response as we generally interpret it, but has simply never been summoned by the name to which it responds.

Derrida *does*, in fact, suggest this explanatory route in his critique of our use of the singular “the animal.” Concluding the first section of “The Animal that Therefore I Am,” he asks his audience a series of questions regarding the animal, questions asked of the animal, and our expectation of a response from it:

“The animal in general, what is it? What does that mean? Who is it? To what does that ‘it’ correspond? To whom? Who responds to whom? Who responds in and to the common, general, and singular name of what they thus blithely call the ‘animal’? Who is it that responds?”¹⁸

In this series of questions and challenges, (the opening of a sort of autobiography that declares “here I am,”) he seems to suggest that perhaps, in summoning the “singular name of what they thus blithely call the ‘animal,’” we do not, in fact, summon anybody, “any One,” to respond. Here, he seems to

suggest that it is an empty and meaningless call. If no animal fits that “who?” then no animal will respond to it.

Notes

1. Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, trans. David Willis (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 53.
2. *Ibid.*, 52.
3. *Ibid.*, 8.
4. *Ibid.*, 32.
5. *Ibid.*, 33.
6. *Ibid.*, 8.
7. *Ibid.*, 9.
8. Jacques Derrida, “Abraham, the Other,” in *Judeities: Questions for Jacques Derrida*, ed. J Cohen et al., trans B. Bergo and M. B. Smith (New York, 2007), 34.
9. Derrida, “Abraham, the Other,” 2.
10. Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, trans. David Willis (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 3.
11. *Ibid.*, 33.
12. *Ibid.*, 9.
13. *Ibid.*, 4.
14. *Ibid.*, 58.
15. *Ibid.*, 11.
16. *Ibid.*, 47.
17. *Ibid.*, 4.

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‘Picking Up’ Perspective in Pictures

Izilda Pereira-Jorge

Introduction

Gregory Currie argues a narrator provides a point of view, a “way of responding to the world”.¹ When readers come to understand a point of view, they are accessing the world in a particular orientation, one that involves perception, feeling, thought, and action.² As readers spend time with this narrator, they are provided with resources for “knowing, sensing, telling, and doing”, interpreting events much like the narrator would.³ These resources ultimately allow readers to engage with, or ‘try on’, a point of view embodied within the narrative.⁴

However, literature is not the only medium where the audience accesses a point of view. Pictures can provide a set of resources for interpreting the world. Iconic representations, such as pictures, often embody a point of view that its spectators can access.⁵ Like literary works, pictorial works possess an inherent perspective. In this paper, I prepare an account of the resources available for a spectator to extract a perspective.

In Section I, I distinguish between accounts of point of view and perspective, selecting what is apt for the account of pictures I plan to pursue. Utilizing Camp's notion of perspective, I demonstrate that there are elements available in picture that embody characterizations. These same elements may also embody perspective. I then introduce three resources available to facilitate spectators to extract perspective in picture: expression and expressiveness, style, and title. Expression and expressiveness embody characterizations. They do not themselves yield a perspective, nevertheless I detail why expression and expressiveness are important for the spectator. Spectators also have style available to them in art works. I maintain that general style merely yields characterization, that only individual style allows the spectator to extract a perspective. However, in some cases of modern artwork, I demonstrate that utilizing the title of an artwork may be more fruitful for extracting a perspective than individual style. After discussing each resource, I make explicit the role of perspective in pictures for the spectator. I argue that perspective in pictures functions analogously to a narrator in literary works.

I. Point of View and Perspective

Currie's account of point of view overlaps with Elisabeth Camp's notion of perspective. Similar to point of view, a perspective may be exemplified by a particular person, event, or scene, but is not tied to that person, event, or scene.⁶ Camp defines perspective as an open-ended intuitive disposition

to interpret.⁷ To ‘pick up’ a perspective is to engage with its mode of interpretation. Engaging with a perspective is to “respond to some parts of the world in certain ways”.⁸ One is parsing and prioritizing features in accordance to a presupposed taxonomy. These features are assimilated into complex, holistic structures. In turn, this information is evaluated in appropriate ways (morally, emotionally).

An important distinction between point of view and perspective is that perspective is a tool for thought.⁹ Perspective is not to be mistaken for a single, complex, multidimensional thought regarding a subject, scene, or event. Perspectives yield sets of complex intuitive beliefs about a subject, also known as *characterizations*.¹⁰ It is best to liken perspective as an overall mode of interpretation, rather than a single interpretation a spectator may have about a given feature.

Characterizations have a multidimensional structure, reflecting the ways in which various features “matter” to an agent.¹¹ In other words, how useful a particular feature is to an agent is dependent on the dimensions they categorize that feature with. These dimensions are *prominence* and *centrality*. A feature is said to be prominent in a subject when it is more noticeable, or salient.¹² Prominence determines *which* features matter to an agent whereas centrality details *how* those features matter. The more central a feature is, the more connected it is to other features. *Mutability*, how much the agent’s overall thinking about a subject would change with-

out that given feature, is a good metric in determining the centrality of a particular feature.¹³ It is important to note that these dimensions are context-sensitive: the extent to which a feature is prominent or central is contingent on the background or situation in which the agent finds this feature. In a room full of curly-haired people, having curly hair will not stick out, nor will knowing that you are looking for a person with curly hair in such a room help you find them.

As I am investigating pictures, I find that Camp's distinction between characterization and perspective is important in demarcating complex, multidimensional thoughts from the open-ended disposition that yields such thoughts. This is not to say that point of view does not operate within pictures. Given the similarities between point of view and perspective, it is clear that where there is a stable perspective, there is a point of view.¹⁴ However, I am explicitly providing an account of how a spectator extracts Camp's notion of perspective in pictures.

In the account I provide, it is important to specify that spectators do not need to utilize every resource in order to extract a perspective. The potential resource(s) that facilitate the acquisition of a perspective is largely dependent on 1) the extent to which that resource is available within the picture and 2) how integral the individual resource is in extrapolating a perspective.

Additionally, I am not making the claim that these resources are unique to extracting perspectives in pictures. Expression, style, all of these resources exist in other mediums, like literature. I am arguing that these are resources that are most helpful for spectators when extracting the inherent perspective in a picture. I will now discuss expression and expressiveness as my first resource. In order to do so, I will first clarify what I mean by expression and expressiveness.

A. Expression and Expressiveness

In her account of expression and expressiveness, Jenefer Robinson specifies that artistic expression operates as expression in “ordinary life”.¹⁵ In other words, an agent is said to express an emotion when that agent experiences X (emotion, inner state that is being acted upon) and X manifests as Y (perceptible, revealing outer signal of an inner state).¹⁶

Expression and expressiveness are related concepts but bear some distinctions. Expression is a maker-centered notion, where the maker is thought to be expelling their own emotions into their artistic creations. Expressiveness is an audience-centered notion, a communicative aspect of what the maker expresses to its spectators. This notion highlights how spectators gain some insight into what it’s like to be in that state.¹⁷

Expression can operate within characters. In Artemisia Gentileschi’s *Judith Beheading Holofernes* (Fig. 1), Holofernes

is represented as expressing his horror at the turn of events. Though, this expression of horror may not be what the picture expresses *as a whole*. Gentileschi depicts Judith and the chambermaid as displaying determination, and to some extent, satisfaction at the near completion of their task.

If the spectator is shown what it is like to be in that state, that expression is said to be *expressive*. This is because it successfully communicated to a spectator an aspect of the emotion expelled from the character.¹⁸ Gentileschi depicted the struggle of the beheading in the way Judith grips the sword -- she is not holding the sword but gripping it, forcing its weight to tear into the thick muscle of Holofernes' neck. It is clear that Gentileschi is not merely expressing the emotions of Judith, chambermaid, and Holofernes. This is only a portion of what she is doing. The spectator realizes the painting as a whole expresses the emotions of the "implied maker".¹⁹ The spectator accesses these emotions in what Robinson calls the "point of view" from which the content of the painting is represented.²⁰ To Robinson, point of view expresses the emotions of a maker "seeing the world" in a particular way.²¹ Yet, I am hesitant to relate her notion of point to view to the notion of perspective that I am modeling this account from.



