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Letter from the Editor

Though this issue of *Acta Cogitata* may look largely similar to past issues, the conditions that produced it are unique. Finding ourselves in a worldwide pandemic changed the ways we did philosophy, in both format and content. The struggle that burdened countless people cannot be overlooked, and in times such as this philosophy must persist and articulate responses to injustices and widely promoted falsehoods. In recognizing the suffering endured this past year, we sought out silver linings from which hope could spring and in such conditions this iteration of the journal was produced. I want to recognize each person involved in this journal as a contributor to the positive movement forward. We adapted to new formats, as our Undergraduate Conference each author took part in was entirely online for the first time, but this had the benefit of making it accessible to authors from different parts of the world and country. From the obstacles of this past year we have found new and beneficial ways of thinking and acting and that is something we can be grateful for.

As with past issues, my goal was to represent diverse interests within philosophy. In spite of this diversity, or rather in virtue of it perhaps, a common thread emerged this year in which each contribution to this journal represents a looking-forward: an observation of the shortcomings of traditional discourses and society-at large, and a constructive project that seeks to move us forward. In each article, our authors make forceful, critical arguments that challenge us to encounter our collective future in a new way, whether that involves a different orientation toward language, viewing our own productivity as an expression of humanity, or seeing relics of past injustices as sites of potential resistance.

Without the support of colleagues and faculty, this iteration of *Acta* could not have happened. I want to thank Lauren Williams for heading up the task of organizing the undergraduate conference and ensuring the process of bringing the conference and journal to fruition was done properly. I must thank my advisor and Editor-in-Chief Dr. John Koolage as his guidance was and will continue to be crucial to this journal. Above all, I thank everyone who engaged in this journal and the undergraduate conference as each individual provided unique value and made this experience what it has been.

Mac Neaville, Student Editor

A Case for Creating Clearly Condemnatory Status of Wrongdoers

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Abstract: In recent work discussing how we should address public statues of wrongdoers, people typically argue for either removing statues or retaining them, often with the addition of a contextualizing plaque, counter-commemoration, or other alteration.¹ In contrast to mere removal or modification, I argue that one permissible alternative is to create clearly condemnatory statues of wrongdoers, but only for wrongdoers with already existing statues. That is, we need not create statues of every wrongdoer; we should only create them following removal of the originals. While my arguments apply to wrongdoers generally, including confederates, colonizers, and genocidaires, I focus on Columbus as a wrongdoer and the Columbus statue in Marconi Plaza in Philadelphia.² First, I outline Helen Frowe’s argument for our duty to remove statues of wrongdoers as part of the state’s duty to condemn and repudiate wrongdoing. While I do not frame my argument in terms of duties, building on Frowe’s claims, I argue that one permissible way of condemning and repudiating wrongdoing is to create condemnatory statues, and in cases involving serious rights violators, we ought to prefer creation of these statues over mere removal.³ I also draw on accounts of the value of blame to show how blame – and particularly the blame that condemnatory statues convey – demonstrates our commitment to morality. Finally, I address alternative options of retaining the statue and either adding a plaque, counter-commemoration, or vandalization, to illuminate some reasons why we might prefer condemnatory statues.

¹ When I use the term “wrongdoers” in this essay, it is limited to those who are serious rights violators, as articulated in Helen Frowe’s account (8). My account is limited to statues of individual wrongdoers, rather than commemorations of groups that commit wrongs, groups that contain some wrongdoers, or other portrayals of wrongdoing that do not depict individual wrongdoers.

² The Columbus statue before and after being boarded up. In August 2020, its removal was approved by the Philadelphia Art Commission, but when the removal was legally challenged, a judge paused the process while waiting to hear related motions. In April 2021, a new lawsuit was filed opposing the removal. In August 2021, a judge ruled that the city may not remove the statue, but the city plans to appeal, and the statue is still boarded up.

³ When I say, “we ought to prefer,” I do not mean that we must respond to all statues of serious rights violators by creating condemnatory statues. While specific responses to each statue will be largely context-dependent, we should make our condemnation of serious rights violators salient, and often, mere removal does not clearly or sufficiently express condemnation. For example, if a statue has recently sparked protests, local governments often cite public safety as a reason for removal, while failing to condemn the wrongdoer’s actions. Or the government might remove the statue at night, so as not to attract attention or protest, and fail to provide reasons for the removal. In contrast, a condemnatory removal might involve the government issuing a condemnatory statement upon removal and then installing a condemnatory plaque so that the condemnation remains publicly visible. Although both this condemnatory removal and the creation of a condemnatory statue are permissible responses, below I address reasons why creating condemnatory statues can better condemn wrongdoers and convey our commitment to morality than can mere removal.

First, I should clarify what constitutes a “clearly condemnatory” statue. Helen Frowe argues that statues often convey a positive evaluative attitude of a historical figure, and that “states have duties to repudiate their own historical wrongdoing, and to condemn other people’s serious wrongdoing,” and these duties are incompatible with expressing positive evaluations of wrongdoers through public statues (1). When Frowe mentions that her argument does not support a duty to remove clearly condemnatory statues, she notes that most statues are not condemnatory, since “they merely depict the person (often in a manner meant to convey their heroic or otherwise admirable status), and they are erected as expressions of esteem” and “denote a positive evaluation” of a historical figure (3). In contrast to these positive evaluations, condemnatory works involve negative evaluation, meant to convey the wrongdoer’s vicious or contemptible status, created as expressions of condemnation. But this blaming does not license malicious ridicule, as our main aim in condemning is to convey our commitment to our moral principles and our repudiation of the wrongdoer’s bad actions or values.

I do not adopt a specific account of blame in my above outline of the features of a clearly condemnatory statue. So, a condemnatory statue could express a judgment of blameworthiness, provoke reactive attitudes constitutive of blame, morally protest the actions or values of the wrongdoer, and so on. But whatever account of blame one chooses to adopt, she can envision condemnatory works that align with her views; her constraints are self-imposed and imaginative rather than author-imposed and definitional. Because public art has enhanced capacities to communicate commitments and encourage emotional responses in its viewers compared to other ways of blaming, I mainly address the communicative and affective aspects of condemnation.

To illustrate what a condemnatory statue might look like, below I have created an example of a clearly condemnatory statue that could replace the Columbus statue following its

removal.⁴ Aligning with my definition of a clearly condemnatory work, this statue does not honor, esteem, nor denote a positive evaluation of Columbus. The “hate” letters express a negative evaluation and have a double meaning, in that we convey our hatred of Columbus’ wrongdoing while portraying him as hateful figure, given his enslavement, murder, and other mistreatment and manipulation of indigenous people. Rather than depicting him as a heroic figure looking down on viewers, he is the same size and on the same level as viewers and, importantly, he is the same size as the bold “hate” letters, so his figure does not overshadow our condemnation. Indeed, he is now positioned in the shadow of hatred: no longer towering over his colonial conquests, the oppressor becomes oppressed under the weight of the hatred his actions and attitudes convey.⁵

⁴ Although this statue is not proportional to the actual sizes of the Love and Columbus statues, this is how I imagine one example of a clearly condemnatory statue.

⁵ While I only address individual wrongdoers here, for examples of other works that I consider clearly condemnatory and directed towards group wrongdoing (in this case, that of the Mexican government), see this [video on Mexico’s anti-monuments](https://youtu.be/9byeq7LP050). <<https://youtu.be/9byeq7LP050>>. One aim of anti-monuments is protesting how the government has addressed, or failed to address, tragedies or wrongdoing. Though I do not argue that moral protest is essential to blame, the protest of these anti-monuments seems to blame or negatively evaluate the government for failing to appropriately address wrongdoing.



Having clarified what constitutes a clearly condemnatory statue, I now address Frowe’s argument for the duty to remove statues of wrongdoers and I build on her claims to argue that one permissible way of condemning and repudiating wrongdoing is to create condemnatory statues. I focus on showing that mere removal is insufficient condemnation and offer reasons why we should prefer condemnatory statues, and because I agree both that the original statues express positive evaluations of wrongdoers and with Frowe’s argument for removal, I do not restate all of her claims. Frowe asserts that “[k]eeping public statues of serious rights violators is incompatible with the state’s duties to condemn and repudiate serious wrongdoing” grounded in what is owed to victims of wrongdoing (2). Regarding repudiation, Frowe states that it “requires, amongst other things, a public and sincere declaration of an act’s wrongfulness, and a commitment to not facilitate such wrongdoing in the future,” which is incompatible with publicly honoring wrongdoers through statues (11). Similarly, the value of a state’s condemnation is that

it “reflects our intrinsic reasons to affirm victims’ moral standing in the face of actions that have denied that standing by publicly asserting the wrongfulness of those actions” (12).

In comparison to creating a condemnatory statue, merely removing a statue does not declare an act’s wrongfulness, a future commitment to improved actions, nor victims’ moral worth. That is, merely removing a statue expressing a positive evaluation does not equate expressing a negative evaluation. Likewise, mere withdrawal of praise is not blame, and merely removing a racist statue does not make one anti-racist. Considering that these statues aim to communicate our values, declaring that we are no longer committed to some value does not positively articulate the values to which we are presently committed, nor those to which we will commit ourselves in the future. Since statues can serve as reminders of the commitments they convey, creating condemnatory statues can fulfill Frowe’s aim of conveying our commitment not to enable future wrongdoing, whereas mere removal does not convey nor remind us of this commitment. Moreover, while Frowe claims that condemnation must be sincere, mere removal is less sincere than creating condemnatory works. In discussing condemnation, Frowe connects its sincerity to the idea that “justice should not only be done, but also be seen to be done” (13). Yet, in the case of mere removal of statues, after the removal, nothing is seen at all; we are left with an empty plot of land, which does not come close to the sincere declaration of wrongfulness, nor the affirmation of victims’ worth, that Frowe seeks. In contrast, creating clearly condemnatory statues makes the declaration of a perpetrator’s wrongfulness sincere, visible, and lasting, and thus is a permissible way that the state can repudiate and condemn wrongdoing.

One might object to my argument for the creation of condemnatory statues and assert that since most of the wrongdoers are dead, we have no reason to blame them, since they cannot apologize, change their values, or produce any future good. Opponents might similarly claim that we should not blame wrongdoers when, according to the context of their times, their views were

not as egregious as we currently consider them to be. I respond to this second concern by noting that if we agree that our moral principles are universal and apply across time, we can still blame wrongdoers who lived in different social contexts. As George Sher states, “given that all moral principles apply to all persons, we may indeed conclude that whenever someone accepts a principle as moral. . . he must have not only a motivationally effective desire to obey it himself, but also a variety of motivationally ineffective desires that others obey it as well,” and desires that people obeyed it in the past (126). While I do not adopt Sher’s belief-desire pair account of blame, I agree that a commitment to blame is inseparable from a commitment to morality (115).

To address the objection that we ought not blame wrongdoers if they are dead and incapable of reforming and contributing to future good, I maintain that while there can be good consequences of condemnation, I am more focused on blame as serving to defend and articulate our moral commitments and the intrinsic value of affirming victims’ worth, rather than instrumental benefits of condemnation. Because I focus on the connection between blame and our commitment to morality, I do not think that the only value of blame is in its ability to reform wrongdoers, indeed, I prefer to focus on how blaming might aid victims of wrongdoing.

Christopher Evan Franklin also focuses on victims while arguing for a conceptual connection between blame and a commitment to morality, arguing that we are required to protect and defend objects of moral worth, and only blame can provide the requisite defense and protection (215). In particular, Franklin claims that blame defends an object’s moral worth, avoids your complicity in devaluing the object upon failing to defend it, and avoids your failure to recognize an object of moral worth as important. Franklin states: “to defend moral values involves expressing our condemnation of the act [which devalues a valuable object] . . . we make it clear that we disagree with and will not stand for that kind of action” (220). These expressive and functional dimensions of blame support the public expression of blame, such as

through the creation of condemnatory public statues, rather than a more private or less salient condemnation. As Franklin notes, “publicly blaming the agent can serve to bring others to a recognition of the value of the object in question or to sustain the beliefs of those who already recognize it as valuable” (220).

Blaming wrongdoers shows that we value objects of moral worth in the sense that when someone commits a wrong, they fail to show proper moral concern for the people whose rights they violate. So when we blame the wrongdoer, we show that we value victims of wrongdoing and their descendants, that we do not condone the mistreatment of members of our moral community who are worthy of moral concern. And, as Franklin articulates above, blaming not only makes salient the moral worth of victims of wrongdoing for those who already believe they are worthy of concern, but also for those who failed to view victims and their descendants as valuable. Blame’s contribution to making community members recognize the value of victims is especially important under nonideal oppressive conditions, since oppressed groups are less likely to be seen as valuable parts of the community and have their interests and well-being prioritized by their oppressors. So even if we cannot dismantle oppressive systems in a single blaming interaction, through the creation of condemnatory statues, we can at least communicate to the oppressed that we regard them as worthy of moral concern and we oppose their mistreatment.⁶

⁶ One might worry that since I claim that the state can blame wrongdoers through condemnatory statues, and in a democracy, the state is composed of citizens, I am therefore claiming that all citizens blame wrongdoers, when in fact, some citizens view wrongdoers – such as Columbus – as admirable and would be deeply upset by a condemnatory statue. To respond, first, I note that we can still outline some basic values that everyone should agree on, even if everyone does not actually agree. In this essay, I assume that all citizens should condemn serious rights violators. We should not forgo blaming serious rights violators merely because some people admire them. And if we want to maintain that colonialism is universally bad, we should still publicly condemn colonizers. The fact that some community members admire colonizers does not mean that colonizers are good, nor that people who praise colonizers are justified in praising them. Second, more generally, I think no statue will represent all citizens, or even all Philadelphians. People’s views on wrongdoers vary widely and are often too nuanced to be fully conveyed through simple statues. Likewise, within a community, people’s values are often conflicting and incommensurable. So it is not the case that the community was in perfect agreement, and creating a condemnatory statue is the state’s first non-neutral statement. Retaining a statue of a wrongdoer is also not neutral; indeed, it conveys a lack of moral concern for the wrongdoer’s victims and their descendants.

We can see how public art in particular can serve as an effective way to encourage condemnation of wrongdoers if, in our account of blame, we define it as involving experiencing certain reactive attitudes. Since public art often provokes emotional responses in viewers, we can support the creation of condemnatory statues, as opposed to condemnatory texts or other assertions that may not generate as strong an emotional response in the audience. While we cannot obligate people to feel the negative attitudes involved in blame upon viewing a statue, the state should still publicly condemn wrongdoing and defend values through creating condemnatory statues. Even if not every viewer will experience the attitudes associated with blame, they can still understand the condemnatory message that the work communicates, and having the statue as a public reminder of what they ought to condemn may gradually encourage the negative attitudes involved in blame, or at least positive attitudes towards victims.

