Journal of Philosophical Investigations

University of Tabriz

Journal of Philosophical Investigations

Volume 18, Issue 48, Autumn 2024

Print ISSN: 2251-7960

Online ISSN: 2423-4419

Journal of Philosophical Investigations

ISSN (print): **2251-7960**
ISSN (online): **2423-4419**

Department of Philosophy- University of Tabriz- Iran

Founder: **University of Tabriz**
General Manager: **Dr. Hassan Fathi**, *Associate Professor of western philosophy, University of Tabriz*
Editor in chief: **Dr. Muhammad Asghari**, *Professor of philosophy, University of Tabriz*

Editorial board:

Susan Haack	*Professor of law & philosophy, Miami University- USA*
Galen Strawson	*Professor of philosophy, Texas University at Austin- USA*
Mark Van Dan Bossche	*Professor of western philosophy, Vrije University- Brussel*
Slavoj Žižek	*Professor of philosophy at The European Graduate School/ EGS - Switzerland*
Rabert J. Dostal	*Professor of western philosophy of Bryn Mawr College - USA*
Simon Critchley	*Professor of philosophy at The European Graduate School/ EGS - Switzerland*
Lawrence Cahoone	*Professor of philosophy at College of The Holy Cross- USA*
Thomas Sheehan	*Professor of religious studies and philosophy, University of Stanford - USA*
James M Magrini	*Professor of philosophy and religious studies at College of DuPage - USA*
Mahmoud Navali	*Professor of western philosophy, University of Tabriz*
Morteza Shajari	*Professor of Islamic philosophy, University of Tabriz*
Mansour Imanpour	*Associate Professor of Islamic philosophy, Shahid Madani University of Azarbaijan*
Abdolrazzaq Hessamifar	*Professor of western philosophy, Imam Khomeini University of Qazvin*
Abdolkarim Rashidian	*Associate Professor of western philosophy, Shahid Beheshti's University*
Mostafa Shahrayini	*Associate Professor of western philosophy, University of Tabriz*
Majid Sadremajles	*Associate Professor of western philosophy, University of Tabriz*
Hassan Fathzade	*Associate Professor of western philosophy, University of Zanjan*
Yousef Nouzohoor	*Associate Professor of western philosophy, Allameh Tabataba'i University*
Alireza Farnam	*Professor of psychiatry, Tabriz University of Medical Sciences*
Mahmoud Soufiani	*Assistant Professor of western philosophy, University of Tabriz*

Internal Manager: **Dr. Mahmoud Soufiani**, *Assistant Professor of western philosophy, University of Tabriz*

Publisher: **University of Tabriz**

Address: **Faculty of Persian Literature & Foreign Languages, University of Tabriz, Tabriz, Iran.**

Tel: **00984133392131** Fax: **00984133342490**

Website: **https://philosophy.tabrizu.ac.ir** E-mail: **philosophy@tabrizu.ac.ir**

Indexing Databases: **Scopus, ISC, Doaj, Philpapers, Oaji, Accademia, Sindexs, Magiran, Noormags, Erihplus, Cosmos, Scirev, Portal.issn, Civilica, Europub, Researchbib, Ensani.ir, Road, Indexcopernicus**

Table of Contents

Slavoj Žižek
Is There a Post-Human Sexuality? ……...…..……....… 1

David Seamon
Lifeworld, Place, and Phenomenology: Holistic and Dialectical Perspectives ……..… 31

Howard Sankey
Science, Common Sense and Reality ..…..……...…….…..… 53

Jeff Malpas
Heidegger's Topology from The Beginning: Dasein, Being, Place ……..….. 67

Caius R. Gibeily
Hegel's Internal Engine – Free Energy Minimization at Play in the Phenomenology of Spirit …… 81

Hans L. M. Dassen
Spring is in the Air a New Philosophy of Love …….……. 95

Fabio Tononi
Democracy and Information in the Age of Digitalization ……... 117

Khanh Trinh
Whether Hegel is a Pantheist? Spinoza in Hegel's Pantheism …… 133

Amita Valmiki
Is Ethical Religion Possible? ……..…… 147

Ali Naqi Baghershahi
Panentheism versus Pantheism in the East and West with Special Reference to Shankara and Ramanuja's Views: an overview ……. 161

Abbas Bakhshandeh Bali
Comparing Immanuel Kant's and Allamah Tabatabai's Approach to Money and Wealth …… 173

Meysam Khanjanian Mian-Poshteh
Functional Fit and the Instrumental Character of Knowledge: Rethinking the Theory of Knowledge with Radical Constructivism ……..…… 185

Mansour Imanpour
Analysis of the Basis and Arguments of the Theory of "Active Intellect" in Islamic Philosophy …… 199

Hossein Ghaffari
The Ontological Place of Invocation (du'a); from the Quranic and Islamic Gnosis Perspective …..… 217

Abdollah Amini
Being That Can Be Understood Is Language" A Contemplation on the Implications of Gadamer's Thesis Concerning Language ……...…. 233

Hossein Rouhani
Comparing Martin Heidegger's and Jalal Āl-e-Ahmad's Views on Technology …… 249

Shahriar Mansouri
Forego the reality of all the simple things": On Object-Oriented Reality as Metaphorical Vortex in Flann O'Brien's The Third Policeman ……..…. 261

Pegah Sheibeh & Hossein Moradi
Beauty and Neutrality in Alice Munro's Selected Works: A Socio-Philosophical Reading of Lacanian Ethics …….. 277

Ali Yousefi Heris
Rethinking Basic Emotions: Insights from Distributed Causal Mechanisms ……..… 291

Nadia Maftouni
Ibn al-Haitham vis-à-vis Shaykh Ishraq on Vision ……...…….…… 309

F. X. Adji Sametko & Aga Natalis
Exploring the Grundnorm Dilemma: Can Pancasila be Considered the Grundnorm in the Context of 'the Pure Theory of Law'? …….. 319

Asghar Vaezi & Esmail Ghaedi
The Functions of Preunderstandings in ʾAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī's Hermeneutics ……..……. 339

Reihaneh Davoodi Kahaki & Rasoul Rahbari Ghazani
Mystic Intoxication (Mastī) and the Meaning of Life: Fayḍ Kāshānī's Mystic Poetry Through the Lens of John Cottingham's Philosophy ……. 360

David Edward Rose
Hegel, the Greeks and Subjectivity: the origins of modern liberty and the historical justification of liberalism ……... 381

Journal of Philosophical Investigations
Print ISSN: 2251-7960 Online ISSN: 2423-4419
Homepage: https://philosophy.tabrizu.ac.ir

Is There A Post-Human Sexuality?

Slavoj Žižek

Professor of Philosophy and Psychoanalysis, The European Graduate School (EGS), Saas Fee- Switzerland. Email: szizek@yahoo.com

Article Info

Article type:
Research Article

Article history:
Received 11 July 2024
Received in revised form 13 July 2024
Accepted 13 July 2024
Published online 07 September 2024

Keywords:
sexuality, antagonism, phallus, undeadness, Buddhism, lathouse

ABSTRACT

Will human sexuality survive the passage to Artificial Intelligence? To answer this question properly, we should first analyze the paradoxical inner structure of sexuality itself, which is never simply binary: it always involves a third element that gives body to the deadlock of sexual difference – this is what Lacan meant by "there is no sexual difference." This is why sexuality is in itself excessive and perverse. For this reason, all attempts to "normalize" sexuality by way of keeping it within the limits of moderation miserably fail: today, we find on the market products deprived of their dangerous element (coffee without caffeine, chocolate without sugar…), and the moderate sexuality is sexuality without sex. The Buddhist attempts to contain the excess sexuality miss the point of sexuality: intense sexuality is in itself the greatest sacrifice (the sacrifice of peaceful moderate life) – in sexuality, we enjoy the pain, the renunciation itself. However, today, in our world pervaded by commodification and technological inventions, real human partners are more and more replaced by what Lacan called lathouses, artificial objects aimed at satisfying our sexual desire without another human being (plastic phalluses, digitalized pornography). The result is that we are thrown into a space of limitless pleasures where, although "everything is permitted," our intense sexual desire gets anaestheticized.

Cite this article: Žižek, S. (2024). Is There A Post-Human Sexuality? *Journal of Philosophical Investigations*, 18(48), 1-30. https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.18404

© The Author(s).
https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.18404
Publisher: University of Tabriz.

Officers, Maids, and Chimney Sweeps

What better way to begin a treatise on sexual difference than with Kierkegaard's "immortal division"(Lacan 1966, 600) of mankind:

> A wit has said that one might divide mankind into officers, serving maids, and chimney sweeps. To my mind this remark is not only witty but profound, and it would require a great speculative talent to devise a better classification. When a classification does not ideally exhaust its object, a haphazard classification is altogether preferable, because it sets imagination in motion."(Kierkegaard 1983, 162)[1]

In a first approach, it appears that sexuality is grounded in the classification of human beings: human genus is divided into two main species (masculine and feminine), or we reject this binary view and assert a new more complex classification, a plurality of gender identities. Lacan leaves behind all such options: his starting point are not Two or Three (men, women, and some higher androgynous unity of the Two) or a multiplicity but a Two whose terms cannot form a full relationship because of a third disturbing element which enables the two and simultaneously serves as an obstacle to their complementarity. One should note that in Marx, Kierkegaard's contemporary, we find two different versions of the same paradoxical classification. First, there is, in *Capital*, Marx's characterization of the market exchange between worker and capitalist as

> a very Eden of the innate rights of man. There alone rule Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham. Freedom, because both buyer and seller of a commodity, say of labor-power, are constrained only by their own free will. They contract as free agents, and the agreement they come to, is but the form in which they give legal expression to their common will. Equality, because each enters into relation with the other, as with a simple owner of commodities, and they exchange equivalent for equivalent. Property, because each disposes only of what is his own. And Bentham, because each looks only to himself. The only force that brings them together and puts them in relation with each other, is the selfishness, the gain and the private interests of each.[2]

One is tempted to submit this passage from Marx to a double Kierkegaardian correction: first, the terms should be just three, not four - freedom, equality, *and Bentham*; then, one should bring to light the underlying triad of the French Revolution to which Marx obviously refers- freedom, equality, *fraternity*. We are thus dealing with a metaphoric substitution (fraternity is pushed below

[1] Soren Kierkegaard, *Fear and trembling / Repetition*) Princeton: Princeton University Press 1983, p. 162. I am indebted to Mladen Dolar for this reference to Kierkegaard, Heine and Marx.
[2] Quoted from http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch06.htm

the bar, out of sight, substituted by Bentham) which makes a clear point: the actual result of the bourgeois revolution is that, instead of fraternity of free people, we get narrow egotism... The second version of paradoxical classification we get in *Capital* concerns the status of the "general equivalent among other commodities:

> It is as if, alongside and external to lions, tigers, rabbits, and all other actual animals, which form when grouped together the various kinds, species, subspecies, families, etc. of the animal kingdom, there existed in addition *the animal*, the individual incarnation of the entire animal kingdom[1]"

The two types of paradoxical classification are clearly opposed: in the second case, the supplementary element (money, THE animal) directly gives body to the universal dimension as such, i.e., in it, the universal (of commodities or of animals) encounters itself among its species; in the first case, the supplementary element (Bentham) stands for ridiculous particularity (which is also universal in the precise sense that it provides a specific color to the universality – in Marx's case, the key to what freedom and equality effectively mean in capitalist society). The difference relies on the structure of the preceding set: if it is a couple (man and woman, rich class and poor class), the third element is the »lowest« one (chimney sweeper who disturbs harmonious sex relationship, or, in anti-Semitism, the Jew who disturbs harmonious class relationship); if it is an (open, in principle) series (of commodities, of people, etc.), the supplementary term is the highest one (Money, King, gold among metals, etc.). In the first case, the excessive element disunites, introduces antagonism, struggle; in the second case, it introduces unity, it totalizes.

Or, in the terms of Lacan's formulas of sexuation: the stand-in for universality (money among commodities) follows the "masculine" logic of the exception which grounds universality, while the supplement to the Two (chimney sweep, rabble) follows the "feminine" logic, i.e., it make makes the couple non-All, inconsistent. In the case of Bentham, we can also introduce the same triadic logic of the antagonistic couple plus its supplement - there is an antagonism between freedom and equality (which Etienne Balibar tries to overcome with his formula *equaliberte*), and »Bentham« names the cause of this antagonism: it is because freedom means freedom of market exchange that, when we are dealing with the »free« exchange between capital and labour, formal equality turns into factual inequality, and *vice versa*, it is because equality is the formal equality in the eyes of the law that the free exchange on the market turns into unfreedom for the one selling his/her labour force. In short, the condition of *equaliberte* is to obliterate »Bentham« from the picture.

True, the chimney-sweep-element is a particular supplement which provides the specific coloring of all the preceding terms (what they "really mean" in the concrete historical totality); however, this is not to be read as if the chimney-sweep-element stands for the touch of commonsense, as in Heinrich Heine's (yet another contemporary of Marx and Kierkegaard) well-

[1] Quoted from http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/commodity.htm

known saying that one should value above everything else "love, truth, freedom, and crab soup." "Crab soup" stands here for all the small pleasures in the absence of which we become (mental, if not real) terrorists following an abstract idea and enforcing it onto reality without any consideration of concrete circumstances… One should emphasize here that such a "wisdom" is precisely what Kierkegaard and Marx did NOT have in mind – their message is rather the opposite one: the principle itself, in its purity, is already stained by the particularity of crab soup, i.e., the particularity sustains the very purity of the principle. The difference that separates Heine from Marx is thus clear, it concerns the status of universality: while Heine advocates the commonsense wisdom which warns us against direct literal devotion to and application of universal norms, Marx point is the opposite one – the addition of "Bentham" implies that, in the capitalist society, freedom/equality is not authentic, so we should get rid of "Bentham" and strive to actualize freedom/equality in its true universality.

One should also note here the difference between this supplementary element and the Derridean supplement: the latter is a supplement to One (to Presence, to Origin), while for Kierkegaard, Marx, *and Lacan* (whose name should be added here as the chimney sweep to both of them), the excessive element is a supplement to the Two, to the harmonious couple (*yin* and *yang*, the two classes, etc.) - capitalist, worker, *and the Jew*; or, maybe, high class, low class, *plus rabble*.[1] In the triad of officer, maid and the chimney sweep, the chimney sweep can effectively be perceived as the *Liebes-Stoerer*, the obscene intruder who cuts short their love-making. (Let us go to the end and imagine the ultimate obscenity: sexual act between the officer and the maid, with the chimney sweeper who intervenes afterwards with the act of belated contraception, cleaning up her "channel" with his brush…)[2]

Insofar as this supplementary element embodies trash with no proper place in the hierarchy of things, no wonder that the same paradox reproduces itself within trash itself. Public trash bins are more and more differentiated today: there are special bins for paper, glass, metal cans, cardboard package, plastic, etc. Here already, things get sometimes complicated: if I have to dispose of a paper bag or a notebook with a tiny plastic band, where does it belong, to paper or to package? No wonder than we often get on the bins detailed instruction beneath the general designation: PAPER – books, newspapers, etc., but NOT hardcover books or books with plasticized cover, etc. In such cases, to properly dispose of one's waste would have taken up to half an hour or more of detailed reading and touch decisions. To make things easier, we then get a supplementary trash bin for GENERAL WASTE where we throw all that did not meet the specific criteria of other bins – again, as if, apart from paper trash, plastic trash, etc., there is trash as such, universal trash. Chimney sweep is the element embodying the non-relationship, sustaining it as a non-relationship: if we take

[1] Stalin's position seems ambiguous here: one can imagine a Stalinist purge as the veffort to liquidate all chimney sweepers who disturb socialist harmony – but was Stalin himself also not the supreme sweeper?

[2] One should also not forget that a maid and a chimney sweeper themselves form a couple - recall the old myth of chimney sweeper as the seducer of innocent maids.

it away, we get a simple duality of polar opposite, like the eternal struggle of masculine and feminine cosmic principles, instead of a true antagonism.

The place of this excessive element can also be discerned through the imbalance between the universal and the particular – the excess of the universal over its actual particularities points towards a weird excessive particular element, as in Chesterton's well-known remark addressed at "my readers most of whom are human" – or, as a well-known Slovene soccer player once put it after an important victory: "My gratitude goes to my parents, especially my mom and my dad." Who is then the remaining parent, the third one, neither mother nor father?

Everyone knows Winston Churchill's quip about democracy usually quoted as: "Democracy is the worst possible system, except for all others." What Churchill effectively said (in the House of Commons on November 11 1947) was slightly less paradoxical and scintillating: "Many forms of Government have been tried, and will be tried in this world of sin and woe. No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed it had been said that democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time."[1] The underlying logic is best rendered if one applies to Churchill's dictum Lacan's "formulae of sexuation" and rephrases it in as follows: "Democracy is the worst of all systems; however, compared to it, any other system is worse." If one takes all possible system as a whole and ranges them with regard to their worth, democracy is the worst and finishes at the bottom; if, however, one compares democracy one to one with all other system, it is better than any of them.

Does something similar not hold (or seem to hold) for capitalism? If one analyses it in an abstract way, trying to locate it into the hierarchy of all possible systems, it appears as the worst - chaotic, unjust, destructive, etc.; however, if one compares it in a concrete pragmatic way to every alternative, it is still better than any of them. This "illogical" imbalance between the universal and the particular is a direct indication of the efficiency of ideology. An opinion poll in the US at the end of June 2012, just before the Supreme Court decision about Obama's healthcare reform, showed that "strong majorities favor most of what is in the law":

> Most Americans oppose President Barack Obama's healthcare reform even though they strongly support most of its provisions, a Reuters/Ipsos poll showed. /…/ The survey results suggest that Republicans are convincing voters to reject Obama's reform even when they like much of what is in it, such as allowing children to stay on their parents' insurance until age 26.[2]

Here we encounter ideology at its purest: the majority wants to have its (ideological) cake and to eat it (the real cake), i.e., they want the real profits of the healthcare reform, while rejecting its

[1] Incidentally, it is not known to whom "it had been said" refers – is it a determinate individual or just a reference to common wisdom.

[2] For a more detailed account of this topic, see the first part of Slavoj Zizek, *The Indivisible Remainder*, London: Verso Books http://news.yahoo.com/most-americans-oppose-health-law-provisions-040810861.html .

ideological form (which they perceive as the threat to the "freedom of choice") - they reject water, but accept H_2O, or, rather, they reject (the concept of) fruit, but they want apples, plums, strawberries… Towards the beginning of Jo Nesbo's thriller *Headhunters*, there is a joke which involves a similar paradoxical series: "The tangy saline taste of exhaust fumes in the autumn air evoked associations of sea, oil extraction and gross national product"(Nesbo, 2011, 18). The eccentric moment which adds itself to the series of natural and physical elements is here the GNP, a shorthand for the brutal exploitation of nature.

There is a similar categorization in which a set is divided into ridiculously unbalanced subsets - recall Eugene Wigner's claim: "There are two kinds of people in the world: Johnny von Neumann and the rest of us." Recall also the cynical-wisdom-formula: "There are two kinds of people, those who… and those who…", where the point is the ridiculously-arbitrary nature of the distinction: those who get hanged and those who hold the rope; those who enjoy drinking armagnac and those who hate it… And wouldn't the ultimate categorization be the very division into something and nothing? "There are two kinds of people in the world: those who will die and no one else." Or: "There are two kinds of people in the world: those who will die and the immortals" – the point being that the second set is empty.

Along the same lines, one should celebrate the genius of Walter Benjamin which shines through in the very title of his early essay "On Language in General and Human Language in Particular." The point here is not that human language is a species of some universal language „as such" which comprises also other species (language of gods and angels? animal language? the language of some other intelligent beings out there in space? computer language? the language of the DNA?): there is no actually-existing language other than human language – but, in order to comprehend this „particular" language, one HAS to introduce a minimal difference, conceiving it with regard to the gap which separates it from language „as such" (the pure structure of language deprived of the insignia of the human finitude, of erotic passions and mortality, of the struggles for domination and the obscenity of power). The particular language is thus the "really-existing language," language as the series of actually uttered statements, in contrast to the formal linguistic structure. This Benjaminian lesson is the lesson missed by Habermas: what Habermas does is precisely what one should NOT do – he posits the ideal „language in general" (the pragmatic universals) DIRECTLY as the norm of the actually-existing language. So, along the lines of Benjamin's title, one should describe the basic constellation of the social law as that of the "Law in general and its obscene superego underside in particular"…

The "Part" as such is thus the "sinful" unredeemed and unredeemable aspect of the Universal – to put it in actual political terms, every politics which grounds itself in the reference to some substantial (ethnic, religious, sexual, life-style…) particularity is by definition reactionary. Consequently, the division introduced and sustained by the emancipatory ("class") struggle is NOT the one between the two particular classes of the Whole, but the one between the Whole-in-its-

parts and its Remainder which, within the Particulars, stands for the Universal, for the Whole "as such," opposed to its parts.

So is the triad of the two opposites plus the chimney sweep Hegelian or not? Does the fact that we referred to Kierkegaard, Heine, and Marx, each of whom tried to break out of the constraints of Hegel's idealist logic, not indicate that the target of such paradoxical classifications or divisions is precisely to unsettle the consistent logical frame of the Hegelian schemes? Upon a closer look, things get complicated: does the Monarch in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* not display the coincidence of the highest (pure signifier) and lowest (biology, contingency) which characterized the excessive element? Was on account of this overlapping of the pure symbolic element (the royal title) and a contingent bodily element (penis) the young Marx not more right than he was aware of when, in his early critique of Hegel's philosophy of right, he acerbically remarked that the Hegelian Monarch is just an appendix to his phallus?[1]

In Lacan's precise sense of the term, the chimney sweep effectively stands for the phallic element – how? Insofar as he stands for pure difference: officer, maid and chimney sweeper are the masculine, the feminine, *plus their difference as such*, as a particular contingent object – again, why? Because not only is difference differential, but, in an antagonistic (non)relationship, it precedes the terms it differentiates: not only is woman not-man and *vice versa*, but woman is what prevents man to be fully man and *vice versa*. It is like the difference between the Left and the Right in the political space: their difference is the difference in the very way difference is perceived: the whole political space appears differently structured if we look at it from the Left or from the Right, there is no third "objective" way (for a Leftist, the political divide cuts across the entire social body, while for a Rightist, society is a hierarchic Whole disturbed by marginal intruders). Difference "in itself" is thus not symbolic/differential, but real-impossible – something that eludes and resists the symbolic grasp.

This difference is the universal as such – universal not as a neutral frame elevated above its two species, but as their constitutive antagonism, and the third element (chimney sweep, Jew, *object a*) stands for the difference as such, for the "pure" difference/antagonism which precedes the differentiated terms. If the division of the social body into two classes would have been complete, without the excessive element (Jew, rabble…), there would have been no class struggle, just two clearly divided classes - this third element is not the mark of an empirical remainder that escapes the class classification (the pure division of society into two classes), but *the materialization of their antagonistic difference itself*, insofar as this difference precedes the differentiated terms. In

[1] Alexander Sokurov's film*Telec (Body)* depicts a day in the life of Lenin when he was already approaching death, living isolated in a forest mansion; it renders the painfully-desublimated body of a Leader: Lenin is shown as a helplessly-fragile individual unable to stand and walk alone, prattling nonsense and making obscene gestures, oscillating between senile smiles and outbursts of suppressed rage.

the space of anti-Semitism, the "Jew" stands for the social antagonism as such: without the Jewish intruder, the two classes would live in harmony…

Insofar as the antagonism is another name for non-relationship (*il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel*, there is no class relationship), this third excessive element which always haunts the Two (sexes, classes) as their obscene shadow can also be said to stand for Lacan's »there is (something of the) One (*y'a de l'Un*)« which is the obverse of *il n'y a pas de l'Autre* is strictly correlative to his *y'a de l'Un*, "there is something of the One." Or, to put it with a slightly different accent, insofar as the One of *y a de l'un* is an "indivisible remainder" which makes sexual relationship inexistent, *y a de l'un* is also strictly correlative to *il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel*: it is the very object-obstacle to this rapport. The One of *y a de l'Un* is not the mystical all-encompassing One of the infamous "oceanic feeling" derided by Freud, but a "little piece of the real," the excremental remainder which disturbs the harmony of the Two.

Clarifying this crucial distinction, le Gaufey drew attention to a subtle passage in late Lacan from "*il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel*" to "*il y a du non-rapport (sexuel)*", the shift which precisely fits Kant's distinction between negative judgment (the negation of a predicate) and infinite judgment (the affirmation of a non-predicate), as in "he isn't dead" versus the much more uncanny "he is un-dead." "There is no sexual relationship" can still be read as a variation on the old motif of the eternal conflict between the sexes: there is no harmony between men and women because men are from Mars and women from Venus, they move in different universes, so their encounter is always missed. "There is a non-relationship" implies something much more radical: the positivization of this impossibility of the sexual relationship in a paradoxical "trans-finite" object which overlaps with its own lack or which is in excess with regard to itself.

This is why we shouldn't say for the *objet a* that it simply isn't sexual: it is un-sexual in exactly the same sense in which vampires are un-dead: the "undead" are neither alive nor dead but the monstrous living dead, and, in the same way, *objet a* is neither sexual nor non-sexual but "sexually asexual," a monstrosity which doesn't fit the coordinates of any of the two sexes, but is still sexual (Žižek, 2012).[1]

For A Joyfully-Painful Excess Against the Buddhist Moderation

In Buddhism, we are taught to sacrifice desire in order to attain the inner peace of Enlightenment in which sacrifice cancels itself. For Lacan, the true sacrifice is desire itself: desire is an intrusion which throws off the rails the rhythm of our life, it compels us to forfeit everyday pleasures and comforts for discipline and hard work in the pursuit of the object of our desire, be it love, a political Cause, science… or, as Neil Gaiman put it in a memorable passage:

> Have you ever been in love? Horrible isn't it? It makes you so vulnerable. It opens your chest and it opens up your heart and it means that someone can get

[1] I resume here the line of thought from Chapter 11 of Slavoj Žižek, Less Than Nothing, London: Verso Books 2012.

> inside you and mess you up. You build up all these defenses, you build up a whole suit of armor, so that nothing can hurt you, then one stupid person, no different from any other stupid person, wanders into your stupid life...You give them a piece of you. They didn't ask for it. They did something dumb one day, like kiss you or smile at you, and then your life isn't your own anymore. Love takes hostages. It gets inside you. It eats you out and leaves you crying in the darkness, so simple a phrase like 'maybe we should be just friends' turns into a glass splinter working its way into your heart. It hurts. Not just in the imagination. Not just in the mind. It's a soul-hurt, a real gets-inside-you-and-rips-you-apart pain. I hate love.[1]

There is a cure against this horror of intense love – it's called marriage. A (not too) vulgar joke provides an insight into a truly happy marriage. Late in the evening, a wife and a husband lie in bed; the wife is trying to fall asleep, while the husband is reading a book. Every couple of minutes, he reaches with his hand over to the wide and gently rubs his finger into her vaginal lips. After this goes on for half an hour, the wife explodes: "I am trying to fall asleep! If you want to have sex, do it fast, don't play with me like that!" The husband replies: "Sorry, it is not about sex. I am just reading a book and every couple of minutes I need to wet my finger to turn a new page…" This brings us to Pascal: the true Pascalean formula of marriage is not "You don't love your partner? Then marry him or her, go through the ritual of shared life, and love will emerge by itself!"; it is, on the contrary: "Are you too much in love with somebody? Then get married, ritualize your love relationship, in order to cure yourself of the excessive passionate attachment, to replace it with the boring daily custom..." Marriage is thus a means of re-normalization which cures us of the violence of falling in love. And, incidentally, are many "radical" Leftist intellectuals not doing something similar to the unfortunate husband? Afraid to approach the real of actual political struggle they just touch it fleetingly to wet their finger and go on reading writing academic books (criticizing actual fighters).

Today, in our time of permissivness, a passionate sexual love for a single person is dismissed as too fixating – you can play (consensual) sexual games with many people, just don't get to stuck on one of them. The love preferred today is the Western Buddhist loving acceptance of all of reality. However, the ultimate postmodern irony is the strange exchange between Europe and Asia: at the very moment when, at the level of the economic infrastructure, European technology and capitalism are triumphing worldwide, at the level of ideological superstructure, the Judeo-Christian legacy is threatened in the European space itself by the onslaught of the New Age "Asiatic" thought, which, in its different guises, from the "Western Buddhism" (today's counterpoint to Western

[1] Available online at http://thinkexist.com/quotes/neilgaiman.

Marxism, as opposed to the "Asiatic" Marxism-Leninism) to different "Taos," is establishing itself as the hegemonic ideology of the global capitalism (Sloterdijk 1989).[1]

The highest speculative identity of the opposites in today's global civilization is the one between capitalist dynamics and Buddhism: although "Western Buddhism" presents itself as the remedy against the stressful tension of the capitalist dynamics, allowing us to uncouple and retain the inner peace and *Gelassenheit*, it actually functions as its perfect ideological supplement. One should mention here the well-known topic of the "future schock," i.e. of how, today, people are no longer psychologically able to cope with the dazzling rhythm of the technological development and the social changes that accompany it - things simply move too fast, before one can accustom oneself to an invention, this invention is already supplanted by a new one, so that one more and more lacks the most elementary "cognitive mapping." The recourse to Taoism or Buddhism offers a way out of this predicament which definitely work better than the desperate escape into old traditions: instead of trying to cope with the accelerating rhythm of the technological progress and social changes, one should rather renounce the very endeavor to retain control over what goes on, rejecting it as the expression of the modern logic of domination - one should, instead, "let oneself go," drift along, while retaining an inner distance and indifference towards the mad dance of the accelerated process, a distance based on the insight that all this social and technological upheaval is ultimately just a non-substantial proliferation of semblances which do not really concern the innermost kernel of our being...

One is almost tempted to resuscitate here the old infamous Marxist cliche of religion as the "opium of the people," as the imaginary supplement of the terrestrial misery: the "Western Buddhist" meditative stance is arguably the most efficient way, for us, to fully participate in the capitalist dynamics, while retaining the appearance of mental sanity. If Max Weber were to live today, he would definitely wrote a second, supplementary, volume to his *Protestant Ethic*, entitled *The Buddhist Ethic and the Spirit of the Global Capitalism*.

A wonderfully-ambiguous indicator of this predicament of ours is *Sandcastles. Buddhism and Global Finance*, a documentary by Alexander Oey shot almost two decades ago (in 2005) with commentaries from economist Arnoud Boot, sociologist Saskia Sassen, and the Tibetan Buddhist teacher Dzongzar Khyentse Rinpoche. Sassen and Boot discuss the gigantic scope, power, as well as social and economic effects of global finance: capital markets, then valued at an estimated $83 trillion, exist within a system based purely on self-interest, in which herd behavior, often based on rumors, can inflate or destroy the value of companies - or whole economies - in a matter of hours. Khyentse Rinpoche counters them with ruminations about the nature of human perception, illusion, and enlightenment; his philosophico-ethical statement "Release your attachment to something that is not there in reality, but is a perception," is supposed to throw a new light on the mad dance of billion-dollars-speculations. Echoing the Buddhist notion that there is no Self, only a stream of

[1] See Peter Sloterdijk, *Eurotaoismus*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag 1989.

continuous perceptions, Sassen comments about global capital: "It's not that there are $83 trillion. It is essentially a continuous set of movements. It disappears and it reappears"…

The problem here is, of course, how are we to read this parallel between the Buddhist ontology and the structure of virtual capitalism's universe? The film tends towards the humanist reading: seen through a Buddhist lens, the exuberance of global financial wealth is illusory, divorced from the objective reality - the very real human suffering created by deals made on trading floors and in boardrooms invisible to most of us. If, however, one accepts the premise that the value of material wealth, and one's experience of reality, is subjective, and that desire plays a decisive role in both daily life and neo-liberal economics, is it not possible to draw from it the exact opposite conclusion? Is it not that our traditional life world was based on the naïve-realist substantialist notions of external reality composed of fixed objects, while the unheard-of dynamics of "virtual capitalism" confronts us with the illusory nature of reality? What better proof of the non-substantial character of reality than a gigantic fortune which can dissolve into nothing in a couple of hours, due to a sudden false rumor?

Consequently, why complain that financial speculations with futures are "divorced from the objective reality," when the basic premise of the Buddhist ontology IS that there is no "objective reality"? The only "critical" lesson to be drawn from the Buddhist perspective about today's virtual capitalism is thus that one should be aware that we are dealing with a mere theatre of shadows, with non-substantial virtual entities, and, consequently, that we should not fully engage ourselves in the capitalist game, that we should play the game with an inner distance. Virtual capitalism could thus act as a first step towards liberation: it confronts us with the fact that the cause of our suffering and enslavement is not objective reality itself (there is no such thing), but our Desire, our craving for material things, our excessive attachment to them; all one has to do, after one gets rid of the false notion of substantialist reality, is thus to renounce one's desire itself, to adopt the attitude of inner peace and distance… no wonder such Buddhism can function as the perfect ideological supplement of today's virtual capitalism: it allows us to participate in it with an inner distance, with our fingers crossed as it were.

It is against this background that we should interpret the ultimate paradox of our predicament: we hear all the time that we live in an era of relativization of truth, that there is no objective reality but just different subjective perspectives; however, the result of this global subjectivization is not that „objective reality" disappears but that our subjectivity itself disappears, turns into a trifling whim, while the social reality continues its run. No wonder that in our era whose basic stance is best encapsulated by the title of a recent Phillip McGraw's bestseller, *Self Matters*, teaching us how to "create your life from the inside out," finds its logical supplement in books with titles like *How*

to Disappear Completely - manuals about how to erase all traces of one's previous existence and "reinvent" oneself completely (Richmond 1999).[1]

It is here that one should trace the difference between Zen proper and its Western version: the proper greatness of Zen is that it cannot be reduced to an »inner journey« into one's »true Self«; the aim of the Zen mediation is, quite on the contrary, a total voidance of the Self, the acceptance that there is no Self, no »inner truth« to be discovered. Which is why the authentic Zen masters are fully justified to interpret the basic Zen message (the liberation resides in losing one's Self, in immediately uniting with the primordial Void) as identical to the utter military fidelity, to immediately following orders and performing one's duty without consideration for the Self and its interests, i.e., to assert the standard antimilitaristic cliche about soldiers being drilled to attain the stain of mindless subordination and act out orders as blind puppets, as identical to the Zen Enlightenment. Here is how Ishihara Shummyo made this point in almost Althusserian terms of an act of interpellation which grasps the subject directly, by-passing hysterical doubt or questioning:

"Zen is very particular about the need not to stop one's mind. As soon as flintstone is struck, a spark bursts forth. There is not even the most momentary lapse of time between these two events. If ordered to face right, one simply faces right as quickly as a flash of lightning. /.../ if one's name were called, for example, 'Uemon,' one should simply answer 'Yes,' and not stop to consider the reason why one's name was called. /.../ I believe that if one is called upon to die, one should not be the least bit agitated" (Victoria 1998, 103).[2]

Far from denouncing this stance as a monstrous perversion, one should perceive in it an index of how authentic Zen differs from its Western appropriation which reinscribes it into the matrix of »discovery of one's true Self.« The logic of »inner journey,« when brought to the end, confronts us with the void of subjectivity and thus compels the subject to assume his full desubjectivization; the paradoxical Pascalean conclusion of this radical version of Zen is that, since there is no inner substance to religion, the essence of faith is the proper decorum, the obedience to the ritual as such. What Western Buddhism is not ready to accept is thus that the ultimate victim of the "journey into one's Self" is this Self itself. And, more generally, is this not the same lesson as that of Adorno's and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*? The ultimate victim of positivism are not confused metaphysical notions, but facts themselves; the radical pursuit of secularization, the turn towards our worldly life, transforms this life itself into an „abstract" anemic process – and nowhere is this paradoxical reversal more palpable than in the work of de Sade, where the unconstrained assertion

[1] See Doug Richmond, How to Disappear Completely and Never be Found, Secausus: A Citadel Press Book 1999. This book belongs to the series of how-to-do manuals which effectively form a refreshing obscene double of the official manual of how to live an authentic spiritual life: books which directly address our publicly unacceptable desires – other titles in the series are: Cheaters Always Prosper, Advanced Backstabbing and Mudslinging Techniques, Revenge Tactics, Spying on Your Spouse, etc.

[2] Quoted from Brian A. Victoria, Zen at War, New York: Weatherhilt 1998, p. 103.

of sexuality deprived of the last vestiges of spiritual transcendence turns sexuality itself into a mechanic exercise lacking any authentic sensual passion.

And is not a similar reversal clearly discernible in the deadlock of today's Last Men, postmodern individuals who reject all "higher" goals as terrorist and dedicate their life to survival, to a life filled with more and more refined and artificially excited/aroused small pleasures? What if we are »really alive« only if we engage ourselves with an excessive intensity which puts us beyond "mere life"? What if, when we focus on mere survival, even if it is qualified as "having a good time," what we ultimately lose is life itself? What if the Palestinian suicide bomber on the point of blowing himself (and others) up is, in an emphatic sense, "more alive" than the American soldier engaged in a war in front of a computer screen hundred of miles away of the enemy?

But what about the Buddhist attempts to articulate its own economy which, avoiding the trap of infinite expansion, follows the goal of moderate balance? It remains caught in the opposition between false limitless desires which only bring suffering and the authentic spiritual desire for well-being. What psychoanalysis taught us is that sensual desires are in themselves moderate, constrained to their direct goals, they become infinite and self-destructive only when they are infected by a spiritual dimension. As already F.W.J. Schelling knew, only spirituality is self-destructive in its longing for infinity, which is why Evil is much more spiritual than our sensual reality. In other words, the root of Evil is not our egotism but, on the contrary, a perverted self-destructive spirituality which can also bring us to sacrifice our lives. This dimension is missing in Buddhist economics, which is why its declared goal of the proper measure, when one attempts to practice it, tends to end up in some form of (not always) soft Fascism. (Recall that Fascism also presents itself as the middle road between the two extremes, capitalist individualism and Communist collectivism.) The cases usually mentioned are Malaysia, Thailand, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Japan, even China, but the main reference is Bhutan where

"King Jigme Singye Wangchuck and its government have promoted the concept of 'gross national happiness' (GNH) since 1972, based on Buddhist spiritual values, as a counter to gauging a nation's development by gross domestic product (GDP). This represents a commitment to building an economy that would serve Bhutan's culture based on Buddhist spiritual values instead of material development, such as being gauged by only GDP."[1]

Sounds OK, if it were not for an event which somehow spoils the picture:

> Often overlooked in all the attention received by the tiny Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan's much-touted 'Gross National Happiness' program is that the government's version of happiness includes being free of any unwelcome ethnic minorities. More than 100,000 ethnic Nepalese – a Hindu minority in Bhutan for

[1] Buddhist economics - Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhist_economics

> centuries – were forced out of Bhutan in the early 1990s by authorities who wanted to impose the country's dominant Buddhist culture."[1]

It is thus a properly Nietzschean paradox that the greatest loser of the attempts to assert moderate life against all transcendent Causes is actual life itself. What makes life "worth living" is the very EXCESS OF LIFE: the awareness that there is something for which one is ready risking one's life (we may call this excess "freedom", "honor", "dignity", "autonomy", "justice", "emancipation"…). Only when we are ready to take this risk, we are REALLY ALIVE – or, to conclude with Gilbert Keith Chesterton's perspicuous comment on the paradox of courage:

> A soldier surrounded by enemies, if he is to cut his way out, needs to combine a strong desire for living with a strange carelessness about dying. He must not merely cling to life, for then he will be a coward, and will not escape. He must not merely wait for death, for then he will be a suicide, and will not escape. He must seek his life in a spirit of furious indifference to it; he must desire life like water and yet drink death like wine."(Chesterton 1995, 9)

One of the most disturbing TV episodes of *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* ("The Glass Eye," the first episode of the third season) perfectly stages such a reversal of the excessive supplement to a human body into an object more alive than the living. body itself. Jessica Tandy plays here a lone woman who falls for a handsome ventriloquist, Max Collodi (a reference to the author of *Pinocchio*); when she gathers the courage to approach him alone in his quarters, she declares her love for him and steps forward to embrace him, only to find that she is holding in her hands a wooden dummy's head; after she withdraws in horror, the "dummy" stands up and pulls off its mask, and we see the face of a sad older dwarf who start to jump desperately on the table, asking the woman to go away… the ventriloquist is in fact the dummy, while the hideous dummy is the actual ventriloquist. Is this not the perfect rendering of an "organ without bodies"? It is the detachable "dead" organ, the partial object, which is effectively alive, and whose dead puppet the "real" person is: the "real" person is merely alive, a survival machine, a "human animal," while the apparently "dead" supplement is the focus of excessive Life.

Lacan's lesson is here that subject is strictly correlative to such an excessive object. In his Seminar XIV[2], he mentions the "weird correspondence between subject and object" ("l'etrange correspondance entre sujet et objet") – why is this correspondence strange? For two interconnected reasons. First, this correspondence is not what philosophers usually mean by the correlation between subject and object – it is almost its opposite, a kind of negative e correlation, since subject is defined precisely by being a non-object. Subject and object are two sides of the same coin, lack

[1] Ethnic cleansing in the kingdom of happiness – Foreign Policy. https://foreignpolicy.com/2010/12/13/ethnic-cleansing-in-the-kingdom-of-happiness/

[2] See S14 LOGIQUE.docx (live.com)

and excess; they cannot be "synthesized" so that excess will fill in the lack because they are strictly co-existent, one and the same thing at two different levels – if the lack were to be filled in, there would no longer be a subject, the subject would fall into reality as one of the objects. Second, this correspondence is not properly dialectical but a non-dialectical foundation, a gap which opens up and sustains the very space of dialectics, in some sense even its non-dialectical presupposition.

Here we clearly see the difference between Lacan and Badiou. For Badiou, subject is object-less, while for Lacan, subject is strictly correlative to a paradoxical object, *objet a*. Badiou's point is, of course, that subject should not be constrained to the transcendental correlation between subject and object, where "object" stands for the order of objective reality; not without irony, the best term to designate Lacan's operation left out by Badiou is the Badiouian one, *subtraction*. And, again, not without irony, it is Lacan who is materialist here, i.e., who adds a pathological "stain," a contingent remainder and/or excess, as the (im)material support of the subject correlative to transcendentally-constituted objective reality. *Objet a* is that what has to be subtracted from reality so that reality can emerge as a transcendentally-constituted field of phenomena. Lacan's thesis is that *there are (transcendentally constituted) objects (of the "external reality") because there is a split subject*.

This constitutive split of the subject (which precedes the split between subject and object) is the split between the void that "is" the subject ($) and the impossible-real objectal counterpart of the subject, the purely virtual *objet a*. What we call "external reality" (as a consistent field of positively-existing objects) arises through subtraction, when something is subtracted from it, and this something is *objet a*. The correlation between subject and object (objective reality) is thus sustained by the correlation between this same subject and its objectal correlate, the impossible-real *objet a*, and this second correlation is of a totally different kind: it is a kind of negative correlation, an impossible link, a non-relationship, between the two moments which cannot ever meet within the same space (like subject and object) not because they are too far away, but because they are one and the same entity on the two sides of the Moebius band… And we should not be surprised to find a strictly homologous paradox in a totally different domain, that of the Cold War strategy of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD):

> It is a strange paradox of our time that one of the crucial factors which make the /nuclear/ dissuasion effectively function, and function so well, is the underlying fear that, in a really serious crisis, it can fail. In such circumstances, *one does not play with fate*. If we were absolutely certain that the nuclear dissuasion is one hundred per cent efficient in its role of protecting us against a nuclear assault, then its dissuasive value against a conventional war would have dropped to close to zero" (Brodie 1973, 430-43).

The paradox is here a very precise one: the MAD strategy works not because it is perfect, but *on account of its very imperfection*. That is to say, a perfect strategy (if one sides nukes the other,

the other will automatically respond, and both sides will thus be destroyed) has a fatal flaw: what if the attacking side counts on the fact that, even after its first strike, the opponent continues to act as a rational agent? His choice is now: with his country mostly destroyed, he can either strike back, thus causing total catastrophe, the end of humanity, or not strike back, thus enabling the survival of humanity and thereby at least the possibility of a later revival of his own country? A rational agent would choose the second option… What makes the strategy efficient is the very fact that we cannot ever be sure that it will work perfectly: what if a situation spirals out of control for a variety of easily imaginable reasons (from the »irrational« aggressivity of the one part to simple technological failures or miscommunications)? It is because of this permanent threat that both sides do not want to come even too close to the prospect of MAD, *so they avoid even conventional war*: if the strategy were perfect, it would, on the opposite, endorse the attitude "Let's fight a full conventional war, since we both know that no side will risk the fateful step towards a nuclear strike!

So the actual constellation of MAD is not »If we follow the MAD strategy, the nuclear" catastrophe will not take place, «but» If we follow the MAD strategy, the nuclear catastrophe will not take place, *expect for some imprevisible incident*. «And the same goes today for the prospect of the ecological catastrophe: if we do nothing, it will occur, and if we do all we can do, it will not occur, *expect for some imprevisible accident*. This» imprevisible factor *e* «is precisely the remainder of the Real which disturbs the perfect self-closure of projected perfect strategy – it is a cut which prevents the full closure of the circle (exactly the way Lacan writes *l'objet petit a*). What confirms this paradoxical status of *e* is that, in it, possibility and impossibility, positive and negative, coincide: *it renders the strategy of prevention effective precisely insofar as it hinders its full efficiency*. In short, is this factor not quite literally (a something that is) *less than nothing*? It is negative, an obstacle, an index that something was taken away from the thing (in this case, the perfectly functioning dissuasion strategy), but if we abolish the obstacle and fill in this lack, we lose what it is an obstacle to, i.e., we get less than we had before.

This twisted space of *objet a* brings us to the erotic dimension. A voluptuous lady from Portugal told me a wonderful anecdote: when her last lover first saw her fully naked, he told her that, with just one or two kilos less weight, her body would have been perfect. The truth is, of course, that, with one or two kilos less, she would probably have looked more ordinary - it is the very excessive element which generates the illusion of disturbing perfection, so that if we were to subtract it, the result would be perfect. In short, the very element which seems to disturb perfection creates the illusion of perfection that it disturbs: when we take away the excessive element which disturbs perfection, we lose perfection itself.

There is no place for this excessive element in today's predominant behavioral and chemo-therapeutic approach which directly ground our inner experience in neuronal-biological processes, leaving no space open for the Freudian Unconscious. And although the LGBT+ and new feminists reject such an approach, they also reject psychoanalysis which is, as they like to repeat, mostly

practiced by "old white men." However, the conceptual frame within which they operate – "yes means yes," mutual consent – relies on a decidedly pre-Freudian notion of subject: individuals are supposed to know what they really want. Pathological phenomena arise from external social oppression, and individuals should just get rid of this oppression in order to regain the ability to realize their innermost sexual desires. There is no place here for the Freudian notion of the divided subject, for the immanent inconsistency of our desires (we don't know what we want, we often really desire what we don't want, we find pleasure in suffering and self-humiliation).

In § 29 of his *Minima Moralia*, Adorno proposed a claim which makes him totally incompatible with today's woke ideology: "Erster und einziger Grundsatz der Sexualethik: der Ankläger hat immer unrecht. / "First and only principle of sexual ethics: the accuser is always in the wrong." / He goes on to explain it: "What is merely identical with itself is without happiness." Adorno's claim is directed against (what we call today) identity politics as well as against sex as act of exchange between self-identical egos whose interaction is based on mutual consent - or, as Antonia Hofstätter formulated it in a courageous and brilliant reading: "Every 'I accuse you' drags into the sphere of sexuality the expectations and entitlements of conscientious consumers and those citizens who know their rights." This is why Adorno's claim "takes its impulse not from the ubiquitous demand for 'safety' that echoes across campuses from Berlin to Boston, but from a sexual utopia in which power relations are divested of their scarring force." Sex is by definition not safe, it involves exposing oneself to the loss of identity:

> The dim light of ambiguity that nourishes Adorno's outrageous line is inseparable from its promise: the promise of a wealth – however murky and repellent – that exists beyond the conscious life of the subject, a wealth in which it nevertheless partakes.[1]

One should not be afraid to draw the ultimate conclusion from these insights: The Politically Correct safe and controlled sex is a desexualized sex, to put in the series with decaffeinated coffee and communication with others who are deprived of the abyss of Otherness. The PC rejection of claims like Adorno's rejects precisely its "dim light of ambiguity" which is considered a threat to unambiguous interaction where yes means yes and no means no: it refuses to engage itself in the "promise of wealth" and is satisfied with the direct reading of Adorno's claim which reduces it to the prohibition of the victim's right to accuse the assailant.

Adorno is, of course, ridiculously one-sided: should a woman who was brutally raped not accuse her assailant? We are dealing here not with transgressive ecstatic blurring of boundaries but a simple direct brutality: the rapist gets a surplus-enjoyment from the fact that his victim is terrified by his act… Nonetheless, we should remain open to the "dim light of ambiguity" which pertains

[1] Antonia Hofstätter, "J'Accuse," available online at J'accuse | Krisis | Journal for Contemporary Philosophy. https://krisis.eu/article/view/38361 Vol. 41 No. 2 (2021): 70 Years Minima Moralia / 70 Years Minima Moralia

to language as a social link: there is no meta-language, especially in the domain of sexuality, which means that every rejection or condemnation of a sexual act, no matter how clear and unambiguous it sounds, is in principle open to the possibility of becoming sexually invested, giving birth to its own surplus-enjoyment. Unacceptable as it may sound within the Politically Correct parlance, even a brutal rape which is not part of any sado-masochist contract can be perversely enjoyed in a way disavowed by its victim. To avoid a fatal misunderstanding: not only does this fact not justify the rape (in the sense of "she really wanted it"), it makes the rape even more terrifying since it opens up the path to the psychic self-destruction of the victim – assuming openly this enjoyment-in-being-raped ruins the basic subjective consistency of the victim.

Welcome To the Desert Of *Lathouses*

But will all these paradoxes and ambiguities not disappear with the prospect of what is often referred to as »posthumanity«? One thing is sure: from the psychoanalytic standpoint, what the shift to the post-human amounts to at its most fundamental is the overcoming (leaving behind) of sexuality in its most radical ontological dimension – not just "sexuality" as a specific sphere of human existence but the Sexual as an antagonism, the bar of an impossibility, constitutive of being-human in its finitude. And the issue carefully avoided by the partisans of the new asexual man is: to what extent are many other features usually identified with being-human, features like art, creativity, consciousness, etc., dependent on the antagonism that constitutes the Sexual. This is why the addition of "asexual" to the series of positions that compose LGBT+ is crucial and unavoidable: the endeavor to liberate sexuality from all "binary" oppressions to set it free in its entire polymorphous perversity, necessarily ends up in the abandoning of the very sphere of sexuality – the liberation OF sexuality has to end up in the liberation (of humanity) FROM sexuality.

The rise of Artificial Intelligence confronts all of us with a choice: will humans show enough antifragility to survive and emerge even stronger from integrating the AI into their daily lives, or will they be extinct as humans? If humanity survives, will it remain the same humanity, the same substantial content of being-human, just enriched by a new dimension of experience and interaction, or will the very core of "being-human" be imperceptibly transformed? The key to this enigma is provided by cloning – only in cloning sexual difference disappears: an organ(ism) reproduces itself (or is reproduced) through genetic self-copying. Not only is human sexuality always-already symbolized, symbolization itself emerges through a certain cut in animal sexuality called by Lacan "symbolic castration." This disturbing nature of sex is rendered palpable in a negative way by the desperate attempts to define "healthy" pornography – here is one of the latest attempts:

> While pornography can be made for hollow gratification, with no regard for wellbeing, healthy pornography can actually contribute to disease free, safe sex,

> that actually helps enable healthy sexual development. The criteria are: a variety of sexual practices; a variety of body types, genders and races; a negotiation of consent on screen; ethical production; a focus on pleasure for all participants; and depictions of safe sex.[1]

But is sex not in its innermost "unhealthy," a deviation from its "natural" goal of reproduction? Is it not by definition enacted for "hollow gratification"? Is applying politically correct rules on pornography (showing negotiation of consent, depiction of safe sex with condoms, presenting a variety of sexual practices, genders and races…) not a ridiculous strategy which may bring additional arousal only if is perceived as a redoubled irony? Once sexual reproduction is symbolized, we get the difference between the two deaths, the biological death and the symbolic death, and what is located in this interspace is *jouissance* as a surplus beyond the pleasure-principle:

"The (mythical) immortal, irrepressible life, being by definition lost, returns as something more accurately called undead life, something indestructible because it is undead (libido, the drive). Better yet, this mythical irrepressible life instinct exists in reality only as the death drive: not a drive aiming at death but the drive to repeat the surplus(-enjoyment) that occurs at the point of the cut/loss involved in sexual division. The death drive is essentially related to surplus-enjoyment, which emerges in the process of the death drive circling around something that is not there."(Zupančič 2017, 35).

And this is why, from the strict Freudian standpoint, the human finitude (symbolic castration) and immortality (death drive) are the two sides of the same operation, i.e., it's not that the substance of life, the immortal *Jouissance*-Thing, is "castrated" by the arrival of the symbolic order. As in the case of lack and excess, the structure is that of parallax: the undead Thing is the remainder of castration, it is generated by castration, and *vice versa*, there is no "pure" castration, castration itself is sustained by the immortal excess which eludes it. Castration and excess are not two different entities, but the front and the back of one and the same entity, that is, one and the same entity inscribed onto the two surfaces of a Möbius strip.

So what if cloning will effectively become a mode of human reproduction? Will we get a different symbolic order or the end of the symbolic order? The first thing to note is that what will disappear is libido itself as the remainder/excess of sexual difference. We will be compelled to accept that, in human life, finitude is constitutive of the very transcendence which emerges against its background. Insofar as posthumanity is, from our finite/mortal human standpoint, in some sense the point of the Absolute towards which we strive, the zero-point at which the gap between thinking and acting disappears, the point at which I became *homo deus*, we encounter here gain the paradox of our brush with the Absolute: the Absolute persists as the virtual point of perfection in our finitude, as that X we always fail to reach, but when we get over the limitation of our finitude we

[1] Can pornography be healthy? If it follows six rules, perhaps, Australian lifestyle, The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2023/jun/10/can-pornography-be-healthy-if-it-follows-six-rules-perhaps

lose also the Absolute itself. Something new will emerge, but it will not be creative spirituality relieved of mortality and sexuality — in this passage to the New, we will definitely lose both, we will be neither *homo* nor *deus*.

So, what happens with God – our name for the Absolute - in the universe pervaded by science? Two interconnected things. First, a comical notion of God enters the scene, a God who depends on human approbation. As one would expect it, such a God is evoked by Kierkegaard who, in his *Concept of Anxiety,* describes in a mockingly-antihegelian way how Simon Tornacensis (the 13th century scholastic theologist from Paris)

> hought that God must be obliged to him for having furnished a proof of the Trinity /…/ This story has numerous analogies, and in our time, speculation has assumed such authority that it has practically tried to make God feel uncertain of himself, like a monarch who is anxiously waiting to learn whether the general assembly will make him an absolute or a limited monarch." (Kierkegaard 1980, 151).

Such a "God of philosophers" whose existence is logically demonstrated is a dead god, so Tornacensis was wrong or at least he should be read in a more ambiguous way: if a philosopher proves the existence of God, is the god who comes to exist in this way not a dead god? So, maybe, what God really dreads are the very success of the proof of his existence, and the situation is here the same as in the well-known anecdote about the Hearst editor: God fears that the proof of his existence will fail, but he fears even more that it will *not* fail. In short, god's impasse is that he is either alive (but as such caught in a terrifying suspension about his existence) or existing, but dead. Kierkegaard of course dismisses the attempts to logically demonstrate the existence of god as absurd and pointless logical exercises (his model of such professorial blindness for the authentic religious experience was Hegel's dialectical machinery); however, his sense of humor cannot withstand the wonderful image of a god in anxiety, dreading for his own status as if it depends on the logical exercises of a philosopher, as if the philosopher's reasoning has consequences in the real, so that, if the proof fails, god's existence itself is threatened.

And one can go even further in this line of Kierkegaardian reasoning: what undoubtedly attracted him to the remark of Tornacensis was the blasphemous idea of a god himself in anxiety. The divine impasse thus resides in the fact that the god whose existence is proven is like a monarch whom the assembly makes an absolute one: the very form of confirming his absolute power (it depends on the whim of the assembly) undermines it. The political parallel is here crucial, since Kierkegaard himself resorts to the comparison of God and king: god exposed to the philosopher's whimsy wit is like a king exposed to the whimsy wit of a popular assembly. But what is his point here? Is it simply that, in both cases, we should reject liberal decadence and opt for absolute monarchy? What complicates this simple and apparently obvious solution is that, for Kierkegaard, the (properly comical) point of the Incarnation is that that god-king becomes a beggar, a low

ordinary human. Would it thus not be more correct to conceive Christianity as the paradox of God's abdication – God steps down to be replaced by the assembly of believers called the Holy Spirit?

Our conclusion should be here that *every subject is ultimately in the position of Tornacensis's god*, forever in anxiety as to what happens if others will stop to believe in him, to pre-suppose him/her as subject (subject is for Lacan as such a presupposed subject) – we are dealing here with belief, not with knowledge. And here love enters: the most radical moment of love is not the belief of others which sustains the subject in its ex-sistence, but the subject's own counter-gesture, the terrifyingly-daring act of fully accepting that my very existence depends on others, that – to put it in somewhat inappropriate poetic terms – I am nothing but a figure in the dreamspace of an inconsistent other. This insight also compels us to renounce the cynical view that the treasure the loving one sees in the beloved is just an illusory projection: Lacan is not a cynic who thinks that there is really no treasure, that the subject is in itself only an excremental void. Recall the paradox of Kierkegaard's notion of "sickness unto death": the truly dreadful thing is not to accept the fact that one is a mere mortal being who will disappear into dust, leaving no traces behind, but to accept the hard fact that one is immortal and that, as such, one cannot escape one's conscience and the sins one has committed. In a homologous way, one should say that the truly dreadful thing is not to accept the fact that I am an excremental void, that the treasure others see in me is their projection which has nothing to do with the real core of my being – such a position ("what can I do, I'm in it for nothing, I am not responsible for what others project onto me") is an all too easy one, it offers an all too easy escape.

The truly dreadful thing is to accept the fact that there IS a treasure in me and that I cannot escape from it – this is why the notion of a treasure in me triggers anxiety, since, as Lacan pointed out, anxiety is caused by the over-proximity of the object, not by its lack. This treasure is not a secret object that the beloved HAS deep in him/herself – the true treasure IS the (beloved) subject him/herself. In other words, love does not occur when the loving subject is desperately searching in the beloved for some hidden treasure; love occurs when the loving subject discovers that the treasure in the beloved in just a deceiving fetish, that the true treasure is the fragile beloved, perplexed, at a loss, unable to relate his/her subjectivity to the treasure the beloved sees in him/her. It is this reflexive reversal from objet hidden in the subject to the subject itself which defines love, the move from blind fascination to love.

This is why the basic paradox of sex with love is that the tender consideration for the beloved Other (sexual partner) and its ruthless objectivization (reduction to a thing expected to provide intense enjoyment) do not exclude each other: the more love that binds the sexual partners is truly profound, the more each of the partners is ready to offer him/herself as the object of the other's enjoyment, or to exploit/use the other for his/her enjoyment *as an act of love*. If, on the contrary, in the midst of an intense sexual encounter, one of the partners craves for "deeper" tender acts, as if naked sexuality is somehow not enough, as if it needs some kind of "spiritual" supplement, such

craving is an infallible sign that his/her spiritual love for his/her partner is not an authentic one. Years ago, I read a Catholic sexual manual which recommended missionary position, claiming that it offers the easiest way to avoid reduction to bare sex, since, during the act, the two partners can exchange tender words – the brutal misreading of sexual activity, its implicit reduction to animal coupling in need of a "spiritual" supplement, couldn't be more palpable.

It is this coincidence of the apparent radical opposites – absolute subjectivity of love and radical self-objectivization into an object of enjoyment – which renders the Hegelian "infinite judgment" of sexual love. Without this step into complete self-objectivization, into becoming an object-instrument of the Other's enjoyment, there is no proper subjectivity in the act. A proof: in the most thorough self-objectivization, the subject is still here, i.e., the whole point of this self-objectivization is that it is performed by the two unique subjects/lovers. We are not dealing with some dissolution of subjectivity in an impersonal cosmic Enjoyment, but with something that takes place exclusively between the two subjects, me and my lover. This is why, in a link of love, intense sexual enjoyment is necessarily followed by the act (or, rather, process) of re-subjectivization, arguably the most tender act in the world through which the beloved Other re-emerges as a singular vulnerable and fragile human being.

This fragile coincidence of subjectivity and thorough self-objetivization which characterizes authentic love gets lost in in our post-modern universe which imposes another coincidence of the opposites: that of the scientific self-objectivization (naturalization) of man with its elevation into a prothetic divinity. This brings us to the second effect of science on our idea of God – to the notion of a prosthetic god. In his *Civilization and its Discontents*, Freud deployed his vision of the human being as a "prosthetic God," manufacturing and using techno logical supplements to his finite and limited body to approach the ideal of omnipotence and omniscience. As expected from Freud, his point is properly dialectical: it is not that man cannot approach these ideals, troubles emerge precisely when he seems to approach them, but things take an unexpected turn:

> Long ago /man/ formed an ideal conception of omnipotence and omniscience which he embodied in his gods. To these gods he attributed everything that seemed unattainable to his wishes, or that was forbidden to him. One may say, therefore, that these gods were cultural ideals. Today he has come very close to the attainment of this ideal, he has almost become a god himself. Only, it is true, in the fashion in which ideals are usually attained according to the general judgment of humanity: not completely, in some respects not at all, in others only half way. Man has, as it were, become a kind of prosthetic God. When he puts on all his auxiliary organs, he is truly magnificent; but those organs have not grown on to him and they still give him much trouble at times. /…/ Future ages will bring with them new and probably unimaginably great achievements in this field of civilization and will increase man's likeness to God still more. But in the

> interests of our investigations, we will not forget that present-day man does not feel happy in his Godlike character" (Freud 1961, 39).

For us, common mortals, there is an unmistakable dimension of "beyond the pleasure-principle" in our dealings with artificial organs and gadgets: instead of just enhancing our pleasures and powers, they cause fear and anxiety. In the last decades, due to bio-technological breakthroughs, prostheses exploded and wiring our brains is around the corner, and "trouble" also exploded. Even the proverbial Stephen Hawking's little finger – the minimal link between his mind and the outside reality, the only part of his paralyzed body that Hawking could move – will no longer be necessary: with my mind, I can DIRECTLY cause objects to move, i.e., it is the brain itself which will directly serve as the remote-control machine.

In the terms of German Idealism, this means that what Kant called "intellectual intuition /*intelektuelle Anschauung*/" - the closing of the gap between mind and reality, a mind-process which, in a causal way, directly influences reality, this capacity that Kant attributed only to the infinite mind of God – is now potentially available to all of us, i.e., that we are potentially deprived of one of the basic features of our finitude. And since, as we learned from Kant as well as from Freud, this gap of finitude is at the same time the resource of our creativity (the distance between "mere thought" and causal intervention into external reality enables us to test the hypotheses in our mind and, as Karl Popper put it, let them die instead of ourselves), the direct short-circuit between mind and reality implies the prospect of a radical closure.

In his *Ethics* seminar, Lacan invokes the "point of the apocalypse," (Lacan 1992, 207) the impossible saturation of the Symbolic by the Real of *jouissance*, the full immersion into massive *jouissance*. When, in a Heideggerian way, he asks, "Have we crossed the line /…/ in the world in which we live?" (Lacan, 231.), he aims at the fact that "the possibility of the death of the Symbolic has become a tangible reality" (Chiesa, 2004, 233). Lacan mentions the threat of atomic holocaust; today, however, we are in a position to offer other versions of this death of the Symbolic, principal among them the full scientific naturalization of the human mind. The apocalyptic process will reach its zero point when prostheses will no longer merely supplement the human body (and brain) but in a way supplant it, leaving behind the notion of human being as a worker whose know-how enables him to use prosthetic instruments. One should note that Lacan engages in these reflections as part of his critical confrontation with the Maoist notion of knowledge inherent to manual work (which is why intellectuals should learn from physical workers), a notion which is not foreign even to Heidegger who, in 1933, answered Jaspers (who raised the question how can a man as coarse as Hitler govern Germany) with: "Culture is of no importance, just look at his marvelous hands!" (Maier-Katkin, 2010, 99) – a weird Maoist idea of the primacy of manual work. Lacan draws attention to

> how, in a world in which there has emerged, in a way that indeed exists and is a presence in the world, not the thinking of science, but science in some way

> objectified, I mean these things entirely forged by science, Hertzian waves, simply these little things, gadgets and things, which for the moment occupy the same space as us, in a world in which this emergence has taken place, can know-how at the level of manual work carry enough weight to be a subversive factor? This is how, for me, the question arises (Lacan 2007, 149).

When Lacan mentions Hertzian waves, he draws attention to another uncanny aspect of prosthetic gadgets: they are more and more becoming invisible to us, doing their job at a level well below the threshold of our perception. What makes nanotechnology so thrilling is the prospect of constructing objects and processes in such a small dimension that all correlation with our ordinary life world is lost, so that it is effectively as if we are dealing with an alternate reality: there are no shared scales between nano-reality and our ordinary reality, and yet nonetheless we can influence our reality through nano-processes. Ray Kurzweil remarked apropos *Blade Runner*:

> The scenario of humans hunting cyborgs doesn't wash because those entities won't be separate. Today, we treat Parkinson's with a pea-sized brain implant. Increase that device's capability by a billion and decrease its size by a hundred thousand, and you get some idea of what will be feasible in 25 years. It won't be, 'OK, cyborgs on the left, humans on the right.' The two will be all mixed up.[1]

While this is in principle true, the problem is that with such an increase and decrease the prosthesis is no longer experienced as such, but becomes invisible, part of our immediate-organic self-experience, so that those who technologically control the prosthesis control us in the very heart of our self-experience. This option – the prosthesis becomes invisible – compels us to introduce another crucial distinction: not between human and posthuman but between posthuman and *inhuman*. The paradox at work here is that maybe posthumans will continue to experience their activity as humans, but what they will lose is the very inhumanity that characterizes sexuality. That is to say, the axiom of Hegel and Lacan is that, in the very core of a human being, there is the abyss of self-relating negativity ("night of the world" for Hegel, "death drive" for Freud) which is in some (far from merely metaphorical) sense inhuman: an excess which undermines what we perceive and/or experience as a human person, and the basic form of this excess is sexuality as a self-destructive drive. We are truly human only insofar as we succeed in (minimally, at least) sublimating this deadly excess. And the paradox of the passage from the inhuman to the posthuman is the one detected by Jean-Pierre Dupuy: a weird reversal of the traditional Cartesian anthropocentric arrogance which grounded human technology, the reversal clearly discernible in today's robotics, genetics, nanotechnology, artificial life and AI researches:

[1] Quoted from Ian Sample, "Frankenstein's Mycoplasma," The Guardian, June 8 2007.

> how are we to explain that science became such a 'risky' activity that, according to some top scientists, it poses today the principal threat to the survival of humanity? Some philosophers reply to this question by saying that Descartes's dream — 'to become master and possessor of nature' — has turned wrong, and that we should urgently return to the 'mastery of mastery'. They have understood nothing. They don't see that the technology profiling itself at our horizon through 'convergence' of all disciplines aims precisely at nonmastery. The engineer of tomorrow will not be a sorcerer's apprentice because of his negligence or ignorance, but by choice. He will 'give' himself complex structures or organizations and he will try to learn what they are capable of by way of exploring their functional properties—an ascending, bottom-up approach. He will be an explorer and experimenter at least as much as an executor. The measure of his success will be more the extent to which his own creations will surprise him than the conformity of his realization to the list of preestablished tasks."[1]

The motor of this self-surpassing of humans is the ongoing scientific progress in evolutionary biology, neurology, and cognitivist brain sciences which is sustained by a weird form of shame: the shame about our biological limitations, our mortality, the ridiculous way we reproduce ourselves—what Gunther Anders called the "Promethean shame,"[2] ultimately simply the shame that "we were born and not manufactured." Nietzsche's idea that we are the "last men" laying the ground for our own extinction and the arrival of a new Overman is thereby given a scientific-technological twist…

The topic that haunts our media in the last decades is: can Artificial Intelligence actually think? This topic was till now mostly dominated by the idea that AI can only imitate human intelligence, reducing it to abstract forms of reasoning, missing the true "spirit" of human intelligence. AI is thinking reduced to automatization: machines can adapt themselves to new situations, they can learn new things and new procedures, they can perform complex operations far beyond the scope a human mind. But AI is not really alive, it is literally artificial, a grey mechanistic shadow of human intelligence in which no sudden sparks explode which characterize the working of a human mind… insofar as we reflect in this way, our victory over machines is secured in advance.

However, things radically changed with the development of Artificial Neural Networks (ANN), connected units or nodes called *artificial neurons*, which loosely model the neurons in a brain. These are connected by *edges*, which model the synapses in a brain. They are used for various tasks, including predictive modeling, adaptive control, and solving problems in artificial

[1] See Jean-Pierre Dupuy's contribution in Le Débat, no. 129 (March–April 2004), quoted from Jean-Michel Besnier, Demain les posthumains, Paris: Fayard, 2012, p. 195.
[2] Gunther Anders, *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen* [The outdatedness of human beings], Munich: Beck, 1956.

intelligence. They can learn from experience, and can derive conclusions from a complex and seemingly unrelated set of information.[1] In this way, they do not imitate human thinking: what we are really encountering lately are *machines which don't think like humans*: they really think, but not simply better than us, humans – they think in a way which is radically *foreign* to human thinking.[2] From this perspective, the organic human intellectuality (our inner reflection or contemplation) – in other words, what I referred to above as the sparks of spirit - is not a sign of our priority or advantage over AI but a sign of its *inferiority*:

> Human intellectuality is seriously limited, it has already reached its zenith early in the development of the species *homo sapiens*. Today we do not think more deeply or in a more sophisticated way than the eldest Antique philosophers, and *The Illiad* can move us in the same way it would have moved us three thousand years ago. /…/ Intellectuality is linked to the stagnant organic side of the human species, and the only dimension of human intelligence which effectively develops beyond slow and unpredictable rhythms of biological evolution is technical intelligence. This means that human intelligence can expand and perfect itself only through its autonomization from organic intellectuality through technological self-overcoming. /…/ the use of intellectuality as the measure of (today's) artificial intelligence effectively only demonstrate their difference, not the superiority of human intellectuality (Krašovec, 1980, 158)

I disagree with this conclusion for two reasons. First, there is nothing natural or organic in "intellectuality"; intellectuality is rather a sign of the radical rupture between humans and animals, it breaks and disturbs organic rhythms. Second, yes, there effectively is something constrained or limited in the very foundation of human intellectuality, but it is precisely this limitation (what Heidegger called finitude) which gives birth to human transcendence, to specific human spirituality. If this limitation is abolished, we enter a totally different domain. So we should turn the terms around: human is more than over-man. What human intellectuality implies is a gap between inside and outside, between so-called inner life and outside reality, and it is not clear what will happen (or, rather, is happening) with this gap in developed AI – in allprobability, it will disappear, since machines are part of reality.

As Elon Musk put it back in 2017 not long after he founded Neuralink: "If I were to communicate a concept to you, you would essentially engage in consensual telepathy. You wouldn't need to verbalise unless you want to add a little flair to the conversation or something, but the conversation would be conceptual interaction on a level that's difficult to conceive of right

[1] See Neural network (machine learning) - Wikipedia.

[2] I rely here on the insights of Primož Krašovec – for a resume of his ideas, see "Inteligenca, ki opušča intelektualnost" (in Slovene) in *Cukr*, Ljubljana 2024, p. 94-100.

now."[1] Extend this idea to the domain of sex, for example: you could save a great sex experience in the cloud to enjoy again later – or, if you're not too private a person, you could send it over to a friend to experience. However, what Neuralink promises is not only the abolition of language but also the abolition of human sexuality. What constitutes human sexuality is an unnecessary complication that prevents direct access to a goal: failure (measured by the standards of simple instinctual mating) is cultivated as the resource of new sexual pleasures. Can we imagine something more stupid (from the standpoint of successful reproduction), for example, than the tradition of courtly love in which the completion of sex is endlessly postponed? So how could courtly love become the model of high eroticism? And what about our perverted games, in which a particular object or gesture that should be constrained to a subordinated moment of erotic foreplay turns into the central feature, the focus of libidinal intensity, which eclipses the big procreative Act? Is this dimension of erotic mediation not threatened by a direct brain-to-brain link?

Darian Leader mentions an anecdote from his analytic work, when a patient reported to him a slip of tongue that embarrassed him: he was taking a lady to a restaurant in a luxury hotel, secretly planning to take her to a room for sex after lunch; when a waiter approached them, the patient: "A bed for two, please!" instead of "A table for two, please!". Leader rejects the obvious "Freudian" reading (his real wish for sex erupted directly) and proposes the opposite one: the slip of tongue should be read as a warning not to enjoy the food too much, as a reminder that the shared lunch is just a pretext, a *Vorlust*, and that the true goal is sex. The slip of tongue was thus a desperate attempt to repress the gnawing suspicion that even sex is not "the real thing," that something is missing in it also... But Lacan goes a step further in this direction and elaborates the changed status of science implied by the profusion of objects »entirely forged by science«:

> what is involved in science as we are now, as I might say, lumbered with it – I mean have it present in our world in a manner that goes well beyond anything that might be speculated on as a result of knowledge (or, rather, cognition - *connaissance).* In effect we should all the same not forget that the characteristic of our science is not that it introduced a better and more extensive knowledge of the world, but that it made emerge into the world things that did not exist in it in any way at the level of our perception (Lacan, 1966, 158).

Science and technology today no longer aim only at understanding and reproducing natural processes, but at generating new forms of life that will surprise us; the goal is no longer just to dominate nature (the way it is), but to generate something new, greater, stronger than ordinary nature, including ourselves – exemplary is here the obsession with artificial intelligence, which aims at producing a brain stronger than human brain. The dream that sustains the scientific-technological endeavor is to trigger a process with no return, a process that would exponentially

[1] Quoted from https://waitbutwhy.com/2017/04/neuralink.html.

reproduce itself and go on on its own. The notion of "second nature" is therefore today more pertinent than ever, in both its main meanings. First, literally, as the artificially generated new nature: monsters of nature, deformed cows and trees, or – a more positive dream – genetically manipulated organisms, "enhanced" in the direction that fits us. Then, the "second nature" in the more standard sense of the autonomization of the results of our own activity: the way our acts elude us in their consequences, the way they generate a monster with a life on its own. It is *this* horror at the unforeseen results of our own acts that causes shock and awe, not the power of nature over which we have no control; it is *this* horror that religion tries to domesticate. What is new today is the short-circuit between these two senses of "second nature": "second nature" in the sense of objective Fate, of the autonomized social process, is generating "second nature" in the sense of artificially created nature, of natural monsters, i.e., the process which threatens to run out of control is no longer just the social process of economic and political development, but new forms of natural processes themselves, from the unforeseen nuclear catastrophe to global warming and the unforeseen consequences of biogenetic manipulations. Can one even imagine what can be the unforeseen result of nanotechnological experiments: new life forms reproducing themselves out of control in a cancer-like way. Here is a standard description of this fear:

> Within fifty to a hundred years, a new class of organisms is likely to emerge. These organisms will be artificial in the sense that they will originally be designed by humans. However, they will reproduce, and will 'evolve' into something other than their original form; they will be 'alive' under any reasonable definition of the word. /…/ the pace of evolutionary change will be extremely rapid. /…/ The impact on humanity and the biosphere could be enormous, larger than the industrial revolution, nuclear weapons, or environmental pollution (Farmer & Belin, 1992, 815).

This fear also has its clear libidinal dimension: it is the fear of the asexual reproduction of Life, the fear of an "undead" life that is indestructible, constantly expanding, reproducing itself through self-division – in short, the fear of the mythic creature called by Lacan „lamella" (which can vaguely be translated as „manlet," a condensation of „man" and „omelet"), libido as an organ, the inhuman-human "undead" organ without a body, the mythical pre-subjective "undead" life-substance. The line that leads from simple techno-gadgets to the undead *lamella* is not difficult to reconstruct: what makes gadgets so uncanny is that, far from simply supplementing human organs, they introduce a logic which fundamentally differs from and unsettles the "normal" libidinal economy of sexed human beings *qua* beings of language. Techno-gadgets are potentially "undead," they function as parasitic "organs without bodies" which impose their repetitive rhythm onto beings they are supposed to serve and supplement. Recall *The Mask* with Jim Carrey in which a plastic mask changes the ordinary guy into a superhero. The Mask is the a-sexual "partial object" which allows the subject to remain in (or regress to) the pre-Oedipal anal-oral universe where there is no

death and guilt, just endless fun and fight – no wonder the Jim Carrey character in *The Mask* is obsessed with cartoons: the universe of cartoons is such an undead universe without sex and guilt, a universe of infinite plasticity in which every time after a person (or animal) is destroyed it magically recomposes itself and the struggle goes on… Lacan proposes the neologism *lathouses* as the name for these »things that did not exist« prior to the scientific intervention into the real, from mobile phones to remote-controlled toys, from air conditioners to artificial hearts:

> The world is increasingly populated by *lathouses*. Since you seem to find that amusing, I am going to show you how it is written. Notice that I could have called it *lathousies*. That would have gone better with *ousia,* it is open to all sorts of ambiguity. /.../ And for the tiny little *a*-objects that you are going to encounter when you leave, on the pavement at every street corner, behind every shop window, in the superabundance of these objects designed to cause your desire in so far as it is now science that governs it, think of them as *lathouses*. I notice a bit late since I invented it not too long ago that it rhymes with *ventouse* [windy] (Farmer & Belin, 1992, 162).[12]

(And it echoes *vente*, sale, we might add, to bring out the capitalist link.) As such, *lathouse* is to be opposed to symptom (in the precise Freudian sense of the term): *lathouse* is knowledge embodied (in a new "unnatural" object). Now we can see why, apropos *lathouses*, we have to include capitalism – we are dealing with a whole chain of surpluses: scientific technology with its surplus-knowledge (a knowledge beyond mere *connaissance* of already existing reality, a knowledge which gets embodied in new objects); the capitalist surplus-value (the commodification of this surplus-knowledge in the overflow of gadgets); and, last but not least, the surplus-enjoyment (gadgets as forms of *objet a*) which accounts for the libidinal economy of the hold of *lathouses* over us. / Maybe, *lathouses* at the same time open up the way to overcome sexual activity by outsourcing it. Dildos (plastic penises which vibrate) recently acquired a counterpart, the so-called "Stamina Training Unit," a masturbatory device that resembles a battery-powered light (so we're not embarrassed when carrying it around). You put the erect penis into the opening at the top, push the button, and the object vibrates till satisfaction … So let's say I am flirting with a lady and we decide to do it: we meet at her of my place, she brings her vibrator and I my Stamina training Unit, we plug both toys into a source of electricity, then we push the vibrator into the Stamina Training Unit, turn them both on and leave all the fun to this ideal couple. Accompanied by the pleasant background buzzing, we - the two real human partners – then sit down at a nearby table, drink tea and eat cake, both of us calmly enjoying the fact that, without great effort, we have fulfilled our

[1] Doyne Farmer and Aletta Belin, "Artificial Life: The Coming Evolution," in Artificial Life, ed. by C.G. Langton, C. Taylor, J.D. Farmer and S. Rasmussen, Redwood City: Addison-.
[2] Op.cit.,162.

duty to enjoy through the machines. In this way, we are free to engage in a nice talk, with no pressure that this talk must lead to sexuality: we can just enjoy it and become asexual friends.

So what is our hope here? That, while engaged in a livid conversation, our hands touch unintentionally and we end up in bed together, performing sex without any superego pressure (because the machines already satisfied the superego demand).

References

Brodie, B. (1973). *War and Politics*, Macmillan.

Can pornography be healthy? If it follows six rules, perhaps | Australian lifestyle | The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2023/jun/10/can-pornography-be-healthy-if-it-follows-six-rules-perhaps

Chesterton, G. K. (1995). *Orthodoxy*, Ignatius Press.

Chiesa, L. (2004) *Imaginary, Symbolic and Real Otherness: The Lacanian Subject and His Vicissitudes* (doctoral thesis), University of Warwick, Department of Philosophy.

Freud, S. (1961). *Civilization and its Discontents*, Norton.

Kierkegaard, S. (1980). *The Concept of Anxiety*, Princeton University press.

Lacan, J. (1966). *Ecrits*, Seuil.

Lacan, J. (1992). *Ethics of Psycho-Analysis*, Routledge.

Maier-Katkin, D. (2010). *Stranger from Abroad*, Norton.

Nesbo, J. (2011). *Headhunbters*, Vintage Books.

Richmond, D. (1999). *How to Disappear Completely and Never be Found*, A Citadel Press Book.

Sloterdijk, P. (1989). *Eurotaoismus*, Suhrkamp Verlag.

Victoria, B. A. (1998). *Zen at War*, Weatherhilt.

Žižek, S. (2007). *The Indivisible Remainder*, Verso Books.

Žižek, S. (2012). *Less Than Nothing*, Verso Books.

Zupančič, A. (2017). *What IS Sex?* MIT Press.

Journal of Philosophical Investigations
Print ISSN: 2251-7960 Online ISSN: 2423-4419
Homepage: https://philosophy.tabrizu.ac.ir

Lifeworld, Place, and Phenomenology: Holistic and Dialectical Perspectives

David Seamon*

Professor of Architecture, Kansas State University, USA. Email: triad@ksu.edu

Article Info

Article type:
Research Article

Article history:
Received 13 June 2024
Received in revised from 23 June 2024
Accepted 26 June 2024
Published online 07 September 2024

Keywords:
homeworld; lifeworld; lived emplacement; Lively, Penelope; natural attitude; phenomenology; phenomenology of place; place.

ABSTRACT

In this article, I clarify the phenomenological concept of lifeworld by drawing on the geographical themes of place, place experience, and place meaning. Most simply, *lifeworld* refers to a person or group's day-to-day, taken-for-granted experience that typically goes unnoticed. One aim of phenomenological research is to examine the lifeworld as a means to identify and clarify the tacit, unnoticed aspects of human life so that they can be accounted for theoretically and practically. Here, I discuss some key phenomenological principles and then draw on phenomenological renditions of place as one means to clarify some of the lifeworld's social, environmental, spatial, and geographical aspects. To concretize my discussion, I draw descriptive evidence from British writer Penelope Lively's *Spiderweb*, a 1990s novel describing one outsider's efforts to come to inhabit a place—a fictitious present-day village in the southwestern British county of Somerset.

Cite this article: Seamon, D. (2024). Lifeworld, Place, and Phenomenology: Holistic and Dialectical Perspectives. *Journal of Philosophical Investigations*, 18(48), 31-52. https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.18406

© The Author(s).
https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.18406
Publisher: University of Tabriz.

* David Seamon is Professor Emeritus of Environment-Behavior and Place Studies in the Department of Architecture at Kansas State University in Manhattan, Kansas, USA. Trained in geography and environment-behavior research, he is interested in a phenomenological approach to place, architecture, and environmental design as place making. He is editor of *Environmental & Architectural Phenomenology*. His most recent books are *Life Takes Place* (Routledge, 2018) and *Phenomenological Perspectives on Place, Lifeworlds, and Lived Emplacement* (Routledge, 2023).

> [E]very opinion about "the" world has its ground in the pre-given world. It is from this very ground that I have freed myself through the epoché; I stand *above* the world, which has now become for me, in a quite peculiar sense, a *phenomenon*. Edmund Husserl (1970, 152).

Introduction

In 1979, I published *A Geography of the Lifeworld,* a phenomenological examination of *everyday environmental experience*—"the sum total of a person's firsthand involvements with the geographical world in which he or she typically lives" (Seamon 1979, 15-16).[1] The book was a revision of my 1977 doctoral dissertation, *Movement, Rest, and Encounter: A Phenomenology of Everyday Environmental Experience,* written under the direction of human geographer Anne Buttimer, who was then a professor in Clark University's School of Geography in Worcester, Massachusetts (Seamon 1977; Buttimer & Seamon 1980). Beginning in the late 1960s, Buttimer and other human geographers such as David Ley, Edward Relph, Marwyn Samuels, and Yi-Fu Tuan initiated a new disciplinary subfield called "humanistic geography." This subfield sought to position "humans and human consciousness, feeling, thoughts, and emotions at the center of geographical thinking" (Cresswell 2013, 109). A primary aim was to understand the lived relationship between people and the geographical world in which they find themselves. How and why, for example, are places important in human life, what are they experientially, and how do environmental qualities contribute to their constitution? What does it mean to be emplaced humanly in a world that always includes geographical dimensions such as space, distance, nearness, mobility, materiality, landscape, region, and nature?[2]

It was in the academic context of a developing humanistic geography that I wrote *A Geography of the Lifeworld* (henceforth *Lifeworld*). At the time, humanistic geographers were experimenting with a wide range of conceptual and methodological approaches that included idealism, pragmatism, existentialism, phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, and grounded theory (Cloke et al. 1991; Ley and Samuels 1978; Seamon 2015). In *Lifeworld,* I drew on the philosophical tradition of phenomenology, which, most simply defined, is the careful description and interpretation of human experience, awareness, and meaning. The phenomenological focus is *phenomena*— things or experiences as people experience those things or experiences. Phenomenologically, the aim is to describe any phenomenon in its own terms as it is as an experience, situation, or event understood via the real lives of real human beings. As philosopher David Cerbone, explains, phenomenology works to hold attention on "'the experience itself', to

[1] The book was reprinted in Routledge Press's "Revival" series in 2015; for a set of commentaries on the book, see Moores 2006; Seamon 2006.The current article draws from discussions in Seamon 2018, 2023.

[2] Introductions to humanistic geography include Buttimer 1976; Cloke et al. 1991, Ch. 3; Cresswell 2013, Ch. 6; Relph 1981; Seamon 2015, 2018, 2023; Seamon and Larsen 2021; Tuan 1976.

concentrate on its character and structure rather than whatever it is that might underlie it or be causally responsible for it" (Cerbone 2006, 3).[1]

In *Lifeworld,* my phenomenological method was primarily grounded in what qualitative researchers identify today as "focus groups" (Cameron 2000; Seamon and Gill 2016). Calling them *environmental experience groups,* I gathered firsthand experiential accounts from small discussion groups of volunteer participants who were willing to meet once a week to examine, in their own daily lives, environmental and geographical experiences relating to specific weekly themes such as movement patterns, emotions relating to place, the nature of noticing and attention, the meaning of home and at-homeness, places for things, deciding where to go when, and so forth (Seamon 1979, 28). Through a phenomenological explication of some 1,500 first-person observations provided by these environmental experience groups, I eventually arrived at three overarching themes—*movement*, *rest,* and *encounter*—that delineated a common lived core of everyday environmental experience. The book's first section on movement examined the habitual nature of everyday environmental behaviors and argued that the lived foundation of these behaviors is the preconscious, intelligent awareness of the body, an aspect of human experience first explored thoroughly by French phenomenological philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962). The second section on rest considered people's attachment to place and gave particular attention to at-homeness and sustaining affective relationships with places and environments. The book's third section on encounter explored the multifaceted ways in which people make or do not make attentive contact with their surroundings. I identified and described such modes of awareness as obliviousness, noticing, watching, and heightened contact. The book's concluding section examined the lived relationships and interconnections among movement, rest, and encounter and argued that their threefold structure offers one simple but integrated way to envision human environmental experience conceptually and to think about design, planning, and policy practically.

In this chapter, I draw partly on *Lifeworld* to examine directions for lifeworld research today, giving particular attention to recent phenomenological research on place. Most simply, *lifeworld* refers to one's everyday, taken-for-granted experience that typically goes unnoticed. One aim of phenomenological research is to examine the lifeworld as a way to identify and understand the tacit, unnoticed aspects of human life so that they can be accounted for theoretically and practically. Here, I identify four important assumptions that underlie a phenomenological understanding of lifeworld and then draw on the concept of place to clarify some of the lifeworld's social, environmental, spatial, and geographical aspects. To concretize my discussion, I draw on descriptive evidence from British writer Penelope Lively's *Spiderweb,* a 1990s novel describing

[1] Introductions to phenomenology include Cerbone 2006; Finlay 2011; Moran 2000; Sokolowski 2000; van Manen 2014. The classic work is Spiegelberg 1982.

one outsider's efforts to come to inhabit a place—a fictitious present-day village in the southwestern British county of Somerset (Lively 1998).

Phenomenological Assumptions for Understanding Lifeworld

I grounded *Lifeworld* in the conceptual perspective of *existential phenomenology*, a mode of phenomenological study originally developed by such philosophers as Merleau-Ponty (1962) and Martin Heidegger (1962).[1] These existential phenomenologists distrusted phenomenological founder Edmund Husserl's original emphasis on pure intellectual consciousness and instead worked toward a reflexive understanding of everyday human life and its lived meanings (Moran 2000, 13-14). Here, to clarify its nature, I discuss four central assumptions of existential phenomenology relating to the nature of human being, experience, and understanding (Compton 1997; Seamon 2018, 2023). These assumptions are:

Understanding grounded in experience;
Phenomena approached as openly as possible;
People immersed in the worlds in which they find themselves;
Describing and understanding lifeworlds as a major phenomenological aim.

1. Understanding grounded in experience

As I've already suggested, existential phenomenologists give attention to concrete human experience and the lived reality of everyday life. Phenomenologist Max van Manen explains that the aim is to discern "the primordialities of meaning as we encounter and live with things and others in our lived experiences and everyday existence" (van Manen 2014, 28). At first glance, the use of the word "lived" in phrases like "lived experience" or "lived meaning" may seem tautological—what, other than "lived," can experience be? For existential phenomenologists, however, "lived" is an essential descriptor because it "announces the intent to explore *directly* the originary or prereflective dimensions of human existence: life as we live it" (van Manen 2014, 28). Van Manen writes:

> Lived experience is [the] active and passive living through experience. Lived experience names the ordinary and the extraordinary, the quotidian and the exotic, the routine and the surprising, the dull and the ecstatic moments and aspects of experience as we live through them in our human existence (van Manen 2014, 39).

In this sense, any phenomenological articulation of human beings and their worlds must be grounded in an awareness, language, and conception that arise from, remain with, and return to *lived* human experience and meaning. The foundation for conceptual and applied claims is human actions, situations, events, and understandings as they happen spontaneously in the unfolding world of human

[1] Introductions to existential phenomenology include Finlay 2011; Compton 1997; Seamon 2000; Valle 1998; van Manen 2014.

life, which is "the ultimate setting for ourselves and for all the things we experience" (Sokolowski 2000, 44). On the one hand, this unfolding world is inestimably more than what any one person can experience or know. On the other hand, for each person, this unfolding world is always only what he or she uniquely experiences and understands it to be. As philosopher John Compton explains,

> The world is inexhaustible and transcends us; we are inevitably out in the middle of it; it is experienced independently of us. At the same time, the world is what, in the most inclusive sense, we experience (or perceive) it to be. There is no world "behind" or "beneath" the world of primordial lived experience (Compton 1997, 208).

2. Phenomena approached openly

If the topical focus of existential phenomenology is human experience and meaning, the methodological focus is empathetic contact with the phenomenon. The aim is an openness whereby the phenomenon is offered a supportive space in which it can present itself in a way whereby it is what it is most accurately and comprehensively. One way that founder Edmund Husserl described phenomenology was "back to the things themselves," by which he meant setting aside personal, cultural, ideological, and conceptual prejudices so that one might offer the phenomenon a supportive venue in which it can appear in a way that is most real (Moran 2000, 9). One of the most incisive descriptions of phenomenological method is Heidegger's cryptic directive: "To let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself" (Heidegger 1962, 58). How, in other words, might we encounter the phenomenon so that it freely has the space to be what it is rather than what we might suppose, imagine, claim, or dictate it to be?

The central means by which phenomenologists work to allow openness to the phenomenon to happen is the *phenomenological reduction*, which refers to ways to facilitate a progressively deepening awareness of the phenomenon so that it is seen in stronger and stronger light. Van Manen (2014, 215) contends that this reduction incorporates contrasting but complimentary modes of encountering the phenomenon—on the one hand, suspending any obstacles that block the phenomenon (called "bracketing" or the "epoché"); on the other hand, moving closer to the phenomenon via careful, persistent, deepening contact (called the "reduction" proper). Van Manen writes:

> The epoché describes the ways that we need to open ourselves to the world as we experience it and free ourselves from presuppositions…. The aim of the reduction is to re-achieve a direct and primitive contact with the world as we experience it or as it shows itself—rather than as we conceptualize it. But we need to realize as well that in some sense nothing is "simply given." The phenomenological attitude is sustained by wonder, attentiveness, and a desire for meaning…. The reduction aims at removing any barriers, assumptions,

> suppositions, projections, and linguisticalities that prevent the phenomena and events of the lifeworld to appear or show themselves as they give themselves. So we need to engage in the reduction in order to let that which gives itself show itself (van Manen 2014, 220-221).

In seeking to locate and describe the lived reality of human experiences and meanings, phenomenologists are skeptical of any conceptual system that arbitrarily transcribes human life, actions, and experiences into secondhand, cerebrally-derived presentations. Humanistic geography arose in part because, in the 1950s and 1960s, the discipline was dominated by quantitative-analytic research that reduced the lived richness of geographical phenomena to piecemeal, measurable, pre-established renditions that, to humanistic geographers, often seemed simplistic, intellectual caricatures of the original phenomena (Cloke et al. 1991). More recently, existential phenomenologists have criticized poststructuralist, social-constructionist, and relationalist approaches because they are seen to misrepresent and reduce the complex plenum of human experience and meaning via preselected social, cultural, political, gender, or discourse constructs and interpretations (Rojcewicz 2010; Rosenau 1992; Seamon 2015).

3. People immersed in world

Phenomenologists claim that human experience, awareness, and action are always *intentional*—i.e., necessarily oriented toward and finding their significance in a world of emergent meaning. Human beings are not just aware but aware *of something*, whether an object, living thing, idea, feeling, environmental situation, or the like (Sokolowski, 2000, 8-11). Merleau-Ponty (1962, xvii) explains that the distinguishing feature of intentionality is that "the unity of the world, before being posited by knowledge in a specific act of identification, is 'lived' as ready-made or already there." In this sense, intentionality relates to "the ways we are 'attached' to the world" and means that, experientially, we can never separate or "'step out' from the world and view it from some detached vista. We are *au monde*, meaning simultaneously 'in' and 'of' the world" (van Manen 2000, 62).

The concept of intentionality leads to a central phenomenological claim crucial in understanding lifeworld: *that human beings are always already inescapably immersed and entwined in their worlds that, most of the time, "just happen" without the intervention of anything or anyone* (Seamon 2014a, 5). How, phenomenologically, do we describe the way in which, existentially, selves and world are reciprocally related and mutually dependent? How, phenomenologically, do we locate and understand the complex, multivalent ways in which we, as human beings, are intertwined, intermeshed, entrenched and submerged in the worlds in which we find ourselves? Because of this lived intimacy between person and world, one cannot assign specific phenomena to either person or world alone. Everything experienced is "given" but also "interpreted," is "of the world" but also "of the person" (Compton 1997, 208).

One early thinker who explored the lived interconnectedness between people and their geographical worlds was French historian Eric Dardel, who examined what he called *geographicality* (*géographicité*)—the experiences and relationships binding human beings to the earth and a lived situation he considered fundamental to human life (Dardel 1952; Relph 1985, 2014). According to Dardel, this intentional commingling between people and their geographical worlds, though mostly taken for granted, is always inescapably present, whether the particular geographical surrounds are ordinary or extraordinary, within or beyond the circle of usual daily life (Dardel 1952, 1). As phenomenological geographer Edward Relph explains, geographicality is "unobtrusive, inconspicuously familiar, more lived than discussed. It is, in fact, a naming of the geographical forms of being-in-the-world" (Relph 1985, 21).

4. Describing and understanding lifeworlds

The everyday structure through which "being-in-the-world" unfolds is the *lifeworld*—a person or group's day-to-day world of taken-for-grantedness normally unnoticed and, therefore, concealed as a phenomenon. "As conscious beings," writes Moran (2005, 9), "we always inhabit—*in a pre-theoretical* manner—an experiential world, given in advance, on hand, and always experienced as a unity. It is the universal framework of human endeavor, including our scientific endeavours. It is the general structure that enables objectivity and thinghood to emerge in different ways in different cultures." One aim of existential-phenomenological study is to disclose and describe the various lived structures and dynamics of the lifeworld, which always includes spatial, environmental, and place dimensions. There is a lived wholeness to lifeworld in that, on the one hand, it refers to the normally unnoticed, automatic unfolding of everyday life as it happens for the individuals and groups involved. On the other hand, lifeworld incorporates the world in which that unfolding happens. In this sense, there is a lifeworld for each experiencing person and group but there is also a lifeworld of the place or situation that embraces those individual and group lifeworlds. This collective lifeworld is grounded and sustained, totally or in part, by the individual and group lifeworlds, just as they are grounded and sustained, totally or in part, by the collective lifeworld comprising them.

Unless it changes in some significant way, we are almost always, in our typical human lives, unaware of our lifeworld, which we assume is *the* way that life is and must be. This typically unquestioned acceptance of the lifeworld is what Husserl called the *natural attitude,* because of which we habitually assume that the world as we know and experience it is the *only* world. We "accept the world and its forms of givenness as simply *there,* 'on hand' for us" (Moran 2005, 7). Husserl characterized the natural attitude as "naïve" because "we are normally unaware that what we are living in is precisely given to us as the result of a specific 'attitude'. Indeed, even to *recognize* and identify the natural attitude as such is in a sense to have moved beyond it" (Moran 2005, 55). The difficult question, however, is "how one can awaken to the world as phenomenon instead of being directed at the things and events that appear within that world?" (Jacobs 2013, 353). One pathway toward an

answer is offered by Moran, who describes the complex lived relationship between the natural attitude and the lifeworld:

> In the natural attitude into which we are born or into which we wake, we encounter not just individual things and indeed an environing 'world of things', but also living organisms, bodies, like ours, which we encounter as *persons,* all within the context of an infinite 'surrounding world'. Moreover, we recognize that each of these embodied persons has his or her own sensitivity, sphere of free movement, view on the world, with its correlated aspects…, his or her stream of conscious experiences, his or her 'slant' on the world, surroundings, or environment…" (Moran 2005, 56).

Moran's emphasis on the existential variedness of lifeworlds can be clarified in part by realizing that any lifeworld incorporates three constitutional dimensions that, though always integrally related and interconnected experientially, can be given specific research attention, depending on a phenomenological study's particular thematic focus:

- First, a person or group's unique individual situation—e.g., one's gender, sexuality, physical and intellectual endowments, degree of ableness, personal likes and dislikes;
- Second, a person or group's unique familial, social, cultural, geographical, and historical situation—e.g., the time and place in which one lives, economic and political circumstances, religious and societal background, technological infrastructure;
- Third, a person or group's situation as it involves their lived typicality as human beings sustaining and sustained by a typical human world—e.g., the lived fact that we are bodily beings of a particular size, morphology, and physical constitution that all contribute in specific ways to how we experience and encounter our worlds.

As I sought to demonstrate in *Lifeworld,* any lifeworld is *transparent* in the sense that it is normally tacit and *just happens*, grounded in spatial-temporal situations and events more or less regular (Seamon 1979). As I argue in the last part of this chapter, one integral dimension of this lived transparency is *place,* for which I explore some holistic and dialectical dimensions. Before introducing that discussion, however, I present the concept of lifeworld in a more grounded, real-world way by drawing on a novel by critically-acclaimed British author Penelope Lively (Lively 1998).

Concretizing Lifeworld

Lively's 1998 *Spiderweb* provides a sobering, present-day portrait of one newcomer's effort to become at home in England's West Country. The novel is set mostly in Somerset, a bucolic region that, though once perhaps an integrated lifeworld grounded in history and place, has become a diverse mix of contrasting lifeworlds, more or less different because of time, happenstance, and varying life

paths—in short, "people who have always been there and people who come there fortuitously" (Lively 1998, p 1-2). Lively recounts the efforts of recently retired social anthropologist Stella Brentwood to make a home for herself by purchasing and settling in a cottage near the small, unremarkable Somerset village of Kingston Florey. From a lifeworld perspective, Stella's story is revealing because she tries to become a lived part of the Somerset lifeworld rather than remain the detached observer she has been her entire professional life, studying lineage and kinship in far-flung places like Egypt, Malta, and Scotland's Orkney Islands. How, through commitment, involvement, and affection, can she draw this chosen place inside herself so that she is *a part of* the place rather than *apart* as she has always been as professional anthropologist? Early on in the novel, she realizes that, until her present effort to make a home, she has never really felt a sense of lived connection to the communities and places she studied, which are little more than "worlds out there, richly stocked and inviting observation" (Lively 1998, 15). She has never really gathered herself up into place and actually *lived* there:

> Her professional life has been that of a voyeur, her interest in community has been clinical. She has wanted to know how and why people get along with each other, or fail to do so, rather than sample the arrangement herself. She had been simultaneously fascinated and repelled. Moving around the world, she was always alert, always curious, but comfortable also in the knowledge that, in the last resort, this was nothing to do with her. Indeed, casting a cold eye back, it now seems to her that she and her like can be seen as parasites. Intellectual parasites (Lively 1998, 75).

In seeking finally to *enter life* rather than just to observe it, Stella sets herself to engage her retirement place and to embrace its lifeworld: "This is where she would now live, not just for weeks or months but for the foreseeable future. For years" (Lively 1998, 14). She takes long walks, drives through the countryside, studies maps, reads local newspapers, and visits old buildings and places of earlier historical times. She converses with locals, shops in the small village grocery, tries to know her neighbors, and presents a talk to the local historical society. As Somerset as a place of human life comes into focus, Stella realizes that it incorporates not one but many lifeworlds that interact and overlap through subtle lived dynamics like family ties, longevity, employment, commerce, and informal interpersonal encounters:

> And thus Stella learned…. The place took shape. It ceased to be a landscape, a backdrop…. Stella perceived the intricate system of checks and balances by which things worked. She saw that there was a continuous state of negotiation, of dealing, of to-and-fro arrangements. Everyone stood in a particular relationship to everyone else, often literally so in terms of marriage connections or distant ties of blood. People employed one another, or sold things to each

> other, or exchanged services, or simply rubbed shoulders here, there, and everywhere. Each passing casual encounter in a lane or at a shop entrance reinforced this subtle and elaborate system, as hard to penetrate as any she had met.