Fig. I

The expression of the painting as a whole provides us with a complex, multidimensional belief about the content depicted (i.e. subjects: Judith, chambermaid, Holofernes; situation: beheading). Prominence is the perceptible manifestations (gestures, actions) that signal an emotion (inner state the subject is experiencing). Such manifestations are diagnostic of this emotion. Intensity serves as the features that communicate something about what it's like to be in that inner state, as it "sticks out" from neutral body language.²² Cen-

trality are the features that foster a point of view the painting as a whole expresses. In *Judith*, the gestures indicating that Holofernes is utterly horrified are less central than the gestures indicating Judith's triumph over her partial beheading. So far, the complex thoughts surrounding certain depicted subjects in *Judith* strongly adhere to dimensions of prominence and centrality. It appears that Robinson's 'point of view' from expression and expressiveness actually functions as *characterizations* rather than a perspective.

Perspective is an open-ended disposition to characterize.²³ From the characterizations in *Judith*, the spectator acquires a multidimensional belief about a given subject in the painting. The spectator did not extract a broader interpretive principle that yields sets of complex, multidimensional thoughts about depicted subjects and events in *Judith*. The characterization of Holofernes does not equip the spectator with an ability to characterize any other subject in the picture, like Judith or her chambermaid. Only if the spectator is able to cohere characterizations to a broader interpretive principle, then the spectator is said to grasp a perspective.

This is not to say that characterizations are pointless to the spectator. Characterizations not only influence our interpretation of particular features, but also guide our emotional and evaluative responses to entire subjects and situations.²⁴ They help spectators grasp how certain information is collected and structured. As stated earlier, the resources I discuss

operate as tools for extracting a perspective. An individual resource does not have to single-handedly extract a perspective, but rather, contribute to this process of determining a perspective. An individual resource, like expression and expressiveness, may help the spectator gradually construct a perspective by evaluating the products of its perspective. Therefore, expression and expressiveness are useful resources for extrapolating a perspective.

I have demonstrated that expression and expressiveness operate as characterizations, which are products of perspective. In the following section, I will discuss elements available that constitute style. Style, in the account later provided, is a method of cohering these various elements together to construct a subject. I will argue that because these elements constitute style, style conveys a perspective.

B. Style

Robinson provides an account of style, one that is not deeply entrenched in literary works. Ultimately, style is a “way of doing something and expressive of a personality” in a relatively consistent fashion.²⁵ The very nature of expression dictates that inner state x is expressed (trait, emotion, attitude, etc) into outer manifestation y (behavior, action).²⁶ Robinson claims that we are able to construct a personality from this outer behavior. Outer behavior holds a “trace” of an inner state of mind, character, or personality.²⁷ However, this personality is one of an implied maker. An implied maker is constructed solely from the “evidence” of the art

object.²⁸ In other words, a spectator hypothesizes the kind of person who would create the given artwork, this constructed person referred to as an implied maker.²⁹

Certain elements constitute style in a particular piece. Though, Robinson does not argue for a set of elements that, if present, always constitute style.³⁰ This is because the presence of an element may contribute to style in one work, but its presence in another work does not guarantee a contribution to style. Elements are context-dependent. Hence, why there is no definitive checklist of elements a picture must have to possess style. For example, brushstrokes are a pertinent element in constructing the style of most van Gogh pieces. Yet, when viewing the work of his contemporary Paul Cézanne, brushstrokes are present in his work, though not central in constructing that work's style.

Up to this point, a work is said to have style when its various elements cohere into a whole that contribute to the overall expression of a cohesive personality.³¹ It is the relation amongst these elements that prevents a taxonomy of elements from being formed, how each element matters to the spectator is crucial for constructing a personality from the piece. I believe these elements can be likened to 'features' from Camp's account of characterization. Such elements do not appeal to just one dimension of salience, or prominence.³² The centrality of features, how these features matter and connect to each other are essential in forming complex,

intuitive beliefs about a subject -- in this case, the personality of the implied maker.³³ I will now introduce the distinction between general and individual style.

On one hand, when a work obeys certain techniques that are shared amongst a group of makers at a given point in history, it is said to possess a general style.³⁴ For example, abstract-expressionism is a general style of painting. This style is constituted by brushstrokes and other mark-making that meets its aim of providing an impression of spontaneity.³⁵

On the other hand, individual style is present in a work when it contains certain striking features. The key component here is that these striking features not only indicate the general era it belongs to, but signals a unique individual of that era. One is able to distinguish a Rothko from a Pollock because there are elements, like brushstrokes, color palette, texture, and so on, that correspond to that particular individual.

Elements in pictures embody either characterizations or perspective. How a spectator picks up on style in pictures determines whether or not they pick up the work's inherent perspective. In other words, by the end of this process, if the spectator fails to grasp a perspective, they have encountered a piece that merely embodies characterizations. In the next section, I will make the case that works possessing general style ultimately yield characterizations. Afterwards, I will demonstrate that works possessing individual style yield perspectives.

General Style and Characterizations

When a spectator picks up a style by picking up certain features, they are in reality constructing an implied personality. Robinson argues this is not the case in instances of general style. However, I propose that spectators are still able to construct a personality with works possessing general style.

For example, impressionism is a general style of painting that valued our experience and feeling of the natural world rather than accurate depiction. To meet this aim, there are certain techniques most impressionist painters utilized to capture light and color in a manner that reflects our visual experience of it. They abandoned formal realist methods that forbid textured paint on canvas and any excessive mark-making. Works produced in accordance with the impressionists' techniques embody a particular collective style of that era. Looking at Pierre Auguste-Renoir's *Dance at Le moulin de la Galette* (Fig. 2), his loose brushstrokes and vivid use of color are representative of that era's general style: that of the impressionists.³⁶



Fig. II

Despite general style possessing some striking “formal or expressive” elements, Robinson maintains that these elements do not express the personality of an implied maker.³⁷ Works with general style carrying an “anonymous air” about them, as if they weren’t made by any one unique individual but a generic collective.³⁸ From this definition, general style does not express an ‘individual personality’ of an implied maker. It cannot be the case that general style fails to express *any* personality of *some* implied maker. A spectator does not look at Renoir, gather elements that express certain values, emotions, and attitudes, and fail to “sum up” these traits into a personality.³⁹ Contrary to Robinson, I argue that general style expresses the personality of a *type* of maker. General style differs from individual style not because one fails to express a personality. The difference remains in that a spectator has less traits to construct a personality from. Consequently,

the spectator constructs a personality of a *type* of maker, a stereotype, rather than an *individual* maker.

Camp compares characterizations to stereotypes.⁴⁰ When a spectator constructs the personality of a *type* (e.g., prototype, stereotype) of maker, the spectator yields a complex, intuitive, multidimensional thought about the maker. General style provides a spectator access to a small set of attitudes, interests, and traits (inner states expressed from outer actions) that they must cohere. It also provides complex characterizations about different subjects and situations, more so than the spectator appealing to expression and expressiveness. Expression and expressiveness provide characterizations about a single inner state: emotion.

In cases of general style, the spectator is able to pick up style by picking up on some traits to construct a type of maker. However, this is not yet grasping a perspective. The elements that motivate this subject are ultimately facets of a characterization about this type of subject. When the spectator is constructing an implied individual from these elements, the spectator is extracting a perspective. In the following section, I will argue that only in instances of individual style is when a spectator is actually grasping a perspective.

Individual Style and Perspective

When a spectator is constructing a personality of an implied maker “with a number of traits”, that spectator is construct-

ing the personality of a maker with individual style.⁴¹ Individual style licenses the spectator to construct an agent who consistently notices information and prioritizes information. They connect information and features to cohere in accordance to values and principles expressed in the work. As the spectator constructs the personality of this agent, they are in reality picking up an open-ended disposition to interpret. Through this process of construction, the spectator is essentially extracting an inherent perspective in the picture.

One possible concern is that individual style might only yield characterizations and not a perspective. This constructed personality of an implied maker is construed from depicted subjects and events in the picture. It follows that personality is thus sourced from characterizations within a picture. So, individual style merely provides complex intuitive thoughts and is not itself a tool for thought. Perhaps individual style is enriched with more characterizations than that of general style, but it is not yet embodying a perspective.