Now, to address to a preservationist objection, one might claim that in removing statues, we eliminate the opportunity to engage in democratic dialogue regarding the wrongdoing, our history, and our current values. But unlike mere removal, creating a condemnatory statue does not foreclose dialogue, rather, the dialogue would be grounded in a negative evaluation instead of a positive one. So, we retain our dialogue while better articulating and defending our values.⁷

I now turn to the inadequacy of plaques, counter-commemorations, and vandalism as alternatives to condemnatory statues. I do not oppose all instances of plaques, as condemnatory works can often benefit from clarification or contextualization in plaque form. I only claim that, regarding the original statues of wrongdoers, a contextualizing plaque does not adequately

⁷ Some people who favor preservation are also concerned with potential damage to old statues caused by the removal. The August 2021 ruling – which can be accessed through this [news article](https://www.nbcphiladelphia.com/news/local/christopher-columbus-statue-can-remain-in-south-philly-judge-rules/2929988/) <www.nbcphiladelphia.com/news/local/christopher-columbus-statue-can-remain-in-south-philly-judge-rules/2929988/> – declaring that the city may not remove the Columbus statue cites concerns about damage to the marble (2-3), as well as the city’s “duty to preserve and protect historical objects” (6). My argument for clearly condemnatory statues can accommodate these preservationist worries about damaging original works. This is because condemnatory statues can be built around the originals, similar to the “hate” letters placed over the original Columbus statue in the example I present above.

condemn wrongdoing nor demonstrate our commitment to morality. Part of expressing our commitment to morality is not just praising those who are virtuous, but also identifying those who violate our moral principles, which also shows moral concern for wrongdoers' victims. By keeping a statue and adding a plaque, you still retain the honoring and positive evaluation aspects of the statue, which are typically more salient than the plaque. That is, it is not enough to merely state that the wrongs occurred through providing historical context, we also must condemn those wrongs. The ambivalence of a prominent positive statue and an easily overlooked condemnatory plaque is often insufficient to adequately condemn serious rights violators.

Regarding counter-commemorations, Frowe opposes their creation by stating that they imply wrongdoers and non-wrongdoers are “merely two sides of the same story – their actions on a moral par, their views equally reasonable, both worthy of respect,” and “This implication is morally objectionable,” since retaining statues of wrongdoers continues to honor them, and wrongdoers do not deserve positive evaluation (7). I endorse Frowe's view, and further claim that even if the wrongdoer were removed and only the non-wrongdoer remained, this would be insufficient condemnation, for the reasons articulated above in claiming that removal is insufficient. While I do not oppose creating statues of admirable figures, we cannot convey our commitment to moral principles merely by highlighting instances in which people fulfill them, we must also condemn wrongdoers who flout them.

With respect to vandalism, in his defense of vandalizing tainted commemorations, Chong-Ming Lim contrasts the aims of activists and preservationists, stating, “Activists seek to secure self-respect. . . Preservationists seek to secure public engagement with the past” (197), and he articulates how vandalism can fulfill the values of self-respect and remembrance. While I do not oppose his argument for vandalism, I argue that creating condemnatory statues meets the

aims of both groups while better condemning wrongdoers.⁸ First, a condemnatory statue still facilitates public engagement with the past, which is the aim of preservationists. As noted above, creating condemnatory statues still allows us to discuss the wrongdoer and their actions, but rather than publicly praising the wrongdoer, our discussion is based on a negative evaluation.

Second, in relation to activists' aim of securing respect, we should not only be concerned with activists' self-respect, but also others' respect for activists. Respect need not be our only concern when evaluating statues, but focusing on respect for activists reflects the reality that people angered by vandalism may retaliate, as when Columbus statue "defenders" assaulted activists advocating its removal.⁹ Not all preservationists "defend" statues violently, but this violence is not an isolated incidence. Since this Columbus-related assault was prompted by mere protest, we have even more reason to be concerned about the violence vandalism might provoke. Even if vandalism were legalized, because it involves vandalizers' visibility, it exposes them to assault. So, if we are concerned with respect, and respect encompasses bodily integrity, we ought to prefer condemnatory statues. The state better condemns wrongdoing by creating condemnatory statues, which involves affirming victims' worth and committing not to facilitate future wrongdoing, whereas allowing activists to be assaulted does not affirm their worth and enables assaulters' wrongdoing. Risking assault should not be the cost of securing respect.

⁸ It is important to note that Lim defends vandalism in the context of a state's refusal to remove tainted commemorations, so he is not arguing for vandalism as an alternative to removal. And in cases in which the state will not remove statues, they may be even less likely to create new condemnatory statues. Though if the state values preservation, they might be willing to build a condemnatory statue around the original. In cases in which the state rejects removal and condemnatory statues, we may support the creation of condemnatory contextualization, such as a contextualizing plaque or other exhibit near the statue, as an initial step towards more complete condemnation in the future. Even though it is unlikely that those who admire wrongdoers will immediately change their views and support condemnatory statues, condemnatory contextualization could at least encourage people to reconsider their views and confront the truth about the extent of the wrongdoing.

⁹ The state's failure to condemn wrongdoing enabled "defenders" to "swarm around them [activists], punch them, push them to the ground, kick and stomp on them, burn them with lighters, cigarettes and cigars, sexually assault them, and shove them into busy Broad Street traffic," as detailed in [this article](http://www.inquirer.com/news/columbus-statue-black-lives-matter-krasner-philadelphia-marconi-vigilantes-20200616.html).
<www.inquirer.com/news/columbus-statue-black-lives-matter-krasner-philadelphia-marconi-vigilantes-20200616.html>.

Instead, the state should assume the risks of the wrathful reactions of dissatisfied “defenders,” and create clearly condemnatory statutes.

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Hegel, Marx, and the Realization of the Self in Work: Towards a Humanistic Ontology of Labor

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Abstract: It has become evident in advanced capitalism that the worker's relation between their labor and their selfhood remains unclear and distorted. For many, labor is merely a means for putting food on the table and a roof over their head. This does not mean, however, that labor in itself gives rise to this prevailing relation. The objective of this essay is to uncover a fundamental ontological characteristic of labor; namely, its ability to reflect one's subjectivity and capabilities as a human being. I attempt to demonstrate, through thinkers such as Karl Marx and G. W. F. Hegel, that the worker's labor and the exchange of their products are intimately connected with their selfhood—whether they see themselves as creative, competent, and so on. Furthermore, I argue that the advanced capitalist mode of production has distorted this essential relationship to labor, thus estranging the worker from their labor and subjectivity.

Introduction

When a manufacturing company has to resort to installing large nets outside its buildings to prevent employees from committing suicide, the grim and contorted relationship the employees have with their work becomes clear.¹ Under advanced capitalism, a system in which most of the world's population currently participates, the general apprehension of the essential relationship between labor and being human is noticeably obscure. The instability of this present "understanding" of the relation is demonstrated by frequent worker strikes and the need for "suicide nets" on manufacturing buildings. And this issue is not something which has recently developed; through the centuries of capitalist rule, this ill-defined concept of labor as it relates to human experience has become increasingly unclear and distorted. The reasons for this

¹ I am referring to a Foxconn manufacturing plant in Shenzhen, China. This plant manufactures hardware for various technology companies, one of which is Apple.

contortion are numerous and would require an intensive investigation. My object of study is not to look at labor in terms of its functions within the political economy—how labor affects the value of a product, the price of labor as determined by the intersection of supply and demand, etc. Rather, my concern is directed towards the *being* of labor as it relates to selfhood and being human. The objective of this essay is to uncover a fundamental ontological characteristic of labor; namely, its ability to reflect one’s subjectivity and capabilities as a human being. Guided by the writings of Karl Marx and G. W. F. Hegel, I expound upon this property in the first and second sections of the following essay. The first illustrates how one’s unique human capacities—creativity, intelligence, etc.— can be expressed and cultivated primarily through labor, the objective transformation of the world. The second section attempts to demonstrate how the subjectivity reflected in one’s creation (or product) attains certitude only when that creation is used and recognized by another. I contend in the last section that once the intimate interrelation between labor and human subjectivity is neglected, forms of labor that estrange and disconnect workers from their creation (and thereby from their subjectivity and from one another) become socially and politically permissible.

Subjectivity and Labor

In order to observe how engaging in labor serves as a transformation and reflection of one’s sense of self, we must direct our attention towards the conditions which allow for this intimate relationship to exist. However, before we do that, it is important that we make the general distinction between the activities of an animal and the labor of human beings. Broadly speaking, the animal’s laborious activities that are necessary for maintaining its physical existence are what determine the life of its particular species; or as Marx notes, “[t]he animal is its life activity.”² The effort involved in a bird building its nests and its search for

² Karl Marx, *Marx: Selected Writings*, ed. Lawrence H. Simon (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994), 63.

earthworms and mulberries constitute the limitations of what it is capable of. Even when the animal's life is not dominated by the activities necessary for maintaining its life, that is to say if its environment is relatively safe from predators and there is a sufficient supply of food, it does not follow from this that creativity and reason suddenly come into fruition. Conversely, these aforementioned faculties begin to germinate and are made manifest when a human being is liberated from the incessant demand to preserve their own biological life—this will be further discussed later in this section. A cursory glance at the world would suffice in noticing that humans are endowed with abilities far more sophisticated than those of animals. It is the “practical creation of an objective world”—the houses, cars, tools, art, and so on—that displays the multitude of unique capabilities inherent in being human. Moreover, we cannot help but heed the diverse ways in which these abilities take form in the transformation of the material world. Think, for example, of how something as basic and simple as sustenance has become something which defines a culture and is an expression of artistry. It is in this process of creating and affecting the world that human beings develop their sense of self—that which constitutes one's individuality and unique character. However, I must be cautious in this generality, for not all humans find (and have found) their labor to be a source of their selfhood. It has only been those who are capable of exercising agency over their creations that have found their labor to be an expression of who they are and what they are capable of. Intellect, creativity, ingenuity, skill, and so on, are those human qualities that one is capable of expressing and utilizing in one's transformation of the world. So, to see these human capabilities freely expressed in labor, we need to observe the situation where the worker feels as if their activity is “a definite way of expressing their life.”³

One might suppose that living a life comparable to a prehistoric human, a human

³ Marx, 107.

unfettered from the restraints of others, constitutes a free relationship with their labor and its products. This is problematic simply because a human in this primitive state is confined to activities that are similar to those of an animal. Living outside an organized society or a *polis* would entail living without a structured division of labor, and thus in some form of state of nature. Alone and dependent on only themselves to obtain sustenance, the human would spend most of their waking hours hunting and scavenging for food. There is no relationship to their labor that allows them to find themselves and their potential in the products of their labor. The spear they make is not constructed for any reason but to use it for killing wild boar. Most of the time of the human's day is spent expending energy on activities necessary for maintaining their biological existence, a life similar to an animal. So in this sense, they are not free and the conditions are such that the idea of cultivating a sense of self (what they are capable of and so forth) through creation, is nonexistent. We are able to locate those engaged in genuine creation only in some form of organized community or society. As Marx remarks: "Only in community do the means exist for every individual to cultivate his talents in all directions. Only in the community is personal freedom possible."⁴ And the conditions for an individual to 'cultivate his talents' in labor can be found throughout various economic modes of production; although it is in capitalism that we find this particular relationship to labor taking on alienating and often restrictive forms. Marx notes that even during feudalism, many had a relative degree of freedom in their craft and were able to find their labor reflecting their character. He states in the *German Ideology* that:

[t]he medieval craftsman still exhibited an interest in their special work and their skill in it which could develop to a certain limited artistic talent. For that very reason every medieval craftsman was completely absorbed in his work, had a contented slavish relationship to it, and was subjected to it to a far greater extent than is the modern

⁴ Marx, 144.

worker for whom his work is a matter of indifference.⁵

Despite master craftsmen being required to get permission from the guild in order to be self-employed, there were not many restrictions impeding on their craft. Similarly, when we look at the very few in capitalism that have the privilege of working for themselves, insofar as they own the products they produce and are actively engaged in the craft, we find a relationship to labor that closely resembles that of the master craftsman.

Thus far, we have yet to get at the concrete ways in which labor and subjectivity are intimately connected. To understand the way subjectivity is apprehended and cultivated through labor, we must direct our attention to the situation where the worker is free, or at least relatively free, in their creation. That being said, let us observe a self-employed carpenter during the nascent stages of capitalism. Although, we could very well look at a master craftsman or journeyman during feudalism and still observe the worker acquiring a sense of who they are through their labor.

The carpenter who is able to exercise complete control over her product is, at the most fundamental level, able to see the process of work in terms of potentiality and actuality. Before commencing with the activity of building a chair, she must first devise a general image or model of it. In this particular stage of production, the carpenter envisages the chair in various forms; which is to say that it has the *potential* of taking on different shapes and structures. Once a rough blueprint has been established, she then proceeds to cut the wood and collect the necessary materials. It is in this process that she actively actualizes the possibility of the raw material being transformed into a chair; and throughout this endeavor, the desired end is always subject to change. For instance, after mounting the splat (the back part of the chair) on the chair, she notices that its convex shape does not suit the overall aesthetic of the creation; so as a result,

⁵ Marx, 135.

she constructs one that is aesthetically congruent with the surrounding parts. In *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt succinctly asserts this process into two parts: “first, perceiving the image or shape of the product-to-be, and then organizing the means and starting the execution.”⁶

What is of vital importance here is that it is the carpenter who precisely transformed the world in a constructive and creative manner. When the individual sees themselves as the subject (or agent) that propels the creation process, from the conception of the form (eidos) to the material actualization of that potential, the idea they have of themselves is reinforced. In other words, their skills, knowledge, creativity, etc, that are embodied in the chair they built become tangible and concrete evidence that those characteristics are a part of who they are. In *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel contends something quite similar in his account of the condition of the slave in the master-slave dialectic. He states that the slave’s “formative activity is at the same time the individuality or pure being-for-self of consciousness which now, in the work outside of it, acquires an element of permanence.”⁷ After having physically altered the world in a constructive way (through work), the bondsman’s sense of self or “individuality” becomes something concrete rather than vague and determined solely by the master. Alexandre Kojève, in his transcribed lectures on *Phenomenology of Spirit*, expands on Hegel’s analysis of work by remarking that, “[i]t is the realization of his project, of his idea...it is he that is realized in and by this product.”⁸ Furthermore, he adds the following: “In his work, he transforms things and he transforms himself at the sametime; he forms things and the world by transforming himself,

educating himself...”⁹ This active transformation of oneself through one’s productive

⁶ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* 2nd Edition (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 225.

⁷ G.F.W. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford University Press, 1977), 118.

⁸ Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1969), 25.

⁹ Kojève, 25.

activity is especially pertinent when it comes to taking on new projects that require the acquisition of additional skills and knowledge. The carpenter's determination to build a French bergère, a type of upholstered armchair, demonstrates this dual transformation of the subject and the creation. She is initially confident in her ability to take on such a formidable project; however, as she begins cutting the wood and configuring the various parts, she gradually comes to recognize that her present capabilities are no match for the elegant and sophisticated design of this particular chair. The limitations of her aptitude in carpentry are disclosed when she fails or falls short in building something intricate and new. It is in virtue of this revelation, however, that she retreats from the hands-on work in order to study various skills and techniques that are applicable for the construction of bergères. And her newly acquired skills and knowledge about bergères are realized only in its objectification, in the material application of her abilities. In other words, it is only once she successfully transforms the wood into the intricate chair that she can physically locate the cultivation and expansion of her knowledge, creativity, embodied skill, etc. After this formative experience, after altering the real objective world by presenting it with another expression of human feat, does the carpenter find herself transformed. However, one's personal evaluation of their creation, and thereby of their capabilities and talents, does not necessarily provide apodictic truth; it may very well be that the chair the carpenter designed is hideous. Seeing oneself in the object is certainly a necessary condition for realizing one's subjectivity, but it is not the sufficient condition. The way others respond to one's creation must also be accounted for when thinking about how one's productive activity operates as a reflection of their subjectivity. To understand why this is the case, let us explore Hegel's theory of recognition.