But Stella also sees that, entwined within the more complex lifeworld of Somerset-as-place, is an unspoken, less visible mesh of individually-defined lifeworlds grounding different individuals and groups in differing ways with varying degrees of place engagement and place identity. Most broadly, she identifies two distinct substrata of Somerset's lifeworld mesh: On the one hand, the all-important stratum of long-time residents deeply rooted in place; on the other hand, visitors and residents from elsewhere, like her, who "would never be truly attuned" (Lively 1998, 72). All these lifeworlds presuppose more or less different natural attitudes that, almost entirely prereflective and unself-conscious, sustain one's relative place status and degree of belonging:

> For there were two layers here, she saw. There was the basic and significant layer, which went back a long way—two, three, or more generations. These were the people whose parents and grandparents looked out from here and who continued to do so themselves, for whom these parts were the hub of things and elsewhere was… elsewhere. Though, admittedly, a rather more familiar elsewhere nowadays, thanks to several decades of mass communications and package holidays. But grafted on to this layer was a further one, the layer of subsequent settlement—some of it transitory, some more permanent. Most transitory of all were the summer visitors, a valuable source of income for some, a confounded nuisance for others. Then there were the more abiding settlers—the retired, the owners of holiday cottages, the potters and woodcarvers and the weavers. These were digested, up to a point and depending upon their personal achievements in terms of participation and commitment…. But they would never be able to plug into the elaborate communication system which hinged upon intimate knowledge of how things stood, how things had changed and why, and what this implied in terms of expedient response and reactions. They would always tramp around wearing blinders. They would always speak with a foreign accent.

How one achieves or does not achieve "belonging to place" is one of Lively's major themes in *Spiderweb*. On the one hand, Stella realizes that really belonging somewhere requires devoted engagement: "Now was the time to prove herself. Even if she could not hope to melt into the ancient levels of this place…, there were still slots into which she could fit in the wider context. Join things, she told herself sternly…. Participate" (Lively 1998, 76). On the other hand, she faces an unyielding disinterest in engaging this place:

> She [became aware of] a reality that continued to surprise her—this house that was apparently hers, this pleasant landscape in which she had fortuitously arrived… She was comfortable enough with these surroundings, but still not certain how she had gotten here or why. In the past there had been good reason to be wherever she found herself. Now, she was where she was simply because one had to be somewhere (Lively 1998, 133).

The insurmountable challenge for Stella is to move from detached observer to immersed-inhabitant-in-place. Partly because of unexpected, unsettling events, Stella cannot find in herself the personal commitment or involvement required for fully inhabiting her retirement place. She is unable to intertwine her lifeworld with the lifeworld of Somerset. She cannot shift from outsider to insider, never really fits in, and eventually leaves. I return to Stella's situation later in this chapter, but first I examine conceptual and lived connections between lifeworld and place.

Placing Lifeworld

As I've emphasized repeatedly, a central phenomenological assumption is that people and their worlds are integrally intertwined. If the concept of lifeworld offers one way to clarify this lived intimacy between people and world, another useful concept is *place*, which is powerful conceptually and practically because, by its very constitution, it offers a way to specify more precisely the experienced wholeness of lifeworlds.[1] Phenomenologically, place can be defined as *any environmental locus that draws human experiences, actions, and meanings together spatially and temporally* (Seamon 2014, 1). By this definition, a place can range from an environmental element or room to a building, neighborhood, town, city, or geographical region. Phenomenologists are interested in the phenomenon of place because it is a primary contributor to the spatial, environmental, and temporal constitution of any lifeworld. Human being is always human-being-in-place.[2] As phenomenological philosopher Edward Casey explains,

> The relationship between self and place is not just one of reciprocal influence (that much any ecologically sensitive account would maintain) but also, more radically, of constitutive coingredience: each is essential to the being of the other. In effect, there is *no place without self and no self without place.* What is needed is a model wherein the abstract truth of this position… can be given concrete articulation without conflating place and self or maintaining the self as an inner citadel of unimplaced freedom (Casey, 2001, 684).

[1] Reviews of place research include Cresswell 2014; Gieryn 2000; Janz 2005; Lewicka 2011; Manzo 2005; Patterson and Williams 2005; Seamon 2021; Trentelman 2009.

[2] Discussions of a phenomenological approach to place include Casey 2009; Donohoe 2014; Malpas 1999, 2001, 2009, 2014; Moores 2012; Mugerauer 1994; Relph 1976, 2009; Seamon 2000, 2013a, 2014b, 2018, 2023

As indicated by Casey's emphasis on lived inseparability and intertwinement—what he calls "constitutive coingredience"—place is not the physical environment distinct from the people associated with it. Rather, place is the indivisible, typically transparent phenomenon of person-or-group-experiencing-place. The phenomenologist recognizes that places are dynamic, shifting, and encountered differently by different experiencers (Seamon 2014b, 2018). For example, the same physical place can invoke a wide range of place experiences and meanings existentially (as illustrated by Stella Brentwood's progressive recognition of Somerset lifeworlds). Similarly, over time, a person or group's experience and understanding of place may shift (for example, Stella's eventual failure to inhabit her chosen place). In short, place as a phenomenon is typically complex in experiential constitution and dynamic in the sense that all places change over time. In the last part of this chapter, I offer one way to clarify this lived complexity by considering some holistic and dialectical aspects of place that I illustrate experientially via Stella Brentwood's situation in *Spiderweb*.

Place as Wholeness

Phenomenologically, place is a significant concept because, by its very constitution, it offers a way to articulate and understand the experienced wholeness of people-in-world (Casey, 2009; Malpas 1999; Stefanovic, 2000). Place is a phenomenon integral to human life and holds worlds together spatially and environmentally, marking out centers of human experience, meaning, and action that, in turn, make place. One of the most important thinkers for understanding the wholeness of place is Merleau-Ponty (1962, 1968), who contended that the lived foundation of human experience is *perception*, which he interpreted as the immediate, taken-for-granted givenness of the world undergirded by the *lived body*—a body that simultaneously experiences, acts in, and is aware of a world that, typically, responds with immediate pattern, meaning, and contextual presence. Merleau-Ponty understood the lived body as a pre-predicative, lived relationship between an intelligent but unself-conscious body and the world it encounters, understands, and makes use of through continuous immersion, awareness, and actions. "The body [is] the place," he explains, where we "take a hold upon space, the object, or the instrument" (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 154).

In considering the relationship between the lived body and place, one can speak of *environmental embodiment*—in other words, the various lived ways, sensorily and motility-wise, that the body in its pre-reflective perceptual presence encounters and reciprocates with the world at hand, especially its environmental and place dimensions (Finlay 2006; Seamon 2013a; Toombs 2001). Merleau-Ponty argued that perception incorporates a lived dynamic between perceptual body and world such that aspects of the world—for example, *seeing* the softness of wood shavings or *hearing* the hard brittleness of glass when it breaks (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, 229)—are understood because they instantaneously evoke in the lived body their interconnected, experienced qualities. Merleau-Ponty also related the lived body to a more active, *motor* dimension of perception—what he termed *body-subject*, or pre-reflective corporeal awareness manifested through action and

typically in sync with and enmeshed in the physical world in which the action unfolds (Merleau-Ponty 1962; Morris 2004; Seamon, 2013a).

Drawing on the concept of body-subject, other phenomenological studies have pointed to its spatial and place versatility as expressed in more complex bodily ensembles extending over time and space and contributing to a wider lived geography (Allen 2004; Hill 1985; Seamon 1979; Toombs 2001). In *Lifeworld*, I highlighted two such bodily ensembles: first, *body ballets*—sets of integrated gestures, behaviors, and actions that sustain a particular task or aim, for example, planting a garden, doing laundry, setting a table, and so forth; and, second, *time-space routines*—sets of more or less habitual bodily actions that extend through a considerable portion of time, for example, a getting-ready-for-bed routine, or a Saturday-afternoon-shopping routine (Seamon, 1979, Ch. 6). Perhaps most pertinent to the wholeness of place is the possibility that, in a supportive physical environment, individuals' bodily routines can converge and commingle in time and space, thereby contributing to a larger-scale environmental ensemble that, in *Lifeworld*, I called *place ballet*—an interaction of individual bodily routines rooted in a particular environment, which often becomes an important place of interpersonal and communal exchange, meaning, and attachment. Examples would include a popular student café, a well-used village grocery; a vibrant city street, a lively urban plaza, or a flourishing urban neighborhood (Fullilove, 2004, Jacobs, 1961; Klinenberg, 2004; Oldenburg, 2001, Seamon, 1979, 2013a; Seamon & Nordin, 1980).

Place Ballet in *Spiderweb*

In her novel, lively infers direct and indirect references to place ballet. She describes how southwestern England shifts in summer, as tourists and vacationers overwhelm the region. Yet "real life continues" and "People are still growing things and selling them and providing one another with services and necessities. Most of them spend most of their time in one place, contemplating the same view, locked in communion with those they see every day" (Lively, 1998, 6). Throughout the novel, Lively sketches the life of Somerset by inserting items from the local newspaper highlighting events like fox hunts, puppy shows, livestock sales, and entertainment venues. Intimating the presence of a Kingston Florey place ballet, lively describes the importance of the village green as "the scene of various concurrent actions, most of them mutually exclusive" (Lively, 1998, 184). Teenagers regularly hang out at one corner of the green and ignore a gathering of mothers with small children, who in turn ignore Stella and other older users—mostly "the retired, the settlers, the colonizers" (Lively, 1998, 184).

Another important site of village place ballet is the local shops, which "still had some clout as "centres for the exchange of information and opinion" (Lively 1998, 120). As one way to learn about Kingston Florey, Stella regularly shops in the village grocery nearest her cottage—an establishment run by Molly, "a product of the place" and with whom it is "neither possible or expedient to complete any transaction without a conversation" (Lively, 1998, 121). After two months in her new home, Stella is asked by Molly if she is getting to know her neighbors. Molly

then offers an unasked-for evaluation of the "mixed lot along the lane there" (Lively, 1998, 121). She is particularly critical of the dysfunctional Hiscox family, who will play a key role in Stella's eventual departure from Kingston Florey: "those boys—not what you might call charmers, those two, are they? Never a civil word" (Lively, 1998, 121).

At one point in the novel, Stella contrasts her Kingston Florey encounters with her research observations in a Malta village where old men sat regularly on a bench under a tree and where, at every street corner, "there was forever a knot of talking women." The village is a perpetual place ballet, and Stella generates a list of its parts:

> The informal conference centre that was the shop or the coffee house. The comments and interrogations shouted from the doorways. The small excursions on foot from here to there for no particular purpose other than to see who might be around… In other words, the fervent face-to-face community life of a world largely innocent of cars and telephones, for better or for worse. What have we come to? Thought Stella (Lively, 1998, 75).

Stella, however, is not sure that she would wish to live like that, even though Kingston Florey might offer similar possibilities, if only she could become more deeply engaged. Independent and detached, however, Stella finds intercourse with her new world difficult: She "retreats behind her closed door and into the protective shell of her car, from which a wave and a smile will suffice" (Lively, 1998, 75).

Place as Dialectic: Homeworld and Alienworld

If place can be examined phenomenologically as an environmental whole via concepts like place ballet, it also can be considered *dialectically* in terms of such lived binaries as here/there, near/far, center/horizon, dwelling/journey, horizontal/vertical, insideness/outsideness, and so forth (e.g., Casey 2009, Harries 1997; Relph, 1976, Seamon, 1979; Tuan, 1974, 2014, 9-28). Binary relationships are significant phenomenologically because environmental and place experiences often involve some continuum of lived opposites as, for example, Stella Brentwood's efforts as an outsider to become an insider to place. To illustrate one way in which a dialectical perspective might shed additional light on lifeworlds and places, I discuss Edmund Husserl's phenomenological explication of *homeworld/alienworld* (Husserl, 1973).

To clarify this lived binary, one first needs to understand the lived meanings of homeworld and alienworld separately. As Husserl interpreted it, the *homeworld* is the tacit, taken-for-granted sphere of experiences, understandings, and situations marking out the world into which each of us is born and matures as children and then adults. The homeworld is always in some mode of lived mutuality with the *alienworld*, which is the world of difference and otherness but is only provided awareness because of the always already givenness of the homeworld (Donohoe, 2011, 2014, 12-20; Seamon, 2013b; Steinbock, 1995, 178-85). Phenomenological philosopher Anthony Steinbock

emphasizes that homeworld and alienworld are always "co-relative," "co-constitutive," and "co-generative" in the sense that neither can be regarded "as the original sphere [of lifeworld], since they are in a continual historical becoming as delimited from one another" (Steinbock 1995, 179). In this situation of co-constitution and go-generation, the homeworld is that lived portion of the lifeworld wherein one is most unself-consciously who one is, largely because of the happenstance of time, place, birth factors, and familial and societal circumstances. As phenomenological philosopher Jane Donohoe explains, the homeworld is "a unity of sense that is manifest in a pre-givenness of the things of the world that constitute the norm by which we judge other worlds and by which the pre-givenness of other worlds becomes given" (Donohoe 2011, 30). Here, norms and normativity do not refer to some arbitrary ethical or ideological system of right and wrong or better and worse but, rather, to "a foundational standard to which other places are compared in terms of our embodied constitution of the world" (Donohoe, 2011, 25).

The normative significance of the homeworld is entirely relative objectively but, subjectively, affords the taken-for-granted world view and values by which the person and group evaluate lifeworlds more or less different than their own. The homeworld incorporates one's manner of lived embodiment, and his or her lived relationships with place evoke a particular mode of comportment that "is not simply one's comportment toward this particular place, but simply one's comportment" (Donohoe 2011, 31). In this sense, we always "carry with us the structure of our [homeworld] in the structure of our lived-bodies, in our typical comportment and in our practices" (Steinbock, 1995, 164).

Though still remaining in the natural attitude, we only recognize the presence of the homeworld when we find ourselves in worlds different from its tacit typicality, normativity, and taken-for-grantedness. In relation to the homeworld, the alienworld presents norms, behaviors, and situations that are more or less different from what a person in his or her homeworld takes for granted. As Steinbock explains, the homeworld plays a central role in sustaining the identity we understand as ourselves:

> A homeworld is privileged because it is that through which our experiences coalesce as our own and in such a way that our world structures our experience itself. This constitutional privilege… is indifferent to whether we like it or not, or to whether it makes us happy or miserable. The point is that the norms that guide the homeworld are our norms, our way of life, as that to which we have accrued (Steinbock, 1995, 232).

Husserl argued that we potentially grow as persons through two sorts of lived exchanges between homeworld and alienworld—what he calls *appropriation* and *transgression* (Steinbock 1995, 179). In appropriation, we involve ourselves in situations of "the co-constitution of the alien through appropriative experience of the home" (Steinbock, 1995, 179). Conversely, transgression involves situations of "the co-constitution of the home through the transgressive experience of the

alien" (Steinbock, 1995, 179). In appropriation, we encounter qualities of an alienworld *within our own homeworld*; perhaps we accept those qualities because they are helpful, inescapable, or revelatory. In a reciprocal way, in transgressive experiences, we encounter the alienworld because we *have left our homeworld*; as in appropriation, we recognize and perhaps accept potentially necessary or helpful qualities of that alienworld (Seamon, 2013b). Steinbock (1994, 214) describes appropriation and transgression as modes of "critical comportment" that "may entail the renewal of a homeworld's norms, revitalizing and renewing its internal sense; [this process] may even demand going against the prevalent normality, replacing old norms with a new ethical normality in an attempt to realize the homeworld more fully." One must emphasize, however, that appropriation and transgression can also involve the acceptance of alienworld values and actions that undermine the homeworld and weaken its lived integrity as a lifeworld.

I am not claiming here that the homeworld/alienworld dialectic works conceptually for describing all manner of places. Especially in today's world of social and cultural diversity, however, Husserl's phrasing offers a valuable way to think through place complexity: the way, for example, socially-different neighborhoods perceive and interact with each other; or the situation of a household of domestic violence or child abuse. Husserl's homeworld/alienworld offers one way to understand the typical, taken-for-granted ground of the places in our lives: That place is part and parcel of the homeworld's normative significance so who people are in their homeworld places is not simply their comportment in or way of being toward those places but simply their comportment and way of being (Donohoe, 2011, 31).

Homeworld and Alienworld in *Spiderweb*

In Lively's novel, the lived binary of homeworld/alienworld marks a central factor because of which Stella Brentwood ultimately fails in making Somerset a home. Sarah describes her homeworld before retirement in terms of a "bird of passage": "in the field she had been in the ultimate state of transience—the invisible observer, the visitor from outer space. The people in whom she was interested were there, in that place—she herself was both there and crucial apart" (Lively, 1998, 176). At one point, she describes her life as a mesh-like homeworld comprised of temporary places and connections encountered in shifting ways because of shifting self-understandings:

> She saw lines—black lines that zig-zagged this way and that, netting the map of England, netting the globe, an arbitrary progress hither and thither. And sometimes these lines crossed one another. The intersections must surely be points of significance—these places to which she had been twice, three times, many times, but as different incarnations of herself, different Stellas ignorant of the significance of this site—that she would revisit it as someone else.

In many ways, Somerset is an alienworld for Stella, particularly in the sense that it challenges her to enter into place via efforts of appropriation and transgression whereby she attempts to make Somerset's presence a part of her lifeworld, which, reciprocally, might become a small but embedded part of Somerset's lifeworld. Unfortunately for Stella, one of her neighbors is Karen Hiscox, her husband Ted, and two sons. Though Stella only makes their acquaintance superficially, this family demonstrates a profoundly dysfunctional homeworld grounded in psychosis and physical and mental abuse. Forties-something Karen Hiscox is deeply disturbed psychologically, partaking in explosive verbal attacks against people by whom she feels slighted, including her husband and sons: "She always won in a fight—with anyone at home or outside—just because she never gave up. She could shout anyone down—eventually the other person had had all they could stand and backed off" (Lively, 1998, 168). Teenage sons Michael and Peter have absorbed her odious ways and are "a general cargo of resentment" (Lively, 1998, 176). They misunderstand Stella's neighborly actions and eventually, out of misplaced spite, shoot and kill a shelter dog that Stella has recently adopted as one way to engage with her place.

Lively's novel is powerful, partly for the way it depicts these two geographically adjacent but dramatically contrasting homeworlds that have no lived sense of the other. Stella sees Peter and Michael as "poor little tykes," whereas they see Stella as an old woman who regularly makes fun of their appearance and possessions, even though all she is attempting is to be friendly to the two teenagers by greeting them when she sees them and asking what she assumes to be pertinent, non-judgmental questions about their lives. Ironically, in trying to engage with her place through getting to know Michael and Peter, Stella unknowingly turns them against her, and they shoot the dog, which Stella has left alone in her unlocked cottage: "they'd be one up on that silly old cow forever now…" (Lively, 1998, 197).

The lived binary of homeworld/alienworld is useful because all places have a generative dimension by which they evolve, devolve, or remain more or less the same. Especially today when shared geographies sometimes clash because of social and cultural diversity, homeworld and alienworld offer a useful way to think about identity, alterity, commonality, and the reconciliation of differences. For much of her professional life, Stella took for granted a homeworld incorporating a detached attitude—from the places she studied and from the lifeworlds associated with those places: "The people in whom she was interested were there, in that place—she herself was both there and crucially apart. If she lived permanently anywhere, it was in a landscape of the mind" (Lively, 1998, 176). Successfully objectifying the homeworlds of others, however, is a much different lived situation than subjectively dissolving one's objectifying attitude to place and becoming deeply rooted, like Stella's garrulous postman, a Somerset inhabitant by birth who "was of this place, and knew what was what" (Lively, 1998, 93). Yet again different is the dysfunctional insularity of the Hiscox homeworld, which takes for granted and perpetuates a damaging way of being those distrusts and despises the "alienworld" of any "different" person like Stella, for whom

the Hiscox sons have no intellectual or emotional means to be interested in or trust. Once they kill her dog, Stella's brittle lived connectedness to place is broken, and she leaves—to where, we're not told.

Understanding Lifeworld and Place

In this chapter, I have sought to clarify the phenomenological concepts of lifeworld and place and suggest some ways in which they can be considered holistically and dialectically. The examples here are limited, and one could draw on other holistic and dialectical interpretations to generate complementary understandings of lifeworld and place. In *Lifeworld*, for example, I drew on several lived binaries grounded in the movement/rest dialectic and offering interpretive ways to understand that dialectic via more penetrating lived structures like home/horizon, dwelling/journey, and insideness/outsideness (e.g., Buttimer, 1980; Jager, 1974; Relph, 1976; Seamon, 2008). I also considered how the lived wholeness of everyday environmental experience could be portrayed through the interconnected "triad" of movement, rest, and encounter. I identified two complementary lived ways whereby people understand and engage with their geographical worlds (Seamon, 1979, Ch. 18). On the one hand, I identified a *triad of habituality*, which referred to the usual ordinariness and humdrum of everyday life, which much of the time involves taken-for-granted repetition and routine that most people, unless required, are unwilling to change. On the other hand, I identified a *triad of openness*, which involves those moments in day-to-day life when one is suddenly aware of the world in a more alert, sensitive way. Ultimately, everyday environmental experience involves some lived combination of these two triads, though phenomenologically a major aim is to develop self-conscious means for more often invoking the engaged, expanding awareness of the triad of openness.

The broader point to be made is that there are many interpretive ways to direct phenomenological studies of lifeworld and place, and I hope this chapter points toward some promising possibilities. An existential-phenomenological understanding of lifeworld and place begins with the specific experiences of specific individuals and groups in specific times and places. The aim, however, is not idiographic descriptions of particular real-world situations. Rather, these situations are a descriptive context for exploring and locating broader patterns and structures of human experience and human life.

In ending this chapter, I want to make one last important point about lifeworld. One mistake made by newcomers to phenomenology is to objectify lifeworld by misunderstanding it as a thing that can be separated from the experiencer of which it is part. One can never say that he or she "has" a lifeworld. It would be more accurate to say that the lifeworld "has" us in the sense that the lifeworld is the always, already pre-given world in relation to which the experiencer has no choice but to be entwined and a part. Lifeworlds can change for better and worse, but always this change happens because of and via the lifeworld—for example, a young woman is able to break out of a limiting homeworld because aspects of her lifeworld open horizons to education and a better life.

The concept of lifeworld is so difficult to grasp because it is always present but almost always hidden from conscious awareness. At times, when some aspect of the lifeworld suddenly shifts—for example, our computer crashes or our car won't start—we realize the taken-for-granted structure and connectedness of daily life but this realization *remains within the natural attitude.* Most of the time, daily life just happens and the lifeworld and natural attitude stay hidden as phenomena. As Husserl writes: "The world is pre-given to us, … not occasionally but always and necessarily as the universal field of all actual and possible praxis, as horizon. To live is always to live-in-certainty-of-the-world" (Husserl, 1970, 142).

One aim of phenomenology is to reveal, describe, and interpret the various dimensions of lifeworld and natural attitude. Phenomenology, writes Merleau-Ponty, "slackens the intentional threads which attach us to the world and thus brings them to our notice" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, xiii). At the same time, phenomenological discovery is not easy or immediate because so often it reveals aspects of lifeworld and place that are "strange and paradoxical" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, xiii). One need go no further than the uncanny, inopportune adjacency of Stella Brentwood and the Hiscox family—an unpredictable and unfortunate alignment of serendipity and geography that unravels one person's possibility for embracing place. "Fortune," writes Lively, "can serve up some strange conjunctions" (Lively, 1998, 2).

Yet running beneath the ambiguity, uncertainty, and hazard of real-world human experience are essential, invariant, non-contingent structures marked by phenomenological concepts like lifeworld, natural attitude, place, and homeworld. These lived structures always and inescapably underlie human worlds, wherever and whenever. A primary aim of phenomenological explication is to make these lived structures available for academic research, practical intervention, and deeper understanding.

References

Allen, C. (2004). Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology and the Body-in-Space: Encounters with Visually Impaired Children, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space,* 22(5), 719-735. http://dx.doi.org/10.1068/d303t

Buttimer, A. (1976). Grasping the Dynamism of Lifeworld, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers,* 66(2), 277-292. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8306.1976.tb01090.x

Buttimer, A. (1980). Home, Reach, and the Sense of Place. In *The Human Experience of Space and Place.* pp. 166-187. Edited by A. Buttimer & D. Seamon, Croom Helm.

Buttimer, A. and Seamon, D., 1980. *The Human Experience of Space and Place,* Croom Helm.

Cameron, J. (2000). Focussing on the Focus Group. In *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography*. Editon by I. Hay, pp. 83-102, Oxford University Press.

Casey, E. S. (2001). Between Geography and Philosophy: What Does It Mean to Be in the Place-World? *Annals of the Association of American Geographers,* 91(4), 683-693. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/0004-5608.00266

Casey, E. S. (2009). *Getting Back into Place* 2nd edn. Bloomington, Indiana University Press.

Cerbone, D. R. (2006). *Understanding Phenomenology.* Acumen.

Cloke, P., Philo, C., & Sadler, D. (1991). *Approaching Human Geography: An Introduction to Contemporary Theoretical Debates.* Guildford Press.

Cresswell, T. (2013). *Geographical Thought: A Critical Introduction,* Wiley-Blackwell.

Cresswell, T. (2014). *Place: A History*. Blackwell.

Dardel, E. (1952). *L'Homme et La Terre.* Presses Universitaires de France.

Donohoe, J. (2011). The Place of Home. *Environmental Philosophy*, 8 (1), 25-40. http://dx.doi.org/10.5840/envirophil2011812

Compton, J. (1997). Existential Phenomenology, in *Encyclopedia of Phenomenology*. pp. 205-209, Edited by L. Embree, Kluwer.

Donohoe, J. (2014). *Remembering Places.* Lexington Books.

Finlay, L. (2006). The Body's Disclosure in Phenomenological Research, *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(1), 19-30. http://dx.doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp051oa

Finlay, L. (2011). *Phenomenology for Therapists.* Wiley-Blackwell.

Fullilove, M. T. (2004). *Root Shock.* Ballantine Books.

Gieryn, T. F. (2000). A Space for Place in Sociology, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26 (), 463-96;

Graumann, C. F. (2002). The Phenomenological Approach to People-Environment Studies, in *Handbook of Environmental Psychology.* pp. 95-113, *Edited by* R. Bechtel & A. Churchman, Wiley.

Harries, K. (1997). *The Ethical Function of Architecture.* MIT Press.

Heidegger, M. (1962). *Being and Time.* Harper & Row.

Hill, M. (1985). Bound to the Environment: Towards a Phenomenology of Sightlessness, in *Dwelling, Place and Environment: Towards a Phenomenology of Person and World.* pp. 99-111, Edited by D. Seamon & R. Mugerauer, Martinus Nijhoff.

Husserl, E. (1970). *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*. Northwestern University Press.

Husserl, E. (1973). *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität.* Martinus Nijhoff.

Jacobs, H. (2013). Phenomenology as a Way of Life? Husserl on Phenomenological Reflection and Self-Transformation. *Continental Philosophical Review*, 46 (3), 349-369. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11007-013-9267-8

Jacobs, J. (1961). *The Death and Life of Great American Cities.* Vintage.

Jager, B. (1975). Theorizing, Journeying, Dwelling. In *Duquesne Studies in Phenomenological Psychology*, vol. 2. Edited by A. Giorgi, W. Fischer, & R. Von Eckartsberg, pp. 235-260, Duquesne Unviversity Press.

Janz, B. (2005). The Range of Place, *City & Community*, 4(1), 87-94. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1535-6841.2005.00104.x

Klinenberg, E. (2004). *Heat Wave.* University of Chicago Press.

Lewicka, M. (2011). Place Attachment. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 31(3), 207-30. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2010.10.001

Ley, D., & Samuels, M. (1978). *Humanistic Geography: Problems and Prospects.* Maaroufa.

Lively, P. (1998). *Spiderweb.* HarperCollins.

Manzo, L. C. (2005). Exploring Multiple Dimensions of Place Meaning, *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 25, 67-86.

Malpas, J. (1999). *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography.* Cambridge University Press.

Malpas, J. (2001). Comparing Topologies. *Philosophy and Geography*, 4(2), 231-238.

Malpas, J. (2009). Place and Human Being, *Environmental and Architectural Phenomenology*, 20 (3), 19-23.

Malpas, J. (2014). Human Being as Placed Being. *Environmental and Architectural Phenomenology*, 25 (3), 8-9.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). *Phenomenology of Perception.* Routledge and Kagan Paul.

Moores, S. (2006). Media Uses and Everyday Environmental Experiences: A Positive Critique of Phenomenological Geography, *Particip@tions*, *3*, 3, 2 (November); on-line journal available at: www.participations.org/ [last accessed 18 November 2014].

Moores, S. (2012). *Media, Place and Mobility.* Palgrave MacMillan.

Moran. D. (2000). *Introduction to Phenomenology.* Routledge.

Moran, D. (2005). *Edmund Husserl: Founder of Phenomenology.* Polity.

Morris, D. (2004). *The Sense of Space.* State University of New York Press.

Mugerauer, R. (1994). *Interpretations on Behalf of Place*. State University of New York Press.

Oldenburg, R. (1999). *The Great Good Place,* 2nd edn. Marlowe & Company.

Patterson, M. & Williams, D. (2005). Maintaining Research Traditions on Place, *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 25(4), 361-380. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2005.10.001

Relph, E. (1976). *Place and Placelessness.* Pion.

Relph, E. (1981). *Rational Landscapes and Humanistic Geography.* Croom Helm.

Relph, E. (1985). Geographical experiences and Being-in-the-World: The Phenomenological Origins of Geography, in *Dwelling, Place and Environment: Toward a Phenomenology of Person and World*, Edited by D. Seamon & R. Mugerauer, pp. 15-31, Martinus Nijhoff.

Relph, E. (2014). Varieties of Phenomenological Description. *Environmental and Architectural Phenomenology*, 25 (3), 38-39.

Rojcewicz, R. (2010). Husserl versus Derrida. In *The Redirection of Psychology,* pp. 307-327, Editon by T. Cloonan & C Thiboutot, Interdisciplinary Circle of Phenomenological Research, University of Quebec.

Rosenau, P. M. (1992). *Post-Modernism and the Social Sciences.* Princeton University Press.

Seamon, D. (1977). *Movement, Rest, and Encounter: A Phenomenology of Everyday Environmental Encounter*, doctoral dissertation. Graduate School of Geography, Clark University.

Seamon, D. (2015). *A Geography of the Lifeworld: Movement, Rest and Encounter.* St. Martin's Press; Routledge, Routledge Revivals.

Seamon, D. (2000). Phenomenology in Environment-Behavior Research, in *Theoretical Perspectives in Environment-Behavior Research*, Edited by S. Wapner, J. Demick, T. Yamamoto, & H. Minami, pp. 157-78, Plenum.

Seamon, D. (2006). *A Geography of Lifeworld* in Retrospect: A Response to Shaun Moores, *Particip@tions*, *3*, 3, and 2 (November); on-line journal available at: www.participations.org/.

Seamon, D. (2008). Place, Placelessness, Insideness, and Outsideness in John Sayles' *Sunshine State, Aether: A Journal of Media Geography*, 3 (6), 1-19.

Seamon, D. (2013a). Lived Bodies, Place, and Phenomenology: Implications for Human Rights and Environmental Justice, *Journal of Human Rights and the Environment*, 4(2), 143-66. http://dx.doi.org/10.4337/jhre.2013.02.02

Seamon, D. (2013b). Phenomenology and Uncanny Homecoming: Homeworld, Alienworld, and Being-at-Home in Alan Ball's HBO Television Series, *Six Feet Under*, in *Resisting the Place of Belonging*. Edited by D. Boscaljon, pp. 155-170, Burlington, Ashgate.

Seamon, D. (2014a). Human-Immersion-in-World, *Environmental and Architectural Phenomenology*, 25 (3), 5-7.

Seamon, D. (2015). Lived Emplacement and the Locality of Being: A Return to Humanistic Geography? in *Approaches to Human Geography*, pp. 35-48. Edited by S. Aitken & G. Valentine, Sage.

Seamon, D. (2018). *Life Takes Place: Phenomenology, Lifeworlds, and Place Making*. Routledge.

Seamon, D. (2021). Place attachment and phenomenology: The dynamic complexity of place, in *Place Attachment: Advances in Theory, Methods and Research*, pp. 29-44, 2nd Editon, Routledge/Francis & Taylor.

Seamon, D. (2023). *Phenomenological Perspectives on Place, Lifeworlds, and Lived Emplacement: Selected Writings of David Seamon*. Routledge.

Seamon, D. & Gill, H. (2016). Qualitative Approaches to Environment-Behavior Research: Understanding Environmental and Place Experiences, Meanings, and Actions, in *Research Methods for Environmental Psychology*, pp. 115-35. Edited by R. Gifford, Wiley/Blackwell.

Seamon, D. and Larsen, T. (2021). Humanistic Geography, in D. Richardson, ed., *International Encyclopedia of Geography: People, the Earth, Environment, and Technology* Wiley. DOI: 10.1002/9781118786352.wbieg0412.pub2.

Seamon, D. & Nordin, C. (1980). Marketplace as Place Ballet: A Swedish Example, *Landscape*, 24 (10), 35-41.

Sokolowski, R. (2000). *Introduction to Phenomenology.* Cambridge University Press.

Spiegelberg, H. (1982). *The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction.* Martinus Nijhoff.

Stefanovic, I. L. (2000). *Safeguarding Our Common Future: Rethinking Sustainable Development.* State University of New York Press.

Steinbock, A. (1994). Homelessness and the Homeless Movement: A Clue to the Problem of Intersubjectivity. *Human Studies*, 17(2), 203-23.

Steinbock, A. J. (1995). *Home and beyond.* Northwestern University Press.

Toombs, S. K. (2001). The Lived Experience of Disability, in *Handbook of Phenomenology and Medicine*Kluwer, pp. 147-161, Edited by S. K. Toombs,

Trentelman, C. K. (2009). Place Attachment and Community Attachment, *Society and Natural Resources*, 22 (3), 191-210. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08941920802191712

Tuan, Y.-F. (1974). *Topophilia.* Prentice-Hall.

Tuan, Y.-F. (1976). Humanistic Geography, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 66(2), 266-276. http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/9781118786352.wbieg0412.pub2

Tuan, Y.-F. (2014). *Romantic Geography.* University of Wisconsin Press.

Valle, R., ed. (1998). *Phenomenological Inquiry in Psychology*. Plenum.

Van Manen, M. (2014). *Phenomenology of Practice.* Left Coast Press.

Journal of Philosophical Investigations
Print ISSN: 2251-7960 Online ISSN: 2423-4419
Homepage: https://philosophy.tabrizu.ac.ir

Science, Common Sense and Reality*

Howard Sankey

Professor of Philosophy at University of Melbourne: Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. Email: chsunimelb@edu.au

Article Info

Article type:
Research Article

Article history:
Received 02 July 2024
Received in revised from 06 July 2024
Accepted 16 July 2024
Published online 07 September 2024

Keywords:
scientific realism; common sense; Eddington; Kuhn; van Fraassen.

ABSTRACT

This paper advocates a realist position with respect to science and common sense. It considers the question of whether science provides knowledge of reality. It presents a positive response to that question. It rejects the anti-realist claim that we are unable to acquire knowledge of reality in favour of the realist view that science yields knowledge of the external world. But it remains to be specified just what world that is. Some argue that science leads to the rejection of our commonsense view of the world. If so, the world about which science informs us is not the world of common sense. Common sense is "stone-age metaphysics". It is false theory inherited from our primitive ancestors that is to be eliminated in favour of science. Against such an elimination of common sense, it is argued that science both preserves and explains our commonsense experience of the world. Science may well lead to the overthrow of some of our most deeply held beliefs. But common sense reflects a more basic and durable level of experience. Commonsense beliefs are well-confirmed beliefs that are vindicated by their role in successful practical action each and every day. Common sense provides a firm basis on which to base a realist philosophy of science.

Cite this article: Sankey, H. (2024). Science, Common Sense and Reality. *Journal of Philosophical Investigations*, 18(48), 53-66. https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.18407

© The Author(s).
https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.18407
Publisher: University of Tabriz.

* This is an expanded version of a lecture delivered at the University of Hyderabad (India) in January 2008. It was developed into a full-length paper for a collection of essays that failed to eventuate. I am grateful to the editor of this journal for the opportunity to belatedly publish the paper in its entirety.

Scientific realism and the return of metaphysics

An interest in metaphysics is now fashionable in a way not seen since before the rise of logical positivism. Diverse factors have contributed to this trend. But in the philosophy of science a significant role has been played by the emergence of scientific realism as the new orthodoxy following the demise of positivism.

The positivists initially dismissed the topic of realism as vacuous. But by the late 1950s, the holistic implications of the partial interpretation account of meaning united with rejection of a sharp divide between observation and theory to foster a budding realist movement in the philosophy of science. A decade later, development of the causal theory of reference provided the basis for a realist semantics of science, which prompted reflection on metaphysical issues such as necessity, essential properties and laws of nature. Work in this currently active area is conducted in a philosophical climate that came into being as the result of the emergence of scientific realism as the dominant position in the philosophy of science.

While scientific realism has played a major role in the return of metaphysics, in this paper I focus on a more basic position. Scientific realists often appeal to common sense as part of the case for their position. Commonsense realism carries with it a commitment to metaphysical realism that is an important aspect of the return of metaphysics. It is not my aim here to chronicle the rise of scientific realism, but to promote a scientific realism grounded in common sense.

Science and reality

With the exception of cultural relativists and social constructivists, scientific knowledge is widely held to be rigorously established knowledge and the methods of science to be a reliable means of establishing such knowledge. Indeed, some hold that science is our best, if not our only, source of knowledge. But to say that science provides knowledge is not yet to settle the question of what science is about. The question remains of the relation between science and reality. Does science provide us with knowledge of an independently existing reality? Does it reveal the truth about the ‘external world’?

I propose a positive answer to the question of the relation between science and reality based on a realist philosophy of science. But before characterizing scientific realism, I will consider the positions of two influential anti-realists, Thomas Kuhn and Bas van Fraassen. I will then turn to the realist view of the relation between science and reality. As we will see, a significant issue emerges with respect to the relation between science and our commonsense view of the world. Some realists hold that there is a conflict between science and common sense which leads to the overthrow of common sense.

Kuhn's changing worlds

Kuhn's book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, introduced the idea of a paradigm as a scientific worldview that underlies an ongoing tradition of scientific research. Science advances by normal scientific puzzle-solving based on a paradigm, which is periodically disrupted by revolutionary change of paradigm.

One of the most perplexing features of Kuhn's account is his repeated use of the image of a change of world. A historian looking at past science may "exclaim that when paradigms change, the world itself changes with them" (1996, 111). Paradigm change is like space travel, "as if the professional community had been suddenly transported to another planet where familiar objects are seen in a different light" (1996, 111). Paradigm changes "cause scientists to see the world of their research-engagement differently", so "we may want to say that after revolution scientists are responding to a different world" (1996, 111).

I prefer to interpret the world-change image as mere metaphor not to be taken literally. But a more common interpretation takes Kuhn's world-change image in a neo-Kantian sense. Paul Hoyningen-Huene, for example, interprets the image in terms of a distinction between the invariant and unknowable world-in-itself and knowable phenomenal worlds that are subject to variation with change of paradigm.

On such an interpretation, Kuhn's account of science yields a negative response to the question of the relation between science and reality. Science does not provide knowledge of an independently existing reality. It is impossible to have knowledge of the world-in-itself. Knowledge is confined to phenomenal worlds. But a phenomenal world is not an independently existing reality. It is a constructed world built out of human concepts and sensory perception. Because phenomenal worlds vary with paradigm, knowledge is a relative notion. What one knows depends on the paradigm one adopts.

This may be a plausible interpretation of the world-change image. But it is not possible for the position itself to be maintained coherently. The position asserts the existence of a world-in-itself of which we may have no knowledge. But in order to make such an assertion, it must be assumed not only that there is a world-in-itself, but that we are able to know of the world-in-itself both that it exists and that we are unable to know anything about it. But it is not possible both to know that the world-in-itself exists and for the world-in-itself to be unknowable.

In a later essay, Kuhn describes his position as a "post-Darwinian Kantianism". What he calls the "lexical structures" of theories provide "preconditions for possible experience" in a manner similar to Kant's categories (2001, 104). In his discussion of change of lexical structure, Kuhn reveals the incoherent nature of the position when he writes as follows:

> Underlying all these processes of differentiation and change, there must, of course, be something permanent, fixed and stable. But, like Kant's *Ding a sich*, it is ineffable, undescribable, undiscussible. Located outside of space and time, this Kantian source of stability is the whole from which have been fabricated both creatures and their niches, both the 'internal' and the 'external' worlds. (2001, 104)

Here Kuhn provides a detailed description of the nature and function of the underlying "source of stability" that he claims cannot be described. Some may be inclined to treat this infelicity as an unavoidable paradox that arises when one must speak of the ineffable. But it is difficult to see why such fundamental incoherence should not be taken to fatally undermine the position.

Van Fraassen's constructive empiricism

I turn to the constructive empiricist position proposed by van Fraassen in *The Scientific Image*. Like Kuhn, van Fraassen holds that there are limits on our access to reality. For van Fraassen, these limits coincide with the bounds of human sensory experience.

For constructive empiricism, the aim of science is to arrive at theories which are empirically adequate, and scientists accept theories as empirically adequate. A theory is empirically adequate if all of its observational consequences are true. Theories routinely make claims which purport to refer to unobservable entities such as atoms and electrons. However, van Fraassen holds that the appropriate attitude toward such claims is an agnostic stance that suspends belief with respect to claims about unobservable states of affairs. Direct sensory experience is unable to determine whether claims of a non- observational nature are true, since such experience only provides information about observed phenomena. Claims about unobservable states of affairs may be true for all we know. But we must suspend judgement about such matters since they transcend empirical verification.

Constructive empiricism is a further example of a negative response to the question of the relation between science and reality. Van Fraassen does not deny that scientific theories may make true assertions about unobservable states of affairs. But we are in no position to know whether any such claims are true. Van Fraassen denies that we may have knowledge of aspects of the world that are incapable of verification by human sense experience. So, while science may provide knowledge of observable dimensions of reality, it yields only limited access to reality. It cannot provide knowledge of unobservable aspects of reality.

As with Kuhn, this position is deeply problematic. For one thing, van Fraassen is unable to provide a uniform account of the use of instruments in science. He must enforce a sharp

distinction between seeing through a telescope and seeing through a microscope. Because one can verify what one sees through a telescope by direct inspection of objects seen through a telescope, such objects are observable. But objects seen through a microscope are too small to see with the naked eye and are therefore unobservable. Given the epistemic significance that van Fraassen attaches to observation, the telescope may serve as a source of information about entities observed through the telescope, but the microscope may not. But the mere fact that some objects are observable by us, and others are not, is no reason to suppose that the principles which govern optical devices at the macro-level cease to operate when applied at the micro-level.[1]

A second problem derives from van Fraassen's strict empiricism. Van Fraassen assumes that our ability to acquire empirical knowledge does not exceed our sensory capacities. Experience is our sole source of information. It only provides information about actual states of affairs that we are able to observe by means of our native sensory apparatus. The limits of experience are contingent limits that may themselves only be discovered empirically. But they are nevertheless significant limits on our capacity to acquire knowledge about the world.

Van Fraassen is no doubt correct that there are limits on what we may detect using unaided sense perception. But to impose such a strict empiricist restriction on the extent of our knowledge is to radically downplay the powers of human reason.[2] We may have no source of information about the world other than the evidence available to our senses. But such information may still be employed as the basis for theoretical science. Scientists develop theories about the nature of unobservable entities whose behaviour gives rise to observed phenomena. They conduct tests of the predictive consequences of such theories, which either confirm or disconfirm the theories. Theories may successfully predict a range of previously unobserved phenomena, the occurrence of which is difficult to explain if the theories are not at least approximately true. Reasoning about such unobservable matters is, of course, a fallible exercise. Its outcomes are less certain than the information directly available on the basis of immediate sense perception, though that, too, is fallible. Yet there is no need to postulate any sort of direct cognitive access to unobservable states of affairs to recognize that our capacity to reason takes us well beyond the limits of the merely observable.

---

[1] The point is analogous to one made by Kitcher with regard to Galileo's extension of the telescope to the celestial realm (2001, 173-4). For the extension of Kitcher's Galilean strategy to the case of the microscope, see Magnus (2003, 468-70).

[2] This point is reminiscent of a point made by Alspector-Kelly, who speaks of "an uncomfortable reversion to rationalism" in the realist search for "an inferential tool" that enables a "leap over the fence into unobservable territory" (2004, 333).

Scientific realism

The two positions I have just considered are sceptical positions, either with respect to the world-in-itself or with respect to unobservable aspects of reality. By contrast, I wish to defend the view that we are indeed able to obtain knowledge of an independent reality. Such knowledge is restricted neither to a phenomenal world constituted out of concepts and sensory input nor to aspects of reality that may be observed by means of unaided sensory experience.

The anti-sceptical position I defend is the position of scientific realism. For the scientific realist, the aim of science is to arrive at the truth about the world. Scientific progress consists in progress toward the truth. The world we inhabit, and which science investigates, is an objective reality that exists independently of human cognitive activity. We interact with this world by means of our actions, which are based on our mental states. But we do not create this world. Nor does it depend in any way upon our beliefs, concepts, experience or language.

The result of successful scientific investigation is knowledge. Scientists discover facts about unobservable entities whose behaviour is responsible for the behaviour of observable entities. They propose theories which refer to unobservable entities in order to explain observed phenomena. Empirical evidence provides reason to believe that theories which refer to unobservable entities are true. Scientific knowledge is not restricted to an observable or phenomenal realm. It extends to the underlying nature of reality by identifying unobservable causes of observed phenomena.

As science progresses, theories approach the truth by providing increasingly accurate descriptions of entities identified by earlier scientists. Early theories tell us a certain amount of truth about the entities that have been identified. Later theories increase the truth known about the entities referred to by earlier theories. Truth is a relation of correspondence between an assertion and reality. An assertion is true provided that what the assertion states to be the case is in fact the case. Whether an assertion about the world is true is an objective matter. It depends on how things stand in the mind-independent world, rather than on what scientists believe to be the case.

A number of considerations combine to support scientific realism. In the first place, reflection on the place of humans in the natural world reveals that the overwhelming preponderance of items found in our immediate environment – to say nothing of the remainder of the universe – exist independently of human thought and experience. Secondly, realism about unobservable entities is a natural extension of realism about common sense. Third, scientific realism provides the best explanation of the success of science, since the empirical success of theories is best explained by means of the truth or approximate truth of such theories. Fourth, as an extension of this so-called “success argument”, the success of the methods of science in producing

successful theories is best explained by the reliability of the methods of science in reaching the truth about the world. Together, these considerations constitute a powerful case for scientific realism, though, of course, they fall short of apodictic certainty.

The realist position that I have just characterized presents a positive response to the question of science and reality. According to scientific realism, science provides us with knowledge of an independently existing world. As science progresses, it increases the amount of truth that is known about the world that we inhabit. But while realism provides a positive response to our opening question, there remains one bridge to cross. Science may provide us with knowledge of an independent world. But what world is that? What is the relation between science and the world of our ordinary, everyday experience?

Eddington's two tables

Throughout the history of science, new scientific theories from heliocentric astronomy to the theories of evolution and continental drift have led to the overthrow of deeply held beliefs about ourselves and the world around us. This leads some to suppose there is a deep conflict between science and common sense.

Arthur Eddington began his Gifford lectures in the following terms:

> I have settled down to the task of writing these lectures and have drawn up my chairs to my two tables. Two tables! ... One of them has been familiar to me from earliest years. It is a commonplace object of that environment which I call the world ... It has extension; it is comparatively permanent; it is coloured; above all it is substantial ... Table No. 2 is my scientific table... My scientific table is mostly emptiness. Sparsely scattered in that emptiness are numerous electric charges rushing about with great speed ... There is nothing substantial about my second table. It is nearly all empty space ... my second scientific table is the only one which is really there – whatever 'there' may be. (1933, xi-xiv)

Note Eddington's words: the "scientific table is the only one which is really there". This suggests that the solid, "substantial" table of common sense does not in fact exist. Only the insubstantial, mostly empty "scientific table" is real. Thus, the example of Eddington's table appears to be a case in which science rejects common sense. The table of science is real. The table of common sense is an illusion.

There may well be a conflict between the scientific and commonsense description of the table. But Eddington's contrast between two tables is misleading. There is only one table, the one revealed to us in commonsense experience. It may well be that the nature of the table is

explained by science. Indeed, the scientific explanation of the solidity of the table may well displace the explanation provided by common sense. Nevertheless, Eddington's "scientific table" is the very same table as the table presented by common sense.

In the remainder of this paper, I sing the praises of common sense. Like Quine, I see science as continuous with common sense. It goes beyond common sense but does not discard it. Rather than overthrow common sense, science explains it. Common sense provides us with a grounding in the world. It is the foundation upon which scientific realism rests. As we will see, it even provides protection against the anti-realist scepticism of Kuhn and van Fraassen.

Common sense

Before attempting to say what, common sense involves, let me say something about what it is not. Common sense is not the same thing as practical skill. Tradesmen, athletes and technicians have many different practical skills. Common sense is something basic that may be shared by those who possess different practical skills, and indeed by those who lack practical skills. Nor is common sense the same thing as deeply held belief. Some commonsense beliefs may be deeply held. But there are many deeply held beliefs that defy commonsense. Throughout history, people have been deeply committed to a great variety of beliefs that defy common sense. So common sense cannot be the same thing as deeply held belief.

It may not be possible to draw a precise line between common sense, practical skill and deeply held belief. But common sense is more basic than either. The idea of common-sense trades on two different meanings of the word 'sense'. We can use the word 'sense' to speak about the various modalities of sensory perception, such as sight, hearing or smell. But equally it may be used to signify sound practical judgement, as in having good sense. Common sense is typified by our ordinary, unreflective awareness of the world around us, and by the routine way in which we deal with objects in our immediate vicinity. Observation, and knowledge derived from observation, play a central role in common sense. But common sense goes beyond mere observation. It is common sense to believe that ordinary objects do not disappear while we are asleep and reappear just before we awake, though this is not something that we could observe to be the case.

Realism about the ordinary, everyday world is part and parcel of common sense. The world of common sense is a world of material objects of all shapes and sizes, with a multitude of properties. We acquire more or less immediate knowledge of such things by means of our sensory experience of those objects. The material objects that we encounter in everyday experience are independently existing things with which we interact causally by means of bodily movement and action. But though we interact with such objects, they lie beyond the control of our minds. Mere thought alone cannot bring about change in the world of objects.

The commonsense world is also a world in which misperception and illusion have their place in the ordinary course of events without giving rise to scepticism. A robust sense of reality provides us with a reasonable degree of practical certainty that things are by and large as they appear to us.

Common sense gives rise to a body of beliefs about the objects in our environment, the nature of our interactions with these objects, and the means by which we may acquire knowledge of such things. On the whole, we may assume that this body of beliefs is true. This is not because commonsense beliefs are guaranteed in any way to be true. Like all beliefs, they are fallible. But they have a strong *prima facie* presumption in their favour. Common sense has a prior claim on our belief. Beliefs based on common sense occupy a central place in our belief system. As such, they are only to be rejected after less pivotal beliefs have been considered for rejection. Given their privileged status, any challenge to common sense is to be met with suspicion. Any such challenge faces an uphill battle, since we know in advance that it is likely to be mistaken.

Science and common sense

What I have just said about the special status of commonsense beliefs may strike some as unscientific. Throughout the history of science, scientific advance has been made by the elimination of commonsense beliefs in favour of scientific theories which show common sense to be mistaken. To place common sense in a protected position is to create obstacles to the sort of thoroughgoing critical inquiry that has enabled science to progress in the first place.
In my view, this objection rests on two mistaken assumptions. In what follows, I will identify these mistaken assumptions. I will then consider two further objections that may be raised against the special status that I ascribe to common sense.

Does common sense require protection?

The first assumption relates to the idea that common sense requires protection from the critical scrutiny characteristic of science. My point that common sense has a privileged status does not imply that commonsense beliefs are to be protected from critical scrutiny. On the contrary, they are subject to sustained critical scrutiny. Commonsense beliefs are put to critical test and survive such test on countless occasions each and every day. Our practical interactions with the world vindicate a commonsense view of the world every day of our lives. The point is not that commonsense belief requires protection from critical scrutiny. Rather, commonsense beliefs are among the most highly confirmed beliefs in our belief system precisely because they are subjected to critical scrutiny on a regular basis (see Devitt, 2002, 22).

It may even be speculated that the privileged status of common sense has an evolutionary basis.[1] Commonsense beliefs survive because they have survival value. Our species could not have survived if the majority of the commonsense beliefs on which we base our everyday interaction with the world were false. False belief does not typically give rise to successful action. Usually, it leads to failure. The risks to survival increase where action is based on false belief. Common sense both promotes survival and is the result of a process of natural selection. This claim reflects a naturalistic approach to epistemology. But it is a speculative point, so I place little weight upon it.

Does the Earth move?

The second error relates to the purported conflict between science and common sense. It rests on the assumption that for science to progress, common sense must be overthrown and eliminated. But it is not clear that this is what typically occurs in science. Scientific investigation leads to new insights into the nature of phenomena known to common sense. Rather than eliminate common sense, science provides illumination of commonsense phenomena.

Let me illustrate the point with an example from the history of astronomy. The geocentric idea that the Earth occupies a fixed position at the centre of the Cosmos, and that the heavenly bodies revolve around the Earth, receives support from everyday experience. It appears to us that the Sun rises every morning and crosses the sky each day, setting in the evening. At night, the stars, the planets and the moon become visible, and move across the sky in much the same way as the Sun traverses the sky each day. But heliocentric astronomy teaches us that these appearances are misleading. The apparent movement of the Sun and other heavenly bodies is due to the rotation of the Earth upon its axis, combined with the movement of the Sun and other bodies. It is not the Sun that rises and sets. The Sun comes into view as the Earth rotates. The Earth's rotation brings the Sun into views each day.

Geocentric astronomy has a basis in commonsense experience. Because geocentric astronomy was rejected in favour of heliocentric astronomy, one might think that heliocentrism entails the overthrow of common sense. Heliocentrism shows common sense to be false, which leads us to reject common sense. But it is not clear that this is what happens at all. Our commonsense experience remains exactly as before. The sun appears to rise, traverse the sky

[1] Campbell makes the point with regard to sense experience: "The survival value of perceptual reliability is so overwhelming that the first creatures to attain it would inherit their niche" (1988, 171). A similar point was famously made by Quine in relation to induction: "Creatures inveterately wrong in their inductions have a pathetic but praiseworthy tendency to die before reproducing their kind" (1969, 126). The appeal to evolutionary considerations in the latter context has been challenged by Stich (1990, ch. 3).

and set each day, and the objects in the night sky appear to behave in a similar manner. The appearances do not change. Nor does commonsense experience.

What changes is what we think happens. Our understanding of what takes place is altered. Heliocentrism explains why commonsense experience is the way that it is. It does not show that commonsense experience is false. It explains why we have the experience of heavenly bodies moving across the sky. At least in this case, science does not eradicate common sense. It teaches us how to understand commonsense experience. The assumption that science eliminates common sense, rather than providing an explanation for such experience, may therefore be rejected as erroneous.

Of course, a single case of science preserving common sense does not show that it always preserves it. But there is no reason to suppose that the present case is in any way exceptional. Conformity with empirical evidence is a standard requirement for theory-acceptance in science. Because it is primarily observational, empirical evidence typically forms part of or is at least available to common sense. To the extent that this is so, conformity of theory with evidence ensures that science preserves common sense.

Stone age metaphysics

We have now seen why the special status accorded here to common sense is not unscientific. Common sense need neither be dogmatically protected from critical scrutiny nor typically be overthrown by scientific advance. Still, it might be thought that appeal to common sense remains problematic. I will now consider a pair of objections to the primacy of common sense: the first challenges the epistemic primacy of common sense; the second challenges its ontological primacy.

It is sometimes said that common sense is a false theory passed down to us by our primitive ancestors. It is the "metaphysics of the stone age". Common sense is therefore to be rejected as outmoded theory, rather than granted privileged epistemic status.

As I've previously noted, commonsense beliefs are fallible beliefs with no guarantee of truth. But while this is so, the assimilation of common sense to outmoded theory is to be resisted. This is why it is important to distinguish common sense from deeply held belief. Beliefs to which members of a society or historical epoch are deeply committed may be rejected in another society or epoch. But common sense operates at a more basic level than such transitory commitments. The common sense enacted in ordinary, practical engagement with the everyday world is the natural endowment of humankind and may well be shared with some species of non-human animals. It is not something that passes in and out of social and historical fashion, but a precondition for successful practical interaction with the world.

But while we may defend the epistemic credentials of common sense in the way just noted, the ontology of common sense is also open to challenge. The world of the commonsense realist is the world of ordinary middle-sized objects with which we causally interact as we go about our daily lives. But it may be argued that there is no such world. There are no such objects. All that exists are the elementary micro-level entities discovered by modern physical science. There are no rocks and mountains, tables and chairs. There is just "atoms and the void".

Where this thought goes astray is in failure to appreciate the nature of physical composition. Ordinary material objects are themselves composed of more basic components, such as molecules, atoms, and elementary particles. To think that ordinary objects do not exist because they are composed of microscopic entities is to assume that a thing that is made out of other things is not itself real. But the fact that a thing is made out of other things does not mean that it is not real. A computer assembled from component parts is still a computer. Unassembled computer components do not constitute a computer until they are put together to form one. The computer only exists once its component parts are assembled in a particular way. The ordinary objects of common sense exist despite being composed of myriads of particles too small to see.

In light of the foregoing, I propose that we treat common sense as both an epistemic and an ontological basis for the position of scientific realism. Indeed, as I will now indicate, common sense provides a platform on the basis of which to confront anti-realist views of the kind considered at the outset of this paper.

Common sense versus scientific scepticism

To return to the changing worlds of Kuhn and the constructive empiricism of van Fraassen, both positions are sceptical positions with respect to knowledge of an experience-transcendent reality. Both positions run afoul of common sense.

On the neo-Kantian interpretation, Kuhn holds that in the transition between paradigms the world-in-itself remains the same, but the phenomenal worlds of scientists undergo transformation. From the point of view of the commonsense realist, however, this is false. The beliefs, concepts and theories that scientists apply to the world may be profoundly affected by scientific revolution. But scientists inhabit the same world before and after a revolution. There is one world, the world of common sense. This world does not undergo radical transformation in change of paradigm. Adherents of alternative paradigms do not occupy different worlds. Scientists maintain common perceptual access to a shared domain of objects before and after a revolution. Practical action brings them into direct physical contact with a shared world of independently existing objects.[1]

[1] For a related point about the stability of common sense and its role in theory-change, see Campbell (1988, 173).

As for constructive empiricism, van Fraassen is himself a commonsense realist who holds that observation provides access to an independent reality. However, he holds that knowledge is restricted to the observational level, so that we can have no knowledge of what cannot be observed by unaided sense perception. But van Fraassen underestimates the power of common sense. Minute objects that are almost too small to see are a familiar part of everyday experience. Equally, the compositional nature of ordinary objects is a familiar part of our experience. So, the idea of component parts of objects that are too small to see is an idea readily available to common sense.

Thinking systematically about the unobservable entities of which ordinary material objects are composed requires an extension of common sense. It requires us to develop and evaluate hypotheses about the unobservable entities whose behaviour underlies observed phenomena. The reasoning employed involves epistemic norms which fall within the methodology of science, such as criteria of theory appraisal and explanatory adequacy, as well as principles of ampliative inference and experimental design. However, the reasoning as well as the norms that govern such reasoning are no more than a systematic refinement of patterns of inference employed by common sense. So far from coinciding with the limits of sense perception, common sense admits of systematic refinement that enables us to extend knowledge beyond the range of what is immediately accessible to our senses.

Conclusion

To conclude, the position I have described is meant to serve as the basis for a realist view of science. Science discovers the truth about the independently existing world in which we find ourselves. It starts from common sense, which embodies a realist view of the objects of everyday experience. Occasionally it conflicts with common sense. However, science does not lead to the overthrow of common sense. It explains why commonsense objects appear as they do. It explains why in some cases the commonsense appearance of things is misleading. However, commonsense realism survives as the basis for our ongoing interaction with the world. Given common sense, scientific realism is the most natural position to adopt as an interpretation of scientific inquiry into the world around us.

References

Alspector-Kelly, M. (2004). Seeing the Unobservable: Van Fraassen and the Limits of Experience, *Synthese*, 140(3), 331-353. http://dx.doi.org/10.1023/B:SYNT.0000031323.19904.45

Campbell, K. (1988). Philosophy and Common Sense, *Philosophy*, 63, 161-74. http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/9780230223134

Devitt, M. (2002). A Naturalistic Defence of Realism in *the Problem of Realism*, Edited by M. Marsonet, Ashgate.

Eddington, Sir A.S. (1933). *The Nature of the Physical World,* Cambridge University Press.

Hoyningen-Huene, P. (1993). *Reconstructing Scientific Revolutions: Thomas Kuhn's Philosophy of Science,* University of Chicago Press.

Kitcher, P. (2001). Real Realism: The Galilean Strategy, *the Philosophical Review*, 110(2), 151-97. http://dx.doi.org/10.1215/00318108-110-2-151

Kuhn, T. S. (1996). *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 3rd ed, University of Chicago Press.

Kuhn, T. S. (2001). The Road Since Structure in *The Road Since Structure*, Edited by J. Conant and J. Haugeland, University of Chicago Press.

Magnus, P. D. (2003). Success, Truth and the Galilean Strategy, *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*, 54(3), 465-474.

Quine, W.V.O. (1969). Natural Kinds in *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays*, Columbia University Press.

Stich, S. (1990). *The Fragmentation of Reason*, MIT Press.

van Fraassen, B. (1980). *The Scientific Image*, Oxford University Press.

Journal of Philosophical Investigations
Print ISSN: 2251-7960 Online ISSN: 2423-4419
Homepage: https://philosophy.tabrizu.ac.ir

Heidegger's Topology from The Beginning: *Dasein*, Being, Place

Jeff Malpas

Emeritus Distinguished Professor, University of Tasmania, Australia. Email: Jeff.Malpas@posteo.net

Article Info

Article type:
Research Article

Article history:
Received 02 August 2024
Received in revised form 07 August 2024
Accepted 08 August 2024
Published online 07 September 2024

Keywords:
being, being-in, *Dasein*, facticity, Martin Heidegger, place, questionability, space, there, topology

ABSTRACT

At the Le Thor Seminar in 1969, Heidegger characterises his thinking as taking the form of what he calls a 'topology of being' (*Topologie des Seins*) and as thereby giving a key role to place (*topos*, *Ort/Ortschaft*). Much of my work over the last 25 years has been devoted to exploring how such a topology is indeed present in Heidegger's thinking, both early and late, and so to showing how place figures in that thinking – to showing, in effect, how the questioning of being is also the thinking of place. The aim here is to provide a summary introduction to the topology that this exploration has aimed at uncovering, but to do so in a way that is focussed on the early work, especially *Being and Time*. To this end, the discussion proceeds through an explication of the topological elements that are present in the form of key terms and ideas such as facticity, questionability, being-in, existential spatiality, and there-being or *Dasein*. There is also a brief exploration of the way the term *Dasein* figures in German philosophical discourse prior to Heidegger in ways that are not only reflected in Heidegger's early work, but also draw directly upon that term's topological connotations.

Cite this article: Malpas, J. (2024). Heidegger's Topology from The Beginning: *Dasein*, Being, Place. *Journal of Philosophical Investigations*, 18(48), 67-80. https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.18419

© The Author(s).
Publisher: University of Tabriz.
https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.18419

1. The question of being and the thinking of place

It is commonplace to find Heidegger's thinking characterised as, above all else, a thinking of *being*. Certainly, the *question* of being represents the starting point for Heidegger's thought in more ways than one. But what exactly is that question and where does it lead us? Although it becomes evident only as Heidegger's thought develops, the question of being as he addresses it seems to take us, despite various detours and roundabout pathways, in one direction: towards the thinking of place – *Ort* or *Ortschaft* in Heidegger's German, or as he also refers to it in the Greek, *topos*. What Heidegger's work shows us is that to ask after being is to ask after place, and that the inquiry into being must take the form of a *topology* – a 'saying' of place.

Much of my work, especially over the last 25 years or so, has been focussed on following the course of Heidegger's thinking in this regard, and more than that: on the attempt to elaborate the nature and philosophical significance of place, and of topological thinking, in Heidegger but also beyond Heidegger. For me, then, it has never been about understanding a single thinker, but of understanding the philosophical task, and the questions around which it is configured, to which that thinking represents such an important contribution.[1] Keeping in mind that broader perspective, the aim of this essay is to provide a brief and summary introduction to the topological reading of Heidegger as this arises in relation to Heidegger's early thinking, and especially *Being and Time*.

This is something I have dealt with, though in slightly different ways, in various of my writings elsewhere. Those writings also provide extensive discussion of the way place and topology emerge as explicit themes in Heidegger's later thinking. There are several reasons for focusing specifically on the earlier work here. One reason is that the early work provides an important entry point of entry into Heidegger's topology more generally. Indeed, a failure properly to grasp what is at issue in *Being and Time*, especially, will create problems for the reading of the later thinking. A more pressing reason is that the prevailing interpretations of the early work, including *Being and Time*, tend to downplay, deny or simply ignore the centrality of the spatial and topological elements in that work. Rather than taking topology to be a theme only in later Heidegger, my claim is that Heidegger's thinking was topological from the start, and this is true even though Heidegger does

[1] The earliest of the relevant works here is a paper published with the title 'A taste of madeleine: notes towards a philosophy of place' (Malpas, 1994). As well as articles and papers, the maint book-length publications are: Malpas, 2018 (first published 1999), although Heidegger figures here only occasionally; Malpas, 2006; Malpas, 2016; Malpas, 2021; and Malpas, 2022. The discussions in these works follow a similar path to that outlined here, although there are differences in emphasis and in the way in which certain topics are approached. My own work on place is heavily indebted to other writers and thinkers including Anne Buttimer, Edward Casey, Robert Mugerauer, Edward Relph, and David Seamon, and especially, so far as Heidegger is concerned, to Jospeh Fell's pioneering work (Fell, 1979). And although neither place nor topology are directly addressed anywhere in its pages in its pages, the book that is the first monograph on Heidegger in English, Vycinas, 1961, is also significant for its implicit topological sensitivity – a sensitivity largely arising from Vycinas' close attentiveness to the character of Heidegger's later thinking. A special acknowledgement is also due to Onora O'Neill who encouraged my thinking about place at a very early stage of its articulation, and as I was developing it in relation, not only to Heidegger, but to Kant.

not arrive at a clear articulation of the topological as such until much later – arguably not until the late 1940s.

In the Le Thor Seminar in 1969, Heidegger talks of the movement of thinking from the question of the meaning of being, in *Being and Time*, to the question of the truth of being, and then to the question of the place of being [*Ortschaft des Seins*], the latter being tied to the idea of the topology of being [*Topologie des Seins*] (Heidegger, 2012, 47). These formulations, although distinct, are also, says Heidegger, bound together. The movement from meaning to place is thus not a movement in which successive terms are displaced, but rather a movement in the direction of an uncovering of what is already presupposed: understanding the question of the meaning of being requires an understanding of truth of being which in turn requires an understanding of the place of being. And the way the end of that movement of thought already shapes its beginning is evident, if one only pays attention, in the centrality the early Heidegger gives to place through his emphasis on the lived, the situated, and the factical, and on the relation of being (*Sein*) and the 'there' (*Da*).

2. Facticity, questionability and being-in

A key focus for Heidegger's early phenomenological investigations is the idea of 'life', not only in relation to that which is foundational or originary to it (Heidegger, 1975a, 66), but to life as given in its worldy *factical* character. In his lecture series from 1919-20, Heidegger declares that 'a concrete experiential ground, which continually grows with factical life, is there [ist da]. 'Is there,' meaning that actual life does not merely establish there-being [das Dasein]; rather, it itself is and lives experiencing a world' (Heidegger, 1975a, 66). Heidegger's 'path of thinking' thus begins, not with some abstracted 'existence', but from life as given within the world – as *there-being* (which I will here use to translate *Dasein* rather than the more usual *being-there).*[1]

In the 1923 lectures to which Heidegger gave the title, *Ontology – The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, the emphasis is on factical life, which is to say, 'our own there-being [Dasein] which is "there" for us' (Heidegger, 1995, 5) as essentially given over to interpretation (*Auslegung*) – the latter being 'itself *part and parcel* of the being *there* [das *da* sein]' (Heidegger, 1994, 13).[2] Such being given over to interpretation, which here also means to self-Interpretation, is a being given over the possibilities of which the being of factical life consists – there-being (or 'the being there') is thus also a being-possible (*Möglichsein*). In this respect, there is a fundamental *questionability* (or 'questionableness') that belongs to the being of factical life, that is, to the being of there-being. And this questionability is tied to the being of practical life in direct relation to its being 'there'.

[1] Part of the reason for this is to emphasise the character of *Dasein* as a mode of *being* rather than a form of ordinary *location or position*, but the use of 'there-being' rather than 'being-there', though somewhat odd in the English, also allows for the contrast being 'there-being' and the being *there* that is proper to it.

[2] I have modified the translation slight since van Buren's version has 'the "being *there*" of Dasein' where the German has only 'das *da* sein' (the being *there*).

There-being, 'the being there', *is* its there and as such is always 'situated''. But this is not in the sense merely of being located or 'positioned' in some neutral fashion. The 'situatedness' or 'being-placed' of there-being is a matter of there-being having always to take a stand with respect to being and to its own being (and this is so, to use the language of *Being and Time*, both 'ontically' as well as 'ontologically'). This is what it is to be situated, genuinely to be *there*: it is to be called upon by the situation in which one is already engaged and to respond to that call. There can be no choice about this – for there-being to be is already for it to be given over to its 'there' in this way and so to be given over to the possibility, and the questionability, that belongs with it.

The questionability that is part of the being of there-being is the primary starting point for Heidegger's analysis in *Being and Time* – there-being is that being whose being 'is an *issue* for it' (Heidegger, 1962, H12-13). And this questionability is directly tied to there-being as *In-der-Welt-Sein*, as 'being-in-the-world' (Heidegger, *1962*, H12-13). The elaboration of this idea requires explication of both 'world' (*Welt*) and 'being-in' (*In-sein*, in English, literally, 'in-being'). Heidegger emphasises that 'being-in' is not to be construed in terms merely of ordinary spatial containment – the containment that is at issue in the way the water is 'in' the glass, the clothes are 'in' the cupboard, or the cathedral is 'in' the city. Indeed, Heidegger argues (echoing a similar point made by Georg Simmel[1]) that the mere position of things in space – the sort of position associated with what Heidegger calls being 'present-at-hand' (*Vorhanden*) – does not allow any genuine relatedness of the sort required by being-in. And, if there is no genuine relationality, then neither can there be any genuine sense of being 'in' that applies in such a case.

Drawing on a set of etymological connections to illustrate his point, Heidegger explicates the being-in of there-being (the being-in of the being that is the there) in terms of nearness (*Nāhe*), familiarity, and care (Heidegger, 1962, H54).[2] This sense of being-in is captured, Heidegger contends, in the German terms *wohnen* and *sich aufhalten* (terms that belong to the early Heidegger no less than to the later) that are often translated by the English 'dwell'.[3] Heidegger's account converges with the account of the essential situatedness of there-being and the questionability of its being that Heidegger sets out in *The Hermeneutics of Facticity*. At the same time it points towards what Heidegger will say later in *Being and Time* concerning the fundamental role of care (*Sorge*) (Heidegger, 1962, H180-H230). 'Dwelling' refers us to that mode of being that is *in* the

[1] Simmel speaks of the 'merciless separation of space', writing that 'no particle of matter can share its space with another, a real unity of the diverse does not exist in spatial terms' (Simmel, 1997, 170).

[2] The key passage here is repeated, after another twenty or more years, in one of the best-known of Heidegger's later essays, 'Bauen Wohnen Denken' ('Building Dwelling Thinking'), first given as a lecture in 1951 (see Heidegger, 1975b, 145).

[3] In the Macquarie and Robinson translation of *Being and Time, wohnen* is first rendered as 'live' and *sich aufhalten* as 'dwell'. The translation of *wohnen* as 'dwell' has become fairly standard in English translations of Heidegger, with *sich aufhalten* variously translated as 'stay', 'linger', or 'sojourn' Though the noun form, *Aufhalten*, is often given as 'dwelling-place') Although commonly taken for granted, the translation of *wohnen* as 'dwell' is not without problems (see Malpas, 2021, 31-35).

world, that is *situated*, that is *there* – and one might add that it is this mode of being, and only this mode of being, that is characterised by 'mineness' and 'ownness' (*Jemeinigkeit* and *Eigentlichkeit*), by questionability, as well as by care.

3. Space and the problem of time

Much of Division One of Part One of *Being and Time* is given over to the detailed analysis of the structure of both being-in and worldhood as they figure in the overall structure of being-in-the-world. A key element in that analysis is the explication of the spatiality that is proper to there-being – what Heidegger calls 'existential spatiality' (*existentiale Räumlichkeit*) – and that is, consistent with the overall account of being-in, distinct from the ordinary spatiality associated with the 'Cartesian' ontology of extension and substance. The spatiality that belongs to there-being is the spatiality of oriented, embodied engagement in the world that is not reducible either to subjectivity or objectivity: '*Space is neither in the subject nor is the world in space*. Rather, space is "in" the world insofar as the being-in-the-world that is constitutive for there-being has disclosed space. Space is not in the subject, nor does that subject observe the world "as if" it were in space. Rather, the subject, correctly understood, there-being, is spatial in a primordial sense. And because there-being is spatial in the way described, space shows itself as a priori' (Heidegger, 1962, H111).

Heidegger's account of the spatiality of there-being, although clearly intended to exhibit space as a fundamental element in the constitution of there-being, is complicated by Heidegger's insistence on the overall primacy of temporality. As Heidegger asserts at the very start of *Being and Time*, the aim is to show *time* as the horizon for the understanding of being (Heidegger, 1962, H111), and as becomes evident in the course of his analysis, it is in temporality that the unity of the being of there-being is founded, particularly as that unity is given in the structure of care.[1] This leads, in §70 of *Being and Time*, to the explicit claim that the spatiality that belongs to there-being 'must be grounded in temporality' (Heidegger, 1962, H367). Exactly how this should be understood, however, is by no means clear or straightforward. Even though Heidegger asserts the dependence of space on time, he also insists that this does not mean that space can be deduced from time nor reduced to time (Heidegger, 1962, H367). He talks instead of temporality being that, and only that, on the basis of which there-being is able to 'break into' space ('ist der Einbruch des Daseins in den Raum möglich') (Heidegger, 1962, H369).

What is at issue here is the relation between space and time – a relation that, in *Being and Time*, remains inadequately and incompletely explicated. Heidegger later expresses his own dissatisfaction with the treatment of space and time as set out in §70 (Heidegger, 1967,16-17; 1972, 23), and he also shifts quite rapidly, in the period after *Being and Time* (most notably in the *Contributions*) to talk of the single structure of 'time-space', *Zeitraum* (Heidegger, 2012, 293-306). Elsewhere Heidegger also suggests that the appearance of time in the title of his *magnum opus* was

[1] 'Temporality is the meaning of the being of care' (Heidegger, 1962, H367, see also H326).

not intended to exclude spatiality.[1] More significantly from the point of view specifically of the thinking of place, Heidegger asserts, in the *Parmenides* lectures from 1942-43, that

> In *Being and Time*, time is experienced and named as fore-word for the word 'of' Being… Time' understood in the Greek manner, χρόυος [*chronos*], corresponds in essence to τόπος [*topos*], which we erroneously translate as 'space'. Τόπος is place [*Ort*], and specifically that place to which something appertains… (Heidegger, 1992, 141, 210).[2]

The real problem in *Being and Time* is not that it overlooks place, assigns a diminished importance to space, or radically misconstrues the relation between space and time (despite the issues that remain to be resolved in relation to these matters), but, more specifically, that it is not able, within the vocabulary that it deploys, adequately to articulate the *topological* character of both space and time together. This is partly a function of the lack of a clear sense in *Being and Time* of place as encompassing space and time as well as being distinct from them (something that is overcome only later in Heidegger's thinking, beginning with the Hölderlin lectures from 1934 onwards).

The way time takes priority in *Being and Time* does not, therefore, indicate some retreat either from the commitment to the fundamental spatiality of there-being or from the essential belonging-together of being with place as that is evident in being as there-being. Nor does it constitute a shift towards the assertion of time over place. What *Being and Time* shows, instead, is the way spatiality does indeed belong to the 'there, and so to place, as well as the essentially topological character of space so understood (space as tied to 'dwelling'). And it does this at the same time as it also draws attention, if indirectly, to the topological character of time, and to the difficulty in adequately articulating the complex inter-relation of time and space to place, and thence also, to being. Much of Heidegger's subsequent thinking is preoccupied, to a greater or lesser extent, with the task of working out the topology that is at issue here, and that is therefore central to *Being and Time,* and yet is not satisfactorily articulated within the pages of the latter work alone.

Yet notwithstanding the way the spatial and topological elements figure so prominently in Heidegger's early thinking, there has been a widespread tendency for readers of *Being and Time* to ignore or downplay those elements, and instead to focus on the seeming primacy of temporality alone.

In one of the earliest responses to *Being and Time,* from 1935, Watsuji Tetsuro claims that Heidegger neglects space and spatiality in favour of time and the temporal. Watsuji's own work, as elaborated in his important 1935 volume *Fudo* (in English as *Climate and Culture*), aims, in

[1] See eg. the condensed comment included as Entry # 8 in Heidegger's 'Hints to *Being and Time:* "'*Being and Time – Space'/* In the title only 'Time,' but in this one space and time...'., Heidegger, 2018, 209.

[2] See also (from 1941): 'In Greek χρόνος means what corresponds to τόπος, to the place where each respective being belongs' (Heidegger, 1993, 103).

part, to remedy this supposed neglect (Watsuji, 1988, first published 1935).[1] Hubert Dreyfus, in his influential commentary on Division One of *Being and Time*, resists the suggestion that there is key role for spatiality in Heidegger's analysis. Effectively reading the structure of existential spatiality as more an engagement in the 'practical' than the spatial (effectively treating spatiality as secondary to what Dreyfus often speaks about in term of 'skilful coping'), Dreyfus also claims that Heidegger's account of existential spatiality is 'fundamentally confused' (Dreyfus, 1991,129; see also Cerbone, 2013, 131). Although arguing that there is, in *Being and Time*, analytics of space corresponding to that work's analytics of time, Petr Sloterdijk nevertheless sees Heidegger as having pulled back from the unravelling of the real issue at stake in relation to space – the issue concerning what Sloterdijk characterises as the 'existential where'. The latter topic is one that Sloterdijk takes as his own, describing his 'spherology' as 'an attempt to recover … the project wedged sub-thematically into Heidegger's early work, namely Being and Space, from its state of entombment'. (Sloterdijk, 2011, 342).[2]

For many commentators, the focus on the there that seems so central to the early thinking, including *Being and Time*, and that is indicated in the centrality of the very term *Da-sein*, there-being, must be read apart from any spatial or topological connotation. This is often supported by quotations from Heidegger (sometimes in relation to the question as to how *Dasein* should be translated[3]) that are taken to rule out any interpretation of *Dasein* as 'being here' or 'being there' (Heidegger and Fink, 1993, 126), but which tend to ignore the fact that what Heidegger is really ruling out in such comments is any reading of *Dasein* – which one might also say means any reading of *there-being*, of *dwelling*, or of *place* – in terms of ordinary spatial locatedness.[4] But this is, of course, exactly what Heidegger already rules out in his discussion of being-in in *Being and Time*. Thus, when Thomas Sheehan emphatically asserts (repurposing a line from the writer Gertrude Stein) that with respect to *Dasein*, which is to say, there-being, 'there is no "there" there'

[1] In a discussion of space in Watsuji and Heidegger, Augustin Berque comments that 'the question of space is far from absent in Heidegger's works. However, it has only a secondary importance before the 1950s, during which it becomes central' (Berque, 1996, 374). Berque's comment echoes the position expressed by Watsuji, but it also represents a reading of the early Heidegger that is remarkably widespread.

[2] It is notable that although Sloterdijk refers to 'place' in the title of his discussion ('Heidegger's Lehre vom existentialen Ort' in the original German), and 'place' (*Ort*) figures occasionally elsewhere in *Bubbles*, Sloterdijk neither distinguishes 'place' (*Ort*) from 'space' (*Raum*) nor addresses the relation between them. Indeed, Sloterdijk makes no systematic attempt to analyse the many different senses of space and place that are at work throughout his writings.

[3] See the comment made by Heidegger to Jean Beaufret (in connection with the 'Letter on "Humanism"': 'Da-sein" does not really mean for me "here I am!" [*me voilà*!]' (Heidegger, 1966, 130).

[4] And when Heidegger emphasises, instead, that what is at issue is there-being as *clearing*, then we must ask how that is to be understood, and the sense in which the clearing does not, as indicated below, itself bring a set of topological and spatial, as well as temporal, connections. The same is true of the idea of the event, *Ereignis*, which cannot be construed as somehow having a sense that is opposed to or exclusive of the topological. On these matters, see Malpas, 2006, esp. 211-278; see also the references in n.53 below (and the brief discussion of the event to which this note is attached).

(Sheehan, 136-138).[1] he leaves out of account the real question as to how the 'there' should itself be understood (a point that is somewhat ironic given that it is precisely the play between different senses of 'there' that is at work in the line Sheehan quotes from Stein).

Sheehan's own preferred understanding of there-being is in terms of what he calls 'openedness', and although he takes this to entail a temporal interpretation, such openenedness itself carries an essentially topological inflection. In fact, much the same point can be made with respect to the many other readings of *Dasein*, including Heidegger's own characterisations, in terms of disclosedness, unconcealment, opening, or clearing that are common in the literature. Such readings direct attention to fundamental elements in Heidegger's thinking, but none of these elements stand opposed to the spatial and topological reading of *Dasein* in the sense explored here. Indeed, all of them, either directly or indirectly, draw upon the spatial and topological – something very much evident in the way Heidegger himself elaborates on these ideas especially in the later thinking. This is perhaps most obviously so in relation to the clearing (*Lichtung*), and Heidegger's use of the forest clearing to illustrate this, as well as his connection of clearing away (*Räumen*) and the open with space (*Raum*) (see eg. Heidegger, 2009, 307).

It may be said, and is often assumed, that any such spatial or topological connotations are *metaphorical* rather than literal. Yet not only does this rely on a notion of the metaphorical that is seldom explained (and that raises significant questions about the very nature of philosophical language more generally), but such a claim also goes directly against Heidegger's own explicit warnings against interpreting his thinking in such a metaphorical fashion.[2] The talk of place in Heidegger, as in my own work, involves no 'transfer of images', to use Heidegger's phrase in the *Letter on 'Humanism'* (Heidegger, 1998, 272), and neither can it be assimilated to some notion of simple spatial locatedness.

4. Place and Dasein

The fact that the term that is so central to *Being and Time*, *Dasein*, frequently remains untranslated in English editions and discussions – as if it were a technical term of Heideggerian art removed from any other sense that might attach to it – reinforces the tendency to ignore or neglect the spatial and topological elements that the term surely carries.[3] Yet *Dasein* is not an unusual term in German and its spatial and topological connotations are evident in many of its occurrences.

---

[1] Sheehan is certainly not alone in reading Dasein in this way, and the issue is discussed further in Malpas, 2006, 47-51.

[2] This is most obviously so in relation to the claim that 'language is the house of being' that appears in 'Why Poets?' (from 1946) (Heidegger, 2002, 232); see also the 'Letter on "Humanism"' (Heidegger, 1998, 252, 272, 274). However, the antagonism to metaphor is present throughout Heidegger's writings and not only in respect of this one phrase – see Malpas, 2022, 99-112.

[3] Some might claim that the term is untranslatable, as might be confirmed by its appearance in Barbara Cassin's *Dictionary of Untranslatables* (Cassin, 2014, 195-200). But Cassin's volume is more about the irreducible complexity of translation (and of language and conceptuality more generally) rather than its impossibility – it thus includes among

In contemporary German dictionaries, *Dasein* appears as a noun as well as with a verb form (*da sein* – 'to be here/there'); the noun form (in the sense of 'being present or presence) having instances as early as the 13th century, but said in its current usage to refer to 'Life [Leben]...living conditions [Lebensbedingungen]...existence, existence [das Bestehen, die Existenz] ... (rarely) presence, existence [Anwesenheit, Vorhandensein]' (*Digital Dictionary of the German Language*). In the *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm* from 1854, the entry for the noun form reads 'Dasein, n. … Initially, it meant the present time, time of my Dasein …However, this usage faded; one would no longer say "he did it in my Dasein" but rather "in my presence" or "in my company." Frequently, and likely only since the middle of the 19th century, it is used, particularly in a higher style, to denote life in its entire scope, essence, existence, or the state of things' (Grimm, online).

For the most part, when the term appears in philosophical contexts outside of Heidegger, *Dasein* is translated into English as existence' (and, similarly in French, as *l'existence*).[1] The translation mirrors the way the term enters into German philosophical discourse in the work of Christian Wolff, in the early part of the eighteenth century, where the term appears as the German correlate to the Latin *existential* (see David, 2014,195; Wienbruch, 1972, 15), as well as the way the term is taken up by Kant (in Kant's case it is used specifically to refer to God's existence, *Dasein Gottes*, as it might be the subject of attempted demonstration or proof, and this usage also appears in later writers).[2]

There is a widespread tendency, to which Heidegger himself contributes,[3] to treat *Dasein* as a term given a decisively new sense and orientation in Heidegger's work.[4] There is no doubt that Heidegger does use the term differently from Wolff and Kant, and he is also quite specific in denying the terms application to the being of entities merely 'present at hand', and in these respects his use of the term is distinct. Yet neither the term's philosophical centrality in Heidegger, its use

its 'untranslatables' a great many terms that are not usually taken as candidates for untranslatability ('philosophy' being one example) but that resist any simple or straightforward explication.

[1] See David, 2014. *Dasein* first appeared as an untranslated term in English, not in 20th century discussions of Heidegger, but in 19th century discussions of Hegel (see Morell, 1846, 141). In the other direction, the term was also commonly used to translate Darwin's phrase (from the *Origin of Species*, 1859), 'struggle for life' (*Kampf ums Dasein).*

[2] Kant also uses it as a contrastive term to *Nichtsein*. See David, 2014, 195.

[3] Commenting on the issue, Heidegger writes that: 'In the philosophical tradition, the term 'Dasein' means presence-at-hand, existence. In this sense, one speaks, for instance, of proofs for God's existence. However, Da-sein is understood differently in *Being and Time*' (Heidegger, 2001, 120). Clearly, *Dasein*, as used in *Being and Time*, is not to be construed in terms of 'existence'. But this claim is misleading if it is intended to imply that Heidegger's use of *Dasein* is entirely unprecedented in the German literature – intended in the latter fashion, the claim seems to reflect Heidegger's sometime tendency to exaggerate the sense in which his own thinking does indeed constitute a radical break with the preceding tradition.

[4] See eg.: 'Dasein, in its contemporary (Heideggerian) usage, has become a paradigm of the untranslatable. It is a common word that Heidegger transformed into a neologism' (David, 2014,195).

to refer to human being, nor the particular emphasis on *Sein* and *Da* as its joint components (exemplified in Heidegger's sometime use of a hyphenated form – *Da-sein*) are without precedent.

Johann Gottfried Herder uses the phrase *lebendiges Daseyns*, 'living there-being', to refer to living things in general, but he also gives it a special sense in relation to the living *Dasein* that is exemplified in human being. This way of understanding *Dasein*, and its relation to space and place, is especially clear in his very late writing. 'We are and, indeed, we are with others', he writes in the *Metakritik* from 1799, and he adds 'This where means the place of our Dasein; we take it up, that is, some else cannot be where we are at this moment' (Herder, 2002, 50). Herder emphasises that what is at issue here is not merely some abstracted mode of being, but human being in its spatio-temporal singularity. *Dasein is* given only *'within and with experience*: for as soon as *living Dasein* is posited, it *experiences itself*. It is self-experience; *a being that comprehends and reveals itself in space and time through inner powers* [innerer Kräfte]'.[1] According to Herder, 'Dasein (Da sein) means being in a place, asserting it' (the parenthetical insertion here is Herder's), and Herder rejects the Kantian idea of space and time as 'forms of intuition' rather than as given in and with experience – as they belong to our *Dasein*, and are inseparable from it (Herder, 2002, 53; the parenthetical insertion of 'Da sein' is Herder's own).

Herder is a particularly important example here, but he is not the only figure in whose work one can find elements that prefigure elements of Heidegger's thinking in relation to *Dasein*. Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi writes that, 'In my judgment the greatest merit of the researcher is to reveal [enthüllen] and disclose [offenbaren] *Daseyn'* (Jacobi, 1998, 29; see also Sandkaulen, online). And what does *Dasein* name in Jacobi's thinking? 'It does not merely denote being in general', writes Birgit Sandhaulen, 'instead, it aims at the specific structure and complexity of human existence, whose personal center, as the "unresolvable, immediate, simple" …evades all representation …' (Sandkaulen, online). Paolo Livieri emphasises that, for Jacobi, *Dasein* is that which is 'the foundation or origin of thought or cognition' (Jacobi, 2024, xx). Although the details of their philosophical positions differ, and Dasein does retain both broader and narrower senses (including that at issue in 'existence' as used by Wollf and Kant), still many of the connotations that *Dasein* carries in Heidegger are prefigured in Herder and Jacobi. Moreover, some of those connotations are also present among other nineteenth-century thinkers. Especially notable in this regard is Ludwig Feuerbach, who uses the term *Dasein* with a specific emphasis on the fundamental connection of *Sein* with *Da* (although in Feuerbach the latter term is used with the connotation,

[1] The reference here to 'powers' (*Kräfte*) reflects Herder's commitment to the being of there-being, *Dasein*, as essentially worked out through activity and the exercise of its own power: 'only through action do we become aware that we are capable of action; through the application of our powers, we demonstrate to ourselves that we are, that we possess and have ourselves. In the most joyful use of these abilities, the human being recognizes as much of his there-being [Dasein] as he has tested for himself' (Herder, 2002, 151).

present in ordinary German, of 'here' as well as 'there'[1]). *Dasein,* declares Feuerbach, "is the being that comes first, the being that is the first to be determined. Here *I* am – that is the first sign of a *real and living* being' (Feuerbach, 2014, xx; Hanfi translates *Dasein* as 'Here-being'). What we see in Herder, in Jacobi, and in Feuerbach, to varying degrees, are indications of the topology that the term *Dasein* already carries with it, but which is seldom addressed – indications that become even more strongly evident in early Heidegger.

The problem with translation of *Dasein* as 'existence' in work prior to Heidegger is that the English term no longer carries any connotation that connects it to the original sense given in the Latin derivation – the Latin *existentia* coming from *ex-* 'out' together with *sisto* or *sistere* 'take a stand'. *Dasein* carries no etymological link to the Latin, but nevertheless has a similar connotation of 'standing out', *ex-sistere* (the associated idea of *ecstasis* having an important role in Friedrich Schelling, see David, 2014, 198), as well as Heidegger, although, once again commentators tend not to take note of the topological implications that come with that idea - see Heidegger, 248). The latter being given, one might say, a new emphasis in the German precisely though the standing out as a standing there/here.

On the face of it, this may seem to provide some additional justification for the English translation of *Dasein* as 'existence'. And that translation does connect the German term with what does seem to be its common English correlate. But where the real meaning of the original German term (and of 'existence' itself) is in question, and especially where this arises in relation to a question about the relation between being and the there – between being and place – then this translation must be considered problematic. It displaces the problem without resolving it at the same time as it also potentially obscures what is at issue. The sense of standing out (as well as of the standing out as a standing there or even as a 'standing toward'[2]) is almost entirely lost in the English term, which no longer retains, in its common usage, any real echo of what is at work in the original Latin form. The emphasis on *Dasein* as 'existence', even more so than the practice of leaving the term untranslated, thus makes it easy to ignore or overlook the spatial and topological connotations that have often been associated with the term *Dasein* in German philosophical discourse.

5. Topology and Philosophy

In Heidegger's writings after *Being and Time,* and especially from 1934 onwards, the topological character of his thinking comes increasingly to the fore. This is so in direct relation to his use of

[1] Some will argue that, in Heidegger, the there must take precedence since *Dasein*, in Heidegger's sense, is always ahead of itself. But this need not invalidate the significance of Feuerbach's use of the term, nor does it mean that *Dasein* must be understood in relation only to the 'there' as understood in clear contrast to the 'here' – see also n.50 below.

[2] Pascal David argues that 'in Heidegger, the *da* in *Da sein* almost means *zu* (toward). Dasein is never "localized," but localizing; it must be thought of with movement' (David, 2014, 198). *Dasein* is indeed dynamic rather than static, but that does not detract from its fundamentally topological character, and, if anything, depends upon it.

Dasein, with the term more often hyphenated, and even greater emphasis given to the *Da*, the there. By the late 1940s Heidegger is explicitly using the phrase 'topology of being' to characterise his own thinking, at the same time as he also talks of the 'locality of being' (*Ortschafts des Seyns*). Moreover, this language is employed in conjunction with the language of the event, *das Ereignis*, that is also a central element in his later thinking (from the 1936-38 *Contributions* onwards). The event, it turns out, is no mere temporal occurrence, but as clearing and opening, it is essentially a happening of place. As Joe fell puts it: 'Heidegger's terms "Event" (*Ereignis*) and "Place" (*Ort*) mean "the same" (Fell, 1979, 221; see also Malpas, 2022, 14-16 and Malpas, 2006, 213-219).

If the essential belonging together of being and place is not already clear in *Being and Time*, then this is largely due to the absence in that work of the requisite terminology – as noted already, neither *Ort*/*Ortschaft* nor *topos* figure in philosophically significant ways in Heidegger's earlier thinking. Yet this is not because the topological is absent from the earlier work. It is rather that topological themes and ideas are expressed differently – in ways that partly reflect the preceding tradition – and that are focussed around there-being, *Dasein*, the there, space, opening and clearing, even in the way time is itself understood. To ignore this, and to insist instead that the topological and spatial elements in early Heidegger are secondary in his thinking, is to ignore the direction of the path on which Heidegger is already set from the beginning. The neglect or even dismissal of place by many readers of Heidegger, which even persists into some readings of the later Heidegger,[1] although in some respects surprising, nevertheless reflects a widespread forgetting or effacing of place within the philosophical tradition (recounted in Casey, 1997). But this forgetting or effacing occurs at the very same time as philosophy constantly draws upon and employs topological and spatial ideas and imagery. Heidegger is notable – as are some of his predecessors, among them Feuerbach and Herder – not only for the way such ideas and images appear in his work, but for the way he gives specific attention to them, so that his thinking does indeed take the form of a topology explicitly recognised as such.

As a philosophical project, topology arises out of the simple recognition of the way all thinking begins with place, with our own being-placed, and with the questionability that belongs to them. Both place and being-placed thus emerge as philosophical issues from the very beginning, even though they are frequently passed over. That they are passed over may itself reflect something of the character of place. It is place that *opens* the original field in which philosophical inquiry moves. But as it does so, it also *bounds* that field. In this respect, it is perhaps not surprising that the shift in the later Heidegger to a more explicitly topological orientation is also accompanied by what has so often been seen as a shift towards the poetic and the 'mystical'. Place is not, however, somehow beyond our ability to speak of it, nor does the thinking of place, any more than the thinking of being, require that one give oneself over to 'the pretension of arcane erudition… nor the display of

[1] See, for instance, Mitchell, 2015, in which neither space nor place are mentioned even though the focus of its analysis, the Fourfold, is fundamentally topological.

rare and exceptional states … raptures, reveries, and swoonings' (Heidegger, 1992,149). Yet as it is both the ground and limit for thinking, including philosophical thinking, so it can never be rendered wholly transparent to such thinking. And for this reason, too, it seems, it is all too easily passed over and forgotten. In this respect, Heidegger's work can be seen as an attempt to reawaken us, not only to the question of being, but to the even more neglected question of place. Such a reawakening has also been the aim of my own work – both in my reading of Heidegger and my 'reading' (or 'saying') of place.

References

Augustin, B. (1996). The question of space: from Heidegger to Watsuj. *Ecumene* 3: 373-383.

Casey, E. (1997). *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*. University of California Press.

Cassin, B. & et al. (ed). (2014). *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*, translated by S. Rendall & et al. Princeton University Press.

Dreyfus, H. L. (1991). *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division 1*. MIT Press.

Feuerbach, L. (2014). *The Fiery Brook: Selected Writings*, translated by Z. Hanfi. Verso.

Grimm, J. & Grimm, W. (2023). 'Dasein ', in Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm auf CD-ROM und im Internet (Kompetenzzentrum -Trier Center for Digital Humanities, University of Trier), https://woerterbuchnetz.de/?sigle=DWB&lemid=D00858 – accessed August 2023.

Heidegger, M. (1962). *Being and Time, trans. John Macquarie and Edward Robinson*. Harper & Row.

Heidegger, M. (1966). *Questions III et IV*, translated by J. Beaufret & et al. Gallimard.

Heidegger, M. (1967). What is a Thing? translated by W. B. Barton Jr & V. Deutsch. South Bend, Gateway.

Heidegger, M. (1975a). *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie, ed. Hans-Helmuth Gander, Gesamtausgabe 24*. Klostermann.

Heidegger, M. (1975b). *Poetry, Language, Thought*, translated by A. Hofstadter. Harper Colophon.

Heidegger, M. (1994). *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, translated by J. Buren. Indiana University Press.

Heidegger, M. (1998). *Pathmarks*, translated by W. McNeil. Cambridge University Press.

Heidegger, M. (2001). *Zollikon Seminars*, translated by F. Mayr & R. Askay. Northwestern University Press.

Heidegger, M. (2018). *Zu eigenen Veröfentlichungen*, Edited by F-Wilhelm von Herrmann, Gesamtausgabe 82. Klostermannn.

Heidegger, M. & Fink, E. (1993). Heraclitus Seminar, translated by C Seibert. Evanston, Northwestern University Press.

Heidegger, M. (1972). *On Time and Being*, translated by J. Stambaugh. Harper and Row.

Heidegger, M. (1992). *Parmenides*, translated by A. Schuwer & R. Rojcewicz, Indiana University Press.

Heidegger, M. (1993). *Basic Concepts, trans. Gary E. Aylsworth. Bloomington*, Indiana University Press.

Heidegger, M. (2012a). *Contributions to Philosophy (of the Event)*, translated by R. Rojcewicz & D. Vallega-Neu, Indiana University Press.

Heidegger, M. (2012b). *Four Seminars*, translated by A. J. Mitchell & F. Raffoul. Indiana University Press.

Herder, J. G. (2022). *Metakritik zur Kritik der reinen Vernunft, ed. Martin Bojda and Holger Gutschmidt.* Felix Meiner Verlag.

Jacobi, F. H. (1994). A Taste of Madeleine: Notes Towards a Philosophy of Place. *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 34 (4), 433-451.

Jacobi, F. H. (1998). *Schriften zum Spinozastreit*, Edited by K. Hammacher & I. Maria Piske, Werke Vol 1. Meiner; Frommann-Holzboog.

Jacobi, F. H. (2016). *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place: Explorations in the Topology of Being.* MIT Press.

Jacobi, F. H. (2018). *Place and Experience: An Essay in Philosophical Topography*. 2nd Edition, Routledge,

Jacobi, F. H. (2021). *Rethinking Dwelling: Heidegger, Place, Architecture*. Bloomsbury.

Jacobi, F. H. (2022). *In the Brightness of Place: Topological thinking in and after Heidegger*. SUNY Press.

Jacobi, F. H. (2024). *On the Divine Things and Their Revelation*, translated by P. Livieri. McGill.

Joseph, F. (1979). *Heidegger and Sartre: An Essay on Being and Place*. Columbia.

Malpas, J. (2006). *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World*. MIT Press.

Mitchell, A. J. (2015). *The Fourfold: Reading the Late Heidegger*. Northwestern University Press.

Morell, J. D. (1846). *An Historical and Critical View of the Speculative Philosophy of Europe in the Nineteenth Century.* W. Pickering.

Pascal, D. (2014). Dasein/Existenz, in *Cassin*, pp.195-200. Digital Dictionary of the German Language, <https://www.dwds.de/wb/Dasein>, accessed 8/24.

Sandkaule, B. (2024). 'Dasein enthüllen', in Birgit Sandkaulen, Stefan Schick and Oliver Koch (eds.), Jacobi-Wörterbuch Online, https://jwo.saw-leipzig.de/articles/bbfcf47b - accessed August 2024.

Sheehan. T. (2015). *Making Sense of Heidegger: A Paradigm Shift. Lanham*, Rowman and Littlefield.

Simmel, G. (1997). *Simmel on Culture*, translated and edited by D. Frisby & M. Featherstone. Sage.

Sloterdijk, P. (2011). *Bubbles, Spheres Volume I: Microspherology*, translated by W. Hoban Semiotext(e).

Tetsuro, W. (1988). *Climate and Culture: A Philosophical Study*, translated by G. Bownas, Greenwood Press.

Ulrich, W. (1972), Dasein, *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Vol. 2, pp.15-22. Edited by J. Ritter Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.

Vycinas, V. (1961). *Earth and Gods: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Martin Heidegger.* Martinus Nijhof.

Wrathall, M. (ed.) (2013). Heidegger on Space and Spatiality, in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger's Being and Time*, pp.129-144, Cambridge University Press.

Journal of Philosophical Investigations
Print ISSN: 2251-7960 Online ISSN: 2423-4419
Homepage: https://philosophy.tabrizu.ac.ir

Hegel's Internal Engine – Free Energy Minimization at Play in the Phenomenology of Spirit

Caius R. Gibeily

Department of Biological and Biomedical Sciences and Department of Philosophy, Emory University, USA, Email: cgibeil@emory.edu

Article Info

Article type:
Research Article

Article history:
Received 20 July 2024
Received in revised from 01 August 2024
Accepted 03 August 2024
Published online 07 September 2024

Keywords:
Hegel, neuroscience, predictive coding, free energy principle, phenomenology, dialectics

ABSTRACT

This paper bridges contemporary neuroscience theories and Hegelian philosophy, centering on Karl Friston's Free Energy Principle (FEP). Neuroscience models like the Bayesian brain hypothesis and predictive coding depict the brain as a predictive machine, echoing Hermann von Helmholtz's concept of unconscious inference, where perception is shaped by prior knowledge. The FEP, rooted in information theory and statistical physics, suggests organisms minimize sensory surprise through unconscious and active inference, providing a model for behavior and explaining the purposiveness of biological systems. Some scholars assert that Georg W. F. Hegel's view of living beings in his Philosophy of Nature aligns with the FEP, portraying them as purposive and enactive systems. This paper extends this idea, proposing that Hegel's 'System of Science' in the Phenomenology of Spirit functions as a free energy-minimizing system. It discusses predictive coding and the FEP, establishing criteria for a system that minimizes free energy, and applies these criteria to Hegel's work. The paper argues that the dialectical narrative in the Phenomenology operates as a reflective system driven to minimize logical or conceptual free energy, ultimately advancing the spirit towards absolute spirit. This Hegelian predictive model generates expectations essential for dialectical progression.