First, it is important to keep in mind that a disposition to interpret may be exemplified by a person, event, or scene.⁴² So, it is possible for a perspective to be embodied by a constructed personality of an implied maker. Being embodied by a personality does not warrant that it must always be a characterization. That being said, not just any personality conveys a perspective. This personality must serve as a tool for generating thoughts. To be a tool for thought is to maintain the *sorts* of features a spectator notices, the *sorts* of explanatory

connections they draw, and the *sorts* of predictions and evaluative responses they tend to have.⁴³ To best understand how individual style operates as a tool for thought, I will now illustrate what this process would look like for a spectator.

The Starry Night (Fig. 3) displays a coherent set of values, emotions, attitudes, and other qualities of the mind that expresses an individual maker of the work.⁴⁴ The personality of the implied maker adheres to impressionist ideals and parses information about the world accordingly. As a spectators coheres these sets of attitudes, values, and characterizations, they are developing the individual personality who would notice, assimilate, and evaluate the subjects and situations within the picture. The uniformity of mark-marking with the sky and landscape anchors an interpretive principle: there is movement in the natural world and our man-made world, and so there should be no discrepancy between how one orients the two. This is exemplified in bold patterning of various vibrant shades of yellow and curling rays of starlight that are echoed in the depiction of the forests surrounding the town, the houses nestled in the field, and the rolling mountains. These distinctive elements embody characterizations. We acquire complex beliefs about these depicted subjects. At the same time, we are grasping a broader ability to interpret information outside of that specific characterization. We are able to cohere these characterizations in such a way that we understand the mindset, the *perspective*, of the maker who devised the entire scene.



Fig. III

In short, there are certain elements the spectator picks up on. When looking at *Starry Night*, these elements are color, texture, brushstrokes, depicted objects, and so on. These elements are distinctive. When lining it up to other impressionist works of that era, like a Renoir or Monet, it is clear that the artist stands as an individual. Their techniques, while undoubtedly belonging to the impressionist era, orient elements of the scene in highly specialized and unique ways. It is apparent from this broad assortment of distinctive elements that this work possesses individual style. From these striking elements, the spectator is informed of numerous traits of the kind of maker of this piece. The maker finds solace in the man-made world just as they do in the natural world. Yet, this maker does not consider himself a part of either world. Rather than providing a spatial point of view

that anchors spectators within these worlds, we are observing them from a distance.

In summary, I have argued that individual style facilitates the extraction of a perspective. Individual style constructs a rich personality that licenses spectators to cohere characterizations. As they cohere characterizations, they are also reconciling an expressed set of attitudes, values, and other qualities of mind belonging to this implied maker. The spectator is able to abstract away from the particular features of content and extract an overarching disposition to interpret: a tool for thought.

However, style especially facilitates the extraction of perspective when its constitutive elements are discernable to its spectator. With impressionist works, the picture is still representational despite deviating from a stricter realist representation. It is easy to identify rolling mountains and nestled houses when there is enough resemblance between the real world objects the spectator is familiar with and the depicted elements in the picture.

Let's consider abstract works, as abstract-expressionism is dominant in modern art. A spectator is then confronted with abstract elements that do not bear a strong resemblance to real-world objects. They cannot so easily identify a style, as I have defined it, from these abstract elements. How then are spectators going about extracting an abstract picture's

perspective? In the following section, I introduce the role of title in extracting the perspective of modern artworks.

C. Title

Pre-modern art consisted of mostly representational work: still lifes, portraits, biblical and mythological narrative paintings. As naturalism was the primary aim of pre-modern art, titles often stated what the object of accurate depiction was. Odds are, if you painted a still life of grapes, cheese, and wine, the title of the picture would most likely be *Still Life of Grapes, Cheese, and Wine*.⁴⁵ Titles can be advantageous as a resource for extracting perspective, particularly in modern pictures. I take modern pictures here to include work that falls under abstract expressionism, cubism, expressionism, any that falls after the age of the impressionists.

To evaluate the role of titles in extracting perspectives, it would be best to identify how titles operate. Charles Forceville builds an account of pictorial metaphor in the context of advertisements. While modern art is not in the ballpark of advertisements, the relation between text and image in an advertisement is structurally analogous to what goes on in artistic pictures. Text and picture operate as metaphor does with text and image, it is an “understanding or perceiving one kind of thing in terms of another kind of thing,” typically characterized as ‘A is B’.⁴⁶ However, what a metaphor communicates is determined by the identity of the communicator, addressee, and the subcultural context of the picture.⁴⁷

This subcultural context echoes upon Catherine Abell's argument that a cooperative principle is enacted between maker and spectator via picture. This cooperative principle enacts a set of assumptions to help the spectator understand the intentions of the maker. Such assumptions include the maker conveying what they believe to be true, for which they have adequate evidence, is making a relevant contribution, is unambiguous, and avoids obscurity.⁴⁸

This particular set of assumptions seems to conflict with the objective of most makers of modern art. A quick glance at de Kooning, Demuth, Duchamp, or any maker of the twentieth century, shows that they are flouting these maxims. It is clear from their pictures alone that these makers are not trying to be brief, relevant, or avoid obscurity. Most spectators would be unsure where to begin, how to interpret features that bear little to no resemblance to aspects of the real world.

Ultimately, this is where titles come in. Titles operate like metaphors in that we are understanding the image, A, in terms of B, the title. Now while 'A is B' seems to imply a unidirectional mapping of properties, in the case of abstract pictures, there is a bidirectional mapping of properties. As the spectator tries to understand the picture in terms of the title, the title will influence what they will notice, attend to, and evaluate in the picture. For example, knowing the title of de Kooning's piece is *Composition* allows the spectator to select certain features (relevant properties of compo-

sition the title singles out) and impose it onto the maker's mark-making and vice versa.

In some cases, titles operate as frames in addition to metaphors. Frames are vehicles for communicating perspectives. When a frame expresses a perspective, "it unifies it into a more cohesive whole".⁴⁹ Titles crystallize a perspective into an explicit form.⁵⁰ They function as an intuitive principle for "attending to, explaining, and responding to a range of subjects" as the spectator encounters new information in the picture.⁵¹

There are instances in which perspectives are not "adequately expressed" by frames, as perspectives are open-ended and can yield many interpretations.⁵² Similarly, titles may fail to capture the perspective in a way that aids the spectator in extracting that perspective. If the spectator were to look solely at the title and picture of Demuth's *I Saw 5 in Gold*, the title fails to crystallize an open-ended disposition to interpret the piece. In this case, the title only seems to prime the spectator's attention to one particular feature, the gold 5's.

In the case of modern art possessing a general style, a spectator would most likely construct the kind of maker from a particular era that would create this piece. While there is no denying that abstract artwork possesses a style, should it possess a general style, it does not aid the spectator in extracting its perspective. When the title of the piece aids the

spectator to understand the abstract picture, the title most likely crystallizes the work's inherent perspective. For these sorts of abstract pieces, the title ultimately guides the spectator's way of noticing, evaluating, and responding to abstract features in the picture. So far, I demonstrated that titles serve as a helpful resource to extract a perspective when the picture is not reasonably representational.

I have provided an account of resources for spectators to access perspective in picture. By likening how a perspective functions to that of a narrator in literary works, I will discuss the role of perspective in pictures. In doing so, I explain why it is imperative that a spectator picks up a work's inherent perspective.

II. Role of Perspective in Picture

Perspective is an intuitive disposition to notice, assimilate, and evaluate information. It is an open-ended interpretive principle. In literary works, a reader utilizes the narrator to grasp a perspective inherent in a literary work. Essentially, the narrator *is* a point of view. Without being embodied as a character, the narrator ultimately coheres a series of subjects, events, and various relations between the two. The reader notices certain elements the narrator attends to when describing persons and events. When doing so, they are in fact constructing the narrator's perspective.

Perspective, much like the narrator in a literary work, an-

chors a spectator to a holistic interpretation of the picture. Unlike literary works, spectators do not have access to an explicit guide that coheres all the available information into a presupposed taxonomy. In a sense, the spectator takes on the role of the narrator. They must actively reconcile information about depicted subjects and situations in a given picture. Yet, they cannot cohere this information any way they choose. Elements within a picture are context-dependent. Evaluating these elements outside their specific picture can yield wholly different interpretations of depicted information within the scene. As a result, a spectator *fails* to construct a cohesive perspective when imposing their own perspective on a picture. Hence, it is crucial that a spectator extracts the work's inherent perspective.