Subjectivity, the Object, and the Other

One of the crucial takeaways from Hegel's theory of recognition, developed in the fourth

chapter of *Phenomenology of Spirit*, is that it is through the other that one acquires a more concrete understanding of who they are. The reason that self-consciousness (i.e. the individual) fights the other is in virtue of its desires to attain “the truth of this recognition as an independent self-consciousness.”¹⁰ Which is to say simply that the individual wants the other to recognize them as independent and free in order to corroborate a feature of their being which they hold to be true (that is, that they are a free and independent being). And while an object produced by work serves as a means for individuals to recognize their subjectivity, as illustrated in the previous section, it nonetheless remains limited in that it is only the individual producing the object who is determining the value of the object. This solipsistic determination engenders a one-sided evaluation of the object, and thereby a one-sided grasp of themselves and their capabilities. Let us return to the case of the carpenter to observe this relation. When the carpenter is finally finished constructing the French bergère, and finds herself satisfied and proud of her creation, her sentiments remain merely personal. For her positive assessment of the chair, and of herself, is deprived of a comprehensive and complete truth; or as Hegel would articulate, her own “self-certainty still has no truth.”¹¹ For all she knows, the values she attributes to herself (creative, intelligent, skillful, capable of building a bergère, etc) may very well be illusory or exaggerated. It is precisely because of this partial evaluation of herself that makes others serve an imperative role in apprehending one’s self. In Arendt’s discussion on action and its way of disclosing the actor’s character, she writes: “This revelatory quality of speech and action comes to the fore where people are *with* others...in sheer human togetherness.”¹² The worker’s labor, similar to the actor and their actions, is truly revealed only when it affects the human world. Supporting this claim, Kojève states that, “...he must impose the idea that he has of himself on a being other than

¹⁰ Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, 144.

¹¹ Hegel, 115.

¹² Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 180.

himself: he must be recognized by the others.”¹³ Translating this in terms of productive activity and subjectivity, the individual must impose their creation on others in order to ascertain whether their assessment of it contains any truth; and the way to discover this is through exchanging or selling their very creation. Whether or not another individual will feel compelled to purchase the chair is the chief affirmation of the carpenter’s sentiment that the chair is aesthetically unique, intricate, functional, etc; and by extension, whether she is capable of building a bergère that is functional and pleasing to the eye. With creations like paintings or sculptures, the situation becomes a bit more complex; one culture or generation might deem a work of art to possess beauty while another might not. However, for the time being, we will put aside this particular matter and concern ourselves mostly with everyday objects and utilities. Additionally, what comes with this exchange is an active communication with others about the very objects the individual creates. This aforementioned feature, while it may appear to be inconsequential, proves to be rather essential for transforming oneself and one’s future creations. For instance, a few who purchased chairs from the carpenter informed her that a couple of the bolts were loose; because of this response, she felt an obligation to be more diligent and attentive when bolting on the legs. From then on she developed a sense of astuteness when it came to assembling the parts. Notice how this communication with others functions as a reflection of her capacities and its limitations. Her idea that the chairs she built were firmly constructed remains private until others use and appropriate the object, the material manifestation of her subjectivity. Furthermore, it is important to keep in mind that work which is reflective of subjectivity and agency is contingent on a set of conditions that make such a relationship with creation possible. We will see in the following section how neglecting this understanding of labor—as an activity that is intimately connected to subjectivity—can result in degraded relations to productive activity.

¹³ Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 11.

The Distortion of Labor in Industrial Capitalism

From the depiction of labor as explicated above, we obtain two fundamental conclusions: (1) Productive activity and the objects created are material realizations of one's subjectivity, abilities, agency, humanity, etc. And, having a free relationship with labor allows for these aforementioned features to be cultivated and expanded. (2) The value one attributes to the objects they create are affirmed or denied by observing the way the objects transform the social objective world—that is, the way others use and respond to the objects they produce. Industrial capitalism has demonstrated an irreverence to this understanding of labor in a multitude of ways. However, there are two that I want to focus on which are relevant to the previous sections: the widespread fragmentation of productive activity and the worker's detachment from those who purchase the objects they “produce.”

Given that capitalists own most of the property and the means of production (raw materials, buildings, tools, etc), those who do not own anything but their labor (the workers, the majority) are forced to sell it to the capitalist as a means to survive. This unilateral distribution of power has allowed the capitalists to have authority over the conditions of production, which is to say that they are the ones who control what is being produced and how it is produced. The latter detail explains the extensive employment of the mechanized division of labor. And by “division of labor” in this context, I am not referring to the macro division of labor we see in any organized society where each person takes on a different vocation (some are bakers, some are doctors, etc). The mechanized division of labor I speak of is the type Adam Smith promotes in *The Wealth of Nations*, and what we see occurring in most manufactures today. In these large manufactures that produce high quantities of products, work is subdivided into as many tasks as possible. Instead of having each worker engaged in the entire production of a chair from start to finish, the workers are subjected to being responsible for a single operation (e.g. screwing in the

arm rests). Smith praises this arrangement of labor, maintaining that “by reducing every man’s business to some one simple operation, and by making this operation the sole employment of his life,” you allow for the worker to develop an adeptness to the particular task.¹⁴ One of the consequences of subjecting workers to this particular relation to labor is a fragmentary and distorted understanding of what it means to create a useful object. Rather than having to learn various skills and understand the construction of a chair in a relatively holistic manner, all the worker is required to learn is a single bodily gesture. Georg Lukács describes something similar in the following statement: “The process of labor is progressively broken down into abstract, rational, specialized operations so that the worker loses contact with the finished product and his work is reduced to the mechanical repetition of a specialized set of actions.”¹⁵ The “repetition of a specialized set of actions” does not constitute the ability to build a chair. The worker who is forced to endure these conditions cannot say they know how to build a chair, for they only know how to screw in arm rests. Recall the carpenter’s relation to creation described in the first section: she was able to clearly recognize her abilities and creativity in the product of her labor. And most importantly, her agency was being exercised in her production, which was expressed in her resolve to expand her competence and creativity in building different types of chairs. This relates to Marx’s contention that workers have been alienated from their “species-being,” expounded in *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*. He states, “free conscious activity is the species character of man”; which is to say that the essential feature that marks one out as human is the fact that they are able to exercise agency.¹⁶ This unique quality, which should be held sacrosanct, is diminished and constricted when someone other than the worker—the capitalist—

¹⁴ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (New York: Modern Library, 1994), 5

¹⁵ György Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1971), 88.

¹⁶ Marx, *Selected Writings*, 63.

owns the worker's labor and its products. Learning how to utilize different tools and understanding the variety of ways to connect different parts (dovetail joints, lap joints, etc) are aspects of the creation process which are not fostered under the dominion of the mechanized division of labor. Being denied the ability to express agency and cultivate artistry through creation inevitably results in the worker viewing themselves as devoid of creativity and someone who is incapable of spontaneous activity.

Another way in which advanced capitalism has warped the worker's apprehension of productive activity, and consequently of their sense of self, is by estranging the worker from those who use the objects they produce. The products are not owned by the worker, so they are not the one who exchanges them. As a consequence, the worker is not able to interact with the consumers to ascertain how they evaluate the product (what aspects of the chair do they find appealing, the flaws about the chair, etc). And as we explored in the second section, communication with those who use the objects one creates plays a significant role in mastering and developing one's craft. Even when the customer finds a defect with the product, the worker

is not the one they speak to in order to resolve the issue. The employer is typically the one who is informed, as well as the one who expresses dissatisfaction towards the worker. And when a worker is subjected to an intense division of labor, where their exclusive duty is a single operation, they invariably feel no responsibility towards the product; for the worker fails to "see himself in the world he made."¹⁷ In industrial capitalism where large retailers purchase in mass quantities, rather than individuals directly purchasing the products, the relationship between the worker and the one who purchases the object they produce is even further removed. Moreover, the rise of bureaucratic "red tape" found in corporation's customer service adds a few inches in

¹⁷ Marx, 64.

the separation between the consumer and the producer (the worker). One may raise the objection that the rise of the internet has engendered numerous ways for individuals to find self-employed work that is creative and meaningful; eBay, Etsy, and Artfire are a few examples of online services that have opened up this employment space. While I am willing to concede that there is hope in utilizing these services as a means for establishing meaningful labor, labor which allows the worker to see themselves in the products, most of these services are limited in that they primarily deal with artistic creations. Components of the economy such as food or vehicle production would be difficult to incorporate in the small-scale production that takes place on websites like Etsy or eBay. And while there seems to be hope with these web services, capitalist countries are nevertheless experiencing an excessive decline of small businesses, and a concurrent rise of large manufacturing monopolies (like Amazon, Walmart, Foxconn, etc).¹⁸ Consequently, with the prevalence of massive corporations comes a collective sense of disaffection and powerlessness with regards to the individual's relationship to labor.

Conclusion

There are many more facets of advanced capitalism which distort a worker's understanding of their productive activity, and thereby of their sense of self. Subjects such as false consciousness and ideology play a role in contorting the definition of labor. Additionally, the rise of bureaucratic vocations, or what David Graeber calls "bullshit jobs," further muddles the most fundamental properties of labor and creation.¹⁹ Any form of labor where the worker cannot exercise agency, creativity, intelligence, etc, will find the activity to absorb and deplete their subjectivity, rather than reflect it. This is one of the consequences of capitalism that I

¹⁸ Stacy Mitchell, "Monopoly Power and the Decline of Small Business," 9.

¹⁹ David Graeber, *Bullshit Jobs: A Theory*. (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2018).

attempted to make explicit in the essay. My chief objective in this essay was to uncover an essential property of productive activity; namely, its ability to reflect one's subjectivity and capabilities as human beings. Guided by the writings of Marx and Hegel, I expound upon this characteristic in the first and second sections. The first illustrated how one's unique human capacities—creativity, intelligence, etc— can be expressed and cultivated primarily through labor, the objective transformation of the world. The second section attempted to demonstrate how the subjectivity reflected in one's creation (or product) attains certainty only when that creation is used by another. I contended in the last section that once there is a neglect of the intimate interrelation between labor and human subjectivity, forms of labor that estrange and disconnect workers from their creation (and thereby from their subjectivity) become socially and politically permissible.

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Laughter as a Critical tool for Liberation

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The question of what society is and how it operates is one that has been analyzed extensively in continental philosophy. In these analyses, the actions of the individual are taken as products of the society. This frames the question of the quality of life of the individual in a specific social context that restricts the possibility of critiques of the individual and their *ideological* values within a broader critique of society. In other words, these thinkers endeavor to improve the society by means of criticizing the practices of the social body instead of the *ideology* of the individual. Gilles Deleuze, Simone Weil, and Herbert Marcuse together provide us the tools to conduct an analysis of society in which the society and individual are viewed as within a symbiotic relationship. In *Pure Immanence*, Deleuze details an interpretation of Nietzsche's will to power and criticizes how it had previously only been interpreted as domineering rather than life-affirming. It is through this critique that Deleuze allows for the possibility of a structural political analysis of social power as life-affirming rather than life-denying. To approach an analysis of this critique, we must try to integrate a new understanding of force and power that Deleuze offers with prior social structural criticisms while including its individual component. This is why Simone Weil's analysis of force in *The Iliad or the Poem of Force* is a very fruitful addition to the literature on power and force. Because of her emphasis on what the individual can do in the face of overwhelming force as she describes it, she also chooses to discuss it in a context in which a systemic analysis of force is still possible. These particular characteristics of Weil's analysis of force allows us to use her work as an intermediary between Deleuze's interpretation of Nietzsche's power and Marcuse's work in *The One-Dimensional*

Man. Marcuse characterizes society as one which is subtly totalitarian through its illusion of free choice in the capitalist framework of western society. He views this system as one which reduces human life down to one dimension in both how we operate within our society and in how we value things. This idea of one-dimensionality fits very well with Weil's concept of force and seems like the inevitable product of a society that has a life denying understanding of power. This returns us to the question: Is a society with a positive relationship between power and life possible? John Lippett's work on laughter combined with this life-affirming understanding of Force indicates to us that a life-affirming society is only possible through a return to a critical mode of laughter.

Due to Deleuze's masterful writing and his own unique philosophical perspective, it is difficult to differentiate his explanations of the thinkers he is writing about versus his own thoughts. In fact, in several instances he does both simultaneously. Despite the fact that the work that is being referenced is an explanation of Nietzsche's ideas, I am going to refer to the ideas from the section about Nietzsche from *Pure Immanence* as if they come solely from Deleuze unless differentiation seems appropriate in specific instances.

For Deleuze, to be life-affirming is fundamentally oriented around unity between life and thought. "Life activates thought, and in turn thought affirms life" (*Pure Immanence*, 66). Thought and philosophy must be responsive to and affirmative of life. The creation of metaphysics birthed a disjunction in this unity by forcing thought to deny life by judging it against 'higher values'. This leads to philosophy and thought being reactive rather than active which is the context that allows us to make sense of the will to power as domination. It is through this reaction that the interpretation of phenomena and the creation of meaning lead to a reactive relationship of forces. This places coercion as the primary force in the relationship of forces that composes the will while adaptation and regulation become secondary forces. This is

how the understanding of the will to power as domination came about that places reaction over action. It is what we now intuitively conceive of when thinking of force or power. Deleuze wants a return to this presocratic life-affirming way of thinking to change how we think of the will to power which should be oriented around creation of values through the action-thought unity.

It is with this life-affirming understanding of force in mind that we must now turn to Weil's work on Force and attempt to adapt it to fit this creative mode of being. She characterizes Force very generally as "that x that turns anybody subjected to it into a thing...[which] turns man into a thing in the most literal sense: it makes a corpse out of him." (Weil, 163). The example of Force in action she chooses is the epic poem *The Iliad* by Homer, because it is incredibly honest in its characterization of Force in that it never shies away from showing the reader Force in its incredible brutality. One particular moment that Weil draws our attention to shows that Force, as she describes at its most extreme, lethal force, is in fact not its most insidious form. Rather, Force as the potential of enacting death is far more damaging to an individual because it turns the body into a thing and entombs the mind/soul/spirit in the thingified body. Weil posits that the mere threat of Force is sufficient to turn man into a thing, "[a] man stands disarmed and naked with a weapon pointing at him; this person becomes a corpse before anybody or anything touches him" (Weil, 165). This is the way that we see force at its smallest level which is life-denying, in how it literally is tied to lethality. In addition to this it subjugates thought into a reactive role by coercing all those participating in it to reject thought that has the possibility to affirm their life. This is why Weil is so insistent that the solution to Force is short pauses of reflection; just small moments in which thought can affirm life. However, because these pauses can only occur momentarily, the reflection they enable one to have is consumed with the weight of the experience of violent actions rather than true life-affirming thought in the Deleuzian sense.

Beyond this smallest level of Force on an individual, there is also significance to the central conflict of *The Illiad* being a war, which is a manmade product of the structures and institutions of society. This shows how Force is not just a natural phenomenon, but rather is something that is produced and perpetuated by specific structural interactions. In her review of James Holoka's new edition of *The Illiad or The Poem of Force*, Sheila Murnaghan mentions the context in which it was written, "*The Illiad, or The Poem of Force* was written in the summer and fall of 1940, after the fall of France. It may thus be read as an indirect commentary on that tragic event, which signaled the triumph of the most extreme modern expression of force." (Murnaghan, 1). This context only adds to how we can understand Force through its extreme expression in the military expansion of Nazi Germany. The Nazis in particular were influenced by an incomplete interpretation of Nietzsche's will to power as one of domination. This life-denying will to power of domination is the quintessence of Weil's force which is not just a phenomenon but a specific political and structural context that perpetuates itself through individual actors. This is why reflective pauses can only ever be discrete moments in the face of all-powerful systems.