Cite this article: Gibeily, C. R. (2024). Hegel's Internal Engine – Free Energy Minimization at Play in the Phenomenology of Spirit. *Journal of Philosophical Investigations*, 18(48), 81-94. https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.62559.3827

© The Author(s).
Publisher: University of Tabriz.
https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.62559.3827

Introduction

Many trending theories in neuroscience, including the Bayesian brain hypothesis, principles of efficient and predictive coding, and biased competition, revolve around the brain as a predictive machine that is engaged in continuous modeling of the world (Friston, 2010; Chalk et al., 2017; Pezzulo, 2021). An earlier form of predictive processing is found in the notion of unconscious inference proposed by Hermann von Helmholtz in which perceiving inevitably introduces perceptual priors that condition the perception of the object under scrutiny (Helmholtz, 1867; Wade, 2021). Karl Friston's free energy principle (FEP) is rooted in information theory and statistical physics and has found widespread traction in the biosciences (Friston, 2010). The principle integrates unconscious with active inference and offers a normative model of organism behaviour. The framework also offers an explanation for the teleonomy or purposiveness inherent to biological systems whose physicochemical and behavioral dynamics resist their destruction. Such systems achieve this goal by minimizing the surprise in their estimates of the sensory world (Friston, 2009).

Some contemporary scholars of Georg W.F. Hegel argue that his conception of living things in his *Philosophy of Nature* is one of living beings as intrinsically purposive and enactive natural systems (Boonstra and Slagter, 2019; Gambarotto, 2024). The *Phenomenology of Spirit* was Hegel's first major work in which he developed the introduction to his systematic speculative philosophy. This paper suggests that a form of free energy minimization is at play in the *Phenomenology.* The paper builds upon the only existing exploration of the FEP in Hegel's philosophy in Boonstra and Slagter (2019). The authors examine parallels to the FEP in Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature* where they present a compelling case for an FEP-like process at play in Hegel's understanding of animal organisms. The paper extends this perspective by arguing that Hegel's 'System of Science' (*System der Wissenschaft*) itself takes the form of a free energy-minimizing system.

The paper is divided into a brief discussion of predictive coding and the FEP, leading to a collection of minimum criteria that a system would need to meet to be considered a free energy-minimizing system. A case is then made for a possible reading of the FEP in Hegel's system, focusing on the Preface and Introduction of the *Phenomenology.*

It is argued that the dialectical narrative throughout the *Phenomenology* can be modeled as a type of reflective system immanently driven towards minimization of a form of logical or conceptual free energy. The inevitable result of this optimization in the *Phenomenology* drives the self-motion of spirit towards absolute spirit. A further consequence is that a Hegelian predictive model is also a generator of expectations, without which the dialectics could not progress.

Predictive coding and Karl Friston's Free Energy Principle

Neuronal predictive coding is the hypothesis that the brain predicts future sensory input rather than the pattern of sensory information. Activity in primary sensory areas reflects a mismatch signal whose amplitude is proportional to the disparity between the sensory evidence and the encoded sensory prediction, rather than a pattern of activity that signals the object's identity (de-Wit, 2010). Under a predictive processing framework, the brain actively anticipates and then compares the outcome to its priors, rather than being a passive recipient of incoming information from the sensorium. In hierarchical feedback circuits, there may be sequential feedback propagated from higher to lower levels that signal different types of prediction error (Rao and Ballard, 1999; Friston, 2009; Chalk et al., 2017).

Of course, without a method for updating their models, organisms would be unable to navigate their environments effectively and could have no certainty in their perception, given the volatility of the sensory world and inadequacy of out-of-date models to uncertain sensory information. The only information yielded would be a negative signal indicating 'x is not y', where x and y are prediction and observation, respectively. Instead of completely rejecting an inadequate model, leaving the perceiver without a starting point, the optimal strategy is a form of Bayesian inference that requires a starting point – the prior distribution – and calculates a posterior distribution, continuously updating the existing model. This overview gives some intuition as to why static predictions are unsuited in an uncertain world and, instead, the nervous system must continuously update its perceptual models to infer the true nature of the sensory world. Implementation of model update in nervous systems can involve modulation at multiple levels of the hierarchy, operating from changes in gene expression and protein regulation, modulating synaptic strength, up to reorganizations in brain network topologies and functional connectivity (Rao et al, 2024). Changes in synaptic weights given recent activity between pairs of neurons – in its simplest form, Hebbian plasticity – or large-scale adjustments in network activity through synaptic scaling are two such mechanisms that may transform prediction error into physiological changes in circuit dynamics.

Here, the FEP enters the scene as a principle for consolidating hypotheses on predictive coding, encompassing hierarchical Bayesian models of organism function (Friston, 2006, 2009 and 2010). While information theoretic free energy is a historical continuity of Helmholtz free energy in thermodynamics, it is distinct from thermodynamic Gibbs-Helmholtz free energy. The FEP states fundamentally that a self-organizing system will tend towards reducing its free energy. Informally, free energy reduction may be described as the efficient use of the information available in the dynamic system which reduces the amount of unused or wasted information that follows from encoding a surplus of potential information. Optimizing the free energy of the system involves setting a stable upper bound on entropy, or uncertainty in its predictions (Friston, 2006 & 2009). The statistical separation between the system's internal states and those of the surroundings is given by a Markov blanket. The FEP is formulated as having some set of n internal states, $\{\mu_i...\mu_n\}$,

hidden states of the sensory environment, $\{\psi_i...\psi_m\}$, that explain the cause of the observed sensory distribution, and actions that follow from the internal state of the system, a(μ). The optimal state is the one that minimizes the free energy of its prediction given its sensory input (Friston, 2009) and past actions that follow from μ. Consequently, the self-organising system may opt to minimize its residuals through two compatible routes: changing its internal model to fit the available data or acting in such a way as to affirm its model predictions (i.e. changing the statistics of the sampled sensory space) (Friston, 2005 & 2006). The latter approach is consistent with enactivism whereby self-organizing systems are not just actively generating and testing their internal inferences against the sensory evidence but are also enactive, filtering their environment to confirm their prior beliefs. The enactive perspective includes brain, body and environment as a coupled system and provides a type of organismal teleonomy or purposiveness as a "self-organizing autonomous, autopoietic system" (Chemero, 2009, 152).

The Minimal Conditions for a Free Energy-Minimizing System

The FEP therefore provides a normative and unfalsifiable general model. Its formulation as a general principle is both germane in its applicability to a number of both biological and non-biological systems but also a limitation in the problem of discriminating between different putative free energy-minimizing systems. Both a thermostat and a human brain could be judged to perform free energy minimization. Distinguishing between FEP-compatible systems is beyond the scope of this paper; instead, a set of minimal criteria are proposed, which if satisfied, would point towards the system in question being a free-energy minimizing system *in nomine certe:*

1. Markov blanket – the system maintains a separation between its own internal states and the environment. The Markov blanket captures this separation in the statistics of the system's internal states from its environment while still admitting the flux of information between system and environment (Friston, 2009; Pezzulo and Sims, 2021).
2. Mechanisms to reduce variational free energy – in addition to a separation of internal and external states, the system should have mechanisms for detecting and responding to the amount of variational free energy in the system by converging on a set of states with minimum free energy.
3. Generative modeling of expectation – the system models the expected distribution of the sensory evidence, termed the recognition density, which generates expectations about its current state (Friston, 2009 and 2010).
4. Active inference – the actions of the system should lead to a reduction in free energy. The resulting actions should either change the type of evidence the system is exposed to, such as through soliciting a particular type of sensory evidence or by changing its expectations (Friston, 2009, and 2009a; Pezzulo and Sims, 2021).

In the next section, Hegel's system and method in the Preface and Introduction are discussed, identifying elements of Hegel's system where it may be compatible with an FEP reading. It begins by building up from the prior examination of the FEP in Hegel's philosophy in Boonstra and Slagter (2019).

The Hegelian Free Energy-Minimizing System

The Free Energy Principle in Hegel's Understanding of Animal Organisms in the Philosophy of Nature

In their *Dialectics of Free Energy Minimisation,* Boonstra and Slagter (2019) propose a serious dialogue between Hegel's dialectics of the constitution of animal organisms and the FEP through a reading of plasticity in Catherine Malabou. They draw attention to the three moments in how organisms relate to the environment: "[r]eproduction passes through sensibility and irritability and absorbs them; it is thus derived, posited universality which, however, as self-producing is at the same time concrete singularity" (§353/*Philosophy of Nature*). The "contradictory organism" (Boonstra and Slagter, p. 10), arises in the negative relation of living things with their surroundings while maintaining an internal state in and for itself; organisms sublate the two, thereby assimilating its surroundings.[1] As organisms reconstitute the experience of their organic and inorganic media, these moments are captured in habit (Malabou, 2000). These habits, or shapes, *Gestalt,* are taken to reflect internal states engendered by the FEP: "We thus find here an additional indication that both lines of thinking [Friston's states and Hegel's notion of habit] are closer than they may appear: both 'state' and 'habit' refer to the configuration of the anticipatory organism" (Boonstra and Slagter, 2019, 9). For the authors, the organism is by definition its anticipatory structure, potentiated through its form-receiving plasticity in making habit (Malabou, 2000). Upon encountering error that risks the organism's dialectical autodestruction, "the threat of the explosion of form structurally inhabits every form" (Malabou, 2008, quoted in Boonstra and Slagter, 2019), a mediated tension arises between the organism's formation and destruction of form that marks the dialectic progression, sublating the first two moments – form and the anticipatory error – to arrive at a new form. What is yet to be elucidated is whether the dialectics of free energy in organism determination in the *Philosophy of Nature* are reflected in the *Phenomenology.* The next subsection explores the properties of subject as living substance in the Preface, suggesting that a similar self-organisation is attested across different shapes of consciousness.

[1] "Now since the organism is directed towards the outer world as well as being inwardly in a state of tension towards it, we have the contradiction of a relationship in which the outer must be sublated. The organism must therefore posit what is external as subjective, appropriate it, and identify it with itself; and this is assimilation"

Hegel's System as Involving Self-Restoring Subject

Hegel's Preface, written after the completion of the remainder of the *Phenomenology*, offers important insight into his system and his goal of reconstituting a science of philosophy, as the "goal where it [philosophy] can lay aside the title of love of knowing and be actual knowing" §5. He warns that for the type of book the *Phenomenology* aims to be, it would be misleading to give a preface summarizing its results, given that laying out its result in advance without the stages preceding its actuality would be not to grasp that the results themselves are an end unintelligible without the means that got consciousness to those inferences. It is insufficient merely to have a collection of posited truths, since "[w]ithout this development, science has no general intelligibility [*Verständlichkeit*] and it seems to be the esoteric possession of only a few individuals" §13, marking an apparent contrast with the approach of his contemporaries. Hegel claims that "what is intelligible is what is already familiar and common both to science and to the consciousness alike" §13, thereby introducing the centrality of a cognizing consciousness into the science itself – the truths of the science must be immanent to consciousness itself in order to be intelligible, since intelligibility is by definition what can be grasped by consciousness (even if it does not appear so immediately).

In taking this stance, Hegel rejects the idea of intellectual intuitionism of a presupposed absolute, simply posited without development, and criticizes such views as he sees them in Schelling and Fichte (Pinkard, 2023; Bruno, 2023). He is also wary of what he perceives as the formulaic approach of the philosophical systems of his contemporaries and antecedents,[1] and seeks to escape the trap of "repetition of the same old formula" §15 that precludes the possibility of any movement towards an idea of absolute qua absolute; this may only proceed in following the "exposition of the system itself" §17 and to do so requires "grasping and expressing the true not just as substance but just as much as subject" §17. It is in the subject, the individual reader herself and consciousness that the truth of the whole is self-immanent.

Living substance is "the being that is in truth *subject*" §18 and it can only be "actual only insofar as it is the movement of self-positing, or, that it is the mediation of itself and its becoming-other-to-itself". Here, scholars have understood "actuality" (Wirklichkeit) as furnished by Hegel with a technical meaning of Aristotle's 'ἐνέργεια', the thing at work, real by expending energy (Pippin, 2022; Pinkard, 2023). To be constituted as subject, a living being must keep working towards its self-maintenance in the face of otherness. Unlike man-made devices, living beings are subject to their own internal action. Here, one finds a link to the first criterion of a free energy-minimizing system – subject qua living substance is to reject its own dissipation into its surroundings or

[1] However, if the way it spreads itself out is examined more closely, it turns out not to have come about as a result of one and the same thing giving itself diverse shapes but rather as a result of the shapeless repetition of one and the same thing which is only externally applied to diverse material and which contains only the tedious semblance of diversity §15.

becoming *merely* other and losing itself as in its death. It seems there is in effect a type of metaphysical Markov blanket here that divides the collection of processes constituting living substance as self-maintaining from what does not fall under the sheets. A further consequence is that living beings are a "self-restoring sameness, the reflective turn into itself in its otherness" §18. It should be recalled that similarly in the FEP, systems resist dispersion by tending towards as few unsurprising states as possible through (en)action and evidential inference – that is, they attempt to preserve their enduring self-similarity in the face of environmental perturbation.

Coincidentally, however, a living being cannot simply posit itself as itself without reference to otherness, a realization self-consciousness has before lordship and bondage.[1] The FEP interpretation is that living things also cannot deprive themselves of the external "sensuous world" for long, or, as Friston quips: "close [their] eyes or head for a dark room" (Friston, 2009a, p. 3), since organisms will eventually enter a surprising state like hunger. Part of their being is simply in the work they do to resist their own destruction. Hence, in the process of their self-maintenance, living beings are "pure negativity" within themselves (with hunger as a type of opposition to self-maintenance) and relate to objects negatively, as in Desire. While examples of sensory states are given here, this circularity in life's teleonomy – "the circle that presupposes its end as its goal and has its end for its beginning, and which is actual only through this accomplishment and its end" §18 is perhaps a defining property of living substance generally for Hegel. It would be a teleonomy that is not simply in animal organisms and the mediations between them and the sensuous world but immanent in "[t]he life of God and divine cognition...as a game love plays with itself" §1 that is driven by "[t]he need to represent the absolute as *subject*" §23. The next section explores what form of free energy minimization may be at play across the successive shapes of spirit.

The Hegelian gradient of conceptual free-energy minimization through determinate negation

The paper has discussed that according to the FEP, the likeliest state (the recognition density) is chosen that reduces the variational free energy given the internal states of the system (Friston, 2009; Spezzulo, 2021). Under optimal Bayesian assumptions and plasticity in the system's internal parameters, the result is a gradient of descent in free energy towards a minimum upper bound on surprise afforded by the available evidence and noisiness along the sensory channel (Isomura, 2023).

Turning to the *Phenomenology,* if we found such a gradient, one might ask what the optimization function that we as self-conscious would be attempting to solve by doing – and in the act of doing,

[1] "The sensuous world is thereby for it a stable existence, which is, however, only appearance, or is the difference which in-itself has no being. But this opposition between its appearance and its truth has only the truth for its essence, namely, the unity of self-consciousness with itself. This unity must become essential to self-consciousness, which is to say, self-consciousness is desire, full stop" §168. Self-consciousness has two moments – in the first, it takes the previous forms of consciousness from sense certainty and perception. In the second, it takes itself as object but discovers that to move beyond the empty assertion of 'I=I', self-consciousness must distinguish itself by opposing what is other to self-consciousness, namely, the sensuous world of appearances.

achieving – rigorous philosophical science? To make a case, therefore, for free energy minimization in the *Phenomenology*, it would not be concerned, at least exclusively, with empirical or quantitative free energy at play, for example, in biological systems interacting with their environment. Rather, it would take the form of conceptual or metaphysical free energy in logic involving "pure thought". The result implies the development of an expanding system of non-contradictory philosophical truths, but not a reliquary of empirical or mathematical truths[1]. What follows is the dialectical progression in which, for example, an apparent conceptual contradiction between the concept's first moment and the next moment are sublated, thereby regarding both as necessary parts of the whole. Taking such an approach breaks with previous verificationist modes of thinking: "[i]t does not comprehend the diversity of philosophical systems as the progressive development of truth as much as it sees only contradiction in that diversity" §2.

To comprehend the progressive development while seeing each moment in the development of rigorous science is challenging for us being individuals who are accustomed to representational, "materialized thinking" §58 or, alternatively, in systems involving "non-actual thought", such as formal logic. Hegel recognizes that breaking such patterns of thought "requires concentrated attention to the concept as such" §58. The implications are that for a system of rigorous science, self-consciousness should be aiming towards conceptual thinking, or that they are self-driven towards the goal of a form of conceptual thinking which in its wholeness is free of actual contradiction (even if parts of the whole present at first the semblance of contradiction). Consequently, in embarking on this route, it strives towards being a self-consistent system that is more than just a recapitulation of the 'I = I'. The entire project insofar as it is a phenomenology of spirit involves a laborious gradient towards true knowing on the part of spirit where "immediate spirit" (§27, §679, §724) learns to know itself and to understand itself in its mediated role in world-history.[2]

The path brings natural consciousness to a bifurcation point in which it may fall back onto the truths it took as being certain. Such a route, one would suggest, is consistent with the enactive approach to minimizing the free energy by choosing to align itself to its prior expectations rather than update its truths. The other route involves updating its model by avoiding the trap of merely making a "return to the former truth" and moving forwards with difficulty to real truth in science. In a sense, the motivation to switch from the former to the latter may coincide with when sensuous consciousness begins to question its convictions at the start of the journey in Sense-Certainty on what it took as immediate sense certainty in the world of appearances but then discovered the

[1] To questions like, "When was Caesar born?", "How many toise were there in a stadion and what did they amount to?", etc., a neat and tidy answer is supposed to be given, just as it is likewise determinately true that the square of the hypotenuse is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides of a right-angled triangle. However, the nature of such a so-called truth is different from the nature of philosophical truths. §40

[2] In order to become genuine knowing, or, in order to beget the element of science which is its pure concept, immediate spirit must laboriously travel down a long path. §27

mediations between itself and the object and the internal mediations within both. These discoveries lead it on the spiral path of "despair" towards real truth, rather than the path of a stubborn or forgetful consciousness just reliving its past experiences without any development.

Along the arduous path, there is a certain teleological self-motion of the concept, elaborated more fully in the Encyclopedia Logic. Maybee suggests this movement for Hegel is really one driven by logical necessity, where the determinations themselves solicit their opposites and vice versa at the moment of understanding. It is a form of "natural deduction" that is self-propelled through rational motivation given prior experience (Butler, 2012): "the completeness of the forms of non-real consciousness will emerge through the very necessity of their progression and their interrelation" §79. Here, a contrast in the responses of the Kantian categories of cognition, with understanding (*Verstand*) and reason (*Vernunft*) is presented, where understanding handles the opposition by eliminating one of the comparands, whereas reason recognizes the necessity of determinate negation in grasping the whole, taking a dialectical stance (Pinkard, 2023). The final sentence of the section reveals that in determinate negation, "a new form has thereby immediately arisen" §79 due to the nothingness revealed from the previous form, which Pinkard interprets as the transition to a new form of life that replaces the earlier form but retains its experience (Pinkard, 2023). A point of parity between Hegel's notion of determinate negation and prediction errors (in the broadest sense) is that both have some positive content in themselves but mark a negative relation to the first determination, stating what 'is not'. One finds a similar argument raised by Boonstra and Slagter (2019) from Malabou, in which the first two moments of form and anticipatory error arrive at a new form of the organism.

The role of free energy in Hegel's speculative philosophy could therefore be understood through the dialectical resolution of contradiction operating within and between the shapes of spirit. Within the predictive coding framework, determinate negations would constitute a type of error signal that are fed between layers. The logically necessary progression which Hegel takes simply to "come about on its own accord" §79 may be understood as a form of 'maximum likelihood' inference by consciousness. It takes the form that is least free energetic in terms of being logically most parsimonious (i.e. with the fewest extra presuppositions) while preserving itself in the next form given the experience consciousness has of its failures in the previous forms.

Free energy minimization at the level of cognition in the *Phenomenology* may both aid and be aided by a comparison with the psychology of cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance arises when two apparently contradictory statements or beliefs are held simultaneously to be true, necessitating an update to the agent's belief system (Festinger, 1957). To reduce dissonance, an individual may take the route akin to the understanding, negating one or the other of the beliefs through belief suppression or acting in a way that reduces tension between the beliefs, thereby bounding its surprise. Alternatively, it may involve a type of second-order meta-learning (Bateson, 1972). When faced with dissonance, people sometimes need to suppress their immediate error

response and instead engage in meta-learning, where the error is fed forward to a higher cognitive level, which in turn projects down to create a new belief model that resolves the dissonance (Kaaronen, 2018). In their predictive dissonance model, Kaaronen (2018) suggest that meta-learning prevents overfitting on limited information and recoding the original beliefs in a more generalized framework.

In summary, one has explored how spirit is on a necessarily ceaseless path towards self internal consistency in absolute spirit, capturing a form of teleonomy discussed above. The path, one has suggested, might be read as a path of gradient descent in conceptual free energy. One might object by raising the problem of equating teleonomy and teleology. The paper does not equate the two; rather, it suggests that the path has only the semblance of teleology in the context of spirit's development, just as pre-Darwinian theories of evolution, i.e. natural theology and Lamarckian evolution mistook organism ontogeny and phylogeny as directed towards some end design or utility. Instead, the semblance of teleology may arise from the work spirit does qua living substance towards its self-maintenance, i.e. through its teleonomy or intrinsic purposiveness. Such a reading may be attractive insofar as it does not presuppose an end-goal for spirit in history but allows it to emerge from spirit's immanent self-organization.

Determinate negation presents the semblance of contradiction reached by taking the current model to be true. It was argued to be characteristic of an error signal that signposts the failure of the current model, which, if consciousness avoids the trap of returning to old beliefs, is propagated forwards to a new form that reflects its past development. The new form also responds to the determinate negation that brought the destruction of the previous, unmodified form. The exposition given here points to a qualitative satisfaction of the second criterion of a free energy-minimizing system, one that follows a gradient of descent towards the smallest upper bound on its surprise. The role of expectation will be elaborated in the last subsection.

Expectation in Hegel's method of judging both knowing and the standard for knowing

The previous subsection explored the gradient of the system towards self-similarity and prediction error in the resolution of determinate negations that propel the system qua consciousness towards its goal of self-similarity. Still to be elaborated on is the role that prediction or expectation might play in Hegel's method for the *Phenomenology*. What contrasts the last two criteria with the second is the idea of 'active' rather than 'unconscious' or passive inference.

On the one hand, in unconscious inference (Helmholtz, 1867), the act of perceiving involves perceptual priors about the expected form of the object of perception, such that the object is inextricably bound by these inferences (Helmholtz, 1867; Wade, 2021). In vision, for example, these inferences may follow Wertheimer's Gestalt principles of perception, including the figure-ground distinction in which natural scenes are unconsciously deconstructed into two categories for the observer – agents in the foreground and static background (Wertheimer, 1923, Gluberman, 2017). These are implicit in perception and there is no sense that the agent seeks to test or self-

evidence its model of the world through action. While this paper certainly agrees with earlier arguments advancing a type of unconscious inference at play in a reflexive self in Sense-Certainty and Perception even before developed self-consciousness comes on the scene (Dahlstrom, 2013), one would, on the other hand, further propose that Hegel's method requires active inference. In Hegel, the active inference begins by acknowledging that the science of testing the truth of knowing requires an "investigation and testing of the reality of cognition" §81. The investigation entails testing the priors themselves in addition to the objects they purport to measure. Consciousness does not have the truth of knowing laid out before it, but must (we too as readers) actively determine this truth for itself. To do so however would be to invoke an established standard. Doing so is inadequate for Hegel as it implies a presupposition or an appeal to authority (Houlgate, 2012). Claims on *de facto* science also fail, since science is still in its early stages of development and thus yet to "justif[y] itself as the essence of as the in-itself" §81. When the object of examination is knowledge itself, what consciousness took as the in-itself (*a sich*) of knowledge was really *for* consciousness, being its object of study. Consciousness would then mistake the in-itself of knowing with what is actually *for* consciousness as its object. Here, Hegel makes two crucial points:

> The essence or the standard would lie within us, and that
> which was supposed to be compared with the standard, and that about
> which a decision was supposed to be made on the basis of this comparison
> would not necessarily have to recognize [*anzuerkennen*] the standard. §84

The passage affirms that the standard is the one internal to consciousness itself and not an external imposition. Moreover, consciousness is not necessarily even cognizant of exercising a standard – a move reminiscent of unconscious inference. Indeed, the standard even deceives consciousness into thinking it knows what knowledge is in itself. By accepting the standard implicitly, consciousness falls into contradiction due to what it took as a true standard of knowing as it is in itself: "consciousness declares within itself to be the in-itself, or the true" §84. Hegel elaborates that consciousness "provides its own standard, and the investigation will thereby be a comparison of it with itself" §84, one that will be its own measure of knowing. The action of differentiating something like an object for consciousness from itself is a distinction immanent to the current form of consciousness. The distinction following from the model for making the distinction are those which consciousness must nevertheless investigate to determine if it has a true concept of knowing.

The method will consist, therefore, not just in examining knowing but also examining the very standards against which knowing is compared. In Hegel is the idea that each form of consciousness generates its own standard "for which the essence is something different from what was the essence for the preceding shape" §87. The standards always follow from but never directly precede the new form of consciousness. It is the standards that seem to change due to the emergence of a new form of consciousness. This progression was possibly reflected in the Preface where a

new form of consciousness is said to arise immediately from the earlier one. The standard, conversely, is a mediation of what knowing is taken to be for consciousness.

One would therefore draw from these observations that a standard is generated by consciousness that in turn reflects the experience it has of its earlier forms. The standard is thus an implementation of the current state of consciousness and what it takes to be the essence of true knowing. In this light, consciousness is a generative model of expectations that follow logically from the current form of consciousness; these expectations are the standards that are used to measure its knowing and in setting its determinations about something, for example, in distinguishing something from itself as an object. It follows, therefore, that consciousness could not begin to examine the truth of its knowing without also bringing along a self-imposed standard.

Given this framework and taking Hegel's standards as expectations for consciousness, it suggests a satisfaction of the final two criteria: a system that (3) generates expectation and (4) is engaged in active inference given the expectations it has generated of the world. Of course, the ideal position for consciousness would be to discard its standards or have a standard identical to the essence, but consciousness cannot completely discard them; philosophical consciousness instead updates them in a form that appears analogous to Bayesian inference with the goal of adjusting one's 'posterior distribution' to converge on the true essence of knowing.

The paper has explored a perspective on how Hegel's method for the system of science is one of making predictions, examining them and the objects measured against the predictions, and dialectically refining the underlying model of consciousness given the determinate negations that arise from the standard consciousness sets for itself.

Conclusion

If Hegel's system can be described normatively as a type of free energy-minimizing system, the next question would be how this reading impacts a reading of the main text of the *Phenomenology*. On one level, the FEP is poised to offer a unifying account of brain functioning, including perception, learning and action, and is well suited to understanding hierarchical dynamics that are intrinsic to biological systems. In the *Phenomenology*, such a reading could provide insight to a range of features in Hegel's system. Since Hegel's *Phenomenology* is deeply involved in charting the emergence of higher forms of consciousness as moments of spirit, the FEP is well suited to characterizing the self-organization of consciousness and how it maintains its coherency as it transitions through different forms of being. We saw as well how the apparent logical necessity between forms of consciousness driven by determinate negation might begin to be examined through a free energy reading. It would resemble the path a rationally motivated consciousness estimates would be optimal in terms of best resolving its prediction error qua contradiction, but in retrospect would not have been had it more experience.

Moreover, taking the free energetic approach provides an alternative exploration of the development of spirit towards its goal, namely, as the necessity of the system's minimization of

conceptual free energy across its development that strives to maintain itself in the face of determinate negations. In fact, one might even suggest spirit is what it is by virtue of its actualizing itself in its self-preserving work whose result leads towards absolute spirit. Future work could test the description of Hegel's system as a free energy-minimizing system through a more thorough reading of the core dialectical progressions in the main text, including in understanding the FEP in a historicist context, like the struggle for intersubjective recognition and historical ethical institutions.

References

Bateson, G. (1972). *Steps to an Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology.* University of Chicago Press

Bruno, G. A. (2023). From Time into Eternity: Schelling on Intellectual Intuition, pp. 1–15

Butler, C. (2012). *The dialectical method: a treatise Hegel never wrote.* Humanity Books.

Boonstra, E. A. & Slagter, H. A. (2019). The Dialectics of Free Energy Minimization, *Journal of frontiers in systems neuroscience*,13 (42), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.3389/fnsys.2019.00042

Chemero, A. (2009). Radical embodied cognitive science. *MIT Press*.

Dahlstrom, D. (2013). The Self before Self-Consciousness: Hegel's Developmental Account. *Hegel Bulletin*, 34(2), 135–158. https://doi.org/10.1017/hgl.2013.20

de-Wit, L., Machilsen, B., Putzeys, T. (2010). Predictive coding and the neural response to predictable stimuli. *J Neurosci*. 30(26), 8702-3. https://doi.org/10.1523/JNEUROSCI.2248-10.2010

Festinger, L., Riecken, H. W. & Schachter, S. (1956). *When prophecy fails.* University of Minnesota Press.

Friston, K. (2009). The free-energy principle: a rough guide to the brain? *Trends in cognitive sciences*, 13(7), 293–301. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2009.04.005

Friston, K., Daunizeau, J. & Kiebel S. J. (2009). Reinforcement Learning or Active Inference? *PLOS ONE*, 4(7), e6421. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0006421

Friston, K. (2010). The free-energy principle: a unified brain theory? *Nat Rev Neurosci* 11(2), 127–138. https://doi.org/10.1038/nrn2787

Friston, K., Kilner, J. & Harrison, L. (2006). A free energy principle for the brain. *Journal of physiology, Paris*, 100(1-3), 70–87. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jphysparis.2006.10.001

Gambarotto, A. & Mossio, M. (2024). Enactivism and the Hegelian Stance on Intrinsic Purposiveness. *Phenom Cogn Sci* 23, 155–177. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11097-022-09823-9

Guberman, S. (2017). Gestalt Theory Rearranged: Back to Wertheimer. *Psychol.* 8, 1782. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.01782

Hegel, G. W. F. (2018). *The Phenomenology of Spirit.* Pinkard T. & Baur M., eds. Cambridge University Press.

Helmholtz, H. L. (1948). Concerning the perceptions in general, first pub: 1867.

Houlgate, S. (2012). *Hegel's Phenomenology of spirit: a reader's guide*. Bloomsbury Academic.

Kaaronen R. O. (2018). A theory of predictive dissonance: Predictive processing presents a new take on cognitive dissonance. *Frontiers in Psychology* 9,1–15. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.02218

Malabou, C. (2000). *The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality*, Dialect icl 15.

Malabou, C. (2008). *What should we do with our brain?* Translated by S. Rand. Fordham University Press.

Maybee, J. E. (2020). Hegel's Dialectics, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosoph*, URL= https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2020/entries/hegel-dialectics/

Pezzulo, G. & Sims, M. (2021). Modelling ourselves: what the free energy principle reveals about our implicit notions of representation, *Synthese*, Vol. 199 Springer Netherlands. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-021-03140-5

Pinkard, T. P. (2023). *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit: A Guide*, OUP Usa.

Pippin, R. (2022). The Many Modalities of Wirklichkeit in Hegel's Wissenschaft der Logik, in *Wirklichkeit. Beiträge zu einem Schlüsselbegriff der Hegelschen Philosophie*, pp. 43-58) http://doi.org/10.5771/9783465106647-43

Wade, N. J. (2021). The vision of Helmholtz. *Journal of the History of the Neurosciences*, 30(4), 405–424. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/20416695211022374

Wertheimer, M. (1923). Untersuchungen zur Lehre von der Gestalt. II. *Psychol. Forsch*. 39(1), 301–350. https://doi.org/1010.1007/BF00410640

Journal of Philosophical Investigations
Print ISSN: 2251-7960 Online ISSN: 2423-4419
Homepage: https://philosophy.tabrizu.ac.ir

Spring is in the Air: a new philosophy of love

Hans L. M. Dassen

Researcher, Anthroopos Foundation, Amsterdam, International Member of the Dutch Research School of Philosophy (OZSW), Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Leiden in the Netherlands (2020-2024). Email: mrjlmdassen@hotmail.com

Article Info

Article type:
Research Article

Article history:
Received 05 June 2024
Received in revised from 10 June 2024
Accepted 22 June 2024
Published online 07 September 2024

Keywords:
philosophy, anthropology humanism, domain unto itself, interdisciplinary reflection, conscience and the other, conflict of interest, morals and ethics, love

ABSTRACT

The experience of our conscience belongs in the same category as feeling, thinking and wanting. However, it has a special aspect, namely the presence of other human beings as absolute entities. The process of experience is concerned with the way to best promote your own interests, with how far you will go in actualising your essential characteristics as an absolute entity. The discussion of our urge for survival shows that we can go quite far in that respect, and that to actualise that urge, there are in fact no boundaries; everything is permitted. The same can be said about actualising our other essential characteristics, but the difference is that our need to do so is perhaps less cogently present; it is not our life, or at least not our continued material existence, that is at stake. Nonetheless, we can and may even choose to go to extremes in this respect and thus to give ourselves priority over others. Respect for the interests of others is based on self-respect, which may lead you to decide to subject your dealings with other people to a set of standards for yourself. Here we enter the area of morals and ethics, to which we can attach a complete moral philosophy and on the basis of a belief, a moral theology. At the end of this road is total love of yourself and others, because you have come to realise that it is the only way that can lead to the fourth essential characteristic of human beings as, absolute entities, namely self-fulfilment. You will then have developed in a way that allows you to yourself and others the scope we need as absolute entities. (compassion, solidarity). Self-fulfilment is achieved through self-development, i.e. discovering and honing our gifts and talents and thus finding our own identity (development), a process by which the lives of human beings as absolute entities acquire purpose (the search for meaning). Self-fulfilment is self-actualisation, the that results from the realisation of the essential characteristics of human beings as absolute entities, and it leads to satisfaction derived from ourselves or our activities, a sense of being satisfied with what we have accomplished.

Cite this article: Dassen, H. L. M. (2024). Spring is in the Air: A new philosophy of love. *Journal of Philosophical Investigations*, 18(48), 95-116. https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.18421

© The Author(s).
Publisher: University of Tabriz.
https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.18421

Introduction

The entire world population can be regarded as billions of people who went before us in carrying out their assigned task of begetting progeny. The earth is now populated by a great many more people than when we were born. Apparently, people are only too happy to do this work. Men and women are indeed so equipped that it is evidently the idea that we make continual attempts. There is always a good chance that one will be successful.

After all, one ejaculation, with a volume of two to five cubic centimetres, contains from 75 to 600 million sperm cells per cubic centimetre. The ovaries, two organs about the size of a walnut and symmetrically situated just below the navel against the side of the pelvis, contain around 50.000 egg cells, which are already present but unripe in the foetus. Until puberty, these egg cells do not develop, but after the onset of menstruation one egg cell ripens every month. This takes place in the Graafian or vesicular follicle, which grows bulges on the surface of the ovary until one rupture, thus releasing the oocyte. This is called ovulation and generally takes place halfway through the menstrual cycle (Dassen, 45). Just so you know. The general idea is that a single egg cell is penetrated by a single sperm cell, resulting in new life.

A considerable portion of life is focused on the free and unfettered progress towards this development. But is this the only objective of our lives, the most important one? You might almost think so, were it not that newborn life is very vulnerable and dependent, so provisions have to be made for this. Although many children die young, all over the world, billions of people have managed to emerge from the struggle unscathed. Many people concern themselves with the fate of the neonate and organise their lives around this. It is not easy, but by trial and error, people often manage to bring the new life into a state in which it too can take part in this cyclic process.

Semen largely consists of a liquid that nourishes the sperm cells and that is rich in fructose for this purpose. Fructose is a sugar with a simple chemical structure (simple sugar); it is also an ingredient of cane sugar (Dassen 46). I will not discuss further the physical and chemical composition of the sperm cells and egg cells. But it has been established that they are composed of basic elements found in all human beings. They can be regarded as the germ of all life. Although life appears to us in a physical form, these elements potentially make us who we are; they are the germinal beginnings of our external and internal manifestation. Therefore, it is life itself that we have been carrying with us for millions of years. In addition, if Darwin was right, then billions of years ago it was just a tiny fish. If we go on reasoning consistently, that fish might simply have come from the earth itself, which in its turn might have arisen from the Milky Way galaxy, the universe, and the cosmos. But then what? In my view, it stops there. These are questions that cannot be answered, and there is no point in speculating about them.

In addition, following this reasoning you saddle yourself with another problem. It arouses the suggestion that time is something with a real existence, while there are a great many reasons to assume that time does not exist, but is merely a human dimension. After all, time implies a

beginning and an end, which means it is finite. And finite is the opposite of infinite, of eternity and immortality, which calls up a lot of questions to which there is no answer. From our history we can conclude that this has created a problem for us, one that we do not know how to deal with, but that nevertheless demands a solution to explain the entire phenomenon of life. We are apparently unable to let go of this situation and simply to assume that we are dealing with a state of being, and then to analyse it.

Another insoluble problem created by time is the suggestion that we go through a process of development towards a certain objective, which is something we want, because life without a purpose means life without meaning, without any point. In which case, just what are we doing here! We have been pondering this problem for centuries, and have always had to resort to artifice to find a solution that was somehow satisfactory. Unfortunately, this same artifice has always caused the way we view our everyday earthly existence to become clouded, distorted, false. If we distance ourselves from time, it does not mean that life has no object and therefore no purpose. It means that we no longer allow time to push us from one thing to the next, that we can lean back into ourselves and relax, from this vantage point to see what experiences befall us. Then the sky will clear of its own accord, and what we then see might be very interesting.

One consequence of this theorem is that the Darwinian process of evolution does not necessarily imply that our development is progressive – that we are on our way to improving the species, whatever that may mean. It means that the matter of which we are made can appear in many different manifestations, depending on the circumstances, but it also means that the basis is invariable, that it exhibits characteristics of being that form the actual foundation for our existence. Then it no longer makes any difference who you are and where you are, because time and place are not important. We are all part of one and the same thing (Bryson, 517). Hereditary traits have been passed on unchanged since time immemorial. This applies to all life forms.

So, it is not necessarily the case that our development describes a straight line with a beginning and an end, but neither does it mean that our development follows the movement of a circle, an eternally repetitive evolution. Taking our distance from time and place in an absolute sense means that we restrict ourselves merely to our essence, that we can investigate and analyse the characteristics of our essence of which we can be reasonably sure that they exist in some form (Russell, Ten Kate, 452-453 (1)). The most recent developments in the natural sciences, and in quantum theory in particular (Van den Berg (2)), might well form the basis for this.

Absolute Entity

All life forms can be referred to by this concept. To a greater or lesser degree, they all exhibit its characteristics. Its main characteristics are a common origin, a shared evolution and structure. The common origin and the shared evolution mean that all absolute entities are brought in line with their common origin and are also directly connected to it. Absolute entities are structured so as to

be ends in themselves, solely focused on self-fulfilment and therefore fully autonomous. Human beings are therefore also absolute entities, and we will limit our discussion to them.

All absolute entities are part of one and the same thing (Bryson, 517 (3)). For discussion purposes we divide it into parts, phases, qualities, and so on merely to clarify, but this cannot alter the underlying unity. It therefore follows that all characteristics are interchangeable, that they are all interrelated and that every line of reasoning necessarily leads to the same conclusion.

The words absolute and entity are interrelated, they necessarily complement one another; in this context they cannot be seen as separate from one another, but they also have their own meaning. The word absolute means the absolute, something entirely on its own, without any relationship to anything outside of it. The word entity means essential existence, something that is substantial, a reality or essence. The term absolute entity could therefore be defined as an autonomous unit in itself, but also in relation to its origin, and is therefore the same as the characteristic of being (Bryson, 517 (3)).

1. “Methodological and epistemological standpoints. Russell defended a methodical principle for philosophy that is known as Ockham’s razor: ‘Do not expend the number of entities assumed to exist any further than strictly necessary.’ For Russell, this principle embodied a programme for general philosophical analysis: ‘If possible, replace entities which we think exist by logical constructs made up of entities which we are sure exist.’ These logical constructs are immediate observations, set forth in basic statements. … Russell was primarily interested in how we can have knowledge of the external world. He tried to answer this question by showing how we can construct complex insights from basic statements about that world.”

2. “*String theory* tries to build a bridge between Einstein’s theory of relativity and the quantum theory and it is the most important candidate for a ‘theory of everything’: an overarching description of nature at a basic level. It does not work with elementary particles such as electrons and quarks, but something more resembling minuscule elastic strings that can oscillate in different ways.”

3. “Every living thing is an elaboration on a single original plan. As humans we are mere increments – each of us a musty archive of adjustments, adaptations, modifications and providential tinkering stretching back 3.8 billion years. Remarkably, we are even quite closely related to fruit and vegetables. About half the chemical functions that take place in a banana are fundamentally the same as the chemical functions that take place in you. *It cannot be said too often: all life is one*. That is, and I suspect will ever prove to be, the most profound true statement there is.”

The origin and evolution of human beings as absolute entities can be divided into five distinctive segments:

1. Cosmos, which cannot be defined, but which has the following characteristics:
2. Intelligence (Plan, Order, Structure), Energy, Form and Matter
3. Planet Earth and Nature (Laws of Nature)

4. Human Beings: Brain, Male and Female, Reproductive Urge
5. Conception (Insemination), Duality, Birth
6. Unity, Absolute Entity

The defining essential characteristics of human beings as absolute entities are:

1. Dependency and Urge for Survival (Material)
2. Inward-Looking (Closed), Goal in Itself (Autonomy, Being Yourself),
3. Isolation and Communication (Broad and Immaterial)
4. Identity (Singularity, Character) and Individuality
5. Ultimate Objective: Self-Fulfilment (Development, Search for Meaning)
6. Autonomy (Self-Determination), and Freedom (Relative Freedom)

As absolute entities, human beings operate by means of experience. The concept of experience can be described as parts, or phases, of processes in the brain. These processes are autonomous. Accordingly, experience can be divided into the following parts or phases:

1. Observation (Input)
2. Storage (Memory)
3. Organising (Combining)
4. Conclusion or Finding (Mood, Intuition, Feelings, Emotions, Thought, Knowledge, Reason (Kant, 2004, 681), Idea, Mental Grasp, Consciousness (Blackmore, 2005, 2009, 2011), Mind, Soul, Psyche, Will, Conscience, etc.)

1. Plan
2. Performance (Output)

If we just let these distinctions sink in, no one will doubt their existence, at least at first sight. It all sounds perfectly reasonable and we may therefore assume it to be true (Russell, Ten Kate, 452-453) (Dagenais IX-XII, 141-162 (1)), (Cheung 365-383 (2)), (Bakker, Studia (3), (Kant, 2004 (4), 1999 (3))

However, upon closer inspection, you could ask yourself what these words actually mean, and what is behind them, or what terrain the words themselves cover. Although we will always be somewhat in the dark in this respect, it does show us how important it is that we know the correct meaning of words and that we continually ask ourselves if appearances are deceptive. People are always developing and their insights continually changing, so it is of great importance that the meaning of words is continually geared to situations with the most refined precision.

Another aspect that plays a role in this connection is the issue of what people can know: theories of knowledge. However, by decoupling the time-space dimension and by focusing on our state of being, this problem can be deemed to have been eliminated. For this discussion, I assume that, now

or in the future, we will be able to clarify our deepest essence. I am going to make an attempt at this right now.

And if the distinctions cited above should prove to be based on truth, and therefore can be assumed to be certain, then the conclusion seems justified that they apply to all people all over the world, that is to say to the deepest essence of all people, stripped of their different cultural properties.

1. "The present proposal is to define human consciousness, with Husserl, not as a thing but as a giver of meaning, and to define man in a preliminary way not as a 'rational animal' but as essentially project and as incarnate freedom." (Dagenais, 161)
2. "" Wesen" means the disclosing process of the understanding of Being (Seinsverständnis) in the human Dasein" (Cheung, 382)
3. "Philosophical anthropology explains how human beings are put together without delving into their cultural characteristics and without moralising" (Kant, 2004 (15-40), 1999 (7-28)) (Heidegger, 36-38: about the meaning of the word Humanism)
4. About "A priori- and a posteriori-knowledge; Knowledge, Observation and Experience; Thought and Reason", etc. (Kant, 681)

The origin and evolution of human beings as absolute entities

The origin and evolution of human beings as absolute entities can be divided into five distinctive segments:

1. Cosmos, which cannot be defined, but has the following characteristics:
2. Intelligence (Plan, Order, Structure), Energy, Form and Matter
3. Planet Earth and Nature (Laws of Nature)
4. Human Beings: Brain, Male and Female, Reproductive Urge
5. Conception (Insemination), Duality, Birth
6. Unity, Absolute Entity

The distinctions made in this context can all be regarded as conditions for the origin, evolution and survival of human beings as absolute entities. The order in which they are named is somewhat hierarchical (from part one to part five), but on the other hand there is also some reciprocity because of their shared origin. In addition, in this sense, all parts together therefore form a unity (Bryson, 517). They are part of the same tapestry, of the same thing. If one of the parts is lost, the unity is broken and this would mean the end of the absolute entity.

The fact that all parts together form a unity does not mean that they cannot each be seen as unities in their own right. This means it is possible to discuss the unity, the absolute entity, with its own essential characteristics. In this discussion, it is of great importance to bear in mind the perspective (they are one and the same), which implies that the essential characteristics of the absolute entity must mesh with the conditions for their origin and evolution, because they are part of it and are aligned with it (Bryson, 517).

Human beings as absolute entities

Here too, the individual essential characteristics can be viewed as independent units, but together they are inextricably bound up and as such, they form the unity of absolute entity. They influence one another but are not in a hierarchical relationship; one does not arise from the other. They have independent meaning and operate independently. This because the factors that determine the essential character of human beings as absolute entities can be regarded as their essentials, i.e. all of them together and each of them separately determine our essence. And their essence is that which makes them what they are, that which distinguishes them one from the other, and therefore touches on their raison d'être.

If the foregoing is correct, then this would mean that the highest priority for every human being is, as early as possible, to focus on the totality of his or her essential characteristics, to reflect on them and more particularly, to align and coordinate all of them with each other – in other words, to achieve equilibrium, and thus to safeguard his or her existence. A pressing question in this context is to what extent people owe something to one another. An argument in favour of this might be found in their common origin and in the consequence of the second essential characteristic: the fundamental need to break out of their isolation.

Apart from this, it can now be postulated that today's human beings are seriously remiss in two respects: in respect of the environment and in respect of the search for meaning or spirituality, both of which are related to the conditions for the survival of planet earth, of nature and its laws, as well as the essential characteristics of self-fulfilment as the ultimate goal of development and the search for meaning. You could say that we have lost our way in these respects and that only an in-depth reflection on our innermost essence can point us in the direction of ourselves again. The two are interconnected and are related to the enormous developments of the past centuries, which have resulted in economies of scale, something we now refer to as globalisation, meaning that all developments all over the world influence everything and everyone everywhere. Thanks to recent developments in the field of internet and telephony (communication), we can share our joint concerns with one another and bring them to a solution. For this it is necessary that we reflect on what our essential characteristics entail and bring them into harmony with one another.

The defining essential characteristics of human beings as absolute entities

The defining essential characteristics of human beings as absolute entities are:

1. Dependency and Urge for Survival (Material)
2. Inward-Looking (Closed), Goal in Itself (Autonomy, Being Yourself),
3. Isolation and Communication (Broad and Immaterial)
4. Identity (Singularity, Character) and Individuality
5. Ultimate Objective: Self-Fulfilment (Development, Search for Meaning)
6. Autonomy (Self-Determination) and Freedom (Relative Freedom)

7. 1 Dependency and Urge for Survival (Material)

Central to this is our material state of being. On the one hand, material refers to wants, needs, imperfections, death and on the other hand to their obviation by endeavouring to make provisions, to satisfy needs, bring perfection and life. It is from this antithesis that our urge for survival arises. Survival means maintaining living matter on pain of the occurrence of its opposite, dead matter. But this opposition is less absolute than we might think and has only one human dimension. After all, here a link seems to exist to our cosmic condition for existence, of which matter is a characteristic part. And our urge for survival (our will to live) can only be explained by matter that is not merely physical, but also includes, nay bears in itself, our will to live in a form or a manner that we call energy. Matter is therefore not only substance and our visible manifestation, but also embodies energy, which is incorporeal, immaterial, invisible to us. If this energy is the basis of our urge for survival, it is related to what we call intelligence, and then the conclusion would be justified that in an absolute sense matter includes not only energy, but also intelligence. These three quantities bear in them one another's characteristics and in this way, they are each other's equals, but viewed from our human dimension it is plausible that they are related hierarchically and that intelligence manifests itself in the form of energy, which appears to us as matter.

However this may be, our first task is to maintain our physical, corporeal essence, but this also leads to the biggest problems. Because we are not self-supporting in this respect, but dependent on the possibilities offered to us by nature, to which all life forms belong, we are obliged to spend a considerable portion of our lives on it. This means using scarce energy to achieve our objectives. To maintain our energy levels, we must spend an average of one-third of our life sleeping. For this, we need a place to live. On average, another one-third of our life is spent acquiring nourishment and a place to live. This leaves one-third for our private life, a considerable portion of which is needed for activities that are directly and indirectly related to our material self-preservation. This means that we are always short of time and always carry on an unrelenting struggle for existence. Not only our own inner struggle, but also an external one as well in which we must compete with others, imply that means of existence are scarce. This necessity of the struggle applies not only to individuals, but to the entire world population, which is why nations wage war on one another.

The implication is that our urge for survival is inherent, that everything is permissible, that we are a law unto ourselves; it is a matter of survival of the fittest, and this consequence can manifest itself in all conceivable and inconceivable variants. This situation is recorded in the lower strata of our lives, and it seems very remote in our present day and age because human societies have been created on the basis of rules which can be enforced, if necessary with the use of violence; but the threat will always be there, and even though the rules are enforced, a great many situations are conceivable that can escape the effects of enforcement, and thus the fundamental principle is always applicable.

We might well ask ourselves whether it is a good thing for people as absolute entities to seize every opportunity to raise the level of prosperity all over the world so that a great many people benefit from it. What will be the consequences? We would do well to wonder whether some limit needs to be set. Unrestricted growth of the world population and unbridled growth of prosperity may well mean that one day there will be a price to pay. The crucial question is when the critical limit is reached and what factors affect this; resourceful management can shift this limit infinitely. However, these are forces that are currently not under our control. Perhaps new worldwide macro-organisational structures will be able to provide a solution (Zoellick (1)).

1. "[*India, Brazilië en China moeten G7 bijstaan*] "We should consider setting up a new steering committee, one that includes Brazil, China, India, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and the present G7."
2. But once again, should human beings as absolute entities be happy with this? Or will such a development take place at the expense of other interests of absolute entities? Worse still, will it interfere to such an extent with one or more of the conditions for our existence that it must be slowed down or even stopped?
3. Inward-Looking (Closed), Goal in Itself (Autonomy, Being Yourself)

Isolation and Communication (Broad and Immaterial)

Human beings as absolute entities are inward looking, separate from all other absolute entities. We need to remember that all life forms are absolute entities and therefore all of them share this fate. Ordinarily, absolute entities can only observe the outside of another absolute entity, and cannot catch even the slightest glimpse of the inside. Body language is no exception. It can be considered an expression of something without revealing the underlying substrate of factors that play a role. More is required for this. Often, parts of it can be deduced from the circumstances, but it is still a matter of guesswork as to the actual causes of certain communications. A person's inner life and the deeper backgrounds always remain concealed for others as long they are not expressed in the commonly accepted manner.

This is one reason why human beings as absolute entities are on their own and can only seek their objectives within themselves. They are thus the goal in itself or in other words, autonomous in the sense of self. This autonomy must be distinguished from the fifth essential characteristic of absolute entities, or autonomy as self-determination. Both characteristics entail the third characteristic, which is that human beings as absolute entities live in isolation in an absolute sense, isolated from everything and everyone, even from their origins. Since they perceive this as very oppressive, they will do all they can to break out of their isolation? The obvious way to do so is by communicating using all possible means, in the broadest sense of the word. However, because the state of isolation is absolute, it is in fact not possible to break out of it, and the means of communication are only ostensible possibilities and are therefore immaterial. The result is an imaginary connection. It exists only in the imagination

of those involved. In addition, human beings can only communicate with limited and imperfect means, which leads to a great chance of misunderstanding or miscommunication. Recent developments in telephony and internet cannot alter this.

The most important general means of communication are those of language, involving signs (words, figures, and symbols), images, sounds, or a combination of these; they stimulate our senses and thus leave a certain impression in our brains. In everyday life, communication is usually incidental and fleeting. Words evaporate. Books, or at least texts, image and sound recordings give communication permanence. Certain forms of human behaviour (codes, manners, rituals) are intended to promote communication between people, although they may promote other objectives as well. We can thus regard religion and philosophy, art and culture, science and politics as forms of permanent communication between people.

4. Identity (Singularity, Character) and Individuality

We are living matter in a certain form, in which a number of specific characteristics are inherent, among them a number of unchanging hereditary traits that give us our own identity (singularity, character), by which we distinguish ourselves from other absolute entities (individuality).

Preamble (Dassen, 57)

Heredity might be described as passing on, by means of reproduction, factors that produce a resemblance of offspring to their parents. In a certain sense, every cell nucleus is an archive filled with documents, one that stores the complete list of hereditary factors of an organism. The documents are the chromosomes, which are present in all cells in equal numbers. Under the microscope, they are visible as a jumble of short threadlike strands. Half of every chromosome pair comes from the father and half from the mother. Human beings have twenty-three pairs of chromosomes. In these macromolecules the genes (the carriers of the hereditary traits, genetic factors) are arranged like pearls on a chain, and each gene always occupies the same place in the chain.

We know that hereditary traits of our forebears recur repeatedly in the family tree. The colour of our skin, eyes and hair is very clearly hereditary, as is the physique in a general sense (e.g. slender or stocky), and other hereditary traits to a lesser extent.

For a long time, it was not known why the hereditary structure passed on from parent to child remained constant over many generations, even thousands of years. Biochemical research has shown that a complicated compound found almost exclusively in the cell nuclei of plants and animals forms the basis for life. This compound, deoxyribonucleicacid (DNA), is arranged in the form of an intertwined double helix with a multitude of crosslinks. Every cell nucleus forms an archive in which the chromosomes are the documents containing the construction diagram for the organism. These documents have a number of chapters, the

genes. When a cell divides, the construction diagram of the entire organism is passed on in the genetic code by means of complicated interaction.

Conclusion

Identity is the defining essential characteristic of human beings as absolute entities. This essential characteristic makes people individuals. It is not shared a human trait as described in the other essential characteristics of people as absolute entities.

Their identity therefore reveals the innermost being of people; it touches the germ of life and thus is life itself. What makes it so special? We have learned that its characteristics can all be traced back to our material state of being, which includes certain substances that give us our own specific singularity. The field of genetics is a field that has not been fully explored (Mielke c.s.). Quantum theory is still in its infancy (Van den Berg). The conclusion nevertheless seems justified that further research might explain the riddles of life and might even allow us to break through into a subsequent dimension. However, for the time being, we have reached a boundary.

5. Ultimate Objective: Self-Fulfilment (Development, Search for Meaning)

Self-fulfilment is achieved through self-development, i.e. discovering and honing our gifts and talents and thus finding our own identity (development), a process by which the lives of human beings as absolute entities acquire purpose (the search for meaning). Self-fulfilment is self-actualisation, the state that results from the realisation of the essential characteristics of human beings as absolute entities, and it leads to satisfaction derived from ourselves or our activities, a sense of being satisfied with what we have accomplished.

6. Autonomy (Self-Determination) and Freedom (Relative Freedom)

Autonomy means self-reliance, independence, the freedom to make your own choices, your own decisions about yourself, to the exclusion of others (self-determination), thus allowing you to actualise the essential characteristics of human beings as absolute entities. This freedom is relative in that it focuses on self-fulfilment, and so it is limited in this sense.

Experience (perception, cognisance)

This is the way in which human beings as absolute entities operate. Experience as a concept can be described as parts, or phases, of processes in the brain. These processes are autonomous. Accordingly, experience can be divided into the following parts or phases:

1. Observation (Input)
2. Storage (Memory)
3. Organising (Combining)
4. Conclusion or Finding (Mood, Intuition, Feelings, Emotions, Thought, Knowledge, Reason (Kant, 2004, 681), Idea, Mental Grasp, Consciousness (Blackmore, 2005, 2009, 2011), Mind, Soul, Psyche, Will, Conscience, etc.)
5. Plan

6. Performance (Output)
7. Preamble (Dassen 60)

All living organisms, even the simplest micro-organisms, are composed of cells. Despite differences in dimensions and form, all cells are essentially the same. The cell nucleus provides for the maintenance and reproduction of the living cell. Cells form new cells by dividing. The normal manner of cell division is called nuclear division. The formation of new DNA takes about eight hours, whereas nuclear division takes less than two hours. Human cells divide at most once a day; many types of cells divide only after weeks or months. In general, cell division is a brief, intense activity during a short period of the life of the cell, causing scarcely any interruption to its normal functioning.

The brain is part of the nervous system, containing all nerve centres that are needed to maintain life. They form the body's central checkpoint and make it possible for us to think, to plan and to experience. The nervous system has two basic functions: receiving and processing information and setting in motion and guiding movements for specific physical work. The central nervous system, to which the brain belongs, is the central exchange or checkpoint, coordinating and managing all life and bodily functions. Everything that we consciously feel or do starts in the central nervous system and is processed there. Our unconscious thoughts, feelings and conflicts can be found there as well.

Conclusion

Experience can thus be viewed as a process in the brain that is set in motion by stimuli to the senses. The information about this is stored and processed and, within fractions of seconds, is given a suitable reaction (by means of electrical impulses), apparently based on a situation or state that can best be qualified as a conclusion or finding, interpreted by us in terms of functions, such as mood, intuition, feelings, emotions, thought, ideas, wants or a property arising from these such as intellect, knowledge, conscience, mind, soul and psyche or a relate state such as consciousness, the subconscious and the unconscious.

1. The process seems to take place autonomously and therefore to escape our observation and influence. This would mean that the phase in which the conclusion or finding is reached is a direct consequence of the data stored and processed in the brain cells. If this reasoning is correct, then the qualifications we use (mood, intuition, etc.) are inaccurate, misleading and confusing and they can better be replaced by the words conclusion or finding. After all, we are that process (Swaab, 2008, 2014) and though appearances are deceiving thanks to the operation of the senses, what in fact takes place shows merely the distance within the process that we are still removed from reaching the phase of the conclusion, a matter of a fraction of a second.

We would be better off using the word conclusion or finding as our basis, at any rate to indicate the phase in which the process of experience finds itself. Both words refer to perception (immaterial) in contrast to experience (material). The words conclusion or finding do more

justice to what takes place in this phase of the process of experience. The words we now use arouse the mistaken impression that there is another dimension outside of our empirical reality, which is not plausible.

2. The process of experience

How does the process of experience actually take place, and how can we explain the fact that we use so many different words for something that has to do with the same process?

To answer these questions, we must first of all realise that all these processes take place within fractions of seconds. Nerve impulses are transmitted at a speed of around fifty to one hundred metres per second. This makes it clear why a reaction time of approximately one second is necessary before a motorist recognises a danger and takes appropriate action, or when a person is holding his or her hand near a hot oven, before the muscles are told to withdraw the hand (Dassen, 62).

Viewed in this way, it seems reasonable that, depending on the complexity of the situation, the process of experience is longer or shorter. The more complex a situation, the more time it will take. A process of experience is autonomous, taking place outside of our field of observation and beyond our influence. This means that in complex situations we must wait longer for the conclusion or its implementation. This gives us a sense of uncertainty, which continues throughout the phase of ordering (combining) and lasts until the phase of the conclusion or finding, which is the only one that can provide us with certainty. Uncertainty means not knowing what to do or how to act. The scale from not-knowing to knowing is a sliding scale, i.e. the longer the phase of ordering and combining, the more knowledge we will gain, and each point in that process is accompanied by a different feeling, depending on the extent to which our not-knowing (uncertainty) has been converted into knowing (certainty).

In the first phase, we are in the domain of mood, intuition, feeling, emotion and in the second phase the domain of thinking, ideas, intellect, reason and knowing. These are parts of one and the same ordering process which will lead to the conclusion or finding. Only the way we perceive it is translated into terms of feeling and knowing or not-knowing (Van den Berg, Frayn (1)). We refer to the course of this process as unconscious and then move via the subconscious to consciousness; again, these are references to our perception and they are not actually correct because the process of experience continues without interruption, although outside of our field of observation and beyond our influence, and therefore autonomously; because we are these processes of experiences (Swaab, 2008, 2014 (2)), they take place within ourselves; we are one of them, indivisibly linked.

3. Dreams, visions, paranormal phenomena, ghosts and apparitions

Meditation

Then how can we explain dreams, visions and paranormal phenomena (clairvoyance, clairsentience and clairaudience), ghosts and apparitions? In addition, what exactly is meditation?

In medical terms, dreams are sometimes defined as the fantasies, thoughts and other mental activities that occur while we are asleep. From this, we may conclude that the process of experience continues without interruption, not only in our waking state but in sleep as well, and that it is thus an autonomous process, outside our field of observation and beyond our influence. The images in our dreams are simply a result of the empirical visual observation that took place in a waking state, the stimuli of which (visual, photographic) have been stored (set down) in the brain cells and the images of which can become visible during sleep.

Taking this one step further, some people have visions; they see paranormal phenomena, ghosts and apparitions, which also result in images or visions that arise in the same way, though here they are not limited to sleep, but are also seen in a waking state.

The shared characteristic of all these phenomena is that the images can manifest themselves in present, past or future (multidimensional, broader, and deeper). From this it might be conclude that the time-space dimension is absent, or in other words, that the images thus evoked are not limited by time or space but can be approached directly in their state of being, where many interconnections can be viewed.

Meditating is generally defined as looking inward to experience the deepest reality, meditation as an attempt to experience the deepest reality by means of internal contemplation and transcendental meditation as meditation intended to separate the mind from the body. Meditating means being one and the same (Bryson, 517), your deepest (cosmic) state of being, by separating yourself from empirical reality (the process of experience) and looking inward in your own self as an absolute entity, which is part of your origins (evolution and history) with which you as an entity are linked. During the process, your essential characteristics are aligned with your most original state of being, thus bringing about a state of equilibrium (peace).

From this we may conclude that the former phenomena and meditation are not the same, but quite the opposite. The former arise from the process of experience and empirical reality and are part of it, while meditation can be viewed as an attempt to withdraw from reality and its sphere of influence, and so is not part of it.

1. “There is no such thing as free will, language proves to be ambiguous and consciousness is still a huge riddle. Even the laws of nature are no more than human artefacts, the product of the way in which we perceive the universe. In short, all structure that we ascribe to the world arises from our own observation of it.”

2. Statement: Everything is illusion, nothing is real, we live our lives completely in the (human, illusionist) world of our own creation and reality (fact, realism, God as reality) will always be unknowable to us as human beings. Philosophical anthropology describes this human (illusory) world, of which religion and philosophy, art and culture, science and politics (Popper) are constituent parts. Important in this context: the meaning of language and communication.

3. [*Wij zijn ons brein*]: "Free will is an illusion. It is not we, but the brain, that determines. Our character, personality, our sexual orientation and what we refer to as mind, it is all found in the brain … a person … is his brain…..".[*De 21 gram*]: "There is no such thing as the soul. When we die, 100 billion brain cells cease working."

4. Multiplicity of processes

Sliding scale

Experience is not just a single process, but a multitude of them throughout one's entire life. It leads to what we call a person, or a mind, a soul, a psyche, a totality of experiences, which gradually cause someone to exhibit certain personal characteristics related to his or her own identity (singularity, character), to that by which he or she distinguishes himself from others (individuality). We now want to look at what happens on that sliding scale from not-knowing to knowing, the process which we need so many words to describe, even though it is all part of the same process. In the first phase of this process (not-knowing) we are in the domain of feelings and emotions, and in the second phase in the domain of knowing, where feelings have been converted into knowing. In addition, remember, all this takes place in just a fraction of a second.

5. The meaning of the words we use (Coëlho; Zakwoordenboek; Psychoanalytisch) (See also Kant, 2004, 681; 1999, 55-60)

Because the meaning of words is so important, we will first define them and then see what happens and how:

Mood

1. emotional tone that accompanies human beings in their continual activity
2. all-embracing and lasting emotional state (in contrast to affect)

Intuition

form of understanding not based on reasoning, experience or knowing

Feelings

becoming innerly aware, perceiving

Emotions

feelings that are consciously observed, in contrast to affect, which is about both conscious feelings and urges

Affect

brief but vehement emotion

Thought

inner processing and treatment of data from observation or from the memory

Knowledge

capacity to think and to understand

Reason

capacity of human beings to render an account of the world and themselves, to know grounds and arguments and to act accordingly; see also sense

Sense

sense (good sense, common sense), wits

Idea

representation existing in the mind, concept, thought

Mental Grasp

the whole of meaning, experience, general concepts and statements

Knowing

understanding

Understanding

having knowledge of

Consciousness

a. sensory state in which people efficiently process and/or respond to stimuli from the outside world and from their own body, and in which they are aware that their body is functioning
b. arriving at a certain awareness through thought

Subconscious (psychology, psychiatry)

a. the portion of what people have forgotten that is trying to return to their consciousness and that thus exerts an influence on their behavior
b. in psychoanalytic theory: level of consciousness between unconscious and conscious

Unconscious

the whole of processes that influence behaviour, but that are not apparent to our consciousness

Person

independently acting human being, individual

Mind

a number of functions of the body: thinking, feeling and wanting

Soul

mind or psyche

Psyche

total of conscious and unconscious inner experiences of an individual organism, soul, mind

Will

the human capacity to strive for something

Conscience

learned awareness of good and evil, moral consciousness.

6. Billions of cell bodies

Structural, functional and incidental information

Our body consists of a single large mass of cells (living matter) that possess a treasure of information that we are unable to grasp, and that, depending on the place where those cells are located, make us do everyday things. The nature of this information might perhaps be classified into structural (DNA, chromosomes, genes), functional (hunger, thirst, fatigue, sexual feelings, etc.) and incidental (related to the process of experience). The incidental source of information is situated in the brain, which can be regarded as the coordination centre. The management of all life and bodily functions is conducted in the brain, and it is here that what we call conscious or unconscious feelings, thoughts, plans, conflicts, etc. are found (Dassen, 66).

All brain activity can be regarded as an autonomous process that escapes our observation and is beyond our influence; it is entirely managed by our structural, functional and incidental antennas. This process continues when we are asleep and even when we are unconscious. Our dreams confirm this. When we wake up and open our eyes, our incidental information provision goes on without flagging, whether we like it or not. What we do at that point might be described as entering the train that is our process of experience and becoming entirely absorbed by it. When we rouse ourselves from sleep, wash and dress, have breakfast, it may seem to be a conscious experience, but in fact we are simply being guided by our cells; an extra dimension of consciousness has nothing to do with it.

In our sleeping state we are not conscious of ourselves, but our empirical processes of experience (except for observation and storage of new sensory stimuli) continue nevertheless. In our waking state we are fully taken up by the process of experience, and as an entity, a oneness, we are part of it. We are the process of experience (Swaab, 2008, 2014). The unconscious cannot alter the way our process of experience moves forward. We may or may not be involved (to a limited extent) in the process of experience. If we see a tree, we are not conscious of that tree, but we are in an uninterrupted flow from our eyes to the tree, which we observe via our brain cells. Here the word consciousness is not appropriate; what we are involved in is merely an empirical experiment, namely the course of the process of observation. And the same applies to what we call feeling, thinking and wanting. If we referred to these as experiencing, it would do more justice to what actually happens. The words we use arouse the suggestion of a non-existent human dimension.

The concepts of person, mind, soul and psyche give the overall picture of all the characteristics that we possess, that we can observe in ourselves and in others and that are connected to our experience in relation to our origin and evolution and our essential characteristics as absolute entities. In fact the same objections are attached to the use of such words as those described above in relation to consciousness, feeling, thinking and wanting. This applies all the more to the emotionally charged word soul and to a somewhat lesser extent to the word mind. It is therefore preferable in my opinion to replace these words by a

different word – characteristics, for example – because this word does more justice to what actually takes place.

7. Conscience and the Other

Conflict of Interest

The experience of our conscience belongs in the same category as feeling, thinking and wanting. However, it has a special aspect, namely the presence of other human beings as absolute entities. Generally speaking, the process of experience is concerned with the way to best promote your own interests, with how far you will go in actualising your essential characteristics as an absolute entity. The discussion of our urge for survival showed that we can go quite far in that respect, and that to actualise that urge, there are in fact no boundaries; everything is permitted.

The same can be said about actualising our other essential characteristics, but the difference is that our need to do so is perhaps less cogently present; it is not our life, or at least not our continued material existence, that is at stake. Nonetheless, we can and may even choose to go to extremes in this respect and thus to give ourselves priority over others.

This leaves two possibilities: either it brings you into conflict with the other, or you step back of your own accord, perhaps after a showdown with another person, and decide simply to make the best of it. You can drive a conflict so high that you go to extremes, even death. You can also come to your senses and decide to step back. Finally, you can decide in advance that you do not want to let things come to this juncture for any reason at all, and pull back.

These possibilities share at least one common characteristic: they are all related to the presence of the other; the interest of another person is at stake, giving rise to the question of how you will deal with it. If you give your own interests priority at the expense of the other, it is good for you, but you as an absolute entity have surely experienced what this means for the other; in a fleeting moment, it has presented itself. You can go on like this endlessly, but at some point, perhaps not until the end of your life, you will realise what it means to another person when you realise what it means to you when it happens to you. This may well constitute a reason to change your behaviour towards others. The reason to respect the other person's interests is therefore found only in the fact that you do not want to have such an experience yourself; it is not found in the interests of the other person. This experience or this awareness can lead you to take it into account in your behaviour at an early stage and to encourage the same thing to others. This is what we call the conscience. From this point of view, good means good for yourself and therefore for others as well. You realise that when you injure another person, you primarily harm yourself. If you do not, many people will regard you as an unprincipled reprobate and you will feel the consequences.

Respect for the interests of others is therefore based on self-respect, which may lead you to decide to subject your dealings with other people to a set of standards for yourself. Here

we enter the area of morals and ethics, to which we can attach a complete moral philosophy and on the basis of a belief, a moral theology. At the end of this road is total love of yourself and others, because you have come to realise that it is the only way that can lead to the fourth essential characteristic of human beings as absolute entities, namely self-fulfilment. You will then have developed in a way that allows you to give yourself and others the scope we need as absolute entities (compassion, solidarity).

Summary

To summarise, human beings as absolute entities have undergone developments over millions of years (they have evolved) so that today we can point to a number of traits (essential characteristics) in connection with their nature and origin, which we have looked at from a point of view that we generally call empirical reality (the process of experience). In this process our empirical involvement can be regarded as the motor that has made us, or caused us to develop, into what we are today. This is our everyday reality. This alone has given us our essential characteristics (urge for survival, communication, identity, self-fulfilment, self-determination), and these essential characteristics can be seen as the motives – which have proved in the course of history to be enduring – for our actions. This implies that they do not truly exist, but they apparently typify our most original state of being, set down in billions of cells (matter) that make us who we are.

It follows from the nature of human beings as absolute entities that the way in which they get along with each other is primarily determined by the free interplay of forces. They can impose limitations (self-limitations, voluntarily) on themselves for the sake of peace (conscience) and can avail themselves of norms (rules of morals and decency) as guidelines for their actions. This involves the relationships between individuals in contrast to individuals in a group (family and friends, clubs, companies, religious communities, government) where the group imposes norms (rules of morals and decency, mores, customs and usages, laws) on its participants, who must adhere to them.

We can thus conclude that the free interplay of forces (absolute freedom) is inherent in human nature, that any limitation of this is alien to human nature and that the use of norms is only prompted by a need for ordering, depending on the circumstances (efficiency), when there is a clash of interests. This absolute freedom in connection with the realisation of the total of all essential characteristics of human beings as absolute entities in relation to others must be distinguished from the relative freedom of people in realising their autonomy in the form of self-determination, which is limited in this sense.

A New Philosophy of Man & Humanism

On 10 December 2006 Pakhuis De Zwijger in Amsterdam organised a forum discussion on consciousness and free will. According to the English psychologist and panellist Susan Blackmore, there is only experience – the rest is not important. (Blackmore, 2005, 2009, 2011) In the past few

years, neuroscientists Victor Lamme and Dick Swaab have fuelled this debate. In recent publications both have further decried the idea that there is such a thing as free will.

A new philosophy of man shows that questions about consciousness and free will are borrowed from the old philosophy, with its focus on ultimate knowledge and the absolute beginning. But we cannot find any answers to these questions if we leave human beings out of the equation.

The theoretical basis for the new philosophy was laid by the American philosopher and member of the American Philosophical Association James Joseph Dagenais (1923-1981), who came to the conclusion that philosophical anthropology is not a science, but a domain unto itself and cannot be replaced by any other anthropology. The final explanation of man lies outside all possible scientific views that have ever been formulated, because they lie within the origins of every branch of science, including the science of philosophy. The philosophies, of any nature whatsoever, can be practised implicitly or explicitly on the final ground. (Bakker, Studia, 150) He demonstrates that 'I think, therefore I am' (Descartes) should be replaced by 'we are', and calls it "nonsense" to ask whether free will exists, or whether we are determined.

Dutch humanist Jaap van Praag (1911-1981) and Dutch philosopher Reinout Bakker (1920-1987) elaborated on the findings of Dagenais. Van Praag for humanism and Bakker for the philosophy of man or philosophical anthropology. Taking this one-step further, the new philosophy of man can serve as the basis for a humanist ideology.

In his inaugural speech of 25 January 1965, Bakker spoke of the necessary collaboration between philosophy and science. Philosophy without contact with the empirical sciences is empty, but also: the empirical sciences are blind without the contribution of philosophy. If one of these two poles is made absolute, the danger of gross onesidedness, or even distortion, is imminent. The fact that the ultimate questions about man are so rarely asked stems from giving the scientific foundation an absolute status. Many phenomenologists and existentialists have warned against such scientism (Bakker, Studia, 150).

The methods of a post-modern philosophical anthropology will have to be based on reflection, on the claim that it is possible to debate differences and contrasts on reasonable grounds, and on the individual responsibility for the decisions, we all make for ourselves in respect of changes in body and mind. A post-modern version of Sartre's creed: man is and always will be what he makes of himself. (Bakker, Studia, 151) I have given philosophical anthropology a new concrete substance because of the definition of American philosopher Jim Dagenais: "a consistent overall vision of man and his world", so that it can serve as the basis for philosophy and thus as the foundation for human life.

References

Bakker, R. (1982). *Wijsgerige Antropologie van de Twintigste Eeuw*, Terreinverkenningen in de Filosofie, ISBN 90 232 1800 0

Bakker, R. (1984). *Studia in honorem Reinout Bakker*, presented by the Centrale Interfaculteit Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, ed. B. Delfgaauw, H. Hubbeling, W. Smith, "Can philosophical anthropology still exist?"

Blackmore, S. J. (2005). *Consciousness, A very short introduction*, ISBN 9780192805850

Blackmore, S. J. (2009). *Ten Zen Questions*, ISBN 978-1-85168-642-1

Blackmore, S. J. (2011). *Zen and the Art of Consciousness*, ISBN 978-1-85168-798-5

Bryson, B. (2005). *A Short History of Nearly Everything*, ISBN 0385 609612, p. 517: "all life is one".

Cheung Chan Fai, (2001), *Human Nature and Human Existence – On the Problem of the Distinction between Man and Animal*, pp. 365-383. (Prof. Dr. Cheung Chan Fai, B.A., M.Phil. (CUHK), Dr. Phil. (Freiburg), Office of University General Education, the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Coëlho Zakwoordenboek der Geneeskunde. (2000). ISBN 90 6228322 5

Dagenais, J. J. (1972). *Models of Man, A Phenomenological Critique of Some Paradigms in the Human Sciences*, Martinus Nijhoff / The Hague, ISBN 90 247 1290 4

Dassen, J. L. M. (2023). *A new philosophy of man & humanism, basic principles*, ISBN 9789464629095 (www.anthroopos.com)

Descartes, R. (2006). *Over de methode*, ISBN 90 5352 791 5

Frayn, M. (2006). *The Human Touch, Our Part in the creation of a Universe*, ISBN 9780571232178

Heidegger, M. (2010). *Ueber den Humanismus, Vittorio Klostermann Frankfurt A.M.*, ISBN 978-3-465-04091-0

Kant, I. (1800/1798). *Anthropologie (in pragmatischer Hinsicht abgefasst)*

Kant, I. (1999). *Prolegomena*, ISBN 90 5352 318 9

Kant, I. (2004). *Kritiek van de Zuivere Rede*, ISBN 90 5352 702 8

Klukhuhn, A. (2003). *De geschiedenis van het denken, filosofie, wetenschap, kunst en cultuur van de oudheid tot nu*, ISBN 978 90 351 3176 7, specifically Chapter II, Hersenen en Bewustzijn, pp. 127-176 and the notes pp. 590-598

Lamme, V. A. F. (2006). *Towards a True Neural Stance on Consciousness*, Trends in Cognitive Sciences 10, 494-501

Mielke, J., Konigsberg, L. & Relethford, J. (2006). *Human Biological Varietion*, ISBN 0-19-518871-3

Russell, B. (2007). (United Kingdom 1872-1970) in Encyclopedie van de Filosofie, Van de Oudheid tot vandaag, Ten Kate L, ISBN 978 90 8506 457 2

Psychoanalytisch woordenboek. (2008). ISBN 978 90-8506 614 9

Swaab, D. F. (2008). *Wij zijn ons brein*, NRC Handelsblad of 22 and 23 March 2008 (www.nrc.nl)

Swaab, D. F. (2008). *De 21 gram*, NRC Handelsblad of 30 and 31 August 2008 (www.nrc.nl)

Swaab, D. F. (2014). *We Are Our Brains, From the Womb to Alzheimer's*, ISBN 978-081299-2960 (Dr. D. F. Swaab, emeritus professor of neurobiology at the University of Amsterdam, also founder of the Netherlands Brain Bank (for worldwide scientific study of the brain), a division of the Netherlands Institute for Neurosciences of the Royal Academy of Sciences in Amsterdam)

Tallon, A. & Williams, P. (1982). *Memorial Minutes James Joseph Dagenais 1923-1981*, Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association, Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/3131239)

Van den Berg, R. (2006). *Het heelal zit in ons hoofd, Zin en onzin over mens, aarde en kosmos*, NRC Handelsblad of 8 December 2006 book review Frayn M., 2006, *The Human Touch*)

Zakwoordenboek van de Psychiatrie. (2001). ISBN 90 6228 366 7

Zoellick, R. (2008). *India, Brazilië en China moeten G7 bijstaan*, NRC Handelsblad (Opinie) of Tuesday 14 October 2008 (www.nrc.nl)

Journal of Philosophical Investigations
Print ISSN: 2251-7960 Online ISSN: 2423-4419
Homepage: https://philosophy.tabrizu.ac.ir

Democracy and Information in the Age of Digitalization*

Fabio Tononi

Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Centre for the Humanities (CHAM) in the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences (FCSH) of NOVA University of Lisbon, Portugal. Email: fabiotononi@fcsh.unl.pt

Article Info

Article type:
Book Review

Article history:
Received 07 July 2024
Received in revised from 15 July 2024
Accepted 25 July 2024
Published online 07 September 2024

Keywords:
Byung-Chul Han, democracy, digitalization, infocracy, information, truth

ABSTRACT

What is the state of democracy today? In the Western world, people often take the meaning of this term for granted, but do they genuinely know what democracy is? In this sense, how can we define democracy in today's digitalized world? What is the relationship between democracy and information? Furthermore, do we really live in a democratic world? In Infocracy: Digitalization and the Crisis of Democracy—the 2022 translation of the original German book Infokratie. Digitalisierung und die Krise der Demokratie, published in 2021 by MSB Matthes & Seitz Berlin Verlagsgesellschaft mbH—Byung-Chul Han reflects on these and other related issues. Han's analysis of the current political, social, and technological situation indicates that a profound democratic crisis is emerging. The loss of interest in truth, the end of grand narratives, the replacement of reason with data analysis (even in philosophy), the fragmentation of the population due to digitalization, and the predominant role of information in everyday life are all symptoms of a radical transformation underway in Western society, with severe consequences for democratic stability. In these terms, Han's vision, at times excessively pessimistic, orients us on the crucial issues of our time.

Cite this article: Tononi, F. (2024). Democracy and Information in the Age of Digitalization. *Journal of Philosophical Investigations*, 18(48), 117-132. https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.18253

© The Author(s).
Publisher: University of Tabriz.
https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.18253

* This essay is a review of Infocracy: Digitalization and the Crisis of Democracy. By Byung-Chul Han. Translated by Daniel Steuer. Cambridge, UK; Medford, MA: Polity Press, 2022. 66 pp. This article had the support of CHAM (NOVA FCSH / UAc), through the strategic project sponsored by FCT (UIDB/04666/2020). https://doi.org/10.54499/UIDB/04666/2020.

I.

Han's book is structured into five short chapters. In the first, "The Information Regime," Han describes the present epoch as a form of domination rather than a democracy. In this form of domination, digital information plays an important role with negative repercussions on culture, economy, politics, and society.[1] Han regards artificial intelligence as a threat to democratic stability. Then, he draws parallels between the information regime and the disciplinary regime. Whereas the former exploits *information* and *data*, the latter exploits *bodies* and *energies*.

In the age of digitalization, power consists of having access to information that can control and predict people's behavior. This resource becomes useful for political and economic reasons: "Information regimes are tied to information capitalism, which develops into surveillance capitalism and reduces human beings to *consumer cattle that provide data*" (1). Information capitalism, resulting from digitalization, is a new form of capitalism, different from industrial capitalism, which resulted from mechanization.[2]

Han compares and contrasts the notion of the information regime with Michel Foucault's description of the disciplinary (or biopolitical) regime. Whereas the former is based on surveillance (via data) because it is characterized by communication, the latter is based on isolation, and it is exemplified by the panopticon.[3] Another difference between the two regimes is that while the disciplinary regime "inserts the body into a production and surveillance machinery" (2),[4] the information regime is not interested in the body in a biological sense, but it "seizes *the psyche* by way of a *psychopolitics*" (3).

Another interesting point that Han addresses is the association, in Western society, of the body with aesthetic appearance and fitness. Notably, Günther Anders and Zygmunt Bauman previously detected the tendency of people to submit their bodies to the beauty industry, though Han does not mention the insights of these two scholars. In *The Outdatedness of Human Beings* (1956), Anders (2016: 29–95 (36)) discusses women's use of make-up "as a reification of the self," arguing that the true naked body is the unmodified one, not the unclothed one. In *Liquid Modernity*, Bauman (2000: 76–80) addresses the consumer's body, referencing the distinction between health and fitness. According to Bauman (2000: 77), far from being synonymous, the terms belong to two different discourses: "If health is a 'no more and no less' type of condition, fitness stays permanently open on the side of 'more.'" That is why fitness belongs to a capitalist conception of the body—it is a surplus state of health supporting the business of gyms. Whereas we may know

[1] On the information age and the rise of the network society, see Castells (1996–98).

[2] On information capitalism and industrial capitalism, see Han (2021), Boltanski & Arnaud (2020), Stiegler (2019), and Boltanski & Chiapello (2018).

[3] On the panopticon, see Foucault (2020a: 195–228).

[4] On capitalism and the corporeal, see Foucault (2020b).

when we are healthy, we cannot know when we are fit enough. Like the capitalist attitude toward desire (commodities), fitness has no end.

In this context, visibility and spectacle assume an overriding importance.[1] As Han states, whereas in the pre-modern sovereign regime, both visibility and spectacle were the prerogative of those who dominated, in the information regime, visibility and spectacle mainly involve those who are dominated. This shift is particularly evident on social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, which are based on (private) image sharing. In this sense, the information regime reflects a surveillance-based society (via data).

Han also compares and contrasts the notion of the information regime with George Orwell's notion of the surveillance state, outlined in his 1949 novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. In Orwell's book (2000), it is "Big Brother," not the panopticon (as in Foucault), that maintains permanent visibility. This omnipresence is indicated by the frequently reported sentence, in capital letters, "BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU." However, as Han suggests, Orwell's description of the surveillance state still refers to the disciplinary regime, where "spatial measures such as confinement and isolation guarantee the visibility of the subjugated" (4).

On the contrary, in an information society, openness replaces confinement, and isolation gives way to communicative networks. Visibility and surveillance are still rooted in the information society, though in a different way. Whereas visibility is guaranteed by interconnection, "[d]igital information technology turns communication into surveillance" (4). The more intensely people communicate through digital technology, the more effective surveillance becomes. For example, social media tools are clearly surveillance technologies—the danger is that surveillance is masked by communication and the supposed freedom that social networks also purportedly offer. Therefore, contrary to the disciplinary regime, people feel free despite their submissive status in the information regime, which thus does not need to impose the same level of disciplinary pressure. However, this is not necessarily a positive outcome since, as Han states, "*[w]hen freedom and surveillance coincide, domination becomes complete*" (5). In other words, in this situation, people are dominated without knowing it.

In the information regime, people feel the need to expose themselves, and they desire visibility. The notion of transparency is crucial here.[2] As Han states, "[t]he information regime pursues its policies in the name of *transparency*" (5). According to Han, "[t]ransparency is the *systemic compulsion of the information regime*. The imperative of transparency is: *everything has to be available as information*" (5). In this sense, transparency becomes synonymous with information, with Han stating that "[t]he information society is a transparency society" (5). However, there is a

[1] On the role of spectacle in society, see Debord (1995).

[2] On the notion of transparency, see Han (2015).

paradox: "*people are imprisoned by information*. By communicating and producing information, they shackle themselves" (5). Therefore, the digital becomes a transparent prison.

Nonetheless, domination is never transparent, even in an information-sharing society: "Transparency is merely the front of a process that is itself invisible" (6). According to Han,

> The rule of the information regime is hidden because it is fully incorporated into everyday life. It hides behind the friendliness of social media, the convenience of search engines, the soothing voices of the virtual assistants and the courteous servility of smart apps. The smartphone is in fact an efficient *informant* that exposes us to 24/7 surveillance. (6)

Thus, surveillance emerges from the comfort of everyday life, and the information society does not resist the dominant regime. It is clear that no revolution can emerge from this situation. This situation defines neoliberalism: it offers freedom and "positive incentives" (7), allowing neoliberal regimes to control people's will at an unconscious level. In this way, "[r]epressive disciplinary power gives way to smart power, a power that does not give orders but *whispers*, that does not command but *nudges*" (7). The influencers on YouTube and Instagram play a significant role in this context. They embody the neoliberal imperative of freedom and desire through their travels, beauty, dress, and fitness.[1] Influencers exercise such a fascination that "[w]hereas people use ad-blockers to remove conventional advertisements on YouTube, they intentionally seek out the influencers 'ads" (7). Followers purchase the products influencers display on their channels, using scenes from their daily lives. As Han points out, "influencers present consumer products as means of self-realization" (8). In this way, consumption and identity merge.

According to Han, the neoliberal information regime "is a *totalitarianism without ideology*" (9). Whereas ideologies inspire the masses,[2] the information regime tends to isolate people, who, instead of following a leader, follow influencers and form a digital swarm.[3] In the age of digital media, there is no mass man without identity. Instead, the inhabitant of the digital globe has a (behavioral) profile. In this sense, referring to Walter Benjamin's notion of the "optical unconscious" (Benjamin 2003), Han coins the expression "digital unconscious," noting that "[b]ig data and artificial intelligence enable the information regime to influence our behavior at a level that lies below the threshold of consciousness" (10). In this respect, power today means possessing and controlling information.

[1] On the role of influencers in society, see Tononi (2023a; 2022).

[2] On totalitarianism and the role of ideologies for the masses, see Arendt (1986).

[3] Han has already dealt with the notion of digital swarm in Han (2017a).

II.

In the second chapter, "Infocracy," Han explains the titular concept, a combination of information and democracy. According to Han, digitalization has not only changed people's lives and how they relate to each other but has also transformed the essence of information and democracy. The consequence of this transformation is that "[d]emocracy is degenerating into *infocracy*" (12). For example, the political and rational discourse of modernism, which was based on a book-centric culture, was much more complex than that of postmodernism and hypermodernism, which have formed an information culture devoid of reason and reasoning.

Democratic (and political) discourse mediated by the mass media results in *mediacracy*, which means that people forgo rational discourse and voters become passive recipients. Mass media caused the decay of the democratic public sphere because politics must submit to their logic (Habermas 1992). However, the principal aim of mass media is to entertain and amuse the public, which then transforms into a priority in the political agenda (Han 2019; Postman 2006). In this context, the distinction between fiction and reality disappears, undermining rationality. As Han states, "[w]hat counts in televised debates is not the quality of the argument but the *performance*" (15). In this sense, it is not by chance that people belonging to the world of cinema and mass media become successful politicians—from Ronald Reagan, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and Michael Bloomberg in the United States to Silvio Berlusconi and Beppe Grillo in Italy, from Eva Perón in Argentina to Volodymyr Zelens'kyj in Ukraine. Usually, the candidate who masters communication and self-presentation wins elections. In this way, the political discourse degenerates into a series of slogans.

In a neoliberal, infocratic society, people are at the mercy of amusement, consumption, entertainment, and spectacle. However, in the information regime, people are no longer passive spectators—with smartphones and touchscreens, they become producers, transmitters, and consumers of information. In this respect, Han states that "[c]ommunication has become a form of addiction and compulsion, and the frenzy of communication ensures that people remain in a new state of immaturity" (17). The prolongation of immaturity is indeed a new issue today (Badiou 2017), resulting from the overlap of the public and private spheres; people's attention "is dispersed rather than directed towards issues relevant to all of society" (17).

According to Han, to understand the crisis of democracy in Western society, it is necessary to analyze the phenomenology of information. Information is ephemeral and differs from narration, which is based on temporal continuity. Characterized by the "appeal of surprise," information fragments people's perceptions, condemning them to live in an eternal present. It follows that "time-intensive cognitive practices such as *knowledge*, *experience* and *insight* are pushed aside" (18). Thus, democracy is in crisis because the information society has a short-term nature, whereas democratic discourse is "characterized by a temporality that is incompatible with accelerated,

fragmented communication" (18). Therefore, temporal expansion is missing in the information regime, but it is crucial for the democratic discourse, which is based on rational decision-making and action.

In the communication that characterizes the information society, what prevails is not the most articulated and rational argument but the most captivating information. As Han states, "[f]ake news is more interesting than fact. A single tweet containing fake news or a fragment of decontextualized information may be more effective than a reasoned argument" (19). This view is exemplified by the (sometimes successful) political attitude of Donald Trump, the first Twitter president, who reduced his political platform to simple tweets. His politics has no vision, but it is sustained by viral information.

Another aspect that distinguishes the information society is that most social network profiles contain enough information to know a person much more than what (s)he believes (s)he knows about him- or herself. In this sense, a smartphone becomes a "psychometric recording device," as Han calls it, that people feed daily with personal data. Thus, it is possible to calculate its user's personality with high precision. In this respect, Han contrasts biopolitics with psychopolitics.[1] Whereas the former describes a regime that had at its disposal *demographic* information, the latter describes a society that constantly generates *psychographic* information.

As Han points out, psychometrics is the essence of marketing, both in consumption and politics. Consumer behavior and voter behavior are subject to unconscious influences, and people receive personalized advertisements based on their social media profiles. In this way, the regime of information undermines democracy, which is based on freedom of thought and action. Instead of informing, so-called micro-targeting manipulates voters through calculated and personalized electoral advertisements and fake news, which result in *dark ads* that are invisible to the public and fragment the population, poisoning the democratic process. Consequently, citizens no longer pay attention to matters concerning the betterment of society. In this way, society's self-observation, a fundamental aspect of a democracy, disappears.

III.

In the third chapter, "The End of Communicative Action," Han argues against the idea put forward by the media theorist Pierre Lévy (1997) that representative democracy can be replaced by real-time digital democracy. Digital democracy is characterized by constant communication and feedback. However, this kind of digital swarm, as Han calls it, cannot form a proper collective that can act politically because, in this context, voters become isolated followers trained by influencers. As Han states, "[a]lgorithm-controlled communication on social media is neither free nor democratic" (26). Under these conditions, social media brings people to a new state of immaturity.

[1] Han has already discussed psychopolitics in Han (2017b).

As Han asserts, smartphones "are much more likely to produce consumption and communication zombies than mature citizens" (26). Social media tools also function as windows where private matters are constantly presented to the public, leading Han to argue that smartphones are responsible for the disintegration of the public sphere. Therefore, the internet is not and cannot be a public space because information is generated and received in private spaces.

Han detects a decline in today's social communication, inasmuch as the new dichotomy of influencers–followers has substituted the community of the public sphere, leading to the end of the discursive practice in the sense put forward by Hannah Arendt (1969). Displays of commodities, propaganda, and publicity have replaced social interaction. Through thousands of selfies, influencers indoctrinate their followers on how to dress, what to eat, and where to go on holiday; in other words, they become models of life. This indoctrination produces self-referential information bubbles, which hinder communication (Pariser 2011). Han states, "[w]ith the development of the auto-propagandistic compulsion, discursive spaces are increasingly replaced by echo chambers in which the only voice one hears is one's own" (28). Since it involves listening, discourse is at the base of democracy. Therefore, the crisis of discourse also becomes a crisis of democracy:

> The longer I surf the internet, the more my filter bubble becomes filled with information that I like and that reinforces my convictions. I am shown only those views of the world that conform to my own. All other information is kept outside the bubble. (29)

All this destroys the public sphere. However, according to Han, this process of disintegration begins *offline* in a globalized, atomized, and narcissistic society. There is, in fact, an "inability to listen" to the other; thus, Han talks about the "disappearance of the other" (30).[1] Globalization and the hyperculturalization of society that follows destroy the traditional cultural contexts that characterize a shared lifeworld.[2] This process may lead to some positive outcomes, such as freedom and cultural enrichment, but it also leads to the dissolution of communicative action (Habermas 1986). In this sense, Han does not seem to offer the upbeat description of globalization and hyperculture that distinguished his 2005 book *Hyperculture: Culture and Globalization*; now, he seems to have a more critical view of hypermodernity.

IV.

In the fourth chapter, "Digital Rationality," Han criticizes the so-called dataists, who—following Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1968)—argue that the disintegration of the public sphere, the enormous quantity of information available, and the growing complexity of the information society make

[1] Han has already discussed the concept of the disappearance of the other in Han (2018). See also Habermas (1993).
[2] On globalization and hyperculture, see Tononi (2023b) and Han (2022). See also Bauman (1998).

communication obsolete (Azuma 2014; Skinner 1973). As they maintain, discourse is replaced by data.

Han distinguishes between communicative rationality and digital rationality. Whereas the former guides discourse and involves reasoning and learning, the latter lacks both communicative and discursive qualities. Instead, in artificial intelligence, reasoning has been replaced by algorithms. As Han states, "[i]n the course of the discursive process, arguments can be *improved*. In the course of the computing process, algorithms are constantly *optimized*. They thereby independently correct the mistakes they make. Digital rationality replaces discursive learning with *machine learning*" (36). Dataists contrast Habermas's theory of communicative action with a behaviorist theory of information that rejects discourse (Pentland 2015; 2014). From a dataist point of view, digital rationality is superior to communicative rationality.

Han disagrees with dataists, particularly when they propose a society without politics: "They would argue that, if a social system is sufficiently stable, that is, if the system enjoys far-reaching consent at all social levels, then genuinely political action, action that aims to create new social conditions, is superfluous" (38). In fact, according to dataists, political parties and ideologies emerge in societies dominated by inequality. For this reason, dataists believe that party-based democracy will soon come to an end, and, according to Han, it will be replaced by *infocracy—a digital post-democracy*.

In this scenario, politicians "will be replaced with experts and computer scientists who will *administer* society without relying on ideological assumptions or advancing particular interests" (39). Similarly, politics "will be replaced by *data-driven systems management*, with decisions taken on the basis of big data and artificial intelligence" (39). Therefore, if this apocalyptic scenario occurs, data and algorithms—instead of discourse and communication—will regulate and optimize the social system. In this way, human freedom will be outmoded. As Han states, "[t]he only thing that matters is an *efficient exchange of information* between functional units in order to increase performance. Politics and governments are replaced with planning, control and conditioning" (42). It follows that there are compatibility problems between democracy and a society ruled by artificial intelligence.

Elsewhere, Shoshana Zuboff (2019) rejects the dataist vision of the human being, calling for a more active role for people in society and public spaces. In a dataist universe, what matters is the exchange of information and the analysis of data with the help of artificial intelligence. These processes lead to the end of the discursive public sphere, democracy, and humanity as we know it.[1]

[1] See also Žižek (2023).

V.

In the fifth chapter, "The Crisis of Truth," Han argues that the present epoch is marked by a new nihilism, different from the one expressed by Friedrich Nietzsche (1999: 72f). The emergence of this new nihilism coincides with the loss of interest in truth. Indeed, the information age is characterized by fake news. It is an epoch in which disinformation and conspiracy theories make people lose their sense of reality and its factual truths. As Han states, "[t]he circulation of information is completely decoupled from reality; it takes place in a hyperreal space" (44). In this sense, the idea of *facticity* is lost, leading Han to argue that we live in a *defacticized* world.

Truth is an important convention that serves to maintain societal cohesion: it gives a sense of the binding signification of things and regulates social life. The disappearance of the need for truth and the disintegration of society reinforces each other. With the new nihilism, the distinction between truth and lie is blurred.[1] At the base, there is a preponderance of information. As Han put it, "[t]he new nihilism is a symptom of the information society" (46). In fact, information itself destroys social cohesion: "The new nihilism emerges within the same destructive process that leads to the *crisis of democracy*: the *disintegration of discourse into information*" (46). Information alone does not and cannot explain the world. Information can even obscure the understanding of the world because it gives rise to a basic distrust.

As Han explains, whereas information is *additive* and *cumulative*, truth is *narrative* and *exclusive*. Thus, Han opposes information with truth. Truth "eliminates contingency and ambivalence. When elevated to the form of a narrative, it provides meaning and orientation. The information society, by contrast, is devoid of meaning" (52). In fact, people—who have never been so informed—have never been as disoriented (Badiou 2022; Bauman 2006) because information cannot yield orientation.

According to Han, the new fake news phenomenon is not reducible to a series of lies, but rather it is "an attack on the facts themselves. It defacticizes reality" (46). If the public discourse loses its connection to facts and factual truth, it degenerates into a farce. As Han states, "[e]ven the most diligent fact-check cannot produce truth, because truth is more than the rightness or correctness of information" (52). Moreover, flaunting freedom of expression to justify fake news is a petty game. As Han states, "[s]omeone who is blind to fact and reality poses a greater threat to truth than does a liar" (46). The pinnacle of this phenomenon was reached by Donald Trump's 2020 political campaign: "Trump's politics of fake news is possible only under the conditions of a *de-ideologized information regime*" (51). In fact, the present epoch is characterized by the end of both ideologies and grand narratives. These events underline how important truth is as a social convention.

[1] In this sense, Harry G. Frankfurt (2005) discusses the notion of bullshit, which Han deems insufficient to explain the current crisis of truth.

In 2005, *The New York Times* detected a new neologism: "truthiness." Contrary to what the term might suggest, according to Han, truthiness is a symptom of the crisis of truth. It signifies a "truth" that lacks any factual basis. As Han argues, truthiness is a phenomenon of digitalization that expresses a nihilistic attitude towards reality: "*The digital is directly opposed to factuality*" (51). In fact, due to its manipulative nature, digitalization undermines the sense of reality.

Truth works in a precise way: statements must be tested by counter-arguments until consensus is reached among all participants in the discourse, guaranteeing social cohesion. Understood Socratically, truth is a discursive process to achieve understanding and consensus (Foucault 2011; 2010). Therefore, the crisis of truth is also a societal crisis. Moreover, "[t]he temporality of truth is completely different from that of information. While information is relevant only very briefly, truth is characterized by *duration*" (58). Therefore, truth gives stability to life.

Emptied of truth, society disintegrates, and economic relations become the only binding agent that holds society together. The end of grand narratives, which is at the origin of postmodernity, culminates in the information society.[1] Information has replaced narratives. However, information and big data do not *narrate* anything, meaning that the current era is not only facing a *narrative* crisis but, as a consequence, political, economic, environmental, and health crises (Chomsky & Polychroniou 2021; Žižek 2020a; 2020b).

Narration offers meaning and identity. Thus, a narrative crisis leads to a void of meaning and a loss of identity. The result is a disorientation with the world. In this context, conspiracy theories flourish, functioning as *micro-narratives*, which are a sort of remedy for the lack of identity and meaning. As Han states,

> Conspiracy theories resist attempts at fact-checking because they are narratives that, despite their fictional character, provide a basic framework through which their adherents perceive reality. In this way, they are factual narrations. In a conspiracy theory, fictionality turns into factuality. What matters is not factuality in the sense of the facticity of truth but the narrative coherence that makes the theory credible. (54)

It is precisely here that democracy collapses into infocracy, and politics switches from reason to emotion. In recent years, politics has appealed to people's emotions and, therefore, aims at the heart rather than reason. However, as Han points out, "[t]he heart is not an organ of democracy. When emotions and affects dominate political discourse, democracy itself is in danger" (48). Therefore, truth and reason are at the core of democracy.

Discussing the crisis of democracy, Han refers to Plato (2013: II, 257), who, in *Republic*, states that democracy ultimately produces a state abundant "in freedom and freedom of speech" and in

[1] On postmodernity, see Jameson (1991).

which there are "the means to do whatever one wishes" (Book VIII, 557b). According to Han, democracy today has reached this point, which means a chaotic age in which everyone can say whatever is advantageous to them: "This threatens the very unity of society" (56). Plato contrasts a parrhesia understood as the arbitrary assertion of opinions with a parrhesia understood as good and courageous. As Han states, "[t]he true parrhesiast differs from the populist or politician who seeks to flatter the people" (56–7). Therefore, it is essential to abandon the populist attitude to re-establish democracy.