The role of perspective is to guide the spectator in truly understanding the scene of a picture. Understanding a picture is not merely understanding its features in isolation. To understand a picture is to understand how these features best connect and relate to each other. These connections do not solely foster individual thoughts about a given feature, but provide the very tool that *produces* these thoughts. In a similar vein, this distinction is comparable to that between characterization and perspective. Picking up an inherent perspective is akin to trying on a different mindset. When evaluating a picture, extracting the inherent perspective ensures a comprehensive interpretation of the picture, unblemished from biases of the spectator's own perspective.

Conclusion:

Camp's notion of perspective is particularly useful in demarcating when a spectator successfully picks up a perspective rather than a characterization. I have demonstrated that spectators can access an inherent perspective of a picture by appealing to available resources, specifically, expression and expressiveness, style, and title.

With this notion of perspective, a spectator acquires characterizations when utilizing expression and expressiveness, as well as general style. Individual style, in works that are reasonably representational (discernible to the spectator), is particularly helpful in extracting an inherent perspective. When constructing an individual maker, a spectator is able to abstract away from the particular features of content and extract an overarching tool for thought. As a resource, style can only help a spectator so much. Encountering modern, non-representational works of art often require appealing to a different resource. Title of an artwork can guide which elements the spectator notices, assimilates, and evaluates in a picture. Hence, titles can crystallize a perspective in these cases.

Additionally, I have argued that in the case of pictures, perspective functions similarly to that of a narrator in a literary work. Meaning, it is imperative that a spectator extract a picture's perspective in order to truly understand the relations

between elements in the piece. Engaging with an artwork is an active process. The spectator takes on the role of a literary narrator when they cohere the information available in picture. However, they cannot cohere the information any way they like. In doing so, they are often imposing their own perspective when noticing, assimilating, and evaluating elements and their relations in a scene. They are not extracting the work's inherent perspective, and so they sport a limited and often inaccurate interpretation of the picture. Thus, the spectator must be cautious to ensure they are picking up the inherent perspective of a picture.

Notes

1. Gregory Currie, *Narration, Imitation, and Point of View*, eds G.L. Hagberg and W. Jost (Wiley, 2009), 337.
2. *Ibid.*, 332.
3. *Ibid.*, 335.
4. Currie goes into depth about these resources available in literary works, but for the purposes of my paper, I will focus on resources that are apt for pictures.
5. Picture refers to both paintings and photographs. While I utilize paintings for my examples in this paper, my account is also applicable to photographs.
6. Currie makes a similar distinction in his account of point of view. He claims that at times, the point of view of a narrator may imitate the point of view of a particular character. In these instances, narrators “do not really narrate from any point of view other than their own” (*Ibid.*, 336).
7. Elisabeth Camp, *Perspectives and Frames in Pursuit of the Ultimate*

- Understanding, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 19.
8. *Ibid.*, 24.
 9. *Ibid.*, 25.
 10. *Ibid.*, 19.
 11. *Ibid.*, 20.
 12. Camp references salience in the way Amos Tversky defines it, as a “function of diagnosticity and intensity” (Elisabeth Camp, *Perspectives in Imaginative Engagement with Fiction*, (Wiley, 2017), 80). Diagnosticity relates to how useful that feature is for classifying objects as part of a certain category. Intensity relates to how that features ‘sticks out’ within a given background. This is essentially when features have a high signal-to-noise ratio, like having really curly hair or thick eyebrows.
 13. Camp, *Perspectives and Frames in Pursuit of the Ultimate Understanding*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 20.
 14. Perspectives are more stable if there is substantial stability in the “sorts of features the agents tend to notice, the sorts of explanatory connections they tend to draw, and the sorts of predictions and emotional and evaluative responses they tend to have”.*Ibid.*, 26.
 15. Jenefer Robinson, “Expression And Expressiveness In Art”, (*The British Society of Aesthetics*, 2007), 30.
 16. *Ibid.*, 30.
 17. *Ibid.*, 30.
 18. *Ibid.*, 30.
 19. *Ibid.*, 23.
 20. *Ibid.*, 30.
 21. *Ibid.*, 24.
 22. Elisabeth Camp, *Perspectives in Imaginative Engagement with Fiction*, (Wiley, 2017), 80.

23. Camp, *Perspectives and Frames in Pursuit of the Ultimate Understanding*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 24.
24. *Ibid.*, 81.
25. Jenefer Robinson, *Style and Personality in the Literary Work*, (Duke University Press, 1985), 228, 230. We are not inclined to say Sally has a flamboyant style of dressing should she sporadically dress flamboyantly. While her clothes may differ from day-to-day, they should be consistently expressing a particular feature of her personality (in this case, flamboyance) in order to qualify as style.
26. *Ibid.*, 229. In this paper, expression is utilized to expel a broad net of imperceptible inner states, like mind, character, trait, belief, into outer perceptible behavior.
27. *Ibid.*, 229, 234.
28. *Ibid.*, 234.
29. When hypothesizing an implied maker, a spectator does not need prerequisite knowledge about the actual maker to make this construction. A spectator does not need knowledge of the maker's personal life in order to figure out the style of their work.
30. Robinson, *Style and Personality in the Literary Work*, (Duke University Press, 1985), 241.
31. *Ibid.*, 237.
32. *Ibid.*, 242. While Robinson likens a salient element to a "striking" feature of the work, how she uses salience is most likely in reference to Camp's notion of intensity, or high signal-to-noise ratio.
33. Camp, *Perspectives in Imaginative Engagement with Fiction*, (Wiley, 2017), 80.
34. Robinson, *Style and Personality in the Literary Work*, 238. Robinson pulls her account of general style from Wollheim's "Pictorial Style: Two

Views”. She compares general style to ‘school’ or ‘period’ styles. These styles are points in history, certain eras, where makers shared a certain way of doing things (i.e., honoring certain conventions and techniques practiced during that time).

35. Tate. “Abstract Expressionism – Art Term.”

36. By vivid use of color, I mean utilizing a bright color palette to exaggerate the effect of warm sunlight peeking through overarching trees and pouring onto the clothes of the people gathered.

37. Robinson, *Style and Personality in the Literary Work*, (Duke University Press, 1985), 239.

38. *Ibid.*, 239.

39. *Ibid.*, 231.

40. Camp, *Perspectives in Imaginative Engagement with Fiction*, (Wiley, 2017), 79.

41. Robinson, *Style and Personality in the Literary Work*, (Duke University Press, 1985), 231.

42. Camp, *Perspectives in Imaginative Engagement with Fiction*, (Wiley, 2017), 78.

43. Camp, *Perspectives and Frames in Pursuit of the Ultimate Understanding*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 26.

44. Robinson, *Style and Personality in the Literary Work*, (Duke University Press, 1985), 247.

45. Dutch painters of the seventeenth century are a good example of this. Some titles of works by high-profile artists of this era: *Still Life with Lobster and Fruit*, Abraham van Beyeren; *Moses Striking the Rock*, Abraham Bloemaert; *A Woman Playing the Theorbo-Lute and a Cavalier*, Gerard ter Borch the Younger; *A Young Woman at Her Toilet with Maid*, Gerard ter Borch the Younger, etc.

46. Charles Forceville, *Pictorial Metaphor in Advertising*, (Taylor & Francis, 1994), 108.
47. *Ibid.*, 163.
48. Catherine Abell, *Pictorial Implicature*, (Wiley, 2005), 60.
49. Camp, *Perspectives and Frames in Pursuit of the Ultimate Understanding*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 27.
50. *Ibid.*, 27.
51. *Ibid.*, 28.
52. *Ibid.*, 27.

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Fig. I, Gentileschi, Artemisia, Judith Beheading Holofernes, oil on canvas. 1610, The Uffizi, Florence, <https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/judith-and-holofernes-artemisia-gentileschi/oQF3gDEYNkutBA?hl=en>.

Fig. II, Renoir, Pierre-Auguste, Dance at Le Moulin de la Galette, oil on canvas, 1876, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, <https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/dance-at-le-moulin-de-la-galette/rQEx7CtGiKE3yg?hl=en>.

Fig. III, van Gogh, Vincent, The Starry Night, oil on canvas, 1889, Musée D'Orsay, Paris, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Starry_Night.