At this point, Marcuse's work in *The One-Dimensional Man* fits nicely with this connection between life-denying thought and Force on both individual and systemic levels. Marcuse describes how the process of alienation and capitalist ideology has advanced so much as to now fully encompass the individual even to the point of removing the inner freedom that one experiences as a psychological subject through the psychoanalytic process of introjection. This appears to be another version of the phenomenon Weil described in slaves, that the threat of death reduces the scope of what the slave can experience down to the forced affection a slave must exhibit for their master. "To lose more than the slave does is impossible, for he loses his whole inner life. A fragment of it he may get back if he sees the hope of the possibility of

changing his fate, but this is his only hope.” (Weil, 170) The quote above shows the diminishment of the inner life and freedom of the slave. In addition, Marcuse would say that a part of this introjection is the capitalist ideology and the immediate identification of the self with the industrialized civilization of our society. This identification removes opposition to the norms and practices of society which leads to,

...The loss of this [inner] dimension, in which the power of negative thinking... is at home, is the ideological counterpart to the very material process in which advanced industrial society silences and reconciles the opposition. (Marcuse, 11).

This death of the power of negative thinking is the most absolute version of the dominance of life-denying thought. For, it is in this death that the ability to critique present values is lost and thus the ability to create new values is as well. Deleuze mentions the three metamorphoses from Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: the Camel, Lion, and Child. The Camel represents the mode of life in which we merely bear the values of our present society. The Lion represents the stage when we begin to critique and destroy the values imposed on us. And, the Child is the stage in which the life-affirming practice of creating our own values takes place. Marcuse describes perfectly how the present ideological values of our society are no longer able to be critiqued which prevents the possibility of life activating thought and thought, in turn, affirming life. It is due to the limitation of Force that we are not able to transition from the Camel to the Lion. This is the final stage of Force: it has not just turned our bodies into things, but our souls as well. There is no longer even the possibility of a life-affirming philosophy in our society anymore.

It is at this point that we must again consider how we might escape this predicament. It is such a totalizing problem that we are unable to grasp a full picture of what it might tangibly mean to live in a life-affirming society. This imaginative difficulty forces us to look to different types of solutions within our social framework. It is here that we must turn to John Lippitt’s work on laughter in a Nietzschean context. He says:

Zarathustra's praise of laughter in his speech to the higher men is ecstatic. He urges them to 'learn to laugh at yourselves as a man ought to laugh!'²⁴ Contrasting himself with Jesus, who in Luke 6:25 wishes 'woe to you who laugh now'. (“Nietzsche, Zarathustra and the Status of Laughter”, 43)

Lippitt goes on to say,

Laughing lions, then, are what the higher men have to become in order to embrace the eternal recurrence and laugh the laughter of the height. It is only when they do this, which they indeed eventually do in an affirmation almost as ecstatic as Zarathustra's own, that they realize their freedom... (“Nietzsche, Zarathustra and the Status of Laughter”, 43).

Lippitt here connects the idea behind Nietzsche's character of Zarathustra, that of the Lion and Child, with a very tangible practice of rejection of the life-denying attitude of Jesus from the book of Luke. This second section from Lippitt almost comes out of Deleuze himself here:

“Eternal Return is not only selective thinking but also selective Being. Only affirmation comes back, only what can be affirmed comes back, only joy returns.” (Deleuze, 88). Laughter itself is the mechanism to return to a life-affirming philosophy and thus a life-affirming society. It is through Laughter that we as people locked in the stage of the Camel can begin to shift to the Lion which reintroduces the critical power of negative thinking that Marcuse thought was lost. Laughter has been thought of for centuries as a force itself because it has been able to subvert the dominating power structures of societies. It gives power to those who have none through its critical faculty. It is itself a mode of freedom and becoming through these affirmative critical qualities. In another work, Lippitt pointed out the almost religious role of Laughter for this same reason, “It is the redemptive potential of laughter as an attitude towards ourselves and our world that leads Nietzsche to condemn those who forbid us to laugh at ourselves, them, and human existence. Note, therefore, that laughter is assigned a quasi-religious role” (“Existential Laughter”, 2). Thus, it forges a way towards a new kind of society which is almost inconceivable to us. In truth, it is difficult to even use the word “society” for what would require such a radical

shift. Because our modern notion of society requires such social limitation, it even tries to exercise force over the conditions of Laughter. Laughter has been commodified primarily through the comic industry, which perverts its critical power into a passive experience. Thus in a similar way that Weil and the critical theorists propose their modest solutions to cope with the overwhelming force of their problems, I propose that we must take laughter seriously as a critical mode of being and as a mode of political expression.

This raises the question: if Laughter can be commodified and integrated within this oppressive system of force, then how can it be liberatory? The answer requires us to first define what we mean by Laughter. Laughter as a phenomenon, is necessarily tied to what gave rise to it. It is a responsive action. We have already seen previously that the phenomenon of laughter can be commodified so, naturally, we are not talking about the phenomenon of laughter alone. What we are discussing is the character and interpretation of the action that gives rise to laughter or put simply: a joke or comedic situation. However, the purpose here is to use laughter as a critical activity, thus we cannot just simply say a 'joke' because that would invoke the social values that form the concept of 'joke' which we are attempting to criticize. In order to critically use laughter, we must take as its object the values that society is attempting to impose upon us. This new critical type of Laughter takes on an almost obscene character from the perspective of the values it criticizes because these introjected social values effect our judgements of it. Thus, we, as influenced subjects, are tasked with the creation of a product that we have to learn to appreciate. It is very important to note that in this critical Laughter is the rejection of particular types of values, life-denying values. Thus, laughter must reject any 'guidance' or direction from these life-denying values of our society in order for it to be possible to critique them. In other words, Laughter cannot only be obscene, it must also be totally holistic. It is here that a reference to Camus appears appropriate to mention as this holistic critical Laughter appears much like his

description of the rebellion against the Absurd. Both are a rejection of systems of meaning or value placed upon us by others. Laughter becomes a method to reject the values of society that have been impressed upon us as well as a method to embrace the arbitrary existential situation we find ourselves within. Thus, while Laughter in this sense fits within the Camusian framework. Its goal is to advance beyond rebellion against the Absurd into a more Nietzschean/Deleuzian sense of life-affirmation.

Weil and Marcuse when read together are almost obviously in agreement and few would take issue with their pairing. However, the introduction of Deleuze to the pair totally shifts the emphasis of the critique and truly propels the force and severity of their arguments. Orienting ourselves towards the goal of a life-affirming philosophy raises the stakes of the discussion because the mechanisms that trap us in the immanence of a life-denying mode of thought operate on a far deeper and more insidious level than the structural mechanisms of a capitalist society. In this analysis, however, we see clearly that there is a path to unity between action and thought through the practice of serious critical Laughter. This Laughter is a method by which we can reintroduce critical capacities that these aforementioned structural mechanisms have removed from us. This then allows us to question the life-denying values impressed upon us by our society. It is through this critical mode of Laughter that we can begin to create our own life-affirming values and restore the unity between life and thought.

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On the Deconstruction of Metaphysics: Heidegger's Critical Ontology in *Being and Time*

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Abstract: Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* offers a sustained critique of the Western philosophical tradition. Specifically, Heidegger describes his project as a "deconstruction" of prior ontological systems, whose goal is a positive recuperation and reformulation of the "question of being." This question, Heidegger suggests, has been obscured and distorted by prior metaphysics. In Division One of *Being and Time*, Heidegger explicates his own ontology in a critical mode, positioning himself against various canonical figures while forging his own, novel conception of the "being of beings." This paper offers a focused exposition of *Being and Time*'s first Division, tracing the contours of Heidegger's critical project while shedding light on his reading of the history of Western metaphysics. Centering on Heidegger's critical intervention in ontology, the paper shows how Heidegger's unique vision emerged through a complex engagement with Aristotelian and Cartesian thought.

Introduction

In a letter to Karl Löwith dated February 20, 1923, Martin Heidegger described the conclusion of the seminar he had offered the previous year on the seminal work of his esteemed mentor, Edmund Husserl: "In the final hour [...], I publicly burned and destroyed the *Ideas* to such an extent that I dare say the essential foundations for the whole [of my work] are now cleanly laid out" (quoted in Kiesel and Sheehan, 2007, p. 372). Later remarking to the same Löwith that this experience secured him "completely on [his] own feet," Heidegger indicated the extent to which his own philosophical journey was intimately entangled with a critical project and posture: the "essential foundations" of the pupil's work were "laid out" in precisely the same moment that he "burned and destroyed" his master's system (Ibid.). It should come as little

surprise, then, that with the publication of his magnum opus only four years later, Heidegger would deliver a sustained and probing critique of Western metaphysics; he framed his whole project in *Being and Time* as a “deconstruction,” or “destruction” (*Destruktion*) of prior ontology, with an eye toward a positive reformulation of the “question of being” (Heidegger, 2010, p. 22). Heidegger’s metaphysics is delineated point by point in a critical or contrapuntal mode,¹ positioned against the work various canonical figures; it is by means of critique that Heidegger forged his own, novel conception of the “being of beings” (Heidegger, 2010, p. 8).

The purpose of the present study is to draw out the critical dimension of Heidegger’s approach in *Being and Time*’s first Division. Rather than offering a reconstruction of the entire work, the study limits itself to an exposition of precisely those points at which Heidegger is engaged—explicitly or otherwise—with the two figures who emerge as his privileged objects of critique, namely Descartes and Aristotle. This study’s first objective—and the substance of its first section—is to familiarize the reader with Aristotle’s and Descartes’s views insofar as they form the background upon which Heidegger critically constructs *Being and Time*’s first Division. The study’s second objective—and the matter of its second section—is to demonstrate the substance of Heidegger’s critique and the positive aspects of his critical ontology. Heidegger treats Aristotelian and Cartesian ontology as paradigms which more or less circumscribe all subsequent ontological reflection; yet according to Heidegger, both Aristotle and Descartes derived their metaphysics from a limited or shallow notion of being, mistakenly elevating one

¹ In musicology, counterpoint describes a relationship between two or more musical lines which are independent in rhythm and melodic contour, yet which remain harmonically interdependent. The ambivalent independence of a contrapuntal line or voice captures nicely the relation between Heidegger’s system and those he critiques: precisely insofar as his positive vision emerges through a gesture of negation and an emphasis on difference, Heidegger’s work cannot be said to be fully independent of prior metaphysics. As we shall see, there is a strong sense in which Heideggerian deconstruction *builds*, while incorporating and preserving that which is negated.

particular sort of being to the level of a paradigm or archetype to which all beings should correspond.

Prior Meanings of Being

Due to his sustained engagement with the history of Western metaphysics, an outline of the prior meanings of being is requisite to an understanding of Heidegger's critical project and a sophisticated appreciation of his ontology. Indeed, the novelty and stakes of his metaphysics will be lost on a reader unfamiliar with the tradition it calls to task. Heidegger works from the supposition that Aristotelian and Cartesian thought circumscribe modern ontological reflection and discourse—that is, it is nearly impossible to pose ontological questions without incorporating Aristotelian or Cartesian assumptions. In order to pose the “question of being” anew, Heidegger insists that we must think *beyond*—which is not to say wholly *reject*—Aristotle and Descartes (Heidegger, 2010, p. 22). To do so, however, we must first familiarize ourselves with their thought and their discourse. This section hence reconstructs Aristotelian and Cartesian metaphysics, which appear as privileged objects of Heidegger's critique in *Being and Time*'s first Division.

At the most general level, one can discern two accounts of being in the Aristotelian corpus—a substantialist account and a hylomorphic account. The former is developed in Aristotle's *Categories*; the latter is in the *Physics*. In the *Categories*—traditionally considered the first work of the *Organon*²—Aristotle endeavored to discern the basic “categories” required to think or talk about anything. He proposed ten such categories, which correspond more or less

² That is, Aristotle's collected works on logic, comprising six volumes. According to convention, the order of the works, with the corresponding Bekker numbering, is as follows: *Categories* (1a), *On Interpretation* (16a), *Prior Analytics* (24a), *Posterior Analytics* (71a), *Topics* (100a), *On Sophistical Refutations* (164a).

precisely to various parts of speech. The first category is *substance* (οὐσία), which Aristotle distinguishes in its “primary” and “secondary” modes (Aristotle, 1991a, p. 4 [2a13-2a18]). Primary substances are what we tend to think of as *entities*, or things—Aristotle gives the example of an individual man or an individual horse—whereas secondary substances are *types* of entities—Aristotle called them “species”—as distinct from entities themselves. “The species in which the things *primarily* called substances are,” Aristotle writes, “are called secondary substances, as also are the genera of these species. [...] [T]he individual man belongs in a species, man, and animal is a genus of the species; so these—both man and animal—are called secondary substances” (Aristotle, 1991a, p. 4 [2a13-2a18], italics added). Both primary and secondary substances possess being, according to Aristotle—both are real—and in either case meaningful propositions can be formulated in which substance—whether primary or secondary—occupies the subject position (Aristotle, 1991a, p. 6 [3b10-3b23]).

Aristotle suggested that *quality* or *attribute* (ποιότης) was another fundamental category (Aristotle, 1991a, p. 15 [8b25-8b26]). Substances necessarily have attributes, and a thing without attributes is hardly conceivable. For Aristotle, attributes possess being, as do substances—they too are real—but the being of attributes is, in a certain sense, derivative of the being of substance. Hardness is a real attribute of a desk, for instance, yet hardness in itself, bereft of a substance in which it inheres, cannot be said to exist or take a share in being. A desk bereft of hardness would surely be a lousy desk—perhaps it wouldn’t be a desk at all—yet as *substance*, it would continue to *be*, and attributes other than hardness would necessarily inhere in it. Lending ontological priority to substance, Aristotle implied a pluralistic ontology which would be thematized in Heidegger; yet, as we shall see, the ontological priority accorded to substance

came to exert a profound influence on the history of Western metaphysics—and this influence, Heidegger believed, eclipsed and distorted our understanding of being.

Substantialism, the metaphysics of the *Categories*, was not Aristotle's only contribution to the history of Western ontology. The account of being most often associated with his name in fact diverges from the one offered in this early volume. Aristotle expounded his later, "hylomorphic" account of being in order to overcome an apparently intractable problem arising within the simple, predicative relationship between substances and attributes which characterizes substantialist metaphysics. Aristotle observed that existing things change, which is explicable in terms of their attributes in a substantialist framework: change occurs when a substance exchanges one attribute or set of attributes for another (Aristotle, 1991a, pp. 15, 16 [8b27-9a9, 9a29-9b9]). But things are also generated and destroyed, and as Aristotle saw clearly in his *Physics*, genesis and destruction pose an aporia for substantialist ontology, in so far as being and non-being can only be conceived as attributes within its terms (Aristotle, 1991b, pp. 80-81, 120 [225a1-225a19; 225a35-225a36; 245b9-246a9]). To say that *non-being inheres as an attribute in a thing* is a paradox, and this unavoidable paradox led Aristotle to revise his account of being.

Hylomorphic ontology does not abandon the notion of substance, it qualifies it. Here, substance is distinguished as *matter* (ὕλη) composed or arranged under a certain *form* (μορφή) (Aristotle, 1991b, p. 23 [194b9]). Hylomorphic ontology transcends the aporia faced by substantialist ontology by proposing that the material substrate which undergoes changes such as genesis and destruction is not *substance* but *matter*, and the thing lost or gained is not *attribute* but *form* (Aristotle, 1991b, p. 13 [190a9-190a31]). When substance—a complex, articulated thing composed of form and matter—is destroyed, it undergoes a process of decomposition whereby the matter remains but the form is effaced. Because matter is not itself substance, this

account reconciles substantialist ontology with our lived experience, an experience in which entities indeed go out of and come into existence.