As Han states, "Plato embodies the *regime of truth*" (58). Plato's remarkable example of the process that leads to truth is expressed by his allegory of the cave, contained in his work *Republic* (2013: II, 106–25 / Book VII, 514a–520a). Plato imagines a group of people who have lived their entire lives as prisoners, chained to the wall of a subterranean cave, unable to see the outside world. A flame illuminates various moving objects, which are silhouetted on the wall in front of the prisoners. Since the prisoners do not have other experiences of reality, they believe these shadows to be real. Plato goes on to explain that the philosopher is like a prisoner who is freed from the cave. The philosopher then sees the fire and the moving objects and understands the source of the shadows inside the cave. (S)he understands that the objects in the cave are just copies of real objects. Therefore, the philosopher is able to see the real world—the world of truth, which is above that of appearances. At the end of the cave allegory, Plato asserts that it is the philosopher's duty to reenter the cave to explain reality to others. According to Plato, since only the philosopher knows the truth, only (s)he can rule society. However, the prisoners do not trust the philosopher and try to kill him or her.

According to Han, people living in the information regime are, like the prisoners of Plato's cave, chained in a *digital* cave: "The digital cave […] holds us *captive in information*" (58). However, Han is more pessimistic than Plato: "The *light of truth* has died down completely. The cave of information has no *outside*" (58). The immersion of people in the digital screen represents for Han the end of truth and democracy.

What is worse, even "[p]hilosophy has now bade farewell to speaking the truth, to the *care for truth*" (57). This situation, I argue, results from the present phenomenon where today, philosophy is mainly done by academicians[1] who emulate natural or so-called exact sciences in the illusion of presenting a more rigorous argumentation. This idea of philosophy contrasts with the Western philosophical tradition, which centers reason as the source of philosophy and truth as its aim (Gentile 2023; Kant 1996; Hegel 1995: 1–116; Aristotle 1933–35). According to Martin Heidegger (2011a; 2011b; 2003; 1968), philosophy is thinking, and science is knowledge.[2] Science does not

[1] Here it is important to distinguish between academics who deal with philosophy and philosophers. While the former are many, the latter are few.

[2] See also Žižek (2022: 263–70; 2021) and Barad (2007: 3–38).

and cannot think because it is empirical, and since it is subjected to revolutions, it cannot establish the truth. Following this reasoning, it is clear that grounding philosophy in science produces neither a philosophical thought nor the truth.

This conundrum is particularly evident in analytic philosophy, which is the philosophy pursued in the departments of philosophy at universities in the United Kingdom and the United States of America (Rorty 2020: 195–202), although recently, it has spread in Europe, too. As Richard Rorty (2020: 195) correctly observes, analytic philosophy "declared its independence from the philosophical tradition and from the humanities. It insisted that philosophy should cease to think of itself as a neighbor of history and literature and should do its best to become a science." If fully pursued, this idea can lead to the death of philosophy.

Most of the time, analytic philosophy produces academic writings on very narrow subjects, preventing scholars from having a broad vision of the topic they address. However, philosophy must deal with the universal, whereas science focuses on the particular. For this reason, philosophers cannot be short-sighted—they must understand the functioning of a given system. As Rorty (2020: 200) put it, "[t]heir rhetoric remains one of pure, quasi-scientific, disinterested search for truth." On the other hand, continental philosophy, and more specifically that pursued in the philosophy departments of European universities, mostly produces dull manuals on the history of philosophy or studies on single philosophers. Only rarely are there, in both philosophical schools, true philosophers who ground their (original) philosophy on thinking, reason, truth, and freedom.[1]

In another passage, Han states: "Today's philosophy lacks any relation to the truth. It turns away from the present. It is therefore also *without future*" (57). Thus, according to Han, philosophy has no future. However, this seems to be too pessimistic a statement. Precisely because philosophy is going through a profound crisis, both in analytic and continental philosophy, it will be the task of future philosophers to rethink its essence and aim and find new ground. In the near future, rather than disappearing—as Han and, for other reasons, Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow (2010) claim—philosophy will be essential to overcome the great challenges of the time. What is needed is a comparative philosophy that would put in dialogue not only analytic philosophy and continental philosophy but also the philosophy of the West with that of the East.

VI.

In sum, in *Infocracy: Digitalization and the Crisis of Democracy*, Han offers a compelling analysis of the state of democracy in the age of digitalization. According to Han, Western civilization is giving up its democratic tradition in favor of ever-increasing technological control over humanity. Han's position contrasts with the general assumption that the West represents the democratic part of the world. What emerges from Han's analysis is that technological capitalism is not more

[1] See, for example, Žižek (2021) and Brandom (2009). But I would also include Han's output here.

democratic than a military regime. Today's Western democracy is an illusion. The Western political and social system is heavily based on digital technology and information, threatening democracy. Capitalism, consumerism, artificial intelligence, and digital information discourage the need for reason, freedom, and truth, which are essential for the democratic discourse.

Han asks for a major return of the human being in politics and society. In fact, politics and society seem to be ruled by big data and digital information, and humanity seems to be controlled by artificial intelligence rather than controlling it. What we need is a disturbance of the status quo, a change of direction, which can only come from reason, freedom, and truth. In this sense, Heidegger's (1981) statement, "only a god can save us," is more pertinent than ever. Although, in the current situation, one might say: "only humanity can save us."

References

Anders, G. (2016). On Promethean Shame, in id., *Prometheanism: Technology, Digital Culture and Human Obsolescence*, pp. 29–95. Translated and edited by C. Müller, Rowman & Littlefield International.

Arendt, H. (1969). Truth and Politics, in id., *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*, pp. 227–64. Viking Press.

Arendt, H. (1986). *The Origins of Totalitarianism,* André Deutsch.

Aristotle (1933–35). *Metaphysics*, translated by H. Tredennick, 2 vols, Harvard University Press.

Azuma, H. (2014). *General Will 2.0: Rousseau, Freud, Google*, translated by J. Person & N. Matsuyama, Vertical.

Badiou, A. (2017). *The True Life*, translated by S. Spitzer, Polity Press.

Badiou, A. (2022). *Remarques sur la désorientation du monde*, Gallimard.

Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, Duke University Press.

Bauman, Z. (1998). *Globalization: The Human Consequences*, Columbia University Press.

Bauman, Z. (2000). *Liquid Modernity*, Polity Press.

Bauman, Z. (2006). *Liquid Times: Living in an Age of Uncertainty,* Polity Press.

Benjamin, W. (2003). The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, translated by H. Zohn & E. Jephcott, in id., *Selected Writings: 1938–1940*, IV, pp. 251–283. Edited by H. Eiland & M. W. Jennings, 4 vols, Harvard University Press.

Boltanski, L. & È. Chiapello (2018). *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, translated by G. Elliott, Verso.

Boltanski, L. & A. Esquerre (2020). *Enrichment: A Critique of Commodities*, translated by C. Porter, Polity Press.

Brandom, R. (2009). *Reason in Philosophy*, Harvard University Press.

Castells, M. (1996–98). *The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture*, 3 vols, Blackwell.

Chomsky, N. & C. J. Polychroniou (2021). *The Precipice: Neoliberalism, the Pandemic and the Urgent Need for Radical Change*, Haymarket Books.

Debord, G. (1995). *The Society of the Spectacle*, translated by D. Nicholson-Smith, Zone Books.

Foucault, M. (2010). *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the Collège de France 1982–1983*, translated by G. Burchell, edited by F. Gros, Palgrave Macmillan.

Foucault, M. (2011). *The Courage of the Truth: The Government of Self and Others II: Lectures at the Collège de France 1983–1984*, translated by G. Burchell, edited by F. Gros, Palgrave Macmillan.

Foucault, M. (2020a). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, translated by A. Sheridan, Penguin Classics.

Foucault, M. (2020b). The Birth of Social Medicine, in *Power: Essential Works of Foucault 1954–1984. Volume Three*, pp. 134–156. Translated by R. Hurley et al., edited by J. D. Faubion, Penguin Books.

Frankfurt, H. G. (2005). *On Bullshit*, Princeton University Press.

Gentile, G. (2023). *L'attualismo: Teoria generale dello spirito come atto puro; Sistema di logica come teoria del conoscere; Filosofia dell'arte; Genesi e struttura della società*, edited by V. Cicero, with an introduction by E. Severino, Bompiani.

Habermas, J. (1986). *The Theory of Communicative Action: Reason and the Rationalization of Society. Volume One*, translated by T. McCarthy, Polity Press.

Habermas, J. (1992). *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, translated by T. Burger with the assistance of F. Lawrence, Polity Press.

Habermas, J. (1993). *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, translated by F. Lawrence, MIT Press.

Han, B.-C. (2015). *The Transparency Society*, translated by E. Butler, Stanford Briefs.

Han, B.-C. (2017a). *In the Swarm: Digital Prospects*, translated by E. Butler, MIT Press.

Han, B.-C. (2017b). *Psychopolitics: Neoliberalism and New Technologies of Power*, translated by E. Butler, Verso Books.

Han, B.-C. (2018). *The Expulsion of the Other: Society, Perception and Communication Today*, translated by W. Hoban, Polity Press.

Han, B.-C. (2019). *Good Entertainment: A Deconstruction of the Western Passion Narrative*, translated by A. N. West, MIT Press.

Han, B.-C. (2021). *Capitalism and the Death Drive*, translated by D. Steuer, Polity Press.

Han, B.-C. (2022). *Hyperculture: Culture and Globalization*, translated by D. Steuer, Polity Press.

Hawking, S. & L. Mlodinow (2010). *The Grand Design*, Bantam Books.

Hegel, G. W. F. (1995). *Lectures on the History of Philosophy. Volume 1 Greek Philosophy to Plato*, translated by E.S. Haldane, University of Nebraska Press.

Heidegger, M. (1968). *What is Called Thinking?* translated by F. D. Wieck & J. G. Gray, Harper & Row.

Heidegger, M. (1981). 'Only a God Can Save Us': The *Spiegel* Interview, translated by W. J. Richardson, in *Heidegger: The Man and the Thinker*, pp. 45–67. Edited by T. Sheehan, Precedent Publishing.

Heidegger, M. (2003). *What is Philosophy?* translated by J. T. Wilde & W. Kluback, Rowman & Littlefield.

Heidegger, M. (2011a). *The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking*, in id., *Basic Writings*, pp. 307–25, Routledge Classics.

Heidegger, M. (2011b). *Modern Science, Metaphysics, and Mathematics*, in id., *Basic Writings: From* Being and Time *(1927) to* The Task of Thinking *(1964)*, pp. 183–212. Edited by D. F. Krell, Routledge Classics.

Jameson, F. (1991). *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Duke University Press.

Kant, I. (1996). What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking? in id., *Religion and Rational Theology*, pp. 1–18. Translated and edited by A. W. Wood & G. di Giovanni, Cambridge University Press.

Lévy, P. (1997). *Collective Intelligence: Mankind's Emerging World in Cyberspace*, translated by R. Bononno, Perseus.

Nietzsche, F. (1999). *Unpublished Writings from the Period of Unfashionable Observations*, translated by R. T. Gray, Stanford University Press.

Orwell, G. (2000). *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Penguin.

Pariser, E. (2011). *The Filter Bubble: What the Internet is Hiding from You*, Penguin.

Pentland, A. (2014). The Death of Individuality: What Really Governs your Actions? *New Scientist*, 222(2963), 1-30.

Pentland, A. (2015). *Social Physics: How Social Networks Can Make Us Smarter*, Penguin.

Plato (2013). *Republic*, translated and edited by C. Emlyn-Jones & W. Preddy, 2 vols, Harvard University Press.

Postman, N. (2006). *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*, Penguin.

Rorty, R. (2020). *On Philosophy and Philosophers: Unpublished Papers, 1960–2000*, edited by C. Voparil & W. P. Małecki, Cambridge University Press.

Rousseau, J.-J. (1968). *The Social Contract*, translated by M. Cranston, Penguin.

Skinner, B. F. (1973). *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, Penguin.

Stiegler, B. (2019). *The Age of Disruption: Technology and Madness in Computational Capitalism*, Polity Press.

Tononi, F. (2022). The Transformation of Images in the Age of Modernism, Postmodernism, and Digital Reproducibility, in *On Portraiture: Theory, Practice and Fiction. From Francisco de Holanda to Susan Sontag*, pp. 517–43. Edited by A. J. Gschwend, F. A. Baptista Pereira & M. J. Gamito, Faculdade de Belas-Artes, Universidade de Lisboa.

Tononi, F. (2023a). Images in the Age of social media: Capitalism, Consumerism, and Liberalism, in *Regimes of Capital in the Post-Digital Age*, pp. 179–202. Edited by S. Wróbel & K. Skonieczny, Routledge.

Tononi, F. (2023b). *Hyperculture: Culture and Globalization*. By Byung-Chul Han. Translated by Daniel Steuer. Cambridge, UK; Medford, MA: Polity Press, 2022. 98 pp., *Journal of Comparative Literature and Aesthetics*, 46 (2), 145–51.

Žižek, S. (2020a). *Pandemic! COVID-19 Shakes the World*, Polity Press.

Žižek, S. (2020b). *Pandemic! 2: Chronicles of a Time Lost*, Polity Press.

Žižek, S. (2021). Philosophy, Science, Capitalism and Truth, *Philosophical Investigations*, 15 (35), 36–52.

Žižek, S. (2022). *Surplus-Enjoyment: A Guide for the Non-Perplexed*, Bloomsbury Academic.

Žižek, S. (2023). The Post-Human Desert, *Project Syndicate*, April 7, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/ai-post-human-future-by-slavoj-zizek-2023-04> [accessed December 21, 2023].

Zuboff, S. (2019). *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*, Profile Books.

Journal of Philosophical Investigations
Print ISSN: 2251-7960 Online ISSN: 2423-4419
Homepage: https://philosophy.tabrizu.ac.ir

Whether Hegel is a Pantheist? Spinoza in Hegel's Pantheism

Khanh Trinh

Devine Word Seminary and De la Salle University, Philippines. Email: frkhanhtrinh@gmail.com

Article Info

Article type:
Research Article

Article history:
Received 26 April 2024
Received in revised from 09 May 2024
Accepted 16 May 2024
Published online 07 September 2024

Keywords:
Spinoza, Hegel, pantheism, semi-pantheism, absolute, God.

ABSTRACT

Does Hegel embrace pantheism? He faced accusations from his orthodox peers who adhered to Pantheism, a phrase that was commonly associated with atheism during his day. This study presents a counterargument to the assertion made by several contemporary orthodox contemporaries that Hegel is pantheistic. Hegel can be classified as a semi-pantheist. The manuscript is divided into three distinct sections. In the initial segment, I examine pantheism as posited by Spinoza, the pioneering contemporary pantheist whose contributions exerted a profound influence on other German thinkers, including Hegel. In the subsequent part, an examination of Hegel's pantheism will be conducted through an analysis of the concept of God or the Absolute. In the third section, an analysis is conducted on Hegel's notion of the features of the Absolute, and a comparison is made with Spinoza's God or Nature in order to ascertain if Hegel can be classified as a pantheist. It is believed that Hegel has a dissenting stance towards conventional pantheism, particularly that of Spinoza. Therefore, it can be inferred that Hegel's pantheism differs from Spinoza's. Hegel can be classified as a semi-pantheist.

Cite this article: Trinh, K. (2024). Whether Hegel is a Pantheist? Spinoza in Hegel's Pantheism. *Journal of Philosophical Investigations*, 18(48), 133-146. https://doi.org/10.22034/JPIUT.2024.61379.3746

© The Author(s).
https://doi.org/10.22034/JPIUT.2024.61379.3746
Publisher: University of Tabriz.

Introduction

Whether Hegel is a pantheist? After the death of Hegel, there was a contentious debate on the religious dimension of Hegel's thought which divided into two perspectives of Hegelian: right Hegelian and left Hegelian. According to the right Hegelian perspective, Hegel can be understood as a Christian apologist who seeks to harmonize his philosophical ideas with the conventional Lutheran doctrines pertaining to the Trinity, Creation, and Incarnation (Shannon, 2017, 1). A contrasting interpretation, as articulated by various prominent commentators, posits a left Hegelian perspective wherein the individual in question is not embracing Christianity, but rather advocating for atheism. In this perspective, on the one hand, Hegel posits that the Absolute Being is identical to humanity, and further asserts that the incarnate god's appearance is merely the Lord of world history returning. On the other hand, Hegel's philosophy is perceived by some as pantheism due to the deity status attributed to the Absolute Being in natural religions. Based on these two interpretations, Hegel is considered to be in opposition to Christianity (Shannon, 2017, 1). Some modern orthodox contemporaries assert that Hegel was pantheistic[1] as atheistic[2] in Spinoza's account of pantheism[3]; this paper refutes this claim. The present manuscript is structured into four distinct sections. In the first section, I will scrutinize pantheism in Spinoza's account, the first modern pantheist whose work had a significant impact on numerous German philosophers, including Hegel. Then, I will delineate Hegel's pantheism in the second section by locating and scrutinizing his discourse on the subject in all of his writings, with particular emphasis on the Lecture on the Philosophy of Religion. In the third section, an attempt is made to address the inquiry regarding whether Hegel is a pantheist as stated in Spinoza's account by examining his concept of Absolute Being and contrasting it with Spinoza's notion of God or Nature. Subsequently, I demonstrate that Hegel's pantheism is not synonymous with Spinoza's pantheism, nor is it synonymous with atheism. In conclusion, I claim that Hegel does not align with traditional pantheism, particularly as it pertains to Spinoza's pantheism since he is a semi-pantheist.

---

[1] Raymond Williamson after examining the arguments for atheism claims that Hegel is advocating pantheism (Williamson, 1984, 215-30). In the same meaning, Merold Westphal claims that, "Like Spinoza, Hegel is a pantheist…," (Westphal, 2004, p. 66), and Gerald McCool, "Pantheism had replaced the personal God of historical revelation with its impersonal Absolute Idea. The greatest proponent of modern pantheism was Hegel…," (McCool, 1989, p.92).

[2] Atheism has been accused of being pantheistic for as long as pantheism has existed. Some thinkers proposed that pantheism is atheism. Coleridge insisted that "every thing God, and no God, are identical positions" (McFarland, 1969, p. 228). In the same way, Owen (1974) argues that pantheism is equivalent to atheism…taken strictly it [pantheism] is equivalent to atheism" (pp. 69-74). Schopenhauer also contends that "that "to call the world 'God' is not to explain it; it is only to enrich our language with a superfluous synonym for the word 'world' (1951, p. 40).

[3] There are numerous studies conducted on Spinoza's Ethics, and many of them indirectly studied on pantheism. Spinoza's version of pantheism, on the other hand, is best understood as one of numerous philosophical variations on pantheistic themes, despite the fact that it has undergone the most transformation throughout history (Levine, 1994, preface, ix).

1. Spinoza on pantheism

Within this particular part, we shall scrutinize Spinoza's definition of pantheism. I will begin by reviewing some prevalent definitions of pantheism. Then, I will trace back to Spinoza, the first philosopher to defend and explain pantheism in its most comprehensive manner.

In general, Pantheism refers to the belief that the natural universe is inherently divine and deserving of reverence; alternatively, it is the belief that divinity permeates the natural universe (Garett, 1997, July 3). The belief that "God is everything and everything is a self-expression of his nature" is a broad definition of pantheism, as proposed by Owen (1974). Alternatively expressed, MacIntyre posits that all existing entities constitute a "unity," and this unity, which permeates everything, possesses a divine essence (p. 64). Michael Levine (1994) argues that pantheism refutes the notion that God is entirely distinct from the world. He states, "Pantheists deny that what they mean by God is completely transcendent" (p. 2). Somewhere else, Owen (1974) gives another more specific definition of pantheism, "'Pantheism'…signifies the belief that every existing entity is, only one Being; and that all other forms of reality are either modes (or appearances) of it or identical with it" (p. 65). According to McIntyre, pantheism is the view that "everything that exists constitutes a unity [in some sense] and…this all-inclusive unity is divine [in some sense]" (1967, 34). While there may be some disagreements on certain aspects, these scholars all concur that pantheism posits that God and the world are not distinct ontologically. In other words, pantheists believe that God is identical to the world.

> Although pantheists differ among themselves at many points, they all agree in denying the basic theistic claim that God and the world are ontologically distinct (Owen, 1974, 65).

Levine posits that the definition of pantheism is multifaceted, as distinct interpretations of the religion exist among different individuals. Hence, as stated by Levine (1994, 25), the fundamental dilemma surrounding pantheism is the definition of its nature. Spinoza, whose Ethics contained the most comprehensive analysis of pantheism, must be revisited in order to address the central question regarding pantheism.

Beth Lord (2010) contends that Spinoza attempts to persuade his audience in Part I that his fundamental concept is that all individual beings we perceive are 'modes' of being -substance and, therefore,'modes' of God; being – substance is equivalent to God; and being is one (p. 15). Indeed, Spinoza argues in part I of his book Ethics that there is a single substance that is in and of itself; all other substances are merely modes of that substance.

> BY SUBSTANCE, I mean that which is in itself, and is conceived through itself; in other words, that of which a conception can be formed independently of any other conception" (1D3)[1].

In contrast to a substance, which is self-existent or self-caused and needs nothing more to exist than itself, a mode is the affection of a substance; a mode exists in another entity – a substance. "BY MODE, I mean the modifications ["Affectiones"] of substance, or that which exists in and is conceived through, something other than itself" (1D5). This indicates that the substance determines the existence of modes. A substance exists prior to its modes; its existence is not dependent on modes. According to Spinoza, a substance that can exist in itself and through it (substance), modes or affections[2] can exist and be understood is God. "BY GOD, I mean a being absolutely infinite--that is, a substance consisting in infinite attributes, of which each expresses eternal and infinite essentiality" (1D6). Spinoza tries to show in 1P11, that God exists in the way that is defined in definition 6 of part 1 (as a substance), "God, or a substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence, necessarily exists". He then says in 1P14, that God is the only substance and there cannot be any other substance: "Besides God no substance can be granted or conceived".

The aforementioned ideas show that God's character in Spinoza's account is that God is infinite. In other words, God is clearly independent and exists necessarily. Spinoza, according to Garett (1991), maintains that the existence of something is certain if and only if it is self-caused. Garrett asserts that Spinoza's approach in all of his arguments is to establish the self-caused nature of God and deduce His existence from this, as well as the equivalence between necessary existence and self-caused.

God is independent since he can exist in himself. Unlike modes or affections that depend on God or substance for their existence, God is self-caused for his existence. Indeed, God or substance requires nothing outside himself to exist. In other words, God is independent and self-subsistence. Following this idea and Definition 11 of Part 1 brings us to the necessary existence of God. By virtue of its very nature, God is the only entity whose existence is indispensable. Self-caused beings are also unique to God. Spinoza argues that a being is self-caused if its existence is predicated solely on its own inherent qualities (P33). At this point, we come to another character of God/substance according to Spinoza, that God is non-personal. God is not a person. In part 1, Definition 7, Spinoza claims that what is free "exists from the necessity of its nature alone, and is determined to act by itself alone". As we discussed above, there is no other substance and God is its own cause and determiner of its own actions, it is possible that God is free in the sense that it is

[1] In this paper all citation from the *Ethics* as follows: 1D: Part 1, Definition; 1P: Part 1, Proposition. For example, 1D1: Part 1, Definition 1

[2] Spinoza uses the words 'mode' and 'affections' interchangeably in part I of the *Ethics*.

not constrained by any other substance to act (Lord, 2010, 35). Therefore, God alone is a free cause. However, Spinoza contends that God does not possess "free will" in the sense that it can decide what it causes (1P33). Beth Lord (2010) argues that God does not possess the capacity to determine what is brought into existence as a 'person'. God has the power or capacity to manifest that which is an intrinsic connection to its very nature. God is free since God acts from the necessity of its own nature (p. 36). In Proposition 18, Spinoza asserts that "God is the indwelling and not the transient cause of all things". God is the immanent, not the transitive, cause of all things. Moreover, according to Mike Popejoy (2019), another clue that proved Spinoza denies the personal concept of God is that there is no distinction between God and Nature in the *Ethics* (p. 27). Nature and God are one and they are used interchangeably in Spinoza's work. In other words, Spinoza does not have any kind of mental life as human beings possess and experience. Therefore, God is not a person.

These characteristics of God/Substance – infinite which include independent and necessary and non-personal explained above is a strong indication of pantheism which includes both the claim that everything that exists constitutes a unity, and that this unity is in some sense divine according to Popejoy (2019, 28). "Whatsoever is, is in God, and without God nothing can be, or be conceived" (1P15). It means that without God – the only one substance, whatsoever – modes cannot be conceived and exist. This meaning reiterates the preceding statement that the dependence of all things on God. Spinoza explains in more detail in 1P25, "Individual things are nothing but modifications of the attributes of God, or modes by which the attributes of God are expressed in a fixed and definite manner". According to these words, modes are not only dependent on God, but their existence also serves as a specific expression of the attributes of God which constitute the essence of substance in return. Modes are particular and comprise the very essence of God. Consequently, through modes – particular things, we can know more about the nature of God/substance. "The more we understand particular things, the more do we understand God" (5P24). Considering these concepts, let us analyze Hegel's perspective on pantheism.

2. Pantheism in Hegel's account

In this section, we will examine what Hegel discusses on pantheism in comparison with Spinoza's account throughout his works, especially in *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*.

From Hegel's point of view, Spinoza is an important figure in the history of philosophy. Moreover, it seems that Hegel considers Spinoza's history to be the foundation of his account of God or absolute spirit. As mentioned above, Pantheism is the view that "everything that exists constitutes a unity and this unity is divine". In the previous section, Spinoza argued that God is the all-encompassing unity that is composed of everything that exists. In his philosophy, Hegel exhibits a preference for the terms Absolute or Absolute Spirit to denote the supreme entity. However, he also employs the term God in comparable circumstances.

At the beginning of the Doctrine of Essence of the *Encyclopedia Logic*[1] Hegel writes: "God, as the unqualifiedly infinite, is not the sort of entity that there simply is and *outside of* and *next to* which there are also still other essences [i.e. beings]" (EL, §112). In a sense, the infinite nature of God renders him an intrinsic component of other entities, rather than an external entity. Near the end of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel claims that a conception of the absolute that implies something existing externally to it is empty: "Absolute essence would be but an empty name if in truth there were for it another, if there were a 'fall' from it" (PS, §780). At this point, Hegel's portrayal of the Absolute can be classified as pantheistic based on the previously established definition: everything that exists constitutes a unity, and that unity is divine.

Hegel also mentions the connection between his concept of the Absolute and God in his introduction to Part I of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*:

> God is the beginning of all things and the end of all things; [everything] starts from God and returns to God. God is the one and only object of philosophy. [Its concern is] to occupy itself with God, to apprehend everything in him, to lead everything back to him, as well as to derive everything particular from God and to justify everything only insofar as it stems from God, is sustained through its relationship with him, lives by his I radiance and has [within itself] the mind of God (PR, Vol. I, 84).

With these words, Hegel argues that God is the ultimate entity in which everything is created and exists. In other words, everything depends upon God for their existence. Indeed, everything is understood and exists through God or the Absolute. This notion is comparable to Spinoza's tenet that nothing can be granted and conceived. In the same meaning, Hegel states in the Introduction to Part III of his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* concerning "The Consummate Religion": "God himself is one in all" (PR, Vol. III, p.63). In the preface of *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel says:

> The True is the whole. But the whole is nothing other than the essence consummating itself through its development" (PS, §20).

It is evident from these passages that Hegel considers the Absolute to be the unity of all that exists, and Hegel's description of the Absolute also meets the criteria for pantheism at this juncture. Now let us explore in detail the nature and the characteristics of the Absolute - God in Hegel's account. According to Hegel, the Absolute, which is pure thought - Idea, is regarded independently of its external manifestation or self-manifestation, as stated in his work on Logic. In addition, to the extent that pure thought constitutes the "substance" of reality. It is not constrained to do so by

[1] Hereafter in this paper *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*: PR.; *Encyclopedia Logic*: EL; *Phenomenology of Spirit*: PS. *Philosophy of Mind*: PM.

anything external to it; therefore, the necessity is an intrinsic requirement of nature. The absolute inherently manifests itself in nature. "The idea can be grasped as that the *nature* of which *can only be conceived as existing*" (EL, §214). At this point, Hegel unequivocally affirms the essential existence of the Idea, and his voice is linked to Spinoza's assertion that the very essence of substance is self-caused and self-sufficient. In other words, the existence is the intrinsic nature of the substance (1P7). We can now conclude that the characteristics of the Absolute or God are essential or necessary.

Hegel also mentions independence as another characteristic of the Absolute/God throughout his work on *Religion*. When examining the notion of God in his lectures, he asserts that God is "in and for itself, embracing and containing absolutely everything, is that through which alone everything is and has subsistence… This One is the result of philosophy". Subsequently, he asserts that God is "that upon which everything is dependent and apart from which nothing other than it has absolute, true independence" (PR, Vol. 1, p. 367-368). Thus, according to Hegel, the Absolute/God is the foundation upon which all other things are built, and it exists necessarily and not through anything else. Others rely on the Absolute, whereas God's existence is independent of himself.

> This object [God] exists solely through itself and for its own sake. It is something that is absolutely self-sufficient, unconditioned, independent, free, as well as being the supreme end unto itself (PR, Vol. 1, p. 367-368).

Hegel further asserts in the *Encyclopedia Logic* that only one thing that possesses "complete, genuine independence" is God since everything is determined by himself alone – God (EL, §82). According to Hegel, true independence is the quality that distinguishes God from other things:

> The being of all these things is not of an independent sort, however, but is quite simply something upheld and maintained, not genuine independence. If we ascribe a being to particular things, it is only a borrowed being, only the semblance of a being, not the absolutely independent being that God is (PR, Vol. 1, 369).

It appears that for Hegel, the concept of "being" in its completest form is exclusive to God, as Hegel argues that only God possesses absolute independence. Hegel's assertions concerning the necessity and independence of God thus far align with certain aspects of the philosophical tradition that came before him, most notably Spinoza's account of pantheism, which posits that God is Nature, which is both necessary and independent. As Spinoza defines pantheism, we shall examine whether Hegel is a pantheist in the following section.

3. Whether Hegel is a pantheist?

In the preceding sections, I have presented several aspects or characteristics related to God or the Absolute as described in Hegel's account. With the aforementioned factors, it appears that Hegel can be classified as a pantheist. Nevertheless, it is indeed fair to classify his perspective as pantheistic in the aforementioned sense (Spinoza's pantheism). In this section, I argue against the claims put forth by several scholars that Hegel is incompatible with pantheism. Hegel does not completely adhere to pantheism. Hegel is a semi-pantheism. By doing so, I contend that atheism and pantheism are not synonymous. Following this, I illustrate how Hegel has provided an original elucidation of the characteristics of pantheism which is different from Spinoza's account regarding the nature of God as both a substance and a subject.

4. Pantheism is not atheism

Pantheism posits that God encompasses everything and everything is God. It means that the world is synonymous with God, or in some way, it is just a manifestation of his nature. According to Owen, if God and the world are synonymous, then God is nothing more than a different name for the world. Therefore, it does not possess any meaning that is unique to itself. He concludes that "pantheism is equivalent to atheism" (1971, 74). With the same meaning, Schopenhauer states that "to call the world 'God' is not to explain it; it is only to enrich our language with a superfluous synonym for the word 'world'" (Schopenhauer, 1951, 40). However, Hegel contends that the idea that pantheism and atheism are identical is a massive misunderstanding. If one were to apply such an equation, it would be assumed that a pantheist would equate God with the entirety of things as distinct and dependent. Hegel responds that such pantheism is impossible since God cannot be considered God if He does not possess the world, which comprises all things finite (PR, Vol. 1, 375).

According to Spinoza and other pantheists, God is the substance or essence of all finite things, which are merely the modes or appearances of God. This assertion was made in the first section of the article. Put simply, finite entities derive their existence from the substance, and the substance's existence is not reciprocally dependent on finite entities. Pantheists maintain that finite things contribute nothing to God, as they vanish in the substance of God. However, finite things are endowed with divine attributes (Beiser, 2005, 143-144). God's existence in the world was manifested through many modes in contrast to the atheist position that God exists independently of the world and has no existence. In addition, according to Popejoy (2019), Hegel contends that atheism takes the finite as the Absolute, whereas Spinoza does not hold this view (p. 146). This is a clear demonstration that pantheism is not an atheistic perspective, and it is also a direct rejection of atheism (Levine, 1994, 3). Now, it would appear that Hegel is a supporter of pantheism, and it

is also true that he is a pantheist, alongside Spinoza. Now, let's take a look at what Hegel himself would have perceived about this assertion.

5. Hegel is a semi-pantheist

While Hegel does argue that pantheism is not the same thing as atheism, it is important to note that he is not a pantheist in every sense of the word. There is a single substance that is the essence of all finite things, and Hegel agrees with pantheists, particularly Spinoza, that this is the case. Further, Hegel, in a manner that is comparable to that of Spinoza, acknowledges that this substance is God, who is characterized as being independent and necessary. Nevertheless, Beiser (2005) asserts that Hegel stands in opposition to pantheists regarding two fundamental aspects. First, Hegel asserts that the realm of finitude does not vanish in the Absolute (God), but rather, it is through them (finite things) that the Absolute comes into existence. Second, Hegel contends that the infinite is not only a substance but also a subject (p. 144).

Regarding the first point, Hegel mentions pantheism twice in his *Lecture on the Philosophy of Religion,* and it seems that he gives two different definitions – meanings to the word 'pantheism'. In his discussion of the concept of God in his 1827 lectures, Hegel states:

> 'Pantheism' in the proper sense means that everything, the whole, the universe, this complex of everything existing, these infinitely many individual things—that all this is God (PR, Vol. 1, 375).

This statement would mean that no one thing in this complex could be God. However, in another passage later, Hegel claims that "'Pantheism' means 'all is divine,' and amounts to the notion that everything taken singularly is God" (PR, Vol. 1, 432). This definition seems to contradict the previous definition. It means that every single thing is part of the divine; you could even say that every single thing bears the mark of the divine. But a single thing is not the divine itself in its totality (Popejoy, 2019, 143). It is very different from Spinoza's.

Second, the primary distinguishing feature that Hegel employs to differentiate his conception of God from Spinoza's is the recognition that the Absolute must be understood not solely as a substance, but also as a subject, which holds significant importance in Hegel's perspective.

Most pantheists do not believe in a "personal" God. They say there is no such thing as a "minded" Being that has the traits of a "person," like having "intentional" states and the abilities that come with that, like being able to make choices (Levine, 1994, 2). It is important to keep in mind that in Spinoza's account, God or Nature is the only substance that is not a personal being. In Part V of his book *Ethics,* Spinoza says:

> God is without passions, neither is he affected by any emotion of pleasure or pain . . . Strictly speaking, God does not love anyone (5P.17).

With the same meaning in a later paragraph, Spinoza asserts that "He, who loves God, cannot endeavour that God should love him in return". (5P.19). When I say that I think of God as personal, I mean that I think of God as having a mind, an action, or a self, comparable to how people think. If God is personal in the way that we usually use the word, then God is not infinite (substance) anymore. In another way, in Proposition 17 of Part I, Spinoza claims that "neither intellect nor will appertain to God's nature." In this statement, Spinoza means that the term intellect or will which is usually used for a person cannot apply to God. Later in the same Part, he stresses that "the intellect in function, whether finite or infinite, as will, desire, love, etc…we do not (obviously) mean absolute thought, but only a certain mode of thinking, differing from other modes, such as love, desire, …[that] requiring to be conceived through absolute thought. It must through some attribute of God which expresses the eternal and infinite essence of thought" (1P31). It is evident from this excerpt that Spinoza rejects the notion that God has specific modes of thought that are distinct from other modes. In other words, Spinoza refuses to acknowledge that God does not have any kind of mental life like human's experience. In short, Spinoza believed that God did not have a personal nature.

Hegel, on the other hand, admits that the Absolute is conceived from the perspective of substance and subject, both of which are essential to him. In the following, we will go into greater detail regarding the role that consciousness and subjectivity play in Hegel's account of the divine. According to Hegel, the all-encompassing divine is conceived of as consciousness or mind/spirit. It is at this crucial juncture that Hegel makes an effort to differentiate himself from Spinoza's pantheism (PR, Vol. 3, 62). There is a close connection between Hegel's requirement that God be conceived of as self-conscious and the fact that Hegel conceives of God not only as substance, but also at the same time as subject (Popejoy, 2019, 18).

In the preface to *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel says:

> In my view, which can be justified only by the exposition of the system itself, everything turns on grasping and expressing the True, not only as *Substance*, but equally as *Subject* (PS, §17).

Hegel contends that the Absolute (Spirit) which is active and living in the world in his account is not the absolute substance in Spinoza's.

> Hegel argued that absolute substance in Spinoza's philosophy was not yet conceived of as active, living Spirit, but only as the abstract unity of Spirit in itself (Gerrish, 1987, 450).

It appears that Hegel considers the concept of the Absolute as a substance to be overly static. Hegel claims that the discussion of the Absolute as a dynamic or living substance is picked up

when the Absolute is recognized as a subject in addition to its substance property. This means that the Absolute is the unification of substance and subject.

At the beginning of *Phenomenology*, Hegel writes: "Furthermore, the living Substance is being which is in truth *Subject*, or, what is the same, is in truth actual only insofar as it is the movement of positing itself, or is the mediation of its self-othering with itself" (PS, §18). Hegel approaches a definition of the term 'subject' in relation to the Absolute in this passage: it refers to that which acts as both the agent responsible for externalizing the Absolute and for unifying that distinction. The process of reconciling and manifesting differences at the highest level is what differentiates the Absolute as a subject and not merely as a substance.

According to Popejoy (2019), it is not the whole truth – not yet the actual truth, if we conceive the divine as substance. In other words, the Absolute or God is substance that is fallacious since it cannot achieve "the true as whole" due to the incomplete nature of the reconciliation movement. At this point, it is critical to emphasize that Hegel posits that the Absolute ought to be regarded as both substance and subject. By the substantial, Hegel means that the Absolute is in itself (PS, §§18-22). In other words, the Absolute is something that exists on its own and does not depend on any relationship with anything else, not even on showing itself to subjects (Klotz, 2020, 54).
Regarding the notion of subjectivity, according to Charles Taylor, Hegel's ideas about the "subject" refer to a way of being that is mainly self-awareness or self-knowledge (Taylor, 1975, 108). At this point, we face another character of the Absolute which is self-consciousness.

Self-consciousness as God has come up many times throughout Hegel's works and it is a key part of Hegel's unique view of God. In his thesis, when discussing God's personality, Popejoy cited Jacobi to show that self-consciousness is essential to personality:

> Jacobi states: "I have no concept of an intelligence without personality".[238] According to Jacobi self-consciousness is a necessary constituent of personality: "Unity of self-consciousness constitutes personality, and every entity which is conscious of its identity is a person."[239] Thus according to Jacobi intelligence requires some kind of personality, and this in turn requires self-consciousness. (Popejoy, 2019, 109).

According to this passage, it is impossible to conceive of a person who does not possess self-consciousness because self-consciousness is an essential component of the human identity. Consequently, given that God is a person, it is reasonable to assume that He possesses the capacity for self-consciousness or consciousness.

In *Phenomenology*, Hegel contends that a representation of God as self-consciousness distinguishes God from others which represents consciousness. "God is *thought of* as self-consciousness. The self that is *thought* of is not the *actual* self". The self is conceived or conscious is the real self since what is thought of stops being just thought of and becomes something separate

from self-knowledge only when the self creates it and sees the object's determination as its own, it sees itself in that object. "For what is *thought of*, ceases to be something [merely] thought of, something aliens to the self-knowledge" (PS, § 684). In another passage, Hegel asserts that "God is God only so far as he knows himself: his self-knowledge is, further, a self-consciousness in man and man's knowledge of God, which proceeds to man's self-knowledge in God" (PM, §564). This excerpt asserts that an essential aspect of God's nature is its self-awareness and self-consciousness.

Throughout this section, I argued that Hegel shares a similar notion with Spinoza regarding the concept of God as an independent and necessary substance. Nevertheless, the notion of God in Hegel's narrative diverges significantly from Spinoza's conception of God. Hegel's concept of God or the Absolute encompasses both substance and subject, referring to the person. The Absolute is a subject that possesses self-awareness. These aspects hold significant importance in Hegel's philosophical framework and serve to differentiate him from Spinoza. In his efforts to maintain the rationality of Christian doctrine and practices, Hegel placed great importance on the subjectivity of the Absolute (Beiser, 2005, 145). Thus, Hegel can be classified as a semi-pantheist due to his agreement with Spinoza's pantheism regarding the existence of an infinite, independent, and necessary substance.

However, he diverges from Spinoza in his understanding of God as the Absolute, which is not solely a substance, but rather a fusion of substance and subject, as well as self-awareness. Copleston says that the Hegelian system "is neither clear theism nor clear pantheism." God has to be more than all of our limited minds put together...When God shows up in and through finite consciousness as well as to finite consciousness, there must be a real difference between the two. While the limited consciousness is still around, it can't be called God because it is part of God but isn't God. In this way, I think Hegel's idea is more like panentheism than strict pantheism. (Copleston, 1946, 54–55)

Conclusion

In this paper, I argue that Hegel can be considered a semi-pantheist because his understanding of God or the Absolute closely aligns with Spinoza's, who is recognized as the first modern pantheist. However, Hegel's concept of God - the Absolute differs significantly from Spinoza's understanding of God as Nature or substance. In order to arrive at this conclusion, I partitioned my paper into three distinct sections. In the first section, an examination is conducted on Spinoza's pantheism through an analysis of the notion of God as an infinite, necessary, and independent substance, as articulated in Spinoza's seminal work, Ethics. In the second section, I am seeking Hegel's exposition on pantheism in relation to the notion of God as presented in his works. In this particular section, I argue that the notion of God as the Absolute exhibits certain attributes that align with the notion of God as nature or substance as described in Spinoza's account. In the final section, which comprises two sub-sections, an attempt is made to address the inquiry regarding Hegel's pantheistic position through an analysis of his conceptualization of pantheism. Within the first sub-section, it

is contended that Hegel refutes the notion that pantheism is synonymous with atheism. In the subsequent subsection, it is argued that while Hegel espouses the concept of pantheism, he does not exhibit the characteristics of a pantheist. I explore the concept that the Absolute or God is subjective in order to demonstrate that while Hegel's God or the Absolute and Spinoza's God exhibit certain similarities, they diverge in their understanding of subjectivity. Subsequently, I deduce that Hegel is a semi-pantheist.

References

Beiser, F. C. (2005). Hegel. In *Routledge eBooks*. Routledge.

Copleston, F. C. (1946). Pantheism in Spinoza and the German idealists. *Philosophy*, 21(78), 42–56.

Garett, J. (1997, July 3). *An Introduction to Pantheism*. Western Kentucky University. Retrieved March 15, 2024, from https://people.wku.edu/jan.garrett/panthesm.htm

Garrett, D. (1991). Spinoza's Necessitarianism. In *God and Nature: Spinoza's Metaphysics. Papers Presented at the First Jerusalem Conference (Ethica I)* (pp. 191–218). Edited by Y. Yovel Brill Academic Publishers.

Gerrish, B. A. (1987). The Secret Religion of Germany: Christian Piety and the Pantheism Controversy. *The Journal of Religion*, 67(4), 437–455. https://doi.org/10.1086/487625

Hegel, G. W. (2001). *Philosophy of Mind*, Translated by W. Wallace, Blackmask Online.

Hegel, G. W. F. (1987). *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion: Vol. II Determinate religion*, Edited by P. C. Hodgson, University of California Press.

Hegel, G. W. F. (1988). *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion: The Lectures of 1827: Vol. III*, Edited by P. C. Hodgson, University of California Press.

Hegel, G. W. F. (2007). *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. I Edited by P. C. Hodgson, Oxford University Press.

Hegel, G. W. F. (2010). *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline: Part 1: Science of Logic*, translated by K. Brinkmann & D. O. Dahlstrom, Cambridge University Press.

Klotz, C. (2020). Substance and Subject, from Kant to Hegel. *Studia Kantiana*, 18(3), 45–58.

Levine, M. P. (1994). *Pantheism: a Non-Theistic concept of deity*. Routledge.

Lord, B. (2010). Spinoza's ethics. In *Edinburgh University Press eBooks*. Edinburgh University Press.

McFarland, T. (1969). *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition*. Oxford University Press.

McIntyre, A. (1967). Pantheism. In P. *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* Vol. 5. Edited by Edwards, Macmillan and Free Press.

Owen, H. P. (1971). *Concepts of Deity*. Mcmillan.

Popejoy, M. (2019). *Pantheism in Spinoza, Hegel, and Contemporary Philosophy of Religion* PhD. Thesis, Purdue University. https://hammer.purdue.edu/articles/thesis/Pantheism_in_Spinoza_Hegel_and_Contemporary_Philosophy_of_Religion/11312714

Schopenhauer, A. (1951). A Few Words on Pantheism. In *Essays from the Parerga and Paralipomena*. translated by T. B. Saunders, George Allen & Unwin.

Shannon, D. E. (2017). Hegel on Christianity in the Phenomenology of Spirit in advance. *Philosophy and Theology*. https://doi.org/10.5840/philtheol201781784

Spinoza, B. D. (2001). *The Ethics* translated by R. H. M. Elwes, Blackmask Online. http://www.blackmask.com

Taylor, C. (1975). *Hegel*. Cambridge University Press.

Journal of Philosophical Investigations
Print ISSN: 2251-7960 Online ISSN: 2423-4419
Homepage: https://philosophy.tabrizu.ac.ir

Is Ethical Religion Possible?

Amita Valmiki

Professor and Head of Department of Philosophy, Ramniranjan Jhunjhunwala College of Arts, Science and Commerce, (Empowered Autonomous), [Affiliated to University of Mumbai], Ghatkopar (W), Mumbai, India. Email: amitavalmiki@gmail.com

Article Info

Article type:
Research Article

Article history:
Received 10 May 2024
Received in revised from 19 May 2024
Accepted 25 May 2024
Published online 07 September 2024

Keywords:
religion(s), concept of God, faith, subjectivity, intuition, transformation, social emancipation, reformation.

ABSTRACT

The paper concentrates on the philosophical discourses of four thinkers – Soren Kierkegaard, M. K. Gandhi, R. D. Ranade and B. R. Ambedkar on Ethics and Religion. Soren Kierkegaard, whose journey in philosophy made him pass through the aesthetic stage to ethical stage and ultimately religious stage landing in the realm of "faith"; where an individual arrives at without any rational commitment. M. K. Gandhi, whose journey in life encompassed politics, economics, and social realms where the underlying paradigm has always been religion. He did not consider 'truth' and therefore 'morality' as segregated from religion. R. D. Ranade, while mentioning the criteria of mystical experience, very empathetically mentions that a mystic (a saint) has the element of universality, is intellectual, emotional, has the intuitive experience of 'spiritual realization' and cannot be devoid of morality. B. R. Ambedkar, instead of accepting Christianity or Islam, consecrated into Buddhism; that befitted Indian contextual situation critiquing the popular Brahmanism, believed that religion must be in amalgamation and consonance with reason and scientific temperament. And this criterion was fulfilled by Buddhism (indeed with other criteria). His adopting Buddhism was more of a political movement rather than spiritual; therefore, his Buddhism in the transformed format, is called Neo-Buddhism. The research article concludes by comparing these masters' views and ideologies in the context of 'a possibility of ethical religion' that has appealed my conscience.

Cite this article: Valmiki, A. (2024). Is Ethical Religion Possible? *Journal of Philosophical Investigations*, 18(48), 147-160. https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.61535.3762

© The Author(s).
https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.61535.3762
Publisher: University of Tabriz.

Introduction

It is very evident in history that ethics/morality has a strong connection with religion. And religion or religious thought is said to be the first systematic thought of human beings. The so-called formal religions with their respective scriptures are laden with laws, norms, customs, traditions and forms of prayer and rituals. Are these norms and customs ethical? Ethics itself stands on the ground of subjectivity. Who decided what is 'right' and what is 'good'? How the word 'ought' to be significant in religion? Is the word 'ought' itself ethical? Religions of the world claim to be moral; be it Semitic or Oriental – morality is what according to majority of theists is by religion, for religion and of religion.

Again, religion does not have a single definition. The term religion comes from Latin 'religare', that is binding together, this makes the term religion more complicated and indefinable – the approach can be binding 'all', or binding human beings, or bind human beings with God(s). Again, we land up on troubled waters as soon as the term 'God' is introduced. Is He/She/It (the Supra Power) deistic or pantheistic or popular theistic (the Creator God concept)?

In the history of religious development, human beings have evolved religions granting it to be righteous; and partaking to this, the central concept – 'God' (be it deistic, pantheistic, or theistic) must be righteous and benevolent. In fact, when the concept of evil is discussed, according to Plato, David Hume, and J. S. Mill – God is benevolent but not omnipotent. (Tooley, 2015, Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy) The concept of God, according to these philosophers, is – God is good but not all powerful; therefore, evil exists in the world. (But this is again criticized by theists who believe God is both, omnipotent and benevolent. Then the question again arises – why there is evil in the world? There are many ripostes to this question, but ultimately one can find solution in some form of mysticism!)

De facto, it seems religion has also evolved in search of righteousness and religion has a strong connection to ethics. According to David Muzzey, "First, Ethical Culture is a creedless religion. The bond of union among its members is a common devotion to the cultivation of moral excellence as the chief duty of man. Contrary to the widely accepted teaching that right conduct depends as a corollary on correct religious belief, we hold that it is the conscientious striving for righteousness in thought and action that has constantly refined and humanized the dogmas of the creeds in a word, that it is not the church that makes good men, but good men who make the church." (Muzzey, 1967, 02)

In the process the concept of God emerged. This outlook was popularized by naturalists. Paul Tillich argues that religious language is symbolic, thereby suggesting that the religious symbols are like art forms, fabricated by human beings. Therefore, the concept of God is evolving and striving towards perfection. Though he does not deny God, God still is a human construct; and humans strive towards righteousness. So, what does my God want from me?

"What doth the Lord require
of thee, but to do justly, and
to love mercy, and to walk
humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8)

Especially looking back in the history of Semitic religions, these religions has aspired some kind of religious revolutionary reforms to instil ethical values in their respective religion. These values have been put on high pedestal than rituals (that seems secondary), though not side-lined. The same procedure follows in Brahmanism (popularly known as Hinduism) – from *Vedas* to *Brāhmaṇas* to *Araṇyakas* to *Upanishads* (the *Vedānta*) – the move has been more philosophical; and the paradigm shift from rituals to philosophy encompassing ethics is quite evident.

Therefore, religion does not remain just a quest to find solution to haunting questions like - why of creation of the universe? Why this life? What are these events of nature? And so on and so forth. But in course of its evolution religion has turned into an applied science (if I am permitted to use this term). In the book *Beyond Religion: Ethics for a Whole World* (2012), Dalai Lama proposes 'a third way' that transcends conventional religion and ethics for improving future human lives. This 'third way', is sort of 'secular belief system', a realm that goes beyond conventional religion. In fact, Dalai Lama holds the views of Buddha that relate ethics to ethics, and ethics to religion. In the former it is the 'a priori universal ethics (or, 'metaethics') in relation to individual ethics and the later speaks of acceptance of 'diversified religions of the world with the base of common ethics.'

So, the dilemma is – are these two power structures – a. Ethics and b. Religion – indispensable to each other or are they independent of each other? (Personally, I would prefer the second option.) There are two main versions of this dependence: according to the first, morality is impossible without religion, which is another way of saying that God is the source of morality and the only basis of its validity. According to the second, morality can be independently valid, but is contingent on religion for its implementation. This rational approach seems to be quite appealing.

The first version was formulated as one of the options in the famous dilemma posed by Socrates in *the Euthyphro dialogue* (hence forth: '*the Euthyphro dilemma*') (*sic*). The dialogue concerns the meaning of piety, and Euthyphro suggests the following definition: *What is dear to the gods is holy, and what is not dear to them is not holy*. (*Euthyphro, 7a*)

Socrates then asks: *Is that which is holy loved by the gods because it is holy, or is it holy because it is loved by the gods*" (Sagi & Statman, 1995, 13)?

This dilemma is often discussed not when we consider 'metaphysical attributes of God' but a potent question posed while considering 'ethical attributes of God'. Since God being central to religion, we come back to our former discussion – is ethics and religion connected? Or (going with the title of the paper), 'Is Ethical Religion Possible?'

There are philosophers who have contemplated upon the issue of the relation between ethics and religion; the paper discusses the views of four such thinkers – namely – Soren Kierkegaard, M. K. Gandhi, R. D. Ranade, and B. R. Ambedkar. Why I selected these thinkers? Precisely because they raise a possibility of ethical religion.

2. Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855)

A Danish philosopher and the father of Existentialism, to be more precise – Theological or Theistic Existentialism is worth mentioning now. [I would like to mention that Existentialism as philosophy is divided in two phases: a) Theological or Theistic Existentialism championed by Soren Kierkegaard and Secular or Atheistic Existentialism under the influence of Friedrich Nietzsche. The contemporary Existentialism was quite influenced by Nietzsche and made in vogue by Martin Heidegger and Jean Paul Sartre. While theological existentialism was kept alive by Karl Jaspers, Gabriel Marcel, Martin Buber, and Paul Tillich. Neither Kierkegaard nor Nietzsche believed in institutionalized school or belief system. For them existence, freedom, authenticity, choice, anxiety, 'the process of becoming' is more important than 'being' and existing individual was vital.]

Kierkegaard's philosophy is a theological movement that led existentialism on the path of Christian theology. Considering Kierkegaard's philosophy, it runs quite parallel to theistic mystics' philosophy, those who have a strong hold on ethical tradition of religion. His philosophy talks about ethics not giving up theology completely. Both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche – in their own poise renounce the formalized, institutionalized, and universal moral decree. They were indeed attracted to Kant's creative will, and their anticipation was - that only the creative will can be judged as moral or otherwise. Though Kierkegaard and Kant differed in their philosophies on ethics and religion, and the connectivity of the two, Kant seems to influence most of the philosophers who came in post Kantian era; and therefore, Kierkegaard was no exception. No doubt, Kant's concept of God is keeping with his axiology – the moral realm; and the related postulates, namely, Freedom of Will, Immortality of Soul and Existence of God are inevitably related to each other. And these postulates are the products of reason. While 'faith' plays a pivotal role in Kierkegaard's moral philosophy and philosophy of religion; and God is realized not through formalized and institutionalized religion but through the 'virtue of absurd' and 'leaps of faith'. As a matter of fact, Kierkegaard is considered a supra-rationalist. Does it mean he is completely against reason? According to Roe Fremstedal, Kierkegaard being supra-rationalist does not mean he is anti-reason. In fact, faith supersedes reason. Therefore, to say Kierkegaard is against reason is invalid argument. His justification of faith being above reason is only to go against the dogmatic acceptance of theological justification of religious principles that undermines the value of divine revelation and the concept of incarnation (Fremstedal, 2022, 9). Kant and Kierkegaard converge at one point where Kant's postulates are of rational outcome while Kierkegaard's ethical level of existence is also based on reason. And precisely for this he takes a leap, a leap of faith to reach the highest level

of existence, which is the religious level. The following paragraph deals with Kierkegaard's three levels of existence.

Kierkegaard passed through different experiential stages (though Kierkegaard has not explicitly mentioned these stages, it was the interpretation of Kierkegaard's work by American scholars] – the first stage is 'the aesthetic stage', this level is very explicitly mentioned in his pseudonym authored work '*Either/Or*' published in 1843. "The aesthetic stage of existence is characterized by the following immersion in sensuous experience …nihilistic wielding of irony and scepticism…...and flight from boredom" (McDonald, 2017, Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy). But one cannot remain at this level only. The individual must move to 'the ethical level' which is – one, a limited sphere, or stage, which is superseded by the higher stage of the religious life; and second an aspect of life which is retained even within the religious life. According to Kierkegaard, the distinction between good and evil cannot be understood by only social norms and duties but can be understood only through 'God'. For example, if Abraham must sacrifice his son Isaac - cannot be justified through social norms, but is understood in the form of duty towards God. The question is – was Abraham right in accepting God's command to sacrifice his son? This cannot be decided by 'popular reason' as this is decided on the basis of 'religious faith'. Here the individual adopts 'a tolerance for paradox'. Therefore, to achieve one's ultimate spiritual identity, according to Kierkegaard, the individual must cultivate 'mores' like hope, patience, co-operation, excellence, devotion, and love. This takes us to the last level, that is 'the religious level'; which is based on "faith"; and as noted by Dexter Amend, "only on the basis of faith does an individual have a chance to become a true self. This self is the life-work which God judges for eternity" (Mendaglio [ed.], 2008, 111). For Kierkegaard, ethics and religion are concerned with 'the subjective', and inner, immediate consciousness of one's own existence. 'Self-contemplation' is the only contemplation that is needed for ethics; and 'God is not an externality either.' One can have ethical and religious truth by inwardness, going deep in one's own self. Kierkegaard's experiential stages rise on an ascending order – the aesthetic stage where Kierkegaard observes human being fancy the concept of freedom and dwells in that illusory world; the ethical stage where he witnessed the illusion of morality and humanism. The choice of Kierkegaard was to hurl both the first two stages and to convert into Christianity, finally adopting the standpoint of 'faith'. This being theistic existentialism it allows the individual to be guided by inner a-moral aspect (where immorality has no place). For Kierkegaard existence, freedom and in particular 'existing individual' is prior to reason. In his philosophy, ethics and religion cannot be separated; and like a theistic-mystic, Kierkegaard's approach turns social, and like a social reformer he approaches human existence, not bound in rules and regulations but freely accepting 'love' and 'hope' through faith.

As noted by Kierkegaard in his book *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846), "……nature, the totality of created things, is the work of God. And yet God is not there; but within the individual

man there is potentiality (man is potentially spirit) which is awakened in inwardness to become a God relationship, and then it becomes possible to see God everywhere" (Swenson [trans.] 1941, 182). Therefore, Kierkegaard seems to believe in strong the possibility of ethical religion.

3. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948)

Gave immense importance to religion in human life. He came from an affluent caste of *Vaishya* (the merchant and traders' community). And his mother, the ardent follower of *Vaishnavism* (the popular form of Hinduism where there is acceptance of devotion to *Lord Vishnu* and his *avatars* [incarnations]). Gandhi lost his father at a very young age, so his mother rendered tremendous influence over him. Therefore, religion remained a primal factor in his life, a guide to moral life and paradigm for practical life. For him religion was a synthesis of *a prior* (ethical paradigm) and *a posteriori* (the moral paradigm). Religion, therefore for Gandhi was theory and practice in simultaneity. He can be described as 'a saint of religious theory and practice.' The theistic element was always predominant in him; therefore, philosophy of *Bhagavad Gita* (the holy text of Hindus) encompassed his moral realm where 'working and performing one's duty without expecting fruits' was/is a prime virtue. For him, 'a man without religion is life without principles and life without principles is like a ship without a rudder' (Datta, 2020,124). His journey in life encompassed politics, economics, and social realms where the underlying paradigm has always been religion. He did not consider 'truth' and so 'ethic' as segregated from each other; and religion is intrinsically related to these virtues.

It is quite well known that Gandhi's home in Porbandar, Gujarat, in Western India, was frequented by Muslims and Jains. His study abroad and working abroad brought him face to face with Christian friends and so with Christian ethics. Therefore, unity of religion was ingrained in him. Though being proud of being a Hindu and against conversion, ethics of all religions attracted him to accept that 'religion is truth' and 'truth is religion' [Often Gandhi is been criticised on his regressive attitude towards caste system in India that was intrinsically related to Hinduism. Kancha Ilaiah Shepherd notes,

> Gandhi was not a caste abolitionist. He was an abolitionist of untouchability. Gandhi was against abolition of caste and varna order because he knew that the caste/varna institution is the soul of Hinduism. (Shepherd, 2019)

And he was all for Hinduism. Was it right on the part of Gandhi to keep up with this dual personality? Scholars are debating this issue till date.

Nevertheless, the basic principles that governed Gandhi's whole life were 'truth' and 'non-violence'. "For Gandhi, truth is the relative truth of truthfulness in word and deed, and the absolute truth is God (as God is also Truth) and morality – the moral laws and code – its basis." (Murphy, 1991)

Living religions interested Gandhi and his deliberate attempt to arrive at the truth of all religions made him say, "I believe in the fundamental Truth of all great religions of the world. And I believe if only we could, all of us, read the scriptures of the different faiths from the stand-point of the followers of those faiths, we should find that they were at the bottom, all one and were all helpful to one another." [Gandhi, *Harijan,* 1934]

As noted earlier, Gandhi has his say in matter of politics, economics, and social issues; underlying all these diversified issues there was this religious fervour to it. This was because of his quest for 'truth'. His autobiography – '*The Stories of My Experiments with Truth*' (published in serialized form, 1st US Edition published in 1948) – also concentrates on his struggle in search of Truth. For him, this 'truth' is nothing but 'God'; this unique understanding is ultimately associated with his extreme acceptance of *ahimsa* ('non-violence'). Therefore, his famous dictum, 'I am not against evil doer, but the evil itself.' (Datta, 2020,124)

If we are to talk about Gandhi's most essential socio-political-economic ideologies – the first and the foremost – the ideology of '*Satyagraha*' ('the idea of non-violent resistance'), his concepts of 'civil disobedience' and 'non-cooperation', his ideal state concept – '*Rāmarājya*' (the rule of Lord Ram) (thought debatable in present context) and '*Swarāj*' (i.e. 'Home-Rule'), the base for all this was his religious philosophy, especially Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Christianity. According to M. V. Nadkarni, "Though the Gandhian view of Hinduism put primacy on personal conduct and ethics, it did not eschew faith in God. But truth was God for him, and seeking truth was religion. Hinduism for him was a process of search after truth. As such, rituals found no place in his religion, though he did not object to others following rituals of worship, provided it was non-violent. Non-violence was basic means of search for truth. It needed no ritual. But *bhajans* or prayers with *bhakti* (devotion) without any sectarian bias were encouraged by him as the means of purifying mind, and strengthening one's resolve to pursue truth." (Nadkarni, 2006, xv)

From the above discussion on Gandhi's ideas on philosophy of religion, one thing that comes out strikingly is he was never bent towards ritualistic religion. Though criticised of using terms like 'God', 'Soul', Self', 'Truth' interchangeably and therefore his philosophical discourses on religion had conflicting ways of argumentations; he still maintained his stance that was morality or ethics being intrinsic to religion. He does not seem to be considering religion in an institutionalized form mainly because then every individual religion will have its fixed mould; which Gandhi could not accept. So, he repeatedly maintained the 'truth' and, in that matter, 'morality' is his 'second name for religion.' So, the above-mentioned criticism is not justified.

Gandhi said (*Ethical Religion* 1930), "There is no religion higher than Truth and Righteousness." (Kripalani [Complied and Ed.] 1980:71) Explicitly it can be declared that for Gandhi it was not just possibility of ethical religion but religion and ethics are two sides of the same coin.

4. Ramachandra Dattatray Ranade (1886-1957)

(also popularly known as Gurudev Ranade [*Gurudev* meaning Master]) is considered a philosopher, a scholar and saint from Maharashtra. His philosophy of mysticism is central to his philosophy of religion. According to him, mysticism is a type of religion that brings people of all faiths together. Mysticism cannot be devoid of ethics. According to Harold Coward, "His writings are many, and especially known among them are his *Constructive Survey of the Upanishadic Philosophy* and his *Pathways to God Studies in Hindi, Marathi, and Kannada Literatures*. Ranade believed that mysticism is the real essence of religion and that in it all religions meet. 'The mystics of all ages and countries form an eternal Divine Society and there are no racial, no communal, no national prejudices among them.'" (Coward 1987:181)

Gurudev Ranade has given an elaborate description of 'mysticism'. He was of the firm opinion that mysticism is totally different from occult practices or mysterious or weird phenomena. As he believed that, "Mysticism denotes that attitude of mind which involves a direct, immediate, first hand, intuitive apprehension of God." (Ranade 1982:1) Bhakti-margins (the followers of the path of devotion) or mystics have complete experience of God through 'intellect', 'feeling' and 'willing'. They form eternal Divine Society in all times and in every country. In Gurudev Ranade's words, "There are no racial, no communal, no national prejudices among them. Time and space have nothing to do with the eternal and infinite character of their mystical experience." (Ibid 2-3)

There are few criteria of mystical experience as explained by R. D. Ranade (Ibid). They are:

1. The element of Universality: Mystics may belong to different faiths, places and come at different eras, and have different mentality, nevertheless there is element of universality that is common in all mystics of the world; there is no difference in the quality of their mystical or intuitive realization. Immanuel Kant confers upon this criterion of universality of mystical experience – objectivity, necessity, and validity. (Ranade 1982, 25)
2. The Intellectual aspect: As said by Shri Ranade, "It is not without reason that great mystics like Shankaracharya, or Yagnavalkya, or Spinoza, or Plotinus, Augustine, or St. Paul, or Gnaneshwar produced the great intellectual work that have lived after them." (Ibid 25-26)
3. The Emotional aspect: A mystic's emotional aspect is 'pure' or 'refined' emotions, completely controlled, and regulated by intellect. Spinoza's view on this matter is important as he talks of transcending this aspect of emotion to 'the intellectual love of God.' Therefore, knowledge or *Gnana* is very important.
4. The Moral aspect: As mentioned in Enneads 6.9.9. by Plotinus, a great mystic, 'The vision is not to be regarded as unfruitful. In this state the perfect soul begets – like God Himself – beautiful thoughts and beautiful virtues.' Moral life goes along with mystical life. Sant Gnaneshwar too, talks of high moral values and virtues in *Gnaneshwari* (*Bhagavad Gita* in Marathi that Gnaneshwar authored). Gurudev Ranade says, "Then, again, so far as the utility of the mystic to the society is concerned, we may almost regard it as a truism of

Mysticism that a Mystic who is not of supreme service to the society is not a Mystic at all." (Ibid 28) In this context Ranade distinguishes between two types of mystics – a. Activist type, and b. Quietist type. In both the cases morality is nowhere comprised. The concern of the mystic is always ethical.

5. The Intuitional aspect: The personal aspect of mysticism is the 'spiritual realization' of a mystic. According to Mrs. Padma Kulkarni, in her book *Prof. R. D. Ranade as a Mystic* says, "Mysticism is a unifying principle of all religions. Mystics all over the world 'have the same teaching about the Name of God, the fire of Devotion, the nature of Self-realization'" (Kulkarni 1986,19).

These criteria of mystical experience are a clear indication of morality relevant to mysticism that which is integral part of religion, according to R. D. Ranade. As a matter of fact, for Ranade, religion has to ethical.

5. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (1891-1956)

who revolted against, and renounced the Brahmanical Hinduism to accept Buddhism as "Ambedkar understood Buddhism, religion, kinship and nationalism as or related set of terms with social and political interpretation, and that Ambedkar drew upon Indian cultural resources as well as 'Orientalist' interpretations of Buddhism in order to create a model for a moral community ideologically co-existent with, although not subordinate to, Brahmanical Hinduism and Indian nationalism" (Blackburn, 1993, 1-2).

Instead of accepting Christianity or Islam, Ambedkar consecrated into Buddhism; that befitted Indian contextual situation critiquing the popular Brahmanical Hinduism. He believed that, "Religion, if it is to survive, it must be inconsonance with reason, which is another name for science" (Singh, 2023). Categorically speaking, he believed that religion must be in amalgamation with reason and scientific temperament. And this criterion was fulfilled by Buddhism (indeed with other criteria). His adopting Buddhism was more of a political movement rather than spiritual; therefore, his Buddhism was metamorphosized into Neo-Buddhism. Ambedkar had endured the atrocities himself as he was born in a Dalit (the outcaste, the subalterns, also called untouchables in his times) family. Their estrangement from main stream Hinduism was the primary reason that he baptized himself and the Dalit community into Buddhism.

Though his father was a *Kabirpanthi* (follower of medieval mystic-saint Kabir from Banaras, North India), Ambedkar opted for Buddhism. Why? In fact, Kabir followed the path of devotion to ONE, Unqualified Ultimate Reality and his was a secular religion where any one religion was not in a privileged position. For Ambedkar this was quite befitting to Indian scenario. But in *Kabir panth* (the path of Kabir) did nor galvanize the movement for lower castes in India, and lived a subordinate and subjugated lives. Also, the path of Kabir was bhakti (the path of devotion) that was always humble and believed in surrender to the Ultimate One. Precisely Buddhism was other way round. Buddhism had a revolutionary background. The zeal of Buddhism can be characterized

as rebellious and antagonistic to mainstream Hinduism. And Buddhism was installed on rational outlook, equality, and humanitarian outlook. The religion believed in compassion and *metta bhavana* (loving kindness). Overall Buddhism provided all that Hinduism or any other oriental religion could not grant. Therefore, it was obvious for Ambedkar to convert into Buddhism. (Christianity, Islam, and Sikhism in especially India could not bereft itself from caste dogma; therefore, they were not suitable to the whole purpose for which Ambedkar fought.)

According to R. S. Khare, Ambedkar's choice of Buddhism was precisely against the back-drop of Hindu caste system, 'the presence of multiple "evaluative and decision-making structures" within the contemporary "Indian social order"' (Khare, 1993, 2); and Buddhism came from the same soil as Hinduism that took a bold stance against the later religion. The source from where Hinduism originated, the same socio-political-economic background, rose Buddhism, which made Ambedkar accept the religion for the suppressed classes in India. Buddhism having Indic origin was/is well eligible in place of Brahmanical Hinduism that too has Indic origin. The Semitic religions will not be able to feel the pulse of people here in India. Ambedkar therefore used strong 'polemical critique of Brahmanical religio-social dominance as the foundation upon which to develop an Indic based alternative to the Brahmanical social order.' (Khare, 1993, 5) Therefore, instead of displacing the traditional with the new was not his intention but to take resort to already co-existing religion, i.e. Buddhism; and to place it at par with existing Hinduism in a popular framework. This act of his would become the eye-opener for not only in India but also outside India.

In *Buddha and His Dhamma*, narrating Gautam Buddha's life, Ambedkar mentions the conversation between King Suddhodhana (who is a Hindu *Kshatriya*, the second in caste system, the warrior and noblemen's community) with Asita in Part I, 4, where Asita declares that the child (Siddhartha [popularly known by the name of Buddha]) will become Buddha, the enlightened One. In stanza 26, Asita says to Nardatta (Asita's nephew), "When thou shalt hear, Nardatta, that the child has become a Buddha, then go and take refuge in his teachings. This shall be for thy weal and welfare and happiness" (Ambedkar, 2006, 8)

From the above quotation, Ambedkar was very clear that parallel to Hinduism which has degraded in all ways – socially, politically, and spiritually, was provided with alternative religion, oriental in its origin, and that is Buddhism; and from the book – the welfare and moral aspect hitherto has been described.

As mentioned by K. R. Rao, "To Ambedkar, then, religion is a foundation of human life and society. This is because morality, and without moral foundations society cannot survive as a human society. Religion, then, is conceptualised by him as a system of moral values, a system of injunctions and prohibitions designed to promote a harmonious human life.....in which there is equality and brotherhood among members and one which is rationalistic in rejecting superstitions,

mysticism, irrationality, blind belief, and of course, God, who symbolized all these rejected elements" (Rao, 1993, 66-67).

Therefore, Buddhism for Babasaheb Ambedkar was not just a revolutionary religion but politically motivating, socially egalitarian in nature and most importantly anti-Hindu as for him Brahmanical Hinduism was unscientific as it accepted casteism (the gradation in society, in social order) and degrading spiritualism as it offered spiritual privileges only to upper caste people.

Therefore, for Ambedkar, the ethical religion is Buddhism.

Conclusion

All the four thinkers opted for religion as to uplift human life. And all four of them also showed the pathway to the possibility of ethical religion; but their 'ideal religion' (that is ethical in nature) varied from each other completely.

Somewhere there is a link between the views of Kierkegaard and Ranade, where 'subjectivity' is given due importance keeping aside reason (but arriving at this by reason) and no boundaries are drawn that can make an individual fundamentalist or fanatic. Kierkegaard gave utmost importance to 'subjectivity', and like Socrates, Kierkegaard felt that when one overcomes illusions, one move towards light; and this baptism is not rational or intellectual but like a mystic, an emotional and ethical one. This is so obvious even in Ranade's philosophical elucidation of mysticism as religion.

Both Ranade and Kierkegaard would agree on the point that the religion they are talking about is the religion of mystics. These mystics (or mystic-saints) may differ temperament-wise or in their approaches, but their ultimate realizations are identical in content. This is quite explicitly seen in their writings, and other art forms that they have produced. Speculative philosophies may differ in their approaches as well as in conclusions. This is avoided by Ranade and Kierkegaard in their ethical religion; that is the non-formal religion of the mystics. The mystics' vision is the experience of 'identity'. The mystics and their experiences of unity are entirely independent of advancements in learning or civilization. Therefore, advancements of science or stratification found in society in the name of religion, caste, creed, race, class, and gender has no significance for them.

The point where Ranade and Kierkegaard differ is – Kierkegaard's main interest in philosophy was not theoretical but practical. Therefore, he is a spiritual or existential pragmatist, who emphasizes more on the will, than either on intellect or on intuition. Ranade gives lot of importance to intuition. In fact, he considers the aspect of intuition as the most important criterion of mystical experience. The personal experience is judged by mystic by himself/herself. As put by Plotinus, in *Enneads* 6.6.18, 'And yet, we here see but dimly, yonder the vision is clear. For it gives to the seer the faculty of seeing, and the power of higher life, the power by living more intensely to see better, and to become what he sees.'

Both Ranade and Kierkegaard brought high formal religious/theological philosophy down to earth and broadcast the seeds of mutual love, understanding concord and peace among people by raising the possibility of ethical religion. Here, I would like to put Kierkegaard and Ranade on one

hand and Kant on the other. Both Kierkegaard and Ranade celebrate the concept of faith and intuition respectively. (I take this opportunity to put faith and intuition in simultaneity.) Therefore, it seems obvious that Kant is on the other extreme, emphasising on the role played by reason. Kant's concept of God is an automated entity, the outcome of rational analysis of the first two postulates of religion (as mentioned earlier – 'freedom of will', 'immortality of soul' and 'existence of God'.) While in Kierkegaard and Ranade, in the levels of existence, faith and intuition supplant reason. However, neither Kierkegaard nor Ranade give up reason per se; but in levels of existence Kierkegaard accepts reason at ethical level (devoid of faith), and Ranade accept that a mystical experience is characterized by intellectual aspect. Both of them do not deny reason but at the highest stage it is only leap of faith and intuition that reigns supreme. So the distinction between Kierkegaard/Ranade and Kant can be understood from the following quote by Steven M. Emmanuel, "Against the traditional reading of Kierkegaard, according to which his view of revelation gives rise to an irrationalist conception of faith, I contend that he puts forward a suprarationalist account of revelation, and a pragmatic account of justification of religious belief. The absolute paradox is interpreted as a conceptual expression for the total incommensurability between an infinite God and infinite human intellect." (Emmanuel 1996:x) (So, neither intellectual nor scientific approach would do any kind of justification to divine revelation and the concepts of resurrection or incarnation.) [Though, many philosophers are of the opinion that Kant's ethics is heavily based on reason, while Kierkegaard's approach is of an irrationalist. I completely differ from this view. Kierkegaard is not against conventional wisdom at human level, but when one elevates to religious level, faith is sovereign.] Therefore, 'faith' becomes very important to raise the ethical kingdom of God. Again, giving 'hope' for actuality and possibility of ethical religion.

Gandhi and Ambedkar on the other hand, have one commonality, that is aspiring for ethical religion, and that is religion is not a segregated realm of human beings' life but completely connected to social, political, economic, and spiritual life of the individual.

Apart from this Gandhi respected all religions as he respected his 'own' Hinduism. (This can be criticised as it is a paradoxical statement, nevertheless understood as ethical taking whole of Gandhian philosophy). According to Bhikhu Parekh, three important concerns are to be addressed in contemporary times: 1. The need for intra-religious dialogue. 2. The need for inter-religious dialogue and 3. The need for dialogue on conflicts between religious groups having complex causes – say political or economic interests. Gandhi tried to address these issues, though one can critique those arguments. But he tries to initiate the dialogue and address these fragile and intricate issues. (Douglas [ed.] 2008) Dr. B. R. Ambedkar explicitly states the moral conflict between Brahmanical Hinduism and Buddhism. For him if the out-casted wanted to end their social isolation, they need to get associated with another community or religion. This kinship needs to be developed. According to him, "It is kinship which generates generosity and invokes its moral indignation which is necessary to redress a wrong……Kinship with another community is the best insurance

which the Untouchable can effect against Hindu tyranny and Hindu oppression" (Ambedkar, 1989, 415).

The non-oriental nature of Semitic religions made Ambedkar give up adopting them as his own. He even thought of accepting Sikhism [known as the religion of Saints where Hinduism and Islam meet] but realized that the Dalit (the outcaste) community will be always given the position of second grade Sikh in the community. So, he thought of Buddhism and said to his supporters that you must 'select only that religion in which you will get equal status, equal opportunity, and equal treatment (Ramendra, 2010).

While Gandhi said, "I came to the conclusion long ago… that all religions were true and also all had some error in them, and whilst I hold by my own, I should hold others as dear as Hinduism, not that a Christian should become a Hindu... But our innermost prayer should be a Hindu should be a better Hindu, a Muslim a better Muslim, a Christian a better Christian." (*Young India* 1928).

But one thing is clear, both Gandhi and Ambedkar aspired for an ethical religion(s) that would emancipate the down-trodden, uplift the standard of living of those oppressed communities and bring about positive social reformation or transformation. According to Suhas Palshikar, "…the Gandhi-Ambedkar clashes resulted from their personalities, as well as their respective positioning in the contemporary political contexts. However, beyond these classes and differences of assessment of contemporary politics, there exists some ground where the agenda of Gandhi and Ambedkar might actually be complementary." (Palshikar, 2014)

Finally, all four great thinkers accepted – 1. – Religion, 2. - With noble goals and 3. – Leading to the possibility of ethical religion.

As Kabir (the medieval mystic-saint from North India) says –

'*Do not go to the garden of flowers!*
O Friend! go not there;
In your body is the garden of flowers.
Take your seat on the thousand petals of the lotus, and there gaze on the Infinite Beauty.' (Kabir, 2022, 17)

As Rumi (Sufi-saint) says –

'*Words are a pretext. It is the inner bond that draws one person to another, not words*.' (Akṣapāda, 2019, 30)

References

Akṣapāda. (2019). *the Analects of Rumi*. Independently Published [ISBN: 781091155688, 1091155682]

Ambedkar, B. R. (1989). *Writings and Speeches*. Vol.5. Government of Maharashtra.

Ambedkar, B. R. (2006). *Buddha and His Dhamma*. Siddhartha Books, Delhi.

Blackburn, Anne M. (1993). Religion, Kinship and Buddhism: Ambedkar's Vision of a Moral Community. *The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*. 16 (1).

Coward, H. (1987). *Modern Indian Response to Religious Pluralism*. SUNY Press.
Dalai Lama. (2012). *Beyond Religion: Ethics for a Whole World*. Toronto - McClelland and Stewart.
Datta, D. (2020). Gandhi: *Porbandar to Partition*. Kolkata, Bee Books.
Douglas, A. (Ed.) (2008). *The Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi for Twenty-first Century*, Lexington Books.
Emmanuel, S. M. (1996). *Kierkegaard and the Concept of Revelation*. State University of New York Press.
Fremstedal, Roe. (2022). *Kierkegaard on Self, Ethics, and Religion*. Cambrodge University Press.
Gandhi, M. K. (1934). *Harijan*. Gandhi Sevak Sangh.
Gandhi, M. K. (1919-1931). *Young India*. Bombay.
Hick, J. (1993). *Philosophy of Religion*. 4th Edition. Prentice-Hall India Private Limited [Indian Reprint].
Khare, R. S. (1993). Indic Culture and Moral Criticism. *The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*. 16(1).
Kierkegaard, S. (1992) *Either/Or: A Fragment of Life*. Penguin Classics.
Kripalani, K. (Complied and Ed.). (2011) *All Men are Brothers: Autobiographical Reflections*, Mahatma Gandhi. Continuum International Publishing Group.
Kulkarni, P. (1986). *Prof. R. D. Ranade as a Mystic*. Nimbal R. S.
Mendaglio, S. [Ed.]. (2008). *Dabrowski's Theory of Positive Disintegration*. Great Potential Press, Inc.
Murphy, S. (1991). *Brief Outline of Gandhi's Philosophy*. From *Why Gandhi is Relevant in Modern India: A Western Gandhian Personal Discovery*. Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi, Academy of Gandhian Studies, Hyderabad, India. (www.gandhifounation.net)
Muzzey, D. S. (1967). *Ethics as a Religion*. American Ethical Union.
Nadkarni, M. V. (2006). *Hinduism – A Gandhian Perspective*. Ane Book India.
Palshikar, S. (2014). *Gandhi – Ambedkar Interface*. Economic and Political Weekly. Vol. XLIX No. 13, [https://www.epw.in/journal/2014/13/glimpses-past-web-exclusives/gandhi-ambedkar-interface.html]
Ranade R. D. (1933 and 1982). *Indian Mysticism in Maharashtra*. 1st Edition. Poona – 2; and Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
Ramendra. (2010). *Why Dr. Ambedkar renounced Hinduism*. Patna University. 2 [https://www.roundtableindia.co.in/why-dr-ambedkar-renounced-hinduism/]
Rao, K. (1993). *Babasaheb Ambedkar*. Sahitya Akademi.
Sagi, A. & Statman, D. (1995). *Religion and Morality*. Amsterdam Atlanta, Rodopi.
Shepher, K. (2019). *Gandhi was not a Caste Abolitionist*. The Week Maganize. [https://www.theweek.in/theweek/cover/2019/06/21/gandhi-was-not-a-caste-abolitionist-kancha-ilaiah-shepherd.html]
Singh, P. (2023). *Dhamma Diksha Divas: Ambedkar's Conversion to Buddhism and the Impact on Indian Society*. The Mooknayak [[https://en.themooknayak.com/india/dhamma-deeksha-divas-ambedkars-conversion-to-buddhism-the-impact-on-indian-society]
Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.
Swenson, D. F. (Trans.) (1941). *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, translated by S. Kierkegaard. Princeton, Princeton University Press.
Tagore, R. (Trans.) (2022). *The Devotional Songs of Kabir Saheb*. Introduced by E. Underhill, E-book.
Warnock, M. (1979). *Existentialism*. Oxford University Press.

Journal of Philosophical Investigations
Print ISSN: 2251-7960 Online ISSN: 2423-4419
Homepage: https://philosophy.tabrizu.ac.ir

Panentheism versus Pantheism in the East and West with Special Reference to Shankara and Ramanuja's Views: an overview

Ali Naqi Baqershahi

Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, Imam Khomeini International University, Iran. Email: baghershahi@ikiu.ac.ir

Article Info

Article type:
Research Article

Article history:
Received 02 August 2024
Received in revised form 09 August 2024
Accepted 22 August 2024
Published online 07 September 2024

Keywords:
panentheism, Shankara, pantheism, Ramanuja, Spinoza, Hegel, God, universe

ABSTRACT

Panentheism and pantheism represent one of the most profound, even startling parallels across the world's great metaphysical traditions about which the present article seeks to explore and carry out a comparative study of certain Eastern and Western philosophers with special reference to the views of two chief exponents of Advaita Vedanta of Indian philosophy, Shankara and Ramanuja. Both these terms, touch on the relation of God and the universe with the difference that the former seems to be rigid, motionless, and abstract and lacks a kind of religious fervor in its approach, while the latter is presumed to be concrete and palpable and seeks to reconcile philosophical thinking with the demands of religious feelings as well. God in pantheism is compared to the God of Spinoza, the Neutrum of Schelling, and Shankara's concept of indeterminate Brahman. In contrast, in the West Hegelian Absolute, and Ramanuja's qualified Brahman in Indian tradition, both are accredited with panentheism in which a personal God, identity-in-and-through-difference, has all auspicious qualities. Though these philosophers are from totally different temperaments and cultures, their philosophical method has certain similarities that have been examined in this work.

Cite this article: Baqershahi, A. N. (2024). Panentheism versus Pantheism in the East and West with Special Reference to Shankara and Ramanuja's Views: an overview. *Journal of Philosophical Investigations*, 18(48), 161-172. https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.63078.3847

© The Author(s).
https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.63078.3847
Publisher: University of Tabriz.

Introduction

There is a significant overlapping between Eastern and Western philosophical traditions concerning the notions of pantheism and panentheism that both deal with the relation of God and the universe with the difference that the former is a bare intellectual and abstract identity without any shade of difference as some called it rigid and motionless or a bloodless Absolute dark with the excess of light. In this approach God is compared to the God of Spinoza and the Neutrum of Schelling and in the East with Shankara's concept of Brahman, on the whole, all of them seem to lack religious fervor. In contrast, the latter's Absolute has been called a concrete individual, an identity-in-and-through-difference that has been compared to the Hegelian Absolute and Ramanuja's qualified Brahman. It is also called personal God like that of Pringle-Pattison. In the East, Ramanuja is accredited with panentheism by trying to reconcile philosophical thinking with religious feelings. As we will see, panentheism and pantheism represent one of the most profound, even startling parallels across the world's great metaphysical traditions. Unfortunately, people are either misled by these terms or put off by them for they sound strange and unhelpful. But since there is no better term available the alternatives also may even be more cumbersome, so the author seeks to shed some light on these concepts in the light of a comparative study to pave the way for having a clear picture of the issues. So let us first proceed to evoke and define these terms before turning to specific examples in Eastern and Western philosophical traditions comparatively.

Panentheism

"Panentheism", not to be confused with Pandeism, Pantheism, or Panpsychism, is a term composed of three Greek terms "pan", meaning all, "en", meaning in, and "Theo", meaning God. It is the belief, according to which God intersects every part of the world and, at the same time, extends beyond it. this term was coined first by the German philosopher Karl Krause in 1828 after reviewing Hindu scripture to distinguish the ideas of Hegel (1770–1831) and Schelling (1775–1854) about the relation of God and the universe from the pantheism of Spinoza that considers God and the world to be inter-related.

Moreover. While panentheism offers an increasingly popular alternative to classical theism, both panentheism and classical theistic systems affirm divine transcendence and immanence. Yet, classical theistic systems by prioritizing the difference between God and the world reject any influence upon God by the world, while, panentheism to some extent affirms the world's influence upon God.

Again, while pantheism emphasizes God's identity with the world, panentheism affirms God's presence in the world without losing the distinct identity of either God or the world. Indeed, Panentheism occupies a position midway between theism and pantheism. For panentheism, while it is not strictly true that everything is God, making the two interdependent. (Bunnin, Nicholas and Yu Jiyuan, 2009, 501)

Anticipations of panentheistic understandings of God have occurred in both philosophical and theological writings throughout history (Hartshorne and Reese 1953; J. Cooper, 2006). However, a rich diversity of panentheistic understandings has developed in the past two centuries primarily in Christian traditions responding to scientific thought (Clayton and Peacocke 2004). There are specific forms of panentheism, drawing from different sources, that explain the nature of the relationship of God to the world in a variety of ways and come to different conclusions about the significance of the world for the identity of God.

Although panentheism affirms God's presence in the world without losing the distinct identity of either God or the world, specific forms of panentheism, drawing from different sources, explain the nature of the relationship of God to the world in a variety of ways and come to different conclusions about the nature of the significance of the world for the identity of God. Panentheists have responded to two primary criticisms: (1) the panentheistic God is a limited God, and (2) panentheism cannot be distinguished from other forms of theism such as classical theism or pantheism.

In panentheism, the universal spirit is present everywhere, which at the same time "transcends" all things created. While pantheism asserts that "all is God", panentheism claims that God is greater than the universe. Some versions of panentheism suggest that the universe is nothing more than the manifestation of God. In addition, some forms indicate that the universe is contained within God, like in the Kabbalah concept of tzimtzum. Much of Hindu thought is highly characterized by panentheism and pantheism.

Pantheism

Pantheism is a term originated by John Toland for the belief that God is identical with the universe, that is, rather than being a supernatural power above or alongside the universe. Because God is the universe taken as a whole, no divine act of creation is required and the distinction between God and his creature, sharply drawn in Christianity, is denied. All is God, God is all. Everything in the universe is a mode or element of God. The claim that the divine is all-inclusive distinguishes pantheism from panentheism, which holds that God includes all things but is greater than their totality. (Bunnin, Nicholas and Yu Jiyuan, 2009, p.501)

The idea of pantheism is very ancient, and any survey of the history of philosophy will uncover numerous pantheist or pantheistically inclined thinkers; although it should also be noted that in many cases all that history has preserved for us are second-hand reportings of attributed doctrines, any reconstruction of which is too conjectural to provide much by way of philosophical illumination (see Kahn 1960).

Pantheist belief does not recognize a distinct personal god, anthropomorphic or otherwise, but instead characterizes a broad range of doctrines differing in forms of relationships between reality and divinity. Pantheistic concepts date back thousands of years, and pantheistic elements have been identified in various religious traditions. It is believed that The term *pantheism* was first coined by

a mathematician named Joseph Raphson in 1697 and since then, it has been used in various fields and different manners.

This term was popularized in the West as a theology and philosophy based on the work of Spinoza, particularly his book *Ethics*. A pantheistic stance was also taken in the 16th century by philosopher and cosmologist Giordano Bruno. apart from Spinoza, Hegel is also considered a pantheist due to his identification with the whole of being.

In the East, Advaita Vedanta, a school of Hindu philosophy as developed by Shankara is thought to be similar to the Western version of pantheism while Ramanuja the other exponent of Advaita Vedanta represents a kind of panentheism that we will throw some light on their views in this article. In this region, The early Taoism of Laozi and Zhuangzi is also sometimes considered pantheistic, although it could be more similar to panentheism. Cheondoism, which arose in the Joseon Dynasty of Korea, and Won Buddhism are also considered pantheistic.

However, given the complex and contested nature of the concepts involved, there is insufficient consensus among philosophers to permit the construction of any more detailed definition not open to serious objection from some quarter or other. Moreover, the label is a controversial one, where strong desires either to appropriate or to reject it often serve only to obscure the actual issues, and it would be a sad irony if pantheism revealed itself to be most like a traditional religion in its sectarian disputes over just what counts as 'true pantheism.' Therefore, pantheism should not be thought of as a single codifiable position. Rather it should be understood as a diverse family of distinct doctrines; many of whom would be surprised—and, indeed, disconcerted—to find themselves regarded as members of a single household. Further, since the concept has porous and disputed boundaries there is no clear consensus on just who qualifies, and no definitive roll-call of past pantheists. Given this situation, the range of things that may be usefully said about *all* pantheisms is perhaps limited, but nonetheless, a variety of concepts may be clarified, the nature of contentious issues explored, and the range of possible options more precisely mapped out (see Buckareff & Nagasawa 2016; Buckareff 2022).

Univocity of Being

One of the constitutive elements of pantheism is the belief in the univocity of being. In other words, the univocity of being constitutes the basis of pantheism. So, univocity implies pantheism. The doctrine of the "univocity of Being" is, indeed, an ontological theory developed in the thirteenth century by Duns Scotus, following Henry of Ghent.

In the Middle Ages, univocity was a heterodox position, constantly at the borders of heresy, and had limited currency outside the Scotistic school. This term later on turned out to be an important concept in contemporary philosophy particularly Deleuze ontology. In his ontology, Deleuze drew on both Spinoza and Duns Scotus to develop his own metaphysics of immanence based on difference.

For Duns Scotus, as for many Scholastic philosophers, the object of theology was God, while the object of philosophy, or rather of the metaphysics crowning it, was Being as Being. In developing his theory of univocity, Duns Scotus was injecting himself into a lively thirteenth-century debate concerning the nature of Being; Being is said of beings, but in what sense? The Scholastics used three precise terms to designate the various ways of resolving the problem: equivocity, univocity, and analogy. Being is equivocal means that the term "Being" is said of beings in several senses, and that these senses have no common measure; "God is" does not have the same sense as "man is," for instance, because God does not have the same type of being as man. By contrast, to say that Being is univocal, as Duns Scotus affirmed, means that Being has only one sense, and is said in one and the same sense of everything of which it is said, whether it be God or human, animal, or plant. Since these positions seemed to lead to scandalous conclusions (equivocity denied order in the cosmos, univocity implied pantheism), a third alternative was developed between these two extremes: Being is neither equivocal nor univocal but analogical. This became the position of Christian orthodoxy, as formulated by Thomas Aquinas. (Smith, Danial W., (2012)

Muslim philosophers, generally speaking, argued about the notion of being in their works and, believe that there is no real Being but God and that everything other than God is an unreal being; this is another way of saying what Avicenna says, that all things are possible or contingent save the Necessary Being.

Ibn Arabi (1165-1240) known by Sufis as *Shaykh al Akbar* (the greatest master) is of the view that being is analogous to light, in which each thing is analogous to a specific and distinct colour. The reality of the distinct colour is not compromised by the fact that each colour makes a single light manifest. No colour has any existence whatsoever without light. Every colour is identified with light, but light remains distinct and incomparable with each colour as also with the sum total of colours. Each thing " exists" (mawjud*),* in a specific mode that does not detract from the incomparability of *wujud* itself. Each thing is thus identical with *wujud* and distinct from it at one and the same time. (Nasr Seyyed Hossein and Leaman, Oliver, (Ed.), P.503). So, Ibn 'Arabi, and even more so his followers like Qûnawî, focused on the Real Being as the one and unique. reality from which all other reality derives (Standford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Ibn Arabi, William Chittick).

Mulla Sadra (1572-1640), the most revered of all Muslim philosophers maintained that the whole of existence is not as objects which exist or existents but as a single reality (*Wujud)* whose delimitations by various quiddities(*mahiyyah)* gives the appearance of a multiplicity which exists with various existents being independent of each other. Heidegger complained that Western metaphysics had gone astray since the time of Aristotle by studying the existent (*das Seiende*), to use his vocabulary, and that the proper subject of metaphysics was existence itself or *das Sein* with whose study he was starting a new chapter in Western metaphysical thought. As far as Islamic

philosophy is concerned, such a distinction was made three centuries before Heidegger by Mulla Sadra. (Nasr Seyyed Hossein and Leaman, Oliver, 646)

Shankara, the Expression of Eastern Pantheism

Shankara (6th century AD) is regarded as the founder of the non-dualism Vedanta, which is said developed mainly through his commentary on Badaryana's *Vedanta Aphorisms,* the line of thought is at least as old as the Upanishads themselves. A few centuries before Shankara, Buddhist schools the Vijnanavada and the Madhyamika began calling their ultimate reality non-dual(*advaya)*. Shankara believes in a non-qualified Brahman. (Raju, P. T., 1985, 382)

In Shankara's view, Brahman is the only Reality. It is absolutely indeterminate and non-dual. It is beyond speech and mind. It is indescribable because no description of it can be complete. The best description of it is through the negative formula of '*neti neti'* or 'not this, not this'. Yet Brahman is not an abyss of non-entity, because it is the Supreme Self and stands self-revealed as the background of all affirmations and denials. The moment we try to bring this Brahman within the categories of intellect or try to make this ultimate subject an object of our thought, we miss its essential nature. Then it no more remains Unconditioned Consciousness, but becomes conditioned *as it were.* This Brahman, reflected in or conditioned by Maya, is called Ishvara or God. Ishvara is the personal aspect of the impersonal Brahman. This is the celebrated distinction between God and the Absolute which Shankara, following the Upanishads, makes. Ishvara is also known as Apara Brahman or lower Brahman as contrasted with the unconditioned Brahman called Para Brahman. (Sharma, Chandradhar, 1976, 280)

In Shankara's view Just as my ego is continuous with the Brahman, the personal God (Ishvara)also is continuous with it. Shankara uses the term Brahman for both, and calls them the higher Brahman (Para Brahman*)* and the Lower Brahman (Apara *Brahman)*. The lower Brahman is not ultimately real. It is the same as Higher Brahman as facing the world of objectivity, i.e., with reference to the world or Maya. Indeed, it is not overwhelmed and overpowered by Maya, just as the witness who witnesses people fighting is not overpowered by what he witnesses. It is, therefore, not in bondage, i.e., within the power of Maya. Finite souls only are so overpowered.

We now get two ideas of the Divine: The Absolute (Brahman) and God (Ishvara). But how can the Brahman, which is perfect, become God, the less perfect? The concept of God is full of contradictions. If God is the final truth and is, as the concept is understood, the creator of the world, which is full of evil and misery, how can such a perfect, omnipotent, omniscient, all-merciful God be the creator of evil and misery? How can we prove the existence of God? Shankara examines the usual argument for the existence of God and offers the usual criticism. We can show only that the Brahman, which is Being and Consciousness, must be true. We can show that God exists as only a popular concession.

Then what is the ontological status of God? He is the Brahman with reference to the world. Although thought leads us to the idea of pure and indeterminate Being. It wants also to relate this

Being to the empirical world. It thinks of being as perfect, as having all the best qualities that, as human beings, we possess, but are raised to the power of infinity. Being as indeterminate is quality-less (*Nirguna),* but our thought attributes to it all the best qualities and makes it full of qualities (*Saguna)* thus while the Brahman is known to thought as beyond itself, God is only a thought-product. The idea of God is valid only so long as the world lasts. *Sub specie aeternitatis.* God has no reality, but *sub-specie temporis* he is as real as the world. (Sharma, Chandradhar, 1976, 395)

Observations

Of course, It goes without saying that Shankara to quote Sir Charles Eliot: "in consistency, thoroughness, and profundity, holds the first place in Indian philosophy" (Eliot. Sir Charles, Hinduism *and Buddhism,* Vol.ii.P.2o8), yet, it is believed that he too was considerably influenced by Buddhism. He preserved the best in his philosophy, which was already in the Buddhist school of Mahayana. At the same time, he was a severe critic of Buddhism. At any rate, it must be admitted that his exposition of Buddhism is correct and faithful and his criticism of it is also perfectly justified.

Of all the Eastern and Western philosophers that lean towards pantheism, we can compare Shankara, the renowned exponent of Advaita Vedanta, and Spinoza as the exponent of Western modern philosophy. Though these philosophers are of different temperaments and geographical areas, they meet at one point of 'Absolute Monism' and their method in reaching this is strikingly similar. By saying that ultimate reality is the essence of everything they propound equality as well as Universal Spirituality.

Both Shankara and Spinoza lean towards a kind of pantheistic attitude as they believe in Absolute monism. Spinoza's substance is similar to Shaṅkara's Indeterminate Brahman. All the attributes belonging to this ultimate reality are regarded as the essence of the same. Spinoza's God is eternal; all God's attributes are eternal. Spinoza's God is eternal; all God's attributes are eternal.1 Spinoza has established the Unity of God and the universe by saying that whatever is in God, and nothing can be conceived without God. (Spinoza, 1, 1954, prop. 15), Shaṅkara has assumed indeterminate Brahman as the Highest Reality. Differences in the corporeal forms of God can be the reason for discord in spirituality. The idea of indeterminate reality has given a clear-cut way to reconcile and subsume corporeal forms of Gods assumed by all religions and philosophies. Shaṅkara used the device of *Maya* to prove the multiplicity of the world while Spinoza used the device of 'modes' to solve the problem of one and many. Differences existing in various religions can be dissolved based on this concept i.e. they are the manifestations of the same reality. Both have adopted the logical method to prove their standpoints. For Shaṅkara, scriptural authority is of prime importance but he has given importance to *tarka* (argument)as well. Spinoza has proved everything based on the geometrical method. It means universality is not just a matter of faith but can be proved based on reason too. Both philosophers have given importance to knowledge as the means of the ultimate goal which is a kind of pure bliss. Both of them agree that the proper

knowledge of the Self and its unity with the ultimate reality and conceding that all are one with the Ultimate real principle constitutes the goal of philosophy. (Shakuntala Gawde, *The International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research*)

Ramanuja, the Expression of Eastern Panentheism

Ramanuja (1027 AD) as one of the chief exponents of Advaita Vedanta of Indian philosophy attempts a harmonious combination of absolutism with personal theism. The attempt is not new. We find it in the Gita, in the Mahabharata, particularly in the section called Narayaniya, and in the Puranas, notably in the Vishnu and the Bhagavata. This situation was continued by the Alvar saints and their interpretations, the Acharyas to whom Ramanuja was largely indebted. The attempt to combine personal theism with absolutism took three main lines: Vaishnavism, Shaivism, and Shaktism (Sharma, Chandradhar, 1976, 335)

Ramanuja believes in non-dualism qualified by difference according to which the Absolute is an organic unity, an identity which is trained by diversity. It is a concrete whole that consist of the interrelated and inter-dependent subordinate elements which are called 'vishesanas' and the controlling spirit which is called 'vishesya'. Unity means the realization of being a vital member of this organic whole. God or the Absolute is this whole. He is the immanent inner controller, the Supreme Real who holds together in unity the dependent matter and individual soul as His body. Ramanuja recognizes three things as ultimate and real. These are matter(achit), souls(chit), and God (Ishvara). Though all are equally real, the first two are absolutely dependent on God. Though they are substances in themselves, yet in relation to God, they come from his attributes. They are the body of God who is their soul. God is the soul of nature. God is also the soul of souls. Our souls are souls in relation to our bodies, but in relation to God, they become His body and He is their soul. The relation between the soul and the body is that of inner inseparability. This is also the relation between substance and attribute.

Radhakrishnan briefed Ramanuja's overall views as follows: Ramanuja concentrates his attention on the relation of the world to God and argues that God is indeed real and independent, but the souls of the world are real also, though their reality is utterly dependent on that of God. He believes in a spiritual principle at the basis of the world, which is not treated as an illusion. He insists on the continued individual existence of the released souls. Though the world of matter and the individual souls have a real existence of their own, still neither of them is essentially the same as Brahman. For, while Brahman is eternally free from all imperfection, matter is unconscious, and the individual souls are subject to ignorance and suffering. Yet they all form a unity, since matter and souls have existence only as the body of Brahman, *i.e.* they can exist and be what they are simply because Brahman is their soul and controlling power. Apart from Brahman, they are nothing. The individual soul and inanimate nature are essentially different from him, though they have no existence or purpose to serve apart from him or his service. So Ramanuja's theory is an Advaita or non-dualism, though with a qualification (*visesa*), *viz.* that it admits plurality, since the

supreme spirit subsists in a plurality of forms as souls and matter. It is therefore called qualified non-dualism. (Radhakrishna, 661)

Observations

Both Shankara and Ramanuja were the chief exponents of Vedanta philosophy and shared many common points in many issues but at the same time, they had different views concerning the ultimate reality. Ramanuja was opposed to the Advaittic position of Shankara, for instance, unlike Shankara, he maintains that pure identity and pure differences are alike unreal. Here he agrees with Hegel and believes that identity is always qualified by difference. Ramanuja is of the view that Shankara is wrong in saying that Brahman is a pure differenceless being. Brahman or Reality cannot be indeterminate, undifferentiated, and qualityless substance. Hence, Shankara's distinction between Brahman and Ishvara, between higher and lower Brahman, is unwarranted and unjustifiable by Ramanuja.