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***Plato's "Feminism":
Reassigning the Female as Male***

Sherry Tseng

In Book V of the *Republic*, Plato asserts that women are eligible for admission into the Guardian class, the elite of society.^{1,2} Contrary to the misogynistic attitudes of his contemporaries, this idea is often cited as evidence for his feminism by many feminist philosophers. That he prescribes equality in opportunity is generally accepted; whether those arguments constitute feminism, however, has elicited more controversy.

Here, I challenge the consensus: I argue that Plato's methodology resists the very idea of gender equality. I contend that readings of a gender-equality-advocating Plato rest on a fallacious synthesis of two distinct approaches, one particularistic and one universal. His proposal affords equal opportunities to individuals of identical natures irrespective of gender, not to the collective category of gender. Drawing from Iris M. Young's politics of difference, this argument exhibits an abstraction of the man: By projecting male qualities onto the Guardian position, the male perspective is upheld as the normal and the universal. Allowance of a woman into the Guardian class is then determined on the basis of conformity

to this norm. Because of this, the qualities characterizing the class of women are only glossed over. In its failure to affirm and respect the differences between the social groups of gender, Plato's proposition is decidedly not a form of feminism.

§I begins with Plato's prescriptions for Guardian women, mired as it is with contradictions between his chauvinistic and "feminist" views. §II offers a brief interjection with an exposition of Young's argument on the politics of difference. This will be used in §III to formulate the central thesis that Plato's conflation of individual and social equality means that we cannot interpret him as a feminist, and that doing so in fact perpetuates the social evil of gender inequality. Finally, §IV offers responses to questions on the authenticity of my argument—of whether my claim is even directed at all to a Platonic conception of gender equality.

§I Plato on Women

The didactic aim of *The Republic* is predicated on a search for an answer to the question first posed in Book I: what is justice? Maintaining that the makeup of the state is analogous to the composition of the soul, Plato attempts to illustrate justice by presenting its manifestation in the city. To that end, Plato's discussion of women is set against the backdrop of his broader aim to sketch out the contours of an ideal state.

Central to this utopia is the principle of specialization,

wherein each person pursues that which suits his or her nature. Accordingly, this would allow for the preservation of the state's unity (423d5), as the specified roles would give way to efficiency and harmony. It is then—in reference to the city's oneness—that Plato first makes mention of women: like everything else, they are to be shared in common among the specialized Guardians. (423e6)

Initially only touching on the matter, he is pressed to add flesh to the bones of his views. Women, according to him, differ from men only in their reproductive capacities, and all other differences are as irrelevant as baldness and long-hairedness. (454bd) The only distinction between men and women lies in their respective roles in procreation, which is extraneous to pursuing their respective pursuits. This applies to Guardianship. Therefore, so long as women are of the Guardian nature, they may pursue Guardianship. Because of this, he argues, Guardian women should receive the same musical, physical, and military education as men. (451de) Plato anticipates the objection that this sharing in education would result in the absurd idea of women exercising naked alongside men. To this, he counters by saying that, just as the idea of stripping for men was initially perceived as ridiculous and then as reasonable, the same would hold true for his proposal. (452a8-b2, 452c4-e1)

From there, Plato proceeds to his next “wave” of laws on women: the abolition of the nuclear family. Following his

earlier proposal to dissolve private property, as owning private property would incite hostility and bring about the destruction of the city (417a5-b5), the nuclear family is to be treated similarly. Women and children are to be shared, a man and a woman are not to live together, and no parent is to know who their offspring are and vice versa. (457e10-d2, 460b-461e) To regulate the erotic desire for sex, marriages should occur during festivals with pairings decided by the rulers. (459d-460a) Ultimately, this is to make the Guardians impartial to any form of the private, reinforcing Plato's vision of the state's unity.

Still, it would be remiss to condone the numerous remarks Socrates makes that qualify, if not explicitly contradict, his view of women as being on equal ground with men. He maintains that "one sex shows greater mastery than the other in pretty much every arena" and "for the purposes of all of them [the arenas] women are weaker than men." (455d10-e1) In the context of reproduction, men who excel in war or other pursuits should have more opportunity to have sex with women in order to father more children, degrading women to merely material prizes and rewards. (460b1-5) Further, Guardians, who should only imitate those exhibiting virtue, but not a woman, implying that the virtuous and women are mutually exclusive classes of people. (395cd) The text is replete with many other sexist comments, but I mention only these few.³

§II The Politics of Difference

Here, I will turn to Young's politics of difference. Stripped to its bones, her theory extends conceptions of justice and injustice beyond the individual to social groups. This is made on the basis of the exclusion of peoples from participation, as affected by structural causes. She presents what she calls the five faces of oppression, each of which is a distinct form irreducible to more basic criteria. In this paper, I focus specifically on cultural imperialism, the "universalization of a dominant group's experience and culture, and its establishment as the norm." By instantiations of cultural imperialism, deviant positions are rendered inferior and branded as the Other.

Driving cultural imperialism are the ideal of impartiality and a logic of identity. Impartiality, often hailed as a pillar of reason, assumes the existence of an objective point of view. Abstracting from particularized perspectives, it constructs one point of view to be taken as objective and true. This, as Young believes, is impossible, because perspective cannot be decoupled from context or commitment. In much the same way as impartiality presupposes the possibility of one true perspective, a logic of identity attempts to construct identities as homogenous unities, paring down a multiplicity of perspectives to one that serves as a static benchmark against which all others are measured. In doing so, all other viewpoints are expelled.

To this problem of cultural imperialism, Young endorses a politics of difference, by which social differences are valued. They are ideals of liberation: by imbuing diversity with positive connotations, differences relativize the dominant culture, puncturing its universalistic claim. Her solution is one opposite assimilation, which demands conformity to an arbitrary view. The call to homogenize forces excluded groups to shed their perspectives and truths for those of the dominant groups. To be accepted, *they* must change to become like *us*.

Returning to the core of Young's argument, pivotal to cultural imperialism and a politics of difference are social groups. Cultural imperialism is based on a social view of the world, where the perspective of an entire class of people is universalized. Not to be interpreted as mutually exclusive with individual oppression, social oppression (including cultural imperialism) locates inequality and injustice in broader structural biases. This is what I argue in the next section: Plato's treatment of women is a form of cultural imperialism, and feminist interpretations of him are misguided by the erroneous synthesis of individual and social inequality.

§IV Plato's Cultural Imperialism

Before I continue, one distinction must be made clear. Here, I take the term gender inequality to refer to a *social* inequality. It is inequality not between a man and a woman, but men and women. While it may manifest itself on an individual level, gender inequality is grounded in more structural in-

equities rooted in the being of a woman, the being of which references the collective experience of women.

Given this, I argue that feminist interpretations of Plato's proposal have disregarded this distinction between individual and social inequality through their conflation of woman and women. Specifically, I am responding to one strand of the argument held by Saxenhouse and Spelman. They argued that gender equality is present in the *Republic*, but emerges from his desexualization of women. Saxenhouse (1976), while admitting that women play a different role in reproduction, believes that their biological differences nonetheless do not affect their unique contribution to the governance of a city. As she argues, the woman's part in the creation of the next generation is uncredited, removing her bodily nature. *She* is removed. Similarly, Spelman (1994) maintains that Plato's gender equality comes about through a perversion of the gendered self through his dualistic attitude towards the soul and body. As the only vehicle for knowledge of the Forms, the soul may inhabit a male and female's body in the same way. Hence, gender equality follows from the fact that the nature and soul of a Guardian is independent from its bodily being in a man or woman.⁴

I begin with Saxenhouse's and Spelman's premise: Plato de-sexes women. Ignorance of gender, however, does not entail equality. Instead, the overlooking of gender exhibits the problems of the ideal of impartiality and a logic of iden-

tity. It commits a form of cultural imperialism that universalizes the male experience and otherizes the female one. In particular, this takes place through the arbitrary assimilation of the female to the male in two contexts: the biological and the social.

The Biological Case

In suggesting that women's dissimilarities to men are as irrelevant as baldness insofar as the pursuit of Guardianship is concerned, Plato overlooks the sexual qualities of women. Their bodies are apparently of no consequence, as demonstrated by his proposal to have them strip down alongside men in the palestra for physical training. Further, although he recognizes the difference of reproductive capacities, he nonetheless chooses to overlook its significance. . The communitarian proposal, by which children are handed over to officials, downplays, if not fully erases, the woman's physical role in the development of the next generation.