Up to this point, one could have said that the *preeminent meaning of being in Aristotle is substance*. Yet with the advent of the hylomorphic account, substances come into being by virtue of the formal composition of matter, and the concept of *form* thus achieves a sort of priority in Aristotle's later metaphysics. What it is for a thing to *be* a substance is to be a substance endowed with a form, and when a substance loses its form it loses its existence *qua* substance. If my desk is destroyed in a fire, its being is lost due to the absolute elimination of its formal properties—it is reduced to ashes. Yet precisely these ashes demonstrate that matter persists, under a different form, even when substance is destroyed. In Book II of the *Physics*, Aristotle links the form of a thing to its function; many things, he observes, assume the forms they do to perform a given task. (Aristotle, 1991b, p. 23 [194b27-194b29]). Consider a desk, or a bodily organ: each of these has a physical composition tightly linked to what it *does*. Both form and function are in this way linked by Aristotle to a thing's *purpose* (τέλος), i.e., what a thing is *for* or that *for the sake of which* it has the form that it does. If a desk was for digging, rather than sitting behind, it would surely have a different form; and if a heart was for gastrointestinal digestion rather than pulmonary circulation, it too would have a different physical composition.

While Aristotle's reasoning may seem exact—and it surely holds in certain cases—the limitations of hylomorphism as a metaphysical position are significant. Due to the imbrication of the concepts outlined above—form, function, and purpose (τέλος)—one must conclude that hylomorphism is, at bottom, a metaphysics of the functional object. Put differently, Aristotle failed to consider that things worthy of metaphysical description may exist that for all that lack functions or purposes. Because on his view all material beings are substances in which form

(μορφή) and purpose (τέλος) are tightly linked with being itself, Aristotle was forced to consider human beings, like all things, as entities endowed with a final purpose—which he defined in the *Nicomachean Ethics* as εὐδαιμονία, or human flourishing according to the good (Aristotle, 2000, p. 5 [1095a]). Taking a certain sort of thing—functional things—as a paradigm of being itself, Aristotle was incapable of properly analyzing the ontological structure of things without τέλη, or purposes.

* * *

Alongside Aristotle, René Descartes stands as a key object of Heidegger’s critique in Division One of *Being and Time*. In the ontology developed across his *Discourse on Method*, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, and *Principles of Philosophy*, Descartes drew heavily on the views of the early Aristotle, or a substantialism in which entities primarily figure as bearers of attributes. Significantly, Descartes would adapt Aristotle’s typology of attributes—developed in the *Categories*—to make a novel distinction between “principle” and “dependent” attributes of things; the first was a constitutive feature of a thing, where the second was merely accidental. The notion of a “principle attribute” led Descartes to posit a categorical distinction between two classes things—*res cogitans* and *res extensa*, or mental and extended substances. The principle attribute of the first is thought; of the second, corporality (Descartes 2003, p. 98). In this way, the schema of Aristotelian substantialism, in which the world is composed of many classes of being, would be dramatically reduced by Descartes to two: the ideal and the material, which are, with regard to one another, wholly discrete. “Examining what we are,” Descartes wrote, “we clearly perceive that neither extension, nor figure, nor existence in any place [...] nor anything similar that can be attributed to body, pertains to our nature, and nothing save thought alone” (Descartes, 2003, p. 59, see also p. 98). Cartesian dualism thus hypostatized a rigid divide between subjects

and objects: the objective world of *res extensa* became ontologically distinct from the ‘I’ of mental substance, while all thought, sensation, and experience was conceived in terms of attributes inhering in the cogitating ‘I.’

Following the division between principal and dependent attributes, Descartes would introduce a further distinction, marking off those attributes which could be described by euclidian geometry—conceived in terms of abstract extension—from those which are grounded in sense perception. “Extension in length, breadth, and depth, constitutes the nature of corporeal substance,” Descartes wrote, here affirming that the world of bodily objects is, *ipso facto*, an abstract domain of calculable space. As a rationalist, Descartes held up geometrical knowledge as an epistemological ideal:

[Having examined] all the clear and distinct notions of material things that are to be found in our understanding, and [...], finding no others except those of figures, magnitudes, and motions, and of the rules according to which these three things can be diversified by each other, *which rules are the principles of geometry and mechanics*, I judged that all the knowledge man can have of nature must of necessity be drawn from this source; because *all the other notions we have of sensible things, as confused and obscure, can be of no avail in affording us the knowledge of anything out[side] of ourselves*, but must serve rather to impede it (Descartes, 2003, p. 177, italics added).

Descartes categorically transposed attributes grounded in sense perception—such as taste and smell, as well as value and meaning—into the domain of the subject. According to this view, such qualities do not describe the world as *res extensa*, but are mere attributes inhering in mental substance, or abstract subjectivity.³

The substantialist metaphysics of Descartes roots itself in a rejection of Aristotelian hylomorphism—one following from the preeminent position held by the concept of function in

³ Significantly, precedent for such a distinction can be found in Aristotle himself, who, in the *Categories*, distinguished among qualities to isolate those “affective” qualities—such as color—which follow not from an “affectation” in or of the substance in question, but instead affect our sensory perception of that substance. See Aristotle, 1991a, p. 16 [9b10-9b19].

Aristotle's mature thought. Emerging at the threshold of modernity from a medieval Scholastic tradition where function was tightly linked to the idea of ascription, Descartes tended to view things in themselves as functionless. Where function was naturalized in Aristotle, it was typical of the New Science championed by Descartes to view function as conceivable only in terms of subjective or divine attribution: without an ascribing subject, all things were without purpose and, therefore, intrinsically functionless (Smith, 2018). To the extent that the function of a thing could be said to take a share in being, this was purely a mental phenomenon—like taste, smell, or meaning—imprisoned in the formless void of the cogitating 'I.'

Descartes' claim that geometrical description amounts to the most indubitable—and hence fundamental—way of apprehending or describing the world was profoundly disconcerting to Heidegger. Does this not represent a cold, mathematizing interpretation of being? Here, no thing can be said to bear objective significance, since meaning is categorically excluded from the mathematical or natural scientific level of description (Heidegger, 2010, pp. 88-89). On the other hand, Aristotle's mature ontology was grasped by Heidegger as a metaphysics in which the functional object was falsely privileged as a paradigm for all things—and ultimately for being itself. In Heidegger's estimation, then, the horizon of Western metaphysics presents itself in a janus-faced aspect: within this tradition, the meaning of being has been systematically distorted and violently reduced—to the teleological being of the functional object or the abstract and vacuous being of substance.

Toward a Fundamental Ontology

It is against the backdrop of these two tendencies—Aristotelian hylomorphism on the one hand and Cartesian substantialism on the other—that Heidegger develops his “fundamental

ontology” in *Being and Time* (Heidegger, 2010, p. 13). According to Heidegger, Aristotle had mistakenly linked function, and hence purpose, to being as such; yet in Heidegger’s view neither function nor τέλος can be necessary conditions of being, since human beings—the very beings for whom being is a consideration—lack functions or purposes.⁴ On the other hand, the thrust of Cartesian ontology divests corporeal existence of significance, making meaning utterly subjective and the world a kind of cold, calculable waste. This perspective, Heidegger suggests, fails to accord with the constitutive and intersubjective character of meaning as encountered in the world, and diverges in the most radical ways from the horizon of actual experience. Both Aristotelian and Cartesian ontology eclipse our view of being.

Division One of *Being and Time* elaborates a “fundamental ontology” which charts a decidedly different trajectory than that traced by prior metaphysics. Employing a novel method of phenomenological description, Heidegger arrives at an entirely new breed of metaphysics—one he believes to be critically positioned *vis-à-vis* the ontological systems handed down by the Western philosophical tradition. As a phenomenologist, Heidegger distances himself from prior metaphysics in his insistence on the necessity of describing everyday experience, or “average *everydayness*” (Heidegger, 2010, p. 16). As Thomas Kalary observes, Heidegger’s phenomenological approach grounds “philosophy as a pre-theoretical primordial science” which can be “enacted only through an explication” of the basic structures of “factic life” (*faktische*

⁴ Heidegger’s polemical claim that human beings are essentially purposeless should not be conflated with a nihilistic one, whereby individual human life cannot be lived with intention and meaning. On the contrary, Division Two of *Being and Time* explicates Heidegger’s normative guidelines for “authentic” existence within the strictures of factual human life. Heidegger’s point here, in Division One, is that the human being—or, more specifically, *Dasein*—lacks any generic purpose simply on the basis of its inclusion in the category of being to which it belongs. Where a potter’s wheel has a specified purpose simply by virtue of its *being* a potter’s wheel—and arguably, the same could be said to hold for an uninvented thing, like a tree’s leaves or a red blood cell—a human being, *qua* human being, is neither functional nor purposive.

Leben) (Kalary, 2012, p. 181). Whereas Descartes's meditative method rested upon his ability to divorce himself from the world of the everyday, Heidegger emphasizes the centrality of that world to any account of being as such. This is not to say that everything to be known about being is immediately grasped in a pre-reflexive manner, for as Heidegger notes, fundamental ontology as revealed by phenomenological inquiry is "far removed from what is accessible to the pre-ontological understanding of being" (Heidegger, 2010, p. 177). Still, it is Heidegger's view that an accurate *description* of the constitutive *structures* of everyday experience will furnish an *ontology* of the being whose everyday experience is so described. The overarching thrust of *Being and Time* is to arrive at this descriptive account.

The everyday experience Heidegger undertakes to define in *Being and Time* unfolds from the perspective of a being Heidegger calls *Dasein*. A common German noun often translated as "existence," the term composes the noun *Sein*, "being," and the prefix *da-*, signifying "there." The type of being uncovered by Heideggerian fundamental ontology is thus not abstract but concrete, always situated in a particular *locus*, or "world."⁵ Due to the technical specificity with which Heidegger invests the term *Dasein*, recent translators of his work tend to leave it untranslated; and, because the whole of Division One of *Being and Time* can be seen as offering a sustained, probing, and idiosyncratic definition of the term, one can hardly adduce a comprehensive, sloganistic definition. Provisionally, though, one can say with confidence that *Dasein* refers to *the sort or the way of being that human beings fundamentally partake in or have*, though it is by no means explicit that *Dasein* is restricted to human beings.⁶

⁵ It is significant that, terminologically, this *locus* is undivided from the very being (*Sein*) fundamental ontology describes. As we shall see, it is absolutely central to Heidegger's analysis of *Dasein* that this genre of being is wholly inseparable from the world in which it is given. This is in sharp contrast to the Cartesian view, cited above, that mental substances are essentially non-spatial.

⁶ Heidegger offers somewhat equivocal remarks regarding the extent to which creatures other than humans could be ontologically embraced by *Dasein*. In "The Origin of the Work of Art," an essay

Undertaking a fundamental ontology from the standpoint of *Dasein*, Heidegger commits himself to an ontological pluralism, distinguishing *Dasein* from “other beings” which have features other than those constitutive of *Dasein* (Heidegger, 2010, p. 11). This heterogeneity of being raises two immediate concerns. First, if Heidegger wants to pose the “question of being” *sans phrase*, as he claims, why does he take a particular sort of being, *Dasein*, as his starting point? To justify this choice, Heidegger makes two distinct claims. First, he observes that *Dasein* is that which is “ontically ‘nearest’” to us (Heidegger, 2010, p. 16). As the sort of being that we ourselves are or have, *Dasein* is the genre of being with which we are most intimately familiar, and hence the one we have the best shot at describing accurately. Ultimately, this claim rests on Heidegger’s conviction that fundamental ontology will be revealed through phenomenological description, a procedure of self-disclosure which cannot be performed for a being other than the one we ourselves are. Secondly, Heidegger claims that *Dasein* is a being “essentially concerned about its being,” for whom a “pre-ontological understanding of being” is an “essential tendency” (Heidegger, 2010, pp. 11 and 13). As beings fundamentally predisposed to ontological reflection, and always already endowed with a working definition of being, *Dasein* is, as it were, given to us as a foundation for ontological inquiry.⁷

published in 1950 but drafted between 1937 and 1939, a decade after the initial publication of *Being and Time*, Heidegger describes both plants and animals as existing with “no world.” (“World,” as we shall see, is perhaps the most fundamental structure of *Dasein* according to the analysis of *Being and Time*.) By contrast, in a series of lectures delivered in 1929, Heidegger describes non-human animals as “poor in world” or existing within a fundamental “poverty of world” (*Weltarmut*). See Heidegger, 1971, p. 43; Heidegger, 1995, p. 263. See also Agamben, 2004, pp. 49-73.

⁷ While Heidegger is right that these constitute excellent reasons to undertake a philosophical investigation of *Dasein*, a profound unclarity persists concerning the way a fundamental ontology of this particular sort of being is to furnish an answer to the “question of being” as such. In works subsequent to *Being and Time*, such as the lecture series *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, Heidegger will argue that it is only to *Dasein* that being is revealed or “disclosed” as such. Whereas non-human animals encounter the objects in their environments as pure particulars, Heidegger argues that only human beings discover in such particulars the instantiation of being (*Sein*) itself, or encounter these particulars as *beings*. (This claim dovetails with Heidegger’s assertion, in the same lectures, that non-human animals are fundamentally “poor in world”; see footnote 7, above). Yet, even if *Dasein* is the being to whom

If other ways or sorts of being are fundamentally heterogenous with respect to *Dasein*, as Heidegger claims, one could raise a second objection: Does Heidegger not lapse into the same genre of dualism for which he rebukes Descartes? Does he simply posit a new sort of subject indelibly cleaved off from its object? Answering this question takes us to the heart of the Heideggerian analysis of *Dasein*, and demonstrates the depth of Heidegger's critical divergence from Descartes. Heideggerian pluralism parts ways with the Cartesian division between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, for where Descartes finds mental substances radically distinct from *res extensa*—and hence, inevitably skeptical as regards the latter—Heidegger presents *Dasein* as always already “being-in-the-world” (Heidegger, 2010, p. 53). The world in which *Dasein* finds itself is not ontologically distinct from, but is rather a constitutive ontological structure of *Dasein*. Always already known to *Dasein*, or familiar, the world forms an essential element in the ontological explication of *Dasein* as a unique sort or way of being. *Dasein*, for this reason, is never given apart from the world, and cannot be known except in and through its imbrication with all things worldly (Heidegger, 2010, pp. 59-62). If *Dasein* is, in the most fundamental sense, constituted in and through the world in which it is given, this represents a view of being at antipodes with the model of Cartesian dualism.

Embedded in its world, *Dasein* is a being essentially “concerned” with things—objects and practical engagements (Heidegger, 2010, p. 96). Far from being an immaterial spectator of its material environment, *Dasein* is fundamentally involved in and engaged with the things around it. The world is made up of objects *Dasein* touches, employs, and knows, and these objects are certainly not best described geometrically, as mere “objectively-present” entities

being itself is fundamentally revealed, as Heidegger suggests, this hardly furnishes us with a bridge between the fundamental ontology of *Dasein* and a fundamental ontology without qualification. See Heidegger, 1995, p. 263.

bereft of meaning (*Vorhandene*) (Heidegger, 2010, p. 96). On the contrary, the world encountered by *Dasein* is a world invested with significance, a world comprised of vast networks of meaningful things “ready-to-hand” (*Zuhandene*) (Heidegger, 2010, p. 67). Emphasizing the everyday and the tactile, Heidegger notes that “the closest kind of dealing is not mere perceptual cognition,” as Descartes would have it, but is rather “a handling, using, and taking care” (Heidegger, 2010, p. 67). In other words, *Dasein*’s most basic or fundamental reality is surely not skeptical, or even speculative, but is rather rooted in pre-philosophical, pragmatic encounters with things in the world. Cartesian skepticism concerning the “demonstrability of the external world” is unintelligible from the standpoint of an investigation which presupposes being-in-the-world and average everydayness as its foundation (Heidegger, 2010, pp. 77-83, cf. 195).