Philip Claton is impressed by Ramanuja's views and content that he is one of the greatest expressions of panentheistic thought across the world's traditions and holds it up unapologetically as a model for contemporary Western panentheism. In effect, he is implicitly suggesting that Western philosophers could develop a "purer" form of panentheism if they paid closer attention to Ramanuja's thought. A significant point in Ramanuja's view is that he beautifully affirms the dual status of finite individuals. It is possible to ascribe real agency and even a form of freedom to them. And yet finite agents do not have independent subsistence. In Ramanuja's view "*Brahman* is reality, consciousness, and infinite"; hence it alone enjoys independent subsistence. Thus, all conscious and nonconscious entities exist only as modes of *Brahman*. C. J. Bartley also affirms this view by saying that for Ramanuja, a mode is a reality ... which has neither essence, actuality, nor purpose independently of some other entity upon which it is existentially dependent and to which it is 'adjectival'. This amounts to the thesis that contingent-conscious individuals are ultimately subsidiary states and constituents of *Brahman*.

God is not only the efficient cause of things, the way that the potter molds the clay, but is also the "substrative" cause, that of which everything is made. Other agents can thus arise only through a sort of self-limitation on the part of *Brahman*. Thus, we can say that finite agents *are Brahman* as it is conditioned by *karma*(action), *avidyā*(ignorance), and *Kama* (desire).

The significance of Ramanuja's work lies in the fact that he established a perfect balance between *Brahman* and *Atman*. *Atman* is non-different in that it remains a mode rather than an independently existing thing, yet it is different because it is a mode and because, thanks to the grace of *Brahman*, it can exercise its own form of agency. The intricacy of this conceptual balancing act is all the more remarkable when one realizes that Ramanuja is seeking to do justice to three different requirements: the plain sense of the sacred scriptures, the demands of metaphysical reflection, and the requirements of *bhakti(love)*, that is, the life of obedience and devotion to God.

Western panentheists, and even many classical theists, have affirmed that all finite things exist

only through participation in the divine. But Ramanuja radicalized the sense of participation, extending it beyond things to include all thought, action, and language as well. In so doing he was able to draw on the widespread Indian view that language, insofar as it is true, does not merely *stand for* its referent but also participates in the reality to which it refers. This allowed him to develop a perfect isomorphism for all aspects of reality: individual things have their existence only in the one true Reality; individual minds or spirits (*atman*) participate in the one *Brahman*; all true affirmations likewise participate in the One and thus express reality both ontologically and conceptually.

Ramanuja boldly used the metaphor of mind and body to explain the relationship between *Brahman* and the world. The mind is the controller of the body; the body, although a real actor in the world, is ultimately the agent of the mind. He argues that the sole essence of the body is to be an attribute of a self. The same relationship holds between *Brahman* and its modes: the world, like bodies, is *apṛthaksiddha*, that is, "incapable of independent existence" or, literally, "not separately established". From a Vedic perspective, there is a further advantage to this philosophy: just as *atman* is not decreased by the death of the body, but continues on through reincarnation to be paired with another body, so *Brahman* is not affected by the impermanence, change, and decay of the world but remains always in its eternal perfection.

Finally, Ramanuja recognized that considering finite agents as modes of *Brahman* may lead to a kind of fatalism and determinism, the abolition of all human agency. This consequence would be disastrous since it would render the moral exhortations of the scriptures vacuous and would make genuine devotion (*bhakti*) on the part of believers impossible. Here too Ramanuja's answer is a model for the perennial Western struggles with the problem of God and freedom. The same divine self-limitation that allows finite reality to exist also creates a place for finite agency. A purely naturalistic, object-based account of reality, one without the concepts of *Atman* and *Brahman*, is not sufficient to support genuinely free agency. By contrast, the only way that free agency *can* exist is if finite agents are sustained by an ultimate consciousness in which they participate. The Divine gives (and sustains) the capacity for action. In Ramanuja, as in some Western theologians, one finds hints that finite agents are only truly free when they choose to act under the divine purposes; all other action produces *karma* and thus binds the agent more fully to the world of materiality and illusion. But *atman* itself is not ultimately illusory, since its very agency has been given by God. (Philip Claton, 2004)

Radhakrishnan holds that Shankara's Absolute is a bare intellectualism and abstract identity and ignores the demands of religious feelings, but some Indian scholars disagree with Radhakrishna's comments in this regard by saying that Shankara's critics do justice to Ramanuja but do grave injustice to Shankara. They forget the important fact that neither Shankara overlooked the demands of religious feeling nor could Ramanuja satisfactorily harmonize religious feeling with logical thinking. To dub Shankara's Absolute as a bare identity is to betray ignorance even of the

significant name his philosophy bears, Advait, which means not bare identity but denial of ultimate difference. (Radhakrishnan, S,1983, 365)

Concerning combining philosophy and religion or reconciling philosophical thinking with religious demands by Shankara and Ramanuja, it is important to note that it is one thing to combine philosophy with religion, but quite another thing to combine one particular philosophical doctrine with a particular religious creed. Shankara has attempted the former, while Ramanuja has attempted the latter. Moreover, it is believed that there are some inherent contradictions in the philosophy of Ramanuja as well. Even according to some experts in Indian philosophy he was not very successful in expressing the relation between the universe and God.

Conclusion

Panentheism and pantheism are, indeed, two approaches in the East and West concerning the relation of God and the universe, and such a complex issue brings on numerous difficulties that require, indeed, further reflection and research but at the same time is an immensely rich model for attempting to conceive Ultimacy. I hope this work will offer a helpful point of orientation for other comparative philosophers as they explore the rich connections between the great metaphysical traditions of the East and West. It is no small thing that distinct philosophical traditions, often treated as discrete and even antagonistic, should converge on an underlying unity of perspective. Strictly speaking, speculations of philosophers in Pantheism do not comfort us in our stress and suffering for it is abstract, rigid, and motionless like the Absolutism of Shankara, as viewed by some scholars, that remains indifferent to the fear and love of its worshiper, for the advocates of this doctrine make religion more an affair of the head than of the heart or will. while panentheism is far more than a philosophy. Just as distinctive forms of spiritual practice are associated with pantheism on the one side and with classical Western theism on the other, so panentheism fosters its own distinctive spirituality as well. From yogic practices to Quaker worship, these spiritualities make their own contribution to the storehouse of the world's spiritual practices. Moreover, in an age when humanity is on the verge of decimating the world's ecosystems and bringing about the extinction of many of its species, we must assess metaphysical systems in terms of their ecological potential. Arguably, there is no stronger motivation for valuing and preserving the environment than the affirmation that each organism has its own distinct reality and agency, while at the same time inherent in each is the infinite value of the one.

References

Andrei, A. B. & Yujin, N. (eds.). (2016). *Alternative Concepts of God: Essays on the Metaphysics of the Divine*. Oxford University Press.

Bunnin, N. & Yu Jiyuan. (2009). *The Blackwell Dictionary of Western Philosophy*, Wiley Blackwell.

Bartley, C. J. (2002). *The Theology of Ramanuja: Realism and Religion*, Routledge.

Deleuze. G. (1990). *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, translated by M. Joughin, Zone Press.

Eliot. S. C. (2016). *Hinduism and Buddhism*, Vol. 2, Routledge & Kegan Paul LTD.

Hartshorne, C. & Reese, W. L. (eds.) (1953). *Philosophers Speak of God*, University of Chicago Press.

Hegel. (1984). *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Vol.3, Routledge & Kegan Paul LTD.

Kahn, C. H. (1960). *Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology*, Columbia University Press. Appendix II.

May, T. (2005). *Gilles Deleuze: An Introduction*, Cambridge University Press.

Nasr, H. & Leaman, O. (Ed.) (1995). *History of Islamic Philosophy*, Arayeh Cultural Ins.

Philip, C. & Arthur, P. (eds.) (2004). *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being; Panentheistic Reflections on God's Presence in a Scientific World*, Eerdmans.

Radhakrishnan, S. (1983). *Indian Philosophy*. Vol. 2, Blackie & Son Publishers PVT. LTD.

Raju, P. T. (1985). *Structural Depths of Indian Thought*, South Asia Publisher, New Delhi, Sharma, Chandradhar, *A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy*, Motilal Banarsidass.

Smith, D. W. (2012) *Essays on Deleuze*, Edinburgh University.

Standford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. (2008). Ibn Arabi, William Chittick, substantive revision, 2019.

Shakuntala, G. (2016). Monism of Sankara and Spinoza, *International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research* 4(3), 483-489.

Spinoza. (1954), *Ethics*, Hafner Publishing Company.

Journal of Philosophical Investigations
Print ISSN: 2251-7960 Online ISSN: 2423-4419
Homepage: https://philosophy.tabrizu.ac.ir

Comparing Immanuel Kant's and Allamah Tabatabai's Approach to Money and Wealth

Abbas Bakhshandeh Bali

Associate Professor, Department of Islamic Studies. University of Mazandaran, Iran. Email: a.bakhshandehbali@umz.ac.ir

Article Info

Article type:
Research Article

Article history:
Received 14 March 2024
Received in revised form 20 June 2024
Accepted 11 July 2024
Published online 07 September 2024

Keywords:
Immanuel Kant, Mohammad Hossein Tabatabai, philosophy of money and wealth, human flourishing, afterlife salvation.

ABSTRACT

Humans and human societies have different attitudes about the role and position of money and wealth. Some of them use all their efforts to earn money and wealth. In acquiring money and wealth, some make efforts in the right way and others in the wrong way. Some of the harms of the present age, such as war, are rooted in the wrong way of acquiring wealth and money. One of the thinkers who addressed this issue in some of his works is Immanuel Kant. According to Kant, wealth in individual and social life is strongly influenced by his material foundations. This research compares his view on money and wealth with Allamah Tabatabai's view using descriptive-analytical method and using library resources. The findings of the research indicate the existence of commonalities and differences. Paying attention to money and wealth and staying away from poverty are common concerns of these two thinkers. But the macro view and the small view of these two have fundamental differences with each other. Allamah Tabatabai explains a more comprehensive policy about money and wealth with a religious perspective, which can be a model for the present age.

Cite this article: Bakhshandeh Bali, A. (2024). Comparing Immanuel Kant's and Allamah Tabatabai's Approach to Money and Wealth**.** *Journal of Philosophical Investigations*, 18(48), 173-184. https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.60911.3727

© The Author(s).
https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.60911.3727
Publisher: University of Tabriz.

Introduction

Money and wealth play an important role in the lives of people and societies. A person or a society that does not have enough money will suffer from poverty. People and societies have different attitudes about money and wealth. Some of them only think about money and wealth and use every right and wrong way to get it. On the other hand, some others care about money and wealth, but use correct and logical ways to acquire it. These two attitudes are observed among people, tribes and different societies of the world.

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) was born in an average and Christian family of the holy Lutheran religion. He was greatly influenced by Hume, Rousseau and Leibniz, and had a great influence on later philosophers such as Hegel, and the flow of German idealism (Durant, 2007, 236). Considering his influence in the world, his view on this matter is examined. Some questions of this research are: What is Kant's view on money and wealth? What bases did he use for this issue? Can his view be examined and criticized? How can you criticize Allamah Tabatabai's point of view?

No works have been observed about the adaptation of Kant's and Allamah Tabatabai's (1904-1981) views on the subject of money and wealth. Some of the similar writings on the subject are: The article "Money in Islamic Economy from the perspective of Allamah Tabatabai's credits" written by Sobhani and Ghaeminia was published in the Islamic Economy Magazine. The authors in this research emphasized that credit perception of money has significant implications for Islamic economy. Money has situational, contractual, hypothetical and credit aspects; Therefore, it is not a commodity. Also, money is subject to vital needs and special factors of the environment and changes with their change. The article "Analysis of existential approaches to money based on the theories of Allamah Tabatabai and Simmel" written by Rahimi and colleagues was published in the Journal of Islamic Financial Research.

In this research, the authors emphasized that in the school of idealism, and specifically from Simmel's point of view, the initial creation of money begins with the subjective creation of value and relative means, but it evolves and becomes absolute value and end. In the school of realism and specifically from Allamah Tabatabai's point of view, the initial credit identity of money is temporary, changeable, relative and unnecessary, but with the change of credit, it acquires a real identity which indicates durability, stability, applicability and necessity. The article "Purpose and Functions of Islamic Economy in the Qur'an with Emphasis on the Opinions of Allamah Tabatabai" written by Karimi and Ghafoorzadeh was published in the Journal of Islamic Banking Economics. The findings of this research show that, firstly, according to Allamah’s opinions on credit sciences and real sciences, it can be said that Islamic economics does not completely fit any of the two categories and it has a relationship between the public and the private. Secondly, based on Allamah’s opinions, the desired goals of Islamic economics can be drawn in three levels: final, intermediate, and preliminary goals.

Kant's View

One of the topics that Kant paid attention to in some of his works is dealing with money and wealth. He explained these topics to mankind according to his philosophical principles. In this section, we discuss some basics and discussions about money and wealth.

Some Philosophical Foundations

In the books on the history of philosophy, some things were discussed about Kant's distinctive features, including honesty in speech, practical discipline, moral conscientiousness, and good deeds (Copleston, 2008, Vol. 6, 204). By rejecting the possibility of identifying the soul, he ended the metaphysical tradition of the West and put a new path in front of human eyes with the "Copernican Revolution". He believes: "Until now, it is thought that everything we know must correspond to objects. But all the efforts in the direction of expanding the objects through establishing concepts related to them have remained fruitless. Therefore, it should be tested that if the objects are in accordance with our knowledge, will metaphysics not be more successful in its role?" (Kant, 1965, 22).

In German philosophy, Kant can be considered one of the founders of the idealism movement. One of the neo-Kantians who wrote a work entitled "*Philosophy of Money*" is Simmel. Money is in circulation between the two dimensions of mind and reality. He believes that the phenomena of the world are placed next to each other in an orderly manner, but man does not desire the order that prevails in nature. Man wants to design his value system and sometimes he will be against the ruling order (Simmel, 1990, 59).

He considers the nature of all human beings to be a single inherent humanity. This single nature is transformed by some factors such as environmental factors and will follow the correct or incorrect path (Wilson, 2006, 29). He believes that humans are ready to transform into four states: readiness to be animals, technical readiness, pragmatic readiness and moral readiness (Kant, 2018, 60). He considers animal readiness to be the root of unpleasant events in human nature, and his examples are things like gluttony, lust, and the desire to break the law. He believes that in technical preparation, we will encounter human wisdom, which differentiates humans from animals (Kant, 2006, 226).

Pragmatic preparation will be formed by the expansion of social interactions, and culture and education are important in this field (Kant, 2006, 227). And finally, in moral preparation, humans always have duty and moral sense (Kant, 2006, 229). Kant believes in education in reaching the proper preparation of human beings. He believes that a person will become a person through upbringing and education (Wood, 2009, 41).

Therefore, regarding the issue of money and wealth, according to his point of view, attention should be paid to the education of people and even governments. According to his point of view,

if a person cannot be educated and behave well in this matter, he will remain at his animal level and his moral preparation will not be realized.

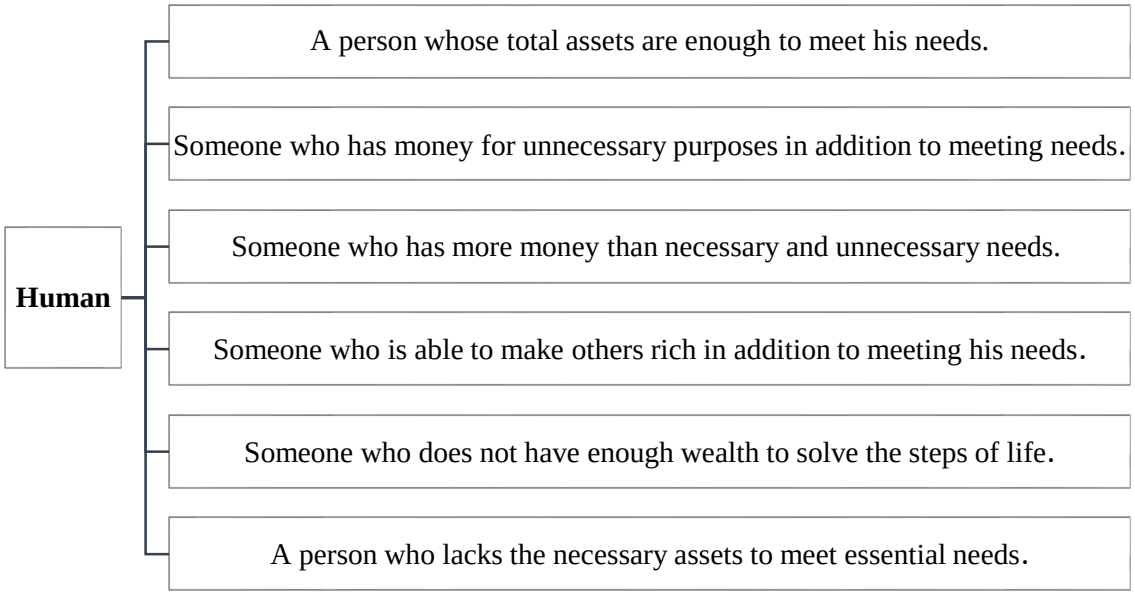
Invitation to Get Money and Wealth

Kant believes that man is free and responsible for the evolution of his nature. This responsibility is his duty and it means obeying the moral law (Sullivan, 2010, 51). Although he had financial means, he raised discussions about the philosophy of money and wealth in life for the salvation and equality of humans (Reiss, 1970, 74), which deserves recognition.

One of the important concerns in Kant's thoughts was calling people to work and effort. In some of his works, like the lessons of moral philosophy, he discussed the importance and role of work in the life of every human being and considered unemployment to be equal to vice and fraud. He believes that an unemployed person is diverted to the wrong path of life and sometimes evil. He states: "Man must be disciplined, and the greatest disciplinary principle is to accustom himself to work." Work is a factor of piety and virtue; If a person is engaged in work, he does not have the opportunity to think about vices, and this is the benefit he gets from work, because an unemployed person naturally engages in vices and cheating" (Kant, 2008, 238-239).

All Kinds of People

He believes that people are divided into rich, wealthy, rich, wealthy, poor and destitute in the matter of wealth and money.



The division of people in the issue of money and wealth, which was done carefully, shows the importance of this issue for this thinker. In other words, it shows Kant's indifference towards human issues, which is admirable.

A Few Notes and Warnings

He believes that wealth and money are valuable for people and have two important benefits: First, a person with money and wealth gains independence and does not need the help of others. Second, a person has a special power. The empowerment of a person increases the popularity and respect of others towards him and increases his influence on others (Kant, 2008, 241).

Another important thing is that Kant is not satisfied with these things and addresses the rich with phrases. He considers money and wealth as a means, not a goal. A means to meet the needs of life and achieve the desired goal in life. He clarifies: "In the past, it was right to say that: wealth is not a noble thing, but it is the humiliation of wealth that is a noble thing... a rich person is an influential being in the society and among the people, he holds the hand of many people and He uses them. This does not lead to the honor and superiority of man, but it degrades the wealth of the wave of human honor. Wealth only elevates the status of a person, not himself" (Kant, 2008, 242).

He believes that poverty is one of the disasters that people reach by neglecting this important thing. In other words, not trying to get money and wealth will lead to the impoverishment of people and societies. Therefore, one should find a suitable way to get money and wealth, and of course he believes that people should not use any way or work or at any cost to get money. He believes: "Man does not surrender to servitude. Do not allow others to violate your right and not be punished. Do not take responsibility that you cannot guarantee. Don't accept kindness that you can do without and don't be a parasite or a flatterer or a beggar. So be frugal so you don't become a beggar. Glory and lamentation, even crying due to the severity of physical pain, cause the degradation of human value" (Kant 2016, 102-103). Therefore, Kant tried to invite people and societies to work and strive and earn money and wealth, so that they don't suffer from poverty and damages caused by it.

Allameh Tabatabai's point of view

One of the topics that Allameh Tabatabai paid attention to in some of his works is dealing with wealth. He explained these topics according to his theological and philosophical foundations. In this section, we discuss some of his basics and discussions about money and wealth.

Some Philosophical Foundations

In his works, following Islam and the Qur'an, Allama considers man to be God's creation. One of the most important parts of human existence is being divine. Nature is a model for human happiness and an immaterial and infallible path to the prosperity of both worlds. He believes that "so, a person who has a healthy nature has faith in a being absent from his senses whether he likes it or not: a being who is his own existence and the existence of the whole universe is the documenter of

existence." (Tabatabai, 1995, Vol. 1, 71) He believes that if people's beliefs and actions are coordinated according to reason and nature, the right path will be followed.

"Indeed, the perfection of man is the same as his three annihilations, and in other words, reaching the status of "actual monotheism", "nominal monotheism" and "essential monotheism", and you also know that the closeness of every creature to God is equal to the inherent limitations and non-existence. its features; Therefore, the mediators between the physical stage of man and God are based on the order of their inherent limits; Therefore, in his journey towards God, man must pass through the ranks of God's deeds, names, and essence, in order to finally reach the three positions of monotheism, actual, nominal, and essential monotheism" (Tabatabaei, 2002, 113).

Credit Matters

In his works, Allameh deals with the distinction between real and creditable entities and perceptions. He believes in the principles of philosophy and the method of realism that "credential perceptions are opposite to real perceptions." Real perceptions are mental reflections and reflections of reality and self. However, credit perceptions are assumptions that the mind made in order to meet vital needs, and they have a situational, contractual, hypothetical, and credit aspect, and have nothing to do with reality and nature. Real perceptions can be placed in philosophical or scientific, natural or mathematical proofs and a scientific or philosophical result can be obtained. Also, a true understanding can be learned from a philosophical or scientific argument, but this cannot be used in the case of credits" (Tabatabaei, 1985, Vol. 2, 138).

He considers the property as credit. One of its credits is the permission to occupy it in any way. Of course, some possessions will have limitations that will be contractual and statutory. He considers money to be one of the examples of credits established by humans:

> As a result of the imbalance of the relationship between the exchanged materials, there is a need for the credit of "money" to use one of the desired materials as a scale unit for measuring the other materials, and of course this credit also requires a series of related sub-credits. that the apparatus of issuing money, gold, silver, banknotes, checks and other securities, etc., are their representatives with their rules and works (Tabatabaei, 1985, Vol. 2, 222).

He believes that in credit matters, the relationship between the two sides of the case and the creditor is aimed at achieving the purpose and expediency, and he gives credit in any way that best brings him to the goal and expediency he means. He goes on to say: "The only rational scale that is used in credits is the literalness and lack of literalness of the credit, and of course, in this regard, the characteristic of the creditor should be considered." For example, if the credibility is imaginary and illusory, the interests and goals of that faculty should be considered, and if the credibility is intellectual credibility, the interests and goals of that faculty should be considered" (Tabatabaei,

1985, Vol. 2, 168). According to the view of Allameh Tabatabaei Malek, including money, is a state credit among humans and has no truth. Of course, these credits are related to the outside world.

One of the basic principles of human capital is the innate tendency to hire. "Each human being, according to his innate instinct and natural desire, always wants to use the powers of others for his own benefit, and since no one is willing to give his powers to other people for free, the result is that everyone He has left some of his forces at the disposal of others in order to benefit from the results of others' forces, so the principle of "employment" leads to the formation of a "cooperative society" (Tabatabaei, 2009, Vol. 1, 253). Therefore, wealth, property, and money are employed by the social nature of human beings and are established and valued.

Deterrence Limits

One of the most important topics in the Islamic field is the study of human desires for wealth. Some people take an unbalanced path in this matter. Unbalanced tendencies cause leaving the true path and entering the deviant path. A path whose true end is unclear, ambiguous and full of problems. "He has not yet recovered from the injuries of that wave, a more dangerous wave that originates from the interest in money and wealth, women and children, repeatedly slaps him in the face and sinks him into the bottom of the roaring waves of this fearful sea. so that his moans and cries disappear in the waves. Wherever he looks, he sees that longing, which is one of the effects and accessories of matter, threatens him" (Hosseini Tehrani, 2009, 38).

Although wealth opens the way in many material fields and some spiritual fields, sometimes it cannot be used. For example, if there is no way to treat a patient, money cannot be a solution. Another example in spiritual matters, if a person performs Qada prayer and has the ability to read, he cannot compensate with wealth and money.

In this context, Allameh Tabatabai pays attention to the limitation of deterrence of money and wealth. In continuation of the above Quranic story, he believes that if wealth and money could open the way, people like Qaroon could also justify themselves with their knowledge. While he died.

He says: "So if the only reason that provides wealth and preserves it and makes him enjoy it was knowledge, then this knowledge made him proud, and at all by God's grace and favor." If it was not, those past tribes should not have been destroyed, and that knowledge and skill should have saved them from destruction, and they should have enjoyed their property, and they should have warded off the calamity with their strength, and their people were also their helpers. have done, and now that neither their knowledge was useful to them, nor their property, nor their community" (Hosseini Tehrani, 2009, 114).

Related to spirituality

Another subject that Allameh Tabatabai emphasizes using religious principles is considering God and his help in money and wealth. A rich person should not attribute it all to his cleverness, but rather to God's grace. In Tafsir al-Mizan, he devotes a section to this topic with the title "Qarun's

arrogant answer: My property is the result of my own work and skill, and no one has the right to interfere in it if he has not participated in it".

After quoting a part of the Qur'anic verses, "قالَ إِنَّما أُوتِيتُهُ عَلى عِلْمٍ عِنْدِي" (Qasas, 78), which was quoted by Qarun, he states:

> Qarun, in their answer, made a mistake on this basis and said that what I believe that the favor of God is not, and it did not come to me without merit, and he claimed that all this was accumulated due to my own knowledge and skill, so I have deserved it among all people, because I knew the way to accumulate wealth, and Others did not know, and when what I got was due to my own merit, then I myself am independent in owning and occupying it, I can do whatever I want, I can use it like Rick in all kinds of pleasures and expanding influence and reign, and to gain status and achieve any other desire, and I don't deserve anyone to interfere in my work (Tabatabai, 1995, Vol. 16, 112).

He further mentions destruction as one of the dangerous results of this kind of desire and thinking about wealth. He believes: "And this wrong idea that was in Qaroun's brain and destroyed his work" (Tabatabai, 1995, Vol. 16, 112).

He criticizes some governments in Islamic history about the use of money and wealth. As an example, during the period of Harun Caliph Abbasi, when the Islamic Empire reached its peak of power and scope, "a singer made Amin Caliph Abbasi lustful by singing two lustful verses. Amin gave him three million silver dirhams, the singer threw himself at the Caliph's feet with joy and said: O Amir al-Mu'minin, will you give me all this money? Khalifa replied, "It doesn't matter, we are taking this money from an unknown area of the country"(Tabatabai, 2009, 54). Allameh believes that, unfortunately, in some Islamic governments, money and wealth were used for whims and the wrong path, which is completely against the right path.

Institutionalizing Charity

One of the solutions that Allameh Tabatabai explains with inspiration from the *Quran* to overcome the harms of wealth is charity. He pays attention to this issue in *Tafsir al-Mizan* with a title called "Speech about giving".

He believes that the spending of wealth by the rich means a balance between the rights of God and the rights of people, which is in matters such as zakat, khums, financial atonements and types of redemption, part of charity and matters such as endowment of housing for someone's lifetime, bequests. And forgiveness is an example (Tabatabai, 1995, vol. 2, 587).

He believes that there are two important fruits in this type of donations; On the one hand, the lower classes, who cannot meet their living needs without financial help from others, have been supported in order to raise their living standards, to bring the life horizons of different classes closer to each other, and to reduce the differences between them in terms of Reduce wealth and material

blessings. And on the other hand, he forbade the wealthy and the prosperous class of the society from pretending to be rich, i.e. from the luxury and embellishment of the manifestations of life, from houses, clothes, cars, etc. He cannot bear to see such expenses; he has prevented them under the title of prohibition of extravagance and the like (Tabatabai, 1995, vol. 2, 587-588).

He continues to criticize the western world with the title "The loss of charity and the prevalence of usury among the people is the biggest cause of social corruption in the western world. He believes: "The biggest cause of this corruption is the loss of charity on the one hand, and the prevalence of usury on the other hand" (Tabatabai, 1995, vol. 2, 589-590).

He believes in the book *Teachings of Islam* that "today it has become clear that the indifference of the wealthy towards the suffering of the needy is the greatest danger that can destroy a society, and the wealthy themselves are the first victims of this danger." are Fourteen centuries ago, taking into account this danger, Islam ordered that the rich should distribute a part of their wealth among the poor and the needy every year, and if their need is removed by this amount, it is recommended that in order to develop the lives of the poor, an amount that They can spend in the way of God" (Tabatabai, 2017, 221).

Avoid Usury

One of the most important risks in the matter of money and wealth is usury. Allameh explains this damage and its consequences in parts of his works.

He believes that "usurers began to collect property and accumulate wealth and competed with each other on the way to gain positions, and this led to world wars, and the world's population was divided into two groups and They stood together, on one side the prosperous rich people, and on the other side the miserable exploited people whose everything was looted, and these world wars became a calamity that moved mountains, and earthquakes on the earth threatened humanity with annihilation, and He turned the world into a ruin" (Tabatabai, 2017, 628-629). Therefore, one of the consequences of usury at the global level, world war and other damage, was the polarization of humanity.

Another harm that he pays attention to in usurpation is the deviation of man from the direct path and the rational system of life. In order to prove this damage, he proposes the verse " الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ الرِّبا، لا يَقُومُونَ إِلَّا كَما يَقُومُ الَّذِي يَتَخَبَّطُهُ الشَّيْطانُ مِنَ الْمَسِّ" (Baqarah, 275). He considers the word "khabat" to mean crooked and unnatural walking. He divides humans into two groups; The first group: "Indeed, man has found the right way of life through the power that has been deposited in him (that is, the power with which he can distinguish between good and evil, beneficial and harmful) and we have previously talked about this power. We have spoken. This is a normal human condition" (Tabatabai, 2017, 629).

The second group: "A person who has been possessed by the devil, that is, the devil has contacted him and disturbed his purifying power, cannot separate good and bad, beneficial and harmful, good and evil from one another, and the ruling of each of these cases makes it flow on the

opposite side" (Tabatabai, 2017, 630). The situation of cannibals is the situation of the second group. Usury people are not like the first group who live naturally, but they follow a deviant path. Paying less money and taking more money, which is customary in usury, destroys the rule of nature and the basis of society; "Because on the part of the usurer, it leads to embezzlement and stealing the property of the debtors, and on the part of the debtors, it leads to empty hands and the collection of their property in the hands of the usurer" (Tabatabai, 2017, 631).

Compare Views

After examining the most important views of Kant and Allameh Tabatabai, we will compare the two views in this section. In matching the views, the weaknesses and strengths of each side can be identified and the best ones can be chosen. In some of his works, such as Principles of Philosophy and the Method of Realism, Allameh Tabatabai discusses some of Kant's positions other than the subject of research and sometimes makes criticisms.

One of the most important points of comparison is that Kant's view of various topics is non-religious and secular. "There have been many discussions in the first aspect. In the tradition of Western thought, a deep and effective approach to the dignity of theoretical reason begins with the famous German philosopher Immanuel Kant in his famous work Critique of Pure Reason. In this heavy and profound book, he undermined the realism value of pure rational perceptions and thereby made serious attacks on metaphysics and common philosophical thinking" (A group of writers, 2008, 147).

On the other hand, Allameh Tabatabai's view on the issues is a religious view and derived from the Islamic religion. As an example, he did not go beyond the limits of the Sharia in his interpretation of the Qur'an and tries to justify and explain the words and phrases from this angle. Despite the difference between these two thinkers in different schools, there are commonalities between them in the matter of money and wealth, which we will discuss first.

Issue	Kant's view	Allameh Tabatabai's view
The importance of poverty	*	*
The importance of money and wealth	*	*
The way to earn money and wealth	*	*
Correct use of money and wealth	*	*
Warnings to the rich	*	*

Both thinkers, with the importance of poverty and destitution, considered it inappropriate for the society and believe that people should get away from this problem. To get away from this harm, both of them tried to explain the importance of money and wealth. Another thing that both paid attentions to is the way to earn money. Man should find a correct way to earn money and wealth and avoid deviant ways. About the use of wealth, both thinkers paid attention to it and reminded about the correct use. Also, both thinkers gave warnings to the rich and emphasized the harms.

In addition to these similarities that were observed in the works of these two thinkers, there are also differences between them, some of the most important of which are mentioned.

Issue	Kant's view	Allameh Tabatabai's view
Accurate division of people in the matter of wealth	*	_
Religious insight on wealth	-	*
Emphasis on eradicating poverty	-	*
Hereafters in the use of wealth	-	*
Intent in acquiring and consuming wealth	-	*
The use of religious stories in the position of wealth	_	*

One of the most important differences between these two thinkers is their insight into the issues. Allameh Tabatabai's vision is completely formed according to divine and Islamic law, but Kant does not adhere to Christianity in this way. Kant has a secular view on various issues such as wealth. Another thing is that Allameh Tabatabai talks much more and qualitatively about the issue of poverty in the society. He tried to explain the negative appearance of poverty and injury in different parts of his works. In spite of Kant's statements about money and wealth, which is a completely material view, Allameh Tabatabai tried to add an afterlife view to it so that wealth becomes a prelude to the abode of the hereafter. The way to acquire wealth, which exists in both ideas, was proposed by Allameh Tabatabai in a much smaller way.

As an example, usury and increasing wealth in this way is examined in a more detailed way in different parts of his works. Another issue is intention and interiority, which although Kant refers to it in moral discussions, but it is presented in a more complete way by Allameh Tabatabai.

Result

Considering the existence of poverty among a part of the people of the present age, different sciences should be used to eradicate it and ways to use wealth properly should be suggested to mankind, governments and international organizations. Philosophy, with its originality, can be a suitable source among these sciences. Some philosophical thinkers have discussed the issue of money and wealth, and in this research, the works of Kant and Allameh Tabatabai were used. Kant and Allameh Tabatabai have similarities and differences in this matter. Both thinkers considered poverty ugly and tried to encourage people to acquire knowledge. Both thinkers emphasized the right way to acquire wealth and choose the right job. On the other hand, the views of these two are very different. Allameh Tabataba'i addressed this issue with a religious perspective, but Kant raised this issue with a secular and maximally moral view. Allameh Tabatabai considers hereafter important in this matter and even explains the spending of wealth in a serious way to provide for the hereafter, but Kant considers the world very important and believes. It is hoped that people, governments and international organizations, considering the importance of this issue, will take a

serious and effective step to eliminate poverty in the world and guide mankind in the correct use of wealth.

References

Holy Quran

A Group of Writers, (2008). *Border Guard of Revelation and Reason*. Boustan-e Ketab. (in Persian)

Copleston, F. (1994). *History of Philosophy*. 9 Vols. Translated by a group of translators. Soroush. (in Persian)

Durant, W. (2008*). History of Philosophy*. Translated by A. Zaryab Khoei. Scientific and Cultural Publishing Company. (in Persian)

Hosseini Tehrani, M. H. (2010). *Lub al-Lubab*. Boustan-e Ketab. (in Persian)

Kant, I. (2008). *Moral Philosophy Lessons*. translated by M. Sanei Darrebidi, Naqsh va Negar. (in Persian)

Kant, I. (1965). *Critique of Pure Reason*. St. Martins.

Kant, I. (2006). *Anthropology from pragmatic point of view*. translated by Robert B. Cambridge University Press.

Reiss, H. (1970). *Kant's Political Writings*. Cambridge University Press.

Simmel, S. (1990). *The Philosophy of Money*. Routledge.

Sullivan, R. (2010). *Ethics in Kant's Philosophy*. translated by E. Fouladvand, Tarh-e No. (in Persian)

Tabatabaei, M. H. (1995). *Al-Mizan in Tafsir al-Qur'an*. Translated by M. B. Mousavi Hamedani. Jamee Modaresin Publications. (in Persian)

Tabatabaei, M. H. (1985). *The Principles of Philosophy and the Method of Realism*. Sadra. (in Persian)

Tabatabai, M. H. (2002). *Path of Mysticism*. Bakhshayesh. (in Persian)

Tabatabai, M. H. (2008*). Islamic Teachings*. Boustan-e Ketab. (in Persian)

Tabatabai, M. H. (2009). *Islamic Studies*. Boustan-e Ketab. (in Persian)

Tabatabai, M. H. (2010). *Shia in Islam*. Boustan-e Ketab. (in Persian)

Wood, A. (2009). *Kant and the problem of human nature*. Cambridge University Press.

Journal of Philosophical Investigations
Print ISSN: 2251-7960 Online ISSN: 2423-4419
Homepage: https://philosophy.tabrizu.ac.ir

Functional Fit and the Instrumental Character of Knowledge: Rethinking the Theory of Knowledge with Radical Constructivism

Meysam Khanjanian Mian-Poshte

Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Cognitive Psychology, Institute for Cognitive and Brain Sciences, Shahid Beheshti University, Iran. Email: m_khanjanian@sbu.ac.ir

Article Info

Article type:
Research Article

Article history:
Received 04 April 2024
Received in revised from 05 June 2024
Accepted 07 July 2024
Published online 07 September 2024

Keywords:
radical constructivism, explanatory pluralism, knowledge fit, epistemology, instrumentalism, Pragmatism.

ABSTRACT

Radical constructivism (RC), introduced by Ernst von Glasersfeld, is an instrumentalist theory of knowledge that challenges the notion of knowledge as a picture or representation of a real, external world. Instead, RC, by integrating ideas from different theoretical fields - such as cybernetics, evolutionary biology, and evolutionary psychology - considers the purpose of the cognitive organism to construct knowledge not to achieve truth, but to construct perceptual and conceptual structures that help to maintain adaptation and cognitive equilibrium. However, the basic question here is, by what character these structures can achieve the purpose. By examining Glasersfeld's writings, this paper argues that the character is a "functional fit", which is based on a fundamental shift in RC, i.e. the shift from "matching" to "fitness". From this point of view, the "fit knowledge" is not due to its match with the external reality, but due to its repeated success in solving a specific problem, it is viable, and by preventing unwanted changes or perturbations, it gives order to the experiential world of the organism and helps to maintain its cognitive equilibrium. This perspective has the potential to create transformation in various fields, from education to ethics and social issues. Therefore, this paper, while examining the basic concepts of radical constructivist epistemology, also deals with its theoretical and practical applications.

Cite this article: Khanjanian Mian-Poshte, M. (2024). Functional Fit and the Instrumental Character of Knowledge: Rethinking the Theory of Knowledge with Radical Constructivism. *Journal of Philosophical Investigations*, 18(48), 000-000. https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.61095.3735

© The Author(s).
https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.61095.3735
Publisher: University of Tabriz.

> *Radical constructivism is unashamedly instrumentalist (in the philosophical sense of that term) and this must offend advocates of the maxim 'Truth for Truth's sake'*. (Glasersfeld, 1988, 87)

Introduction

Philosophical inquiry has long centered around deciphering the nature of knowledge. Epistemological theories rooted in realist ontology have proposed a range of perspectives regarding the connection between knowledge and reality. Radical constructivism (RC), a framework introduced by the German epistemologist and psychologist Ernst von Glasersfeld, challenges the main assumptions of these theories, which he calls traditional epistemology, and provides new insights into the theory of knowledge.

RC criticizes that part of Western philosophy that considers knowledge as a representation or picture of a real and external world in the subject's mind. Instead, Glasersfeld (1984) understands knowledge not in the relation between a representation and an external reality, but metaphorically in the relation between a key and a lock: rather than a picture of reality, knowledge is merely a key that unlocks the locks in front of us. He claims that instead of considering knowledge as an internal representation of an external world, we can, like pragmatists, consider it as a tool in the realm of subject experience (Glasersfeld, 1998). Thus, RC holds that traditional epistemology and its central problem - how we acquire knowledge of (external) reality and how reliable or true this knowledge can be - must be abandoned. In fact, RC is an attempt to dissolve the epistemological problem, not solve it; Because Glasersfeld (1984) believes that the way this question was posed in the first place made it impossible to answer, and the efforts that have been made since then have not been able to come close to proposing a solution to that.

However, this is not a common opinion among all theorists of constructivism and constructionism. For this reason, Glasersfeld uses the "radical" as an adjective to distinguish his view from other theories that, despite using the term constructivism/ constructionism, still do not question the traditional epistemology based on representationalism (Glasersfeld, 1998). Indeed, this view is radical because it abandons ontological realism once and for all. Following the ideas from evolutional biology and developmental psychology, RC believes that the purpose of constructing knowledge is not to achieve objectivity, but to maintain the adaptation and cognitive equilibrium of the organism.

RC can be defined in terms of two basic propositions: first, knowledge is not passively received, but is constructed through an active process by the cognitive organism, and second, the function of this learning process is adaptive, and instead of seeking to discover an ontological and objective reality, the cognitive organism serves to organize its own experiential world (Riegler & Quale, 2010). Indeed, as Glasersfeld puts it, radical constructivists never say: 'This is how it is!' They merely suggest: 'This may be how it functions.' (Glasersfeld, 2000, 4).

However, even with the acceptance of RC's criticisms of traditional epistemology and its instrumentalist view of knowledge, how knowledge can be used as a tool to maintain "adaptation" and "equilibrium" will remain a question. In answering this question, the present paper relies on a basic concept in RC and Glasersfeld's views, namely "functional fit". In fact, in the framework of radical constructivism, it is suggested that the goal of cognitive activity is not to achieve the truth or representation that is "match" to external reality, but to produce ways or tools that are simply "fit"; In the sense that they are only able to solve the problems faced by the organism and help to maintain its adaptation and equilibrium.

The theory of knowledge proposed by RC will have transformative potential for various fields from epistemology to education, ethics and social relations. Therefore, this article tries to highlight the importance of this perspective in today's theory of knowledge and epistemology by exploring the basic concepts of RC, theoretical contexts, current status and its applications.

1. Theoretical Backgrounds of Radical Constructivism

RC, which is a response to the limitations of traditional and mainstream theories of knowledge, owes its origin mainly to Glasersfeld's efforts in the 1970s and 1980s. Beginning academic career in collaboration with the Italian philosopher and linguist Silvio Ceccato in the 1940s, Glasersfeld has drawn on a variety of sources from cybernetics and biology to epistemology and psychology to develop his version of constructivism.

On the one hand, Glasersfeld repeatedly emphasizes the influence of Giambattista Vico's views, the Italian political philosopher, in obtaining the idea of knowledge construction (for example, see Glasersfeld, 1988; 1989; 1991a; 1995a). On the other hand, he points to the importance of Alexander Bogdanov, the Russian thinker, in adopting the instrumentalist approach in RC (for example, see Glasersfeld, 1991a; 1995a). Humberto Maturana, a Chilean biologist and one of the second-order cybernetic theorists, is another important source of inspiration for Glasersfeld, especially regarding the constructivist view of science (for example, see Glasersfeld, 1995a; 2001; 2005). Also, Glasersfeld mentions the importance of the views of American pragmatists, especially William James, as well as sociologists such as Georg Simmel (for example, see Glasersfeld, 2007), however, according to Glasersfeld's references, it does not seem that these influences be as direct and impressive as other sources.

Despite the importance of the aforementioned sources, the two main theoretical backgrounds for radical constructivist epistemology are Charles Darwin's evolutionary framework and Jean Piaget's ideas in his constructivist developmental psychology. First, many of the basic concepts in RC, such as adaptation, which we will discuss further, are influenced by Darwin's description of evolution (for example, see Glasersfeld, 1991a). On the other hand, Glasersfeld is inspired by Piaget's perspective, which is also known as genetic epistemology (for a full description of this influence, see Glasersfeld, 1995a). He praises Piaget in particular for bringing the idea of

constructivism to developmental psychology and considering an adaptive function - in its biological sense - for knowledge (Glasersfeld, 1991a).

It is important to mention here that despite the common sources and roots, there are also differences between constructivism and constructionism. Constructivists, from Piaget and Glasersfeld to the psychology of personal constructs proposed by George Kelly (1955) mainly focus on the "individual" and the construction of knowledge by him/her. But on the opposite side, there are some theorists who prefer the title of constructionism, especially social constructionism. This distinction reflects the concern of constructionists to be careful not to assume the human being as an isolated individual; Because according to their opinion, knowledge is social in nature and the product of temporal and spatial discussion between humans (Raskin, 2002). Social constructionists consider concepts such as "individual", "person" and "self" to be a completely social phenomenon and the structure of our knowledge, even our self-knowledge, is a product of social interaction with others (Burr, 2002). From this point of view, characteristics such as individuality and agency are the characteristics that Western culture attributes to the mentioned concepts, not its necessary and universal characteristics (Burr, 2015). We will return to the contrast between constructivism and constructionism in the following sections.

In short, having diverse theoretical backgrounds has made RC an interdisciplinary framework with many innovative aspects. However, these innovations can only be understood in opposition to traditional epistemology, which is the purpose of the next section.

2. Radical Constructivism and the Traditional Epistemology

Although the history of Western epistemology cannot be reduced to a coherent approach with specific assumptions, what Glasersfeld calls and criticizes as traditional epistemology during his philosophical life is an approach that tries to find a way to match knowledge and external reality. From this point of view, Glasersfeld's audience is primarily those epistemological theories that adopt realist ontological assumptions. However, RC is not ontologically idealist either, but takes an agnostic (i.e. neutral) position. In fact, according to Glasersfeld, a theory of knowledge does not need to adopt an ontological position, and it is not its duty to assume the existence or non-existence of external reality. The decisive emphasis on such a position, which can be seen even in Glasersfeld's final works (for example, see Glasersfeld, 2008), is one of the reasons why he chose the ‘radical’ title for his view. The adjective radical here does not mean that this type of constructivism is dogmatic, extreme or inflexible. In fact, the purpose of Glasersfeld's choice of this title is to emphasize that RC, in contrast to many traditional approaches, abandons ontological realism once and for all.

In RC, the subject is not a passive receiver of information from the environment, but it actively constructs knowledge. Therefore, all cognitive activities in the experiential world of the subject are performed in a purposeful way and are not necessarily related to external reality. From this perspective, a cognitive organism evaluates its experiences, and while evaluating them, it tends to

repeat some of them and avoid others (Glasersfeld, 1984). Thus, according to Glasersfeld (1991a), what distinguishes his view from traditional epistemology is the transition from the ideas of representation and match, and their replacement by adaptation in its functional sense.

In this regard, Glasersfeld (1989; 1995a) formulates two fundamental principles of RC as follows:

1. The cognitive organism does not acquire knowledge for fun. The structure of human knowledge and actions is organized based on the desire to repeat favorable experiences and avoid unfavorable experiences.
2- Knowledge does not reflect the real or external world. The cognitive organism is not concerned with discovering the external reality, but is looking for evolved ways and tools that are considered useful for it.

The adoption of the two principles has caused the title "instrumentalist" to be applied to RC; A title that may offend epistemological theorists who seek ‘truth’, but Glasersfeld accepts it without any shame for his approach (Glasersfeld, 1988). In fact, RC sees knowledge as a ‘tool’ in the service of adaptation. Although the idea is clearly inspired by Darwin's evolutionary framework, Glasersfeld follows Piaget in extending adaptation from the domain of biological survival to the conceptual domain and internal mental equilibrium of the organism (Glasersfeld, 2001). In this regard, in addition to the biological aim of adaptation (i.e. survival), RC also proposes another aim at the conceptual and cognitive level, in which the organism seeks to produce coherent and non-contradictory structures of knowledge (Glasersfeld, 1998). This knowledge structures include ways and tools to achieve the main goals of the organism, which in the conceptual field means achieving "cognitive equilibrium".

Therefore, RC goes beyond the traditional assumptions of knowledge and proposes a new perspective to it. However, how knowledge can help the organism maintain equilibrium and adaptation lies in a conceptual shift: replacing the traditional concept of "match" with "fitness". In the next section, we will discuss this conceptual shift.

3. Functional Fit and Instrumental Character of Knowledge

As we have seen, RC tries to provide an instrumentalist theory of knowledge without an ontological stance. In order to achieve this aim, Glasersfeld talks about the ‘experiential reality/world’ instead of the concept of reality/world in the ontological sense. For him, what we commonly call ‘reality’ is a set of relatively viable perceptual and conceptual constructions that we construct, use, and maintain, in our subjective experience (Glasersfeld, 1995a). Therefore, from the point of view of RC, the subject acts in the realm of his/her experience or the experiential world, and this experience is organized based on the history of his/her activities (Glasersfeld, 1998).

Here, Glasersfeld, a second-order cybernetic theorist, uses the term "self-regulation" in a pioneering way in epistemological theory. As in any cybernetic system, "equilibrium" is achieved whenever an interpretation of new input sensory signals fits to a predetermined desired pattern, so

in a cognitive organism whenever new experience can be made without reorganizing the current conceptual structures, the cognitive equilibrium will be maintained (Glasersfeld, 1986). To achieve this purpose (i.e., cognitive equilibrium), the organism must put its experiential world in order; An order that will be the result of cognitive self-regulation.

The emphasis on cognitive self-regulation has important implications for a theory of knowledge. Above all, as Glasersfeld (2008) explains, the purpose of perception is not to discover facts about the world, but to acquire coherent and, if possible, familiar patterns that have been useful in the past to provide significant action. Therefore, perception serves the purpose of "prediction" by ordering the experiential world, which itself leads to maintaining cognitive equilibrium. In cybernetic terms, the system maintains its equilibrium by eliminating perturbations.

But what is the role of knowledge in maintaining this equilibrium? Here, RC makes a conceptual shift in the function of knowledge to answer this question. Glasersfeld (1984) explains this shift by contrasting the two terms "match" and "fit" in everyday English. While in the former, we seek to "match" two things (here, representation and external reality), in the latter, the aim is simply to achieve adaptivity. He makes this distinction clear by using an interesting metaphor based on the lock and key relationship. When a key opens a lock, it does not necessarily mean that the two are match, as it would not be possible for the locks to be opened with anything other than their own key. He writes:

> Thanks to professional burglars we know only too well that there are many keys that are shaped quite differently from our own but which nevertheless unlock our doors. The metaphor is crude, but it serves quite well to bring into relief the difference I want to explicate. From the radical constructivist point of view, all of us—scientists, philosophers, laymen, school children, animals, and indeed, any kind of living organism—face our environment as the burglar faces a lock that he has to unlock in order to get at the loot. (Glasersfeld, 1984, 21)

The key-and-lock metaphor indicates two basic points about knowledge. First, knowledge, like a key, has the sole function of opening the locks in front of us. A "fit" key need not exactly "match" a particular lock; Simply opening it is enough. In fact, the function of the key is "to open" the lock, not to match it. In the same way, in the framework of RC, it can be said that solving our problems and needs in an adaptive way depends on the extent to which the knowledge structure used is functionally fit.

Second, unlike match, which describes the relationship between the lock and the key, fit simply describes the ‘capacity’ of the key, not the lock. Since different keys are able to open a specific lock, the opening of a lock by a key does not necessarily reveal anything about the characteristics of that key. Instead, the only result is that the key has a capacity that makes us want to use it again the next time we encounter that lock. Likewise, being effective, useful, or adaptive for a knowledge structure does not necessarily mean that it matches or reflects an external reality. In fact, the fitness

of a knowledge structure gives us no clue about what the outside world is like. That we have found a solution to our problem is not the same as that we have discovered the external world. Even this kind of knowledge does not and cannot tell us how many other solutions there are to the problem; Just because one key opens a door does not mean that no other key will opens that.

Therefore, the concept of functional fit can explain how knowledge helps to maintain the adaptation and equilibrium of the organism. If the construction of knowledge does not achieve the aim, it becomes questionable, unreliable and useless, thus losing its credibility and being abandoned; The key that does not open the lock is replaced by another key. On the other hand, the knowledge that can be successful in solving specific problems will be retained. This point leads us to another fundamental concept, 'viability', which means that a knowledge structure will remain as long as it is useful in fulfilling the relevant tasks or goals (Glasersfeld, 1998). Therefore, due to its repeated success in solving specific problems, a fit knowledge will be survived, and by preventing unwanted changes or perturbations, it has given order to the organism's experiential world and maintains its cognitive equilibrium.

Nevertheless, emphasizing the experiential world and that the aim of an organism at the conceptual level is to maintain cognitive equilibrium, does not mean that the organism is able to construct and maintain any type of knowledge structure. Just as the organism has limitations at the biological level, it also has limitations at the conceptual level that do not allow for 'free' construction. These limitations are what separate viable, fit and efficient knowledge from others (Glasersfeld, 2007).

In sum, as we have seen, RC considers features such as functional fitness, viability, and efficiency for knowledge, which are different from traditional epistemology. The knowledge that has the mentioned characteristics is able to help us in predicting, implementing or avoiding the upcoming tasks. Such knowledge is a tool for maintaining adaptation and equilibrium at the conceptual level that the organism is trying to maintain through self-regulation. However, RC believes that the organism faces limitations in constructing knowledge. It seems that talking about these limitations indicates a violation of RC from one of its basic principles, i.e. lack of ontological stance. This will be one of the important challenges for this approach, but before addressing it, in the next section, we will briefly review some theoretical and practical considerations and applications of RC.

4. Considerations and Applications

RC, unlike many other epistemological approaches, considers itself obliged to adopt an interdisciplinary approach as well as the continuous use of insights created in various natural and applied sciences. As Riegler and Quale (2010) point out, this interdisciplinary approach distinguishes RC from so-called "armchair philosophy". The extent of various theoretical and practical effects and applications of RC is very wide, thus, in this section only some of them are briefly mentioned.

The application of RC to education was perhaps Glasersfeld's most important practical concern, as can be seen in his writings on the subject (for example, Glasersfeld, 1991b; 1995a; 1995b). His efforts were not fruitless and as one of the important theoretical approaches in education, RC plays an important role in changing curricula with the aim of facilitating diversity in schools and empowering children in the current education (Gash, 2014).

Since in RC, knowledge is actively constructed by the subject and its function is to organize the experiential world, it is natural that this view will have important implications for education. In RC, traditional assumptions in educational systems, especially that children are passive recipients of knowledge, are discarded. From this point of view, the teacher's role is not to transfer 'real' knowledge to the student, but to provide a space for the student to construct a fit and viable knowledge structure. Therefore, RC emphasizes that instead of focusing on the idea of knowledge transfer in the learning process, we need to understand how the student constructs knowledge. Even young children have a structure of knowledge that has been useful and viable so far to them. To improve this structure, any type of education should first understand and act on the student's current structure. For this reason, RC challenges the traditional views of teaching and approves the use of an active approach in learning.

Ethics is also one of the other issues that have been considered by radical constructivists. In fact, this topic, along with social interaction, are the topics that Glasersfeld found challenging in their explanation, so he recommended that radical constructivists present models in these areas that, instead of mere metaphysical explanations, are capable to be tested practically and experimentally (Glasersfeld, 2000). However, in RC, the conditions for construction of moral knowledge are the same as other knowledge structures, and moral beliefs are also constructed by individual subjects. Therefore, even though RC does not support a specific moral position, by assigning an active role to the individual in the construction of knowledge, it considers people morally responsible for their decisions and actions (Quale, 2014; Riegler & Quale, 2010).

Theorizing and researching in social sciences from a constructivist perspective has attracted a lot of attention today: social interactions (Scholl, 2010), culture (Troadec, 2007; and Rusch, 2007) and micro-macro problem (Palmaru, 2016; and Scholl, 2016) have been among the topics of interest. RC and related approaches such as critical cybernetics, unlike the common discourse of social sciences, mainly deals with the narratives and theories that people construct (Krippendorff, 2023). However, since RC rejects the concept of truth and emphasizes the subjectivity of knowledge, as expected, talking about social experience will be very challenging for constructivist researchers (Gash, 2023).

RC is also closely related to recent developments in cognitive science such as 4E cognition. Accepting constructivist assumptions requires us to adopt new perspectives on mind and cognition. For example, RC asserts that, like a cybernetic system, for any cognitive organism the output, i.e., action, is only a means of controlling the inputs, i.e., perception (Riegler and Quale, 2010). In fact,

perception and action have an intertwined relationship with each other. Descriptions like this can change our understanding of the mind and its processes.

The application of RC in other theoretical and practical fields such as psychotherapy (Oblak, 2011), political psychology (Goldstein, 2021), international relations (Kharkevich, 2023), social policy (Richards, 2007), emotional relationships (Glasersfeld, 2006), religion (Quale, 2015), drawing (Galuszka, 2009), design (Herr, 2019; & Glanville, 2006), robotics design (Bettoni & Castellini, 2021) and nursing education (Epp et al., 2021) has also been discussed.

5. Discussion: Challenges and Responses

It seems that RC aims to present a theory of knowledge that faces fewer challenges by abandoning some of the cumbersome assumptions of traditional epistemology. However, this view was not well received from the beginning. Among other things, Glasersfeld has been a pioneer in addressing this issue among radical constructivists (see, for example, Glasersfeld, 1988; 2000; 2010). Also, other proponents of the theory have also addressed the pathology of RC's lack of acceptance and its inability to become a mainstream approach (for example, see Gadenne, 2010; Riegler & Quale, 2010; Hug, 2010; and Kenny, 2010). In this part, we will try to point out some of the basic challenges of RC and its responses to them.

One of the most frequent criticisms is that RC denies external reality. Rather than being a challenge, this criticism is due to its misunderstanding of RC by some critics. Denial of external reality requires an idealistic stance. However, as mentioned earlier, since this view targets epistemologies based on realism, it does not have an idealistic position, but rather adopts a neutral or agnostic position about external reality. To put it more clearly, RC believes that a theory of knowledge does not have to adopt an ontological position. Therefore, Glasersfeld does not deny the existence of external reality, but rather our ability to know a reality beyond and independent of our own experience (Glasersfeld, 2001).

As we have seen in the previous sections, although Glasersfeld avoids talking about external reality, it seems that he has violated this principle when he talks about the existence of limitations on the knowledge construction (for example, see Glasersfeld, 1984; 1995a; 2007). In RC, where a practical or conceptual structure breaks down, the limits of action and thought are revealed, and the notion that we can freely shape our knowledge structure is challenged. However, while it might seem that RC here has a claim about external reality, or at least can speak to it, Glasersfeld again disagrees. In his opinion, such limitations merely indicate the inadequacy of our existing knowledge structure in dealing with that particular problem and do not tell us anything about reality (Glasersfeld, 1986). The same knowledge structure may be responsive in other situations, but in that particular situation, it is not appropriate (i.e. functionally fit) and the organism should change its procedure or use other patterns of knowledge to provide an adaptive response. Glasersfeld (1984) cautions that RC draws absolutely no conclusions about reality from the revelation of limits, since such an event gives us no clue as to what the external or "objective" world might be like. It

simply means that we know a practical way to achieve a goal that works under certain conditions in our experiential world. Indeed, we can only feel that there are constraints on our conceptual system, just as we have biological constraints, but we cannot say whether these constraints are imposed on us from an independent external world or from elsewhere.

Another criticism is that the consequence of rejecting the possibility of obtaining true knowledge will be our inability to evaluate different knowledge structures. In this case, there is no difference between different types of knowledge and RC will fall into the extreme relativism. However, RC is by no means indifferent to the value of knowledge; Rather, instead of truth, it proposes other criteria such as adaptivity, fitness and viability. More precisely, as Glasersfeld (1991a) emphasizes, as long as constructed knowledge models are capable of solving our problems, their ontological status should not concern us.

On the other hand, rejecting the idea of "knowledge as a representation of external reality" challenges the belief that every problem has a real solution. Instead, from this point of view, each problem can have several solutions at the same time. However, these solutions are not equivalent. They differ in terms of performance levels, speed, economy and even aesthetic factors and achieve different levels of results (Glasersfeld, 1986). Thus, RC does not adopt a neutral stance towards different types of knowledge, but instead provides criteria for evaluating them. Perhaps it is because of this emphasis that Glasersfeld clearly separates his position from postmodernism towards the end of his life:

> What I have presented here is the view of an individual that no longer wants to have anything to do with the ‘postmodern’ movement. A couple of decades ago it seemed to me an acceptable epithet for radical constructivism because it advocated breaching with the traditional notion that reason is a means of access to objective knowledge of reality . . . The model I am suggesting is, in fact, a theory of rational knowing. (Glasersfeld, 2008, 64)

Another challenge is raised by social constructionists who consider Glasersfeld and other constructivism unable to explain social phenomena due to their focus on the individual. As we mentioned, constructivism and social constructionism, despite having similar theoretical sources, have serious differences. In the meantime, the comparison of Glasersfeld's views with Kenneth Gergen, a contemporary social psychologist and postmodern thinker, is the most enlightening because of the relational attitude Gergen adopts. Gergen (2011a) believes that the most important idea of constructionism is that our knowledge about the world and ourselves is rooted in human relationships. According to Gergen, in social constructionism, it is not the individual's mind in which knowledge, wisdom, emotion and ethics are based, but the place of all these is in relationships (Gergen, 2011a). If, as stated by Gergen, the origin of all meanings is in collaborative or interactional action, then the individual finds meaning only in the relationship and cannot be understood independently (Gergen, 2011b). As Gergen (2009, 5) says, “relational being, seeks to

recognize a world that is not within persons but within their relationships, and that ultimately erases the traditional boundaries of separation".

Therefore, the basic conflict between these two approaches is over the primacy of the individual. In response to Gergen, RC could never accept Gergen's basic assumption that the individual is intrinsically intertwined with others and emerges in social relations, as this seems to be an ontological stance. As Glasersfeld (2008) points out, RC cannot make a claim about the existence of relations independent of the subject, but believes that, first of all, relations need an "agent" to be perceived by him/her. In this regard, the assumption of primacy of relationships over the subject, as assumed by social constructionism, will not be acceptable in RC.

Therefore, although RC does not hide the importance of the social, since it does not want to assume an external reality independent of subjective experience of any kind - including the world, others and relationships - it emphasizes the primacy of the subject. However, the fact that knowledge is made by the subject is not a prohibition to construct meaning in relations and interactions with others, but as Glasersfeld also emphasizes, it provides a possibility for phenomena such as social knowledge (Glasersfeld, 2000). Indeed, RC asserts that before we can form a concept of society, we must construct and describe the “others” in our experiential world (Glasersfeld, 2008). As the contemporary phenomenologist, Dan Zahavi, also points out in his critique of social constructionism, emphasizing the primacy of the individual never means rejecting the social issue, but rather it is the basis for it (Zahavi, 2022).

But despite the efforts of radical constructivists, especially Glasersfeld, why hasn't RC become a dominant paradigm in theory and research? In response to this question, Glasersfeld (2010) believes that accepting this view means accepting individual responsibility for one's thoughts and actions, which perhaps people prefer to avoid. On the other hand, the desire to achieve certainty is another motivation that RC seriously thwarts, thus disillusioning many people in the first place.

But apart from the hidden motivations of people facing RC, some believe that the disadvantages of this approach are also effective in not welcoming it. For example, Gadenne (2010) examines two main assumptions of this approach. First, the "construct hypothesis", which has been accepted by an important part of psychologists and neuroscientists due to the fact that it is possible to investigate it experimentally. Also, the practical aspects of RC such as emphasis on pluralism, active learning and tolerance are other things that were accepted more easily. However, Gadenne believes that these are not the main aspects of RC, because accepting them does not make one a radical constructivist. Instead, the second assumption, which is the "closed-system hypothesis" and the anti-realist aspect of this approach, seems to be more important. Unlike the first hypothesis, the second one is a philosophical assumption that cannot be tested empirically. RC does not logically follow from any of the empirical results that we are cognitively closed, or unable to acquire knowledge of the real world. As Boden (2010) also emphasizes, many people in science and engineering still tend to maintain their realist assumptions and, on the other hand, RC has not been

able to convince them. Apart from this issue, Gadenne (2010) believes that the anti-realist approach of RC has made it difficult to deal with common sense and people are not inclined to accept this assumption.

It is important to note that, regardless of how well RC has overcome these challenges, this approach never claims to be the only "correct" theory, because that claim would contradict its own principles (Glasersfeld, 1991a). Obviously, such an attitude leaves the doors open for an explanatory pluralism in epistemology. Therefore, like any other structure of knowledge, RC should also be evaluated based on its functional fitness, viability and usefulness.

Conclusion

As we have seen, RC by having various theoretical sources and by criticizing the assumptions of what it calls traditional epistemology, tries to present an instrumentalist theory of knowledge, in which knowledge contributes to the adaptation and cognitive equilibrium of the organism. Presenting such a theory requires RC to make a fundamental shift about knowledge function, and that is to replace concepts such as functional fit and viability instead of match and truth. From this point of view, the cognitive organism maintains its cognitive equilibrium by constructing fit and viable knowledge that is able to solve problems in a repeatable manner, by ordering the experimental world and making it predictable. Therefore, RC rejects the idea of knowledge as a representation of an external and independent reality and considers it as a tool to keep adaptivity.

It should be noted that RC is a theory of knowledge and not an ontological theory. In fact, it neither wants nor can claim that external reality exists or does not exist. This means that a radical constructivist never says "this exists" and "that doesn't exist", but rather looks for the purpose for which knowledge is constructed. Our mind does not need to represent the world in matching with reality, but it needs a structure of knowledge that solves problems for us just like a "fit key".

Glasersfeld himself points out that due to various factors, RC is not a very popular view among people and theorists (Glasersfeld, 1988; 2010), but as we have seen, its transformative potential has caused it to be successfully used in different fields of theory and practice. This issue indicates the need for deep understanding and accurate evaluation of this approach in future theoretical and practical researches.

References

Bettoni, M. C., & Castellini, C. (2021). *Interaction in Assistive Robotics: A Radical Constructivist Design Framework*. Frontiers in neurorobotics, 15, 675657. https://doi.org/10.3389/fnbot.2021.675657

Boden, M. A. (2010). Against constructivism. *Constructivist Foundations* 6(1), 84–89.

Burr, V. (2002). *The Person in Social Psychology*. Psychology Press.

Burr, V. (2015). *Social Constructionism* (3rd). Routledge.

Epp, S., & et al. (2021). Radical transformation: Embracing constructivism and pedagogy for an innovative nursing curriculum. *Journal of Professional Nursing*, 37(5), 804-809. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.profnurs.2021.06.007

Gadenne, V. (2010). Why radical constructivism has not become a paradigm. *Constructivist Foundations* 6(1), 77–83.

Galuszka, F. (2009). Towards a cybernetic-constructivist understanding of painting. *Constructivist Foundations*, 5(1), 1-18.

Gash, H. (2014). Constructing constructivism. *Constructivist Foundations* 9(3), 302–310.

Gash, H. (2023). Integrating radical constructivism in social contexts. *Constructivist Foundations* 19(1), 96–98.

Gergen, K. J. (2009). *Relational being: Beyond self and community*. Oxford University Press.

Gergen, K. J. (2011a). The self as social construction. *Psychological Studies*, 56(1), 108–116. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12646-011-0066-1

Gergen, K. J. (2011b). Relational Being: A Brief Introduction. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*. 24(4), 280-282. https://doi.org/10.1080/10720537.2011.593453

Glanville, R. (2006) Construction and design. *Constructivist Foundations,* 1(3), 103–110.

Glasersfeld, E. v. (1983). On the concept of interpretation. *Poetics*, 12(2), 207-218. https://doi.org/10.1016/0304-422X(83)90028-1

Glasersfeld, E. v. (1984). *An Introduction to Radical Constructivism*. In *The Invented Reality*. pp. 17–40. Edited by P. Watzlawick. Norton.

Glasersfeld, E. v. (1986). *Steps in the Construction Of "Others" And "Reality": A Study In Self-Regulation*. Edited by R. Trappl. Power, Autonomy, Utopia. Springer.

Glasersfeld, E. v. (1988). The reluctance to change a way of thinking. *The Irish Journal of Psychology*, 9(1), 83–90. https://doi.org/10.1080/03033910.1988.10557706

Glasersfeld, E. v. (1989). Facts and the self from a constructivist point of view. *Poetics*, 18(4-5), 435-448.

Glasersfeld, E. v. (1991a). Knowing without metaphysics: Aspects of the radical constructivist position. In *Research and reflexivity*, pp. 12–29, Edited by F. Steier, Sage Publications.

Glasersfeld, E. v. (1991b). *Constructivism in Education*. In *The International Encyclopedia of Education*, 2nd editon, Vol. 1, pp. 1623-1627, Edited by T. Husén & T. N. Postlethwaite, Pergamon Press

Glasersfeld, E. v. (1995a). *Radical constructivism: a way of knowing and learning*. Falmer Press.

Glasersfeld, E. v. (1995b). *A Constructivist Approach to Teaching*. In Constructivism in Education, pp. 3-15, Edited by L. P. Steffe & J. Gale. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Glasersfeld, E. v. (1998). Why constructivism must be radical. *In Larochelle*, pp. 23-28, Edited by M. Bednarz N. & Garrison J. Constructivism in education. Cambridge University Press.

Glasersfeld, E. v. (2000). *Problems of Constructivism*. In Radical Constructivism in Action: Building on the Pioneering Work of Ernst von Glasersfeld, pp. 3-9. Edited by P. W. Leslie, P. Steffe & Patrick W. Thompson, Routledge Falmer.

Glasersfeld, E. v. (2001). The Radical Constructivist View of Science. *Foundations of Science*, 6(1), 31-43. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1011345023932

Glasersfeld, E. v. (2005). *Thirty years constructivism*. Constructivist Foundations 1(1), 9–12.

Glasersfeld, E. v. (2006). You have to be two to start: Rational thoughts about love. *Constructivist Foundations*, 2(1), 1–5.

Glasersfeld, E. v. (2007). *Key Works in Radical Constructivism*. Sense Publishers.

Glasersfeld, E. v. (2008). Who conceives of society? *Constructivist Foundations* 3(2), 59–64.

Glasersfeld, E. v. (2010). Why people dislike radical constructivism. *Constructivist Foundations*, 6(1), 19–21.

Goldstein, B. (2021). Materialism and selection bias: Political psychology from a radical constructivist perspective. *Constructivist Foundations* 16(3), 327–338.

Herr, C. M. (2019). Design Is Construction, Construction Is Design. *She Ji-the Journal of Design Economics and Innovation*, 5(4), 367-369. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sheji.2019.11.007

Hug, T. (2010). Radical constructivism mainstreaming: A desirable endeavor? Critical considerations using examples from educational studies and learning theory. *Constructivist Foundations*, 6(1), 58–65.

Kelly, G. A. (1955). *The psychology of personal constructs*. Vol. 1. A theory of personality. Vol. 2. Clinical diagnosis and psychotherapy. W. W. Norton.

Kenny, V. (2010). Exile on mainstream. Constructivism in psychotherapy and suggestions from a kellian perspective. *Constructivist Foundations* 6(1), 65–76.

Kharkevich, M. V. (2023). *Grounding Ontology of the "International" in Terms of Radical Constructivism*. World Economy and International Relations, 67(6), 36-46. https://doi.org/10.20542/0131-2227-2023-67-6-36-46

Krippendorff, K. (2023). *A critical cybernetics*. Constructivist Foundations 19(1), 82–93.

Oblak A. (2022). *Steps towards a constructivist psychiatry*. Constructivist Foundations 17(2), 169–173.

Palmaru, R. (2016). Constructivism as a key towards further understanding of communication, culture and society. *Constructivist Foundations*, 12(1), 30–38.

Quale, A. (2014). Ethics: A radical-constructivist approach. *Constructivist Foundations*, 9(2), 256–261.

Quale, A. (2015). Religion: A radical-constructivist perspective. *Constructivist Foundations*, 11(1), 119–126.

Raskin, J. D. (2002). Constructivism in psychology: Personal construct psychology, radical constructivism, and social constructionism. In *Studies in meaning: Exploring constructivist psychology*, p. 1–25, Edited by J. D. Raskin & S. K. Bridges, Pace University Press.

Richards, L. D. (2007). Connecting radical constructivism to social transformation and design. *Constructivist Foundations*, 2(2-3), 129–135.

Riegler, A. & Quale, A. (2010). Editorial: Can radical constructivism become a mainstream endeavor? *Constructivist Foundations*, 6(1), 1–5.

Rusch, G. (2007). Understanding. The mutual regulation of cognition and culture. *Constructivist Foundations*, 2(2-3), 118–128.

Scholl, A. (2010). Radical constructivism in communication science. *Constructivist Foundations*, 6(1), 51–57.

Scholl, A. (2016). The micro-macro-problem in constructivism. *Constructivist Foundations*, 12(1), 47–48.

Troadec, B. (2007). Constructivism, culture, and cognitive development: What kind of schemes for a cultural psychologist? *Constructivist Foundations*, 3(1), 38–51.

Zahavi, D. (2022). Individuality and community: The limits of social constructivism. *Ethos, Berkeley, Calif*, 50(4), 392–409. https://doi.org/10.1111/etho.12364

Journal of Philosophical Investigations
Print ISSN: 2251-7960 Online ISSN: 2423-4419
Homepage: https://philosophy.tabrizu.ac.ir

Analysis of the Basis and Arguments of the Theory of "Active Intellect" in Islamic Philosophy

Mansour Imanpour

Department of Islamic Philosophy, Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University, Iran. Email: imanpour@azaruniv.ac.ir

Article Info

Article type:
Research Article

Article history:
Received 05 June 2024
Received in revised from 28 June 2024
Accepted 31 July 2024
Published online 07 September 2024

Keywords:
intellect, active intellect, Aristotle, actual intellect, efficient cause, tenth intellect.

ABSTRACT

One of the influential topics in Islamic philosophy is the issue of "active intellect". This term has entered Islamic philosophy from Aristotle's philosophy and some interpreters of Aristotle's works. Islamic philosophers interpreted this issue in the context of their philosophical system and by expanding its concept from the field of natural and industrial (artistic) phenomena to the field of epistemology; they gave it a significant role. These philosophers have presented two types of arguments to prove the active intellect. Some of these arguments are formulated based on the theory of the nine spheres and according to the principle of causality. These arguments attemt to prove efficient causes for the existence of spheres and introduce ultimate causes for their rotational movements. Arguments of the second category also attempt to prove active intellect by relying on principles such as "every event and contingent needs an efficient cause" and "lacking a thing, it is not given to it". In this article, these arguments have been examined and finally, it has been concluded that the arguments of the first category are vulnerable and invalid due to the invalidity of their basis (planetary theory); and the arguments of the second category can only prove non-material and efficient cause or causes, provided that their premises are true, not the active intellect, i.e., the tenth intellect.

Cite this article: Imanpour M. (2024). Analysis of the Basis and Arguments of the Theory of "Active Intellect" in Islamic Philosophy. *Journal of Philosophical Investigations*, 18(48), 199-216. https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.61967.3776

© The Author(s).
Publisher: University of Tabriz.
https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.61967.3776

Introduction

Undoubtedly, Islamic philosophy has developed along with Greek and Hellenistic philosophy in the context of Islamic teachings. Among various issues, some issues have attracted the attention of Islamic philosophers, and influenced many issues with new color and content. One of these very influential issues is the doctrine of "Active Intellect"(*aql fa'al*). This Aristotelian doctrine, with the interpretation of some commentators of his works, took on a new color in the context of Islamic philosophy, and was introduced as the intermediary between the supersensible and the sensible world, and earned the titles of " Giver of forms", " Chief of the world under the Moon" and "Gabriel Amin" and it was considered to be the proximate origin of matter and form, soul and intellectual perceptions and revelation.

The Islamic philosophers removed this issue from the natural and Aristotelian background and the course of the gradual realization and actualization of the potentiality by the form, and they based it on some fundamentals of Islamic philosophy, such as a special perception of the efficient cause, and the need for a cause for every possible event, and the impossibility of giving a thing by something that lacks it, and proved this claim with arguments. Now the question is that what are those bases and arguments? And are these arguments sufficient to prove that claim or not?

The whole effort of this paper is aimed at clarifying the concealed foundations by referring to the original texts of Islamic philosophy and using a descriptive-analytical method, and analyzing the change of direction and the historical background of the topic, and by explaining and analyzing the arguments, show their weakness and strength and the limits of their efficiency.

1. Background of the theory of active intellect

Undoubtedly, one of the main sources of Islamic philosophy historically is the same Greek philosophies, especially Aristotle's philosophy. This philosophy has influenced the Islamic philosophy in various ways, including the Peripatetic Philosophy, Philosophy of Illumination and Transcendental Philosophy. One of these influential topics is the issue of "active intellect". In Book9 (Theta) of *Metaphysics*, after explaining the meanings of potentiality and actuality and their relationship, Aristotle enumerates the types of priority of actuality to potentiality and states that:

> For from the potential the actual is always produced by an actual thing, e.g. man by man and musicians by musicians; there is always a first mover, and the mover already exists actually. We have said in our account of substance that everything that is produced is something produced from something and by something, and is the same in species as it (*Metaphysics*, 9, 1049b, 24-30).

Based on the above text and the system based on cause and effect, and potentiality (*quwwah*) and action, and matter and form in Aristotle's thinking, every phenomenon and production, both natural and industrial, is preceded by a potentiality that is actualized and flourishes, and is preceded

by an appropriate form and actualization (of the type of subsequent actualization) that actualizes and realizes that potentiality; Whether that actual existence and realizing agent exists in nature, such as the actual human being that causes the actualization of human potentiality and, as a result, the birth of a human person, or whether that the prior and actual agent is present in the builder's mind, like the shape and plan of a building in the mind of an architect, which causes the objective realization of the building itself outside.

Along with the above theory about products and artefacts in the natural world, in a historic paragraph in the 5th chapter of the third book of the book *0n the soul*, Aristotle expressed the same point of view about the process of reasoning in the soul, and based the actualization of potential intelligibles in the sensible objects on passive and active intellect in the human soul. Aristotle's words in this context are as follows:

> These distinct elements must likewise be found within the soul. And in fact thought, as we have described it, is what it is by virtue of becoming all things, while there is another which is what it is by virtue of making all things: this is a sort of positive state like light; for in a sense light makes potential colours into actual colours.
> Thought in this sense of it is separable, impassible, unmixed, since it is in its essential nature activity…When separated it is alone just what it is, and this alone is immortal and eternal (Aristotle, *on the Soul*, 3, 430A, 10-24).

These interpretable phrases of Aristotle about "constructive reason" have caused conflicting views in the history of philosophy. Some of the interpreters and commentators of Aristotle's works and thoughts, by referring to some of his words and some of the phrases used in the mentioned paragraph, believed in the independent existence of the active intellect and considered it as a separate and immortal being outside of the human soul. Some others, referring to Aristotle's intellectual foundations about matter and form, and potentiality and actuality, and phrases used in the same paragraph, consider intellect to be an element of the human soul; and they believe that the active and passive intellect are two aspects and functions of this single intellect in man. The first group divided into two groups regarding the explanation of the existence of active intellect. Some like Alexander of Aphrodisias (the greatest commentator of Aristotle in the second century AD) "counted the active intellect in all human beings numerically as one and considered it the same as God" (Taylor, 2013, 121) and believed that this active intellect, which is the same as God " and at the same time that it actualizes the passive intellect, it also actualizes the potential intelligible" (Davoudi, 2009, 227 footnote). Some others of the same group, despite the fact that they consider it to be a substance separate from man, but they consider it not God and the First mover, but an immaterial intellectual being (for example, the tenth intellect of the ten intellects) and believe that it has, in itself, "an equal relation to all human beings and even to all the world that is under the moon" (Davoudi, 2009b, 105). Each of the two groups, that is, those who say that there is a separate

active intellect, and those who say that there is a creative (active) intellect within the human soul, have detailed proofs and evidences, which are beyond the scope of this article, and their details has been reported and examined in the precious book of. "*Intelligence (aql) in Hikmate Mashsha*" (Davoudi, 2009b, 95-103).

2. Muslim philosophers on active intellect

Muslim philosophers were those who lived in the Islamic intellectual environment and were educated based on Islamic teachings, and after translating Greek books into Arabic, they studied Greek and Neoplatonic philosophies, and based on the conditions and backgrounds, they themselves put on the clothes of philosophy and founded philosophical schools, i.e. the Peripatetic Philosophy, Illuminationist Philosophy and Transcendental Philosophy. The first philosophers like Al-Kindi, Farabi, and Avicenna encountered Greek sources and thoughts based on the mental context and thought system formed in the Islamic environment, and based on that, they interpreted Greek thoughts. With the same approach, these philosophers turned to Aristotle's words about "active intellect" and by plundering of Aristotle's phrases on the precedence of every production and event by the previous actual factor of the same type, they strengthened the divine perspective based on the centrality of the efficient cause.

The explanation is that, as it was said, Aristotle emphasized in the ninth book of *Metaphysics* that every realization and actuality of potentiality and production in nature is preceded by the previous actual agent of the same type. The meaning of this text is that if the kernel of a palm tree or a human sperm materializes, and a palm tree and a human being are born, this birth actually originates from the actual palm tree and the previous human being. Taking advantage of these phrases of Aristotle, these philosophers first developed the realm of this interpretation and turned it into a general rule and extended its function not only to nature and industry, but also to the field of knowledge and the creation of an immaterial entity such as the human soul; and the actualization of intelligible forms (intelligibles) and the creation of the human soul were included in this rule. Secondly, they considered the meaning of "emergence" and "causality" contained in Aristotle's speech to be the efficient cause and giver of existence, and by highlighting and emphasizing the efficient cause with the color of Plotinus' thinking, they considered that efficient cause to be synonymous with active and creative intellect. The words of Kindi and Farabi, which are reminiscent of Aristotle's words in this context, are as follows: "Everything that is potential, becomes actual through another thing, which is the same thing, but in an actual way" (Kindi, 2008, 179). "Nothing potential can become actual except through a cause that is actual like {of the type of] the same potential thing" (Farabi, 2008, 144). According to this interpretation, this statement became a comprehensive rule that was considered as a basic, respectable and valid principle in all schools of Islamic philosophy.

Furthermore, Farabi writes focusing on the second analogy of the quoted paragraph from the book *on the soul*, i.e. comparing the function of the creative intellect to the role of light on colors in the case of visual vision:

> That intellect gives to the material intellect, which is potentially intellect, something that is like the light that the sun gives to the sight, because its place for the material intellect is like the position of sun to the sight. Sight is the same potentiality and state in matter (body). That potentiality, before it sees, is potential sight, and colors are also potentially visible before they are seen. Neither in the nature of the potentiality that is in the eye, it is sufficient for vision to be actualized, nor is it sufficient for vision to be actualized in the nature of colors. It is the sun that gives light to the sight so that it can see with it, and also gives brightness to the colors so that they can be seen through it.... The work of this separate intellect for the material intellect is similar to the role of the sun for sight, and for this reason, it is called the active intellect. (Farabi, 2007, 97-98).

Ibn Sina also repeats and completes Farabi's words in this context and writes: "whatever has come out of the potentiality to actuality, has come out only by the actual cause." (Avicenna, 2006, 321). It is the active intellect that brings soul from potentiality to actuality in intellectual forms, which is related to our souls like sun (Farabi, 2007, 97-98), and the meaning of activeness of this intellect is its actuality and its role in bringing the soul out of potentiality into actuality. (Avicenna, 1984b, 98).

In the West of the Islamic world, the same approach on the active intellect was accepted, and philosophers such as Ibn Bajjah (500-533 AH) and Ibn Rushd (520-595 AH) considered the active intellect as the last immaterial intellect and believed in its independent and separate existence. According to Ibn Bajjah, the active intellect is pure form and actuality, and the forms and principles of things exist in its essence, and it is he who moves the matter; and the general rules and scientific explanation and the foundations of arguments about nature come to the human soul from it; and the real goal of man is to connect and contact with it (Saeed sheikh, 1994, 155-157; Goodman, 2006, 66-49). Ibn Rushd also repeats the same opinion of Ibn Bajjah and the previous Islamic philosophers, and considers the active intellect as a distinct and separate being outside of the human soul. (Saeed sheikh, 173-175, 1994) and believes that the number of different intellects is 38 and the last one is the active intellect. (Majid Fakhri, 2008, 312-312) and the relationship between the active intellect and human souls is like the relationship of the sun with the eyes, sights and colors (Fakhouri and Jar, 2011, 683).

Philosophers of the Philosophy of Illumination and Transcendental Philosophy also took a tortuous path by accepting the words of Peripatetic philosophers in this field and digesting it in their philosophical structure about the active intellect and the theory of Intellects. The reason for the difficulty of these philosophers in this field is their double effort to reconcile between two

competing and alternative opinions of the two great Greek philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, in this field, and adding Platonic and sometimes mystical and religious content to it. The brief explanation of the matter is that, in his ontological scheme, Suhrawardi holds the theory of Peripatetic vertical Intellects on the one hand, and on the other hand, he defends the theory of the Platonic Forms (Ideas), and based on that, he also believes in countless but finite vertical intellects (Suhrawardi, 1993, vol.2. 140-138) and believes in the Masters of Species and Platonic Forms ((Fakhouri and Jar, 2011, 142-143). It is clear that in this scheme, in practice, the active intellect (according to the perception and narration of previous Muslim philosophers such as Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina), loses its specific position and function, and all its previous responsibilities are delegated to Masters of Species; and the creator, sustainer, and completer of human beings in this world is the Lord of human race, not the tenth intellect (Suhrawardi, 1993, Vol. 2, 144-143). The translation of Suhrawardi's phrases in this context is as follows: "A large number of the vertical dominating lights (alqawahir) arise from each other …and they are the main and high-ranking dominants" (Suhrawardi, 1993, vol. 2, 142). "And you know that the series of vertical lights must be finite, and these lead to a light from which immaterial light no longer arises" (Suhrawardi, 1993, Vol. 2, 138-139). Shaharzuri - the prominent commentator of *Hikmat al-Ishraq* - writes about the number of Vertical Lights in Suhrawardi's thought: "And yet the emanated lights multiply in this way until their number reaches such a level that human faculties are unable to surround them" (Shaharzuri, 1993, 364).

The story is the same in the Transcendental Philosophy, and all human affairs, such as creation, continuity, evolution and resurrection are the responsibility of the Lord of mankind. For Mullahsadra, from an ontological perspective, the Ideas are both the creators of worldly objects and the sustainers of their identity (Mullasadra, 2003, 261-260), and that individual and Ideal entity in the world of the Ideas "is the origin of other individuals, and individuals are effects and signs and shadows of that entity" (Mullasadra, 2003, 263; 1988, Vol. 2, 62).

> Those immaterial ideas and forms are fundamentally entities, whose relation to these mortal sensible forms is the relation of origin to image and shadow; and because they are the agent, the end, and the form of these created and changeable images, they are considered the sources of these. (Mullasadra, 1988. Vol 5, 350).

From an epistemological perspective, intellectual forms are obtained for human souls via the ascension of the soul and observation of the same Ideas and Masters of Species. "When the soul perceives universal concepts, it observes luminous and immaterial essences, but not by abstraction of intelligible form from the sensible" (Mullasadra, 1988. Vol 5, 157). From eschatological perspective, the Ideas and Masters of Species are considered the ultimate goals of all worldly individuals, including inanimate objects, plants, animals, and humans; and individuals of different species with their essential and existential and continuous movement are trying to reach the entity of the Lord of their kind (Mullasadra, 1988, vol. 5: 350; vol. 9: 261; Sabzawari, 2003, 614).

Tabatabai considers the arguments of Ideas to be weak (Tabatabai, *Nahayeh,* 319-317; *Badayeh*, 177-175), and turns again to the theory of the active intellect in the Islamic Peripatetic philosophy, and depends the occurrence of rational perceptual forms in the soul on the presentational observation of the Active Intellect, which is the source of all lower existential entities; and even based on the theory of "the return of acquired knowledge to the knowledge by presence ", the occurrence of particular perceptual forms, i.e. sensual and imaginal, is also considered to be the result of the presentational observation of imaginary substantive beings in the disjunctive imaginal world (Tabatabai, *Nahayeh*, 239, 250-249; *Badayah*, 146-145). Like Suhrawardi and Mullasadra, he says about the number of vertical Intellects: "It has been proven that there are many vertical Intellects, although we have no way to count their number" (*Badayeh*, 174).

3. Intellectual foundations of Islamic philosophers about active intellect

Since Islamic philosophers lived in the context of Islamic culture, and Quranic teachings especially about creation and theology had captured their minds and hearts; they had a special view and approach towards the system of existence and based on that, they plundered some phrases of Greek philosophers and interpreted them. In other words, Muslim philosophers had certain intellectual foundations and based on the same foundations, they understood and interpreted and strengthened some fundamental topics and terms such as "Active Intellect". The philosophical foundations of these philosophers about the theory of active intellect are:

1. As we know, Aristotle was the first person who proposed the four causes, i.e. efficient, formal, material, and final causes comprehensively and boldly, and considered a phenomenon such as a table or an oak tree to be the product of these four causes. Islamic philosophers focused on this subject; firstly, they gave a special preponderance to the efficient cause, and secondly, they interpreted it as creation out of nothing (creation ex nihilo), and assigned this dignity and privilege only to incorporeal beings and above all to God. Reflecting on the works of Greek philosophers, especially Aristotle, shows that the "creating god" and "creator out of nothingness" had no central place in their thinking (Jankar, 2009, 202) and the god of Aristotle's philosophy ,i.e. the first mover, which is actuality and pure reason (Aristotle , Metaphysics, Book 2, Chapter 7, 1072B 30-25), moves the heavens only as a final cause ,i.e. object of love, not as an efficient cause (Jankar, 2018, 203-201; Guthrie, 2018, 182; Gumpers, 1375, vol. 3, 1340 and 1461). Therefore, Aristotle's God is not the creator of the world. For Arastotal, both matter is eternal and uncreated and intellects have an independent and uncreated existence (Ross, 280, 2017). Aristotle, especially as he moved away from Plato, tried to interpret the phenomena of the world from the point of view of natural causes, not supernatural causes (Jankar, 2009, 204). "So Aristotle often equates the form with the efficient cause and the final cause" (Ross, 1998, 123); That is, the efficient and ultimate cause in all natural and industrial events is referred to and reduced to the same formal cause in the final analysis (Gawam Safari, 2015, 108-119); However, in Islamic philosophy, the efficient cause

became the same as the giver of existence and sat at the top. Most of Islamic philosophers with a divine and monotheistic approach obtained from religious teachings, and influenced by Neo-Platonists and making a distinction between existence and quiddity and believing in the necessity of an efficient cause for everything contingent, believe that efficient cause is the one that gives existence to an effect that does not exist by nature, and the origin of change and movement is not the efficient cause but, in fact, the natural cause. "What divine philosophers mean by the cause is not only the origin of movement, as naturalists think, but it means the origin and the bestower of existence" (Avicenna, 1984a, 257).

> So it is this sort of cause that deserves to be the cause because this cause prevents the non-existence of a thing. He is the one who gives complete existence to everything. This means that according to the sages, it is called innovation, and it is the creation of something after its non-existence (Avicenna, 1984a, 266).

Therefore, in the opinion of the divine philosopher, the efficient cause is the bestower of existence and the bringer out of something from the concealment (hiding place) of non-existence to the realm of existence (Sabzawari, 1988, Vol. 2: 214 *Taliqahe*; Farabi, 2007, 35-46; Ibn Sina, 1984 A, 403), so the cause whose only role is to stimulate and change of matter, "such a cause is a "imperfect cause" (preparing cause), not a perfect agent" (Mullasadra, 1988, Vol. 2: 213).

2. According to the previous topic, in the eyes of Islamic philosophers, there is no divine agency and bestower of existence among bodies and the physical objects, (Mullasadra, 1989, Vol. 2: 217) and the only role of bodies and their relationship with each other is preparation and stimulate and movement, and It is also dependent on a special position and confrontation; and an body affects another object (body) on the condition that it has a specific relationship and distance with it and faces it; and since such a relationship between an object(body) and a separate being (immaterial) cannot be imagined and realized, therefore no material entity has no causality or effect on a separate being (Mullasadra, 1989, vol. 3: 101; vol. 6: 46) and basically, creation is not a feature and work of dead and inherently dark body (Suhrawardi, 1993, vol. 2, 109-110, 119).

3. Another basis of Muslim philosophers in interpreting and proving active intellect is the issue of the criterion of the need of a thing for an efficient cause. In the opinion of these philosophers, everything that happens (originated thing) and is possible, and is dependent on another, needs an efficient cause, and it is impossible for such a thing to exist without an efficient cause (Avicenna, 1983, 122, 177-176; 1985 A, 261-260). Therefore, everything that happens and is possible in this universe, needs an effective cause in the strict sense of the word.

4. Another important basis of Muslim philosophers in this field and many other issues is the same rule as "Bestower (the giver) of a thing does not lack that" or the lacking of something is not giver of it. These philosophers believe that based on the self-evident judgment of intellect, if something lacks an thing and according to the assumption, it is the originator and agent of it, it

means that this thing both has it and doesn't have it, and this is nothing but a contradiction! (Dinani, 1993, Vol. 2, 499-494).

5. One of the topics that, as a basis, plays an important role in proving the active intellect is the issue of the immateriality of the soul and rational perceptual forms from the point of view of Muslim philosophers. Peripatetic (Mashsha'i) and illuminated (Ishraqi) philosophers consider the human soul to be inherently immaterial and a originated thing (Avicenna, 2006, 310-306 & 288-300; Suhrawardi, 1993, Vol. 2, 203-200) and Mullasadra also believes that origination of the human soul is physical and its survival is spiritual (Mullasadra, 1989, Vol. 3: 330; 2003, 309); and all these philosophers introduce intellectual forms as completely immaterial. Therefore, it is clear that these philosophers will turn to the separate causes in the explanation of these immaterial originated beings.

6. By refuting the theory of Plato's Forms, Aristotle believed in three kinds of substance: sensible perishable substance, e.g. elemental bodies and plants; the indestructible and eternal sensible substance, such as the heavens; the immovable substance, i.e. the intellect and above all, God (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book 12, 1, 1069a 35-31). In order to explain the system of existence with the help of reason and empirical findings, he starts with the circular and eternal movement of the heavens (*Metaphysics*, Book 12, 1, 1072-25-19, 7) and assigns a intellect to each heaven, and introduces (according to opinions of astronomers) intellectual substances as many as the heavens (*Metaphysics*, Book 12, 1, 1073 A 38-37). Therefore, for Aristotle, the number of heavens and, accordingly, the number of motionless substances are fifty-five (one of them is the first substance, God, and the rest are intellects, (*Metaphysics*, Book 12, 1, 1073b 4-3) or forty-seven (*Metaphysics*, chapter 8, 1074a 6-17).

Muslim philosophers also accepted this general scheme (theory of intellects and spheres) about the world, and by taking the Ptolemaic theory about the number of spheres for granted, and digesting Aristotelian thoughts in this field in digestion of Platonic and Islamic thoughts, they interpreted the system of existence and its degrees.

4. Arguments of Muslim philosophers to prove the active intellect

According to the above-mentioned topics and foundations, Muslim philosophers have generally attempted to prove the active intellect via two types of arguments: some of these arguments are partially based on cosmology based on astronomical theory, and by granting the theory of nine spheres with a special interpretation, they prove the ten intellects. In fact, these arguments are considered the common product of philosophical rules such as the principle of Causality and the Principle of the One, and the theory of astronomers (as a postulate).

The other group are the arguments that are mainly organized and formulated to explain the temporal events; especially the origination of the human soul and intellectual forms; and the basis of these arguments is the rule of "Bestower (the giver) of a thing does not lack it ".

The arguments of the first category can be summarized and presented in this way:

1. Since the First Cause, namely the Necessity Being, is simple and immaterial, therefore, according to the Principle of the One, the first effect from Him will necessarily be immaterial substance (Avicenna, 1363 A, 404). In the first effect (first intellect), two or three directions are included due to its possibility and existential poverty. Now, from those dual reasoning (knowledge of Almighty Necessary and knowledge of its own essence according to Farabi) or the triple reasoning (knowledge of Almighty Necessary and knowledge of its own essence, and knowledge of its own possibility in the opinion of Avicenna), the second intellect and the first sphere and its soul are emanated, and from the second intellect in the same way, the third intellect and the second sphere and its soul are emanated, and the creation continues in the same way until it leads to the tenth intellect, and from the tenth intellect, not another sphere, but the world under the moon, and the first matter and form arise (Farabi, 2007, 55-53; Ibn Sina, 1984a, 407-406). "So the series of creation leads to the ninth heaven and the sphere of the moon; and the number of non-material beings after the First Being is ten, and the number of heavenly bodies is nine in total. So their sum is nineteen" (Farabi, 2007, 60).

2. Heavenly bodies are surrounded by each other (every upper includes the lower), and according to their characteristics, they are needy and possible (contingent). On the other hand, these spheres are not the efficient cause of each other, and their direct emanation from Almighty Necessary is also impossible based on the Principle of the One. Therefore, each of them needs a separate effective cause, which is the immaterial intellect (Avicenna, 1996, Vol. 3: 221-241). Thus, the number of intellects will be equal to the number of heavens and earth located in their center.

3. Since the spheres are moving and their movement requires a mover, and the mover is also distinct from the moved (mobile) according to rational criteria; Therefore, as many as the heavens, there must be movers that are pure actuality and motionless, and they stimulate the heavens as ends and ultimate realities. Thus, there are as many immaterial intellects as there are the spheres (Mullasadra, 1989, vol.7: 269-268) and the earth and its belongings also rely on another intellect other than those nine intellects, i.e. the tenth intellect.

4. The movements of the spheres, due to their rotation, are voluntary and arise from their conscious souls. Now, their purpose and motivation in these movements is either appetitive faculty or faculty of anger or rational desire. Desire based on appetite and anger is raised when it involves attracting of something suitable to the body or avoiding that which is against it; and such animal purposes are excluded in relation to the heavens (according to their existential structure). Therefore, the purpose of the heavens in the constant and willing movements is a fixed and permanent rational thing. This rational purpose is also not lower and insignificant thing like benefiting a lowly being. Therefore, this intellectual goal is aimed at an intellectual perfection, i.e. imitation of the intellectual separate being. On the other hand, this rational being cannot be the one God, otherwise the movements of the heavens would not be different in terms of direction and size. Therefore, the

purpose of movement of each heaven is imitation of the beloved. " So each of them has a special beloved who is his leader and complements him through stimulation, and this also follows him and tries to be like him" (Mullasadra, 1989, vol. 7, 269). Therefore, there are as many as the number of spheres, vertical intellects and objects of love; and the responsible and maintainer of the earth is another intellect called the active intellect.

5. The rotational movements of the heavens are infinite and continuous. Therefore, their sources must also be beings that are infinite in terms of influence and stimulation, and since bodies and material objects cannot be the sources of these infinite movements due to the finiteness of force and influence, and the Necessary Being is also not the source of these many movements according the principle of the One, therefore there is no other way than the reference of these movements to many principles, i.e. many intellects (Mullasadra, 1989, vol. 7, 269). So, there are as many vertical intellects as there are the heavenly spheres, and there is another intellect for the earth and its belongings.

A brief look at these arguments clearly shows that the arguments mentioned above are mainly based on the study of the spheres and the heavens to prove the intellectual substances and determine their number. However, there are also arguments that prove active intellect by studying the phenomena of the natural world, especially immaterial phenomena, such as the human soul and the realization of intellectual forms in it. These arguments mainly look for its efficient cause by pointing fingers at an immaterial and originated thing, and after refuting natural explanations, they turn to the divine explanation and the immaterial entity called the active intellect. These arguments can be presented as follows:

1. According to Aristotle's point of view, every body composed of matter and form; and the first matter and form are eternal and do not need an efficient cause; But Muslim philosophers have considered the first matter and form to be possible and have considered its efficient cause to be active intellect. Therefore, the body is composed of matter and form; and the inseparable matter and form are contingent beings and effect; however, neither matter can be the efficient cause of form, nor form can be the efficient cause of matter. Therefore, an immutable entity called the active intellect, with a making (*jael*), creates the form that requires a matter, and preserves the same individual and sustains matter by a form (Avicenna, 1984a, 89-80; Mullasadra, 1989, Vol. 7: 265; 1382, 167).

2. Another argument that can be presented to prove the active intellect is the same way of the origination of the human soul. The brief explanation of the argument is that the human soul is firstly, a temporal originated thing, and secondly, it is an immaterial substance (Avicenna, 2006, 279-300 & 308-307). Therefore, according to the aforementioned principles, it needs an efficient cause. According to the aforementioned principles, its efficient cause cannot be physical; Because the soul is stronger than the physical body due to its spirituality, and lower cannot be a cause for a stronger than itself. In addition, there is no a special position and confrontation between the

immaterial soul and the body, so that the body is the efficient cause for the soul. Therefore, its efficient cause is the Active Intellect and Giver of forms. (Farabi, 2008, 130, 137). Suhrawardi, who according to his philosophical thoughts, delegates the role and responsibility of the active intellect to the Platonic Forms and considers the creator of the human soul to be the Lord of the human species, writes:

> From some of the all–dominant lights, that is, the owner of the dark body (Talism) of the rational(*nateq*) species, that is, Gabriel - who is considered to be a close father among the elders of the heads of the kingdom, and is the soul-giver, the Holy Spirit, the giver of knowledge and confirmation, and the giver of life and virtue- the immaterial light on the perfect human temperament is created and emanated (Suhrawardi, 1993, Vol. 2, 201).

3. Another argument that have been given for "active intellect's existence" and is actually the most important and famous argument in this field and has been reported in most of the books of Muslim philosophers with similar interpretations, the same argument through the way of the actualization of intellectual forms for the potential human intellect. These philosophers, relying on the aforementioned foundations, especially "a possible thing by its efficient cause becomes existent", and the rule of ""Bestower (the giver) of a thing does not lack that" and referring to some of Aristotle's interpretations, especially the phrase "always an actual being, emerges from a potential being by means of an actual being; ...every phenomenon is something that emerges from something by means of something" and by focusing on the analogy used in Aristotle's text, i.e. comparing the function of the active intellect to the role of light on colors in the case of visual vision, prepared and presented a proof in this context that its summary is based on Farabi and Ibn Sina's interpretation as follows: The immaterial human soul has faculties, and the most important of which is the reasonable faculty. This intellect is initially potential and only has the potentiality and capability to become actual. On the other hand, reasonable forms and natures are also potentially contained and involved in sensible objects and concealed in them. Therefore, both the intellect (cognitive subject) and the intellectual form (object) are possible; but although both of these are potential, it is possible for them to become actual. On the other hand, there is no sufficiency to be actualized in the nature of the essence of any of these two; Therefore, both of these, in order to become actual and come out of potentiality to actuality, need a being that makes both of them actual, and the potential intellect is actualized through the attained intelligibles; and that source and agent must be a being that is actual and separate (Farabi, 2007, 97-96); otherwise, if it itself, in terms of intellectual forms, is potential, it will need another entity to become actual and will lead to an infinite regress. Therefore, in or der to repulsion of the infinite sequence, it must be a being that itself and the intellectual forms included in it are actual (Farabi, 2008, 138). "And the act of this separate intellect similar to the action of the sun in the case of visual vision, and for this reason, it was called the active intellect, and its position and rank compared to the

immaterial(separate) beings that were mentioned (except the First Cause) is the tenth rank" (Farabi, 2007, 98). Ibn Sina also writes in the same context:

> Sometimes the human soul is potential intellect and then it becomes actual intellect, and everything that comes out of the potentiality to actuality, necessarily comes out through the actual being. Therefore, there must be a cause that takes our souls out of the potentiality to actuality in the intellectual forms, and it is he who is the cause of intellectual forms, and that is nothing but the actual intellect, which has the principles and sources of rational forms immaterially in his essence, and its relation to our souls is like a relation of the sun to our sight (Avicenna, 2006, 320).