Plato's dualistic conception of the body and soul continues with this purging of the soul from the body. Following Spelman's claim, the soul exists independently of the body. Thus, gender, which is implied to be located in the body, has no place in the soul. The soul may inhabit either a man or a woman's body. It is in this way that a woman and a man may possess the same natures and hence, pursue Guardianship.

For both Saxenhouse and Spelman, it is Plato's dismissal

of the woman's body that brings forth his feminism. It is, according to Saxonhouse, the de-sexing of the female, who is "destroyed as woman in order to participate,"⁵ that "introduces [her] as the equal of the male."⁶ Spelman similarly contends that the disregard of the female body paves the way for philosopher-queens, the highest positions of society. Through the ignorance of the woman's body, there exists an equality of opportunity between men and women.

Such contentions of a feminist approach emerging from the desexualization of women, however, demonstrate how the fictional nature of impartiality is presented as instead factual. The expulsion of the soul from the female body denies recognition of a particularly female biological sensitivity. The proposal for women to exercise alongside men in the gymnasium, for example, accords no role to the breast or menstrual activities. The minimization of their role in procreation too blatantly ignores the subtleties of the female body. Apart from the occasional breastfeeding, her bodily differences are disregarded in her undertaking of the tasks of Guardianship.

Still, it must be said that Plato is not merely unaware of these differences. Prior to Book V, women are described in terms of exciting and erotic objects. They appear as prostitutes--luxuries of his city (373a3), and his objection to Corinthian girlfriends, implied to be prostitutes given their international reputation in the day, is founded on an assumption that

they would be distractions to the instillation of virtue in the Guardians (404d5). In this sense, his adoption of the male body as the universalized norm without heed to the biological needs of women cannot be attributed to merely a blindness to difference. Instead, the assimilation of the woman to the man is due to an intentional ignorance of these differences that instantiate cultural imperialism.⁷ The female body, so as to qualify for the tasks of Guardianship, must conform to the male body.

The Social Case

In addition to the biological case, Plato further expels the female from her social position. To be specific, when the *Republic* was written, her social position was domestic: women were primarily found in the household, shielded and excluded from public life.⁸ That she is forced out from this position is often understood as a feminist proposal, as it frees women from their confinement to the domestic sphere. Plato's displacement of the woman from this position, however, is a far cry from what may be considered feminist. Instead, his characterization of Guardianship as a gendered pursuit forces Guardian women out from the sphere they were typically found in. By displacing them to the realm of men, he idealizes the male experience as representative of the pursuit of Guardianship while simultaneously degrading what was traditionally regarded as the female experience.

As the original aim of the *Republic* is to construct an ideal

city founded on the thesis that unity is the greatest good, I begin this section with his discussion of the abolition of the nuclear family. This elimination destroys not only the biological qualities of the female in procreation as mentioned earlier, but also the social positioning of women as mothers. Guardian women are accordingly no longer assigned to the positions of nursing and childrearing. Joining the men in guarding the city, they are to share, in addition to the activities of Guardian training and education, all lodgings and meals with the Guardian men (458c8-d1).

This expulsion of women from their sphere of the private and domestic has been the subject of many feminist interpretations. Some feminists today may argue that the very abolition of the nuclear family dismantles gender norms in the division of labor and propels women from their typically entrapped position from the private, domestic life to the publicly shared one.⁹ The decoupling of the women from the domestic, according to Saxenhouse and Spelman, is grounds enough for the argument in favor of Plato's feminism.

Plato's proposal, however, is predicated on the pursuit of Guardianship being characteristically male. As such, a woman's entrance into the class of Guardians necessitates her assimilation into the male sphere. On a literary level, this is made evident by certain rhetorical strategies Plato employs. By his account, a Guardian woman should be assigned the same tasks as a Guardian man: the females are to "join in"

the pursuit of the males (451d5). However, this rhetoric echoes an assimilation of the female to the male. That the woman is *joining* implies that her entrance is an addition, her presence not a core factor. It is thus arguably understood that she exists initially as outside the pursuit, as an excluded Other only later absorbed into the Guardian class.

The irrelevance of a particularly female social position to the pursuit of Guardianship is also implied elsewhere in the text. That there is nothing unique to women relevant to Guardianship underlines this point: a woman has nothing in her *being a woman* to contribute to the pursuit (455b1). Further, the reference to weaving and cooking as separate pursuits implies that these tasks are to be taken up by those with the relevant natures (455d6-7). This, taken hand in hand with the operating principle of specialization, means that the pursuits of weaving and cooking are understood to be excluded from the pursuit of Guardianship. Not only are they incompatible, but as Guardians are society's elite, the exclusion of domestic tasks makes it such that the pursuit of the domestic is inherently inferior to the practice of Guardianship. The eradication of the traditionally domestic sphere in Plato's utopia thus underscores the low value ascribed to the position women were most commonly found in.¹⁰ As such, the Guardian woman must shed the role she occupies in her purportedly second-rate domestic space.

Still, it may be argued that Guardianship is gender-neutral.

Indeed, a man is also said to have nothing in his *being a man* to contribute to Guardianship (455d8). The soul being genderless, its tendency towards a specific pursuit could also be said to be genderless. As Plato presumes that men and women can share in each pursuit (455d6-7), the framing of the pursuit as accessible to both genders hints at an impartiality between them. But this is not the case. Women are stripped of their private space, which is replaced by a necessarily public, shared one. That the position of Guardians is public points to a projection of the male's public existence in society onto Guardianship. While publicity does not imply that this quality of Guardianship is necessarily male, the norm at the time of Plato's writing was that the public was a sphere that men — and only men — occupied. Publicity is not intrinsically male, but by empirical evidence and the social norms of the time, publicity was characteristically male. In this sense, the public character of Guardianship can indeed be said to be fundamentally male.. The assertion that man has nothing in his being a man to contribute to Guardianship is only a testament to how Guardianship has already been standardized to the male. The Guardian woman must don his existence: only through her assimilation to the category of man can she partake in the pursuit.

Through this method of argumentation, Plato is guilty of engaging in cultural imperialism. He has adopted the male experience as that of the Guardian pursuit, such that Guardian women are to conform to the same experience. The male's

perspective is arbitrarily entered as the stable category that defines the pursuit of Guardianship. It is used as a metric to measure the value of other tasks, such as those devalued ones relating to domesticity. The plurality of perspective and experience offered by the woman's viewpoint is effectively expelled.

Returning to the original question of whether Plato can be considered a feminist, the implications of his cultural imperialism point to the negative. Intimations of gender equality are found in his proposal for an individualization of opportunity, such that a pursuit is undertaken so long as one possesses the nature inclined to that pursuit. This has led feminist interpretations, among them Saxenhouse's and Spelman's, to see Plato's society as a post-gender society, and therefore as one exhibiting gender equality.

Such attitudes, however, are misguided because they conflate individual equality with the extension of equality on the social level. Indeed, Plato makes the explicit distinction between the individual and the universal class of women in the following quote:

"It is true that one sex shows greater mastery than the other in pretty much every area. Yet there are many women who are better than many men at many things..." (455d)

In saying that *many* women may be better than many men,

the woman is picked out as an individual to be granted equality. On the social level, though, men are apparently superior to the collective class of women.

The conflation of individual and social equality is then vulnerable to the blind spots of structural inequities. Equality between man and woman does not directly translate to equality between men and women. In fact, equality between man and woman holds *because* the woman has been negated in her woman-ness. Gender *inequality*, as in the assimilation of women to men, is instrumental to the individual equality which Plato posits between man and woman. As such, individual equality between a woman and man comes at the cost of perpetuation of inequality between women and men. From this, it can hardly be said that gender equality has been established.

To truly call Plato a proponent of gender equality, his proposals must meet the standard given by Young's politics of difference in order to reckon with the structural problems of social inequality. Gender should not be obscured as a social category, but its differences should be recognized, affirmed, and respected. It is clear, however, that Plato neither strives for nor achieves a full recognition of difference. The distinction between man and woman is *incomparable* to that between the bald and the long-haired because Plato's trivialization of the differences assimilates the female to the male. Attainment of gender equality necessitates the recognition

of these differences.

§IV On Definitions and Idealizations of Gender Equality

So far, I have argued that Plato's treatment of women does not exhibit gender equality because it glosses over the very idea of gender. The attribution of male qualities to the Guardian class is a form of cultural imperialism that projects the male perspective as the universal.