By emphasizing the practical, the everyday, and the worldly, Heidegger shows that the Cartesian interpretation of the world as *res extensa* is not *false*, but is wholly *derivative* of a more fundamental or “primordial” experience of the world—which is always pragmatically encountered and invested with meaning. *Dasein* as being-in-the-world is, at the most fundamental level, being in a meaningful environment made up of useful objects. Only on the basis of such a world—which is always already “disclosed” or accessible in itself to *Dasein* in the latter’s pragmatic and meaningful dealings—can a scientific view of things as mere objective presence (*Vorhandenheit*) arise (Heidegger, 2010, p. 195). In this way, Heidegger does not so much reject Cartesian ontology as bracket and reverse it. Where Descartes takes the mathematically describable character of *res extensa* to be the an objective bedrock against which subjective experience and meaning-generation emerge, Heidegger sees this scientific view as a narrow, parochial description of things which can only be produced on the basis of a more primordial experience of being-in-the-world. “Da-sein,” Heidegger writes, “is primordially

familiar with that within which it understands itself [...]. This familiarity with the world does not necessarily require a theoretical transparency of the relations constituting the world as world. But it is probable that the possibility of an explicit ontological [...] interpretation of these relations is grounded in the familiarity of the world constitutive for Da-sein” (Heidegger, 2010, p. 81). The primordial condition of *Dasein*’s being-in-the-world is the real foundation upon which theoretical or philosophical insights may be built.

Following Aristotle, Heidegger’s analysis of “world” (*Welt*) and the “handiness” (*Zuhandenheit*) of things underscores the importance of functional and purposive objects to ontological inquiry. Yet *Dasein* is not itself reducible to description in terms of function or *τέλος*, since Heidegger, like Descartes, sees the functions of things as *dependent* upon *Dasein*. However, for Heidegger, contra Descartes, ascriptions of function and meaning are not individual subjective acts. Rather, they are collectively generated and sustained in socio-cultural, historical, and pragmatic practices to which *Dasein*, as a “factual” being, is always already given over: the world in which *Dasein* finds itself is one where meanings and purposes for things have always already been established (Heidegger, 2010, p. 61). The desk at which I am writing isn’t for sitting at rather than for digging a trench simply because I decide this. Rather, I encounter the desk as a place for sitting; this is, after all, what the desk *is*. As indubitable features of socio-cultural reality, meanings and purposes for things are *objective* features of the world, on Heidegger’s view. That the *avant garde* artist may display a urinal as a work of art, excerpting it from its functional mode of being and assigning it a new purpose and meaning from whole cloth is no exception. On the contrary, the jarring and confounding presence of this object in a gallery, and the scandal its presence provokes, serve to underscore Heidegger’s point: the meanings of objects are so deeply socially codified—are indeed objective features of the social world—that

any attempt to change these meanings may appear as a sort of violence directed at the social order.⁸

While Heidegger's stance *vis-à-vis* Cartesian thought is often polemical, his critical engagement with—and appropriation of—Aristotle is significantly more nuanced. Of Heidegger's indebtedness to Aristotle, Martin Wheeler writes, "Aristotle's demand in the *Metaphysics* to know what it is that unites all possible modes of Being [...] is, in many ways, the question that ignites and drives Heidegger's philosophy," while Thomas Sheehan observes that "Aristotle appears directly or indirectly on virtually every page" of *Being and Time* (Wheeler, 2011; Sheehan, 1975, p. 87). Heidegger engaged extensively with Aristotle, lecturing on *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle* in 1921-22, on the *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy* in 1924, and on *Aristotle's Metaphysics, Book Θ1-3* in 1931; across these lectures, Heidegger clarified his own philosophical vision via an extended dialogue with Aristotelian thought.

Notwithstanding the complexity of this intellectual engagement, many of the criticisms Heidegger explicitly addresses to Cartesian substantialism apply, tacitly, to Aristotle's hylomorphic metaphysics. As we have seen, Heidegger, like Aristotle, brings purposive and functional objects to the foreground of his analysis, yet he distances himself from Aristotle by rejecting the view that the being of the functional object can act as an archetype for being as such. At a more profound level, Aristotle's entire approach to metaphysics diverges sharply from Heidegger's, precisely due to the latter's commitment to fundamental ontology *as* phenomenological explication of *Dasein*'s everyday being-in-the-world. By contrast, Aristotelian hylomorphic ontology is, precisely, a metaphysical theory: it deduces objects which are never

⁸ This example gestures towards the culturally conservative politics tacitly lurking beneath Heidegger's account of being and world. See Rosner, 2009.

perceived or experienced in isolation—matter and form—from our real experiences of things, specifically things which are generated and destroyed. Heideggerian fundamental ontology, on the other hand, offers a clarification or elucidation of the basic *pre-theoretical* structures of being as *Dasein*. In the same manner than Cartesian skepticism and a calculating comportment towards existence can only arise on the basis of a more fundamental experience of “being-in-the-world,” Aristotelian hylomorphism presupposes a more basic experience as its condition of possibility, but this experience remains unthought within its parameters.

This experience and its basic structures emerged as Heidegger’s central objects of inquiry in *Being and Time*. Situated at a deeper level than that charted by either Aristotle or Descartes—a level prior metaphysics overlooked due to its quotidian character—Heidegger’s analytic of *Dasein* is, strictly speaking, a *fundamental* ontology.

Conclusion

On Heidegger’s view, both Aristotle and Descartes used the wrong sort of model as the basis for their ontology. For Descartes, mental substances exist completely divorced from a world made up of objectively present things (*Vorhandene*), despite all phenomenological evidence to the contrary. And for Aristotle, human beings are not essentially different from other entities, and can thus be defined in terms of τέλος, or purpose. For both figures, metaphysics should properly go beyond quotidian experience—furnishing an ontological theory of the latter—yet in this gesture, metaphysics fails to interrogate its own conditions of possibility. Describing *Dasein* by means of a phenomenology of the everyday, Heidegger hoped to avoid this error handed down by the history of Western metaphysics: such was the project of fundamental ontology, which

Heidegger also regarded as a “destruction” (*Destruktion*) of the Western metaphysical tradition (Heidegger, 2010, p. 37).

Being and Time's first Division unearths a pluralistic ontology in which *Dasein* shows up as one entity among many. No single ontological description can encompass all things, in Heidegger's view, and the history of Western ontology has done violence to this simple fact. Yet Heidegger does not simply reject prior ontological systems. His complex engagement with the Western philosophical canon discloses how and why prior ontologists failed, and suggests that a comprehensive ontology would make ample use of their insights. Aristotle's hylomorphic account of functional objects informs Heidegger's analysis of *Dasein*'s practical dealings with objects; and Heidegger accepts—perhaps begrudgingly—that a scientific outlook indebted to Descartes cannot be written off as simply wrong. Both of these interpretations of being find a place in Heidegger's structural analysis of *Dasein*; but they are both, at bottom, derivative of *Dasein*'s being-in-the-world.

By formulating a fundamental ontology centering a particular being—*Dasein*—it is ultimately unclear if Heidegger succeeds in transcending the deadlocks of prior metaphysics: shadows of androcentrism and post-Kantian idealism linger at the margins of Heidegger's thought and his discourse. Even if *Dasein* is the being to whom being as such is revealed, as Heidegger claims, he fails to specify how one can move from the ontological analysis of *Dasein* to an investigation of being as such. If such a movement is somehow foreclosed to *Dasein*, one could rightly ask, why? And if *Dasein* is the being who encounters being in beings, as Heidegger insists, what form and content would an analytic of being as such assume? If these questions remain unanswered in his discourse, then perhaps Heidegger is finally right to suggest that fundamental ontology illuminates the *question*—but not the *answer*—of the meaning of being

(Heidegger, 2010, p. 37). Heidegger's critical comportment toward canonical thought and the project of prior ontology urges us to pose, again, that question.

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Palouse Prairie: Ethics Behind the Loss of an Ecosystem

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Abstract: There is an ethical tradeoff between growing high-yield agricultural products and the integrity and goodness of an ecosystem. Why must we protect an ecosystem and prevent extinction of other organisms? One might claim that the human benefit gained from environmental destructions for the purpose of agriculture is more valuable than any life or structure that existed in the ecosystem. In the case of the Palouse Prairie in Eastern Washington, early white settlers in the area valued the monetary gains from agriculture more than any goodness of an intact ecosystem. Unlike the benefits gained from farming (which could be attained through more sustainable means), what is lost with the destruction of an ecosystem or the extinction of a species can never be restored. I will argue that humans are morally obligated to not destroy living lineages when altering a landscape. A brief case study of the Palouse Prairie will illustrate that the small-scale, land-altering decisions made by the few farmers of the Palouse have caused long-term harms for the current and future inhabitants of the ecosystem, and that humans ought to make reparations for those harms. Because evolution grants the potential for any lineage to advance and better its individuals, the processes of evolution must be respected in any ecosystem. Any lineage's process of perpetuation must be morally considerable, as is any living organism's will to live. To offer a practical guideline for land alteration, I conclude with the suggestion that all lineages of life receive freedom of environment, perpetuity, and adaptation.

Palouse Prairie: Ethics Behind the Loss of an Ecosystem

Agriculture allows human populations to grow exponentially but that comes at a cost as the former ecosystem perishes, and the surrounding land suffers – yet all of this killing has been justified by humanity's need to feed its growing population. In the case of agriculture, whether or not a destructive farming practice is necessary for human survival does not change the ethical impact of the consequential loss. In both cases of necessity and non-necessity, some thought

must be given to the ethical impact of that loss which goes beyond the benefits that wild ecosystems, or destruction of wild ecosystems, might supply to humans.

The Palouse Prairie grassland ecosystem in eastern Washington State is critically endangered, with less than 1% of the prairie remaining. The main causes of destruction include overgrazing of range animals, change in fire regime, new species introduction, and agriculture (Sims & Risser, 1988). Now an anthropogenic landscape, the Palouse consists of rolling hills covered in farmland. Could it be unwise to criticize a practice that once brought economic growth to a region and provided food for a growing population? In times like these, when only 5% of land on Earth has escaped human modification (Kennedy et al., 2019) the criticism is necessary. Any practice that modifies a landscape must be criticized ethically and not simply in terms of human survival.

Case Study: Palouse Prairie

The Palouse Prairie is characterized as having a variety of bunchgrasses and forbs growing in rich loess soils, with scatterings of drought-tolerant trees, scarce wetlands, and forested areas on shady northern aspects. Native plants such as Idaho fescue and bluebunch wheatgrass were common (Black et al., 1997; Sims & Risser, 1988). Today, 99.9% of what used to be the prairie ecosystem has been destroyed (National Biological Service, 1995). The Palouse, like so many other prairies that once were common in the United States, once supported endemic native and endangered life.

The story of humans on the Palouse Prairie begins with the Nimi'ipuu, or Nez Perce people, who occupied the Palouse region for hundreds of years before the arrival of Europeans. The Nez Perce would use frequent fire burning to aid with plant regeneration, deer driving, seed harvesting and animal forage (Boyd, 1999; Carroll et al., 2010). Frequent fires have significant

impact on ecosystems, and from this history it must be concluded that the Palouse Prairie was managed and influenced significantly by humans before the arrival of Europeans. The Nez Perce's land use demonstrates how humans can alter the ecosystem for their own benefit without causing long-term damage, and also that successful human development does not necessarily come at the cost of an entire ecosystem.

The arrival of white settlers eventually pushed the Nez Perce off of the prairie and onto reservations, causing a marked shift in the way the prairie was managed (Black et al., 1997). Between the 1870's and the 1990's, nearly the entire Palouse was transformed from prairie to farmland (Black et al., 1997). What was considered innovation at the time gave the illusion that the conversion of wild prairie into high intensity farmland was an act of human resilience. Yet, in reality the settlers were causing larger, long-term problems for the ecosystem as a whole. As Kyle Whyte wrote, resilience isn't defined only in terms of human endurance, but rather as the development of moral relationships between humans and the changing ecosystems in which we reside (Whyte, 2018). As the white settlers forced the Nez Perce from their homes, they also forced humanity away from its positive role in a diverse, resilient ecosystem. Today, the few remnants of the ecosystem are so fragmented that there is little hope for restoration of the once-flourishing prairie.

This change in land management demonstrates that a few individual landowners making decisions on private property can cause the destruction of an entire ecosystem. As Aldo Leopold argued, a farmer's actions on their land affect the entire community, but the farmer is more likely to choose the profit-maximizing option with demonstrable short-term benefits, rather than the long-term benefits for the whole (Leopold, 1949). These profit-driven actions might not have been considered unethical at the time of the destruction of the Palouse Prairie, but as we move

towards a more resilient world, we must analyze the decisions which led to such destruction and seek not to take the same path.

What was Lost

The destruction of the Palouse Prairie caused the loss of tangible ecosystem benefits that could potentially be restored, such as soil biodiversity, water quality, animal and plant populations, critical habitat, and much more. Those qualitative and quantitative aspects of what were lost have been explained in scientific studies (such as Brown et al., 2008; Pimentel et al., 1995; Potts et al., 2020; USDA, 1978, 1979), and although they are important and relevant to all that has been lost, in this paper I will focus on the intangible. This section will address the nuances of lineages and absolute loss.

Lineage is a perpetual string of life formed by the passing of genetic information between generations of living organisms. Lineage does not represent a single point in time, for it is the history (as well as present and potential future) of all genetic information that has been passed over time. Nor does lineage have a single identity; it is constantly changed over time through genetic variations and thus cannot be represented as a single static entity (even self-cloning fungi have evolved over time). Lineage is not one single genotype; it is the accumulation of about 3.5 billion years of life and death that have contributed to all living genotypes and created the diversity of life on Earth.

Moral theorist Paul Taylor suggested that we grant moral standing to any being which has a good of its own, raising the idea that living organisms have their own end towards which they advance, and reaching that end implies the organism has led a good life (Taylor, 2011). I will argue that this moral theory ought to be applied not only to living beings which seek an end, but to the lineage which drives that innate pursuance of an end in all living organisms – lineage which ties all life together on Earth. Lineage is life's call to purpose, whether purpose exists or

not in the sequential stages of evolution which have led to complex life. Because evolution has directed single-celled organisms toward complex, intelligent and sentient life, the highly controversial question must be addressed: does evolution have a purpose, and must that purpose be preserved? It can be deduced from the theories of evolution and natural selection that there is no end or purpose in evolution. Evolution and adaptation happen based on random mutations – some of which are ‘selected’ based on environmental pressures to an organism. Beneficial adaptations are not chosen, but rather won by those organisms who happen to have beneficial mutations and produce more offspring. It can be argued that evolution has not a purpose, but a consequential progression in which some organisms can become better-suited for their environments. Evolution grants a potentiality for better life for all organisms, through adaptation driven by natural selection. Note that evolution does not guarantee a better life but does grant a potential.

Returning to Taylor’s theory, while organisms which seek an end are considered morally relevant, I argue that it is difficult to define – if it exists – a common end towards which all organisms purposefully advance. Humans do not have a common end. We share no overarching expectation for ourselves, especially when comparing human lives from different cultures, times, and locations. There is no evident end towards which we all are driven, but it is apparent that the process which leads us to pursue an end is more valuable, and more tangible, than the end itself. Biologically, our bodies and genetics are framed around reproduction, which translates to the passing of the lineage to the next generation. Perpetuation through time is integral to the process of all life, and evolution. Whether or not this perpetuation leads to an end is irrelevant to the moral relevance of the life or to the moral relevance of evolution; but because the innate call of all organisms is to perpetuate, it must be determined that this perpetuation has some moral relevance, much like the moral relevance given by Taylor to all organisms which advance

towards an end. Perpetuation, in this sense, does not mean basic reproduction, but it means the continuance and evolution of one's own species and all larger classifications: it is the continuance of all life. This is not to be mistaken for a 'pro-life' argument in which every individual human life must be preserved. It is an argument for the continuance of species and life as a whole.