Therefore, after actualization of sensory and imaginative forms, the human intellect becomes ready and prone to connection and union with the active intellect, and in the light of that blessed connection and based on the previous special capacity, a special intellectual form is spread and illuminated by the active intellect (Avicenna, 2006, 322). On the view of these philosophers, it is not the case that intellectual forms are gradually abstracted from physical phenomena, and intellect itself performs this abstraction, and the principle and essence of intellectual form is preserved and the same in sensory, imaginary, and intellectual stages; In other words, it is not the case that the sensible form itself is transferred from the sensory and imaginary stage to the intellect, but the sensory and imaginary stages and their study by the soul and all the thoughts and reflections of the soul in these stages are only prepares for the soul to encounter and connect with the active intellect (Avicenna, 2006, 322); But intellectual forms are effects that "are brought to the soul from outside, and when the preparedness of the soul is perfect, the giver of forms bestows them" (Avicenna, 1983, 166).

In some of the works of Muslim philosophers, this argument is presented in a different way, and instead of emphasizing on the potential intellect and intelligible, it insists on the creation of immaterial intellectual forms and its need for an efficient cause. Based on this explanation, the intellectual forms in the soul are temporally originated things and immaterial and need an efficient cause. The efficient cause of these cannot be the physical body (due to its weakness and the lack of position and confrontation between the body and the immaterial entity), nor can the soul itself, which is inherently devoid of these forms, be the bestower of these. Therefore, the only assumption left is that the immaterial intellectual being (the closest intellects to the soul) is the creator of these intellectual forms (Tabatabaei, *Nahayeh*, 249).

4. Another argument that has been put forward in the context of epistemology to prove "active intellect" in Ibn Sina's works, and has been consistently reported by Khawja Tusi and Qutb al-Din Razi in *Sharh al-Isharat,* is that without a doubt, all of us sometimes experience a kind of forgetfulness (dhuhul) in the field of rational conceptions and with a little effort, we remember them again; and sometimes we experience another type of forgetfulness (forgetting) and we

basically do not remember the forgotten matter, unless we earn it again by a new and hard effort. Therefore, since there is a clear difference between temporary forgetfulness (dhuhul) and forgetfulness, then something must be there for this forgotten conception (in a state of temporary forgetfulness) to remain unchanged and preserved and to be remembered again. This preserver can be neither body nor physical; because the impression of intelligible forms in it is impossible, and neither can the soul; because the soul in itself, its relationship with the intelligible forms is potential, not actual. Therefore, the sustainer and source of these intelligible forms is another being in which all intelligible forms are actually present and it is nothing but the active intellect (Tusi, 1996, Vol. 2, 362-361).

5. Evaluation of arguments

A reflection on the mentioned arguments and examining their foundations shows that the foundations of the first -class arguments are: the principle of causality and its implications, especially the special concept of the efficient cause and the One Rule, and the postulate known as the ten spheres. Islamic philosophers were trying to justify both the story of creation and the hierarchy of emanation and to solve the problem of the spheres within this scheme based on the causal system. What was obtained from the combination of these two attitudes and findings (philosophical and scientific) is the same that has appeared in the arguments of the first category. Therefore, considering dual or triple directions in the first intellect and determining the number of separate substances (vertical intellects) and their leading to the tenth (active) intellect, exactly follows the famous theory of the spheres at that time. It is clear that with the invalidity of the above-mentioned theory and the earth-centered thought, both things based on it, i.e. the theory of two or three directions in the first intellect and theory of ten intellects, will be shaken and invalidated, and it is no longer possible to defend the scheme of Islamic philosophers in this field.

A reflection on the arguments of the second category also shows that the approach of Islamic philosophers in analyzing and explaining some phenomena, especially in the field of epistemology, is mainly based on supernatural causes rather than natural causes. The description is that Muslim philosophers, especially the peripatetic philosophers like Aristotle, attempted to explain the changes and movements in this world by a natural approach. For this reason, peripatetic and Sadra'i philosophers attribute all the effects and actions of natural beings to specific forms and consider their forms as the proximate causes of these effects. For example, all the accidents of the bodies and actions of plants and animals and even humans arise from their specific forms, not separate and supernatural causes (Avicenna, 1984a, 179-180; Mullasadra, 1989, Vol. 3, 49-48).

The main point in our discussion here is that a group of interpreters of Aristotle's opinions are trying to consider active and passive intellect as two functions of one intellect within the human soul, and for this reason, like Aristotle himself, they insist that intellectual forms are not separate from sensible objects, but they are concealed and involved in these sensible objects and they are potentially present in them; and the human intellect, in terms of its constructive function and as a

positive state, plays the role of form and makes these intellectual forms in objects, actual, and it unites with these forms obtained from this sensible objects, and become actual (Davoudi, 2010b, 114-107) and "the inherent nature of intellect is that of being adorned in a form without matter" (Ross, 2017, 228). But the main point that makes the difference here is that all Islamic philosophers consider intellectual forms (rational concepts) immaterial, and the philosophers of the Peripatetic Philosophy and Philosophy of Illumination also consider the human soul immaterial at the very beginning of their creation. Now, these philosophers are faced with this difficult question, how do these immaterial and temporally originated things come into existence, and what are the causes of their existence? And how does an aspect of the human intellect create these immaterial forms? On the opinion of these philosophers, since immaterial beings are superior to material things in terms of strength and intensity of existence, and among the material things, there is no agency in the sense of the giver of existence; Therefore, the only way left is to turn to and cling to the immaterial being or beings. Therefore, it can be said that the Islamic philosophers once again turned their attention to the Platonic approach in the ontological explanation of knowledge and the immaterial soul; and to explain these, they turned to supernatural causes, and even a philosopher like Sheikh al-Rais, considers thought and supplication in deductive reasoning to be the introduction and foundation to receiving divine grace and emanation of the middle term; That is, in fact, the middle term of the deduction is the emanation of the separate(immaterial) being (Avicenna, 2021, 287).

For Islamic philosophy, all other than God are contingent beings and consequently, they need an efficient cause; and an efficient cause in the sense of the giver of existence, plays an essential and irreplaceable role and is restricted to immaterial beings, and on another level, it is unique and specific to God's agency; and in this approach, the divine explanation overshadows the natural explanation in the interpretation of various matters. It is clear that in the framework of this approach, the ground is provided for the presentation of supernatural causes and arguments of the second category. The following phrases, quoted by Aristotle and Mullasadra, clearly show the difference between these two approaches:

> What is the material cause of man? The menstrual fluid. What is the moving cause? The semen. The formal cause? His essence. The final cause? His end (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book 8, Chapter 4, 1044a, 35-34; 1044b, 1).

> The father is the cause of the movement of semen into the womb; But to turn it into an animal form and its survival as an animal, its cause, is the Giver of forms (Mullasadra, 1989, vol.2, 213).

Based on the mentioned approach, the first matter and form also require an efficient cause, and the proofs of motion, creation (huduth), and contingency and necessity in proving the Necessary Being are formulated and presented accordingly; However, it should be noted that every argument results and yields only within the framework of its middle term and not more. Therefore, if we

accept all the four proofs mentioned in the second category and their detailed and debatable premises, their result will be that the separate (immaterial) agent or agents have created them; but whether this agent is one or many, and what is its rank and position; it is beyond the scope of these arguments.

Conclusion

The following conclusions can be obtained from the aforementioned discussions:

1. Muslim philosophers moved the discussion of the four Aristotelian causes in the field of nature and industry (natural explanation) towards the centrality of the efficient cause, namely "creation from nothingness" i.e. emanation, and by adding the rule " bestower of existence does not lack it" to it, they attributed the real agency and activity in the natural world to immaterial beings, especially the active intellect (in the peripatetic philosophy), and they considered the tenth intellect to be the creator of the human soul and its remover of the potentiality to actuality in the intellectual forms.
2. Although this change of direction is debatable from one point of view, but from another point of view, it is very effective and history-maker and a turning point. In fact, the origin of the difference between the two viewpoints starts from here, is our world in its changes and transformations and in the course of its continuation and evolution, a self-sufficient thing, or beyond these transformations and events, there is a creative and completing hand called an immaterial being? This question becomes bold and powerful when some of these evolutions and emergences lead to immaterial things. The question is, does the process and transformations of this system based on matter, form, potentiality, actuality, and absence, lead to the emergence of life, soul, and an immaterial perceptual form or not?
3. In response to the above question, Muslim philosophers insist that it is impossible for life, consciousness, and the immaterial soul to arise through a purely material and natural process, and for this very reason, to explain these cases, they resort to active intellect or immaterial intellects and turn to divine explanation. The point worth pondering here is that Farabi and Ibn Sina considered this immaterial being to be the active intellect (tenth) and they proved it by relying on some of the astronomical assumptions of that time and compiling a set of arguments. While some of their arguments were disputed and rejected due to the falsity of the baselessness of those astronomical assumptions, and some others are incapable of proving a certain immaterial entity; in other words, these arguments are more general than claim. Suhrawardi and Mullasadra, while believing in countless vertical intellects, also believed in Plato's Forms and were confused in their ontological and epistemological justifications.
4. Therefore, although based on special philosophical rules, most of the proofs aimed at the world of immaterial beings, and the aforementioned proofs about the active intellect, lead us to an immaterial and separate being or beings, but determining its position and number is beyond the scope of these proofs.

5. Although in the explanation of the events of the world, natural and divine explanations have been proposed as two competitors throughout history, and great philosophers have been engaged in them and have taken certain positions; However, it seems that in the context of Islamic philosophy, especially the peripatetic philosophy, both explanations (from two distinct perspectives) can reasonably be reconciled; and removing one of them in favor of the other cannot be justified.

References

Aristotle. (1987). *Metaphysics*, Translated by Sh. Sharafuddin Khorasani, Goftar Publication. [In Persian]

Aristotle. (1984). *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, edited by J. Barnes, Princeton University.

Davoudi, A. M. (2010a). *Tahshieh, on Soul*, Hikmat Publication. [In Persian]

Davoudi, A. M. (2010b). *Aql in Hikmate Mashsha*, Hikmat Publication. [In Persian]

Dinani, Gh. (1993). *General Philosophical Rules in Islamic Phil*osophy, Vol 2, Institute of Cultural Studies and Research. [In Persian]

Fakhouri, H. & Khalil, J. (2002). *The history of philosophy in the Islamic world*, translated by A. M. Ayati, Scientific and Cultural Publications. [In Persian]

Fārābī, A. N. (2008). *Theology, Heart Beliefs, Demonstration of Immaterial Beings* (Farabi's Philosophical Treatises), translated by S. Rahimian, Scientific and Cultural Publication. [In Persian]

Farabi, A. N. (2007). *Opinions of Ahl al-Madinah al-Fazelaht and its opponents*, Dar al- Maktabato al-Hilal. [In Arabic]

Fakhri, M. (2008). *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, translated by a group of translators, University Publishing Center. [In Persian]

Goodman, L. E. (2016). *Ibn Bajah* (History of Islamic Philosophy edited by Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Olevir Leaman), translated by A. Hesamifar, Vol. 2, Hikmat Publications. [In Persian]

Guthrie, W. K. C. (2009). *The Greek Philosophers from Thales to Aristotle*, translated by H. Fathi, Elm Publication. [In Persian]

Gumpers, Th. (1996). *Greek Thinkers*, translated by M. H. Lotfi, Vol.3, Kharazmi Publication. [In Persian]

Ibn Sina, A. A. (2006). *An-Nafs-u min "Kitab ish- Shifa"*, Edited by H. Hasanzadeh Amoli, Bustan-e Ketab. [In Arabic].

Ibn Sīnā, A. A. (1985). *Al-Najāt*. Mortazavi. [In Arabic]

Ibn Sīnā, A. A. (1984a). *Al-Ilāhiyyāt*. Naser Khosrow Publication. [In Arabic]

Ibn Sīnā, A. A. (1984b). *al-Mabdaʾ wa-l-Maʿād*. University of Tehran Press. [In Arabic]

Ibn Sina, A. A. (1996). *Al-esharat va Al- tanbihat*, Vol. 3, Al- Balagheh Publication. [In Arabic]

Ibn Sīnā, A. A. (1983). *Al-Taʿlīqāt*. Islamic Propagation Office. [In Arabic]

Ibn Sina, A. A. (2021). *Al-Mubahathat*, edited by M. Bidarfar, Iranian Institute of Philosophy. [In Arabic]

Jancar, B. (2009). *Aristotle's Philosophy*, translated by Mehdad Iranitalab, Ittelaat Publication. [In Persian]

Javadi Amoli, A. (1997). *Raḥīq Makhtūm*, part 4, Vol, 2, Esra Publishing Center. [In Persian]

Kinidy, Y. (2008). *On Intellect* (a collection of philosophical treatises), translated by S. M. Yousef Thani, Scientific and Cultural Publication. [In Persian]

Mullasadra, M. (2003). *Al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyya*, Boostan-ee Ketab. [In Arabic]

Mullasadra, M. (2001). *Al-Mabdaʾ wa-l-Maʿād*, Islamic Propaganda Organization. [In Arabic]

Mullasadra, M. (1989). *Al-Ḥikmat al-mutaʿāliya fī l-asfār al-ʿaqliyyat oal- arbaʿa*. Vol. 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, Maktabat al-Mustafawi. [In Arabic]

Qavam Safari, M. (2015). *The Theory of Form in Aristotle's Philosophy*, Hikmat Publication. [In Persian]

Ross, D. (1998*). Aristotle*, translated by M. Qawam Safari, Fekr-e Rooz Publication. [In Persian]

Sabzawārī, M. H. (2001). *Sharḥ al-manẓūma*. Nab Publication. [In Arabic]

Sabzawārī, M. H. (2003). *Al-Taʿlīqā* on *Al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyya*. Boostan-e Ketab. [In Arabic]

Sabzawari, M. H. (1989). *taliqa on Al-Ḥikmat al-mutaʿāliya fī l-asfār al-ʿaqliyyat al-arbaʿa*. Vol. 2, Maktabat al-Mustafawi. [In Arabic]

Sheikh, M. S. (1994). *Studies in muslim philosophy*, Adam Publisher.

Suhrawardi, Sh. Y. (1993). *Hekmat al- ishraq- The Complete Works*, Vol. 2, Foundation of Cultural and Humanities Studies Publication. [In Arabic]

Shahrzouri, M. (1993*). Description of Hekmat al- ishraq*, Institute of Cultural Studies and Research. [In Arabic]

Ṭabāṭabāʾī, M. Ḥ. (n.d.) *Bidāyat al-ḥikmat*. Islamic Propagation Office. [In Arabic]

Tabatabaii, M. H. (n.d), *Nihayat al-hikmaht*, Institute of Islamic Publication. [In Arabic].

Taylor, A. E. (2013). *Aristotl*e, translated by H. Fathi, Hikmat Publication. [In Persian]

Tusi, N. (1996). *Sharh Al-esharat va Al- tanbihat*, Vol. 2. & 3, Al- Balagheh Publication. [In Arabic]

Journal of Philosophical Investigations
Print ISSN: 2251-7960 Online ISSN: 2423-4419
Homepage: https://philosophy.tabrizu.ac.ir

The Ontological Place of Invocation (*du'a*) from the Quranic and Islamic Gnosis Perspective

Hossein Ghaffari

Department of Philosophy, University of Tehran, Iran. Email: hghafari@ut.ac.ir

Article Info

Article type:
Research Article

Article history:
Received 30 June 2024
Received in revised from 23 July 2024
Accepted 27 July 2024
Published online 07 September 2024

Keywords:
invocation, causality, determinism, gnosis, gnosticism, existential desire, praying, spirituality.

ABSTRACT

The main aim of this article, which is to express the essence of du'a, starts with a question: what is du'a, and doesn't it constitute a gap in the system of causality and rational structure of the creation of the world? A definition of the essence of du'a and its dynamics is given through the presentation of the essential basis of the creation of the world according to some Quranic verses, as well as Islamic speculative Gnosticism according to which the world is based on desire and demand (talab). On this basis, the ontological status of du'a and the fact that it does not contradict God's wisdom is underlined. The second part of the study is based on an interpretation of a Quranic verse according to which the reality of du'a is made possible only thanks to God and through His creation of an innate divine human nature, which naturally searches its God and addresses its demands to Him. From this point of view, the special status of man in respect to all the other creatures who, through his supplications, is responsible of defining his ontological status in this world and the hereafter, is also presented

Cite this article: Ghaffari, H. (2024). The Ontological Place of Invocation (*du'a*) from the Quranic and Islamic Gnosis Perspective. *Journal of Philosophical Investigations*, 18(48), 217-232. https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.62301.3805

© The Author(s).
Publisher: University of Tabriz.
https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.62301.3805

Although in the course of human history, they were the philosophers who discussed on existence of God, as far as it is indicated in geography and history, they were the invocators who "discovered" God, and the same is true today. In the beginning of the discussion, it seems that a glance, though very briefly, to the meaning and essence of invocation is necessary. Although, invocation as an external concrete phenomenon is obvious to everybody, when we are going to give a definition for it, there will appear some difficulties. Friedrich Heiler who is one of the most famous researchers in our time and has written an admirable and scholarly book about this, after a lengthy and pleasurable discussion, in the concluding pages of his book, he states the main constituent elements of the essence of invocation as follows:

What does the simple, devout person, undisturbed by reflection, think when he prays? He believes that he speaks with a God, immediately present and personal, has intercourse with Him, that there is between them a vital and spiritual commerce. There are three elements which form the inner structure of the prayer-experience: faith in a living personal God, faith in His real, immediate presence, and a realistic fellowship into which man enters with a God conceived as present (Heiler, 1932, 356).

Although the presence of every three mentioned elements, i. e, the personal God, faith in His presence, and then establishment of sincere and objective companionship with Him is of essentials of the phenomenon of invocation, it seems that another main element is also at work, not that Heiler would have neglected that, but after mentioning it as the deepest root of any kind of invocation, it seems as if he has not recognized it as the constituent element for the essence of invocation and overlooks it. In the previous page of the mentioned paragraph, quoting from saint Augustine, he writes:

> "When I Seek Thee, my God," prays Augustine, "I seek a blessed life." His words uncover the psychical root of all prayer (Heiler, 1932, 355).

And then some lines later he writes:

> Even the Buddhist beggar-monk, who by meditation works himself up into a state of perfect in-difference, seeks in the denial of life to attain a higher and purer (Heiler, 1932, 355).

The effort to fortify, to reinforce, to enhance one's life is the motive of all prayer. But the discovery of the deepest root of prayer does not disclose its peculiar essence.

In this way, Heiler, in spite of accepting the deep roots of psychological impulse even in worshiping and praying of the Buddhist monk, does not let such impulses enter into the definition of invocation, and only indicates the three above-mentioned elements as the constituents for the definition of invocation. It seems that such attempt of his would not be successful, because if we eliminate the element of demend and desire from the phenomenon of invocation, though we

enumerate other higher and necessary elements for it, the thing we are going to define, however, would not be the invocation we know. We are all familiar with the meaning of command. In any command there is a person with the name of commander and another person as the commanded, and a third thing as command. However, in the commanded there is some belief in superiority and the necessity of obedience of the commander whatever the reasons for such belief may be. Now if we want to change the three elements mentioned above from the relation of commander and the commanded into the relation of the desirer and the desired, it is enough just to change the commanding relation, which is the demand from a superior and transcendental position, into the relation of begging and request. In this case, the commanded is replaced by the commander but from a weak and begging position, and the commander is replaced by the desired and the beloved, and the commend is also changed into request and desire. However, in this case, the mentality of the desirer and invocator regarding the desired should be a beneficial and loving approach, and this is the very same thing which Heiler eliminates it from the definition of invocation as the impulses of psychological root so that he places a friendly compassionateness and a loving presence for it. It is, however, quite acceptable that the spirit of invocation and the real origin of its genetic influence in the causal chain of the world, is the very objective reality of relation between the lover and the beloved, that is, the absolute beloved which all the causal determination are overflowed from His manifestations, but none of these could be as a permission for negating the characteristic of desire and demand which is the main element in the essence of invocation.

In other words, we can say that: the causal system of the universe is in gradation and layer by layer upon each other. The nearer layer to us is the very causal order among the sensible phenomena which we call as the lower layer, and the more internal layer of causality is the very supersensual layer superior than the matter of the causal order which is the very same manifestation of various divine attributes in the intermediate layer of existence - the imaginal and heavenly worlds. The creature of the lower grade of the hierarchy of existence, i.e, the material world, or the world of "Donya: (nearer to the material man) as stated by the Quran all play roles with their physical existence and their spatial and temporal characteristics in completing the chain of causal order of the universe and let flowing the grace of being from the divine essence to every single creatures. Man among the creatures of the lower world-Donya-besides his physical participation with his body and his physical actions in completing the causal chain, e also participates, through thinking and the will to think and the demands caused by his free will in influencing on the intermediate layer of the causal system and drawing the spiritual powers of the intermediate orders of existence towards himself. In this way, as the element of existential desire and the language of capacity and state in the beginning of existence and as the immutable archetypes in absorbing the sacred divine grace have played role in realizing the objective orders of existence, the element of existential desire is also playing role, this time in the lowest order of existence, Donya, through the conceptual system of invocation, in drawing the powers originated from the sacred divine grace toward the

real demands of men. From this, the unique status of man and his free will in the evolutionary chain of being becomes more clear. Such objective influence of invocation in the objective and causal system of the world is, however, in compliance with the general teachings of the holy Quran by the divine additional agency in the causal system of the world which in many verses of the holy Quran, performance of certain actions, e. g, seizure of the spirit upon the death of man is attributed to definite agents of the genetic practitioners of the universe like angels: "Those whom the angles cause to die in a good state,… (The Bee, 32), "Those whom the angles cause to die while they are unjust to themselves, (The Bee, 28), "The angel of death who is given charge of you shall cause you to die… (The Adoration, 11) and at the same time attributes to Himself "Allah takes the souls at the time of their death" (The Companies, 42), and more important in some verses regard the voluntary actions of man, the action is simultanously attributed to both man and God, including: "Surely this is a reminder, so whoever pleases takes to his Lord a way. And you do not please except that Allah please, surely Allah is knowing, wise". (The Man, 29, 30). Thus, the voluntary demand and desire of man in that it is due to voluntariness of man's action, in the same vein it is existentially considered as destiny and the deep planning of the divine creation and his immediate act. Accordingly, the doubt and confusion of discripancy of voluntary will and action of man as to the destined divine system is removed.

This is somehow similar to what Brümmer in his book on prayer, quoting some contemporary Christian scholars advocating the "theory of open theism" like J. Burnaby in "Christion Prayer", explains this theory of the divine dual agency. Vincent writes":

God acts means of the natural order in a way analogous to that in which we do. But as we argued in the previous chapter, he also acts in what we do Some would go so far as to say that 'the power of God's love takes effect in human history in no other way than through the wills and actions of men in whom that love has come to dwell' (Burnaby, 1962, 232-233).

In addition, quoting from Lucas, he writes:

God does not have just one plan for the world, but an infinity of plans and with the changing course of events selects those that are applicable to the actual circumstances that obtain (Lucas, 1967, 39-40).

One plan may fail, but there are always others. As fast as we torpedo his best designs for us, he produces out of his agonized reappraisal a second best (Lucas, 1967, 30-33).

Brümmer, then, refers to an important separation in this respect quoting from John Sanders. He argues that the destined acts of God should not be understood as realization of an immutable divine constructive plan, rather it must be understood as a divine "plan" which God develops it in companionship with free will human participants:

God resourcefully tries out different paths in his efforts to bring his project towards a successful completion. God's activity does not unfold according to some heavenly blueprint whereby all goes

according to plan. God is involved in an historical project, not an eternal plan. The project does not proceed in a smooth, monolithic way but takes surprising twists and turns because the divine-human relationship involves a genuine give-and-take dynamic for both humanity and God (Sanders, 2007, 71).

Then, Brümmer adds:

> We can conclude that it is coherent to claim that God is able to act within the natural order, and through the free actions of human persons, without violating the natural order or our personal agency, and without exhausting his infinite ability to respond adequately to us-even when we fail to give him our co-operation. This being the case, it is also possible that a specific event or human action within the natural order could occur as answer to impetratory prayer to God. God answers prayer by bringing about contingent events within the order of nature and by enlightening, enabling and motivating human agents to realize his intentions (Brümmer, 2008, 82).

However, the views of Lucas and Sanders and other Christians advocating the open theology are in great part close to the views of Islamic mystics and interpretation of prayer and desire in the Holy Quran, not that they are quite the same. Here we can refer to some special characteristics of Islamic view:

1. Realization of divine will by the context of creation system including nature, non-material and supernatural beings (angels and the imaginal world and…) and the order of voluntary actions of man are all uniformed and intervowen and are considered as the different stages of causal order.
2. The more important point is that the role of God as a personal agent and quite distinct within the whole causal chain is totally preserved and has no inconsistency "And you do not please except that Allah please" (The Man, 29, 30). The very existential desire of beings is based on existential effusion and bounty of God given to them. Regarding the humans, since their existential desire is expressed and manifested through the mental system and agents of knowledge, so the role of conceptual prayer is highlighted and becomes the case. 4. Since the conceptual desire of prayer can be considered as something artificial and unreal or some kind of mental or fictional game, so the true prayer is there where it is actually needed and desired and is really considered as his existential desire. That is why the element of supplication which is further refered to later, is deemed as the determining factor for a real prayer. In the other verses of the Holy Quran, the true prayer of a believer is distinguished from the superficial prayers with the term of "being sincere to Him in obedience" in "And when a wave like mountains covers them they call upon Allah, being sincere to Him in obedience…" (Luqman, 32). Although in this case, due to the lack of mental and scientific

element from the origin of being, applying the title of invocation in a common sense is not acceptable, but thanks to the fact that the beneficent creator of being, regarding his own attribute and absolute compassionateness does not leave any existential desire and request without any response, so even the atheists are also allowed to enjoy the natural gifts in compliance with the causal order of the world.

God considers the special invocation of the believers as a concession for their faith asking them intimately to enjoy such special concession. In the most beautiful way, the verses of the Holy Quran indicate that God precedes in encouraging the humans in establishing such relation:

1. "And when My servants ask you concerning Me, then surely I am very near; I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he calls on Me, so they should answer My call and believe in Me that they may walk in the right way". (The Cow, 186)
2. "And your Lord says: call upon Me, I will answer you; surely those who are too proud for my service shall soon enter hell abased". (The Believer, 60). The point, which should be considered in this verse, is that it is first God who commands to pray and ask Him, and that it is He who gives an absolute and strict promise to respond. The verse continues that those who abstain from establishing an obeying relationship and desiring God due to their self-hoodess and pride, they are promised to put in the hell and to stay there forever, It means that the reality of invocation and establishing a relationship with God is the very reality of faith, and if anybody avoids it intentionally and due to selfhoodness and egoism, he will be deprived of divine forgiveness and compassionate ness in the hereafter.
3. God also says: "Therefore remember Me, I will remember you, and be thankful to Me, and do not be ungrateful to Me" (The Cow, 152) which shows the climax of compassionateness, affection and attention of God to man asking him to remember God so that by means of which, loving the beloved in form of a lovely causal order causes the loving and affection of the beloved to the lover, and He asks man, in an ultimately affectionate tone to be thankful of God and not be indulged in negligence.

Philosophical and Gnostic Explanation of the Formal Place of Invocation (du'a)

The first question, which will be asked concerning du'a or invocation, is that in a coherent system based on causality, which is to say on the necessary relation between a cause and its effect, how may *du'a* be justified from an ontological point of view? In other words, *du'a* is not a passive act but an active and voluntary one, which is made based on a particular request and demand (*talab*). On this basis, how may an intellectual act such as *du'a* have an influence in a system based on the necessary relation between a cause and its effect?

At first sight, based on a common scientific and philosophical point of view, this question remains unanswered: if God has created the world based on a system of causality, there remains no

place in it for the exercise of man's independent influence through acts such as invocation. Not only is this influence impossible on a logical point of view and entails the influence of an inferior degree of existence on a higher one, but it is also incompatible with the principles of divine philosophy and the determination of things through God's divine essence and wisdom. On this basis, some mystics did not make invocations because according to them, not wanting and not expressing one's desires is the condition for being God's servant.al point[1] of Moreover, on a soci view, the resorting to invocation to attain one's desires would entail disorders in the social system and encourage idleness.

In order to answer to this difficulty and explain what *du'a* is on an Islamic, Gnostic and philosophical basis, we should mention a few introductory issues.

The first one is that the creation is essentially based on demand (*talab*) and takes place after it. On the basis of the Gnostics' point of view, at the stage of the second determination (*vahediyat*) (which comes after the first determination or divine unity (*ahadiyyat*)), the different divine realities and perfections become distinguished from each other - of course under the form of a cognitive distinction (and not a real distinction which would entail the presence of plurality in the very divine essence). These divine realities are called immutable entities (*a'yan thabete*) and manifest divine names and attributes. At this stage, these divine forms demand to be endowed with external existence and wish to manifest concretely their own perfections in the external world. Gnostics have called this state "existential request" (*taqaza-ye takvini*), as well as "the expression of status" (*zaban-e hal*) or "the expression of capacity" (*zaban-e este'dad*) (Gheisari 1416: 47m).

Moreover, God is absolutely generous, that's why when a request for existence is made, it is impossible for Him not to answer it. In other words, creation takes place on the basis of love on the one hand, and on demand on the other, and this request for existence of the different immutable entities entails the appearance of the world of multiplicity and concrete realities.

The Quran evokes the fact that God fulfils the existential needs and requests of all creatures sometimes through genetic and existential guidance (*hedayat*) and sometimes through revelation (*vahi*).

For instance, in sura "Ta-Ha", verse 50, God says:

[1] Abdolrahman Jami, among the celebrated poets and mystics of 15th century who has written exegesis on the books of the great Islamic mystic, Mohyeddin Ibn Arabi including his *fosus al-Hekam*, while enumerating all types of desires (*talab*) for the sacred divine essence and dividing in into the literal request and existential request, points to the fact that there is a group of saints who avoid any demand and request, because in their mystical journey they have reached to a point who consider any free-will and request of a desired thing as opposed to pure servitude which requires no free will. He, then, says that among such pare sevuants, some seek request and demand for the divine essence only for the purpose of following and obeying His command, which is asked by God in the Quran to state demand and request. Accordingly, he mentiones other categories as well. (*The critique of al-Nosus fi Sharh al-Fosus*, Abdolrahman Jami, corrected and introduced by William Chittick, Tehran Printing, 1356).

«قَالَ رَبُّنَا الَّذِی أَعْطَی کُلَّ شَیْءٍ خَلْقَهُ ثُمَّ هَدَی»

> Our Lord is He Who gave to each (created) thing its form and nature, and further gave (it) guidance.

Which means that God provides means to all creatures, which enable them to reach their own existential perfections. Of course, this guidance does not take place through exhortation and conceptual meanings like in legislative guidance, but through the existential means and capacities, that God has endowed them with.

This reality is mentioned is Sura "The Bee" (Nahl), verse 68 that says:

«وَ أَوْحَی رَبُّکَ إِلَی النَّحْلِ أَنِ اتَّخِذِی مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُیُوتاً وَ مِنَ الشَّجَرِ وَ مِمَّا یَعْرِشُونَ»

> In addition, you are Lord revealed to the bees: "Take your habitations in the mountains and in the trees and in what they erect.

Of course, it is clear that the word "revelation" (*wahi*) refers to an existential instinct present in the nature of bees. In other words, thanks to the creatures' request for existence, God fulfils all their existential needs, from the higher stages of existence like in immutable entities to the lower ones, like insects.

This reality has been expressed in a beautiful way by Molla Sadra through the issue of transsubstantial movement (*harakat-e johari*): according to this theory, all creatures are situated in an evolutionary chain in space and time and, from the lowest degree of existence, they continuously manifest new perfections until the apparition of man's immaterial soul from the heart of this evolutionary process which has all the capacities and possibilities of the *a priori* existential system in itself. Gnostics have called this degree of existence "all inclusive-being" (*kon-e djame'*) and the essence of creation.

In this system, man's situation is unique since contrary to other creatures, he has the possibility to go through different existential degrees until he reaches the divine stage. In Molla Sadra's words, man's quiddity is not a determined and stable reality and in addition to the fact that it has all the perfections and the capacities of the precedent existential degrees, it may free himself from any limits and reach the realm of divine absoluteness as well as become the subject of essential divine manifestations (Sadreddin Shirazi 1967: v.9, p. 96, v.7, p. 184, v.3, p. 338). This infinite capacity is mentioned in Sura "The Fig" (Tin), verses 4 to 6:

«لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنسَانَ فِی أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِیمٍ/ ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَاهُ أَسْفَلَ سَافِلِینَ/ إِلَّا الَّذِینَ آمَنُوا وَ عَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فَلَهُمْ أَجْرٌ غَیْرُ مَمْنُونٍ»

> Surely, We created man of the best stature/Then we reduced him to the lowest of the low/Except those who believe and do righteous deeds, and they shall have a reward without end.

On this basis, the essence of man's creation has an unlimited extent: he has been created in the best stature possible in the world order on the one hand, and he is situated in the lowest and inferior degree of existence on the other.

The capacity of decadence and falling into the inferior degrees of perfection in the human soul is caused by evolutionary existential journey of creatures from the lowest degree of inanimate and physical existence to the higher stage of plants and then higher than it, that is to say, the animal world, all of which through absorbing their existential materials on the process of life and death, ate transformed into the existential material of man which is the highest degree of materials, and then in the scientific and intellectual system which, in the human mind, is the premise of all his voluntary action, by selecting any way of life appropriate with the above-mentioned materials, is realized as a secondary essence in the human existence, (the principle of identity of subject and object). Regarding the capacity of achieving the highest degree of existence which is beyond the horizon of the material world and naturally cannot be transmitted to his soul through transfer of the material of beings lower than man, the existential origin of such capacity is situated into most internal existential layer of human soul which has been incorporated into the depths of human soul from the beginning of creation. This is what is stated in the Holy Quran as blowing the divine spirit into the human soul in the last stage of his creation "So when I have made him complete and breathed into him of my spirit, the falldown making obeisance to him" (Saad, 72). Naturally, such divine breathing entails all beauties and spiritual perfection of the world of existence, and man with his concentration and conceptual request-invocation-and then supplication and insisting on it, will be succeeded in developing such Final stage from his being from the depth upto the surface and from inside to outside. In this way, the process of transsubstantial movement goes beyond the horizon of the material world enabling man to have journey into the depths of divine world and then divine sovereingty.

Of course, what may prevent him from falling in this terrible abyss and reach the highest degree of existence are faith and good deeds.

This passing through different degrees of existence and then going beyond one's own existential limits and determinations which leads to the reaching of the realm of divine absoluteness has been evoked in a beautiful *hadith* attributed to Imam Sadegh (peace be upon him) in the book *Misbah al-Sharia* (The lamp of the Shari'a) which is the following:

«العبودیّه جوهرهٌ کُنْهِها الربوبیّه» (Gilani 1998: Sec. 100).

"Servitude is a substance and a kind of treasure in which depth lies lordship."

This process is based on the existence of an immaterial soul in man's existence, which has potentially the capacity to manifest all the realities of existence. In other words, man's nature has been endowed with means that enable him to reach the highest existential perfections. Based on the rule we mentioned concerning immutable entities, we might deduce that if man expresses a demand, God will necessarily respond to it.

Of course, at the beginning, man's requirements are based on the satisfaction of natural and corporal needs; however, his existential needs widen progressively to include immaterial needs. In other words, there is always a possibility for the apparition of new needs and requests in man's existence. Here we should stress upon the deep relation between mind and objectness, since the more man pays attention to a thing, the more he will feel a need for it and this thing will be present in his soul. In other words, if man thinks about a thing, he will "become" this thing. In Sadrian Islamic philosophy, the issue of unity of the intellect and the intelligible (*ettehad-e aghel o ma'ghoul*) expresses this reality (Sadreddin Shirazi 1967, v. 3, 38) since according to this theory, the process of thinking in man is not only conceptual but all his concepts have a certain degree of existence and that's why in Islamic philosophy, the issues concerning philosophy of mind are called "mental existence" (*vojoud-e zehni*). On this basis, when he reflects on a subject, man becomes united with it and the more he becomes familiar with it, the more the effects of this subject will appear in him (the philosophy of *zekr* or remembrance of God mentioned in religious texts and practical gnosis in islam is based on the same process: the repetition of a divine name in a specific way and under some conditions entails the appearance of the effects of that name in man's soul).

We have presented a general Gnostic and philosophical overview of the importance of existential demand and its role in the creation of the world.

Now in a second introduction, I will shortly mention some Quranic verses, which confirm the importance of man's active and voluntary request in his own destiny.

«مَّن كَانَ يُرِيدُ ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا فَعِندَ اللّهِ ثَوَابُ الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ وَكَانَ اللّهُ سَمِيعاً بَصِيراً» (۴: ۱۳۴)

> Whoever desires a reward in this life of the world, then with Allah (alone and none else) is the reward of this worldly life and of the Hereafter. In addition, Allah is Ever All-Hearer, All-Seeing (Sura "Women" (Nisa'), verse 134).

«مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ حَرْثَ الآخِرَةِ نَزِدْ لَهُ فِى حَرْثِه ۖ وَ مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ حَرْثَ الدُّنْيَا نُؤْتِه مِنْهَا وَ مَا لَهُ فِى الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ نَصِيبٍ» (۲۰: ۴۲)

Whoever desires (by his deeds) the harvest (reward) of the Hereafter, We give increase his reward, and whoever desires the reward of this world, we give it to him, and he has no portion in the Hereafter (Sura "Consultation" (Shoura), verse 20).

«مَن كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَزِينَتَهَا نُوَفِّ إِلَيْهِمْ أَعْمَالَهُمْ فِيهَا وَهُمْ فِيهَا لاَ يُبْخَسُونَ ۖ أُوْلَـئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ فِى الآخِرَةِ إِلاَّ النَّارُ وَحَبِطَ مَا صَنَعُواْ فِيهَا وَبَاطِلٌ مَّا كَانُواْ يَعْمَلُونَ» (۱۶–۱۵: ۱۱)

Whoever desires the life of the world and its glitter; to them we shall pay in full (the wages of) their deeds therein, and they will have no diminution therein. They are those for whom there is nothing in the Hereafter but Fire; and vain are the deeds they did therein. And of no effect is that which they used to do"(Sura "Houd", verses 15 and 16).

For instance, in sura "The night journey" (Isra'), verses 18 to 20, God says:

«مَّن كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْعَاجِلَةَ عَجَّلْنَا لَهُ فِيهَا مَا نَشَاء لِمَن نُّرِيدُ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَا لَهُ جَهَنَّمَ يَصْلِيهَا مَذْمُوماً مَّدْحُوراً ۖ وَ مَنْ أَرَادَ الآخِرَةَ وَ سَعَى لَهَا سَعْيَهَا وَ هُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَئِكَ كَانَ سَعْيُهُم مَّشْكُوراً ۖ كُلاًّ نُّمِدُّ هَـؤُلاء وَ هَؤُلاء مِنْ عَطَاء رَبِّكَ وَ مَا كَانَ عَطَاء رَبِّكَ مَحْظُوراً » (۲۰–۱۸: ۱۷)

Whoever desires the quick-passing (enjoyment of this world), We readily grant him what We will for whom We like. Then, afterwards, we have appointed for him Hell; he will burn therein disgraced and rejected, in addition, whoever desires the Hereafter and strives for it, with the necessary effort due for it while he is a believer, then such are the ones whose striving shall be appreciated (rewarded by Allah). Of the bounties of your Lord, we bestow freely on all these as well as those: the bounties of your Lord are not closed (to anyone).

These verses mention a fundamental law concerning the relations between man and his acts. Thus, God fulfils the demands of the two groups, which is to say men without faith who seek the pleasures of this world as well as believers striving for the Hereafter. As a result, no need remains unfulfilled. As God says: "*the bounties of your Lord are not closed (to anyone)*". However, in the first verse, God insists on the fact that these people will pay the price of their unidirectional view in the Hereafter and their only gain then will be Hell's fire.

These verses insist on the importance of man's personal request since on this basis, God gives him what he wants. However, both these requests and God's bestowal take place in the frame of the system of causality and on the condition that the demand is real and that man strives to fulfill

it by using the means that have been given to him. These verses also show that God does not oppose to men's requests even if they entail spiritual loss. Thus, the world is not based on a predetermined system and things are not decided before they happen but on the contrary, man's will plays an important role in it. As a result, and from an ontological point of view, the existence and making of *du'a* become justified.

To sum up quickly these two introductory points, the actual existence of beings has been given to them by God thanks to their demand at the different stages of existence. These different stages are present in a unique and hidden way in divine essence as its concomitants and then thanks to God's favor, they manifest themselves gradually in the world order.

This issue corresponds to the content of a *hadith*, which has been attributed to the prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him), and in which God says:

«كنت كنزاً مخفياً، فأحببت أن أعرف، فخلقت الخلق لكى أعرف». [1]

> I was a hidden treasure and I wished to be known, so I created a creation (mankind), then I made myself known to them so that they know me.'

Man's corporal needs are of course real and clear, and he usually strives most of his life to fulfill them, that is why it is not hard for him to express them in an invocation.

However, the issue concerning spiritual requests and the ways to attain them through *du'a* needs one more explanation that we are now presenting in a third introductory point.

This third point is based on brief commentary of the verse 77 of sura "The criterion" (Forqan) in which God says to Mohammad (peace be upon him and his family):

«قُلْ مَا يَعْبَأُ بِكُمْ رَبِّى لَوْلَا دُعَاؤُكُمْ فَقَدْ كَذَّبْتُمْ فَسَوْفَ يَكُونُ لِزَاماً» (۲۵:۷۷).

> Say: "My Lord pays attention to you only - here there are two possible translations: "because of your invocation to Him" or "because He invokes you". Now you have indeed denied (Him). Therefore, the torment will be yours forever.

This verse has been interpreted in several ways, especially the expression "لَوْلَا دُعَاؤُكُمْ" which means, "If there is not your invocation".

The first and simplest interpretation is to say that in this verse, the agent (*fa'el*) and the person who makes invocation is man, meaning that if man did not invoke God, God would not pay

[1] This Hadith in most of Islamic mystical books is attributed to the holy prophet (P.B.U.H) without mentioning the references from the narrative books, e. g, in *Manazel al-Saaerin*, khajeh Abdollah Ansari, or the *exposition of kamal al-Din Abdolrazegh Kashani*, Ps. 85 and 210 corrected by Mohsen Bidarfar, Bidarfar Pub., Qum, 1372.

attention to him. In other words, men pay attention to God and as a result, God pays attention to them. We do not accept this interpretation since it is not compatible with the second and third part of this verse. Another interpretation has been given through commentators such as the late Allameh Tabataba'i (Tabataba'i 1973: v. 15, 245), according to which man is considered the object of du'a, and not his subject. It means that in reality, it is God who invokes man and if God did not call man to Him, no human being would have paid attention to Him. In Allameh Tabataba'i's view, God's call to man took place through the sending of prophets and holy books, which is to say though legislative (*tashri'i*) ways. However, we think that this interpretation appears somehow illogical since if we accept it, the meaning of the verse would be that if God had not sent prophets and called men towards Him through these ways, He would never have paid attention to them. On a logical point of view and on the contrary, if God had not sent prophets to men, then it would be more necessary for Him to pay attention to them. Therefore, we think that the meaning of God's call to staff here is not legislative but existential (*takwini*), which corresponds more to the idea of man as the object of du'a. In other words, God calls man to Him but not through legislative and external rules, but through man's own existence and nature based on his divine reality. Many other verses confirm this interpretation. For example, in sura "Sad", verses 71 and 72 concerning men creation, God says to the angels:

«إِنِّی خَالِقٌ بَشَراً مِن طِینٍ ۝ فَإِذَا سَوَّیْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِیهِ مِن رُّوحِی فَقَعُوا لَهُ سَاجِدِینَ»

> Truly, I am going to create man from clay and when I have fashioned him and breathed into him of My Spirit, then fall you down, bowing before him

The fact that God has breathed His spirit in man's nature is the highest wonder and favour that God has ever given to a creature and it underlines the deep presence of God's divine reality in man.

On this matter, we may allude to another quranic verse concerning quranic anthropology. In sura "The Heights" (A'raf), verse 172, God says:

«وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّکَ مِن بَنِی آدَمَ مِن ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّیَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَی أَنفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّکُمْ قَالُواْ بَلَی شَهِدْنَا أَن تَقُولُواْ یَوْمَ الْقِیَامَةِ إِنَّا کُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غَافِلِینَ » (۷: ۱۷۲).

> In addition, (remember) when your Lord brought forth from the Children of Adam from their reins, their seed, and made them testify on themselves (saying): "Am I not your Lord?" They said: "Yes! We testify," lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection: "Verily, we have been unaware of this.

This verse contains very deep meanings which we may not explain now, but what we should mention here is that God reminds man that in the first day of Adam's creation, He made all Adam's descendants until the Day of Resurrection testify on their soul (in which lies divine's reality) that

God is their Lord. This shows again the divine presence and truth in man's divine nature (*fitra*) which leads him to acknowledge naturally that God is his Lord.

In other words, the essence of man's soul is pure dependence to God and if somebody knows his soul, he will necessarily know the Divine Reality. This issue is based on numerous and reliable sources in the Sadrian philosophy as well as in Islamic narrations.
Moreover, we may also mention a section of a Shia invocation called "Abou Hamzeh Thumali" from the fourth Imam Hazrat 'Ali ibn al-Hussein also known as Imam Sajjad (peace be upon him):

«بک عرفتک و انت دللتنی علیک و دعوتنی الیک و لولا انت لم ادر ما انت» (*al-Mafatih al-Jenan*)

By You, I have known you; you guided me to you, and you called me to you,
In addition, if it were not by You, I would not have known who you are.

This sentence means that we know God through God since He is the proof and guide to His own existence, and if God had not called us to Him, we would never have known Him or gone towards Him. To sum up, divine reality is a part of man's existence and lies in its depth.

Here again the meaning of the expression "لَوْلَا دُعَاؤُكُمْ" as a divine and existential invocation to man becomes clearer: if God had not called us to Him through our own divine nature, we would not have addressed ourselves to Him.

We may now draw conclusions from these introductory points:

1. We have said that the effusion of existence in the world comes from the request and existential needs of creatures.
2. Since all man's voluntary acts are based on his own consciousness of things, he expresses his different needs in the frame of conceptual requests.
3. In the world system, all man's real needs are fulfilled provided he makes the appropriate efforts to reach them.
4. Man's spiritual needs also have a place in the depth and hidden part of his being.
5. Demands and requests concerning man's spiritual needs are also fulfilled in the world system.
6. Since spiritual requests do not depend on material means and therefore do not entail conflicts between their means and causes, their realization will be wider and more witnessed.
7. Since the basis of the effusion of existence is request and existential need, invocation – which is a conceptual reality – will be effective only if it concerns a concrete and existential reality and not an imaginary and superficial request, and on the condition that it is expressed with one is whole being. Therefore, if *du'a* usually starts with words, mere sayings are not sufficient to make it become a real invocation effective in the world order.

This reality is mentioned in the Quran through the word "*tazarro*'" which refers to a state in which man has become hopeless of the utility of external means to fulfill his need and expresses a request with his whole being, with intense emotion and cry, and places all his hopes in God. God answers the invocation of a person or of a group when this state reaches its climax.

In sura "Cattle", verses 42 and 43, God says:

«وَ لَقَدْ أَرْسَلنَا إِلَى أُمَمٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ فَأَخَذْنَاهُمْ بِالْبَأْسَاء وَالضَّرَّاء لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَضَرَّعُونَ/ فَلَوْلا إِذْ جَاءهُمْ بَأْسُنَا تَضَرَّعُواْ وَلَـكِن قَسَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ مَا كَانُواْ يَعْمَلُونَ» (۴۳، ۴۲:۶).

> Verily, we sent (Messengers) too many nations before you (Muhammad). In addition, we afflicted them with suffering and adversity so that they might learn humility. When Our Torment reached them, why then did they not humble themselves? However, their hearts became hardened, and Satan made all that they used to do seem fair to them!

If the members of a society have a feeling of misery and powerlessness and at the same time feel their complete dependence on God, He will answer their request.

This reality also applies to individuals, as the verse 62 of sura "Ant" (Naml) tells us:

«أَمَّن يُجِيبُ الْمُضْطَرَّ إِذَا دَعَاهُ وَيَكْشِفُ السُّوءَ وَيَجْعَلُكُمْ خُلَفَاء الْأَرْضِ أَإِلَهٌ مَّعَ اللَّهِ قَلِيلاً مَّا تَذَكَّرُونَ» (۶۲:۲۷).

> Is not He who responds to the distressed one, when he calls on Him, and Who removes the evil, and makes you inheritors of the earth? Is there any ilah (god) with Allah? Little is that you remember!

This verse clearly shows that if somebody makes an invocation while he deeply feels distressed and powerless and considers God to be his only refuge, God will respond to his supplication.

As a conclusion, it clearly appears that the reality of *du'a* and a real *du'a* not only is not incompatible with the system of causality, but it also shows the real way and process of causality from the origin of existence in the creation.

References

Ansari, A. (1993). *Manazel al-Saaerin*. Bidarfar. [in Arabic]

Brümmer, V. (2008). *What are We Doing When We Pray? On Prayer and the Nature of Faith*. Ashgate.

Burnaby, J. (1962). 'Christian prayer' in Vidler A.R. (ed.), *Soundings: essays concerning Christian understanding*. Cambridge University Press.

Gheisari, D. (1995). *Sharh Fosus al-Hekam Mohyeddin Ibn Arabi*. Manshurat Anvar al-Hoda. [in Arabic]

Qomi, A. (2009). *Mafatih al-Jina*n. Mehrab-e Kalam. [in Arabic]

Heiler, F. (1932). *Prayer: A Study in the History and Psychology of Religion*. Oxford University Press.

Imam Sadiq (1998). *Misbah al-Sharia wa Miftah al-Haqiqa*. Guilani, A. (trans.) Payam-e Haqq. [in persian]

Jami, A. (1978). *Naqd al-Nosus fi Sharh al-Fosus*. Chittick, W. (ed.), Anjuman-i Shāhanshāhī-i Falsafah-’i. [in Arabic]

Lucas, J. R. (1976). *Freedom and Grace. Grand Rapids*, Eerdmans.

Sanders, J. (2007). *The God Who Risks, A Theology of Divine Providence*. IVP Academic.

Sadreddin Shirazi (1967). *Al-Hekmat al-Mota'aliya fil-Asfar al-Aghliah al-Arbaah*. Dar Ihya al-Turath al-Arabi [in Arabic]

Shakir, M. H. (translator) (1984). *The Holy Quran: Arabic Text and English Translation*. Islamic European Cultural Centre.

Tabataba'i, M. (1973). *Al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*. Al-A`lami. [in Arabic]

Journal of Philosophical Investigations
Print ISSN: 2251-7960 Online ISSN: 2423-4419
Homepage: https://philosophy.tabrizu.ac.ir

"*Being that can be understood is language*": A Contemplation on the Implications of Gadamer's Thesis Concerning Language

Abdollah Amini

Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, University of Kurdistan, Iran. E-mail: aminiphilosophy@uok.ac.ir

Article Info

Article type:
Research Article

Article history:
Received 09 June 2024
Received in revised form 22 June 2024
Accepted 30 June 2024
Published online 07 September 2024

Keywords:
language, Being, ontological interpretation, understanding, epistemological interpretation.

ABSTRACT

Hans-Georg Gadamer, in his work *Truth and Method*, raises a controversial and thought-provoking argument regarding language and its relation to Being. He states that "*Being that can be understood is language*." Despite his subsequent efforts in some works following *Truth and Method* to elucidate what he considers to be self-evident in the meaning of this expression, various interpreters have continued to derive various interpretations from it. Some have focused on its ontological dimension within Heideggerian context, while others have emphasized its epistemological aspect within the Kantian tradition. In this paper, we aim to clarify the meaning of the Gadamer's expression and explore the grounds and reasons for the emergence of conflicting interpretations, while also referencing such interpretations and relying on a descriptive-analytical approach based on Gadamer's relevant texts. Overall, it seems that the ambiguity in Gadamer's position regarding language and its relation to being boils down to the fact that he seeks to reconcile Heidegger's phenomenological perspective with his own philosophical hermeneutics. Thus, Gadamer sometimes emphasizes on the being itself and sometimes on our linguistic understanding of being.

Cite this article: Amini, A. (2024). "*Being that can be understood is language*": A Contemplation on the Implications of Gadamer's Thesis Concerning Language. *Journal of Philosophical Investigations*, 18(48), 233-248. https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.61971.3779

© The Author(s).
Publisher: University of Tabriz.
https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.61971.3779

Introduction

As we are aware, one of the significant contributions of Gadamer to hermeneutics and the issue of understanding is his emphasis on its linguistic aspect. It is based on this linguistic aspect of the event of understanding that he underscores dialogue as the primary means to achieve mutual understanding, which is verbal in nature. Apart from language, nothing is articulated in understanding; for we are fundamentally confronted with the mediation of language with the world: "… the between-world of language has proven itself to be the true dimension which that which is given is given" (Gadamer, 1981/4, 167). Indeed, the fact that language mediates all our encounters with the world implicitly implies "the impossibility of going beyond the linguistic schema of the world." (Gadamer, 1981/4, 166). In other words, if for Heidegger, "Being" was the common ground upon which everything ultimately depended, for Gadamer, it is language that plays this fundamental role: "language, however, is like a field from which a variety of seeds can come forth." (Gadamer, 1979, 135)[1]. Gadamer's perspective on the role of language in mediating comprehensive understanding of the world and phenomena, which is presented with various interpretations and emphases in his different works, has led to divergent interpretations. Each interpreter by emphasizes on a particular aspect of his claims, has leading to different conclusions.

In the third section (in the concluding subsection "The universal aspect of hermeneutics")[2] of *Truth and Method*, dedicated to the issue of language, Gadamer presents a provocative claim which, at first glance, is highly stimulating and provocative. Similar to Heidegger's famous statement on language, it has been quoted by Gadamer's interpreters here and there and to some extent, has been subjected to debate and various conflicting interpretations. Gadamer, by accepting the fundamental premise that language serves as a mediator through which "self" and the world encounter each other, articulates the famous statement: "*Being that can be understood is language*."[3] (Gadamer, 2004, 470). One interpreter considers its significance as "equivocal and ambiguous" statement and attributes the root of ambivalent interpretation to the brevity inherent in Gadamer's expression (Laurukhin, 2016, 48), while Grondin, as a prominent disciple and interpreter of Gadamer, regards the statement as a prominent exemplification of the "universality of language". In his opinion, Gadamer apparently equates the boundary of the world with the boundaries of language and perceives it in conflict with some of his views regarding the limitations of language and understanding, thus introducing a form of "turn" in Gadamer's position (Grondin, 1399, 127-9). Rorty, while noting that Gadamer's statement has become a sort of "slogan" for contemporary philosophers, believes that both the "linguistic turn" approach of analytical

[1] According to Hegelian expression of Gadamer, "… Only in a dialogue can a language arise and continue to develop- a language in which we, in a more and more estranged world, are at home" (Gadamer, 1977b, 195).
[2] The title of the section is as follow: The ontological shift of hermeneutics guided by language.
[3] *Sein, das verstanden warden kann, ist Sprache*.

philosophers and the "idealist" approach of continental philosophers regarding the nature of language are "encapsulated" therein (Rorty, 2004, 22-24).

Overall, in the interpretation of Gadamer's aforementioned statement, some commentators emphasize its epistemological aspect, somewhat accentuating the Kantian heritage of Gadamer's hermeneutics,[1] while others, by highlighting its ontological dimension, underscore Gadamer's Heideggerian heritage of thought.[2] Finally, some consider both aspects simultaneously.[3] In this paper, relying on Gadamer's own expressions, we endeavor to arbitrate between these two positions and demonstrate whether juxtaposing Gadamer's prominent views on language and understanding alongside his famous statement resolves the claimed ambiguity and whether, given the context of Gadamer's expression and other components of his philosophical hermeneutics regarding language and understanding, there epistemological aspect concerning the relationship between language and the world is concentrated or the ontological aspect?

The Heideggerian traces in Gadamer's perspective on language

Martin Heidegger, in addition to delineating the relationship between being and language in *Being and Time* (sections 34-35),[4] in the *Letter on Humanism* explicitly defines the ontological status of language in relation to being in his famous expression: "Language is the house of being" (Heidegger, 2000, 83). We can discern traces of Gadamer's indebtedness to Heidegger in his analysis of language and its relation to the world or what Gadamer terms as the "being-in-the-world" of our linguistic existence in the following phrases from *Truth and Method*:[5]

> Not only is the world, world only insofar as it comes into language, but language, too, has its real being only in the fact that the world is presented in it. Thus, that language is originally human means at the same time that man's being- in- the-world is primordially linguistic. We will have to investigate the relation between

[1] For example, within this group of interpreters, one can refer to Weinsheimer (2009) and Grondin (2020). Weinsheimer, in interpreting Gadamer's statement, concludes that "the scope of hermeneutics' understanding is identical to the scope of being." (Weinsheimer, 2009, 36).

[2] Among these interpreters, one can mention the positions of Laurukhin (2016) and Reiser (2019). By emphasizing such phrases from Gadamer that what happens during conversation is more than just our action on "the matter at hand"; it is rather "the doing of the thing itself", Figal attempts to highlight the ontological aspect of Gadamer's attitude to language (Figal, 2002, 108-9). However, despite emphasizing the ontological aspect of Gadamer's approach, he expresses Gadamer's famous statement as follows (which its epistemological aspect is highlighted): "The being of the understanding just as much as the being of understanding which comes to word." (Figal, 2002, 115).

[3] From among these interpreters, one can refer to Figal (2002).

[4] According to Gadamer's interpretation, Heidegger considers language as an "existential" aspect of Dasein's being in *Being and Time*; that is, "as a determining factor [*Bestimmung*] of a Dasein singled out by its understanding of Being." (Gadamer, 1993, 136).

[5] In the essay "On the Truth of the Word", Gadamer using Heidegger's terminology elucidates the relationship between language, being, and understanding ontologically: "… Man is not just himself at home in language, but rather 'bein' [*Sein*] is there in the language that we speak with each other." (Gadamer, 1971, 136).

> *language and world* in order to attain the horizon adequate to the fact that *hermeneutic experience is verbal in nature* (Gadamer, 2004, 440).

Certainly, Gadamer as Heidegger considers language not merely as a communicative "tool" nor even as one of the possessions of humans in the world that could easily be overlooked,[1] but rather intertwining it with understanding (the understanding of Being).[2] "Language is not just one of man's possessions in the world; rather, on it depends the fact that man has a *world* at all. The world as world exists for man as for no other creature that is in the world. But this world is verbal in nature." (Gadamer, 2004, 440). The initial expressions echo a hermeneutical reinterpretation of Heideggerian ideas in *Being and Time* concerning the relationship between language, world, and Dasein. What distinguishes Gadamer's work and marks his contribution to this discourse is encapsulated in the concluding statements of the above quotation. If the world or Being exists and if only Dasein has the world and just he can comprehend it, then world-having/ being-in-the-world and understanding it are "verbal in nature". There is a hermeneutic circle between the world and language; both having language is contingent upon having the world and understanding the world in turn is "verbal in nature". This epistemological dimension can also be traced to some extent in Heidegger's *Being and Time*,[3] since ultimately it is Dasein that has the world and comprehend it.[4] In other words, if "Being should come to language" (Gadamer, 1969, 66), then Dasein takes on such a mission. However, the question arises whether if the world is "verbal in nature", does this imply limitations on our understanding or limitations within the world itself? Is there any other possibility for the emergence and understanding of the world, and does its linguistic representation not confine it?

Throughout Gadamer's works, one can discern expressions that explicitly or implicitly suggest a sense of "panlinguisticism," indicating that he reduces everything, even being/ world, to language and linguistic understanding. This has provided a foundation for a sort of epistemological and relativistic interpretation. In the following, we will mention two instances in this regard to provide the necessary groundwork for a better understanding and analysis of Gadamer's earlier mentioned expression.

On relation language and world, Gadamer in his essay "The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem" writes: "Language is the fundamental mode of operation of our being-in-the-world and all-embracing form of the constitution of the world." (Gadamer, 1966, 3). What is somewhat

---

[1] See: (Amini, 2023, 97-8).

[2] According to one of the commentators, "the language ontology" in Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics stands in opposition to an instrumental and nominalistic view of language that does not consider the meaning of words as the product of the "knowing subject's" intention (Davey, 2006, 24).

[3] Although Gadamer himself refers more to Humboldt, who views language as a "worldview", than to Heidegger regarding language and its relation to the world (See: Gadamer, 2004, 440). Perhaps he wanted to simultaneously integrate the approaches of Heidegger and Humboldt.

[4] According to Heidegger, the scope of Being and Time "It asks about Being itself in so far as Being enters in to the intelligibility of Dasein." (Heidegger, 2001, 193).

provocative here is that Gadamer not only ties our being-in-the-world to the being of language but goes even further, considering the very "substitution" of the world dependent on it. This kind of emphasis on the universality of language is somewhat Kantian interpretation of Heidegger, while Heidegger himself emphasizes more on Being/world rather than language. Anyway, if we did not have Gadamer's other statements in his other works, perhaps relying solely on this statement would lead to the misinterpretation that Gadamer seems to consider the being of the world contingent upon the being of language and, like Wittgenstein[1] initially, considers the boundaries of the world to overlap with the boundaries of language. However, by referring to similar statements and other explanations by Gadamer, avoiding such a conception is feasible. The following expressions are seemingly more exaggerated than Gadamer's aforementioned statement, insofar as he considers language as "limitless medium" which "absolutely everything," even tradition and culture, dependent on it:

> The phenomenon of understanding, then, shows the universality of human linguisticality as a limitless medium that carries *everything* within it- not only the "culture" that has been handed down to us through language, but absolutely everything- because everything (in the world and out of it) is included in the realm of "understanding" and understandability in which we move (Gadamer, 1967, 25).

Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics revolves around language and understanding, as evident from the above expressions, indicating a kind of turn in relation to Heidegger's approach. He emphasizes more on verbal understanding of Being rather than placing emphasis on Being itself. Although this understanding is still an understanding of Being, Gadamer is more concerned with the understanding itself and the linguistic occurrence of it, rather than Being itself as Heidegger would. Gadamer interprets Heidegger's "the question of Being" project in favor of his own philosophical hermeneutics, to some extent aligning it with Kantian principles, albeit not fully embracing Kantian epistemological foundations. For example, Gadamer unsettles the Kantian distinction between "for us [phenomenon]" and "in itself [noumenon]". Thus, the scope of hermeneutics is limited to the realm of human understanding and language, not beyond it. Whatever lies beyond linguistic understanding of humans is not pertinent to hermeneutical inquiry and its principles are generally indeterminate to the hermeneutician.

Therefore, Gadamer consciously dismisses the assumed boundary between the verbal thinkable and the non-verbal unthinkable. However, this expression does not contradict with Gadamer's use of the term the "unvordenklich" (the unthinkable in its Schellingian sense) in some of his works

[1] "The world is *my* world: this is manifest in the fact that the limits of language (of that language which I alone understand) mean the limits of *my* world" (Wittgenstein, 2001, 68). While Wittgenstein sees the mission of philosophy as a "battle" with language and the solidification of our consciousness through it, Gadamer completely disagrees with this perspective.

(Gadamer, 1955, 364). His conception of the "unvordenklich" has a verbal and immanent aspect, as we continually strive to approach its linguistic understanding and articulate it. Gadamer's recourse to the concept of the "inner word" in the Christian tradition is an attempt to refer to this very the "unthinkable." For example, in his essay "Hermeneutics and Ontological Difference", where seems to still be under Heidegger's influence and even employs Heideggerian terminology to articulate the problem further, in relation to the hermeneutical situation into which we are "thrown", Gadamer brings forth something that is "unintelligible." It is not that this thing is inherently unintelligible, but rather its unintelligibility is contingent upon our current capacities and abilities, as we do not have prior mastery over all "meaningfulness". Thus, our task is to engage with it and comprehend it:

> In this situation hermeneutics [as a hermeneutics of facticity] is focused on something that is *not understandable* [life]. Indeed, this is somehow always the case for hermeneutics. Challenged by something not understood or not understandable, hermeneutics is brought onto the path of questioning and is required to understand. In this process one never has some advance lordship over all meaningfulness. Instead, one is answering an always self-renewing challenge to take something not understood, something surprisingly other, strange, dark- and perhaps deep- that we need to understand (Gadamer, 1955, 363).

Thus, for Gadamer, there is no fundamental gap between "what it is" and "what is expressed," where each belongs to separate realms that cannot be bridged, or where "the expressed word" is considered as a secondary compared with "what it is". In Gadamer's Heideggerian comment, "What something presents itself as belong to its own being." (Gadamer, 2004, 470). As a result, the relationship between Being, understanding, and language in Gadamer's hermeneutics is one of the significant and challenging topics that we will look at it more precisely in the subsequent sections.

Interpreters and somewhat conflicting interpretations

Jean Grondin dedicates the sixth chapter in his book (2020) to the interpretation and elucidation of Gadamer's famous assertion. Grondin considers Gadamer's central statement (1955), "We can never say what we want to say completely," as indicative of an acknowledgment of the "boundaries of language," in contrast to Gadamer's famous assertion in *Truth and Method* (1960) that according to it "the realm of language is almost boundless." (Grondin, 2020, 127). Grondin sees this veer as a type of "turn" in Gadamer's position regarding language. He argues that Gadamer has moved from a position of acknowledging the boundlessness of language towards conceding the limitations of language boundaries. Despite the central concern in Gadamer's hermeneutics about the distinction between the "inner word" and the "expressed word," Grondin strangely overlooks this

distinction and instead focuses on the "turn" and change in Gadamer's stance about the boundaries of language.

Another interpreter, while acknowledging the "ambiguity" inherent in Gadamer's statement due to the "brevity" in it, sees his task to analyze ambiguity and critically reconsidering Grondin's epistemological interpretation of it (Laurukhin, 2016, 48-9).[1] Rorty conversely sees important implicit implications in it. In his view, the "nominalism" of analytical philosophers as a reaction to the metaphysical tradition[2] "can best be summarized in this Gadamer's doctrine that only language can understand." (Rorty, 2004, 23).[3] However, this interpretation of Gadamer's position on language in the style of analytical philosophy is not entirely consistent with his overall "anti-nominalistic" stance. Although, it cannot be denied that Gadamer, like analytical philosophers and contrary to the metaphysical tradition, does not believe in "essences" in itself and does not have an essentialist view of language. However, the refusal of essences is not necessarily to accept the full position of nominalism. In addition, Gadamer's approach to language cannot easily be labeled "idealist"; the majority of Gadamer's effort, following Heidegger, is to avoid an idealistic and subjective interpretation of language and understanding. Gadamer's criticism on Cassirer's neo-Kantian approach to language as a "symbolic form" is evidence for this claim.[4] Weinsheimer in opposition to such an interpretation believes that Gadamer's intention is not an idealistic interpretation in the Kantian sense, which would attribute all being or phenomena to the mental capabilities of the subject. Hence, in Weinsheimer's opinion, if Cassirer were to write the Gadamer's phrase in his own language, its implication would be as follows: "Being is an expression of the constituted subject." (Weinsheimer, 2009, 144).

Laurukhin identifies the three main component of the Gadamer's statement: "Being, Understanding, and Language." He considers conjunction and proximity of these elements as the source of ambiguity (Laurukhin, 2016, 49). Depending on which component we emphasize, our interpretation will vary. If we prioritize the notion of Being and read it through a Heideggerian lens, we arrive at the general proposition that "Being is Language" (Grondin, 2020, 129), because from Heidegger's perspective, Dasein is the only linguistical being that questions Being, and Being is problematic for whom. It is on basis Heidegger claims that "Language is the house of Being". According to Grondin, although this Heideggerian interpretation is not entirely alien to the spirit of Gadamer's thought, but the formulation of *Truth and Method* places the emphasis "elsewhere": "Being that *can be* understood is language. Therefore, not every 'being' is language, but rather that

[1] Instead, Wisenheimer argues that through a careful examination of what Gadamer means by the concept of language (Sprache), we can understand the significance of Gadamer's famous statement without considering it as an "ambiguous slogan." (Wisenheimer, 2009, 137). While Laurukhin considers Grondin's interpretation to be "completely ambivalent," much like Gadamer's own expression (Laurukhin, 2016, 49).

[2]. The claim that "all essences are nominal and all necessities *de dicto*."

[3] For the critique of Rorty's pragmatist approach regarding Gadamer's expression and its implications, refer to: (Brad, 2005).

[4] For example, see: (Gadamer, 2004, 405; Gadamer, 1977a, 64; Gadamer, 1964, 30).

the being which can be understood." (Grondin, 2020, 129). It is disputable why Grondin explicitly states this and simultaneously accuses Gadamer of equating Being with language. Laurukhin, while criticizing Grondin's interpretation, believes that Grondin's exposition aims to de-Heideggerize Gadamer's understanding of language. In other words, he downplays Gadamer's ontological stance and highlights its epistemological and "philological" dimension. In Laurukhin's view, reducing Gadamer's stand to "Being is Language" is both a simplification of Gadamer's position and an attempt to "de-ontologicalize" his hermeneutics. Instead, he endeavors to highlight the "ontological structure of language" implicit in Gadamer's statement (Laurukhin, 2016, 49-55).

Grondin offers two possible interpretations of Gadamer's statement; in each one a different aspect of the sentence is emphasized. Indeed, contrary to Laurukhin's interpretation, Grondin's distinction between syntactic and philological for understanding the meaning and resolving its "ambiguity" is quite illuminating.[1] From this perspective, it can be said that Gadamer's statement is a "conjunctional" sentence, that is, a "determining/limiting" phrase rather than an "explanatory" one. The difference lies in the fact that in the former case, the second part of the sentence restricts the domain of the first part and makes it "conditional" (to understanding), while in the latter type, it explains the subject matter and, since it does not have a determining role, its omission does not affect the sentence structure. This does not hold true for the former case (Grondin, 2020, 130). So, his conclusion is that the Gadamer's statement does not mean Being is absolutely language, but rather only the Being that *can be* understood is language (i.e., it is of the determinative type of sentence), and as it turns out, this is simply a repetition of Gadamer's own words.

Accordingly, the context of the sentence specifies a limitation of Being to "the understood Being," and thus, Gadamer's intention is that "the understood Being necessarily possesses a linguistic property (while Being *not understood* is not language). In other words, we concern with the linguistic nature of our understanding." (Grondin, 2020, 130).[2] Based on this, Grondin does not consider Gadamer's statement as an "ontological" assertion regarding Being itself (by which the language is entirely the same as Being), but rather it has an epistemological aspect (that is, the verbal nature of Being is related to the structure of our understanding; our approach to Being and our understanding of it are necessarily linguistic).

Rorty also has such an understanding of the Gadamer's doctrine. In his view, this proposition is not a metaphysical discovery about the nature of Being in itself. Instead, it is a proposal regarding how to describe the process which we call "increasing our understanding." (Rorty, 2004, 24). By highlighting the affirmative and epistemological aspect of Gadamer's approach to language, Rorty

[1] Therefore, it can be said that the root of ambiguity somehow comes back to the way of reading Gadamer's sentence, which can be read in at least in two ways.

[2] Distinguishing between these two types of sentences, which convey different meanings, is illustrated based on the English language structure using two relative pronouns that specify restrictive or explanatory clauses:
- Defining Sentence: Being *that* can be understood is language.
- Explanatory Sentence: Being *which* can be understood is language.

sees therein the potential for deconstructing the entire metaphysical tradition (which it is essentialistic and ontological at the same time). As said by Rorty, this doctrine of Gadamer helps us to replace "metaphors of depth", which are the result of metaphysical tradition about the objects, with "metaphors of breadth" (Rorty, 2004, 24).[1] In general, he regards Gadamer's statement more as an anti-metaphysical and anti-ontological stance, while Laurukhin sees a Heideggerian ontological attitude in it. Besides, Grondin discerns it as a sort of epistemological-hermeneutical approach. In any case, if we take Grondin's distinction as a basis, considering the context of the statement and Gadamer's own explanations in his other works, we can align with Gadamer that here the issue has a determinative/ delimiting and epistemological/ hermeneutical dimension for Gadamer, and from this perspective, Laurukhin's critique of Grondin's interpretation is not very well-founded. However, Laurukhin argues that Gadamer not only claims epistemological precedence for language but also fundamentally claims "ontological precedence." (Laurukhin, 2016, 54). However, the phrase of "ontological precedence" here is ambiguous, and it can be interpreted in two ways. First, if the meaning of this precedence is that language has an existence independent of us and it is beyond our experience; such an interpretation is incompatible with Gadamer's hermeneutic view. Second, if the meaning of this precedence is that language is involved in every encounter and understanding, and it always determines our orientation beforehand, such an interpretation is entirely compatible with the foundations of Gadamerian hermeneutics. This is what we have read as epistemological and methodological precedence, and Grondin does not object to such precedence. But necessarily, this statement does not mean that Gadamer has completely turned away from Heideggerian views on language and returned to the epistemological and subjective foundations of modern philosophy.

Gadamer accepts that we (as subjects) are not always the ones speaking and control the process of speech "…but it is we who are spoken through." (Davey, 2006, 24). Even where Gadamer, in the foreword to *Truth and Method*, formulates his problem around this question "how is understanding possible?" (Gadamer, 2004, xxvii), his inference of understanding is not necessarily Kantian, but rather understanding is for him "the mode of being of Dasein itself." Therefore, he intentionally refrains from formulating the problem of understanding based on the subject/ object or phenomenon/ thing-in-itself dichotomy. What Gadamer emphasizes is the epistemological and cognitive precedence of "linguistic experience" and "human experience of the world" over whatever exists and is understood. As a result, this primacy is not logical and ontological, but rather returns to the structure of our understanding as an interpreter of the world; that is, language is

[1] Rorty's notion of "metaphors of depth" in the metaphysical tradition refers to the idea that the deeper and more profound our understanding, it brings us closer to the true nature of a thing, while moving further away from its appearance. The term "metaphors of breadth," on the other hand, signifies to get more descriptions and several interpretations from various perspectives of a thing and then synthesizing these interpretations to aid in our enhanced understanding of that thing.

superior to us rather than to the world itself as a whole. Gadamer himself explicitly raises this distinction:

> Our verbal experience of the world is prior to everything that is recognized and addressed as existing. *That language and world are related in a fundamental way does not mean, then, that world becomes the object of language.* Rather, the object of knowledge and statements is always already enclosed within the world horizon of language. That human experience of the world is verbal does not imply that a world-in-itself is being objectified (Gadamer, 2004, 447).

As the text suggests, Gadamer intentionally removes any semblance of subjective significance from his seemingly Kantian project and even denies any existence of a world or thing-in-itself beyond the boundaries of language. In addition, the nature of language in Gadamer's view aligns with the phenomenological approach of Heidegger, whose function is essentially the "disclosure of reality"; that is, language acts as a mediator that allows something to show itself and disclose itself. As notes one of interpreters, Gadamer's intention is that language is not a "secondary" representation of reality, in such a way that first reality or things come to display and then in the second step we put them into words (Risser, 2019, 4). However, Gadamer sometimes speaks of the "primacy of language" in such a way that it seems that the ontological primacy is of concern in Heideggerian context. In conclusion of the essay "The Truth of the Work of Art," which discusses the importance and primacy of language in the poetics works in Heideggerian context, this issue becomes more apparent. Gadamer considers the "primacy and superiority of language" not as a unique feature of poetic works, but as a characteristic of the thing-being of beings: "The work of language is the most primordial poetry of Being. The thinking that conceives all art as poetry and that discloses that the work of art is language is itself still on the way to language." (Gadamer, 1960, 109).

Now we have discussed some interpretations offered by scholars regarding Gadamer's famous doctrine, it is appropriate to elucidate Gadamer's own explanations and interpretations in his works following *Truth and Method* to facilitate a better assessment.

The relationship between Being and language: What does Gadamer himself say?

As mentioned earlier, Gadamer raises this controversial statement in the third section of *Truth and Method*: "*Being that can be understood is language*." Alongside some contradict interpretations about the meaning of this expression, it is better to clarify its significance with the help of Gadamer's other statements, considering the context of the discussion and his philosophical hermeneutic foundations.

In an interview with Grondin towards the end of his life (1996), Gadamer explicitly articulates the significance of this statement, surprising Grondin with his response.[1] Grondin, while referring to the "misinterpretation" of Gadamer's words, argues that "... but one gets the impression from *Truth and Method* that the universe of language is boundless." (Gadamer, 1996, 417). Perhaps, in view of this boundlessness interpretation of language and the reduction of Being to it, Grondin concludes elsewhere that "the word is the truth of Being." (Grondin, 2003, 145). It is strange here that Grondin does not pay attention to the following statements from *Truth and Method*, where Gadamer clearly takes the opposite position: "If we start from the fact that understanding is verbal, we are emphasizing, on the contrary, the finitude of the verbal event in which understanding is always in the process of being concretized." (Gadamer, 2004, 471). Here, Gadamer explicitly states that the emphasis on the linguistic nature of understanding and the centrality of language in the hermeneutical practice are not aimed at proving the limitlessness of language and the reduction of the Being to it; rather, it is to demonstrate the boundaries of linguistic understanding.

Since Gadamer himself admits that what is discussed on language in the third section of *Truth and Method* "was only a sketch," it seems that he himself was aware of this sketch and the "misinterpretations" resulting from it, especially in his famous statement about language. Therefore, in some of his works after *Truth and Method*, he eludes it and tries to shed some light on it; albeit without providing clear and explicit explanations, often relying on brief and general allusions. For example, in *Truth and Method*, Gadamer, a few lines after his controversial statement about language, attempts to complement it by saying "That which can be understood is language." (Gadamer, 2004, 470). However, this statement does not resolve the previous ambiguity much (perhaps it even adds to it), except that instead of the concept of Being, he uses an indefinite pronoun. Several years after the publication of *Truth and Method*, in an essay titled "the Scope and Function of Hermeneutical Reflection" (1967), he ties the fundamental principle of hermeneutics to his famous proposition: "The principle of hermeneutics simply means that we should try to understanding everything that can be understood. This is what I meant by the sentence: *Being that can be understood is language*." (Gadamer, 1967, 31). In this context, Gadamer's intention is not to equate the boundaries of language with the boundaries of Being and to say that language has no boundaries. Instead, he brings forth the possibility of understanding things, emphasizing our mission to comprehend them or to articulate them in language.

A decade later, in the essay "Text and Interpretation" (which is essentially a dialogue with Derrida), Gadamer elaborates slightly on the meaning of the aforementioned statement, albeit somewhat more elaborate, merging the boundaries of language and understanding rather than the boundaries of language and the world. Additionally, here he emphasizes more on the "limitation" aspect of language that takes the form of a "proposition," highlighting a kind of precise demarcation

[1] Ofcourse, in the same interview Gadamer affirms that the third section of *Truth and Method*, which concerns language, was "only a sketch" (Gadamer, 1996, 413).

in his position regarding language compared to *Truth and Method*. It appears that he focuses more on the incompleteness of our understanding of language as a limitlessness capacity and emphasizes distinguishing it from a proposition or the expressed word:

> My own efforts were therefore in every hermeneutical experience of meaning. When I wrote the sentence, 'Being that can be understood is language' what was implied by this was that what is can never be completely understood. This is implied insofar as everything that goes under the name of language always goes beyond whatever achieves the status of a proposition. That which is to be understood is that which comes into language, but of course it is always that which is taken as something true [*wahr-genommen*] (Gadamer, 1981/4, 162).

At this juncture, based on Gadamer's own statements, there doesn't seem to be an explicit acknowledgment of the limitlessness of language boundaries in relation to Being. Contrary to Grondin's claim, the text from *Truth and Method* does not lead to such an interpretation. However, the quoted text expresses a kind of complete incomprehensibility of the nature of language in works after *Truth and Method*. This issue can be discerned in Gadamer's differentiation between the inner word the expressed word, although this discussion is not within the scope of this paper.[1] Interestingly, even Gadamer himself questions thinkers (for example, Habermas) who misunderstand his notion of linguistic universality: "But is it not true that we can understand precisely *every* ideology as a form of false linguistic consciousness, … ?" (Gadamer, 1967, 31). This implies that language itself serves as a mediator even for unfolding "false consciousness" or any ideological approach. Habermas views Gadamer's attention to language (as dialogue and connecting it to tradition), as a form of "legitimization" the existing status quo, while neglecting the critical and emancipator thought (Weinsheimer, 2010, 36-7). However, it's interesting to note that even Habermas eventually accepts Gadamer's conception of linguistic universality years later. The following phrases seem to have been written by Gadamer:

> As historical and social beings we find ourselves always already in a linguistically structured lifeworld. In the form of communication through which we reach an understanding with one another about something in the world and about ourselves, we encounter a transcending power. Language is not a kind of private property. No one possesses exclusive rights over the common medium of the communicative practices we must intersubjectively share (Habermas, 2003, 10).

Now let's see what Gadamer "exactly" says in interview with Grondin about his provocative phrase. In response to Grondin's question about the exact meaning of the mentioned statement, Gadamer explicitly highlights both the ontological and epistemological dimensions of the phrase

[1] The author has discussed this distinction and its implications in detail in another forthcoming publication.

(perhaps such a statement has provoked the conflict interpretation of the interpreters). While pointing out that its significance is clear, he states: "Above all it means: being that can be experienced and understood, and it means that Being speaks. Only via language can being be understood" (Gadamer, 1996, 417). In these phrases, he aims to simultaneously uphold both the Heideggerian approach to language and his own hermeneutic approach to it. It is probably because of such instances that Laurukhin accuses Grondin for neglecting Gadamer's ontological dimension and Grondin also, observes a "turn" in Gadamer's position on language. Based on the aforementioned statements, it seems that Laurukhin is justified in emphasizing the ontological and Heideggerian aspects of Gadamer's position. Gadamer initially places the emphasis on "Being" itself and attributes speech to Being: "It is Being that speaks." He then refers to Heidegger's famous phrase "Die Sprache Spricht/ Language Speaks".[1]

On the other hand, scholars like Grondin are justified in emphasizing the epistemological aspect of Gadamer's statement, because in addition to mainly epistemological assertions in *Truth and Method*, Gadamer in latter quotation emphasizes that "*only* via language can being be understood". Of course, considering our linguisticality, he states that it cannot be denied that there is "someone" who speaks, but he/ she is limited to the boundaries of language in any case. So, if both laurukhin and Grondin are somehow correct in their interpretation of Gadamer's position on language, then where is the problem? However, the issue with Grondin's interpretation lies in concluding the "limitlessness" of language boundaries based on the context of Gadamer's statements about language and understanding of being. He claims that Gadamer has entirely restricted being to our linguistic comprehension. Moreover, limitation of Laurukhin's position lies in focusing solely on this Gadamer's claim that "it is being that speaks", in Heideggerian terms, meaning that language is the language of being. Laurukhin pays less attention to the fact that such expressions have largely become clichéd in Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics and play a lesser role. According to the general principles of Gadamer's hermeneutics, our role as interpreters who understand being in a linguistic manner is mostly highlighted rather than being itself.

These challenges become obvious in the continued questions and answers between Grondin and Gadamer in the aforementioned dialog. The question arises: if there is "someone" who speaks and understands being and at the same time is limited to the boundaries of language, then what is the task of hermeneutics? Gadamer, referring to Heidegger's particular interpretation of the concept of *aletheia* (truth), explains that "hermeneutics helps us to realize that there is always much that remains unsaid when one says something." (Gadamer, 1996, 417). Little attention to what Gadamer says reveals that, unlike Habermas, he does not intend to suggest that everything expressed or communicated through language is necessarily "true", that language reveals all aspects, visible and

[1] More precisely in another text, Gadamer writes: "As Heidegger says, language speaks *us*, insofar as we do not really preside over it and control it, although, of course, no one disputes the fact that it is we who speak it." (Gadamer, 1968, 76).

hidden of being, or that being is exactly what language "represents" for us. From this perspective, Gadamer fully preserves Heidegger's phenomenological view. He explicitly puts an end to all misunderstandings in this regard when he responds directly to Grondin's interpretation:

> No! no! I have never thought and never ever said that everything is language. Being that can be understood, insofar as it can be understood, is language. This contains a limitation. What cannot be understood can pose an endless task of at least finding a word that comes a little closer to the matter at issue [*die Sache*] (Gadamer, 1996, 417).

In this quotation, the phrase of "insofar as it can be understood" is indeed crucial.[1] It is evident that Gadamer does not confine the entirety of being to language; the disputed issue is not the scope of being but rather the scope of our linguistic understanding of being. A more explicit response than this is not found in Gadamer's texts. However, can one, like Grondin, argue for a sort of "turn" in Gadamer's position? According to Gadamer's texts, it is evidently not possible to discern a "turn" or a fundamental shift in position regarding this matter (though Gadamer emphasizes the epistemological aspect of his view on language). Anyway, the primacy of the "universal mystery of language … to everything" (Gdamer, 2004, 370) is epistemological rather than ontological. Perhaps Grondin modifies his position in response to Gadamer's explicit answer, replacing "turn" with a "sort of relocation in emphasis". Indeed, Grondin rightly attributes this relocation in emphasis to Gadamer himself. So, when Gadamer states, "Being that can be understood is language," does he simply mean to say that "Being/ world" is identical to language, that is "The word is the truth of the being" (Grondin, 2003, 145), or does he intend to convey something else?

It seems that the ambiguity present in Gadamer's position and expression regarding language and its relation to being boils down to the fact that Gadamer seeks to reconcile Heidegger's phenomenological perspective with the fundamental principles of his own philosophical hermeneutics. Thus, he sometimes emphasizes on the being itself and sometimes on our linguistic understanding of being. Whiles considering the foundational principles of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, its epistemological aspect takes precedence over its ontological dimension in his perspective on language and understanding. This is because his overarching project is based on the question, "How is understanding [which is verbal in nature] possible?" rather than on defining being as it is in itself.

Conclusion

In the third section of *Truth and Method,* Gadamer advances the notion that language is the only medium of our understanding of the world. The important of the linguistic aspect of understanding for Gadamer is such that he explicitly asserts in a controversial statement that "*Being that can be*

[1] As previously stated, Heidegger also, with the qualification "in so far as Being enters in to the intelligibility of Dasein" confines the understanding of being to the understanding of Dasein.

understood is language". Most interpreters consider Gadamer's assertion to be ambiguous and compendious, and various and conflicting interpretations, stem from this ambiguity and succinct. Gadamer's ambivalence lies in simultaneously emphasizing Heidegger's ontological approach to language and considering understanding of the world as "verbal in nature" from an epistemological perspective. Contrary to prevalent interpretations of Gadamer's famous phrase, what is central to him is not the distinction between being and language (the distinction between "what it is" and "what is expressed"), but rather the distinction within language itself, namely between the inner word and the expressed word. Therefore, interpretations that pronounce Gadamer's position as "limitlessness of linguistic boundaries," "nominalistic," or "idealistic" one, return the problem to the relationship between the word and the object, while the issue is about the linguistic capacity (as an infinite realm of linguistic possibilities that "can never be fully understood") and its objective or expressed manifestations. Undoubtedly, traces of Heidegger's views on language and its relation to being are traceable in Gadamer's thought; however, Gadamer endeavors to distance himself from Heidegger's perspectives by incorporating his own hermeneutic principles. Based on certain emphases and qualifications made by Gadamer himself in explaining the aforementioned phrase, it can be argued that he never intends to say that "being is the language," but rather, in his view, Being only "insofar as it can be understood," is language. That is to say, the emphasis is not merely on Being itself in general, but on a being that is understood and situated within the framework of our linguistic understanding. From this perspective, the epistemological interpretation in the majority of Gadamer's texts takes precedence over the ontological interpretation (in the sense that "our verbal experience of the world" takes precedence over us and not over Being itself). However, the presence of other implications in Gadamer's statements does not simply allow for such a unilateral conclusion; for instance, sometimes he expresses in a Heideggerian manner that "Being speaks." Consequently, different interpretations have their roots in Gadamer's own ambivalent positions.

References

Amini, A. (2023). Linguisticality is not Merely Expressing the Experiences; the relationship between language and understanding according to Gadamer, *Journal of Philosophical Investigations*, 17(44), 89-107. http//doi.org/10.22034/JPIUT.2023.58041.3590

Brad, T. (2005). *Being that Can be Understood is (Not Simply) Language: How Rorty Misappropriates Gadamer*, Seminar Paper for Philosophical Arguments, Gary Gutting.

Davey, N. (2006). *Unquiet Understanding: Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics*, State University press.

Figal, G. (2002). The Doing of the Thing Itself: Gadamer's Hermeneutic Ontology of Language, translated by R. J. Dostal, in: *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, R. J. Dostal (ed.), Cambridge University Press.

Gadamer, H. G. (1955). Hermeneutics and Ontological Difference in: *The Gadamer Reader*. (2007). Edited by R. Palmer, Northwestern University Press, 357-371.

Gadamer, H. G. (1960). The Truth of Work of Art, in: *Heidegger's Ways*, Translated by J. W. Stanley, State University Press. (1994). 95-109.

Gadamer, H. G. (1964). Marburg Theology, in: *Heidegger's Ways*, Translated by J. W. Stanley, State University Press. (1994). 29-43.

Gadamer, H. G. (1966). The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem, in: *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, Translated and edited by D. E., University of California. (1976). 3-17.

Gadamer, H. G. (1967). The Scope and Function of Hermeneutical Reflection, in: *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, Translated and edited by D. E. Linge, University of California. (1976). 18-43.

Gadamer, H. G. (1968), The Language of Metaphysics, in: *Heidegger's Ways*, Trans. By J. W. Stanley, State University Press. (1994). 69-79.

Gadamer, H. G. (1969). The Thinker Martin Heidegger, in: *Heidegger's Ways*, Translated by J. W. Stanley, State University Press. (1994). 61-67.

Gadamer, H. G. (1971). On the Truth of the Word, in: *The Gadamer Reader*. (2007). Edited by R. Palmer, Northwestern University Press, 133-55.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg. (1977a). Classical and Philosophical Hermeneutics, in: *The Gadamer Reader*. (2007). Edited by Richard Palmer, Northwestern University Press, 44-71.

Gadamer, H. G. (1977b). The Thinker Martin Heidegger, in: *Heidegger's Ways*, Translated by J. W. Stanley, State University Press. (1994). 181-195.

Gadamer, H. G. (1979). The Way in the Turn, in: *Heidegger's Ways*, Translated by J. W. Stanley, State University Press. (1994). 121-137.

Gadamer, H. G. (1981/84). Text and Interpretation, in: *The Gadamer Reader*. (2007). Edited by R. Palmer, Northwestern University Press, 157-91.

Gadamer, H. G. (1993). On the Truth of the Word, in: *The Gadamer Reader*. (2007). Edited by R. Palmer, Northwestern University Press, 133-155.

Gadamer, H. G. (1996). A Look Back over the Collected Works and Their Effective History [Dialog with Grondin] in *The Gadamer Reader*. (2007). Edited by R. Palmer, Northwestern University Press, 409-427.

Gadamer, H. G. (2004). *Truth and Method*, Translated by J. Weinsheimer & D. G. Marshall, Continuum Publishing Group, Second and Revised Edition.

Grondin, J. (2003). *The Philosophy of Gadamer*, Translated by K. Plant, Acumen Publishing, Limited Chesham.

Grondin, J. (2020). Von *Heidegger zu Gadamer: Unterwegs zur Hermeneutik*, Translated by M. R Hosseini Beheshti & M. Hosseini, Nashr-e Ney. (In Persian)

Habermas, J. (2003). *The Future of Human Nature*, Translated by a group of translators, Polity Press.

Heidegger, M. (2000). Letter on Humanism, *Global Religious Vision*, vol. 1/1, 83-109.

Heidegger, M. (2001). *Being and Time*, Translated by J. Macquarie & E. Robinson, Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Laurukhin, A. (2016). The Ontological Dimension of Language in H. G. Gadamer's Hermeneutics, *Kalbos ir Pažinimo Filosofija*, (90), 48-56.

Rorty, R. (2004). Being that Can be Understood is Language." In *Gadamer's Repercussions,* Edited by B. Krajewski, University of California Press, 21-29.

Risser, J. (2019). When Words Fail: on the Power of Language in Human Experience, *Journal of Applied Hermeneutics*, 31, (6), 1-11.

Weinsheimer, J. (2009). *Philosophical Hermeneutics and Literary Theory*, Translated by M. Olia, Nashre Qoqnous. (In Persian)

Wittgenstein, L. (2001). *Tractatus Logico- Philosophicus*, Translated by D. F. Pears & B. F. McGuiness, Routledge Classic.

Journal of Philosophical Investigations
Print ISSN: 2251-7960 Online ISSN: 2423-4419
Homepage: https://philosophy.tabrizu.ac.ir

Comparing Martin Heidegger's and Jalal Āl-e-Ahmad's Views on Technology

Hossein Rouhani

Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Faculty of Administrative Sciences Economics, University of Isfahan, Iran.
Email: h.roohani@ase.ui.ac.ir

Article Info

Article type:
Research Article

Article history:
Received 2 July 2023
Received in revised from 3 August 2023
Accepted 17 October 2023
Published online 07 September 2024

Keywords:
Āl-e-Ahmad, Heidegger, subjectivism, technology, modern technology.

ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to compare Heidegger's and Āl-e-Ahmad's views on technology; first, the close relationship between subjectivism and modern technology was analyzed based on Heidegger, and subsequently, it was pointed out that Heidegger's approach towards technology is a critical confrontation based on engagement/disengagement dialectics. Then Jalal Āl-e-Ahmad's view on technology was analyzed, emphasizing that, unlike Heidegger, with a philosophical, ontological, and anticipatory approach to modern technology, Āl-e-Ahmad took a selective and voluntarist approach towards modern technology by adopting a political and social stance. Āl-e-Ahmad, like Promethean and leading intellectuals and reformers, believed that a Westoxificated society is a society that has not yet achieved technology and is technologically dependent on the West. Therefore, to deal with Westoxification, it should become a technological power by adopting a will-based approach-- a machine must be built and owned; however, at the same time, one should not be got caught by the machine because it is a means and not a goal. Unlike Āl-e-Ahmad, Heidegger considered technology not a mere tool but a kind of ontology and way of thinking that affects all humans' areas and affairs, so it is not easy to escape modern technology's grip.

Cite this article: Rouhani, H. (2024). Comparing Martin Heidegger's and Jalal Āl-e-Ahmad's Views on Technology. *Journal of Philosophical Investigations*, 18(48), 249-260. https://doi.org/10.22034/JPIUT.2023.57354.3571

© The Author(s).
https://doi.org/10.22034/JPIUT.2023.57354.3571
Publisher: University of Tabriz.

Introduction

As a Western radical thinker, Martin Heidegger criticizes the 2500-year history of the West as a manifestation and breeding ground of subjectivism and metaphysical rationality. He believes that without a deep understanding of subjectivism and humanism, one can never have a comprehensive and complete knowledge of technology and the technological rationality of the modern world. In other words, according to Heidegger, it is with the dominance of the Cartesian thinker and the paradigm of modern knowledge that technology in the modern sense of the word is born. In the modern world, with the domination of technical, reflective, and conceptual thinking, a logic of measurement, calculation, and accounting has been established, which is used in all matters and situations.

Technological thinking, the birth of modern rationality, has no limits and can expand without limitations until there is no room for other ways of thinking. The main feature of the technical and calculating thinking ruling the modern world is the desire to control everything and everyone. In this situation, in the ontological and poetic thinking that Heidegger is the preacher and promoter of, a person finds a kind of openness towards himself, the world, and others instead of thinking about dominating nature and other human beings. In line with facing modern technology, Heidegger raises the point that technology is a consistent and inseparable part of people's daily life, and we cannot escape from it. But at the same time, he believes that by adopting a discontinuity-connection approach to modern technology, we can hope to create another thinking defined and formulated in a break from subjectivism. At this time, instead of adopting a philosophical, judgmental, and ontological approach to modern technology, Āl-e-Ahmad adopts voluntarism to modern technology. More directly and accurately, although Āl-e-Ahmad is highly indebted to people like Farid in processing and polishing the concept of Westoxification; however, unlike Farid, who had a thoughtful and profound view towards technology, he adopted a political and social position and approach towards technology. Āl-e-Ahmad considers the reason for the Iranians' Westoxification to be related to not making cars and not knowing and not having modern technology, and he thinks that it is possible to achieve independent and native technology by simply having the will to make cars and technology. The findings and results of this research indicate that Heidegger's encounter with modern technology takes place from a philosophical, judgmental, ontological, and anticipatory point of view, and he believes in engagement/disengagement dialectics in dealing with modern technology. Āl-e-Ahmad, an intellectual and a social reformer who calls for profound and fundamental changes in the political and social sphere, believes that to deal with Westoxification, one should achieve indigenous independent technology by adopting a voluntarist solution.

1. Heidegger's Epistemological Approach to Modern Technology

Radical thinker and critic Martin Heidegger criticizes the 2500-year history of the West as a manifestation of subjectivism and metaphysical rationality and puts the image of his thought in line with the break from subjectivism (Abdolkarimi, 2008, 173). Heidegger believes that with the beginning of modern philosophizing, and specifically with Descartes, we witness the emergence of a gap between the knowing subject and the object of identification. The subject controls the Cartesian world-- the subject acquires and gives meaning to this acquisition. This sensemaking represents what is always present in the subject; the world is the product of the subject's representation, and the subject creates the world (Jabbari, 2011, 22).

By establishing the "I think, therefore I am" (Latin: "cogito, ergo sum") dictum, Descartes considered the only real subject or the only specific being to be the "human ego" because it thinks - all beings are products or representations of this thinking ego. If, in Aristotle's thought, truth refers to the correspondence of the mind with the object, then in the paradigm of knowledge of the modern foundation, truth is translated as the correspondence of the object with the mind. As the agent of knowledge and agent of history, Man in the modern world can identify and analyze everything and, accordingly, interfere and occupy everything, including nature. In the shadow of subjectivism's conquest of the modern world, a concrete wall is drawn between the subject and the object, and the modern conquering and dominating intellect rise in pursuit of objectifying the world (Jabari, 2014, 47). Heidegger believes that:

Measurability refers to the openness available to computation. This approach to nature allows us to know what natural processes we can recognize and should predict, and predicting is desirable if the goal is to dominate natural processes. But the dominance or availability of nature is a form of possession. In the final part of Descartes' *Discourse on the Method,* we find the goal of science as "mastery over nature (Heidegger, 1962,135)

Heidegger believes that the logical and immediate result of the rise of subjectivism in the modern world is the transformation of the world into picture. According to this German thinker, no one saw the world as a picture in the Middle Ages. In those centuries, people quickly recognized their place in the order created by God. In the same way, there was no image of the world in ancient Greece because in Greece, Man had a closer relationship with the universe. No system of thought and belief wanted to reduce the world to an image and replace any other system of thought (Heidegger, 1977,141). Man in the ancient world was not a subject in the Middle Ages. But with the domination of the knowledge paradigm of the modern foundation, humanism, the peak of the worldview, dominates the world as an image. As soon as the world is established and known as an image, man has a new worldview and a position that can determine a status (Ahmadi, 2017, 1293). Heidegger writes about the transformation of the world into picture in the modern age that the world picture, when fundamentally understood, does not mean a world picture, but the world that is imagined and understood as a picture (Heidegger, 1977,129).

Heidegger claims that the emergence of new knowledge and technology has been parallel to the objectivity of the human mind and the emergence of subjectivity, and scientific and technological thinking in the scope of modernity was developed based on the fact that the essence of man is translated into a subject (Zeymaran, 2010, 106). Heidegger explicitly emphasizes that the essence of technology should not be considered technological, but the essence of technology lies in *Ge-Stell*. In German, the word *Ge-Stell* in its simple meaning, means "enframing," or frames such as bookshelves, and sometimes it also refers to the body and skeleton. Heidegger uses the term *Ge-Stell* to mean gathering people and focusing and emphasizing the order and organization of what is placed in front of them in the form of raw material for consumption. Due to this credit, in the new historical position, man considers all the phenomena of nature as raw materials and ready for consumption. In this framework, nature is considered a material to be transformed into a resource used by technology (Zeymaran, 2010, 221).

Ge-Stell order should not be considered a purely material order, but it should be seen as the orientation of thinking in the direction of knowledge manipulation. *Ge-Stell* transforms every reality into something that is put back and saved. Objects, as raw materials, are used for the movement of technology. Therefore, all the phenomena of the world become a set of consumable objects (Heidegger, 1977,28). Heidegger claims that modernity should be counted as the promise of *Ge-Stell* because the widespread and comprehensive mentality gives way to the ability to consume deposits and natural and social engineering of all creatures and even humans as the subject and property of their possession-- humans also become the raw material of technology. For example, medical science turns human life into a critical object in the laboratory (Manouchehri, 2008, 64).

According to Heidegger, questioning the nature of technology does not mean the negation of technology, but an attempt to understand its nature, criticize its limitations and the pathology of human existence in the age of technological dominance. Heidegger wants us not to understand technology simply as a set of devices and tools and to have a cognitive understanding of it. Based on his ontological and phenomenological approach, Heidegger wants us to practice *Gelassenheit* (releasement) concerning being concerned with technology. *Gelassenheit* (releasement) means saying yes and no to things: we let technology into our everyday world while keeping it out. This matter means that by saying yes to technology, we accept it as a necessary and consistent element of our current life, but by saying no, we always remember that scientific and technological thinking is not the only possible way of thinking; it cannot respond to all areas of human existence and his most original needs (Abdolkarimi, 2013, 340).