Regarding the question of whether my argument holds weight, though, there is a prior matter to address. Dealing with the issue of gender equality first requires a definition of the term. My claim is grounded in a specific conception of gender equality. Here, I mean to say that gender refers to the social category of gender as opposed to the individual category. Equality is not merely a formal conception, but an approximation of gender justice, by which equality goes beyond access to opportunities, but extends to equal value being accorded to both men and women. It is apparent that Spelman and Saxenhouse's argument does not conceive of gender equality in the same way: formal equality is seemingly sufficient. In this way, there is arguably no basis for comparison between their views and mine, as we target entirely different concepts masked under the same linguistic term.

To this point of definitions, gender equality cannot be equated with formal equality. Such a definition lowers the stan-

dard for what it means to attain equality. While this formal aspect is necessary, it is *not* sufficient, as it fails to overcome deeply-rooted structural and cultural barriers. Thus, although Spelman and Saxenhouse may be reading gender equality differently, their readings do not properly satisfy the conditions necessary to justify the use of the term ‘gender equality.’

Further, the reader of Plato must heed the original aim of the *Republic*: to outline the mechanisms of an ideal city. The key term here is ‘ideal.’ Plato’s feminism may be said to hold only under conditions of his ideal city. Thus, to my argument, the assumption of the existence of a woman’s perspective breaks away from his hypothetical project. In other words, the *Republic* hinges on a male perspective masked under an absence of a gendered one. The ideal city is able to exist ahistorically, without attention to a woman’s traditional place in society. The destruction of gender is part of the ideal, and it is the vision and optimism of a genderless society that makes Plato a feminist.

This, I believe, is a product of Plato’s own privilege as a man in his time. As Young suggested, an entirely impartial perspective is neither possible nor desirable. Gender identity cannot be decoupled from the context of any proposition locating gender. This fiction of objectivity is better understood as symptomatic of the cultural imperialism pervading ancient Athens. While Plato may write *The Republic* for dialectical

and pedagogical purposes, the act of positing his philosophy as the correct one is a privilege afforded to the male. He is able to ignore his own group specificity and formulate his argument with the assumption that his perspective represents an objective point of view. In this way, the contention that Plato is a feminist even in his ideal city is merely an expression of an ingrained form of cultural imperialism and cannot be said to be a sufficient justification for his “feminism.”

Because of Plato’s methodology of abstracting a woman into a man in describing the ideal society, he does not deserve the title of feminist. Thus, his apparent feminism is just that: apparent.

Notes

1. All references to the Republic draw from the Reeves translation.
2. Throughout this paper, I use the term “female” and “woman” interchangeably. Though there is a marked difference between the two in today’s terms, in that “female” refers to the sex of any species responsible for offspring and “woman” to any human being that identifies as such, because Plato equates the terms, I adopt the same terminology.
3. It is important to recognize that many of his sexist attitudes are continued and echoed in his other works. In the Laws, for example, he claims that the “female sex has a natural inferiority to the male when it comes to human goodness.” (781b).
4. What is interesting is how the gender is necessarily tied to, if not identified, with the body. This, however, runs into the counterargument of the

view of gender as a social construct. Many will argue that gender is how one identifies irreducible to biological attributes. Another claim can be made here that this in itself is also a non-feminist argument, as it ignores the experiences of the trans and non-binary community, a direct charge against intersectionality. Still, in keeping with the scope of this paper, I do not address this as an argument against Plato's feminism.

5. Saxenhouse, 202.

6. *Ibid.*, 198.

7. This is another area of debate. On one hand, there is the argument that women should be treated differently because of their bodily distinctions. For example, they should not be made to wear the same swim attire, and tampons should be distributed freely. On the other hand, there is the counter that these distinctions should be transcended, as differential treatment and attitudes have been imposed by a patriarchal history.

8. See: "Law, Custom, and Myth: Aspects of the Social Position of Women of Classical Athens," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 100 (1980): 38-59. Hints of this can be spotted throughout the text as well, where women are assumed to be the superior sex in weaving and cooking (455c6-7) and initially taken to be indoors, looking after the house (451d7).

9. See: Firestone, S. *The Dialectic of Sex*.

10. The argument is similar to what persists even today with the lack of value placed on a woman's work: there is little recognition for the second shift, and women are often the ones charged with unpaid, invisible work. The absence of remuneration then feeds into the biased perception of the woman's work as valueless and insignificant. For more, see: Hochschild, A. (2012) *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home* and "Time spent in paid and unpaid work, by sex," OECD, retrieved from <https://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?queryid=54757>

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***Having Your IBE and Eating it Too:
Arguments for Inflationism
about Natural Laws***

Abigail Tulenko

In *Philosophie der Technik*, Friedrich Dessoir writes that “the discovery of natural law is a meeting with God.”² The importance of defining precisely what such laws are can hardly be overstated. They may be the key to understanding the very structure of reality. In this paper, I will explain the strengths of Dretske and Bird’s arguments for inflationist theories of laws of nature. In particular, I will focus on those which Kreines refers to as “Brute Coincidence” and “Explanation” arguments. Central to the debate is the principle of inference to best explanation (IBE), which states that we have reason to believe the hypothesis that best explains a given body of evidence. Inflationism requires this IBE principle to defend the knowability of natural laws, leaving the theory vulnerable to an empiricist rejection of IBE. However, I will argue that deflationism implicitly assumes IBE in its own appeal to simplicity. Moreover, given IBE as a valid principle, inflationism is a stronger theory of natural laws, because it offers far greater explanatory depth with comparatively little cost to simplicity.

By “laws of nature,” I’m referring to the laws pursued by the natural sciences. The contending views on what a law of nature is or, more modestly, what a law of nature *would* be, fall broadly into two categories: deflationism and inflationism.³ In general, the strongest, most sophisticated form of deflationism is the Ramsey-Lewis “best-system” theory⁴, which I address in this paper. It posits that laws of nature are nothing superseding those “universal truths” or observed natural regularities that are “appropriately axiomized.”⁵ According to Lewis, the appropriate axiomatization is to admit only the regularities that contribute the most to the “collective simplicity and strength” of the system.⁶ By strength, Bird takes Lewis to mean “informativeness.”⁷ In this manner, the best systems theory is an iteration of the formula Dretske labels “law = universal truth + x,” “x” being a principle about which regularities merit inclusion in the best system.

In contrast, inflationism argues that laws of nature *are* something over and above the mere regularities themselves. They are that which governs, or otherwise gives rise to the regularities we observe. One potential problem for inflationism concerns our knowledge of natural laws. If laws are something over and above the regularities themselves, and we can only observe the regularities, how can we have knowledge about said laws? Strict empiricism suggests we can not. If true, this is a significant disadvantage of

inflationist theories. Inflationism would leave science in a position of insurmountable ignorance. The laws themselves exist but they are beyond our grasp, wholly unobserved and therefore wholly unknowable. In contrast, deflationism would render laws knowable to science. If laws are just the regularities we observe, they are consistent with empirical knowledge that we can know about them. However, the inflationist might appeal to inference to best explanation to save knowledge of laws. By employing IBE, scientists can attain knowledge about the laws despite their epistemic inaccessibility. They are able to observe the regularities and infer their causes—the laws themselves.

Dretske offers a thought-experiment involving a coin toss intended to push our intuitions toward this interpretation of how science attains knowledge.⁸ I will present a similar case involving a lottery. Imagine you regularly buy lottery tickets. Each month a new 5 digit winning number is announced, purportedly selected via a random generator. The chance of your number being drawn should be around 1 in 302,575,350.⁹ After many months, you see a consistent pattern. The same combination of numbers wins over and over again. Perhaps you'd suspect some sort of foul play—that the random generator isn't really random at all. Most people would be suspicious that there's some reason explaining why this regularity has emerged. If you're sympathetic to this suspicion in the lottery case, you should be even more sympathetic to it in the case of natural laws. The

chance of matter in freefall accelerating at exactly 9.8m/s^2 in every single observable case by mere chance— without the law of gravity as a *governing* principle— is infinitely lower than the chance of a random generator churning out the same five digit number multiple times in a row.