A lineage does not end with one organism's death. The lineage ends with a larger group that carries similar adapted traits that are not found in other groups, such as those traits defined in the taxonomic classifications from species to domain. Because all life is theorized to have emerged from one common ancestor, each individual life form carries its own path that can be traced directly back to the common ancestor. A group of these individuals together as a species, who share near-identical traits, carry a unique lineage. When one of these branches carrying biological knowledge of the entire species is erased, there is absolute loss of lineage.

If the lineage of the eukaryotic branch in the phylogenetic tree of life had been terminated by an extinction of the last eukaryotic common ancestor, which was a single-celled organism, almost all forms of complex life that exist today would not have evolved. This is an example of the potential of lineage. At any given point in time, a species must not be judged to be insignificant based on perceived inferiority or lack of complexity. Like the single-celled organisms that evolved into all of life as we know it on Earth, each lineage holds great potential.

An extinction, or absolute loss, happens when the genetic information is no longer passed on through a lineage. Thus, a common ancestor which speciates (branches) into two different species arguably does not go extinct, because its lineage is still continuous (McLennan, 2010). We can imagine that current branches will continue to evolve and speciate. Using the phylogenetic tree of life, here are some inferences about the potential of a lineage:

1. The higher the amount of species diversity at a given point in time, the higher the chance for speciation of a lineage at that point in time.
2. The less amount of species diversity at a given point in time, the greater the potential for speciation of a lineage in the future.

If we are to accept these inferences, we can conclude that all lineages at any point in time hold potential for speciation. During times of high diversity, a lineage is more likely to branch. When there is less species diversity, each lineage holds a huge amount of potential. This potential matters because, as we saw with the single-celled eukaryote, a great amount of life could come from that lineage no matter how insignificant it may seem at the time. Extinction of a single species, the termination of a lineage, is absolute loss of incredible potential.

The lineage must be respected as having a moral relevance to all life. Just as the sun which is the origin of all energy for life on Earth must not be purposefully destroyed, the lineages of life also must not be destroyed. Purposeful extinction is wrong, because it betrays the lineage of life, of which we are a part.

Biodiversity

In order to have biodiversity there must exist a wide variety of genes both between species and among species (United Nations, 1992). Human actions have reached a scale of worldwide environmental destruction, one where our land management has ended in absolute loss of species and ecosystems that might have lasted for thousands of years to come. These environments hosted unique lineages that were tailored to their ecosystems – lineages which are now lost forever. Loss of biological diversity on a worldwide scale means that we have caused the absolute loss of billions of lineages.

If we as moral agents are obligated to learn from our harmful mistakes, then we must look back on those human developments that caused extinctions and acknowledge that there

were alternatives to these destructive actions, especially in the case of the Palouse where many times the alternatives were recommended by scientists yet still ignored (Black et al., 1997).

Ethical alternatives exist which can procure our human needs without causing absolute loss. This is where our ethical obligations reside: choosing the option which does not endanger the lineages of life.

Duty and Restoration

Andrew Light wrote that philosophers of science and the environment should seek to influence environmental policies, in order to influence real change in the world (Light, 2003). I make the following argument about our duty as moral agents to make restitution for harms and losses we have caused, specifically those caused to lineages and their nurturing ecosystems as occurred on the Palouse.

Restoration of the Palouse Prairie ecosystem will not result in an ecosystem equivalent to that of the original prairie. Planting native species will help aid in ecosystem function, but the landscape is now changed by the introduced species that have gained advantage on the Palouse. However, although the restored ecosystem would not be equivalent, some ecosystem functions would regain function. For example, restoration would provide more pollinator pathways, increase soil biodiversity and resilience, regrow biological soil crust to help prevent erosion, and restore ecosystem functions which are not maintained in an agricultural landscape. Restoration can also help strengthen any lineages which have been endangered, such as those organisms endemic to the Palouse. Thus, the action of reparation on the Palouse is necessary and beneficial.

In current times nearly all ecosystems on Earth have been affected, directly or indirectly, by humans. The idea of nature as a separate entity from humans is out of date. It is good to value and preserve these landscapes that are less altered than not, and to attempt to protect and restore them to our ability; however, acceptance that humans will always be contributors to their

ecosystems is imperative for absolving the harms already inflicted to those lineages. As we make restorations as reparation, we must remember that humans exist as residents of the ecosystem. In a resilient ecosystem, humans and non-humans alike will hold responsibilities to one another (Whyte, 2018).

Eric Katz focused his argument on restoration and wrote that an ecosystem is “fundamentally different” once it is altered by humans, and only is restored to serve human interest (Katz, 2003). This means that the ecosystem will never be the same once it is restored, but also that humans are not regarded in the same way as the rest of living organisms. I agree that even if we can imagine a theoretical replacement ecosystem in which every single property and soil nutrient are exactly the same as the original, it would be practically impossible to do so in real life. So yes, a human grown forest is different from a non-human grown forest. However, I argue that restoring a forest, or even designing a forest and managing it, would allow the living residents to have their own purpose and good, thereby serving more than just human interest. Even if humans had influence on how the forest was created, that does not change the essential biological mechanisms of which the living beings are comprised. Human-made artifacts can be used by animals for their own purposes, and in large cities (artifacts) non-human living beings are adapting and living out their lives to the full extent of their purpose. A tree planted by a human hand is still a tree. Even if restoration is created for the purpose of human benefit, the intent of its creation has no physical or biological alteration on the functions of the ecosystem itself, meaning that an ecosystem ought not be valued by the intent of its creators, but by the quality and quantity of diverse lineages which reside within.

As Andrew Light argued, a restored ecosystem has an advantage over an ecosystem damaged by humans and left on its own (Light, 2003). I agree and argue that humans cannot be separated from their ecosystems. As moral agents we can only interact positively or negatively

with them. For example, restoration of an agricultural landscape is overall a positive alteration of the land given its benefits to greater amounts of lineages in the ecosystem. Conversion of an entire functioning ecosystem to agriculture (specifically agriculture which demands complete dominance over the land when there are sustainable, positive agricultural practices) is an overall negative. This form of agriculture predominantly benefits one lineage, the *homo sapiens*, as well as the limited lineages of crops and domesticated animals which cannot measure up to the diversity of lineages found in an ecosystem.

Katz also explained that human-attributed value of a restored forest is less than that of a non-human grown forest (Katz, 2003). I argue that a change in human value, much like intent of the creator, makes no change in the biological functionality of the forest. Therefore, even though a restored ecosystem will not have the same human-attributed value or perfectly recreate the original landscape, restoration is still a beneficial interaction, and therefore the right action to take as reparation for our unethical destruction of the ecosystem.

Conclusion

In an attempt to make these ethical arguments applicable to our every-day lives and the choices we must face going forward, I will suggest that all lineages be granted the following freedoms, for the benefit of all life on this planet:

- 1) Freedom of environment: humans ought not destroy those environmental pressures which drive natural selection in a landscape.
- 2) Freedom of perpetuity: humans ought not end a lineage purposefully or make land-altering decisions that will lead to the end of a lineage.
- 3) Freedom of adaptation: humans ought not prevent a lineage from following its own unhindered course of evolution.

The classification of lineage is granted to a group of living organisms that share unique genetic traits. For example, one species carries a lineage, while the genus also carries a larger lineage. A lineage is a perpetual string of life formed by the passing of genetic information between generations of living organisms and is not defined by a single organism, but by a group of organisms.

There is a difference between protection of a lineage and leaving a lineage unhindered. As reparation, we must protect and restore those lineages we have damaged. But this does not hold us to the obligation of protecting every lineage that exists on earth, because the process of evolution itself may lead to the extinction of some species regardless of human cause. The point of un-hinderance is that we do not prevent a lineage from adapting and evolving over time. Human developments can and necessarily will cause some destruction of ecosystems, which is only morally acceptable when all rules are followed. Freedom of environment maintains the ecosystem under which lineages are adapting and prevents large disturbances that may harm the lineage.

Ultimately, it is our moral obligation as humans to make ethical choices in our interaction with the land, and not to hinder the lineages which reside within our ecosystems. The lineage of life is shared between all organisms, and protecting one helps ensure that the process of life itself is not betrayed for all living things. Lineage, much like the lives of all organisms, need not have an ultimate purpose in order to have moral relevance. As demonstrated on the Palouse Prairie, the actions of the few can have devastating consequences for an entire ecosystem, which is why I recommend that if these freedoms are impeded upon, then reparations made in the form of restoration must occur – including restorations to the Palouse Prairie.

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Wittgenstein on Reasonable Doubt and Calling Bullshit

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Abstract: In this essay I analyze a passage from Ludwig Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*. This excerpt contains the expression "O, rubbish!" (Ach Unsinn), which I consider to be closely related to the notions of "bullshit" developed by Harry Frankfurt and Gerald A. Cohen. The relevance of this essay is illustrated with lively examples, both related to contemporary society and identified by Wittgenstein about 70 years ago. The paper is organized in six sections containing 1) an introduction to the topic, 2) an explanation of "bullshit" as found in the works of Frankfurt and Cohen, 3) an explanation of Wittgenstein's work on certainty and propositions beyond doubt, 4) an identification of reasonable and unreasonable doubt and their connection to "bullshit", 5) an explanation of the different kinds of "bullshit" with the intention of mapping them in relation to each other, and 6) a summarizing conclusion. The main purpose of this paper is to expound on Wittgenstein's views on "bullshit" and relate them to contemporary philosophy of nonsense.

One might simply say "O, rubbish!" to someone who wanted to make objections to the propositions that are beyond doubt. That is, not reply to him but admonish him. (OC 495)

1. Introduction

Harry Frankfurt first investigated the phenomenon of 'bullshit' in his 1986 paper, *On Bullshit*, which later became a book of the same name in 2005. In this essay, I focus on Frankfurt's original paper as well as on Gerald A. Cohen's response in his 2002 paper, *Deeper into Bullshit*. My main purpose is to argue that already in 1951 Ludwig Wittgenstein conceived a very similar

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phenomenon while dealing with different philosophical concerns. That is, he arrived at this idea after theorizing about the unreliability of certain kinds of skepticism. Nonetheless, ‘bullshit’, or ‘rubbish’ (Unsinn), as seems to be the case from Wittgenstein’s work, was fundamentally different to Frankfurt’s and Cohen’s ideas.

With that in mind, my three aims are to 1) explain a variety of concepts found in Wittgenstein’s philosophy relevant to the present discussion, 2) argue that Wittgenstein had a kind of ‘bullshit’ in mind when theorizing unreasonable doubt, and 3) argue that the kind of ‘bullshit’ that Wittgenstein had in mind is essentially different in meaningful ways from the kinds of ‘bullshit’ that Frankfurt and Cohen had in mind. I focus primarily on Wittgenstein’s last work, *On Certainty (OC)*, which covers primarily what is deemed Wittgenstein’s work in epistemology, especially the threat of skepticism and *Moorean certainties*². Wherever I refer to other texts, I do so peripherally and only in order to justify my interpretation of *OC*.

2. What is bullshit?

The difference between ‘bullshit’ and ‘lies’, Frankfurt explains, is that the liar, when lying, says something they believe to be false with the intention of deceiving the audience into thinking that it is true, or vice versa.³ For example, think of politicians who tell their constituents that a tax-cut will benefit them, even if all available evidence indicates the contrary (assuming that this is the case). It might turn out to be true that the tax-cut will benefit them (maybe it helps bring more jobs to their community, etc.) but because all the evidence known by the politician at the time of the utterance indicates that the tax-cut would actually harm the community and only by luck would this not be the case, we can say that the politician was lying.

The bullshitter, on the other hand, does not need to have an intention to deceive. For

² These are truisms that George Edward Moore identified in his famous papers *Proof of an External World* and *A Defence of Common Sense*.

³ Frankfurt 2002, p. 3.

example, think of politicians who claim without any evidence that there was voter fraud during an election. The reason they are not lying is that they have no reason to believe that there was or not voter fraud (assuming that this is the case) because they have no evidence to back either claim. In backing any of these opposing views they are not intending to deceive, which would require them to promote a view that they know to be false (or vice versa). Rather they might have other intentions which have no connection to the truth value of their statements, e.g. they might be gathering support by energizing their base, etc. In this case the politician is not lying, but bullshitting.

It is worth mentioning that the bullshitter needs not completely lack an intention to deceive. Cohen pointed this out when arguing that “advertisers may not care whether what they say is true, but they do care about what their audience is caused to believe.”⁴ This led him to conclude that some instances of (Frankfurtian) bullshit are not so different from lying. In responding to Cohen, Frankfurt argued that advertisers (or people who act in a similar manner) are liars only “incidentally or by accident,” but “their most fundamental commitment is as bullshitters” because they “generally decide what they are going to say [...] without caring what the truth is.”⁵ In other words, some bullshitters might be lying when they deceive their audience, but they are not *primarily* aiming to deceive their audience. It just turns out that by deceiving them they reach whatever goals they may have (like selling their products, etc.).

This of course has nothing to do with the truth value of what they say. According to Herman Cappelen and Josh Dever, a way of distinguishing a liar from a bullshitter, is that the liar *must care* about the truth or falsehood of their statements, while the bullshitter “isn’t guided by or motivated by a desire to track the way the world is,” not even in order to deceive.⁶

⁴ Cohen 2002, p. 331.

⁵ Frankfurt 2002, p. 341.

⁶ Cappelen and Dever 2019, p. 53.

Correspondingly, (Frankfurtian) bullshit is distinguished by the *lack of caring* for the truth value of a statement, or when this caring occurs only incidentally.

Cohen distinguished his account, known as “deep bullshit,”⁷ from Frankfurt’s because, according to him, Frankfurtian bullshit is closer to “trivial or insincere talk or writing,” having an intentional nature, i.e. (Frankfurtian) bullshit is the product of (someone’s) bullshitting, where ‘bullshitting’ means saying something while not caring for its truth value. Cohen’s definition, on the other hand, has to do with instances of “nonsense” or “rubbish,” related to “the character of its output,”⁸ i.e. x is (Cohenian) bullshit *iff* its output has the character of bullshit regardless whether the person who produced it was or not bullshitting. Cohenian bullshit is centered on the expression itself, as opposed to Frankfurtian bullshit which is centered on the intentions of those who utter it.

In Cohen’s view, those who produce bullshit need not be bullshitting at all. They might just be producing bullshit, while deeply caring for truth, or conversely might be purposefully transmitting falsehood, but bullshit is produced nonetheless. According to Cappelen and Dever, another way of characterizing Cohenian bullshit is as “gibberish” or “meaningless speech.”⁹ What is said by Cohenian bullshitters is either “meaningless words” or a “meaningless combination of meaningful words.”¹⁰

Some have argued that Cohen’s characterization is misguided and illegitimately charges some speech as bullshit. For instance, Tom Burdge argues that “[Cohenian-bullshit] accusations are often instances of epistemic trespass,”¹¹ instead of legitimate accounts of bullshit. I do not delve into defending or criticizing Cohen’s view, rather I take it as a referent (in the same way

⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 59-60.

⁸ Cohen 2002, p. 325.

⁹ Cappelen and Dever 2019, pp. 59-61.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 60.

¹¹ Burdge 2020, p. 42.

that he takes Frankfurt's view) in order to locate Wittgenstein's view within what I call the 'bullshit plane'.