According to Heidegger, technology provides a possibility that we cannot guess at all. This possibility is "the possibility of a saving power" (Heidegger, 1977, 26). Heidegger states that: "the nature of technology can be both a danger and at the same time an evangelist and a harbinger of a saving power" (Heidegger, 1977, 26). Therefore, according to Heidegger, the negation of

technology and the acceptance of its closeness are both the same thing. According to Heidegger, technology *Ge-Stell* is a part of our historical destiny in the current historical period. But by belonging to this destiny, man is neither forced to surrender to technology nor is he forced to revolt against technology (Abdolkarimi, 2016, 95).

2. Āl-E-Ahmad's Voluntarist Encounter with Technology

Jalal Āl-e-Ahmad is one of the famous Iranian contemporary writers who has written numerous works on various cultural, political, social, and economic subjects. One of the critical concepts in Āl-e-Ahmad's intellectual system is his view on technology and how to face it. To explain and refine the concept of technology, Āl-e-Ahmad mentions another concept, "Westoxification". Āl-e-Ahmad was inspired by Ahmed Fardid in expanding the concept "Westoxification". Fardid was a thinker who introduced Westoxification into Iranian academic and intellectual literature by adopting a philosophical approach. Fardid believed that technology and the rationality that follows from it are events and the historical transition of our world. Therefore, it is not easy to be freed from the grip of technology. Although Fardid was strongly opposed to the modern world and the technological rationality that follows it, he considered dominating the technical world as an arduous and challenging task. Meanwhile, Āl-e-Ahmad, who was heavily influenced by Farid's concept of Westoxification, unlike Farid, saw the path of liberation from the modern world and the technological world paved (Abdolkarimi, 2016, 93).

As Āl-e-Ahmad puts it, the most essential and fundamental meaning of Westoxification is dependence on machines or technology:

> As long as we are machine buyers, the seller does not want to lose us" (Āl-e-Ahmad, 2001, 108-102).

He also believes that "As long as we are only consumers - until we do not build a machine - we are Westoxificated" (Āl-e-Ahmad, 2001, 25). Accordingly, according to Āl-e-Ahmad:

> Westoxification is a characteristic of an era in our history when we have not yet reached the machine and do not know the secret of its organization and construction. Westoxification is characteristic of an era in our history when we are not familiar with the basics of the machine, i.e. with new science and technology. Westoxification is a characteristic of a period in our history when we are forced to buy and use cars due to the economic market and the movement of oil (Āl-e-Ahmad, 2001,31).

According to Āl-e-Ahmad, "a Westoxificated person" is someone dependent on machines or technology. Therefore, the most fundamental characteristic of a Westoxificated society is technological dependence on the West, and it is this technological dependence that causes the

second characteristic of a Westernized society, that is, the political and economic following of Western political and economic powers (Abdolkarimi, 2016, 61). Āl-e-Ahmad believes that:

> This is the meaning of what we call Imitation [of the West] in politics and economics. Imitating the West, their oil companies and governments, this is the highest level of Westoxification in our time" (Āl-e-Ahmad, 2001, 76).

In Āl-e-Ahmad's view, Westoxification is a characteristic of a pre-industrial society whose people do not know anything about new knowledge and technology and whose economy is dependent on oil. Such a society imports and consumes the products of the western industrialized countries (Mahmoudi, 2019, 31).

Āl-e-Ahmad believes that in facing the modern technological world, we have no more than three ways:

1. Negating the modern world and sinking into oneself;
2. Surrender to technology and consumption (Westoxification); and
3. The third way that he suggests (Āl-e-Ahmad, 2001, 101).

He writes about this third way:

> But the third way, from which there is no alternative, is to put the life of this machine in glass; it is to take it under your control. It is like pulling a load from it. Naturally, the machine is a springboard for us to stand on and jump as far as possible with its spring power. A machine should be built and owned, but one should not be tied to it-- he should not be caught in it because the machine is a means and not a goal. The goal is to eliminate poverty and keep material and spiritual well-being within the reach of all people... Is a machine nothing but a horse trained by humanity and to serve it? ... to master the machine, one must build it (Āl-e-Ahmad, 2001, 102-104).

To explain and refine his meaning of Westoxification, Āl-e-Ahmad mentions that the relationship between the countries that produce and consume industry and technology is a relationship based on master and slave, which is referred to as neo-colonialism. He calls the complications of this special relationship "Westoxification". The consequences of such a relationship, from Āl-e-Ahmad's point of view, were the wars and conflicts that took place in Vietnam, Algeria, and Congo without anyone thinking about finding the underlying causes. Despite Āl-e-Ahmad's sharp criticisms of modern technology, he emphasizes that "Westoxification" never means opposition to the West and resistance to technology because if industry and technology are not the optional destiny of humankind, at least His fate is forced (Āl-e-Ahmad, 1979,118). Therefore, Āl-e-Ahmad adopts a selective approach to facing modern technology and writes in this regard:

> We need to get some things from the West, but not everything. In the West or the West, we are looking for technology: we enter this [western object] and learn their science, but not their humanities; that is, their literature to history, economics, and law. I have and know these myself. You can learn the scientific method from someone who knows, but I have the subject of human sciences myself (Āl-e-Ahmad, 2017, 201-201).

Āl-e-Ahmad values new science and technology and hopes that gradually and as a result of using western technology, Iranians will slowly reach a stage where they own technology. In other words, according to Āl-e-Ahmad, the machine (provided that we are its builders) can be a tool to eliminate Westoxification. Āl-e-Ahmad does not deny the machine and technology because he considers it inevitable. But he does not consider its existence proof of his truthfulness and wants to control it as much as possible (Mahmoudi, 2019, 314). To manage and contain the monster of machine and technology, he points out that "It is not a question of negating the machine... never... the machine becoming stuck in the world is historical determinism. The discussion is about how to deal with machines and technology" (Āl-e-Ahmad, 2001, 27).

Āl-e-Ahmad, who relates the problem of Westoxification and backwardness to the lack of technology in Iran, wants to provide a practical solution in using modern technology correctly and rationally. In this regard, he writes:

> For a period of, say, twenty years, we should send students only to India or Japan and not anywhere else in the West or USA. If I only mention these two countries, it is for the reason that we know how they finally got along with the Āl-e-Ahmadand how they got the technology (Āl-e-Ahmad, 2001, 192-193).

Āl-e-Ahmad's discussion about technology is structured around the effort to achieve technology. He considers the cause of the underdevelopment of third-world countries to be the interference of foreigners to protect their economic interests, and he writes about this:

> From the point of view of the economic interests of machine manufacturers - from the point of view of the international economy - the later we get the machine and technique, the better... All our breakdowns and disturbances originate from this one point (Āl-e-Ahmad, 2001, 126).

Āl-e-Ahmad indeed emphasizes the necessity of obtaining indigenous technology and selective use of modern technology; the fact is that Āl-e-Ahmad felt himself facing a conflict or paradox. On the one hand, he believed that we need technology and machine production to overcome our Westoxification and dependence on the West. On the other hand, he thought that the achievement of technology and the power of machine production would expose us to the danger of technology loss and mechanism. Abdolkarimi, 2016, 70). It is because of the existence of this conflict and

paradox that Āl-e-Ahmad states in his discussion of how to get out of Westoxification: "Would we be hit by a machine when we just built it? Just like the West, which cries out for technology and cars" (Āl-e-Ahmad, 2001, 25).

3. Evaluating the Relevance of Heidegger's and Āl-E-Ahmad's Views on Technology

Heidegger is among the prominent thinkers who want to break away from subjectivism and calculative thinking associated with the modern world and turn to poetic and reflective thinking. He believes that before the emergence of the paradigm of modern foundational knowledge, in the pre-Socratic period, people had a poetic and contemplative encounter with phenomena and that man had a character and an open horizon towards himself, the world, and others. In the pre-Socratic era, subjectivism had not yet cast a shadow on the world, and man was the shepherd of existence. However, with the removal of the theoretical rationality of Socrates and the rise of humanism in the modern world, a concrete wall was drawn between the subject and the object. The desire to control and dominate the world replaced the desire for truth and poetic inhabitation in the world (Asadi, 2008, 175).

Techne had a different meaning than its modern meaning in the pre-Socratic era. According to pre-Socratic rule, the board is meant to provide and produce. The critical point in Techne was not the use of tools or construction but the revelation, and Techne was considered to mean discovering the truth (Ahmadi, 1994, 108). Accordingly, it is clear that truth is connected with the meaning of unconcealment and uncovering the veil; in it, unconcealment is revealed, and the truth is realized. Therefore,

> If we consider the truth as unconcealment and disclosure- the unconcealment and disclosure making an object appear and allowing that object to appear and be present- we see that what appears in every moment, in fact, somehow presence comes, whether it is the matter of making a new tool, building a wall, preparing a place to live, cultivating a new species of a plant, or making and processing an artwork (Heidegger, 1987, 135).

In the pre-Socratic period, art and works of art were also called art, and all arts were called invention or self-manifestation because they allowed the emergence of truth, i.e., unhiddenness and emergence of objects. Heidegger writes: "Because art brings the most immediate possible form of existence, i.e., the phenomenon and the unhidden that has emerged in itself, to a time and establishes it in something present, i.e., in the artwork. An artwork is not an artwork simply because it has been worked on and made, but it is simply an artwork that realizes existence in an object (being)" (Heidegger, 1987,156). Therefore, the pre-Socratics also knows art "Techne" because art, which is the manifestation of existence, realizes the truth in the meaning of the appearance and uncovering of the veil in work. An artwork is one such work, and the artist with his artwork strives to realize the truth and establish it in the work. For this purpose, he dwells in the realm of truth,

that is, in the conquest of existence and its manifestation, and when he comes across that manifestation, he preserves and preserves it and leaves it in work. Dwelling in the conquest of existence and being prepared and opening the arms of the soul in search of that manifestation is his knowledge and wisdom (Rikhtegaran, 2010, 25).

The central signifier of Heidegger's thought about technology is defined and formulated around this main claim: by removing modern subjectivism and the domination of modernist controlling thinking, we move away from the pre-Socratic perception of technology. In other words, in the modern world where technology is reduced to technology, everything is placed in the direction of man's domination over nature and expansion of his domination over the world and man, and in the realm of technology and under the new relevance that man has made with objects in the world of technology. Man tries more to continue the process of production for consumption and consumption for production, and thus, living on the soil, oneness with nature, including forgetfulness and negligence (Rikhtegaran, 2010, 36).

Unlike Heidegger, who takes a philosophical, judgmental, and ontological position about technology and tries to establish a relationship between subjectivism and modern technology, Āl-e-Ahmad adopts a non-philosophical approach to technology. Unlike Heidegger, who considers technology not just a tool but a way of thinking and ontology, he has a pragmatic, instrumentalist, and voluntarist approach to technology and thinks it is possible to make a machine and technology was achieved. It no longer followed Western politics and economy (Mahmoudi, 2019, 315). By adopting a selective approach towards technology, Āl-e-Ahmad believed that the indigenous culture can be preserved from the damage of Western thinking by adopting western technology and incorporating western culture and philosophy. He looked at technology as a neutral thing, based on the same instrumental view that makes us utterly blind to the nature of technology (Abdolkarimi, 2016, 86).

Āl-e-Ahmad was unaware that in modern times, this technique turns things around and arranges everything in a system of circulation of things. Man of the modern era is dependent on technological tools, and unknowingly and unconsciously, he has attached himself to these technical tools so much that he has become a slave to them. On the other hand, technology forcibly and inevitably brings modern culture and thinking with it (Ghaninejad, 1998, 55).

Āl-e-Ahmad's selective encounter with modern technology, which involves taking modern technology and tools and incorporating intellectual and cultural elements of modern thinking, faces many difficulties in practice because modern technology is not a technical matter but a metaphysical matter. Without considering the philosophical roots and foundations of modern technology, which is rooted in humanism and modern subjectivism, it is never possible to have a correct and realistic encounter with modern technology (Golestani, 2015, 10). Āl-e-Ahmad was not interested in the fact that technology brought its historical universality. Therefore, based on the current facilities and historical frameworks of the present time, it can never be separated from this

historical world, that is, from the metaphysical tradition that arose from it and the theoretical and cultural foundations and the value system resulting from this tradition (Abdolkarimi, 2016, 86).

The fact is that instead of dealing with the intellectual foundations of modern technology and consequently adopting a deep and cautious approach to the type of encounter with modern technology, Āl-e-Ahmad adopts a simplistic and selective approach to modern technology. Following his selective approach against modern technology while giving authenticity to the category of technology and the need for Iran to become a technological power, he wants to resist Western thought and culture. In Āl-e-Ahmad's anthropology, a person has authority and freedom; therefore, he can take everything he wants from the West and throw away everything he does not wish to (Bahrami Komeil, 2014, 63).

Although Āl-e-Ahmad is interested in building a machine and has a selective and arbitrary encounter with modern technology by adopting an active and selective approach, Heidegger has an entirely different approach to technology. Heidegger believes that the superiority of technology and the technological rationality resulting from the modern world was beyond the will and choice of people. Simply put, technology is our historical destiny, but it should not be considered destiny and inevitable. For him, technology is not inevitable and is our eternal fate. This issue means we should not unthinkingly accept the framework technology determines. However, this statement also means that our technology experience may present us with another option other than a helpless and helpless rebellion that only curses technology and considers it the devil's work. We must respond to the voice of technology within the context of technology experience. Answering from within the context of technology experience is our contemporary destiny (Johnson, 2008, 172-172).

Heidegger wants to remind us that we are in a correct relationship and encounter with technology when we say no to the western direction of our existence, including technology, and leave technology from the heart so that our hearts are freed from its dominion. It is not leaving, erasing, or neglecting technology but abandoning it. Not having it is no problem, but not being attached is the problem. As soon as one abandons technology, the power and domination that is its inherent requirement will end, and he will be in the right relationship with it. But this change in his relationship with technology, implying some symptoms and disregard for it, is not sudden but rather a gradual thing; it is only in the position of *Gelassenheit* (releasement) from technology that he is no longer bound by technology-- it is the technology that is attached to him (Rikhtegaran, 2003, 189).

Therefore, it can be concluded that if Heidegger wants an ontological confrontation with modern technology and knows the way to get rid of it is to turn to a kind of symptomatic thinking and break with modern subjectivism. Āl-e-Ahmad has a voluntarist and selective approach toward technology. He imagines that technology is a mere tool and never cares about technology's developmental and ontological nature. Therefore, contrary to Heidegger, he thinks that by simply

having a political determination to build a machine and selectively use modern technology, one can overcome Westoxification due to the lack of technology (Nasri, 2011, 48).

Conclusion

Martin Heidegger is among the radical thinkers who, by adopting a contemplative and ontological approach, establish a close relationship between subjectivism and modern technology. He believes that without understanding and deeply rooting the metaphysical rationality and subjectivism associated with the modern world, achieving a thorough and insightful understanding of modern technology is impossible. Technology and its consequent rationality are part of the fate of the history of the world and existence; therefore, it is impossible to go to the technology war by adopting an active and voluntarist approach. Technology is a part of the reality, historical context, and historical aspect of modern times, which cannot be denied. However, Heidegger's words do not mean that in the face of technology, we will become captives of technology and its domineering and controlling logic, but what Heidegger proposes as a solution to face technology - a saying yes and no simultaneously to technology. It means that we use the tools and instruments of modern technology, and in this way, we say yes to them, but we only consider them as tools that cannot determine the essence and truth of our inner and original existence and have an effect on it; so, we say no to them.

As Heidegger, Āl-e-Ahmad criticizes technology and mechanism and calls for a critical encounter with technology. However, unlike Heidegger, Āl-e-Ahmad adopts a selective and voluntarist approach toward technology. Āl-e-Ahmad seeks to take western technology on the one hand and impose western culture, thought, and philosophy on the other hand, and he ultimately adheres to this belief - the only solution to face westernization is to achieve technological power. It seems that Āl-e-Ahmad has a subjective view of modern technology and thinks it is possible to perform this task by having the will to accomplish the machine and technology. It is when Heidegger emphasizes the developmental and ontological character of technology and raises the point that the domination of technological rationality in the modern world was a matter independent of human will; thus, it is not possible to go to the technology war voluntaristly or to take advantage of selecting modern technology because, as Heidegger believes, technology is a way of thinking and is not just a mere tool that can benefit from its technical and functionalist merits, according to Āl-e-Ahmad. However, it creates culture and thought arising from modern technology.

References

Abdolkarimi, B. (2008). *We and Nietzsche's World.* Nashr-e Elm Publications. [In Persian]
Abdolkarimi, B. (2013). *Heidegger in Iran*. Wisdom & Philosophy Institute. [In Persian]
Abdolkarimi, B. (2015). *Heidegger in Our Historical Horizon*. Naqd-e Farhang Publications. [In Persian]
Ahmadi, B. (1994). *Modernity and Critical Thought*. Nashr-e Markaz Publications. [In Persian]
Ahmadi, B. (2017). *Heidegger and the History of Being*. Nashr-e Markaz Publications. [In Persian]

Āl-e-Ahmad, J. (1979). *A Three-Year Report*. Ravaq publications. [In Persian]
Āl-e-Ahmad, J. (2001). *Gharbzdegi (Westoxification)*. Ferdows Publications. [In Persian]
Bahrami Komeil, N. (2014). *Typology of Iranian Intellectuals*. Kavir Publications. [In Persian]
Ghaninejad, M. (1998). *Modernity and Development in Contemporary*. Nashr-e Markaz Publications. [In Persian]
Golestani, M. (2015). *Deconstructing the Texts of Jalal Āl-e-Ahmad*. Niloofar Publications. [In Persian]
Heidegger, M. (1977). *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, translated by W. Lovitt, Garland Publishing, INC.
Heidegger, M. (1987). *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, translated by R. Manheim, Yale University Press.
Heiegger, M. (1962). *Being and Time*, translated by J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson, Blackwell.
Jabbari, A. (2011). *Philosophy, Reproduction and Sexuality*. Porsesh Publications. [In Persian]
Jabbari, A. (2014). *Dasein Mining or Dasein Analysis*. Porsesh Publications. [In Persian]
Johnson, P. (2008). *Heidegger*. Mehr Publications. [In Persian]
Mahmoudi, S. A. (2019). *Iranian Thinkers*. Ney Publications. [In Persian]
Manouchehri, A. (2008). *Martin Heidegger*. Cultural Research Office. [In Persian]
Nasri, A. (2011). *Confronting Modernity*. Nashr-e Elm Publications. [In Persian]
Rikhtegaran, M. (2003). *Phenomenology, Art, Modernity*. Saqhi Publications. [In Persian]
Rikhtegaran, M. (2010). *A reflection on the Theoretical Foundations of Art*. Saghi publications. [In Persian]
Zeymaran, M. (2010). *Philosophy between the Present and the Future*. Payan Publications. [In Persian]

Journal of Philosophical Investigations
Print ISSN: 2251-7960 Online ISSN: 2423-4419
Homepage: https://philosophy.tabrizu.ac.ir

"Forego the reality of all the simple things": On Object-Oriented Reality as Metaphorical Vortex in Flann O'Brien's *The Third Policeman*

Shahriyar Mansouri

Associate Professor of Modern Irish Literature, Shahid Beheshti University, Iran. Email:s_mansouri@sbu.ac.ir

Article Info

Article type:
Research Article

Article history:
Received 26 April 2024
Received in revised form 21 June 2024
Accepted 25 June 2024
Published online 07 September 2024

Keywords:
objectile reality, symbiotic ontology, mature object, spatial temporality, circular vortex, *The Third Policeman*

ABSTRACT

This article examines Flann O'Brien's *The Third Policeman* in the context of Object-Oriented Ontology, and argues that the novel transports the structural paradigm of reality and being towards a never-ending limbo, highlighting a circular transference of meaning from known toward unknown horizons and vice versa. In so doing, it explores the ways in which *The Third Policeman* engages with the concept of metaphor in its proportionality or analogous nature, revealing a contrapuntal form of narrative that produces an odd reality wherein objects maintain a self-referential position while introducing the subject as that which must oscillate between its metaphorical and literal integrity. The object, therefore, not only enjoys an independent existence in O'Brien's narrative but also maintains a singular and independent ontological composition inside or outside such circular vortex. The article concludes by presenting the object as the most stable entity with multifarious functionalities that complement the axis of the narrative, cementing its presence as the mature object.

Cite this article: Mansouri, SH. (2024). Forego the Reality of All the Simple Things": On Object-Oriented Reality as Metaphorical Vortex in Flann O'Brien's *The Third Policeman*. *Journal of Philosophical Investigations*, 18(48), 261-276. https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.61392.3748

© The Author(s).
https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.61392.3748
Publisher: University of Tabriz.

One year after publishing his first novel *At-Swim-Two-Birds* in 1939, objects with exothermic reactions simply referred to as bombs took control of the fate of Brian O'Nolan's manuscript when Longman's London offices were destroyed.[1] O'Nolan, in this article referred to as Flann O'Brien, saw almost no trace of his manuscript until 1960. The second novel, *The Third Policeman* finished in 1940, is oddly structured around how objects, especially the explosive types, can not only reconstruct seemingly synchronous ghost branches of reality but also decentralize the subject in a metaphoric plane of reality by dismantling certain fixed anthropocentric artifacts such as language, and narratorial norms. Objects in O'Brien's novels have been examined by scholars such as Charles Kemnitz, Andrew Spencer, John Attridge, and M. Keith Booker in the context of classical or quantum physics, Schrödinger's probability and more, maintaining an objective lens while examining the subject-object state of being. This essay, however, looks at O'Brien's *The Third Policeman* through an object-oriented rhetoric, and examines a select number of objects such as the bicycle, and the chest box that control the absurd realism of the novel. I will explain how reality in *The Third Policeman* functions like a circular vortex, invoking two asymptotic and parallel planes of existence with the object as its center; one plane involves the known uses of objects in the form of daily tools and equipments, while the other contains a phantasmic projection of the object and its unknown layers.

To account for the objectile reality, this paper engages with Graham Harman's Object-Oriented philosophy and his understanding of the role that metaphor plays in not only connecting the daily and known with the unknown realities of objects but also revealing the autonomous state of objecthood, hidden behind a facade of diversified functions and references in O'Brien's novel. Metaphor, according to Jose Ortega y Gasset, becomes a plane that allows the matter to be expressible through "ever-new trajectories" (1975, 127), revealing the unknown or hidden.

The Object as Reference

Harman investigates the referentiality of the object within an anthropocentric domain in his *Tool-Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects*, and describes a reality structured around a function-oriented perception of the object. Harman explores a plane that reveals the object's ontic presence, namely, a profile presence, or an appearance that goes beyond the object's sum of phenomenological performances; in other words, the object exists, yet its existence contradicts functions that were assigned to it by the subject. The object, in this respect, is irreducible to its ontic or ontological features. By ontic features, Harman evokes the Heideggerian *Vorhandenheit* or the object's static profile whereas the ontological features highlight the functionality of an object, i.e., *Zuhandenheit*. The latter informs Harman's appreciation of being, i.e., a functional

[1]On O'Brien's publishing history see Anthony Cronin, *No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien*, New York: Fromm, 1998, pp. 85–99. Also see Rob W. Maslen, "Flann O'Brien's Bombshells: At Swim-Two-Birds and The Third Policeman", *New Hibernia Review*, Vol. 10, No. 4, Geimhreadh/Winter 2006, pp. 84-104.

presence which is at the same time hidden and withdrawn. However, it is the object's ontic presence that stretches the existence of the object beyond Anthropocentric ends by masking the functions of the object. For instance, it is the ontic presence of an object like Husserl's knife, Heidegger's hammer, or the narrator's bicycle-pump that hides numerous possible functions of each object, presenting them as mere tools to cut, drive in nails, and inflate tires, respectively. As such, the object becomes a being that oscillates between ontic singularities and hidden multiple ontological appearances; for instance, an apprehension of the bicycle as an object that facilitates transportation and at the same time a wide spectrum of ontic manifestations such as a seductive partner with a "saddle […] spread invitingly into the most enchanting of all seats" (O'Brien 1974, 149), an object of murder, or a feral entity that solitary prisons cannot contain. In any scenario, the ontic existence of the object disassembles an anthropocentric function-oriented reading of objects.

In the novel we follow the ontological trials and tribulations of an unnamed narrator, whose soul assumes the name Joe later in the narrative, as he and John Divney murder the old Mathers, who is "worth a packet of potato meal" (O'Brien 1974, 17). Searching for Mathers's hidden fortune, the narrator is catapulted into an eerie dimension of reality when the booby-trapped chest-box explodes, unveiling an ontological plane wherein objects such as bicycles benefit from an existential referentiality that transcends their functions. This uncanny plane expands reality by imagining little hidden worlds of objects wherein objects' masked ontologies become visible. In this reality the object's ontic multiplicity confirms an underlying inter-objectile system;[1] the assemblage of such microsystems projects the image of another object of a larger dimension. For instance, a bicycle can be seen as a product of this inter-objectile, indirect dynamism wherein various smaller parts such as pedals, brakes, stem, bolts, spokes, tires, seat, handlebars, and a "pump resting warmly against her rear thigh" (O'Brien, 1974, 149) must function harmoniously to project an emergent image, "a reference" toward that larger final object, "shifting […] the issue" of being beyond the functions of those smaller objects (Harman, 2002, 25). This referent is what Harman regards as the equipment, with the potential to switch between ontic appearances, and to create realities that relate to the projected image.

The object's ontic presence as a referential terminus is related to Harman's understanding of tool-being as the signifier of meaning. In other words, for Harman referentiality is a synthetic allusion to diverse meanings and systematically complex images; hence, "for the tool, to be is to *mean*" (2002, 25), and to reflect alternative states of being. In chapter 6 of the novel, for instance, the spectral narrator is introduced to 'the Atomic theory' by Sergeant Pluck, who believes in the transformative power of atomism. His example is "Michael Gilhaney," who "is nearly banjaxed from the principle" of this theory as he is "nearly half a bicycle" (O'Brien, 1974, 72). Pluck's

[1]The term 'objectile' here denotes an object-oriented or object-centric system or structure, reflecting Harman's original taxonomy borrowed form computer languages, and is distinct from the term suggested by Bernard Cache, or Gilles Deleuze.

argument, according to Kemnitz and Spencer, heavily relies on quantum physics, making a Schrodinger case of every possible entity, be it the subject or their objectile companions. However, in the context of Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO) and the reflexive nature of objects, Gilhaney's banjaxed being is a projection of his bicycle as a mechanical microcosmic reality, which functions as an empire of tools that relies on various micro-objects to work together. In other words, Gilhaney's centaur-like half-bicycle image references a larger reality, albeit absurd, that contains smaller objects such as Gilhaney and his bicycle, and other objectified bodies, intimating 'The behaviour' that has "a high content of humanity." For Pluck, the spectral narrator, and the readers such an imagery "is very cunning and entirely remarkable," since an unimaginable must be imagined to "see a bicycle leaning against the dresser of a warm kitchen when it is pouring outside?" (O'Brien, 1974, 77). As such, Gilhaney's existence is a projection of a state of being that is assigned to him by his bicycle as an ontic chrysalis, one that matures and defines him and other subjects by transferring features that seem unknown to both Pluck as the focalizer and the spectral narrator as the interlocutor. Gilhaney's bicycle functions as an epistemological signifier of not just his being as a pseudo-mechanical organism but also the quality of his being such as walking smartly, never sitting down, or leaning against the wall to rest; the bicycle *is* by way of reflecting and defining others:

> He will walk smartly always and never sit down and he will lean against the wall with his elbow out and stay like that all night in his kitchen instead of going to bed. If he walks too slowly or stops in the middle of the road, he will fall down in a heap and will have to be lifted and set in motion again by some extraneous party (O'Brien, 1974, 78).

Although Pluck's understanding of Gilhaney regards him as an uncanny, mechanical half-bicycle, his diegetic machinations against Gilhaney's features exceed logical description of any half-machine; as such, Pluck's diegetic exuberance is a testament to Gilhaney's object-oriented body extraordinaire, the sort that appears, according to Katherine Ebury, as a collection of "absurd bodies" through which O'Brien "dethrone[d]" the subject as not just the authoritative "observer" but also the site of meaning making by "empowering imaginative responses to the cosmos" (2017, 88), especially its hidden layers. In the coming pages, I will examine objectile referentiality in the context of symbiosis, where objectile symbiotic formations point to the composition of a mature object, namely, one that no longer can or will reciprocate with its neighboring objects. The object, therefore, emerges as an entity with an ontological sovereignty to resist or to appropriate the neighboring object partially or in its entirety. Regardless of the action, the end product of such objectile communion can no longer resume its previous ontic and ontological state of being.

The Object, Meaning, and an Internal Circular Vortex

In an Object-Oriented context, reality fails as a "total empire of meaning that only humans would be able to break up into individual zones" (Harman, 2002, 34); rather, in an object-oriented understanding of reality it segues into what I call a circular vortex of meaning, namely, a plane of meaning-contexture where objects not only "resist one another" but also maintain their unique identity by exerting their referentiality as the terminal point of meaning (Harman 2002, 34). The plane is translatable as the "horizon within which something", for instance, the object appears as a daily object yet with hidden features (Žižek, 2021, 37). A classical understanding of the vortex derives from Ezra Pound's imagined realm of words that functions "like great hollow cones of steel of different dullness and acuteness" (1973, 34), appearing as a bridge that enables "the subject [to] circle […] back to the object" (Albright, 1997, 175). Conversely, in a circular vortex, as shown in Fig. 1, the object has become the center (F), and dethroned the subject and his linguistic "systematicity" (Phillips & et al, 2016, 1) by interfacing with planes of reality. The suggested vortex is not only cone-like but also forked as it is comprised of two planes of meaning-reality, reflecting the object's ontological and ontic dimensions, respectively. In this circular vortex (Fig. 1), the object facilitates the mechanical meaning-contexture to become a perceptible reality (A), while containing within its layers a metaphorized, and hidden form of reality (B), which engages with "countless hidden layers of categorial structures" to "gradually draw out" reality (Harman 2002, 26).

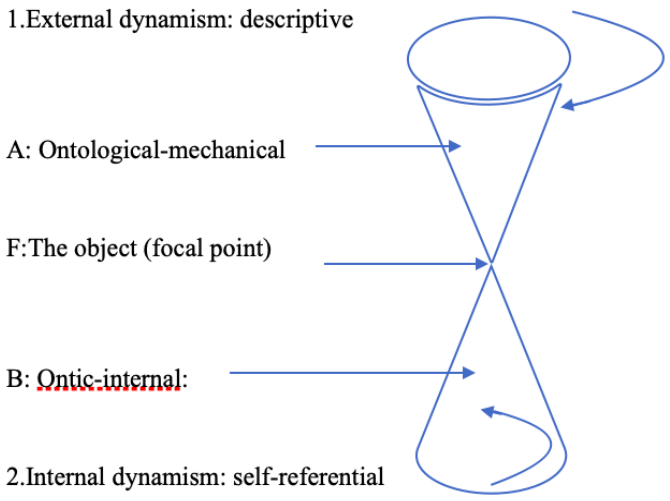


Fig. 1: Reality as an Objectile Circular Vortex

In Fig. 1, '1' represents a mechanical projection of reality channeled through the object's functional dynamism or Tool-Being that materializes within a descriptive resonance of reality wherein the Anthropos appears as a consumer of meaning, hence a clockwise rotation to mark the canniness of an Anthropocentric understanding of temporality and progress. This appears as a transliteration of reality in which existence and realities are but shadows of an objectile ontological presence, namely, a reality in which being is a result of what objects do or are made to do, and a canny relation between the object and the subject. In this literal reality, objects remain as the locus of certain functional references, e.g., bicycles maintain their ontic reference as objects of transportation. However, '2' in Fig. 1 corresponds to an autonomous cryptic empire of infinite possible realities, masked by the object's seemingly static "regime of presence-at-hand" which constructs Harman's core argument vis-à-vis an object-oriented ontology (Harman, 2002, 28). By relying on an inter-objectile regime of presence, the object initiates a departure from anthropocentrism and anthropocentric meaning-making, resulting in a nonsensical extension of reality.

In "Nonsense, Ordinary Language Philosophy, and Flann O'Brien's *The Third Policeman*," Attridge looks at O'Brien's novel through the usual anthropocentric lens, dealing with objects through a discourse that flirts with a Husserlian understanding wherein no object exists outside of the subject's mind. For instance, Attridge examines how the narrator's perception "of a two-dimensional building in a three-dimensional environment" sounds "unintelligible - a kind of nonsense" (2014, 302); or when he analogously analyzes the absurdity and "silliness" of "proclaiming that 'the right is much trickier than the left'" in anthropocentric contexts such as "sense data and language" (2014, 303). His critique that "what is being posited in not wrong but meaningless" (Attridge, 2014, 303), makes sense within a Kantian definition of perception, a "flat ontolog[ical]" analysis would diminish such anthropocentric superiorities,

> treat[ing] all objects in the same way, rather than assuming in advance that different types of objects require completely different ontologies (Harman, 2018, 83).

In this respect, objects with an independent and withdrawn existence might sound just as 'unintelligible' and nonsensical as the narrative does; for instance, when the space in the form of a two-dimensional structure fluctuates as if it is "watercolor in rain" it can be considered as a product of the second plane of reality in a circular vortex wherein the function and the presence of an object contradict or alienate such fixed anthropocentric apprehensions of the object (Kemnitz, 1985, 58). Such critical readings of meaning as the one proposed by Attridge connects with the external dynamics of reality in Fig. 1, emerging as a mechanically sound realism with objects that are categorically bound by the subject's ideation, either making sense or appearing as those "that are similarly unintelligible" (Attridge, 2014, 302). However, it is the hidden domain of an object that disrupts such fixed readings, inviting an indirect reading of "these incomprehensible objects and

the stupefying artifacts and contraptions" that MacCruiskeen crafts and operates (Attridge, 2014, 302). This is the reality in which objects can preserve their uncanny mask and appear as the site of the unknown, disrupting the canny plane of meaning-contexture known to us as reality.

This form of meaning, shaped by an empire of masked and disruptive objects, signifies the existence of an internal reality that is masked by the object's withdrawn presence and at the same time its multiple layers of self-referentiality, superimposing these internal structural dynamics of existence. For the narrative, a reversal of geometrical meaning appears for the narrator as objects that "lacked an essential property of all known objects" (O'Brien, 1974, 177); this is represented by a counterclockwise rotation in Fig. 1 to emphasize such internal contradictions, and the inherent non-anthropocentrism of the narrative. The internalized confusion at the core of shapeless objects created at police barracks highlights the object's departure from anthropocentrism toward self-referential autonomy: these objects are "not square or rectangular or circular" as their geometry adheres to a definitional core hidden by the object; objects, in this respect, appear as "simply irregularly shaped" (O'Brien, 1974, 117). The reality of objects with intelligible shapes and geometrical forms is shown in Fig. 1 as 'A' and '1', connecting with Harman's understanding of "overmining," namely, perceiving the objects by "reducing [them] to their impact on us or on each other, denying them any excess or surplus beyond such impact" (Harman, 2018, 75). Whereas 'B' and '2' portray 'undermining' or "smallism," namely, a perception "central to the natural sciences" that denies objects such as 'chairs and horses' the "same degree of reality as their chosen ultimate foundations," as they are either "too shallow" or too deep and cryptic to be real (Harman, 2018, 69-70, 72); and hence, an object is tantamount to mere static presence-at-hand, irrespective of its hidden layers of reality; a bicycle or a bomb, in this respect, *is* what it does, obscuring the fact that its planes of reality had galvanized the existence of the novel.

Metaphor as the Catalyst

In "Science, Philosophy, and 'The Third Policeman,"' M. Keith Booker engages O'Brien's novel as a metaphoric examination of being qua being; in so doing, Booker assays an article by a young Friedrich Nietzsche in which he understood "all knowledge" as "indirect and metaphorical," finding reality to be "nothing but 'an X which remains inaccessible and undefinable for us"' (1991, 37). Booker's allusion to Nietzsche's vision that "we possess nothing but metaphors for things" (Booker, 1991, 37) is not only to debunk the nature of language and its seemingly rigid and direct relationship with beings but also to appreciate the bizarre, aloof and non-prescriptive nature of O'Brien's art.

The non-prescriptive aspect of O'Brien's novel becomes an asset when we learn that for modernists such as y Gasset real art is created when one engages with hidden aspects of reality. In *Phenomenology and Art*, y Gasset goes as far as to say that "decorative or industrial arts" as representations of daily and monolithic reality are so cognitively exhausted that they barely stand

as art; it is more accurate, therefore, to call it "utility varnished with beauty" (1975, 129-130). The reality that such artworks represent connects with Harman's reality of overmining, namely, a hidden yet dry, shallow, and function-oriented reality. Through a dialectical engagement with object-oriented vortices, metaphor not only reveals but also brings such hidden vortices to the fore by treating previously unknown meanings and internal realities as, according to y Gasset, "whirlwinds with ever-new trajectories" that can add "novelty to the world, that add ideality to the universe" (1975, 127).

In *Poetics* Part 3 Section XXI, Aristotle introduces two types of words: "current, [and] strange, or metaphorical" whereby current fits our contemporary "general use" and understanding of language while the metaphorical or the strange might be current and contemporary yet within or from a different culture or region. Metaphor is regarded by Aristotle as the "application of an alien name by transference either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or by analogy, that is, proportion" (Section 3, Part XXI). It is the fourth form, namely the proportionality or the analogous nature of language that brings delicate matters such as reality and ontology to the foreground by creating not only the context of criticism as in the form of two parallel planes, one literal and one imagined and thus critical, but also a necessary mindset that will make reconsidering reality permissible. Metaphor, I suggest, may be considered as a referential threshold that opens to masked realities hidden within objects, and at the same time translates such hidden depths into systematic verbiage by way of "transference," (Aristotle, 2008, 3: XXI) namely, connecting the known with the unknown through the analogous power of language.

Through metaphor not only the object's self-referential, counterintuitive multiplicity of realities but also its pseudo-ontological presence can be examined. This critical reflexivity of metaphor should not be misunderstood as its function to reduce art to an everyday object with internal and external vortices of reality that are deplorably repetitive and exhausted; rather, by cracking the object's previously impenetrable carapace and by inviting our assessment of its internal realities, a metaphorical reading of a work of art allows for the hidden planes to be explored and imagined in the face of a fixed Kantian nature of the process wherein understanding and judgment appear as mechanical apparatuses that enable artistic perception possible. To understand the object and its masked vortices of reality we cognitively become an interfacial object, or as y Gasset notes, we become the executant I, namely, a referentiality that becomes meaningful by understanding every dynamic object and event as entities that participate in assigning a frame of mind, a state or an ontological condition to other states of being. The executant 'I', connects with the conception of a Sensual Object in Harman's taxonomy, mediating between the Real Object and its Sensual or Real Qualities on the one hand, and a perceptible reality on the other.

In OOO, a Real Object (RO) is always beyond the grasp of the subject's structured systematicity since it is host to unique performances that contradict the subject's original perception of the object. To survive the reality orchestrated by the object's multifarious ontic being, the subject participates

in various layers of objective reality, which confirms the subject's role as an interface, or a Sensual Object (SO). An SO can be imagined as a cognitive echo of an object or a structured existence that appears in a physical reality; it is only the "correlate of our acts of consciousness" (Harman, 2018, 233).

In the novel, the narrator finds objects that exist beyond his comprehension: 'I would have to forego the reality of all the simple things my eyes were looking at" (O'Brien 1974, 75). What the narrator focalizes is describable through a metaphoric communication of such seemingly canny objects with uncanny ontic shifts; for instance, when Sergeant tells about the "man-charged bicycle[s]" (O'Brien, 1974, 74), namely, a bicycle "that has a high content of humanity", Joe is troubled by such ontic presence of an object, incredulously investigating the human dimension of "people's bicycle" or alternatively "bicycles's people or whatever is the proper name for them - the ones that have two wheels under them and a handlebars" (O'Brien, 1974, 75): "Are you certain about the humanity of the bicycle?" (O'Brien, 1974, 75). In another scene, objects made by MacCruiskeen project a reality that is beyond the narrator's cognitive semioticity:

> simply their appearance, if even that word is not inadmissible, was not understood by the eye and was in any event indescribable (O'Brien, 1974, 131).

The internal plane of reality, or 'B' in Fig. 1, challenges Joe's conception of reality; this is a pattern of reality in which a bicycle appears as an autonomous RO, the stability and multifarious being of which disrupts the narrator's cognitive and narratorial reign, banishing him to a cognitive exile; yet the withdrawn state of the bicycle as an RO can only be confirmed when we as the audience can experience or relate to one of its aspects or functional presences. To address the issue of mediation, while maintaining its detached autonomy the bicycle indirectly appoints the reader as its intermediary in O'Brien's narratorial limbo to fill the gap when, for instance, the narrator and the bicycle as an RO are contemplating "an intimate […] tryst," as Andrea Bobotis calls it (2002, 242). This is where the reader must form a logic, accommodating an object that can shuffle between its hidden functional presence, moving away from being an object of transportation and transforming into a desirable object. Within this circular vortex, the bicycle is simultaneously an object of desire, devoured by a subject that only sees the object's presence-at-hand within a metaphoric reality, and a detached, static entity that rejects any form of categorization inside an Anthropocentric reality:

> [the bicycle] seems ineffably female and fastidious, posing there like a mannequin […] resting on its prim flawless tyres (O'Brien 1974, 147).

Although metaphoric transference can expose various layers of reality, the bicycle as an RO remains indifferent to any metaphoric or literal plane, only submitting to its internal ontological dynamism. The object, in other words, can not only be the reference towards a larger reality but also a product of such transference, fostering "a reality that is also somehow an appearance, or a

verb that is also a noun," Harman writes (2002, 26). In "Many Worlds: The New Physics in Flann O'Brien's *The Third Policeman"* (1995), Spencer explores the ways in which O'Brien's engagement with objects eventually introduces them as macrocosms that are hosts to hidden cores and at the same time include an infinite number of realities. For Spencer finding "black holes in the text when the narrator is extracting a nameless object from one of the cabinets" functions as a "metaphor[ic]" register "rather than a simile," finding it evident that O'Brien had "something other than merely a simple aperture in mind" (1995, 155). What Spencer's scientific examination of the novel fails to appreciate is not the dualistic nature of the narrative and its reality, being founded on two parallel planes, but rather how "this cabinet" with "an opening … resembling a black hole" can be a signifier of objects hosting other objects by way of cocooning a microcosmic reality within their masked core (O'Brien, 1974, 135). This worlds-within-objects, also appears in the explosion scene in the form of a box that hosts a new, albeit bizarre, form of narrative reality and ontology. The metaphoric plane only comes to be after the box is found and opened by the narrator, facilitating the clash between the literal and metaphorical planes, and beginning a cyclical movement around an object as their point of convergence. Not only does the box, in this respect, reject "indeterminacy" as an added value, as Shelly Brivic notes (2012, 126), but it also confirms its ontic horizon as a reference to a radically different reality by containing various, masked realities. This palimpsestic and world-within-world state of the object can be read as a form of objectile self-referentiality wherein explosive objects can not only cause an ontological metamorphosis but also fracture the plan of reality and create idiosyncratic temporal branches.

In another scene, O'Brien tames the infinite potential of metaphor rooted in a subterranean objectile reality to mock any subject-oriented superiority in appreciating epistemological structures. The scene portrays MacCruiskeen's chests formed like nesting dolls, each containing a deeper, microcosmic reality, and hence standing as a microcosmic center. The image strikingly resonates with Harman's concept of a "global tool-empire," "a homogeneous empire" of macrocosmic ontic presence hosting smaller objects with diverse functions and deeper ontic presences (2002, 33). The contradictory nature of these chests is revealed when MacCruiskeen fails to extract an ultimate chest that would be ontically withdrawn and ontologically independent and contain no other box. The last five he produces out of final chests "began to get invisible, glass or no glass" so much so that "nobody has ever seen" them (O'Brien, 1974, 74). The invisibility signals the emergence of the non-mechancial plane of an objectile reality wherein reality can only be approached indirectly, and hence metaphorically. The disappearance of these chests into a realm that exists perhaps only in MacCruiskeen's mind echoes one distinct form of objecthood and a concomitant form of reality. According to Booker, these chests are harbingers of an "unknowable" truth, set against the Cartesian backdrop of uncertainty (1991, 45). The chests, I suggest, are SOs that have come to be and remain as a result of an RO; these are mere shadows of ROs that lurk somewhere in the literal dimension of reality that can neither fit the narrator's traumatized state of

mind nor MacCruiskeen's phantasmagoric presence. In spite of their objectile core, and due to their purely cognitive presence with no physical equivalent, these SOs as chests are incapable of producing a new reality by subsuming or sharing features with other objects. This objectile subsumption that ends in a metaphoric re-imagination of new shadows will be examined as Object-Oriented symbiosis.

Metaphor as symbiosis: Bicycle as a Nonsymmetrical Tool

Symbiosis can be considered as a structurally binding process that ends in the creation of new beings with independent structure and DNA when two or more entities, i.e., originators exchange features and qualities. The result is a structurally independent, new body which imitates the paired originators and their hidden and active attributes. In an OOO, each object appears as an independent entity with ontological and ontic presences, capable of symbiotic interaction mediated through SOs, namely, their subterranean functional proxies that handle inter-objectile flows. An objectile symbiosis exhibits distinct features: 1. Unlike a biological procedure wherein only "living cells form symbiotic relations with other entities" (Harman, 2018, 133), OOO considers symbiosis as a biographical pattern, hence, objects, and institutions can be included in the process; 2. OOO rejects any obligatory reciprocity and instead permits the object to either exchange or absorb qualities; and finally, 3. the nonsymmetrical nature of symbiosis confirms the autonomous nature of all objects, and allows one object to project features or qualities onto a neighboring object, hence remaining as the focal point in transferring meaning or function.

In the novel, the most stable object with a ghostly and withdrawn presence that transfers feature of its own to other objects as well as subjects is the bicycle. The nonsymmetrical interaction of the feminine bicycle with the narrator results in the latter's hallucinatory vision of the former as something more than an object of transportation; as such, the bicycle becomes an object of metaphoric desire. Moreover, staying as the focal point of a referential reality, the bicycle enjoys a stable and at the same time multifarious ontology while reciprocating with the subject; it, therefore, remains as a detached object that not only accommodates desires, companionship, and functionality but also objectifies existence. The bicycle as it appears in O'Brien's novel should not be misunderstood as the Baudrillardian "haunted object" without "referents" that lures the narrator to find it as a metaphysical entity that fills the existential void (Baudrillard 2001, 61-61); rather, the bicycle confirms its functional objecthood as an object of transportation within a literal reality shared with the audience; and simultaneously survives the narrative's metaphorized realism wherein existence is nothing short of a compound reality. In either case, the bicycle remains as an entity with an objective existence, conversely initiating the subject to search for his lost, spectral roots. Nevertheless, such objectile stability should not be misconstrued as the abnegation of the character, the subject, or the milieu as passive agents. In spite of the absence of inter-objectile interactions in an OO reality, every entity engages the neighboring element through its Sensual

Qualities (SQ), that may affect the opposing entity but may or may not be similarly marked by the other object. For instance, in chapter 11, the narrator shares with us the "perfection of [his] comfort on the bicycle," and his "union" with it, as well as the "sweet responses" the it gave him at "every particle of her frame" (O'Brien, 1974, 150). We witness two indirect inter-objectile interactions: between the bicycle and the "stony tracks", and how the bicycle is capable of "finding smooth ways" (O'Brien, 1974, 150); and between the bicycle as the tool with agency and the narrator's 'wooden leg' as it "accommodat[es] her left pedal patiently" to lessen the awkward image of his wooden leg (O'Brien, 1974, 150). The projected image sympathizes with a role reversal whereby the bicycle becomes the dominant element, taking care of the narrator and comforting his mood swing by "swaying and bending skillfully" (O'Brien, 1974, 150). The interaction, albeit indirect, is taking place at the extreme edge of objecthood, involving the object's SQ; nevertheless, such SQs are projected by the bicycle as an agential tool, rendering the narrator as a mere receiver whose ultimate engagement is his expression of the "completeness" of his pleasures (O'Brien, 1974, 150). He becomes a Sensual Object, or an intermediary whose presence only confirms the stability but more importantly the referentiality of the bicycle as the dominant equipment.

The bicycle as a reference addresses two concerns under OOO: first, as a reference the object's existence confirms a larger objectile construct and simultaneously hides its functional presence within the macrocosmic confines of that construct; more importantly, the existence of this macrocosmic structure confirms an objectile symbiotic formation; second, the more an object such as the bicycle expands its domain of ontic presence by incorporating other objects or their features, the faster it reaches a level of saturation from which point onward only a fixed image of the bicycle remains in both the metaphoric and literal planes of reality. The stable and non-metamorphic image of the bicycle as a product of functional as well as ontic symbiosis confirms the nonsymmetrical and non-reciprocal nature of symbiosis in OOO: the bicycle has been indifferent to incorporating images that were heterogenous to its inner reality, and projected an illusion of itself that appropriates such functions in a metaphoric reality.

The novel assimilates the superfluity of human presence within not only an objectile reality but also any symbiotic relationship by examining Gilhaney's symbiotic ontology as a bicycle that is more human than machine. Gilhaney's half-bicycle physique shows how an objectile symbiosis has affected not just the object-subject binary but also the very concept of being *qua* being by instrumentalizing the analogous dimension of metaphor; Gilhaney appears as an SO who "is always going to a particular destination […] on" his bicycle, which is an RO, and "if it wasn't that his bicycle was stolen every Monday" he would be more than "half-way to being a bicycle himself" (O'Brien, 1974, 72). The novel creates a reality in which the object can either reciprocate or only project features to the neighboring entity, be it an object or a subject like Gilhaney. This objectile transubstantiation evinces a new conception of the object, introducing a new ontological rather than an ontic incarnation that only absorbs features while interacting with the subject, at the same time

maintaining its original structure and formative body as a bicycle. "Resting before" the narrator, for instance, the bicycle appears "like a tame domestic pony, [which] seemed […] low in relation to the Sergeant" (O'Brien, 1974, 146). This new form of objecthood connects with Harman's nonsymmetricality of symbiosis wherein the bicycle either assigns or transfers attributes to other objects, as a result inculcating certain images in the mind of the observer, signaling the centralization of the object as the ontological interface. This is why the narrator perceives the object, namely, the bicycle as "a thing of surpassing grace and elegance, transcending all standards of size and reality and existing only in the absolute validity of its own unexceptionable dimensions" (O'Brien, 1974, 147).

Similar to symbiosis, as Harman explains, "metaphor results in […] compound entities" and realities, with new features constantly being attributed to objects by way of transference (2018, 144), creating a vortex of reality or objecthood with two planes: one that is independent of its actual 'socio-political' context, while the other shares structures or formative semblances with its socio-historical setting. A metaphorical engagement with a bicycle, a spade, or bicycle-pump creates a new perception of that tool with features or qualities that are assigned to the old image of the object, while rejecting any form of reciprocity. As a result, the bicycle as the focal point of both realities appears as a concept which only seemingly shares features with an actual bicycle in the metaphorical, compound reality; the bicycle, therefore, appears as a familiar object but with notable differences in function and quality. For instance, while the bicycle ontically appears as an object of transportation its "leaning against the dresser of a warm kitchen when it is pouring outside" can be read only metaphorically; or seeing "crumbs at the front wheels of some of these gentlemen" functions as a marker of such metaphoric transformation (O'Brien, 1974, 75). The bicycle as a compound object, half-bicycle, transcends its objective limitation by reciprocating with its human counterpart, and remains as the most metaphorically diverse entity with a meaningful and self-referential presence; whereas the narrator appears as a marionette lost in the persistent reverberations of an explosive event initiated by a tool like a bicycle-pump and then a cash-box. Characters such as Gilhaney appear as just static observers looking at reality through the dynamic, multi-mirrored kaleidoscope of the object, while the bicycle as an equipment can either project the image of a non-binary partner in its metaphoric plane, or inculcate desire in the subject in other planes.

A metaphorized depiction of reality is a mere reversed projection of the context. What we witness in the novel is O'Brien's reversal of the literal reality, projecting a state of being wherein objects are not only agential but also multi-functional; whereas the narrator is treated as a decentralized being, who is imprisoned by a repetitive temporal void. Nevertheless, the object's resistant nature, especially as the focal point that connects external and internal planes of reality, superimposes another reversal on the narrative, creating a reversal of a reversal, or as Coulouma suggests, a "criterion for meaningful or nonsensical" reality (2012, 6). The object's referentiality,

therefore, within this circular vortex of reality becomes the central agent of narrativity with stable and diverse functionality, and imposes a second reversal so that, firstly the core of such objectile reality could dismantle any trace of anthropocentric reality by treating it as an allusion to an alternative plane of reality wherein the object confirms meaning; and secondly, an RO's authoritative qualities could emerge as replacement to human systematicity, at the same time peripheralising the subject as a flexible actor hovering around an objectile vortex of reality.

The first reversal of reality is what Harman first refers to in *Guerrilla Metaphysics* as "allure" (2005, 50), namely, appreciating the core of an objectile reality, founded on a split between the object and its qualities; the split as the nucleus of this reality is inaccessible to the subject, and hence understanding the internal layer of the bicycle as an object with protean functional presence as an instance of a silly or meaningless reality. At the heart of this vortex of reality rests a rare and momentary rift between an RO and its SQ, which reveals the difference between a literal and a metaphoric reading of an object. For instance, the bicycle with a sturdy cross-bar can represent durability and mechanical stamina within a literal context, and simultaneously attracts the narrator who sees in the saddle of the bicycle an attractive object with gentle skin, durability and "honourable suffering and honest duty," and a partner whose geometric shape is nothing but alluring, seemingly ignoring the sturdy cross-bar (O'Brien, 1974, 147). The second reversal superimposed by the object in the narrative, I suggest, is that moment of allure, when we as the audience can see the two planes of reality projected by the bicycle, caused by a tension between what it actually is in the literal world, and what it becomes in the phantasmic realm of the narrative.

The second reversal can be justified, according to Baylee Brits et al., as an intermediary between inter-objectile realities, or as that which "resides at the heart of every object and necessarily withdraws from access" (Brits & et al 2016, 15) such as the communion between the bicycle, and "a mass of peculiar brass," provoking an image of a real prison (O'Brien, 1974, 145). In this instance, however, the only convict is an object that is alternating between echoing its ontic presence, and exchanging and projecting human qualities, appearing as an object that is half-human and half-machine, or simply "a verb that is also a noun" (Harman, 2002, 26).

Conclusion: Is it not about a bicycle?

The ontological dissonance at the heart of the novel leads to a world of metaphorical existence deeply entrenched in transcendental layers of reality and meaning, embracing a state of being in which objects as central ontological agents define existence. In the novel, characters such as Mathers can be considered as mere artifacts manipulated by objects such as the gown as an RO, and time as the its SQ; it is the gown that defines the temporal limits of other SOs such as Mathers when he remembers his childhood mediated through the SQs of the object, namely, the color of the gown: "In a word the colour gradually deepens gown by gown and year by year until it appears to be black. Finally, a day will come when the addition of one further gown will actually achieve real

and full blackness. On that day I will die" (O'Brien, 1974, 30). This is a conception of the object that regards it as a temporally dominant construct, projecting time as a byproduct of its ontological and ontic presence. Time, in this respect, is neither a mere product of the object's *zuhandenheit* nor a projection of its *vorhandenheit*, but rather an SQ of the object. The gown or the bicycle embody Harman's understanding of the mature object: an object that has reached an irreversible level of symbiotic saturation, connecting the known with the unknown, creating a plethora of possibilities.

References

Albright, D. (1997). *Quantum Poetics: Yeats, Pound, Eliot, the Science of Modernism*. Cambridge University Press.

Aristotle. (2008). *Poetics*, translated by S. H. Butcher, gutenberg.org.

Attridge, J. (2014). Nonsense, Ordinary Language Philosophy, and Flann O'Brien's The Third Policeman. *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 60 (2), 298-319. https://doi.org/10.1353/mfs.2014.0028

Baudrillard, J. (2001). *Seduction*. Trans. Brian Singer. New World Perspectives.

Bobotis, A. (2002). Queering Knowledge in Flann O'Brien's The Third Policeman. *Irish University Review* 32 (2), 242-258. https://www.jstor.org/stable/25504907

Booker, M. K. (1991). Science, Philosophy, and "The Third Policeman": Flann O'Brien and the Epistemology of Futility. *South Atlantic Review* 56(4), 37-56. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3200520

Brivic, S. (2012). The Third Policeman as Lacanian Deity: O'Brien's Critique of Language and Subjectivity. *New Hibernia Review* 16 (2), 112-132. https://doi.org/10.1353/nhr.2012.0018

Brits, B., Prudence, G. & Amy I. (2016). Introduction, in *Aesthetics after Finitude*, re.press.

Brooker, J. (2020). Do Bicycles Dream of Atomic Sheep? Forms of the Fantastic in Flann O'Brien and Philip K. Dick. *The Parish Review: Journal of Flann O'Brien Studies* 4 (2), 1–23. https://doi.org/10.16995/pr.3383

Cronin, A. (1998). *No Laughing Matter: the Life and Times of Flann O'Brien.* Fromm.

Coulouma, F. (2012). Making sense of N/nonsense in Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* and *The Third Policeman*, a Wittgensteinian perspective. *Corela* [Online], HS-10. https://doi.org/10.4000/corela.2449

Ebury, K. (2017). Physical Comedy and the Comedy of Physics: In *the Third Policeman*, the Dalkey Archive, and Cruiskeen Lawn, in *Flann O'Brien: Problems with Authority*, eds. Ruben Borg, Paul Fagan, John McCourt. Cork University Press.

Harman, G. (2018). *Object-Oriented Ontology: A New Theory of Everything*. Penguin Books Ltd.

Harman, G. (2002). *Tool-Being: Heidegger and Metaphysics of Objects*. Open Court.

Harman, G. (2005). *Guerrilla Metaphysics: Phenomenology and the Carpentry of Things*. Open Court.

Kemnitz, C. (1985). Beyond the Zone of Middle Dimensions: A Relativistic Reading of The Third Policeman. *Irish University Review* 15 (1), 56-72. https://www.jstor.org/stable/25477574

O'Brien, F. (1974). *The Third Policeman*. Picador Pan Books Ltd.

Ortega, y. Gasset, J. (1975). *Phenomenology and Art*. Norton.

Pound, E. (1973). *Selected Prose 1909-1965*. New Direction.

Phillips, S., Takeda, Y. & Sugimoto, F. (2016). Why Are There Failures of Systematicity? The Empirical Costs and Benefits of Inducing Universal Constructions. *Frontiers in Psychology* 7, 1310. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.01310

Spencer, A. (1995). Many Worlds: New Physics in Flann O'Brien's The Third Policeman. *Éire-Ireland* 30(1), 145-158. https://doi.org/10.1353/eir.1995.0025

Žižek, S. (2021). Philosophy, Science, Capitalism and Truth. *Journal of Philosophical Investigations*, 15 (35), pp. 36-42. https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2021.13837

Journal of Philosophical Investigations
Print ISSN: 2251-7960 Online ISSN: 2423-4419
Homepage: https://philosophy.tabrizu.ac.ir

Beauty and Neutrality in Alice Munro's Selected Works: A Socio-Philosophical Reading of Lacanian Ethics

Pegah Sheibeh[1] **Hossein Moradi**[✉ 2]

1. Ph.D. Candidate, Department of English Language and Literature, Karaj Branch, Islamic Azad University, Karaj, Iran. Email: sheibeh@gmail.com
2. Corresponding Author, Assistant Professor, Department of English Language and Literature, Karaj Branch, Islamic Azad University, Karaj, Iran. Email: moradi.hossein@gmail.com

Article Info

Article type:
Research Article

Article history:
Received 02 May 2024
Received in revised form 29 May 2024
Accepted 01 June 2024
Published online 07 September 2024

Keywords:
Lacanian ethics and beauty, Alice Munro, neutrality, transgression, act, love.

ABSTRACT

Lacanian Beauty in his ethics is encapsulated as making decisions and "act[ing] in conformity with one's desires". This idea is thought while reading Munro's short stories to argue humans reconfigure their life through decision, transgression, act and love. Munro's characters are confined in the condition that contextualizes them through one limited interpretation, detaching them from their individuality. To get out of this condition they detach from the Other via acting on their Real desire. So the Real opens the space for the decision that postulates the possibility for transgression. Thus, it is claimed making decisions leads to transgression that necessitates act whereby love is experienced. This study through analyzing decision, transgression, act, love and their relation introduces *neutrality* as a novel idea about a stance in which Beauty in Lacanian ethics is founded. It demonstrates neutrality is a pure communication area not polluted by Symbolic Order, a singularity, a power stance, a varietal stance in which love is the law. In this neutral singularity, humans succeed in living a life in its full. Lacanian ethics and sociology are interconnected to demonstrate the new context of life human can live so as to bring forth new outlooks on ethics including Beauty.

Cite this article: Sheibeh, P. & Moradi, H. (2024). Beauty and Neutrality in Alice Munro's Selected Works: A Socio-Philosophical Reading of Lacanian Ethics. *Journal of Philosophical Investigations*, 18(48), 277-290. https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.60928.3752

© The Author(s).
https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.60928.3752
Publisher: University of Tabriz.

Introduction

Jacques Lacan and his theories have always been of interest in the field of psychology, but this article emphasizes Lacan's view as a full-fledged philosopher and considers him first and foremost an ethicist. Lacan's concept of Beauty in his ethics is encapsulated as making decision and "act[ing] in conformity with one's desires" (Lacan, 1992, 311). The present study is an attempt to analyze and develop Lacan's ideas about ethics including Beauty through Munro's short stories. It is the simultaneous development of both Lacan and Munro. To do so the situation of society in Munro's fictions is illustrated and it is represented how the characters move outside symbolic order and succeed in reconfiguration of their life and live it in its full through decision, transgression, act and love.

Lacanian ethics represents Lacan as a social and philosophical critic; it exhorts us to resist the hegemonic sociality and the Other's desire and not be a victim of the Other's desire by following our own Real desires. For Lacan desire is different from need and demand, desire is shaped beyond need or demand. Desire is not desire for an object. What Lacan means by desire are not the desires that are interiorized into one's unconscious by the superego and desires of the Other. Real desire is not misled by the Good, it is rather the individualistic Real desire that belongs to each person. It is a truth that can't be evaluated through external criteria rather it is something that hides within the subject. The Real desire is different from the utilitarian desire of the Other. Real desires arise because of "a good object", "an object of love" (Lacan, 2005, 243), the Thing, not because something is forbidden. Real desire arises for the object that has the echo of the Thing; hence, it helps us to be closer to the Thing.

Lacanian ethics belongs to the realm of the Real since it is a realm that is not polluted by norms and conventions of the Symbolic Order since it is where one can have access to his Real desires regardless of the desires that are imposed on him and even registered on his unconscious as his own by the Other. Lacanian ethics is nothing but recognizing one's Real desire, the desire that has an aura of the Thing and acting on that.

Lacanian ethics doesn't infer one is free to do anything he wishes; it doesn't follow the doctrines of hedonism. It doesn't support anarchy, it is ethical because it is an act committed, a choice made by the person who is victimized in a way or two. Lacan wants human beings to be aware that the Other's desire is different from one's own Real desires. Lacanian ethics encourages human beings not to relinquish their own desires and instead be loyal to their desires and persist in them. Lacan announces ignoring one's desire is a kind of treachery to oneself. It exhorts the individual to dare and not to be restricted to the norms and conventions of the Symbolic Order that defines things as good or bad, as ethical or unethical. Lacanian ethics seeks to rupture the subject's over-compliance with the Other's desire and that is the beauty of the individual's choice. Lacanian ethics leads to essential personal and social transformations; it reminds us we are able to live a different life, a life different from what we used to know as the only way of life due to social and cultural order.

Alice Munro as revealed in her fiction more than anything is in search of "a more abundant life" (Bloom, 2009, 3) in which one has an active role in shaping his life rather than being passive and living a life till death without being able to embrace what life is indeed about. A life in which, one feels free, happy and self-satisfied. A life one can live freely and courageously for oneself relieved of societies or others' expectations, limitations and prohibitions so as to get some good out of life not a victimized life filled with regret. Munro gets the material of her stories from the life she sees around herself and real experiences. Munro's short stories are "a sustained interrogation of realism…it is "real life" mingled with social world "that necessitates constant revision of codes and conventions" (Kroller, 2004, 272), in order to be completely detached from social ideologies. Alice Munro is well aware of the dilemmas human beings confronted with in the contemporary area and through the characters of her fiction meticulously reveals the human condition in a world that is surrounded by society's conventions and its suffocating power over individuals' way of life.

The present research explores and addresses selected stories from four collections of the 2013 Nobel Prize winner Alice Munro. "Heirs of the Living Body" from the collection of *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971); and "Floating Bridge" from the collection of *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage* (2001). The sections of this essay will discuss how Munro's characters in the chosen fictions succeed in reconfiguring and living their life in full through decisions, transgression, acts and love in order to prove neutrality is a stance in which Lacanian Beauty is founded. First, the bad condition the characters trapped into will be represented. Then, the decisions the characters make will be comprehensively argued. After that this essay will consider the acts the characters commit regarding their decisions and it will be represented that decisions lead to transgression. Next, love and its role in Lacanian Beauty will be examined. Finally, Lacanian Beauty and neutrality will be considered.

1. Bad Condition

In these fictions Munro's characters are trapped into bad conditions, conditions that are not neutral and are fed up. They are surrounded by society's pre-defined roles and rules and are supposed to live in accordance with the norms of their social system, its expectation and what it imposes as the proper way of life. They are confined in the condition which contextualizes them through one limited interpretation detaching them from their individuality by which they may live in their own full desire.

This contextualized condition understood as the other practices its power over their life and takes their lives and actions under control in order to follow its desire and doesn't let them live a life they truly want. It tries to shape their life, decline their autonomy, individuality and independency through prohibition and ignorance; it tries to reinforce some belief on individuals' mind and shape their life through normalizing certain thoughts and values; through designating specific way of life, imposing its own desire as the only possible existing truth and erasing the

possibility of other desires and other ways of life except what it defines. It does not give them enough space to decide and exclude them easily if they don't follow its desire.

Because of the penetration of the hegemonic Other's desire into the individuals' mind, they are deceived by the Other and are affected by what it prescribes as the only way of life. That's how unknowingly they strengthen the Other's desire. They're surrounded by destructive social patterns and expectations that are nonsense and, in some cases, turns into business. They are living in a world that social position defines their values. Munro's characters are marginalized because of the arbitrary social classification.

The individuals for getting the approval of society must wear masks instead of being who they truly are and doing what they truly want to do. The Other desires passive individuals with victim mentality trapped into past because these people would never act on their desires so they are harmless. The Other tries its best to prevent the characters from acting on their desire; therefore, on the one hand, it suppresses ambitiousness and advocates sacrificing one's own desire and on the other hand, it conveys feeling of guilt and ominous as the result of acting in conformity with one's desire instead of following society's desire. It respects those who choose not to take action on their desire. They are tired of the demanding Other that follows the "morality of power" (Lacan, 1992, 315) that deep inside has only one plan: to preserve "the services of goods, to keep the social working and, thus, to sublate desire" (Neill, 2011, 238); they never live for themselves. They suffer living a life that turns into jail because of their over-compliance with the Other's desire and wearing the garment of a victim who in silence tolerates the condition. They feel devastated.

They couldn't be relieved from distressed moments via momentary distractions provided by the Symbolic Order. Because of the distractions that prevail in society humans forget their priority is to recognize and act on their desire. Their responsibility is to take action; not be passive and indifferent towards their desire because of "social compliance" (Žižek, 2000, 50), social obedience. Everyone is responsible for his own desire and "fidelity to one's desire" (153) is to be emphasized since desire "does not have the character of a universal law" it is particular for each individual (Lacan, 1992, 24). They must not be a victim of the Other's desire.

2. Decision

2.1. Stay in Comfort Zone and Never Live for Oneself in "Heirs of the Living Body"

In "Heirs of the Living Body" there are some characters who could've lived a different prosperous life if they "act in conformity with [their] desires" (Lacan, 1992, 311) but they choose to repress their ambitions and not to take action on their desire. One of these characters is Ruth McQueen, Del's cousin, who "had won a scholarship to go to college, for she was very clever, but she thought it over and turned it down, she decided to stay home" (Munro, 2009, 41) and not to follow her ambition because she is afraid of failure. She is "afraid to stick her head out of her own burrow" (42) since coming out of her comfort zone is a risky path that can lead to failure and she doesn't want to make a fool of herself and be laughed at by others while having access to one's desires and

making a decision with regard to that requires putting aside fears (Lacan, 1992, 320) so it is the society that molds her life in spite of the fact that she is clever enough to mold her own life by following her ambitions.

Similarly, though Uncle Craig is "one of the smartest... and could have been in the Cabinet, if he'd wanted…he never ran" (Munro, 2009, 41), because he also is afraid of failure. For the same reason he never published thousands of pages he had written about the history of the county for years. Also, Aunt Elspeth and Auntie Grace choose to stay the same (60), they never have any ambition, believing there is no other way of life except doing house chores (36) since Symbolic Order "prohibits every broad, positive vision of possibilities" (Badiou, 2001, 14). They "nourish and admire" (60) men of the family. They never live for themselves and relinquishing their desire for the sake of others is a sort of "betrayal" to themselves (Lacan, 1992, 321). Hence, they never reconfigure their lives and stay the same. Since they don't "think they're somebody" (Munro, 2009, 41), and have no desire of their own to follow. They are "ordinary man" not the "hero" of their lives (Lacan, 1992, 321).

Also "Aunt Elspeth could play the piano by ear" (Munro, 2009, 40) which requires a great talent but when Del's mother "offered to teach her to read music" so she can "play really good things" (40), she doesn't accept with an "unnatural laugh" (40) as if she offers something farfetched since she doesn't even imagine she deserves to have ambition and she can live for herself doing something she is talented in and enjoying. As a result, their life is spoiled by staying in their comfort zone and never living in accordance with their Real desire since being trapped in the Symbolic Order doesn't let them have a glimpse of the Thing (Kesel, 2009, 56).

2.2. Be Rebellion and Live for Oneself in "Heirs of the Living Body"

Del is an ambitious, curious girl so when she heard that Uncle Craig passed away her mind filled with so many questions about death that irritates her mother since she supposes she can protect herself by knowing about it. (Munro, 2009, 48) She is shocked and confused by the suddenness of death; by human mortality and the fact that it is powerful enough to take one's life at any moment. Munro's stories illustrate "the impossibility of taking anything in life…for granted" (Heble, 1994, ix). Picturing Uncle Craig's death Munro demonstrates that the characters would live differently if they recognized they were mortal beings. As Del declares Uncle Craig "really believed in the world of public events, of politics" (Munro, 2009, 35) so he busies himself with the history of the country and compiling a family tree while "These were not what mattered; it was daily life that mattered" (36), enjoying every bit of daily life and live it in its full is what matters, instead of ignoring it and wasting it by doing something that might bring social admiration for him; therefore, his life is wasted since he doesn't act on her desire and instead acted in conformity with what society desires. Hence, referring to human mortality, one needs to make the best of his life by living it in its full, acting on his desire and "confront the relation between his actions and his desire in the immediacy of the present" (Evans, 2006, 57) and act on his desire without hesitation.

Del facing the sudden death of Uncle Craig realizes the human mortality and her own. So she decides to be rebellious and to live for herself. She "challenges the authoritarian and totalitarian structure of the substantial order" (Karimi & Binandeh, 2021, 248). She decides to live in conformity with her desire and doesn't let others make her have to do what she doesn't like. Actual confrontation with one's desire is "a moment of irrationally driven rebellion" (Kesel, 2009, 260). She believes they can't put her outside. she is so resistant that she doesn't allow them to exclude her or treat her as a "borderline case" (Munro, 2009, 57) since "ambition for undifferentiated totality" is to be rebuked (Sbriglia & Žižek, 2020, 180), so Del knows she is different and is ok with that since being different from what the Other announces as normal is not wrong. Society can't repress her individuality by labeling her. She is an ambitious girl with her singular desires and thoughts.

2.3. Enjoy the Time Given and Challenge the Other's Power over one's Life in "Floating Bridge"

The hope of having the chance of still living is a turning point for Jinny to live the life she desires instead of wasting her life merely living and passing time. For many years she awaits death, these are the times that though she was alive she didn't live. Therefore, in the time given, she challenges being under the power of Neal or anybody else anymore; it is Neal who decides for her life, but now she decides to decide for her life; every moment of that. She resists the "morality of the power" (Lacan, 1992, 315) through taking control of her life on her own hand instead of living based on society's expectation of a sick wife. Jinny seeks to rupture being overly compliant with the Other's desire since by closing her eyes on her desires and acting in conformity with Neal's desire she only intensifies Neal's power over her life. She decides not to cede her desire to his power, to be the captain of the ship of her life and think for herself instead of being the obedient passive observer of a life that is passing and awaits death.

Ricky's caring behavior reminds Jinny she is still alive. Ricky is compassionate and thoughtful "He seemed to understand things, though. He seemed to understand that she was exhausted and in some kind of muddle" (Munro, 2001, 76). Therefore, when he sees Jinny does not feel well he offers to give her a ride home, and on the way he takes her to a beautiful place "not so many people even know this road" exists to provide some peace for her. She stands on a floating bridge Where she hears "a different sound… Water in the reeds, lapping water," that is called "Tannin". Ricky talks to her about different things except her sickness. He shows her something she has "never seen before" (80).

The act "happens to the subject that he performs an act, whether he wants to or not" (Zupančič, 2000, 100); therefore, after being in a route she never was before and experiencing the things, she never did, the Jinny returns from the road was not the "same one" (Munro, 2001, 81). It gives her the power to make the best of "the time given" and live her life in its full.

The little incident on the bridge works as a revelation for her when she truly "break[ed] down" (Ruti, 2012, 78). This beautiful improvised moment gives her the awareness that as long as she is alive, she can enjoy the time given otherwise she will be regretful. As Lacan discusses "the only thing of which one can be guilty is of having given ground relative to one's desire" (Lacan, 1992, 319); therefore, she decides to enjoy the time given and embrace the present moment and live it in its full instead of worrying about future. She understands that each little moment of life counts.

3. Act

3.1. Speak Out One's Desire and its Effect in "Heirs of the Living Body"

In Uncle Craig's funeral her malicious cousin tries to force her to see Uncle Craig, in an attempt to escape she bites her as hard as she can (Munro, 2009, 56), she tries to free herself from all the pressures that want her to do something she doesn't want.

Her act is decisive. Nobody should "dare" (56) to ask her to do anything she doesn't want to do. The Other can't decide for her and can't make her have to do what she doesn't like; she doesn't have to follow the social conventions. She "dare[s]" (Žižek, 2000, 392) to disrupt the Other's desire even if all hates her, she prefers this hatred since it gives her "gift of wings" (Munro, 2009, 56) to be free from the Other's desire; she commits a radical act, she "step[s] out of the symbolic in a "suicidal" gesture of a radical act" (Žižek, 2005, 140).

"But no; freedom is not so easily come by" (Munro, 2009, 56). Ignoring the Other's desire and being defiant has some consequences. Aunt Moira clenches her shoulders and shakes her "Mad dog!" (56). The Other blames, insults and locks up those who act freely on their desire. But despite all the consequences Del doesn't do what she doesn't want to do; she doesn't go to the funeral and resists against the "barbaric" decision taken regarding the social codes, a decision that subjects a "too highly strung" child to a funeral. (57)

When Del in an act of startling bravery reacts to what she doesn't want to do, when she speaks out her desire to a society that prefers to have her locked up and shut up, the wrongness of social conventions is bold; Symbolic Order is not a consistent structure without any lack, it is not flawless (Žižek, 1989, 137) since it is not a predetermined law that's why Munro believes "real life"…necessitates constant revision of codes and conventions" (Redekop, 2004, 272). Therefore, because she speaks out, her desire is respected, she "was surrounded and taken care of" and she was directed to another room and "put on the sofa, blanketed…given the cake and the tea" (Munro, 2009, 57). Everyone tries to silence Del and makes her have to do what is supposed to be socially accepted but she, nonetheless, speaks out and acts in conformity with her desire.

On the other hand, when she speaks out others start to sympathize and enlarge it. Those who experience the same thing but don't dare to resist it and blindly submit to it and keep silent start to talk about their experience "I passed out at a funeral myself, one time before I was married" (57) said one of the ladies. So, her speaking out helps others to know they are not the only persons who

don't like to participate in funerals and they shouldn't feel ashamed or guilty. They are not obliged to do what bothers them and what they don't like merely because it is socially expected.

"The radical character of the act … would be that which would fundamentally redefine what might be considered as good" (Neill, 2011, 222). In other words, decisions might lead to a social transformation by destroying the established symbolic order and bringing about some space for a new way of living and seeing the world. Thus, Del's act is transformative and progressive; social conventions are changeable and they will change only when the individual speaks out her desire and doesn't surrender in silence to whatever society affirms. Accordingly, the personal reconfiguration of the character's life ultimately leads to social reconfiguration.

3.2. Come Out of Comfort Zone in "Floating Bridge"

The lack of attention to her and her decision makes her so angry that she runs away from home hoping Neal would worry about her and in this way, she can attract his attention. Feeling insecure, unable to make the proper decision for her life and afraid of being alone because of being affected by what people write on the walls, she returns to the same route she came from. (Munro, 2001, 53) The fear of loneliness is the reason for her decision to come back home and not act on her desire which is freedom from a loveless life with a husband who doesn't care about her decisions and desires.

One of the most courageous decisions is releasing something that hurts you and your emotions. Feeling suffocated Jinny transgresses the expectation of the social norms from a sick wife and instead of "*abdication*" (Carrington, 1989, 12), wears the garment of a victim who in silence tolerates her husband's flirting with another woman and waiting for death, accepts Ricky's drive and by doing so she transgresses Neal's power over her life and tries to experience a new way of life. She resists the power that "blocks other possible worlds, as a blockage that makes possibles impossible, such that possibles are lost before they can be lived, experienced, or imagined" (Ahmed, 2010, 165), realizing another way of life is possible.

She learns as far as "she wanted everything familiar and stable" and fear of change involves her decision she won't be free. In order to challenge the Other's power in her life, enjoy the time given and live her life in its full she comes out of her comfort zone by going to a new road, on a floating bridge and doing as Ricky suggests "Walk out on it,…Go on" (Munro, 2001, 81). Something she wouldn't do before this awakening out of fear "If this was happening back in her old, normal life, it was possible that she might now begin to be frightened. If she was back in her old, normal life she would not be here at all" (80). She is a hero because she refuses to "cede on" her desire though she knows it is a "risky path" and nothing can be taken for granted (Lacan, 1992, 323) in the floating bridge of life.

Jinny transgresses the usual route and tries to experience another route instead of returning to "the common path" thinking to herself that she isn't "worth that much" (Lacan, 1992, 321). She comes out of her comfort zone and does and sees what she has never done or seen before. It is a

vital act. Her choice "brings to light the essential *power* of being human" (Shepherdson, 2008, 76) and her power of making decisions that is in conformity with what she really desires relieves her of the tricks of the Symbolic Order. In order to live a life in its full and released from being imprisoned under the Other's power one should come out of her comfort zone; go to routes, see things and do things she never done before.

4. Love

4.1. Love Overcomes Fear in "Heirs of the Living Body"

Del is a young girl who is afraid of seeing Uncle Craig when he passes away because she is afraid of seeing a dead person. No matter how hard others try to force her to visit Uncle Craig for the last time she refuses. Finally, they realize her fear and send her to another room to rest. Del feels ashamed "Being forgiven creates a peculiar shame" (Munro, 2009, 58) the horrible, voluptuous feeling of exposure, impotence and self-betrayal, since shame "arises as a sign of what is missing…shame engenders the feeling of nihilation" (Prudente, 2016, 728) and suffocation, "I felt held close, stifled, as if it was not air" (Munro, 2009, 58), said Del. The Other creates a feeling of shame in her by forgiving her as if she makes a mistake and misses something and this causes her to feel a thick burden on her shoulders that makes her feel suffocated in a world she lives.

"The entire phenomenology of shame" and "fear" produced by the Other (Lacan, 1991, 215). The Other creates the feeling of shame in her because of her fear. That is to say, her fear leads to her shame; therefore, shame can "be conceived as an effect of the social bond and discourse" (Prudente, 2016, 730) because she is not what they expect and desire. Shame is the result of the reluctance "to mimic the norm" (Goldman, 2007, 813). Therefore, Del is excluded because of her fear and this creates a feeling of shame in her.

When Del stays in a distant room alone and in peace with some cakes and tea, she suddenly becomes herself again. When far from the Other and the pressures it puts on her she calms down in a separate room, she succeeds in having access to another realm, the realm of the Real; a neutral stance without any fear, a realm of love. Del is in "that zone where nothing can touch her now, or make her hesitate for an instant" (Shepherdson, 2008, 66), she goes to see him.

Uncle Craig was a man who was "restful to be with" (Munro, 2009, 34), Del loves Uncle Craig and love is a power that has nothing to do with the law of the Symbolic Order that obliges people to see the dead man for the last time as a duty, as a ritual, as a must, since "The more love is rendered obligatory, a duty, whether religious, moral, or otherwise, the more it shrivels up and dies like a plant cultivated under the wrong conditions" (Fink, 2016, 161)

Therefore, the power of Real love gives Del enough strength to willingly go and see Uncle Craig for the last time. Love provides her with the power to do something she never imagined she could do, something that surprises herself and her mother who was "biting her lips, and looking preposterously hopeful" (Munro, 2009, 59). Accordingly having access to one's desires and

making decisions with regard to that requires putting aside fears. (Lacan, 1992, 320) and love gives her the power to face and overcome her fear and make "a radical decision" (Neill, 2011, 117).

Hence, fear works as a deterrent and obstacle to act on one's desire but the power of love lets her overcome fear and visit Uncle Craig. When Del overcomes her fear and visits him because of the power love gives her no obligation to others, she feels "relieved" (Munro, 2009, 59), power of love frees her from "shame" and "helplessness" (58) provided by the Other. Love is relieving. Her love helps her to be close to the Thing and be in the realm of the Real; in this realm love overcomes fear.

4.2. Love the Unique Value of One's Being in "Floating Bridge"

Love plays a significant role in Jinny's life. On the one hand, Jinny lives in a loveless circumstance and is apathetic about her aloofness and her feelings. She is trapped in a loveless life with Neal. Living a loveless life, in other words, lack of love and the fact that nobody cares about her feelings bothers her and might be the reason for her sickness in the first place. "Where there is a deadlock in a love relationship – some kind of unsaid problem or quiet discontent – this will be expressed through the body instead of being expressed directly" (Hewitson, 2016, 12). Lacan argues about it as *L'amur* which "is what appears in the form of bizarre signs on the body" (Lacan, 1998, 4)

On the other hand, Ricky's love for Jinny is a kind of love in the realm of the Real. His love for her is because of "the unique value of her being" (Lacan, 1992, 279) not because of some qualities she has, not because of some benefits; his love is detached from "narcissism and rivalry" (Shepherdson, 2008, 204). It is unaccountable. He cares about her regardless of the meaningless Symbolic Order; she is a married woman and it is none of his business to care about her condition. Ricky loves her because of her being, because of what she is since Ricky's "love transcends the imaginary order" (Chiesa, 2007, 23) and is "no longer conceived of as a passion but as an active gift, is always directed, beyond imaginary captivation, towards the being of the loved subject" (Lacan, 1991, 276).

Ricky does his best to encourage her to be herself, behave the way she likes and act on her desire. "True love involves an act of absolute freedom" (Tarpey, 2013, 8), he separates her from the symbolic world and brings her to a space where she can be absolutely free from all social norms and breathe in the realm of the Real in order to have access to her desire and live it in its full. Unlike Neal's narcissistic controlling love, Ricky's Real love paves the way for her to recognize her Real desire and be bold enough to act in conformity with it. That's why he doesn't decide for her and instead asks her questions to know what she desires "You getting tired? You want to go home? You want me to go in and tell your husband you want to go home?" And when she says: "No. Don't do that," he accepts it unquestionably "Okay. Okay. I won't."(Munro, 2001, 77) "So—you want me to drive you home or what?"(78) Ricky asks, and he gives her a ride only because she wants.

Ricky is in the realm of the Real. He is a boy who loves not only Jinny but even a porcupine merely because of the value of its being (Munro, 2001, 80) Ricky is close to the Thing, he values things whether human or not for their beings and cares about their feelings and desires. He well-recognizes that the porcupine is scared to death just like Jinny who is "exhausted" to death (Munro, 2001, 76) and he helps them both to escape from the "muddle" (76) they are in and be free by his love. Ricky's love gives Jinny the power to come back to life, recognize her desire, act on it and live a life in its full. Hence, Real love is the power that gives courage and freedom whereas love outside the realm of the Real weakens and imprisons.

4.3. Love Brings Being Face to Face with Itself in "Floating Bridge"

The love Jinny receives from Ricky reconfigures her life. It is because of this unexpected love that Jinny releases from the ugly symbolic world and enters the Lacanian world of Beauty and revives. Love has the power to let her experience "freedom" (Santner, 2001, 87), unbelievable happiness and revive. Therefore, on the floating bridge, she could hear the "Tannin," (Munro, 2001, 81) of love. This Tannin is new for her, it is something she never heard and experienced before.

Munro's stories are about the "stimulating force that love can exert on people's lives" (Nath, 2020, 1). Thus, the power of love enables Jinny to make choices that would seem impossible according to the Other because of her health issue. That is to say, regardless of her faintness she goes on a new road and experiences new things whereby she gets her passion back. More than her sickness, the loveless life with Neal is killing her and making her live as if she is dead.

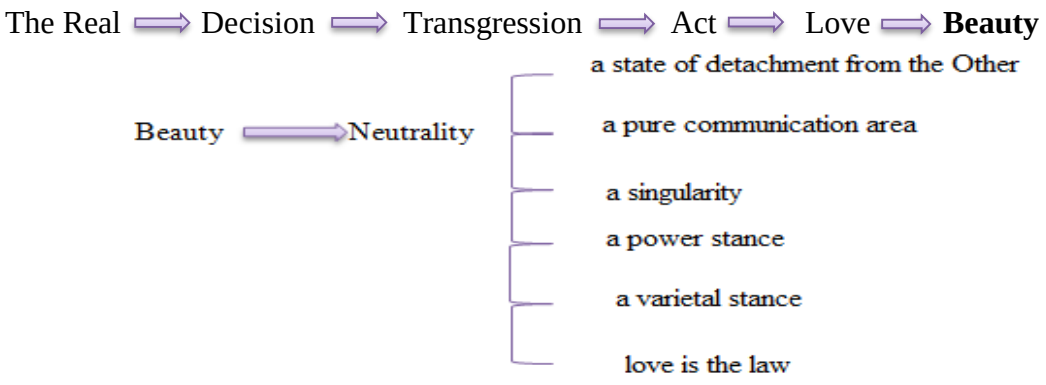
Lacan emphasizes "the function of love in the truth-process" (Badiou, 2006, 8), that is to say, "love…is what brings being face to face with itself" (10) and let Jinny to have access to her Real self and her Real desire the one that is closest to the Thing but was hidden and suppressed by the Other, the one that forgets she is alive and can enjoy her life. Love brings her face to face with herself whereby it enables her to make decisions with regard to what is Real and regardless of reality of the Symbolic Order and its expectation of a sick wife. As a result, Munro emphasizes the power of love enables Jinny to reconfigure her life and live it in its full, it enables her to experience a life she has never had, it enables her to come out of her comfort zone and does and see what she has never done or seen before because this is her Real self, not the one that is shaped by the Other.

5. Methodology

This study used the argumentative method through the theoretical analytical design to discuss neutrality as a stance in which Beauty in Lacanian ethics is founded. Lacan's concept of Beauty in his ethics is encapsulated as making decisions and "act[ing] in conformity with one's desires" (Lacan, 1992, 311). This idea is to be thought in order to prove human beings can reconfigure their life and live it in its full through what will be developed as decision, transgression, act and love.

6. Results

The findings of the present study through analyzing decision, transgression, act, love and their relation introduced *neutrality* as a novel idea about a stance in which Beauty in Lacanian ethics is founded. This neutrality is demonstrated to be a state of detachment from the Other, it is a pure communication area, a singularity, a power stance and a varietal stance in which Real love rules. In this neutral stance, human beings succeed in the reconfiguration of their life and living their life in full through decisions, transgression, acts and love. That is to say, the Real opens the space for the decision that postulates the possibility for transgression. That being so it is claimed that making decisions leads to transgression which necessitates act, whereby love is experienced. Lacanian ethics and sociology were interconnected in order to demonstrate the new context of life humans can live and brought about new perspectives on ethics including Beauty.



Conclusion: Beauty and Neutrality

Munro's characters are confined in the bad condition which contextualizes them through one limited interpretation detaching them from their individuality by which they may live in their own full desire. In order to get out of this condition instead of staying in comfort zone they decide to be rebellion, live for themselves, enjoy the time given and challenge the Other's power over their life. Their decision leads to transgression. Therefore, they speak out their desire and come out of their comfort zone whereby they experience a sort of love that overcomes fear; loves the unique value of one's being and brings them face to face with themselves.

Accordingly, reading Lacan through Munro leads to the idea of neutrality as a novel idea about a singular state of life that removes the border between the social and ethical area. This state of life enacts pure communication not polluted with all other existing social and ethical theories; it brings the social and ethical state into one space in a neutral stance. In this neutral singularity, the individual is different from every moment and each individual is a particular being, different from the other one. This singular state is to respect differences whereby a varietal stance is experienced

in which no one exercises power over others so it leads to freedom and living in a world one desires to live in. It is in this space one can live his/her life in this full.

This neutrality is a state of detachment from the Other so it gives power to the individual; it is a stance in which love rules. It is filled with de-normalization, un-conditionality and un-restrictedness whereby diversity, difference and singularity which is the prerequisite of novel possibilities prevails; this stance is related with an unconditional and insistent desire. When the individuals act in conformity with their desire, they portray humans' power of taking action on their desire regardless of the Other's desire; so, they are in a power stance. The Other can't prevent them from acting on their desire. When they do what they must do and decide is the moment they feel free and powerful. They are in a power stance since they can reconfigure their life. So Lacanian Beauty illustrates not only a neutral stance but also a power stance. Decision, transgression, act and love create Beauty.

Lacanian ethics and sociology are interconnected in order to bring forth new outlooks on decision, transgression, act and love so as to demonstrate the new context of life humans can live and bring about new perspectives on ethics including Beauty.

References

Ahmed, S. (2010). *The Promise of Happiness.* Duke UP.

Badiou, A. (2001). *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, Translated by P. Hallward, Verso.

Badiou, A. (2006). Lacan and the Pre-Socratics. In *Lacan: The Silent Partners*, Edited by S. Žižek, Verso.

Bloom, H. (2009). *Alice Munro*, Bloom's Literary Criticism.

Carrington, I. P. (1989). *Controlling the Uncontrollable: The Fiction of Alice Munro.* Northern Illinois UP.

Chiesa, L. (2007). *Subjectivity and Otherness: A Philosophical Reading of Lacan.* MIT Press.

Evans, D. (2006). *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis.* Routledge.

Fink, B. (2016). *Lacan On Love: An Exploration of Lacan's Seminar VIII, Transference.* Polity Press.

Goldman, M. (2007). Introduction: Literature, Imagination, Ethics, *University of Toronto Quarterly. Special Issue: The Ethical Turn in Canadian Literature and Criticism.* Eds. Marlene Goldman and Kristina Kyser, 76 (3), 809-820. https://doi.org/ 10.3138/utq.76.3.809

Heble, A. (1994). *The Tumble of Reason: Alice Munro's Discourse of Absence.* University of Toronto Press.

Hewitson, O. (2016). What Does Lacan Say About… Love? *LacanOnline.com.*

Karimi, B. & Binandeh, M. (2021). Zizek's Hegelian-Lacanian Reading of the Subject. *Journal of Philosophical Investigations*, 15(35), 248-267. https://doi.org/ 10.22034/jpiut.2021.42015.2675 (in Persian)

Kesel, M. (2009). *Eros and Ethics: Reading Jacques Lacan's Seminar VII,* Translated by S. Jottkandt, Edited by Ch. Shepherdson, SUNY Press.

Kroller, E. M. (2004). *The Cambridge Companion to Canadian literature.* Cambridge UP.

Lacan, J. (1998). *Encore, Book XX*, Translated by B. Fink, W, W. Norton & Company.

Lacan, J. (1991). *Freud's Papers on Technique, Book I,* Translated by J. Forrester, W. W. Norton & Company.

Lacan, J. (1992). *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII*, Translated by D. Porter, Edited by J. A. Miller, Tavistock/Routledge.

Lacan, J. (2005). *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI*, Translated by A. Sheridan, Edited by J. A. Miller, W. W. Norton and Company.

Munro, A. (2001). Floating Bridge. *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage.* Douglas Gibson.

Munro, A. (2009). Heirs of the Living Body. *Lives of Girls and Women*. Penguin Canada.

Nath, D. P. (2020). *A Psychoanalytic Study of Alice Munros Select Narratives.* Rajiv Gandhi University, PhD dissertation. http://hdl.handle.net/10603/277847.

Neill, C. (2011). *Lacanian Ethics and the Assumption of Subjectivity.* Palgrave Mcmillan.

Prudente. S. E. (2016). About a Concept of Shame in the Work of Jacques Lacan. *Psicologia em Estud,* 21(4), 723-734. https://doi.org/10.4025/psicolestud.v21i4.32201

Redekop, M. (2004). Canadian literary criticism and the idea of a national literature, in *The Cambridge Companion to Canadian literature,* Edited by E. Kroller, Cambridge UP.

Ruti, M. (2012). *The Singularity of Being: Lacan and the Immortal Within*, Edited by E. Rashkin & P. L. Rudnytsky, Fordham UP.

Santner, E. L. (2001). *On the Psychotheology of Everyday Life: Reflections on Freud and Rosenzweig.* University of Chicago Press.

Sbriglia, R. & Žižek, S. (2020). *Subject Lessons: Hegel, Lacan, and the Future of Materialism.* Northwestern UP.

Shepherdson, Ch. (2008). *Lacan and the Limits of Language.* Fordham UP.

Tarpey, G. (2013). Lacan's Psychoanalytic Way of Love. In *PsychoanalysisLacan,* Vol. 1, Edited by R. Grigg, LCA e Journal. https://lacancircle.com.au

Žižek, S. (2005). Neighbors and Other Monsters: A Plea for Ethical Violence. *The Neighbor: Three Inquiries in Political Theology.* University of Chicago Press.

Žižek, S. (1989). *The Sublime Object of Ideology.* Verso.

Žižek, S. (2000). *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology.* Verso.

Zupančič, A. (2000). *Ethics of the Real: Kant, Lacan.* Verso.

Journal of Philosophical Investigations
Print ISSN: 2251-7960 Online ISSN: 2423-4419
Homepage: https://philosophy.tabrizu.ac.ir

Beyond Variability: A Causal Perspective on Basic Emotions

Ali Yousefi Heris

Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, Shahid Beheshti University, Iran. Email: a_yousefi@sbu.ac.ir

Article Info

Article type:
Research Article

Article history:
Received 29 June 2024
Received in revised form 31 July 2024
Accepted 05 August 2024
Published online 07 September 2024

Keywords:
emotions, natural kinds, basic emotion theory, psychological construction theory.

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the debate between Basic Emotion Theory (BET) and Psychological Construction Theory (PCT) regarding the nature of emotions, focusing on the challenges PCT poses to BET's claims of universality, discreteness, and biological underpinnings. By examining empirical evidence and theoretical frameworks, this paper argues that the variability in emotional responses, often cited by PCT proponents as a challenge to BET, does not negate the existence of distinct basic emotions with biological foundations. Instead, the paper proposes a refined understanding of BET, emphasizing a causal perspective that focuses on the underlying mechanisms of emotions rather than solely on fixed physiological signatures.

Cite this article: Yousefi Heris, A. (2024). Beyond Variability: A Causal Perspective on Basic Emotions.*Journal of Philosophical Investigations*, 18(48), 291-308. https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.62285.3804

© The Author(s).
Publisher: University of Tabriz.
https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.62285.3804

Introduction

Emotions, intricate and potent forces woven into the fabric of human experience, have long fascinated philosophers, scientists, and laypeople alike. They profoundly influence our lives, shaping our perceptions, decisions, and interactions with others. From fleeting moments of joy to prolonged periods of sadness, emotions serve as a fundamental aspect of our existence, guiding us through life's complexities and fostering social connections.

Yet, beneath the surface of this emotional complexity lies a profound intricacy. The fundamental nature of emotions—their origins, constituent elements, and purposes—remains a subject of ongoing debate and investigation. Are emotions innate, biologically determined responses, or are they flexible constructs molded by individual experiences, cultural norms, and social context? These questions have fueled a rich and multifaceted discourse, with various theoretical perspectives competing for dominance.

Basic Emotion Theory (BET) has long served as a cornerstone in the field of emotion research, providing a foundational framework for understanding the nature and origins of emotions. Early pioneers like Tomkins (1962, 1963) laid the groundwork for BET by proposing that a limited set of discrete, universal emotions—such as joy, anger, fear, sadness, and disgust—are biologically ingrained in humans, transcending cultural and individual differences. Tomkins's research on facial affect, particularly his identification of nine innate affects, laid the groundwork for further investigation into the biological basis of emotions.

Ekman's groundbreaking cross-cultural studies on facial expressions (Ekman & Friesen, 1971) provided strong evidence for the universality of basic emotions. His research showed that people from different cultural backgrounds exhibit similar facial expressions when experiencing core emotional states. Building on this, Izard's Differential Emotions Theory (Izard, 1977, 1991) further developed BET by suggesting that basic emotions have distinct motivational properties and adaptive functions. His theory, supported by extensive research on infant emotional development (Izard et al., 1980), highlighted the importance of basic emotions in early social and cognitive development.

However, BET has faced challenges. Psychological Construction Theory (PCT), proposed by Barrett (2006a, 2006b, 2017), challenges some of BET's core assumptions. PCT posits that emotions are not innate and universally expressed but are constructed in the moment through a dynamic interplay of core affect (basic, underlying feelings of pleasure or displeasure), sensory input, and conceptual knowledge. This theory argues against discrete, biologically determined emotional categories, suggesting instead that emotions are emergent phenomena shaped by individual experiences, cultural influences, and linguistic practices. PCT emphasizes interoception—the perception and interpretation of bodily sensations—as crucial in constructing emotional experiences (Barrett & Simmons, 2015). By presenting a more fluid and context-

dependent model of emotions, PCT has prompted researchers to re-examine long-held assumptions about the nature and origins of emotions.

This paper critically examines the challenges posed by Psychological Construction Theory (PCT) to Basic Emotion Theory (BET), particularly focusing on the contested notions of emotional universality, discrete emotional categories, and the biological underpinnings of emotions. While acknowledging the valuable contributions of PCT, this paper aims to demonstrate that BET remains a robust framework for understanding emotions. By reframing the concept of emotional categories and adopting a causal perspective, the variability in emotional responses often cited as a challenge to BET will be addressed. Through an examination of empirical evidence, a refined BET framework is suggested that acknowledges both the universal biological basis of emotions and the influence of individual and contextual factors on emotional expression and experience.

1. The Basic Emotion Theory (BET)

Basic Emotion Theory (BET) finds its roots in Charles Darwin's evolutionary framework. In his work, "The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals" (1872), Darwin proposed that emotions are not unique to humans but shared across species, serving essential adaptive functions for survival and communication. This challenged the then-dominant view that emotions were solely a human trait and laid the groundwork for BET, suggesting that certain emotions might be biologically innate and universal across cultures (Ekman, 1992).

Darwin's observations on the striking similarities in emotional expressions across diverse human populations and even among certain animals provided the first empirical evidence for the potential universality of emotions (Darwin, 1872). He meticulously documented facial expressions associated with emotions like fear, anger, and joy, noting their consistent manifestation across individuals from different cultural backgrounds. These observations, though limited by the methodological constraints of his time, planted the seeds for the concept of basic emotions that subsequent researchers would later formalize and expand.

Building upon Darwin's foundation, Silvan Tomkins, Paul Ekman, and Carroll Izard emerged as key figures in developing Basic Emotion Theory (BET). Tomkins's research on facial expressions identified nine innate affects, suggesting a biological basis for emotions. Ekman's cross-cultural studies narrowed this to six basic emotions: happiness, sadness, anger, fear, disgust, and surprise (Ekman & Friesen, 1971). His findings provided compelling evidence for the universality of these emotions, showing that individuals from diverse cultures exhibit similar facial expressions when experiencing these core emotional states. Izard's Differential Emotions Theory (1977, 1991) further expanded BET by proposing that each basic emotion has distinct motivational and adaptive functions. This theory, supported by research on infant emotional development (Izard et al., 1980), highlighted the importance of basic emotions in early social and cognitive development.

Building upon the foundational work of Darwin, Tomkins, and Ekman, Basic Emotion Theory (BET) became a dominant framework in emotion research during the mid-20th century. BET rests on several key principles that have shaped our understanding of emotions:

1. **Discrete Emotions:** BET proposes that emotions can be grouped into a small set of fundamental, distinct categories. These are often identified as joy, sadness, anger, fear, disgust, and surprise (Ekman, 1992; Izard, 2007). While acknowledging the existence of complex emotions, BET suggests that these are combinations or variations of the basic emotions.
2. **Universality:** A central tenet of BET is the universality hypothesis, which asserts that basic emotions are not culturally bound but are innate and biologically hardwired in humans (Ekman, 1994). This implies that individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds experience and express these basic emotions in fundamentally similar ways. Ekman and Friesen's (1971) cross-cultural studies on facial expressions provide compelling evidence for this claim.
3. **Distinct Physiological and Expressive Characteristics:** BET suggests that each basic emotion is associated with a unique pattern of physiological responses, including changes in heart rate, blood pressure, and facial muscle activity (Levenson, Ekman, & Friesen, 1990). Additionally, each emotion is thought to have a specific facial expression that is universally recognized, serving as a reliable indicator of the underlying emotional state (Ekman & Friesen, 1975)
4. **Adaptive Function:** BET emphasizes that basic emotions have evolved to serve adaptive functions in human survival and social interaction. For instance, fear signals danger and triggers fight-or-flight responses, while joy promotes social bonding and cooperation (Keltner & Kring, 1998).

Research across different fields supports BET's claims. Cross-cultural studies, exemplified by the pioneering work of Ekman and Friesen (1971), have consistently demonstrated a high degree of agreement in recognizing and expressing basic emotions through facial expressions. Even individuals from remote, isolated cultures with minimal exposure to Western media reliably identify and produce facial expressions associated with emotions like happiness, sadness, anger, fear, disgust, and surprise. These findings support the universality hypothesis of BET, suggesting that these emotions are not merely cultural artifacts but reflect fundamental human experiences with biological underpinnings.