In both cases, you would be implementing IBE, inferring from an observed regularity to an underlying explanation. The lottery case is analogous to inflationist constructions of how science functions. According to inflationists, scientists also employ IBE in order to gain knowledge of laws. They observe regularities in nature and use that evidence to devise hypotheses about laws that best explain it. In both cases, the lottery buyer and the scientist infer on the basis of observed regularities that there is something over and above them that gives rise to them.

Bird argues that deflationism fails to adequately explain regularities. He claims that “there are certain things we use laws for, in particular for explaining, that we cannot use regularities, however systemic.”¹⁰ He demonstrates this view with a thought experiment concerning a toaster. Suppose you have an electric toaster that keeps malfunctioning. You go to the store to inquire why this is happening. The employee tells you that every individual toaster of this model malfunctions in the same way. Would you be satisfied with this explanation? If he gives you a list of many other people whose toasters malfunction this way,

would that make it a better explanation of why your particular toaster is doing so? Consistent with empiricism, this explanation avoids the use of IBE, but it seems inadequate. Showing that the malfunction occurs universally across toasters of this type doesn't actually explain why this is the case. Bird explains that this form of explanation is circular:

Being told that Emily's toaster does this and Ned's and Ian's too does not explain why my toaster does this. After all, if Emily wants to know why her toaster behaves this way, she is going to be told that Ned's does too and so does Ian's and so does mine...When we consider everyone asking why their toaster does this strange thing, we can see that the explanations we are being given are completely circular.¹¹

If you find this explanation unsatisfying, you should find deflationism similarly unsatisfying as an explanation of instances of regularities. If deflationism is true, when scientists describe laws, they are behaving like the toaster salespeople—attempting to explain instances of regularities in nature with the regularity itself. This interpretation saves science from entanglement with IBE, satisfying empiricist concerns. However, Bird argues this type of explanation ultimately fails because something cannot explain itself.¹²

According to deflationism, matter in freefall accelerates at 9.8m/s^2 because matter in freefall accelerates at

9.8m/s². There is no additional governing principle such as a law of gravity to which we can appeal. F is so because F is so. Bird's toaster example illustrates the explanatory insufficiency of deflationist constructions of laws of nature. He argues that though "regularities are not explanations of their instances," we might mistake them for an explanation because their existence hints at one.¹³ This aligns with our suspicion in the coin toss and lottery case that there is a reason for the regularities given our observation of the regularities. In both cases, we employ the IBE principle to devise an explanation for the observed phenomena. If IBE is your intuition in the lottery case and the toaster case, you would need to find a relevant disanalogy such that it isn't acceptable in the parallel case of scientists seeking knowledge about natural laws.

So, in part, inflationism's strength as a theory hinges on the acceptance of IBE. Inflationism requires IBE to salvage the knowability of laws; it is the means by which science can attain knowledge about laws to which we cannot have direct epistemic access. Dretske and Bird show that our ordinary intuitions implement IBE, so their opponents must find a disanalogy between parallel cases and that of natural laws to argue against IBE in the latter case. Secondly, they argue that deflationism fails to provide an explanation of instances of regularities because it violates the principle that something cannot explain itself.

Inflationism's dependence on IBE seemingly leaves the theory vulnerable to empiricist attacks, and that one can argue for deflationism by arguing IBE. However, I argue that deflationists are also under significant pressure to accept IBE. Though strict empiricism rejects IBE, deflationists seem to have no qualms about letting the principle slip into their deliberations. This principle states that given competing explanations of a body of facts we have reason to prefer that which best explains while requiring the fewest posits. Lewis himself explains his best-system view in words that ring of IBE. He explains that the regularities that "earn inclusion in the best system" are those that "have as much information content as [they] can have without sacrificing too much simplicity."¹⁴

Furthermore, one of the primary advantages of deflationism is its purported simplicity. Proponents claim that we have reason to prefer deflationism over inflationism because it invokes fewer metaphysical resources to explain the same body of facts.¹⁵ It doesn't postulate anything over and above the regularities themselves to explain them. If deflationists wish to argue against inflationism on the basis of simplicity, they seem to require some version of IBE.

Next, I will argue that, given IBE, inflationism about natural laws is a better explanation of the relevant facts. Firstly, deflationism may need to appeal to more metaphysical resources than initially supposed.¹⁶ Lewis identifies this

concern with regard to the best-system theory. Within the best-system, regularities are only laws if they contribute to the collective simplicity and strength of the system as a whole. But, according to Lewis, “different ways to express the same content, using different vocabulary, will differ in simplicity.”¹⁷ So, the simplicity of a given proposition is relative to the particular language used to express it. If so, the status of a law might change depending on the language it is expressed in. This seems like a detriment to deflationism as a universal metaphysical theory. To account for this, Lewis argues that the laws should “refer only to perfectly natural properties.”¹⁸ If so, deflationism needs to posit at least one metaphysical resource in addition to the regularities themselves—namely certain “natural properties to explain determinacy of interpretation.”¹⁹ Therefore, even if deflationism remains overall simpler than inflationism, the margin isn’t so wide as it may ostensibly appear.

Regardless, simpler theories aren’t stronger in virtue of simplicity alone.²⁰ Under IBE, the simpler theory is preferable only when all else is equal. Given IBE, Dretske and Bird’s explanatory arguments take on increased significance. These arguments demonstrate that inflationism better explains the relevant facts, that is, the regularities we observe. Moreover, deflationism fails to offer *any* explanation of the same facts. Bird’s toaster example highlights the circular nature of its attempt at explanation. You cannot explain an instance of a regularity by appealing to the regular-

ity itself. At best, this response merely hints at an explanation because it suggests that there is an underlying principle that provides reason for the instantiation. Dretske doesn't mince words on the subject: "the fact that *every* F is G fails to explain why *any* F is G...because the explanatory attempt is never even made."²¹ On this view, deflationism seems to offer little to no value in terms of explanatory scope and depth. Since something cannot explain itself, and deflationism attempts to explain regularities merely in terms of the regularities themselves, it is an explanatory failure.

Even if we maintain that deflationism wins out for simplicity, its advantage here is only slight given Lewis's concerns about language. In contrast, inflationism's explanatory advantage is significant when one considers deflationism's utter inability to explain. Combined with IBE, Bird and Dretske's arguments about explanation become especially powerful. If the deflationists need IBE to argue on the basis of simplicity, and inflationism provides a better explanation of the relevant facts, it seems like they would be forced to accept inflationism.

Deflationists are seemingly left with a dilemma. If they reject IBE, they can mount an attack on inflationism on the basis of knowability. However, even if they are reluctant to admit it outright, they may need a principle like IBE to support why simplicity is relevant to determinations about a theory's philosophical advantages. And yet, the benefits of inflationism in terms of explanatory scope far outweigh the

cost to simplicity So, given IBE, inflationism seems like a stronger theory of natural laws. The deflationist must either renounce IBE, and forfeit the basis for one of their foremost advantages, or admit IBE and risk being forced to accept inflationism. In any case, they can't have it both ways; deflationists simply can't have their IBE and eat it too.

Notes

1. Thanks to Professor James Kreines for comments on earlier drafts of this paper.
2. Dessauer, Friedrich, *Philosophie Der Technik*. (Bonn: F. Cohen, 1927), 31.
3. Kreines, James, "Introduction and Cited Arguments Concerning Inflationary vs. Deflationary (aka "humean") Accounts of the Laws of Nature," 1.
4. Inflationists have argued that deflationism is false because if it posits that laws of nature are just regularities, it assumes all regularities are laws and this seems wrong. Best-System deflationism resolves this problem and is able to explain a sense in which regularities can be merely accidental, and not laws. (Kreines, 9)
5. Dretske, Fred. "Laws of nature." In *Philosophy of Science*, (1977): 253.
6. David Lewis, "New work for a theory of universals," in *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, (1983): 367.
7. Alexander Bird, *Philosophy of Science*, (1998): 39.
8. Dretske 1977, 257.
9. "The New York Lottery," New York State Gaming Commission,

<https://nylottery.ny.gov>

10. Bird, 42.
11. Ibid., 46.
12. Ibid., 44.
13. Ibid., 46.
14. Lewis, 367.
15. Kreines, 3.
16. Ibid., 21.
17. Lewis, 367.
18. Ibid., 368.
19. Ibid., 371.
20. Kreines, 11.
21. Dretske, 262.

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ISBN 978-1-0878-8102-7

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