Thus, there are at least two kinds of bullshit: Frankfurtian bullshit, or F-bullshit hereafter, and Cohenian bullshit, or C-bullshit hereafter. The former is, as Cohen describes it, 'bull-centered' or based on the intentions of those who utter it. The latter is 'shit-centered' or based on the expression itself without a necessary connection to the intentions of those who utter it. The purpose of this paper is to identify Wittgensteinian bullshit, or W-bullshit hereafter, in relation to these two.

3. Certainty and propositions beyond doubt

In order to argue my case, I must a) define what 'certainty' means for Wittgenstein, b) explain the difference between 'subjective certainty' and 'objective certainty', and c) introduce the notion of 'propositions beyond doubt'. To begin, I need to clarify that 'certainty' is not the same as 'knowledge'. 'Knowledge' is taken to mean justified true belief. Even if this is not right, it is inconsequential for the purposes of this paper. Assuming it is true, and shedding light on the fact that 'certainty' is also a kind of belief, the main difference between them must lie on the remaining parts of the definition. Certainty is not justified¹² and is also not true:

Certainty is *as it were* a tone of voice in which one declares how things are, but one does not infer from the tone of voice that one is justified. (*OC* 30)

Wittgenstein intended to prove that the things that G. E. Moore claimed to know, such as 'the external world exists', are not really known by him but he is only certain of them. Essentially, one does not infer from the existence of objects such as one's hands the existence of the external world. Actually doing so would be meaningless because to say that 'the external world exists' is to say nothing (meaningful) at all. Claiming to know, or claiming to hold a

¹² I have some reservations for outright calling certainty 'unjustified belief' just because W-bullshit might also fall under the same category, as will become clear from my argument.

justified true belief, that ‘the external world exists’ is senseless or a tautology (*TLP* 6.126, 6.1265). One can only be certain that ‘the external world exists’. The difference is that knowledge requires justification. Certainty on the other hand *is* the basis for all justification. I.e. We are not justified in believing that ‘the external world exists’, etc., but if we were to doubt it none of our justified beliefs derived from this basic belief would be coherent. In that sense, we must “[replace] Moore’s “I know” by “I am of the unshakable conviction”” (*OC* 86). For example, I cannot infer from ‘here is one hand’ that ‘the external world exists’, rather I must assume that ‘the external world exists’ so I can say things like ‘here is one hand’.

Danièle Moyal-Sharrock described this distinction as logical. Certainty has the property, according to her, that it is logically incoherent for it to be false, because if it were false it would be incoherent to say anything at all. For example, I wouldn’t be able to say ‘I am 23 years old’ if that ‘the world has existed for longer than 5 minutes’ were false. This impossibility of mistake makes justification futile or tautological: “it is in believing, not in knowing, that justification is optional,”¹³ but by being optional it is also unnecessary: “That is the meaning of Occam’s razor” (*TLP* 3.328).

The difference between subjective and objective certainty, as explained by Wittgenstein, is that subjective certainty consists in a personal conviction, e.g. ‘I believe that I’m living in the year 2021’. While objective certainty consists in the logical impossibility of mistake, e.g. ‘2021 is a year’. Michael Kober described the former as “a kind of being sure, of confidence, or trust.”¹⁴ But as Moyal-Sharrock emphasized, this is not what Wittgenstein prioritized: “although the certainty he is striving to define is a certainty that stands fast for us individually [...] it cannot be merely personal [...] The certainty in question, though in a way personal, is also a shared or

¹³ Moyal-Sharrock 2004, p. 23.

¹⁴ Kober 2018, p. 472.

collective certainty.”¹⁵ Wittgenstein focused instead, according to her, on objective certainty (or “intersubjective certainty” as Kober preferred¹⁶), which is not a matter of personal conviction, but about being certain that some things are beyond doubt because doubt is logically impossible in those cases.¹⁷ Objective certainty can be, according to Moyal-Sharrock,

a) a doxastic (belief) attitude that appears as

i) a disposition towards —, or

ii) an occurrence (taking-hold) of —, or

b) a category that appears as a foundational certainty consisting of —

rules or instruments of grammar.¹⁸

This complicates things in explaining the nature of W-bullshit, but for now I shall focus on the fact that objective certainty needs to be instantiated by actual certainties, or propositions beyond doubt. E.g. ‘the external world exists’, ‘green is a color’, etc.:

We know, with the same certainty with which we believe *any* mathematical proposition, how the letters A and B are pronounced, what the colour of human blood is called, that other human beings have blood and call it “blood”. (OC 340)

Propositions like ‘the external world exists’, ‘green is a color’, etc., serve as logical or grammatical rules, rather than falsifiable propositions. By virtue of their indubitability, because they rest at the bottom of our belief or epistemic systems, they are rather determinants of the truth value of other (empirical) propositions. In Moyal-Sharrock’s view, it is even wrong to call them ‘propositions’ because they lack the property of bipolarity.¹⁹ In contrast, these

¹⁵ Moyal-Sharrock 2004, p. 15.

¹⁶ Kober 2018, p. 470.

¹⁷ Moyal-Sharrock 2004, p. 73.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 59.

¹⁹ This property refers to the possibility of being either true or false.

propositions, which Wittgenstein deemed “grammatical propositions” or “hinges”, are relieved of their propositional status insofar as they are beyond doubt (*OC* 58, 341).²⁰ They take the form of “ready-to-use rules,”²¹ which “condition our acts and thoughts.”²² They are neither true nor false. According to Wittgenstein, they rather *set the tone* for judging the truth or falsehood of empirical propositions (*OC* 58, 94, 205, *TLP* 5.1363). In other words, they cannot be true nor false because they help determine what truth and falsehood are in the first place, and something cannot both determine what truth is and be true at the same time: “If the true is what is grounded, then the ground is not *true*, nor yet false” (*OC* 205). For the sake of consistency, I use ‘propositions beyond doubt’ when referring to these nonpropositional, grammatical claims, while acknowledging that they are not propositions in the correct use of the term.

Two questions follow from these remarks: 1) What is the difference between propositions beyond doubt and bullshit, if neither of them are said to be true nor false? 2) How are they different if both are nonsensical²³? I proceed to answer the first question and will answer the second one further below: Bullshit does not lack truth value, as is the case with propositions beyond doubt. The latter have no truth value *at all*, whereas utterances of the former do have a truth value, but it is the *lack of caring* for this truth value that determines their bullshit-ness. In other words, if someone utters a proposition beyond doubt, they are saying something that is neither true nor false (which, according to Wittgenstein, means that they are not saying anything at all²⁴). On the other hand, if someone utters bullshit, they might be saying something that is true or false, but their *lack of caring* for its truth or falsehood determines its being bullshit.

This of course is not the case with C-bullshit. Hence, we need another condition to

²⁰ Moyal-Sharrock 2004, p. 39.

²¹ *Ibid*, p. 40.

²² *Ibid*, p. 68.

²³ *Ibid*, pp. 46, 90-91.

²⁴ This means that those propositions are ineffable, which is not the same as being unspeakable or unverbalizable (Moyal-Sharrock 2004, pp. 43-47, 97).

distinguish propositions beyond doubt from both F- and C-bullshit. Perhaps more importantly, propositions beyond doubt are regulative of their language games, whereas bullshit is not. In Wittgenstein's view, propositions beyond doubt determine the rules of grammar for a language game, such that if we doubt them or reject them we couldn't play a game at all. This is not the case with bullshit. For instance, if there was no bullshit in a language game we could perfectly play it. One might even say that a game is expected to be played without bullshit. Of course that is not to say that one cannot play a game if there is bullshit, rather that *ideally* there shouldn't be any bullshit if we want to play a game correctly; think here of people who play games without regard for their rules.

4. Reasonable and unreasonable doubt

To arrive at the position where we can accept that Wittgenstein had in mind a kind of bullshit, I must differentiate between reasonable and unreasonable doubt. There are two ways of understanding this distinction: a) Wittgenstein distinguished between doubts that can and cannot be doubted by a reasonable person (*OC* 219, 220, 323). In this case we can say that a reasonable doubt is that which can be doubted by a reasonable person, whereas an unreasonable doubt is that which cannot. The question of who is a reasonable person is more or less neglected by Wittgenstein, but it can be said that anyone who has a rational attitude in relation to the collective world picture (*Weltbild*), which contains the collection of propositions beyond doubt, and is mentally stable, qualifies as a reasonable person. According to Moyal-Sharrock, it would be unreasonable for someone to doubt propositions beyond doubt because “[it] is logically impossible to doubt or be wrong about some beliefs whilst remaining within the ken of normal human understanding.”²⁵

When we say that we *know* that such and such ..., we mean that any reasonable

²⁵ Moyal-Sharrock 2004, p. 74.

person in our position would also know it, that it would be a piece of unreason to doubt it. Thus Moore too wants to say not merely that *he* knows that he etc. etc., but also that anyone endowed with reason in his position would know it just the same. (*OC* 325)

b) At the same time, one can also read Wittgenstein's views on reasonable and unreasonable doubt without any regard for the kind of person who is doubting. Even though it is commonsensical to say that someone raising an unreasonable doubt is being unreasonable, we can think of cases when someone completely reasonable raises a doubt about the existence of the external world or about green being a color. Maybe they are doubting it as a joke or as a thought experiment, etc. But isn't doubt in these cases unreasonable independently of the person's intentions? This view is not uncontroversial and I won't attempt to defend it in this paper.

Another thing to consider is the question about what is deemed reasonable or unreasonable: "what men consider reasonable or unreasonable alters. At certain periods men find reasonable what at other periods they found unreasonable. And vice versa" (*OC* 336). Kober used the example of "Einstein changing our views of space and time, mass and energy" to argue that some considerations "may later cause us to revise some of our certainties."²⁶ Michael Williams created a mechanism based on four factors (semantic, methodological, dialectical and economic) to determine which propositions can be reasonably beyond doubt.²⁷ Though important considerations, I focus here on the basic propositions that most people would agree to if someone were to ask 'what is reasonably beyond doubt?': things like 'the external world exists', 'red is a color', etc.

Moyal-Sharrock claimed that "[on] Wittgenstein's view, 'Red is a colour' is as nonsensical as: 'Red is not a colour.'"²⁸ I am not of the same opinion, as long as her opinion is that both are

²⁶ Kober 2018, p. 454.

²⁷ Williams 2007, p. 100.

²⁸ Moyal-Sharrock 2004, p. 90.

nonsensical *in the same way*, which seems to be the case because she did not distinguish between different kinds of nonsense. It is true that both claims are nonsensical. The latter is nonsensical because it violates a grammatical rule by *indirectly causing* to cast a doubt against a proposition beyond doubt, while the former is nonsensical because it is the grammatical rule or proposition beyond doubt itself, and grammatical rules “stand outside the bounds of sense,” because they are not falsifiable, thus have no sense (*OC* 58).²⁹ But I have reasons to believe that the kind of nonsense of ‘Red is a colour’ and ‘Red is not a colour’ is not the same. I.e. The former is nonsense due to its indubitability, but the latter is nonsense because it is bullshit.

5. Admonishing bullshit

First, it is intuitive to say that unreasonable doubt is bullshit. I would call bullshit if someone asked, for instance, ‘how do you know that red is a color?’. It is also meaningless because raising a doubt against something meaningless doesn’t give the doubt a meaning. Additionally, just as other kinds of bullshit, it is not regulative of any language game. Nonetheless, it seems that unreasonable doubt might lack the other condition, which I said is unique to F-bullshit, i.e. disregard for truth value. This is because it is not obvious that the skeptic (of the kind that would ask things like ‘how do you know that red is a color?’) is doubting with disregard for truth value. It also seems that unreasonable doubt entirely lacks truth value, just as propositions beyond doubt, because there is no reason to believe that doubting something gives the doubt a truth value (*TLP* 4.003). This definitely complicates things, and I should consider them for future endeavors, but the fact that it has qualities that allow at least another kind of bullshit (C-) to be called bullshit (that is, intuitiveness, nonregulativeness and meaninglessness) I can justifiably call unreasonable doubt ‘W-bullshit’.

As previously stated, I am concerned with the difference between W-bullshit and other

²⁹ Ibid.

kinds of ‘bullshit’. For this, I introduce the distinction between claimant- and challenger-bullshit.³⁰ F- and C-bullshit fall under the former kind because their instances take the form of claims. For example, ‘(even though I have no evidence for or against it) there was voter fraud during the last election’ (F-bullshit) or ‘social distancing is communism’³¹ (C-bullshit). W-bullshit on the other hand takes the form of challenges to already established claims. W-bullshit is like asking ‘how do you know that your name is ... ?’ (OC 628) ‘how do you know that the earth has existed for a long time now’ (OC 138, 187, 188, 190, 231) ‘how do you know that the earth is round and not flat?’ (OC 147). I presume, though not conclusively, that it should also include all sorts of (unreasonable) skepticism and denialism like ‘how do you know that human-induced climate change is not a hoax?’, ‘how do you know that COVID-19 is real’, etc. As Wittgenstein himself pointed out:

‘We are quite sure of it’ does not mean just that every single person is certain of it, but that we belong to a community which is bound together by science and education. (OC 298)

To differentiate between claimant- and challenger-kinds of bullshit, consider that one thing is to produce bullshit when claiming something, while another is to produce it when challenging something that was already claimed, or is *implicitly* claimed. Both kinds of bullshit can cause each other. For instance, Bergstrom and West argue that (claimant-) bullshit “undermines our ability to trust information in general,”³² which creates an ideal environment for challenger-bullshit to develop. On the other hand, if the presence of too much challenger-bullshit causes distrust of the evidence, it makes it easier for claimant-bullshit to develop. So the possibility that one causes the other is conceivable. Then, if we take into consideration causation (one thing cannot cause itself) and the fact that claimant- and challenger-bullshit have different logical forms, we can conclude

³⁰ I borrowed the claimant/challenger distinction from Williams 2007.

³¹ See <https://ktla.com/news/local-news/demonstrators-gather-in-huntington-beach-to-protest-states-stay-at-home-order-and-defying-social-distancing-rules/>.

³² Bergstrom and West 2020, p. 8. The reason for my assumption that Bergstrom and West refer exclusively to claimant-bullshit in this quote is that I doubt that they are considering challenger-bullshit anywhere in their analysis.

that they are different things — different kinds of bullshit. For instance, ‘human-induced climate change is a hoax’ and ‘how do you know that human-induced climate change is not a hoax?’ would be different according to the reasons just provided.

But in order to map W-bullshit in the ‘bullshit plane’, I must also locate it in relation to a second axis. As I said before, the difference between F- and C-bullshit is that the former is intention-based, whereas the latter is expression-based. It is not clear where W-bullshit lies in this distinction. It is complicated to exactly locate W-bullshit within the intention/expression axis, given that a) it is both an attitude (intention) and a category (expression), and b) it is both dependent (intention) and independent (expression) of a person’s reasonableness. Hence, we should consider both possibilities, which I highlight in the following table:

Table 1. *Bullshit plane*

	Intention-based	Expression-based
Claimant	F-bullshit	C-bullshit
Challenger	W-bullshit ₁	W-bullshit ₂

6. Conclusion

I have argued that unreasonable doubt, which is the kind of doubt raised against propositions beyond doubt (certainties that instantiate the kind of certainty that is based on the impossibility of logical mistake), is a kind of bullshit. This kind of bullshit is distinguished from other kinds of bullshit because it is challenger-bullshit, in opposition to claimant-bullshit. The latter is constituted by claims which are i) either made without regard for truth value or ii) meaningless. The former is constituted by challenges to already established claims which are

indubitable. I have also said that it is complicated to say with complete assurance whether W-bullshit is intention- or expression-based, but this and other complications must be dealt with in future endeavors. All in all, the most important contribution of this paper is to acknowledge Wittgenstein's continuing contributions to the philosophy of nonsense, given that much of his work was devoted to identifying it.

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