Further supporting the biological basis of basic emotions, neuroimaging studies have revealed distinct patterns of neural activation associated with different emotional states. For instance, fear consistently activates the amygdala, a brain region critical for threat detection and the fear response (Phelps & LeDoux, 2005). Disgust is linked to increased activation of the insula, a region involved in interoception and processing visceral sensations (Wicker et al., 2003). These neurobiological findings provide compelling evidence for the distinctness of basic emotions, indicating they have unique neural signatures.

Research on infant and child development also offers crucial insights into the origins of emotions. Studies have shown that even very young infants, before extensive social learning, exhibit distinct facial expressions and vocalizations associated with basic emotions (Izard et al., 1980). This early emergence of emotional expressions suggests that basic emotions are not solely the product of socialization but have a strong innate component, likely shaped by evolutionary pressures.

Evolutionary psychology provides a compelling framework for understanding the adaptive significance of basic emotions. From this perspective, emotions are not just subjective feelings but evolved adaptations that play a crucial role in human survival and reproduction (Tooby & Cosmides, 1990). Fear, for example, serves as an alarm system, alerting us to potential threats and activating physiological responses that prepare us for fight or flight (Ledoux, 1996). Positive emotions like joy and love promote social bonding, cooperation, and procreation, contributing to the survival and flourishing of our species (Keltner & Haidt, 1999). This evolutionary perspective explains the universality of basic emotions as fundamental adaptations shaped by natural selection to enhance survival and reproductive success.

The empirical evidence from cross-cultural studies, neurobiological investigations, and developmental research supports the theoretical foundations of Basic Emotion Theory (BET). These findings collectively suggest that basic emotions are not just cultural constructs but are deeply rooted in our biological makeup, serving essential adaptive functions across diverse human populations.

Despite this strong support, BET has faced significant challenges from alternative theoretical frameworks, particularly Psychological Construction Theory (PCT). Spearheaded by Lisa Feldman Barrett and colleagues, PCT emerged in the mid-2000s (Barrett, 2006a, 2006b), questioning some of BET's core assumptions and proposing that emotions are constructed through the dynamic interplay of core affect, sensory input, and conceptual knowledge. This theory suggests that emotions are emergent phenomena shaped by individual experiences, cultural influences, and linguistic practices.

2. Psychological Construction Theory (PCT): An Alternative Framework

Psychological Construction Theory (PCT), articulated by Barrett (2006a, 2006b, 2017) and Russell (2003), presents a direct and substantial challenge to the fundamental tenets of BET. Rather than viewing emotions as discrete, universal entities with specific biological signatures, PCT proposes that emotions are constructed in the moment through a dynamic interplay of core affect, sensory input, and learned conceptual knowledge.

In the constructionist view, emotions do not exist as distinct entities within the brain or body. Instead, they are seen as emergent phenomena arising from the interaction of more fundamental components. Central to this framework is the concept of "core affect," a basic neurophysiological state characterized by a blend of hedonic valence (pleasure-displeasure) and arousal (sleepy-activated) (Russell, 2003). Core affect represents the raw, undifferentiated feelings we experience,

which are then interpreted and categorized through conceptualization, drawing upon learned knowledge about emotions and associated bodily sensations. This process is heavily influenced by cultural and linguistic factors, leading to a wide range of possible emotional experiences.

PCT challenges BET's core assumptions by targeting the idea of a one-to-one correspondence between basic emotions and their physiological or behavioral manifestations. Proponents of PCT argue that empirical evidence does not support unique and invariant biological signatures for each basic emotion (Russell, 2003; Barrett, 2006a). They point out that the same physiological response, such as an increased heart rate, can be associated with various emotions, including fear, excitement, or anger, depending on the individual's interpretation of the situation. This variability in emotional responses, according to PCT, undermines the notion that emotions are discrete entities with distinct biological fingerprints.

Instead of viewing emotions as innate and categorically distinct, PCT suggests that they are constructed in the moment through the interaction of core affect and conceptual knowledge. This perspective emphasizes that the same underlying core affect can be interpreted and experienced as different emotions depending on the individual's understanding of emotions, their cultural background, and the specific social context. Thus, PCT offers a more nuanced and dynamic understanding of emotional experience, recognizing the role of both biological and psychological factors in shaping our emotional lives. This constructionist model directly challenges several key tenets of BET:

1. **Universality**: PCT contests the universality of basic emotions, arguing that the purported universality of facial expressions is overstated and that cultural variations in emotional experience and expression are substantial (Barrett, 2017; Gendron et al., 2014). Evidence from cross-cultural studies shows considerable variability in how emotions are conceptualized, labeled, and experienced across different societies. This challenges BET's claim that basic emotions are hardwired and expressed similarly across cultures.
2. **Discreteness**: PCT rejects the notion of discrete emotional categories, suggesting that emotions are not neatly packaged entities with clear boundaries. In contrast to BET's emphasis on distinct physiological and expressive characteristics for each basic emotion, PCT argues that emotional experiences are fluid, dynamic, and exist on a continuum, shaped by a complex interplay of biological, psychological, and social factors (Barrett, 2006a).
3. **Biological Determinism**: PCT challenges the idea that emotions are primarily driven by innate biological mechanisms. While acknowledging the role of physiological arousal in emotional experience, PCT emphasizes that this arousal is not specific to any particular emotion but rather provides a general sense of activation or deactivation (Barrett, 2017). According to PCT, it is the interpretation of this arousal through learned concepts and social context that gives rise to specific emotional experiences. This challenges BET's view that emotions are primarily triggered by specific biological mechanisms.

Psychological Construction Theory (PCT) is not merely a theoretical framework; it is supported by empirical evidence from various disciplines. Cross-cultural studies, for example, have consistently documented the significant influence of cultural context on the experience, expression, and categorization of emotions (Mesquita & Frijda, 1992; Gendron et al., 2014). These findings challenge the notion of universal basic emotions, suggesting that cultural norms, values, and linguistic practices play a significant role in shaping our emotional lives.

Developmental studies further support the constructionist perspective. Research shows that infants, while capable of expressing a limited range of emotions, do not possess fully formed emotional categories at birth (Widen & Russell, 2010). These categories gradually emerge and diversify through social interactions and language acquisition as children learn to label and differentiate their bodily sensations and experiences within their cultural context. This developmental trajectory suggests that emotional concepts are not innate but are acquired and refined over time through a dynamic interplay of biological predispositions and sociocultural learning.

Furthermore, neuroimaging studies have provided compelling evidence that challenges the idea of localized brain regions dedicated to specific emotions, as proposed by BET. Instead, emotions seem to involve a complex interplay of neural networks associated with interoception (the perception of bodily sensations), conceptualization (making meaning of sensations), and social cognition (understanding social cues and contexts) (Barrett & Satpute, 2013). This distributed nature of emotional processing challenges BET's notion of discrete neural signatures for basic emotions. For example, research has shown that the same pattern of brain activation can be associated with different emotions depending on the individual's interpretation of the situation (Wilson-Mendenhall et al., 2013). This finding further supports PCT's claim that emotions are constructed through a dynamic process involving both bottom-up bodily sensations and top-down cognitive appraisals.

The empirical evidence presented provides strong support for PCT, highlighting the significant influence of cultural context, individual experience, and conceptual knowledge on emotional experience. The cross-cultural variability in emotional expression and categorization, the developmental trajectory of emotional understanding in children, and the neuroimaging evidence of distributed neural networks involved in emotion processing all challenge the core assumptions of BET, particularly the notion of universal, discrete, and biologically determined emotions.

However, while PCT offers valuable insights into the complexity and variability of emotional experience, it is essential to critically evaluate the extent to which these findings truly undermine the fundamental tenets of BET. Can BET be reconciled with the evidence for cultural variability, individual differences, and the role of cognition in shaping emotions? Or does PCT represent a paradigm shift that necessitates a complete abandonment of the basic emotion framework? The following sections will delve deeper into these questions, exploring the potential limitations of PCT

and re-examining the evidence in support of BET to assess its continued relevance in the field of emotion research.

3. Revisiting Basic Emotion Theory

While PCT raises significant challenges, a closer examination of the evidence and theoretical foundations suggests that BET's core principles remain valid. This section addresses PCT's critiques, demonstrating how BET can be refined to accommodate the complex and dynamic nature of emotions. I argue that the evidence against a strict one-to-one correspondence between emotions and their physiological or behavioral expressions is not conclusive, with methodological limitations in some studies potentially overemphasizing variability. Importantly, I propose reframing the concept of basic emotions within a causal framework, where emotions are defined by their underlying mechanisms rather than rigid, essentialist properties. This approach allows for individual and cultural variations while acknowledging the biological grounding of basic emotions. I will first examine the variability in empirical findings, highlighting methodological limitations and inconsistencies that may have overstated the lack of specificity in emotional responses. Next, I will introduce the concept of causal mechanisms as a more promising framework for understanding emotions.

3.1. Variability in Empirical Evidence

A central critique from Psychological Construction Theory (PCT) against Basic Emotion Theory (BET) is that empirical evidence does not consistently support a direct, one-to-one correspondence between specific emotions and their physiological responses. PCT proponents, such as Barrett (2006a), often cite studies like Cacioppo et al. (2000), which found that both fear and excitement can elicit similar increases in heart rate and skin conductance. They argue this overlap challenges BET's notion of unique physiological signatures for each basic emotion.

Several methodological limitations raise concerns about the validity of these findings. Firstly, inconsistent experimental designs across studies investigating the relationship between emotions and physiological responses make it difficult to compare results. Some studies induce emotions using visual stimuli, such as pictures or films, while others use auditory stimuli or rely on participants' self-reported emotional experiences. These variations can lead to different patterns of physiological responses, complicating the drawing of firm conclusions about the specificity of emotions (Gross, Sutton, & Ketelaar, 1998; Kreibig, 2010). The method of emotion induction significantly influences the outcomes, affecting the reliability of cross-study comparisons.

Secondly, many studies focus on a limited number of physiological measures, such as heart rate and skin conductance, while neglecting other potentially relevant measures like facial muscle activity or respiratory patterns. This narrow focus can result in an incomplete picture of the physiological correlates of emotions, potentially obscuring subtle but important differences between emotions. As Cacioppo et al. (1997) emphasize, a more comprehensive approach utilizing multiple physiological measures is necessary to capture the complex nature of emotional responses.

Similarly, Stemmler (2001) highlights the importance of considering a wide range of physiological processes during emotional experiences to fully understand their complexity.

Another significant concern is the ecological validity of these studies. Most research on emotions is conducted in laboratory settings, which may not accurately reflect the complexity and dynamism of real-world emotional experiences. Gross et al. (1998) point out that emotions in everyday life are often influenced by social and cultural contexts, as well as individual differences in emotional expression and regulation. Consequently, the artificial nature of laboratory-induced emotions may limit the generalizability of findings to real-world situations. Field studies, such as those by Sbarra and Hazan (2008), which examine emotional responses in naturalistic settings, could provide more ecologically valid insights.

Finally, individual differences in physiological reactivity and emotional expressiveness must be considered. For instance, Feldman Barrett et al. (2007) found that individuals with alexithymia (difficulty identifying and describing emotions) exhibit atypical patterns of physiological arousal in response to emotional stimuli. This highlights the importance of accounting for individual differences in emotional processing when interpreting physiological data. Furthermore, studies by Gross et al. (1998) suggest that personality traits can significantly modulate emotional responses, indicating that individual variability must be factored into the analysis. Research by Kagan (1994) on temperamental differences also underscores the role of inherent individual variability in shaping emotional responses.

These methodological challenges suggest that the current evidence base for variability in physiological responses to emotions may be overstated. Further research with more rigorous and comprehensive methodologies is needed to determine the extent to which basic emotions have distinct physiological signatures. It is important to note that these methodological issues are not unique to studies testing BET but are pervasive in emotion science as a whole. For instance, difficulties in accurately measuring subjective emotional experiences and the complexities of inducing specific emotions in laboratory settings pose challenges across the field. My aim is not to leverage these challenges to prove BET's tenets but rather to highlight that the conclusions drawn by PCT proponents are not as decisive as they might appear.

Apart from the methodological issues, it is important to note that the evidence supporting variability is not as conclusive as often suggested. While some findings appear to support PCT's claim, a thorough review of the literature reveals inconsistencies. For example, Siegel et al. (2018) conducted a meta-analytic investigation of autonomic features of emotion categories, finding significant variability and overlap in physiological responses associated with different emotions. This study challenges the notion of unique physiological signatures for each basic emotion, highlighting the inconsistencies in findings that support the variability claim.

Mauss and Robinson's (2009) comprehensive review of emotion measurement also addresses these inconsistencies. While acknowledging challenges in isolating distinct physiological patterns

for basic emotions, they emphasize the need for a multi-faceted approach that considers the interplay of experiential, physiological, and behavioral responses. This suggests that distinct physiological patterns may still exist despite observed variability.

Lindquist et al.'s (2012) meta-analysis of neuroimaging studies presents a similarly complex picture. Their analysis found evidence for both distinct and overlapping neural activation patterns across emotions, with some emotions demonstrating more distinct patterns than others. While there is some overlap in neural activation, their findings underscore the consistent activation of specific brain regions in response to particular emotions, suggesting the presence of distinct neural correlates for basic emotions. This indicates that emotional processing involves a network of interacting brain regions rather than simple localized activation.

Furthermore, studies like Levenson et al. (1990) have demonstrated significant and consistent differences in autonomic nervous system activity for emotions such as anger, fear, sadness, and happiness, even when controlling for individual and contextual variability. Kreibig's (2010) extensive review also reveals that while some overlap in physiological measures across emotions exists, specific combinations and patterns can differentiate between emotions like fear, sadness, anger, and happiness.

Comprehensive meta-analyses, which synthesize results from multiple studies, offer a broader perspective on the physiological correlates of emotions. A notable example is the meta-analysis by Stemmler (2001), which examined physiological responses across six basic emotions. The analysis revealed distinct patterns of physiological arousal for each emotion, with specific combinations of heart rate, skin conductance, finger temperature, and facial muscle activity reliably differentiating between emotions like anger, fear, sadness, and happiness.

Converging lines of evidence from diverse domains of research also suggest a robust biological basis for basic emotions. For instance, Sauter et al.'s (2010) cross-cultural investigation of nonverbal vocalizations demonstrated high accuracy in recognizing basic emotions like anger, fear, disgust, sadness, and surprise across diverse cultures. This indicates that these emotions are not solely reliant on visual cues and may be communicated through inherent vocal patterns.

Neuroimaging studies have revealed striking cross-cultural similarities in the neural correlates of basic emotions. For example, Vytal and Hamann's (2010) meta-analysis found consistent activation of the amygdala, a key brain region implicated in fear processing, across Western and East Asian cultures in response to fearful stimuli. This suggests that the neural mechanisms underpinning the experience and recognition of basic emotions like fear may be conserved across cultures, highlighting a universal biological basis for these emotions that transcends cultural variations in expression and regulation.

The evidence we reviewed supports the existence of distinct physiological signatures for basic emotions. However, more importantly, it shows that the findings are not as conclusive as initially presented by PCT proponents. This suggests that inconsistencies across individual studies may be

due to methodological variations or specific contexts in which the data were collected, rather than a fundamental lack of differentiation between emotions at the physiological level. Therefore, a nuanced reconciliation between the observed variability and BET's assertion of distinct physiological patterns is necessary.

One crucial factor contributing to variability is cognitive appraisal. Cognitive appraisal theory, as proposed by Lazarus (1991), suggests that the way individuals evaluate and interpret a situation significantly influences their emotional response. The same physiological arousal, such as an elevated heart rate, can manifest differently depending on an individual's interpretation of the situation. For instance, a racing heart may be experienced as fear in a threatening context or as excitement in an exhilarating one (Lazarus, 1991). This process involves evaluating the personal significance of an event, which shapes the specific emotion experienced (Smith & Kirby, 2009). Thus, the subjective evaluation of the situation, rather than the physiological response itself, determines the specific emotion experienced.

Furthermore, social and cultural norms profoundly shape how individuals express their emotions outwardly (Mesquita & Frijda, 1992). These cultural factors may lead to variations in facial expressions, vocalizations, and other behavioral manifestations of emotions. However, these variations in expression do not necessarily imply differences in the underlying emotional experience. Instead, they represent culturally sanctioned ways of expressing or masking emotions that are fundamentally similar across cultures (Matsumoto, 1990).

In essence, while physiological responses to emotions may vary across individuals and contexts, these variations do not negate the existence of distinct physiological patterns associated with basic emotions. Instead, they highlight the complex interplay between biological predispositions, cognitive appraisals, and sociocultural influences in shaping emotional experiences. Put differently, BET's assertion of distinct physiological signatures for basic emotions is not irreconcilable with the observed variability.

This section has demonstrated that the observed variability in physiological responses to emotions can be attributed to methodological challenges, inconsistent evidence, and alternative factors such as cognitive appraisals and cultural norms. These considerations highlight that while there is variability, it does not entirely undermine the existence of distinct physiological patterns associated with basic emotions. BET's assertion of distinct physiological signatures for basic emotions can still hold, recognizing that these signatures are influenced by a multitude of factors. After explaining the variability, in the next section, we will explore causal mechanisms as a more promising framework for understanding emotions.

3.2. Beyond Essentialism: Basic Emotions as Causal Kinds

Critiques of Basic Emotion Theory (BET) often adopt an essentialist framework, which defines natural kinds by intrinsic, unchanging properties shared universally by all members (Kripke, 1980; Putnam, 1975). According to this view, natural kinds have a core essence that remains constant

across different contexts and instances. For example, water is defined by its chemical structure H2O, and gold by its atomic number 79. These properties are seen as defining features that all instances of water or gold must possess, regardless of external conditions or contexts. Applied to emotions, this perspective implies that each basic emotion, such as fear or joy, should have a unique and invariable physiological and neurological signature that is consistent across all individuals and situations.

The essentialist interpretation of BET, which posits that each basic emotion should have a unique and invariable physiological profile, is indeed challenged by the observed variability in emotional responses. As discussed previously, studies like Cacioppo et al. (2000) have shown that emotions like fear and excitement can elicit similar physiological responses, such as increased heart rate and skin conductance. This overlap in physiological arousal seemingly contradicts the idea that each basic emotion has a distinct and identifiable physiological profile, questioning the validity of BET under this framework (Barrett, 2006a). Additionally, studies have shown that the same physiological responses can be associated with different emotions depending on context and individual interpretation, further undermining the essentialist view (Russell, 2003).

However, the essentialist view is not the only way to understand natural kinds. An alternative perspective, known as the Homeostatic Property Cluster (HPC) theory, proposed by Boyd (1999), suggests that natural kinds are defined by clusters of properties that tend to co-occur due to underlying causal mechanisms. These properties may not be universally present in every instance, but they are statistically associated with one another and maintained by homeostatic mechanisms that resist change.

For example, consider the concept of a biological species. While an essentialist might define a species by a fixed set of genetic markers, the HPC theory recognizes that species can vary in their genetic makeup due to mutations and other factors. However, certain traits tend to cluster together within a species due to natural selection and other evolutionary processes. These clusters of properties, such as morphological features, behavioral patterns, and ecological niches, define the species as a whole, even though individual members may not exhibit all of them.

Similarly, emotions can be understood as homeostatic property clusters. While there may not be a single, essential physiological signature for each emotion, different emotions can be characterized by clusters of properties (e.g., physiological responses, cognitive appraisals, behavioral tendencies) that tend to co-occur due to underlying causal mechanisms. This perspective allows for variability in individual responses while still maintaining the idea of distinct emotional categories.

The HPC theory of natural kinds offers a more robust framework for understanding the observed variability in physiological responses to emotions. It acknowledges that while a single, invariant physiological signature may not exist for each emotion, distinct emotional categories can still be identified based on consistent patterns of underlying causal mechanisms, such as specific brain processes.

Importantly, the HPC theory recognizes that causal mechanisms are not rigid but are influenced by various factors, both internal (e.g., genetic predispositions, personal experiences) and external (e.g., cultural norms, situational contexts). This flexibility allows the theory to account for the observed variability in the physiological and behavioral expression of emotions, explaining why the same emotion might manifest differently across individuals and situations. For instance, fear, while consistently associated with activation of the amygdala, a brain region crucial for threat detection, might manifest as a racing heart in one individual and trembling hands in another, depending on their unique backgrounds. Despite this variability in expression, the core causal mechanism of fear – activation of the amygdala– remains consistent, allowing us to identify fear as a distinct emotional category.

Therefore, understanding emotions as natural kinds through a causal lens provides a framework that avoids the pitfalls of the essentialist view. However, a challenge remains: within the HPC framework, we expect to find some specificity in the causal mechanisms associated with different emotions. Identifying these specific causal mechanisms for each emotion is crucial. If such mechanisms cannot be reliably distinguished, even within the causal framework, the issue of variability re-emerges, raising questions about whether distinct causal patterns for each emotion truly exist or if they also exhibit a high degree of variability.

The causal approach to understanding emotions has also faced challenges. While some studies have shown that each emotion is underpinned by specific brain structures—such as the amygdala for fear and the insula for disgust (Phelps & LeDoux, 2005; Wicker et al., 2003)—other research indicates that brain regions are not exclusive to distinct emotions. For example, the amygdala is activated not only for fear but also for disgust, happiness, and other emotions (Lindquist et al., 2012). This means that a brain region, R, can be activated for multiple emotions (emotion1, emotion2, emotion3, etc.). From this evidence, psychological constructionists such as Barrett (2006a) have drawn the conclusion that there is no specific causal mechanism for different emotions.

The conclusion drawn by psychological constructionists may be too quick. While some studies have shown that there is no one-to-one correspondence between each emotion and specific brain structures, concluding from this that there is no underlying causal mechanism in the brain for each emotion is premature. The absence of a one-to-one relationship does not imply that emotions lack distinct neural underpinnings. Instead, it implies that emotions may be supported by more complex and distributed networks within the brain, where multiple regions interact to generate specific emotional experiences.

When exploring the underlying causal mechanisms of emotions, the expectation of a one-to-one correspondence between specific emotions and individual brain structures, or the notion that each emotion has a dedicated brain region, must be abandoned. Instead, emotions arise from the complex

interplay of multiple brain regions, each contributing its unique signature to the overall emotional experience.

This distributed processing model predicts that emotions are not localized to single brain areas but emerge from the dynamic interaction of interconnected neural networks. Each emotion is characterized by a unique pattern of activation across these networks, with various regions contributing different aspects to the overall emotional experience. For example, the amygdala plays a crucial role in processing fear and anxiety, while the insula is implicated in disgust and visceral sensations. However, these structures are not exclusively dedicated to single emotions and can participate in various emotional states, depending on the specific pattern of activation within the broader network.

Under this conception, it is expected that a given brain region might be activated in various emotions due to its role in different neural networks. For instance, the anterior cingulate cortex (ACC), a region implicated in conflict monitoring and cognitive control, has been found to be activated across a range of emotional experiences, including sadness, anger, and pain (Etkin et al., 2011). Additionally, Lindquist et al. (2012) demonstrated that while specific brain regions like the amygdala and insula are involved in multiple emotions, the unique patterns of interactions among these regions contribute to the distinct experiences of each emotion.

Importantly, these findings only challenge the idea of a specific causal mechanism for each emotion if we define causal mechanisms by specific brain structures alone. However, when we understand the underlying causal mechanism as a network of brain structures or a pattern of activation involving different brain areas, the evidence does not undermine the existence of distinct causal mechanisms for each emotion. Instead, it supports understanding emotions as distinct categories within the framework of HPC theory or causal kinds.

While the precise nature of the causal mechanisms underlying emotions remains an ongoing area of investigation, the evidence suggests that these mechanisms are not confined to single brain structures but rather emerge from complex patterns of activation and interaction within interconnected neural networks. Future research should prioritize mapping these intricate networks and exploring how they contribute to the generation of diverse emotional experiences. Advanced neuroimaging techniques and computational models, in conjunction with physiological, behavioral, and subjective measures, can help elucidate the specific patterns that characterize different emotions.

A final acknowledgment should be made that while Basic Emotion Theory may need to be refined to incorporate insights from Psychological Construction Theory and other research, the core idea of basic emotions as distinct categories with biological underpinnings remains valid. The causal perspective, with its emphasis on understanding the complex mechanisms that give rise to emotions, can contribute to refining BET by moving beyond fixed physiological signatures and embracing the dynamic interplay of neural networks. This approach allows for a more flexible and

nuanced understanding of emotions, accommodating variability while maintaining the integrity of distinct emotional categories.

Conclusion

This paper critically examined the debate between Basic Emotion Theory and Psychological Construction Theory focusing on the universality, discreteness, and biological underpinnings of emotions. The variability in emotional responses, often cited by PCT proponents as a challenge to BET, has been thoroughly analyzed. Despite this variability, I have argued that it does not necessarily undermine the fundamental tenets of BET.

By reframing the concept of emotions as causal kinds, rather than essentialist kinds, I have demonstrated how BET can be reconciled with the observed variability in emotional responses. This causal perspective emphasizes the underlying mechanisms that give rise to emotions, allowing for individual and contextual variations while still recognizing the existence of distinct emotional categories with biological foundations.

The examination of the empirical evidence reveals that while there is some variability in physiological and neural responses, there are also consistent patterns that point to specific causal mechanisms underlying different emotions. This suggests that the observed variability in emotional responses is not a fundamental flaw in BET but rather a reflection of the complex interplay between biological predispositions and the dynamic influence of individual experiences, cognitive appraisals, and cultural norms.

The HPC perspective offers a robust framework for understanding the observed variability in physiological responses to emotions. By focusing on how different brain regions interact to generate emotional experiences, researchers can develop a more nuanced understanding of emotions. This approach moves beyond the limitations of searching for single, isolated brain regions responsible for specific emotions and instead embraces the complexity of the brain's interconnected systems.

While BET may need to be refined to incorporate insights from PCT and other research, the core idea of basic emotions as distinct categories with biological underpinnings remains valid. The causal perspective, supported by the HPC theory, can help refine BET by focusing on the complex causal mechanisms that give rise to emotions, rather than solely on fixed physiological signatures. This approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of emotions, accommodating variability while maintaining distinct emotional categories.

Future research should prioritize mapping the specific patterns of neural activation and interactions that characterize different emotions. Advanced neuroimaging techniques, combined with sophisticated computational models, can help identify the distinct networks and pathways involved in emotional processing. Considering multiple measures, including physiological, behavioral, and subjective reports, is crucial for fully understanding the causal mechanisms underlying emotions. By incorporating these approaches, future research in this direction promises

to significantly advance our understanding of the causal mechanisms underlying emotional responses in diverse contexts.

References

Barrett, L. F. (2006a). Are emotions natural kinds? In *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 1(1), 28-58. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-6916.2006. 00003.x

Barrett, L. F. (2006b). Solving the Emotion Paradox: Categorization and the experience of emotion. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 10(1), 20-46. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327957pspr1001_2

Barrett, L. F. (2017). *How Emotions Are Made: The secret life of the brain*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Barrett, L. F., & Simmons, W. K. (2015). Interoceptive predictions in the brain. *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, 16(7), 419-429. https://doi.org/10.1038/nrn3950

Barrett, L. F., & Satpute, A. B. (2013). Large-scale Brain Networks in Affective and Social Neuroscience: Towards an integrative functional architecture of the brain. *Current Opinion in Neurobiology*, 23(3), 361-372. https://doi.org/ 10.1016/j.conb.2013.01.012

Cacioppo, J. T. & et al. (2000). The Psychophysiology of Emotion. *Handbook of Emotions*, 2, 173-191.

Cacioppo, J. T., Tassinary, L. G., & Berntson, G. G. (1997). Psychophysiological science: Interdisciplinary approaches to classic questions about the mind. In *Handbook of Psychophysiology*, pp. 3-26, Edited by J. T. Cacioppo, L. G. Tassinary, & G. G. Berntson, Cambridge University Press.

Darwin, C. (1872). The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals. John Murray. https://doi.org/10.1037/10001-000

Ekman, P. (1992). An argument for basic emotions. In *Cognition & Emotion*, 6(3-4), 169-200. https://doi.org/10.1080/02699939208411068

Ekman, P., & Friesen, W. V. (1971). Constants across Cultures in the Face and Emotion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 17(2), 124-129. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0030377

Ekman, P., & Friesen, W. V. (1975). *Unmasking the Face: A guide to recognizing emotions from facial clues*. Prentice-Hall.

Etkin, A., Egner, T., & Kalisch, R. (2011). Emotional Processing in Anterior Cingulate and Medial Prefrontal Cortex. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 15(2), 85-93. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2010.11.004

Feldman Barrett, L., Quigley, K. S., Bliss-Moreau, E., & Aronson, K. R. (2007). Interoceptive Sensitivity and Self-Reports of Emotional Experience. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 92(5), 967-980. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.92.5.967

Gross, J. J., Sutton, S. K., & Ketelaar, T. (1998). Relations between Affect and Personality: Support for the affect-level and affective-reactivity views. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 24(3), 279-288. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167298243005

Izard, C. E. (1977). *Human Emotions*. Springer Publishing Company.

Izard, C. E. (1991). *The Psychology of Emotions*. Springer Publishing Company.

Izard, C. E, & et al. (1980). The Young Infant's Ability to Produce Discrete Emotion Expressions. *Developmental Psychology*, 16(2), 132-140. https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.16.2.132

Izard, C. E. (2007). Basic Emotions, Natural Kinds, Emotion Schemas, and a New Paradigm. In *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 2(3), 260-280. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-6916.2007.00044.x

Kagan, J. (1994). *Galen's Prophecy: Temperament in human nature*. Basic Books.

Keltner, D., & Kring, A. M. (1998). Emotion, Social Function, and Psychopathology. *Review of General Psychology*, 2(3), 320-342. https://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2680.2.3.320

Kreibig, S. D. (2010). Autonomic Nervous System Activity in Emotion: A review. *Biological Psychology*, 84(3), 394-421. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biopsycho.2010.03.010

Kripke, S. (1980). *Naming and Necessity*. Harvard University Press.

Lazarus, R. S. (1991). *Emotion and Adaptation*. Oxford University Press.

Levenson, R. W., Ekman, P., & Friesen, W. V. (1990). Voluntary Facial Action Generates Emotion-Specific Autonomic Nervous System Activity. *Psychophysiology*, 27(4), 363-384. https://doi.org/0.1111/j.1469-8986.1990.tb02330.x

Lindquist, K. A. & et al. (2012). The Brain Basis of Emotion: A meta-analytic review. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 35(3), 121-143. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X11000446

Mauss, I. B., & Robinson, M. D. (2009). Measures of Emotion: A Review. *Cognition and Emotion*, 23(2), 209-237. https://doi.org./10.1080/02699930802204677

Mesquita, B., & Frijda, N. H. (1992). Cultural Variations in Emotions: A review. *Psychological Bulletin*, 112(2), 179-204. https://doi.org./10.1037/0033-2909.112.2.179

Öhman, A., & Mineka, S. (2001). Fears, Phobias, and Preparedness: Toward an evolved module of fear and fear learning. *Psychological Review*, 108(3), 483-522. https://doi.org./10.1037/0033-295X.108.3.483

Phelps, E. A., & LeDoux, J. E. (2005). Contributions of the Amygdala to Emotion Processing: from animal models to human behavior. *Neuron*, 48(2), 175-187. https://doi.org./10.1016/j.neuron.2005.09.025

Putnam, H. (1975). The Meaning of 'Meaning'. *In H. Putnam, Mind, language and reality*, Vol. 2, pp. 215-271, Cambridge University Press.

Russell, J. A. (2003). Core Affect and the Psychological Construction of Emotion. *Psychological Review*, 110(1), 145-172. https://doi.org./10.1037/0033-295X.110.1.145

Sbarra, D. A., & Hazan, C. (2008). Coregulation, Dysregulation, Self-Regulation: an integrative analysis and empirical agenda for understanding adult attachment, separation, loss, and recovery. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 12(2), 141-167. https://doi.org/10.1177/1088868308315702

Sauter, D. A., Eisner, F., Ekman, P., & Scott, S. K. (2010). Cross-Cultural Recognition of Basic Emotions through Nonverbal Emotional Vocalizations. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 107(6), 2408-2412. https://doi.org./10.1073/pnas.0908239106

Siegel, E. H., & et al. (2018). Emotion Fingerprints or Emotion Populations? a meta-analytic investigation of autonomic features of emotion categories. *Psychological Bulletin*, 144(4), 343-393 https://doi.org./.10.1037/bul0000128

Stemmler, G. (2001). Physiological Processes During Emotion. In *The Handbook of Emotions*, pp. 114-130, Edited by G. Stemmler, W. H. B. Lang, & M. Fahrenberg, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Tomkins, S. S. (1962). *Affect Imagery Consciousness: Volume I. The positive affects*. Springer Publishing Company.

Tomkins, S. S. (1963). *Affect Imagery Consciousness: Volume II. The negative affects.* Springer Publishing Company.

Wicker, B., & et al. (2003). Both of Us Disgusted in My Insula: The common neural basis of seeing and feeling disgust. *Neuron*, 40(3), 655-664. https://doi.org./10.1016/S0896-6273(03)00679-2

Wilson-Mendenhall, C. D., Barrett, L. F., & Barsalou, L. W. (2013). Neural Evidence That Human Emotions Share Core Affective Properties. *Psychological Science*, 24(6), 947-956. https://doi.org./10.1177/0956797612464242

Widen, S. C., & Russell, J. A. (2010). Differentiation of Emotion Concepts in Infancy. *Developmental Psychology*, 46(6), 1289-1306. https://doi.org./10.1037/a0017929

Wicker, B., & et al. (2003). Both of Us Disgusted in My Insula: the common neural basis of seeing and feeling disgust. *Neuron*, *40*(3), 655-664. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0896-6273(03)00679-2

Vytal, K., & Hamann, S. (2010). Neuroimaging Support for Discrete Neural Correlates of Basic Emotions: a voxel-based meta-analysis. *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*, 22(12), 2864-2885. https://doi.org/10.1162/jocn.2009.21366

Wicker, B., & et al. (2003). Both of Us Disgusted in My Insula: the common neural basis of seeing and feeling disgust. *Neuron*, 40(3), 655-664. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0896-6273(03)00679-2

Journal of Philosophical Investigations
Print ISSN: 2251-7960 Online ISSN: 2423-4419
Homepage: https://philosophy.tabrizu.ac.ir

Camera or behind Camera: Ibn al-Haitham vis-à-vis Shaykh Ishraq on Vision

Nadia Maftouni

Professor, Department of Philosophy and Islamic Kalam, University of Tehran, Iran. Email: nadia.maftouni@ut.ac.ir

Article Info

Article type:
Research Article

Article history:
Received 09 November 2023
Received in revised form 21 July 2024
Accepted 29 July 2024
Published online 07 September 2024

Keywords:
Alhazen, Suhrawardi, vision, emission, intromission

ABSTRACT

Developing the empirical method based on observation and experiment, Alhazen is considered the greatest Muslim physicist and the most significant figure in the history of optics between antiquity and the seventeenth century. Inventing a camera obscura, Alhazen rebuilt our conception of eyesight. His theory of vision was enormously prominent and much of our understanding of optics and light is based upon his groundbreaking discoveries. He began his criticism of emission by describing what happens when people are exposed to bright lights. No matter what the light source, the effect of bright lights was always the same. What this indicates to Alhazen is that light entering into the eye from an external source had some serious function in eyesight. Respecting observation, experiment and empirical method, Suhrawardi, the father of Illumination School, argues all theories of vision and rejects them just by mere reasoning. Suhrawardi validates his own Illuminationist method by scientists' empirical method. So, I will argue, he is not to deny empirical aspect of Alhazen's theory of vision. In an allegory, I will use the camera, representing the whole process of a human vision, while I use "beyond camera" for the embodiment that allows for the unfolding of a human soul's position in the process of vision. What Alhazen is speaking of, we might call the process within the camera; while what Suhrawardi is speaking of, we could name the process behind the camera.

Cite this article: Maftouni, N. (2024). Camera or behind Camera: Ibn al-Haitham vis-à-vis Shaykh Ishraq on Vision. *Journal of Philosophical Investigations*, 18(48), 309-318. https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.59157.3630

© The Author(s).
Publisher: University of Tabriz.
https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.59157.3630

1. Issues

During the Islamic Golden Age, a great deal of scientists made the history of humanity heavily indebted. Tracing the development of Muslim civilization, we can observe distinct thinking methods by which improve different facets of society. Being a key scientist of the fifth/eleventh century, Ibn al-Haitham (965 Basrah–1040 Cairo) dramatically developed empirical method based on observation and experiment resulted in which the promotion of sciences and technology. Abu Ali al-Hasan Ibn al-Hasan Ibn al-Haitham, also known by the Latinization Alhazen or Alhacen, was a leading polymath scientist, mathematician, astronomer, who worked in Fatimid Cairo (*al-Fāṭimīyyūn*) during the 11th century under the ruler al-Hakim (Masood, 2009, 121–122). One of his most prominent inventions is deemed his theory of vision on which rests much of our current comprehension of light and optics. It is not obscure that vision was the most important sense for philosophers like Aristotle (322–384 BC). Mentioning in appellation of imagination to a Greek name *phantasia* from *phaos*, he remarks that imagination belongs to the perceiving act the most important of which is vision; and vision is unfeasible wherever light is beyond reach (Aristotle, 1995, 429a1–4). However, the question of what the process of visioning related to light is worth discussing. I will pose the issue against Alhazen as the profound figure of empirical method, also against Suhrawardi (1154 Suhrevard–1191 Aleppo) as the father of intuitive empirical method, each of which posits different theories for vision. That is, Suhrawardi denies all theories of vision including Alhazen's (Suhrawardi, 2002a, 164–179). Giving an account for this divergence, an account of what precisely are their theories is needed. In a chronological order, first follows Alhazen's.

2. Alhazen's Contribution to Vision

Alhazen worked in a range of disciplines and made major contributions to the scientific method as well as optics, mathematics, meteorology, and astronomy. Schramm (1963) in his book *Ibn Al-Haytham's Path to Physics*, increases our knowledge about Alhazen's work as the founder of physics in its modern sense. While Lindberg (1967) develops Alhazen's theory of optics, Rosińska (1986, 38) emphasizes the specific role of Alhazen in mathematics and optics,

> The mere fact that the lecture of optics is preceded by mathematical considerations then use of the data contained in the ledger and to take evidence testifies to Witelo's recognition of the connections existing between mathematics and physics. It is especially visible where it is taken works Alhazen at Wier Optical performance formulated "physically" Witelo gives in mathematical form. Unguru emphasizes another aspect of Witelon's work: in full acknowledgment of between these two teachings, Wite was aware of what It does exist. Hence, mathematics was treated above all as tools in optics.

Alhazen laid many of the foundations for integral calculus, which is used for calculating areas and volumes (Masood, 2009, 145). However mostly, he is known in the West for his works on optics and astronomy, including *The Book of Optics (Kitab al-Manazir), On the Spherical Burning Mirror, On the Light of the Moon,* and *Doubts Concerning Ptolemy.* In *Doubts Concerning Ptolemy* or *Shukūkʿalā Baṭlamyūs*, he raised questions criticizing the elements of Ptolemaic models. In his scientific efforts, Alhazen may well be regarded as an experimentalist who used his abilities to great effect when testing out the theories of the day (Selin, 2008, 1667). Alhazen's main contribution to optics was in suggesting that the mathematics of optics – such as reflection and refraction – need to be consistent with what we know about the biology of the eye.

In addition, as an empirical physicist, Alhazen overhauled our understanding of eyesight, inventing an early imaging device (a pinhole camera or camera obscura meaning "darkened room").[1] His theory of vision was enormously prominent and much of our understanding of optics and light is based upon his groundbreaking discoveries (Masood, 2009, 5, 84, 89–90). Figuring out the mechanisms for sight and the nature of vision are amongst the oldest questions in the history of physics and philosophy. These were of interest to scientists from the Islamic world too, and by the time of the Translation Movement from Greek to Arabic, Ibn al-Haitham was conscious of the leading theories of the day. Perhaps the most popular of these theories of vision was what is now called the emission or extromission theory, whose proponents included Plato. Although our current understanding of vision did not come directly from Alhazen, he was among the first to demonstrate critical flaws in the emission theory (Masood, 2009, 173–175). For this theory, the human eye is able to see objects because the eye releases a special kind of optical energy. This energy can be regarded as being a bit like electromagnetic radiation; it streams ahead out of the eye in pulses, shining a sort of light, which allows humans to see.

The emission theory wasn't without its critics, including Aristotle. The critics of emission theory hold that, instead of a light pulsing out of the eye, our vision is more likely to come from a light that is released from physical objects themselves, which then interacts with the eye. This theory is known as intromission, and is not outlying from our latest knowledge of vision.

[1] "Camera obscura is a very old device. Oldest mention of its effect is by Mozi, Chinese philosopher and the founder of Mohism, during the 5th century BC. He noticed that an image from camera obscura is flipped upside down and from left to right as a result of light's moving in straight line. The Greek philosopher Aristotle noticed in the 4th century that light from a sun eclipse that passes through holes between the leaves, projects an image of an eclipsed sun on the ground. Passing of light in the straight line also noticed Euclid the 4th century BC and Theon of Alexandria in the 4th century AD. Anthemius of Tralles, which designed the Hagia Sophia, used a type of camera obscura in his experiments in the 6th century. Al-Kindi, Arab philosopher, mathematician, physician, and musician, performed experiments with light and a pinhole in the 9th century and proved again behavior of light. All these scientists experimented with a small hole and light but none of them suggested that a screen is used so an image from one side of a hole in the surface could be projected at the screen on the other. First one to do so was Alhazen (also known as Ibn al-Haytham) in the 11th century" (*Photography History Facts*, 2023).

Galen (129– c. 216) had yet another view; he shared the emission idea that the eye emits optical energy, but he also held that our ability to see happens when this energy combines with the surrounding air and with sunlight. Avicenna's critiques of emission were powerful and to a certain extent convincing. However, he was unable to significantly advance our understanding of vision. (Avicenna, 1983, 102) Instead, the job of taking the study of optics to new heights fell to Alhazen. He began his criticism of emission by describing what happens when people are exposed to bright lights. For example, anyone who tries to look directly at the sun feels pain as do those who try to look at the sun's reflection in a mirror. No matter what the light source, the effect of bright lights was always the same. This suggested to Alhazen that light entering into the eye from an external source had some role in eyesight.

Furthermore, he argued, even provided we accepted Galen's view, holding that the eye released a visual energy which interacts with the air, the result of this interaction would need to flow back into the eye so that vision could be registered by the observer's brain. This confirmed that even if we accept emission some form of intromission would be needed for the eye to be able to see.

To try his ideas further, he began to experiment with refraction, which is the bending of light as it passes from one medium to another. For Alhazen, provided vision is what happens when light passes from an object and into the eye, it is likely to bend once it enters the eye. This refracted light could lead to a distorted image, so Alhazen implemented many tests to see if it was possible for light to transfer from one medium to another without being bent.

The crucial insight is that the idea that light travels through transparent bodies in straight lines was confirmed by Alhazen just after years of experiment. His demonstration of the theory was to place a straight stick or taut thread next to the light beam to prove that light goes in a straight line (Guimaraes, 2011, 105; Sambursky, 1974, 136). He explained his method presenting the problem:

> How does light travel through transparent bodies? Light travels through transparent bodies in straight lines… We have explained this exhaustively in our *Book of optics*. But let us now mention something to prove this convincingly.

He stated the fact that light goes in straight lines is clearly observable in the lights entering into dark rooms through holes. And the entering light in the dust which fills the air is visible in a clear and lucid manner (Guimaraes, 2011, 102, 105).

It is thanks to this fashion that Alhazen constitutes one of the key figures in the development of the scientific method (Guimaraes, 2011, 102). The central theme in scientific method is that all evidence must be empirical. In scientific method the word empirical points to the use of working hypotheses that can be tested using observation and experiment (Pickett, 2011, 585).

Alhazen used experimentation to support most of the statements in his *Book of Optics* and grounded his theories of vision, light and color, as well as his research in catoptrics and dioptrics. In effect, he combined observation, experiment and rational reasoning to support his intromission theory of vision, in which rays of light are emitted from objects rather than from the eyes. He used

similar demonstrations to show that the ancient emission theory of eyesight supported by Ptolemy and Euclid, and the ancient intromission theory supported by Aristotle, were both wrong.

Ibn al-Haitham also explained the role of induction in syllogism, and criticized Aristotle for his lack of contribution to the method of induction, which Alhazen regarded as superior to syllogism. Alhazen, in fact, posited that induction is the fundamental prerequisite for accurate scientific research (Plott, 2000, 462).

Alhazen may have been the first scientist to adopt a form of positivism in his approach. He wrote that, we do not go beyond experience, and we cannot be content to use pure concepts in investigating natural phenomena. (Alhacen, 1983, 59-60; See also: Rashed, 2007, 19)

And asserted that the understanding of these cannot be acquired without mathematics. After assuming that light is a material substance, he does not further discuss its nature but confines his investigations to the diffusion and propagation of light. The only properties of light he takes into account are those treatable by geometry and verifiable by experiment (Rashed, 2007, 19; 2016, 25–39; see also: Tbakhi, Amr 2007, 464–467). Alhazen has explained his method himself:

> Whosoever seeks the truth will not proceed by studying the writings of his predecessors and by simply accepting his own good opinion of them. Whosoever studies the works of science must, if he wants to find the truth, transform himself into a critic of everything he reads. He must examine tests and explanations with the greatest precision and question them from all angles and aspects (Alhacen, 1983, 61-62; See also: Masood, 2009, 169).

George Sarton considered Alhazen the greatest Muslim physicist and one of the greatest figures of optics in history (Sarton, 1927, 721). In *Theories of Vision from Al-Kindi to Kepler* another science historian David C. Lindberg said:

> Alhazen was undoubtedly the most significant figure in the history of optics between antiquity and the seventeenth century (Lindberg, 1976, 58).

Of the many other sources describing Ibn al-Haitham as the father of modern optics, M. Ali Kettani said:

> One name stands out as that of a rare genius in physical research: Abu Ali Al-Hasan Ibn Al-Haitham of Basrah, without question the father of modern optics (Kettani, 1976, 140).

3. Suhrawardi's Stand on Vision

Suhrawardi's theory of vision is trackable in his writings and notions around perception which I will discuss in two sections of Avicennian vs. Illuminationist views. As the first section following Avicenna (980–1037), Suhrawardi (1154–1191) considers four human perceptions: sensory perception, imagination, illusion and rational perception (Avicenna, 1983, 51–53; 1986, 344–346;

1995, 277–278; 1985, 102–103; 1984, 23; 1953, 30–33). He explains vision as a sensory perception that is capable of perceiving just the external form of an object and its accidents like position, place, quantity, color, and figure. If the object is not placed in front of the eyes, eyes cannot perceive it, however, imagination is able to perceive the absent beings. Suhrawardi has compared vision and imagination in three aspects of power, separation and permanence, considering imagination atop vision[1] (Suhrawardi, 2002d, 407–410). Vision and imagination are among ten senses of human beings consisting of five inner senses vs. five outer senses. About five inward senses in his different books, Suhrawardi refers to Avicenna and repeats some of his examples (Suhrawardi, 2002b, 179–182; 2002e, 201–203, 111–112; 2002d, 352–355, 130–132, 29–31, 87–88, 227, 249, 278–279, 331). Just in *Hayakel al-Noor*, *motekhayelah* faculty is neglected to mention that I think it might be explained as pen blunder or scribes' fault. Suhrawardi has focused on ten inner senses in his treatise, *A Day with a Group of Sufis*; also in the treatises of *The Red Intellect*, *On the Reality of Love* and *The Shrill Cry of Simurgh* ten senses have been expressed in allegories.

In respect of his Illuminationist opinion about perception in *Hikmat al-Ishraq*, Suhrawardi propounds a different idea from Avicenna's theory on the faculties of imagination, *motekhayelah*, illusion and memory. He refers some of these faculties to others and defines activities for some that result in a new conception (Suhrawardi, 2002a, 500–501). Illuminated imagination theory requires us to discuss about its bases, the most important of which is Suhrawardi's theory of vision. Suhrawardi has expressed his theory of vision in several sections of *Hikmat al-Ishraq*. Afterward he uses the theory to explain Light of all lights' (Nur al-anwar) knowledge (Suhrawardi, 2002a, 376–377), all intelligible (immaterial) lights' knowledge, as well as human beings' external and internal senses (Suhrawardi, 2002a, 502–503). He rejects different views about vision in *al-Mashare and al-Motarehat* and then refers the secret of vision to *Hikmat al-Ishraq* (Suhrawardi, 2002a, 164–179). Discussing all existing theories of vision in the first part of *Hikmat al-Ishraq*, Suhrawardi invalidates all of them including the exit of radius from eyes, reflection, impression, as well as reasoning. Then he considers visible forms and infers that these forms do not exist within the mirror, within the air or within the eyes. Reflection is neither the same object form based on reflection of the mirror radius nor exactly the same object form that is seen except reflection and impression. Forms that the sages assume in eye lenses are in fact the same as the visible forms, that

[1] Suhrawardi considers illusion perception, including meanings regarding the sensible, more powerful than vision and imagination. Yet illusion cannot separate meanings from the sensible and all three kinds of sensory, imaginary and illusion perceptions are physical and cannot be separated from matter. But intellectual perception will find essences as they are. Suhrawardi interprets that intellectual perception can be possessed in the spiritual realm in the blink of an eye. Distinction between human and animal is in this perception that is abstract and its principle is from the spiritual world. Therefore, it can find spiritual substances. Its place is not in the human body but he looks at the body and the invisible world. Intellect is called human rational soul, heart, spirit and psyche too. Because perceptions of vision, imagination and illusion are physical, they can only capture the material world and cannot attain anything in the intellect infinite universe and if they want to find some forms in the world intellect, they can only find it in a physical matter. Vision and even imagination and illusion are all worthless comparing intellectual faculties.

is, those forms are not within the air or lens or …. This is a method to express the reality of vision, visible forms and imagination (Suhrawardi, 2002a, 269–270). However, in the second part of his book *Hikmat al-Ishraq*, Suhrawardi's theory of vision will be more developed. Suhrawardi holds since vision is neither based on visible object form impression in the eyes nor based upon the exit of something from the eyes, it is related just on confrontation between the healthy eyes and the luminous objects. Put another way, three items of healthy eyes, light and confrontation are well sufficient for vision. confrontation means the lack of obstacle between the eyes and objects. Of course, way too distant as well as way too close constitutes an obstacle too. Herein, Suhrawardi puts off spelling out the issue of imagination and the world of images (Suhrawardi, 2002a, 348).[1] Suhrawardi has talked about the reality of vision distinctively as well as negatively but not positively. It is as if he wants to say that vision is just vision and no more. However, in his commentaries, Shahrezoori has added an affirmative description about the reality of vision under the topic of outer senses. He says when there is a confrontation between a vision member and a luminous object, there will be an illuminated intuitive knowledge for soul on the visualized object and then soul will conceive the object intuitively without any intermediary issue or object. This is the whole reality of vision (Shahrezoori, 2002, 489; 2006, 391).

Suhrawardi's theory of vision is the backbone of his theory of imagination. So, his method in developing the theory of imagination is similar to his theory of vision. Shaky Ishraq explains negatively and distinctively what imagination is not. But unlike the debate of vision, Suhrawardi himself will add here a positive notion and affirmative expression in respect of what imagination *is*. Suhrawardi, unlike Avicenna, does not consider imagination as a source of common sense. He concludes that there are no forgotten subjects in human faculties, by studying on reminiscence process, but they are true in the universe of Memoirs, and this universe is under design of Spherical *Esfahbod* lights or Spherical souls that forget nothing and there is no oblivescence in that universe. Shurawardi's argument is that sometimes it is so drudgery to remember a lost issue and there is no success although you tackle a lot. Then you will spontaneously remember the forgotten subject or issue. If the forgotten subject was there in a human's soul or in his physical faculties, it wouldn't be hidden from the rational soul or from the Ruler light, because obstacles cannot keep covering the Ruler light. Imaginary forms that the human will forget are similar and despite Avicenna, Suhrawardi says that the imagination faculty of humans is not the source of imaginary forms. Also, memory faculty is not the source of particular concepts and meanings. Suhrawardi's reasonings are

[1] Given that the impression or the exit of rays is not the necessity of vision and the lack of cover is sufficient to reach to vision, Suhrawardi argues, the knowledge of the Light of lights returns to his vision. Because he is self-manifesting in himself and other beings are constantly apparent even clear for him, since there is no cover against him (Suhrawardi, 2002a, 376–377); and all knowledge of intelligible (immaterial) lights and Lordly lights (Esfahbodie lights) return to their vision (Suhrawardi, 2002a, 503). Suhrawardi's commentators know Esfahbod light and the Ruler light as rational soul. Bahai Lahiji holds Esfahbod means army leader in Pahlavi language and is called Sepahbod (general) in Persian and it is named Esfahbod due to the presidency of rational soul in body and body forces (Bahai Lahiji, 1973, 146).

the same associated with objects as well as concepts. According to him, forgotten imaginary forms are true in the celestial universe and the Ruler light returns those forms from there when you remember the forgotten forms. Of course, Suhrawardi posits that there is a faculty in humans to have reminding and reminiscence capacity (Suhrawardi, 2002a, 502). So, two faculties of memory and imagination are considered just faculties that are capable of accepting the forgotten affairs and lost issues from the celestial universe.

According to Shaykh Ishraq, the imaginary forms and visible forms both are similarly situated. As impression in the eye or brain is impossible, neither the visible forms nor the imaginary forms are impressed. So, the imaginary forms are suspended bodies without any place that mirror and human imagination is a position or a place for their manifestation and because vision is soul intuitive illuminated observing, other appearance and inner senses refer to nature of the Ruler light, who is all-emanating by virtue of its essence and the Ruler light illuminates on imaginary forms and such that namely other appearance and inner senses. *Esfahbod* light illuminates on vision that there is no need to attain the form and its illumination on imagination is the same (Suhrawardi, 2002a, 502–504). Suhrawardi regards imagination as the direct view of Ideal Beings by *Esfahbod* (Lordly) light. Suhrawardi's theory of vision is collatable with his theory of imagination on six sides. First: Sight faculty is a physical faculty and also the soul can see Ideal Beings of the mirrors by that. Imagination faculties are the same in Suhrawardi point of view and are physical, and the soul can see Ideal Beings through it. Second: Vision is qualified to confrontation; imaginary perception is also qualified to confrontation. Third: Vision is done without the intermediate of object form; also, imaginary perception is without intermediate. It means nothing is coming from outside to mind and imaginary forms are suspended ideas that are per se perceiver as objects are per se object perceived. Fourth: In both cases, illuminated intuitive knowledge is resulted for soul. Fifth: In both cases, cognation of perceiver and object perceived is impossible and the Ruler light that is intelligible (immaterial) can see both of the physical objects and suspended ideas (that have incomplete abstract), as in objects perception by Light of lights and Mighty (Qaherah) lights, cognation is impossible. Sixth: Light is conditional in both cases: in vision, the object should be luminous, and in Ideas of mirrors also the light is auxiliary cause. In inner senses, both illumination of intelligible (immaterial) lights and the Ruler light are necessary.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Alhazen based upon empirical method develops his theory of vision. Suhrawardi admits to validity of observation and empirical method of scientist, utilizing it as a foundation for his own intuitive method (Suhrawardi, 2002b, 13):

> Shahadna al'mahsusat WA ta'yaqqanna min baed ahwaleha, thuma banayna ealayha euluman sahihat kalhayat WA ghayriha. fakadha, nushadhed min

> alruwhaniaat ‘ashya’ thumma nabni ealayha. Wa man laysa hadha sabiluhu falaysa min alhikmat fi shay’ wa sayaleab bih alshukuk (Suhrawardi, 2002b, 13).
>
> We observed the perceptible and became certain of some of their states, then we constructed upon them valid sciences like geometry and others. Similarly, we witness things from spiritualities and build upon them. And whoever does not follow this path is not wise in anything and will be played with by doubts.

Just like we observe the sensory and then based upon it we establish the correct sciences like astronomy, we observe the spiritual based on which we establish the true knowledge. So, the reason why Suhrawardi disputes Alhazen’s theory of vision could be explained by distinction between the vision by the camera and vision by one behind the camera. That is, if we regard our vision as a camera and our soul as who works behind a camera, what Suhrawardi denies in respect of the theories of vision, is not about the process happening inside the camera but is about the soul working behind a camera. Whatever the process inside the camera would be, the real one who sees is our soul whose knowledge on the visualized objects is an intuition without any intermediary issue or object.

References

Alhacen. (1983). *Kitab Almanazir*. al-Turath al-Arabi. (in Arabic)

Aristotle. (1995). *The Complete Works of Aristotle*. Edited by Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols. University of Princeton.

Avicenna, A. (1997). *Isharat va Tanbihat*. [In:] Tusi, *Sharh Isharat va Tanbihat*, vol. 2. Nashr al-Balaqah. (in Persian)

Avicenna, A. (1985). *Mabda va Maad*, Edited by A. Nurani. McGill University Institute of Islamic Studies. (in arabic)

Avicenna, A. (1986). *al-Nejat*. University of Tehran. (in Arabic)

Avicenna, A. (1953). *Resaleh al-Nafs*, Edited by Musa Amid. Anjoman Asar Meli. (in Arabic)

Avicenna, A. (1983). *al-Shifa (Tabiiat, Nafs)*, Edited by Ibrahim Madkur. Marashi Library. (in Arabic)

Avicenna, A. (1984). *Taliqat*, Edited by A. Badavi. Maktab Ilam Islami. (in Arabic)

Avicenna, A. (1995). *Uyun al-Hikmah*, Edited by Ahmad Hejazi. Assadeq. (in Arabic)

Guimaraes, F. (2011). *Research Anyone Can Do It.* Pedia Press.

Hobson, M. (2004). *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilization*. Cambridge University Press.

Kettani, A. (1976). Moslem Contributions to the Natural Sciences. *Impact of Science on Society* (UNESCO) 26(3) “Science and the Islamic World”, 135–149. URL: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000020203.

Al-Khalili, J. (2010). *Pathfinders: The Golden Age of Arabic Science*. Penguin Books.

Lindberg, C. (1967). Alhazen’s Theory of Vision and Its Reception in the West. *Isis* 58(3), 321–341. URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/227990.

Lindberg, C. (1976). *Theories of Vision from al-Kindi to Kepler.* University of Chicago Press.

Masood, E. (2009). *Science and Islam: A History*. Icon Books.

Photography History Facts 2023: History of Camera Obscura – Who Invented Camera Obscura? URL: http://www.photographyhistoryfacts.com/photography-development-history/camera-obscura-history/.

Pickett, P. (2011). Empirical. *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*.5th editon, Houghton Mifflin.

Plott, C. (2000). *Global History of Philosophy*, Vol. 4: *Study of Period of Scholasticism* (Pt. 1) (800–1150 A.D.). Motilal Banarsidass.

Rashed, R. (2007). The Celestial Kinematics of Ibn al-Haitham. *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 17, 7–55. (in Arabic)

Rashed, R. (2016). Ibn al-Haytham's Scientific Research Programme. [In:] *Optics in Our Time*. Edited by M. Al-Amri, M. El-Gomati, & M. Zubairy, Springer, Cham. http://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-31903-2_2. (in Arabic)

Rosińska, G. (1986). *Fifteenth-century optics. Between medieval and modern science* (in Polish). "Studia Copernicana" vol. 24, 40–42. URL: https://kpbc.umk.pl/dlibra/doccontent?id=41250.

Sambursky, S. (1974). *Physical Thought from the Presocratics to the Quantum Physicists*. Hutchinson.

Sarton, G. (1927). *Introduction to the History of Science*, vol. 1. Williams and Wilkins Co.

Selin, H. (ed.) (2008). *Encyclopaedia of the History of Science, Technology, and Medicine in Non-Western Cultures*, vol.1. Springer.

Schramm, M. (1963). *Ibn Al-Haythams Weg zur Physik*. "Boethius, Texte und Abhandlungen zur Geschichte der exakten" vol.1. Steiner Franz Verlag.

Shahrezoori, M. (2002). *Sharh Hikmat al-Ishraq*. Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies. (in Arabic)

Shahrezoori, M. (2006). *Rasa'il al-Shajareh al-Elahiye*, vol.2. Edited by N. Habibi, Institute for Research in Philosophy. (in Arabic)

Suhrawardi, S. (2002a). *Hikmat al-Ishraq*. [In:] *Sharh Hikmat al-Ishraq*. Edited by M. Shahrezoori, Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies. (in arabic)

Suhrawardi, S. (2002b). *Majmu'e Musannafat Shaykh Ishraq*, Vol. 1, Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies. (in persian)

Suhrawardi, S. (2002c). *Majmu'e Musannafat Shaykh Ishraq*, Vol. 2, Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies. (in persian)

Suhrawardi, S. (2002d). *Majmu'e Musannafat Shaykh Ishraq*, Vol. 3, Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies. (in persian)

Suhrawardi, S. (2002e). *Majmu'e Musannafat Shaykh Ishraq*, Vol. 4, Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies. (in persian)

Suhrawardi, S. (n.d.). *al-Mashare va al-Motarehat (al-Tabiiat)*. "Library of Islamic Parliament of Iran", manuscript no. 144. (in Arabic)

Tbakhi, S. (2007). Ibn Al-Haytham: father of modern optics. *Annals of Saudi Medicine* 27(6), 464–467. http://doi.org/10.5144/0256-4947.2007.464

Journal of Philosophical Investigations
Print ISSN: 2251-7960 Online ISSN: 2423-4419
Homepage: https://philosophy.tabrizu.ac.ir

Exploring the *Grundnorm* Dilemma: Can Pancasila be Considered the *Grundnorm* in the Context of 'the Pure Theory of Law'?

F. X. Adji Samekto[1] | **Aga Natalis**✉[2]

Professor of Law Department, Universitas Diponegoro, Indonesia. Email: fxadjisamekto@lecturer.undip.ac.id
Corresponding Author, Ph.D. of Law, Universitas Diponegoro, Indonesia. E-mail: aganataliss@lecturer.undip.ac.id

Article Info

Article type:
Research Article

Article history:
Received 15 August 2024
Received in revised form 22 August 2024
Accepted 30 August 2024
Published online 07 September 2024

Keywords:
Pancasila, Grundnorm, 1945 Constitution, Hans Kelsen, legal obligation, Indonesia, unifying foundation.

ABSTRACT

As formulated in the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution, Pancasila represents the core values agreed upon during the meetings of the Body of Investigators for Preparatory Efforts for Indonesian Independence and the Preparatory Committee for Indonesian Independence. These values were subsequently adopted as the Foundation of the Indonesian State. However, the question persist regarding whether Pancasila can be considered as the *grundnorm* within Hans Kelsen's framework in *his pure theory of law*. This study finds that the *grundnorm*, as the highest source of legal obligation, is accepted as a necessity by individuals as a necessity through their free will and is inherently perceived as true. It exists in the practical reason of each individual, is a *priori*, and is never formalized through state processes. Pancasila, although fundamental, cannot be equated with the *grundnorm* as its authority as the source of all state laws derives not from its content but from its formal declaration by legislative and executive bodies. Despite this, Pancasila serves as a unifying foundation that reconciles differences in ethnicity, race, and religion, ensuring Indonesia's sustainable existence, transcending merely being a source of legal obligation.

Cite this article: Samekto, F. X. A. & Natalis, A. (2024). Exploring the *Grundnorm* Dilemma: Can Pancasila be Considered the *Grundnorm* in the Context of 'the Pure Theory of Law'? *Journal of Philosophical Investigations*, 18(48), 319-338. https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.62978.3843

© The Author(s).
https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.62978.3843
Publisher: University of Tabriz.

Introduction

The formulation of Pancasila as the Foundation of the State, which can be found in the Fourth Paragraph of the Preamble to the Constitution of 1945 (Hangabei *et al.*, 2021), is the result of deliberations and discussions led by the founding fathers of the nation in a dialectical manner during the meetings of the Investigation Body for Independence Efforts. The formulation of Pancasila, as it was formulated in the Preamble to the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia in 1945, has been reaffirmed in the Instruction of the President of the Republic of Indonesia Number 12 of 1968 concerning the order and formulation in writing/reading and pronouncing the Pancasila precepts (Samekto, 2021). This instruction was issued regarding the Pancasila precepts. Affirmation of the State Foundation of Pancasila is included in the Decree of the People's Consultative Assembly Number and Determination of the Affirmation of the State Foundation of Pancasila. This affirmation is similar to the one written in the Preamble to the Constitution of 1945. Even though the decree issued by the People's Consultative Assembly is one that does not require any further action, whether because it is *einmalig* (final) (Hastuti, 2019), has been revoked, or has been completed, this clarification is necessary to reaffirm the position of Pancasila as stated in the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (Samekto & Purwanti, 2023).

Now, in Article 2 of Law Number 12 of 2011 concerning the Formation of Legislative Regulations, as amended by Law Number 15 of 2019 concerning Amendments to Law Number 12 of 2011 concerning the Formation of Legislative Regulations, it has been decided that "Pancasila is the source of all sources of state law" (Siagian, 2021). This choice was made because of the reasons stated above. Article 3 of Law Number 12 of 2011 concerning the Formation of Legislative Regulations, as amended by Law Number 15 of 2019 concerning Amendments to Law Number 12 of 2011 concerning the Formation of Legislative Regulations, also determines that "The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia is the basic law in the Legislative Regulations" (Septian & Abdurahman, 2021). This becomes a determination made by Law Number 15 of 2019 concerning Amendments to Law Number 12 of 2011 concerning the Formation of Legislative Regulations (Widodo & Riwanto, 2023).

This explanation was written to test the position of Pancasila in the context of Hans Kelsen's (2009) teachings about *grundnorm*. Considering that Pancasila was formulated in the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia and that its values were used as the ideal basis for the articles of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, this explanation was written. One of the most critical questions is whether Pancasila may be considered a *grundnorm* or not. On this subject, several legal philosophers in Indonesia hold a variety of perspectives, some of which are both in agreement and disagreement. In order to provide a point of reference, the following are present: In 2012, Dani Pinasang (2012) asserted that Pancasila might be classified as a fundamental norm, also known as a *grundnorm*. In both theory and practice, Pinasang thinks that Pancasila, as a *grundnorm*, serves as the foundation for creating legal systems. The Pancasila doctrine is a vital component of the Indonesian legal system, according to this opinion, which supports the notion.

On the other hand, in 2020, E. Fernando M. Manullang (2020) questioned whether Pancasila was suitable to be used as a *grundnorm* or not based on the philosophy of foundationalism. Manullang also claimed that Kelsen's perspective on *grundnorm* was merely a source of validity. In contrast, Pancasila was an idea with philosophical importance and could not be reduced to questions of validity alone. Compared to *grundnorm*

in Kelsen's theory, this demonstrates a significant difference in how Pancasila is understood regarding its function and substance.

Dyah Ochtorina Susanti and A'an Efendi (2021) researched Pancasila in 2021, using Hans Kelsen's notion of degrees of legal norms as their theoretical framework. The researchers concluded that Pancasila is a fundamental norm with five primary characteristics. These characteristics are as follows: it serves as the source of the validity of all state laws; its validity is based on presuppositions; it is a non-legal norm; it represents the juncture at which the series of validity of legal norms comes to an end; and it is the central component of determining the validity of state legal norms. This research demonstrates that Pancasila satisfies the *grundnorm* criteria in Kelsen's theoretical framework. As a result, it offers a solid foundation to justify Pancasila's status as a fundamental norm in the Indonesian legal system.

In contrast, Yogi Sumakto (2012) presented a different viewpoint in 2012. As a result of Sumakto's theoretical investigation into the *grundnorm* notion, the latter discovered that Pancasila needed to satisfy the *grundnorm* criteria that Kelsen had established. According to Sumakto, Pancasila does not fall under the category of *grundnorm* because it does not satisfy Kelsen's four essential norm criteria. These criteria include: it is not an "established" norm; it is not natural law; it provides objective validity to the norms of the constitution without being tied to the content of these norms; and it must close the hierarchy of norms.

There are substantial disparities in perspectives regarding the status of Pancasila as a *grundnorm*, and these are reflected in the methodologies used in the study. Although some research lends credence to the idea that Pancasila can be positioned as a fundamental standard in the Indonesian legal system, other research demonstrates that Pancasila still needs to satisfy the requirements established by Kelsen. This has resulted in an ongoing discussion concerning Pancasila's precise position within contemporary legal theory.

The Autonomy of Positive Law: Kelsen's Rejection of Natural Law Theory

The elimination of the concept of natural law made it possible for positive law to be comprehended as an independent entity. Kelsenian legal study conceptualizes this autonomy in a way that preserves the particular normativity of positive legal norms. This was done to prevent any potential retreat into the sociology of law. The term of "to a purely hypothetical basis through basic norms [*grundnorm*]" is the starting point for the theoretical framework of positive legal science, which must begin with an initial methodological restriction to preserve this normativity. A criticism of natural law theory was the impetus for developing Kelsenian legal positivism, which arose in this manner. Further refinement and elaboration of the critique centres on the contrast between the normativity typically associated with positive law and the normativity that is believed to be related to natural law theory. The challenge of natural law theory is brought to light by the question of the realization of the normative order, which refers to the process of transforming natural law into positive legal standards (Langford et al., 2019).

According to Kelsen (2009), this process comprises two components, the difficulty of which is attributed to the presence of human mediators between the base and the norm. Their presence disrupts the assumption that there is a direct and indirect road from the base (absolute material basis) to the general norms of positive law. It also disrupts the idea that there is a separation between the development of positive law and its application.

As per the Kelsenian language, "basic norms" (*grundnorm*) are the most fundamental norms that serve as the foundation for the development of positive legal systems. According to Kelsen's theoretical

framework, it mentioned that "all norms whose validity can be traced back to the same basic norm form a system of norms, a normative order". Thus, if one "conceives of law exclusively as positive law" and refuses to base the validity of norms on "higher meta-legal norms" that are superior to the framework of positive law, it seems logical to presume the existence of these "basic norms". According to Kelsen (2009) and Langford et al. (2019), this is due to the fact that the premise of their existence is of utmost importance from a rational stance.

According to Kelsen's methodology of positive law, the status of the "basic norm", which is also frequently referred to as the "origin", is what determines the correlation between legal science and the existing system of positive law. The establishment of this relationship begins with the assertion of the independence of legal science from politics and the refusal of legal science to be reduced to the formulation of political policy recommendations. Having this level of independence serves as the basis for this partnership. Therefore, it is possible to characterize it as "a general legal theory, not an interpretation of specific national or international norms". Kelsenian legal science places a primary emphasize on "norms that give the character of legal (or illegal) actions to certain material facts, and which are themselves created through such legal actions". The operations of legal cognition are the fundamental focus of Kelsenian legal science. The "basic norm" could be considered as a form of Kant's "regulative hypothesis" or a hypothetical requirement, with the constitutive principle being another possible interpretation. As previously mentioned, the assertion that "the problem of the Pure Theory of Law is the specific autonomy of a domain of meaning", which was discussed earlier (Langford et al., 2019) explains why this situation arises in the present context.

As a consequence of this, the act of posing enquiries concerning the contents of "basic norms" instantly places itself outside the limitations of positive legal research. When it comes to producing norms inside its system, these standards are required to be adhered to. In the context of the authority that is responsible for developing norms, the term of "basic norms" is limited to the authorization system. Fundamental norms are simply responsible to establish the validity of other norms; they do not provide the substantive content of the norms within the legal system. This is their exclusive function. From a methodological perspective, the Pure Theory of Law completely rejects the noyion of "evaluating positive law". The theory's focys is confined to understanding the structure of positive law, which holds that "basic norms" underlie "legal norms within a legal order created by" those basic norms. Consequently, any content can potentially become law. Based on this perspective, the Pure Theory prohibits "legal science from either claiming positive law as a higher system or justifying positive law based on a higher system" (Langford et al., 2019).

The idea of "basic norms" cannot be divorced from the fundamental notion that law ought to be seen as an independent normative system when it is considered within the framework of the Pure Theory of Law. This indicates that the law should not be regarded as a tool that is beholden to external ideals, such as politics or morality, but rather as a system that possesses its inherent logic and validity. When it comes to the study of law, Kelsen emphasized the significance of distinguishing between "is" (*das sollen*) and "ought" (*das sein*). This would enable legal science to examine law in an objective manner, free from the influence of subjective values.

For this reason, the basic norm does not supply the substance content of legal norms; instead, it just provides a framework for the legitimacy of legal norms. In this context, the basic norm serves as an epistemic presupposition necessary for understanding and applying the law as a cohesive system. A logical starting

point that gives favourable law structure and consistency is the basic norm, which acts as a starting point for positive law.

Positive law can cover a wide variety of content, depending on the social and political context in which the law originates. According to this theory, positive law can encompass a wide range of content. Favourable legislation, on the other hand, must be considered as a component of a normative system, the validity of which is derived from the fundamental norm, regardless of the substance of the favourable law. As a result, the objective of legal science is not to determine whether the law is right or unjust; instead, it is to comprehend how the law operates within the context of a more comprehensive normative framework.

The theory of law developed by Kelsen has had a profound impact on contemporary legal philosophy, particularly with regard to the emphasis placed on the independence of law as a field of study. Kelsen did not subscribe to the viewpoint that the law ought to be an instrument for accomplishing particular political or social goals. Instead, he emphasized the importance of considering law as a normative system that possesses its internal logic, which legal experts are obligated to obey.

On the other hand, this idea has also been subjected to criticism, notably from individuals who contend that the social, political, and moral circumstances in which law operates cannot be divorced entirely from the law itself. Critics argue that Kelsen overlooks the influence of external values and individual interests on the law by focusing too heavily on its self-referential nature. In the context of international law, for instance, it is difficult to ignoere that the legal norms are frequently formed by the global power dynamics of the global community as well as the political objectives of particular governments.

In addition, criticism of the Pure Theory can also be found in the context of changes in social regulations and legal policies. The law frequently needs to be modified in order to accommodate new developments in society, which may include changes in moral and social ideals. This is because the world is in a state of perpetual evolution. In this regard, Kelsen's approach to law, which is characteriaed by a high degree of formality and rigidity, may be less receptive to the requirement for legal change that is in accordance with the changing times.

In spite of this, Kelsen’s intellectual impact continues to be considered significant in contemporary legal theory. Although the basic norm is an abstract term, it provides legal scholars with a theoretical framework that helps them comprehend how the law functions as a coherent system. Additionally, Kelsen's focus on the significance of the autonomy of legal research has assisted in the separation of legal analysis from extraneous influences that have the potential to obfuscate the objectivity of legal studies.

The backdrop of philosophical thought that a philosopher teaches is inextricably correlated to the dimensions of place and time, namely the geographic location and historical period in which a philosopher or at least that thinker lived. This way of thinking has come about by considering the reality of space and time. Until today, the teachings of Hans Kelsen (1881-1973), who supported the Legal-Positivism School of Legal Thought, have yet to be interrupted in any way (Stewart, 2023). Hans Kelsen’s manner of thinking about law is a consequence of the emergence of the rationalist school of thought in the 17th century (Paulson, 2019) and this expansion occurred during the period. The following is an explanation of how the distinction between rationalism and empiricism can be grasped. According to Paul Kleinman’s (2013) viewpoint, the rationalist interpretation of the world, reason, not the senses, is the source of knowledge. Rationalists argue that if humans did not possess a set of rules and categories, they would not be able to organize or comprehend the information presented by their senses. In light of this, rationalism asserts that for people to be able to

utilize deductive reasoning, they must first possess innate notions. The philosophy of empiricism asserts that all knowledge is derived from one's various sensory experiences. It is suggested that humans only have a posteriori knowledge, which means "based on experience." This is in contrast to the idea that humans are born with an innate understanding that they possess.

Hans Kelsen's legal philosophy was shaped by his defense of the legal and political ideals emerging from the French Revolution of 1789, his alignment with the Neo-Kantian school of thought, and his deepening commitment to the influence of Positivism Philosophy in law. These three factors came together to form the basis of his legal philosophy (Hofmann, 2016).

A significant historical turning point in the formation of constitutional, legal, and political teachings is the French Revolution of 1789, which can be considered as an important historical milestone today. As a result of the French Revolution of 1789, countries all over the world were exposed to the concepts of popular sovereignty, government by the people (democracy), a state organized based on law (nomocracy), human equality (equality), human rights, free market, and the modern legal system. Some concepts from the French Revolution in 1789 were implications of the prevalent empirical thinking methods during the Enlightenment. These approaches significantly impacted the dialectic of thought prevalent in Western Europe since the seventeenth century. The way of thinking that prevailed throughout the Age of Enlightenment was essential in dismantling the prevalent ideas during the Mediaeval Period, which were regarded as being rife with speculative and mysterious ideas.

It is concluded that Hans Kelsen's theories include his support for the concepts of popular sovereignty, government by the people (democracy), a state organized based on law (nomocracy), human equality (equality), human rights, and free market, even though these concepts are not expressly expressed in his works. Considering that Hans Kelsen (2013) was a proponent of contemporary thought due to the French Revolution of 1789, a legal rule should be formulated on an agreement founded on the same principles of human equality. In addition, democratic procedures must be followed to obtain this agreement, as the fundamental principle of the agreement is the acknowledgement of the equal position of all persons. Furthermore, after the formulation of legal principles and rules through a democratic process, the following step is for the rules to be certified for their validity by the highest legitimate authority. This is one of the processes that follows the democratic process.

Reassessing Legal Philosophy: the Renewed Interest in Kelsen's Approach

The interest recent surge in Kelsen can be attributed to the search for an alternative to the dominant empirical and natural law methods in English-language legal philosophy (Dedek, 2021). Contrary to empiricists who believe that law may be simplified to social facts, Kelsen asserts that legal interpretation encompasses non-empirical standards (Kähler, 2017). The standards possess an essential framework that constrains legal interpretation. Unlike natural law theorists, Kelsen contends that moral factors do not limit law. Any activity, regardless of its moral repulsiveness, can be legally required. Kelsen's approachon legal interpretation is procedural rather than substantive. Despite the increasing interest in Kelsen's work, significant debate regarding the effectiveness and exact nature of his proposed "third way" between empiricism and natural law. The difficulty in fully appreciating Kelsen's work largely stems from the complex nature of his Kantian technique (Schuett, 2022).

The Neo-Kantian school of thinking originates from the writings of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) (Hirsch, 2023). He resided in the period of the historical transition from the Enlightenment Era, spanned from the seventeenth century to the Modern Era, which emerged after the Post-French Revolution Era of 1789 (Delaney, 2020). The spatial and temporal aspects of that transition had an impact on his cognition, which was founded on the recognition of humans as entities who possess the ability not only to perceive and interpret the world (passive thinking) but also the capacity to modify the environment through sensory perception and rationality actively. The interplay of space and time throughout the shift from the Enlightenment to the Modern Era gave rise to Immanuel Kant's belief that persons possess free choice and an equitable standing in freedom, necessitating equal treatment. Everyone is entitled to equal treatment and is also responsible for treating others equally. Immanuel Kant (1998) is keenly aware that everyone possesses autonomy and freedom to act, which aimed to elucidate that human understanding of the cosmos is invariably a product of combining *a posteriori* and *a priori* parts, and this capacity can go beyond the confines of sensory perception.

Immanuel Kant's thinking is derived from the naturalistic philosophies of Plato (427-347 BC) and Aristotle (384-322 BC), but it also incorporates elements from Rationalism and Empiricism (Pomerleau, 1997). In the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, the cosmos is believed to composed of two fundamental realms: the realm of ideal life, which encompasses spiritual existence and abstract concepts that concepts representing absolute truths, and the realm of empirical reality, which pertains to the mundane and ordinary occurrences of everyday life (Vlastos, 2006). The domain of perfection is indisputable truths exist as the dwelling place of the supreme ideal that rules the entire cosmos. Plato and Aristotle believed that existence in the realm of facts should be governed and restricted by laws (teachings) that originate from the ideal realm (*ideos*). According to their perspective, individuals in objective reality should not deviate from these fundamental principles (Law, 2013). This is in line with Plato and Aristotle, human thought represents or reflects reality. Immanuel Kant developed a philosophy that integrates the naturalist-idealist tradition of Plato and Aristotle with the empirical tradition of Francis Bacon and David Hume. The teachings he espouses are commonly referred to as Transcendental Idealism (Samekto & Purwanti, 2017).

Immanuel Kant posited in his theory of Transcendental Idealism as the combination of reason and experience is crucial for human beings to comprehend and manipulate the universe (Saunders, 2016). Transcendental Idealism, is a synthesis of Empiricism and Rationalism. Empiricism, a philosophical doctrine, posits that knowledge is derived from direct experience or observation of an object. Empiricism highlights the significance of a *posteriori* features, which are acquired through sensory experience. Rationalism is a philosophical doctrine that posits human reason as the subjective source of knowledge. This prioritizes the significance of a *priori* components in perception, making it inherently subjective (Hanna, 2015).

According to Immanuel Kant, humans' understanding of the cosmos may be divided into three primary stages: sensory perception, intellectual comprehension (*verstand*), and rational understanding (*vernunft*) (Willaschek, 2018). These stages describe the cognitive process by which humans assimilate information and acquire an understanding of the world, progressing from firsthand encounters to intricate abstract thinking.

The initial phase is the sensory stage, characterized by a *posteriori* knowledge acquisition, which occurs after experiencing. At this stage, humans depend on their senses to perceive the external reality. At this

stage, all knowledge is derived from empirical experience. Humans passively receive inputs from the external world, using their senses of sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste to acquire information and build an initial understanding of their surroundings. While the sensory stage is crucial for building our knowledge of the world, it has its limitations as it only encompasses what people can directly perceive. Therefore, it is the initial step in a more intricate recognition process.

Following the acquisition of information by sensory perception, the intellect stage is considered a priori. At this point, the human mind starts to take on an active role. Humans initiate the process of establishing associations between sensory information and interpreting the significance of these encounters. This approach entails utilizing fundamental principles to structure and analyse data. Humans not only describe the world as it exists but also contribute to the development of understanding. Intellect enables individuals to comprehend and classify their experiences. For instance, following the sensory stage of perceiving that fire is hot, people employ their intellect to comprehend that heat is an inherent characteristic of fire and can pose a threat. The intellect stage involves the process of organizing sensory experiences in order to create more coherent and meaningful understandings. This stage serves as the basis for developing scientific knowledge and rational thinking.

The ultimate phase in Kant's theory of cognition is the reason stage, also known as a *priori* (Schafer, 2023). During this phase, individuals acquire the capacity to draw inferences based on the knowledge acquired in the preceding phase. The reason enables individuals to engage in abstract reasoning and critical thinking regarding cause-and-effect connections. Humans progress from basic world comprehension to engaging in arguments and analysis. The human mind engages in actively researching and experimenting with ideas and hypotheses. Humans inquire about the reasons and methods behind observed occurrences to uncover more profound answers. The stage is a fundamental component of the scientific method and philosophy, reflecting the human desire to go beyond superficial comprehension and pursue more profound and extensive knowledge. After comprehending that fire can cause burns (cognitive stage), people employ rational thinking to explore the characteristics of combustion and want to manage it.

Kant describes three recognition levels to elucidate humans' progression from passive experience to active thinking. The sensory perception, cognition, and logical reasoning phases serve as the foundation for the intellectual growth of humans, progressing from a basic awareness of the world to a more profound and organized comprehension. Kant highlights the significance of every phase in the progression of knowledge. The sensory stage is responsible for collecting fundamental facts, including the intellect stage is responsible for organising and assigning significance to this material; and the reason stage facilitates the process of investigation and the emergence of new findings. The amalgamation of these three phases establishes the base for scientific enquiry and the advancement of human knowledge in comprehending the cosmos. This study prompts us to contemplate our comprehension of the world and how the expansion of knowledge may be achieved via critical thinking and reasoning. It offers a comprehensive framework for us to investigate the boundaries and capabilities of human intelligence.

During the reasoning stage, Immanuel Kant distinguishes reason into two distinct categories: theoretical reason and practical reason. Humans utilize theoretical reasoning to derive conclusions, utilizing the understanding acquired from the Intellect Stage and developing arguments, forming what is commonly called Science. At the highest level of human reasoning, known as practical reason, individuals actively uncover what Immanuel Kant referred to as the categorical imperative through their ability to make choices.

This refers to ideas regarded as absolute truths and contain commands or directives, such as the belief in God as the supreme ruler of the universe, the inherent freedom of human beings, and the eternal nature of the soul. Therefore, the categorical imperative is not derived from empirical or external a *posteriori* experience but rather from accepting an a *priori* imperative through free will.

Immanuel Kant's teachings on the progression of human understanding of the cosmos, leading to practical reason, served as the foundation for developing Hans Kelsen's legal concept of the *grundnorm*. According to Hans Kelsen's (2009) doctrine, the *grundnorm* is an authoritative source that is assumed to exist, established via voluntary choice, but not generated through official governmental operations. When analyzed through the lens of Immanuel Kant's philosophy, the grundnorm serves as the foundation for practical reason and is considered the ultimate authority for the legitimacy of legal norms. Therefore, the substance included within the *grundnorm* results from practical reasoning that carries a sense of obligation and is willingly embraced by individuals according to their own volition. The *grundnorm*, therefore, is not a source of urgency derived from people's sensory experiences. Hans Kelsen asserts that the *grundnorm* is the ultimate legal imperative, devoid of political influences and psychological factors (Bindreiter, 2002).

In order to comprehend the progression of human comprehension of the cosmos, specifically the transition from theoretical to practical reason, this refers to Immanuel Kant's philosophical ideas. Kant specifiedhuman understanding of the universe into two primary phases: the theoretical stage of reason and the practical stage of reason.

During the theoretical reasoning stage, individuals seek to comprehend natural facts and derive conclusions by analyzing causal relationships. This technique employs human rationality (*Verstand*) to understand and elucidate natural occurrences logically and systematically. At this stage, humans employ rationality to derive inferences from their knowledge of natural occurrences. For instance, witnessing an apple's descent towards the earth reveals the law of gravity. Furthermore, throughout this phase, individuals acquire scientific information subject to experimentation and empirical validation. Science is the outcome of human endeavours to comprehend the cosmos using methodical experiments and observations. Humans exercise their agency to deliberately formulate arguments and hypotheses that can be substantiated by empirical evidence and logical reasoning. This enables scientific knowledge's ongoing growth and evolution as discoveries emerge.

In the practical reason stage, people develop categorical imperatives, concepts that must be accepted as facts without scientific proof, unlike theoretical reason. The categorical imperatives encompass moral and ethical convictions as the foundation for human behaviour. Humans establish categorical imperatives by exercising their free will, such as the belief that God is the supreme ruler of the universe and possesses all knowledge, that humans are inherently free, and the soul is everlasting. These postulates are not empirically validated but are universally acknowledged as axioms that serve as the foundation for ethical conduct in human society. These ideas are derived from human autonomy and frequently function as principles for ethical and moral conduct. For instance, the conviction that individuals possess inherent worth and entitlements that demand universal reverence. Free will is essential in influencing moral and ethical convictions as, according to Kant, a morally just action is carried out according to a freely chosen categorical imperative.

Comprehending the phases of human perception of the cosmos through theoretical and practical reasoning holds substantial consequences in multiple facets of human existence. Within the realm of science,

theoretical reasoning propels the progress of science and technology, resulting in significant advancements in our comprehension of the cosmos and our capacity to harness natural resources. Conversely, practical reason is the foundation for the moral and ethical principles that direct human behaviour in everyday situations. Humans frequently transition between these two stages in their daily lives. When confronted with challenges that necessitate analysis and answers based on facts,theoretical reasoning was used to formulate strategies and arrive at sensible judgements. Nevertheless, when faced with moral or ethical quandaries, frequently depend on pragmatic reasoning to direct our behaviour by the principles and ideals embraced.

Utilizing reason and autonomy, humans can cultivate logical and empirical scientific understanding and construct moral and ethical convictions that serve as the foundation for their behaviour. The distinction between theoretical and practical reason highlights the distinct capacity of humans to seek truth via different means, be it through empirical evidence or by accepting beliefs driven by personal volition. Immanuel Kant's ideas on the progression of human comprehension of the cosmos via theoretical and practical reason offer a profound understanding of how humans see and engage with the world (Minkkinen, 2023).

Hans Kelsen identifies the highest authority for legal obligation as a component of the categorical imperative, drawing from Immanuel Kant's views on the progression of human understanding of the universe, ultimately leading to practical reason. Hans Kelsen's lectures on the Pure Theory of Law, developed in the early 1920s, continue to be widely recognized in legal education. It is evident from the previous explanation that Immanuel Kant's teachings, specifically his Transcendental Idealist Philosophy, significantly impacted the teachings of the Pure Theory of Law (Jestaedt et al., 2020).

The term of "Kantian edifice" refers to the conceptual framework that Kelsen adopted from Kant's Critique of Pure Reason. Kant greatly influenced Kelsen's philosophy during the extensive classical period from approximately 1920 to 1960. Given Kant's significant influence on Kelsen's legal philosophy, it is not unexpected that Adolf Julius Merkl, Kelsen's highly skilled colleague at the Vienna School of Legal Theory who possessed an extensive understanding of Kelsen's work, highlighted Kant's profound impact on Kelsen.

Kelsen initially dismissed fact-based legal positivism and natural law theory, which were conventional alternatives to Kant's approach. Kelsen's ideal of purity in legal science rejects both naturalism and psychologism, as well as any value theory, such as moral, political, and theological philosophy (Paulson, 2017).

By renouncing the Kant-inspired fundamental principle, Kelsen relinquished a significant portion of the Kantian framework in his legal philosophy. Consequently, other important principles that were originally part of Kant's framework also vanished, as they were shown to be inconsistent with the outcomes of Kelsen's significant change in using logic in the context of law. Kelsen's most significant Kantian principle, besides the basic standard inspired by Kant, is the "Kantian filter" (Paulson, 2017).

According to Kantian epistemology, legal science is a constitutive form of knowledge, meaning it "creates" its object by understanding it as a meaningful whole (Kletzer, 2011). Knowledge in science organizes sensory perception into a coherent system, while knowledge in legal science organizes legal norms issued by legal officials into a consistent legal system.

The Kantian filter emphasizes the importance of unity in terms of consistency in the world of norms, while Kelsen refers to the concept of non-contradiction. When he starts questioning the importance of logic

in law and stops following the principle of non-contradiction, he moves towards the Kantian filter, which is now influenced by Kelsen's sceptical viewpoint (Gragl, 2018).

To summarize, Kelsen's thought in this part can be divided into two routes, which collectively mark the beginning of what is commonly referred to as the late period. Kelsen's refusal to accept the role of logic in law and his decision to leave the Kantian framework, particularly his rejection of the Kant-inspired fundamental norm and removing the Kantian filter, were the key changes in his legal philosophy over forty years. These developments only happened randomly in succession. Instead, these interactions are inherently interconnected, with non-contradiction as the foundation for each of them (Viola, 2017).

Kelsen's transformation yields a form of legal empiricism. It is noteworthy that Kelsen's later legal philosophy, which is based on "conceptual empiricism," directly stems from experience, in stark contrast to his previous legal philosophy, which was influenced by Kantian principles. In the later period, Kelsen derives the notion of conflict between legal norms from observing "two opposing forces acting at the same point" (Heidemann, 2004). In the earlier Kantian-influenced classical period, Kelsen's understanding of the conflict between legal norms focused on the principle of non-contradiction, where one of the conflicting norms was deemed invalid. The explanation of this claim and the principle of non-contradiction itself cannot be elucidated by relying on the conceptual framework of empiricism (Paulson, 2008).

The Stufenbau Theory and the Evolution of Legal Positivism

Although it is a broad doctrine within the Legal Positivism school, which emphasizes the formal components of the law, the Stufenbau Theory is essentially a general doctrine (Bergmann & Zerby, 1945). The fundamental idea is that the law is a collection of regulations formulated by the highest authority, including commands and sanctions. Legal positivism is a school of thought primarily founded by John Austin (1790–1859), as a positivist empiricist. It is predicated on the idea that the empirical positivist paradigm is the foundation for legal systems(Rumble, 1981).

The following characteristics distinguish legal positivism: it rejects natural law because its origin is ambiguous and speculative; the law must contain orders from a sovereign ruler and explicit sanctions; a definite, sovereign authority forms law (Hall, 2001). A derived opinion developed by John Austin (1995), which states that law is the command of a sovereign power asan authority not subject to any other authority. As a result, laws are obligatory rather than voluntary, and the members of society need to negotiate their terms accordingly.

According to John Austin's teachings, law debates are not tied to whether something is good or not, just or unjust; rather, they are related to instructions from a sovereign and actual force. Therefore, in his conception of law, John Austin substituted the concept of justice, an ideal present in natural law, with the concept of certainty that results from command. In order words, the philosophy of Legal Positivism that Austin teaches places a greater emphasize on establishing legal certainty to attain predictability. This indicates that if a person is found to violate a law established by a sovereign power, they will undoubtedly be punished if they are found guilty following empirical evidence verification (Freeman & Mindus, 2012).

A new spirit centred on honouring the human position, in living life, relies not only on sensory experience but also on reason and rationality, took on the challenge of challenging the way of thinking that was prevalent in the Legal Positivism school of thought over time. According to what was discussed before, this is represented in the teachings that Hans Kelsen contained inside the Pure Theory of Law.

The teaching of Stufenbau Theory, first presented by Hans Kelsen in 1923, is further refined by the *grundnorm* theory, which emphasizes that the highest source of law is an imperative-categorical necessity that does not need to be established by theoretical reason (Kammerhofer & D'Aspremont, 2014). The imperative-categorical substance is the underlying cause (*causa prima*) that gives rise to concrete directives. There is a normative relationship between the concept of causa prima and the consequences of this concept. The development of legal principles resulted from this normative interaction. On the other hand, this normative relationship is not founded on psychological will because of experience-based reality (the domain of theoretical reason). However, it is founded on a will that is truly neutral inside humans (the realm of practical reason).

The term of "objective will" was used by Hans Kelsen to describe the situation in which most individuals follow (Von Bernstorff, 2010). The following is a description of the causal relationship that exists between the *grundnorm* and the concretization of legal concepts, which is intended to simplify understanding: In the first place, the imperative-categorical assertion that humans are creatures with free will emphasizes that this freedom must be safeguarded. This means everyone can express their views without coercion, and agreements do not bind third parties (*pacta tertiis nec nocent nec prosunt*). Second, the requirement that people must behave according to what they say emphasizes that people must not give false testimony, which means that everyone must give truthful testimony. Finally, "law" pertaints to the conditions necessary for harmonizing individuals' free will with others' will within the framework of common norms. This suggests that the law must be respected as a behavioural control to avoid causing harm to other people, with the principle of *pacta sunt servanda* highlighting that agreements bind the persons concerned. As a result, the connection between the fundamental principle and its application in legal principles demonstrates that the law serves not only as a written rule, but also as a guide to guarantee that the free will of every individual is respected and does not cause harm to one another.

The Presentation of Pancasila and its Philosophical Foundations

At the *Dokuritsu Zyunbi Tyoosakai* Session, also known as the Investigation Body for Independence Efforts, which took place on June 1, 1945, Soekarno for the first time presented Pancasila to the public. It is beyond reasonable question that Soekarno was the first person to present Pancasila, including its fundamental ideas and content (Prawiranegara, 1984). On the other hand, Soekarno asserted that he was merely an explorer of Pancasila. He declared this since, in actuality, the ideals included in Pancasila were already represented in the reality of the existence of the Indonesian people. By adhering to Soekarno's statements, the existence of Pancasila comes after the fact (Soekarno, 1947).

In a momentous speech that was delivered on June 1, 1945, Soekarno laid the groundwork for the establishment of the Pancasila, which is the cornerstone of the Indonesian state. The broad vision that Soekarno had for bringing together Independent Indonesia is expressed through the five key concepts that are mentioned in the speech. First, the principle of nationality emphasizes national unity, which can be understood as the desire to unite. The essence of nationality is the union of humans and the territory in which they reside. Secondly, to be considered internationalism or humanity, it is necessary to have deep roots in nationalism and to have interdependence between national identity and global collaboration. Not only does the suggested democracy involve voting by the majority, but it also involves deliberation in order to arrive

at a consensus on what is best. Achieving political and economic fairness to attain shared prosperity is the fourth goal of the desired social welfare.

Last but not least, the principle of divinity emphasizes the need to worship God Almighty without being forced to do so. This ensures that every citizen is allowed to practice their religion while maintaining mutual respect for one another. As a whole, these five principles reflect Soekarno's objective of establishing a just and affluent society in Indonesia.

The following may be conducted about Soekarno's speech if it is deductively from Hans Kelsen's lessons regarding *grundnorm*: Soekarno utilized terms interchanged multiple times throughout the speech. First, he used the terms of "principles" and "foundations of the state" to describe the content of what he introduced as the Pancasila. Second, in that address, Soekarno never referred to the five "principles" as the General Principles, or at the very least, he did not mean for Pancasila to be the General Principles in Hans Kelsen's teachings. Third, based on the description that Soekarno provided, it is not entirely clear whether these principles are a general portrait of the thoughts of the Indonesian people, which are imperative-categorical, or whether they are Soekarno's original proposals, which he came up with after reflecting on the reality of the pattern of Indonesian society in the time before the country gained its independence.

In his address, Soekarno declared that the five principles he referred to as Pancasila were "*weltanschauung*", meaning they must be understood and implemented in everyday life (Soekarnoputri, 2021). "*Weltanschauung*", translated as "worldview" in English, can be understood as a paradigm that directs an ontological perspective (Naugle, 2002). More specifically, it refers to how the Indonesian people conceptualize their existence about other people. According to the speech that Soekarno delivered on June 1, 1945, based on the ontological perspective of the Indonesian people, it is true that humans are created in togetherness with each other. Based on this conviction, religiosity, fairness, cooperation, deliberation, and acknowledging diversity as a natural phenomenon become the most important for the Indonesian country.

The Institutionalization of Pancasila: The Role of the Investigative and Preparatory Committees

Following Soekarno's presentation on Pancasila on June 1, 1945, the Investigative Body for Preparatory Efforts for Independence established a Committee of Eight. This committee comprised six individuals from national figures, including Soekarno, Mohammad Hatta, M. Yamin, A. A. Maramis, M. Soetardjo Kartohadikoesoemo, and Otto Iskandardinata. Additionally, two individuals from the Islamic group were Ki Bagoes Hadikoesoemo and K.H. Wachid Hasjim. The "Committee of Eight" was led by Soekarno as its person in charge.

Sukarno took the initiative to call for the formation of the "Committee of Nine" when the Pacific War began to spread. In his capacity as chairman of the Committee of Nine, Soekarno altered the composition of the Committee's membership to include four individuals from the national group, namely Mohammad Hatta, Muhammad Yamin, A.A. Maramis, and Achmad Soebardjo, as well as four individuals from the Islamic group, namely K.H Wachid Hasjim, K.H. Kahar Moezakir, H. Agoes Salim, and R. Abikoesno Tjokrosoejoso. Soekarno served as the chairman of the Committee of Nine he convened. This aims to make an effort to bring the perspectives of the two factions regarding the state's foundations into harmony with one another. The draft of the Preamble was referred to as the "Preamble" by Soekarno, the "Jakarta Charter"

by Yamin, and the "Gentlemen's Agreement" by Soekiman Wirsosandjojo. All three of these names pertain to the same document (Latif, 2018).

On June 22, 1945, the Committee of Nine was responsible for studying recommendations for formulating the basis of the state. This investigation culminated in accepting the draft Preamble to the Constitution, which Soekarno called the Preamble. As the Charter, the Preamble text was signed by nine (nine) members of the Committee of Nine. This text is also known as the Charter in Jakarta. The Investigating Committee for Preparatory Efforts for Independence approved the Preamble on July 11, 1945. This marks the beginning of the independence process. The Jakarta Charter outlines the fundamental characteristics of the state in the following manner: The belief in God, along with the need to apply Islamic law for those who adhere to it; a humanity that is just and civilized; the unity of Indonesia; democracy that is guided by wisdom in deliberation and representation; and social justice for all Indonesians (Safa'at, 2010).

The Indonesian Independence Preparatory Committee Session on August 18, 1945, finally altered the agreement that was included in the Jakarta Charter. This was done due to Mohammad Hatta's role in making overtures to Islamic figures who were members of the Committee of Nine. During this meeting, Mohammad Hatta presented the following suggestions for modifications: "Opening" has been substituted for the word "preamble" in this sentence. In the Preamble of the Jakarta Charter, the clause that stated "with the obligation to implement Islamic law for its adherents" was modified to read "based on belief in the Almighty God" (Hosen, 2005).

The phrase of "Belief in God, with the obligation to carry out Islamic law for its adherents" was officially changed to "Belief in the One and Only God" on August 18, 1945, by the Preparatory Committee for Indonesian Independence. This alteration signified an official change in the language of the first principle. As a result, the current Pancasila is the product of the collaborative efforts of the Committee of Nine, which was subsequently ratified by the Preparatory Committee for Indonesian Independence after modifications were made to the wording of the first principle, as noted earlier. Therefore, the formulation of Pancasila, which the nation's founders agreed upon, was the formulation of the Preparatory Committee for Indonesian Independence after the Proclamation of Independence. This formulation was outlined in the Fourth Paragraph of the Constitution's Preamble, ratified in 1945. It is as follows that the formulation is: Belief in a single, all-powerful God; a humanity that is just and civilized; the unity of Indonesia; democracy that is guided by wisdom in discussion and representation; and social justice for all Indonesians (Emmerson, 2015).

The preceding account demonstrates that the core of Pancasila, which Soekarno initially presented on June 1, 1945, was processed and renegotiated through the state's procedures. From the creation of the Jakarta Charter on June 22, 1945, until the ratification of the 1945 Constitution on August 18, 1945 (which included the ultimate articulation of Pancasila in the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution), the process of formalizing Pancasila by the state has been confirmed every step of the way. Pancasila, as formulated in the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, is essentially the values that were agreed upon in a formal procedure through the Sessions of the Investigating Committee for Preparatory Efforts for Independence and the Preparatory Committee for Indonesian Independence, which are the foundation of the Indonesian State. This is based on the description provided above.

Testing Pancasila as a Grundnorm: a Philosophical and Historical Examination

Based on the description above, Pancasila is a value with the following characteristics: It is a value characterized by its subjective existence within Indonesian people, meaning that it is a value widely accepted by the Indonesian people as a whole. The values in Pancasila contain good things that require the Indonesian people to adhere to them in state, national and social life; it is not a positive law formulated through formal procedures by the state to serve as the State Foundation on August 18, 1945. Based on these characteristics, it is possible to assert that the Pancasila, created by the Preparatory Committee for Indonesian Independence in the Preamble to the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia in 1945, are definitive or closed values. Furthermore, it has been politically agreed that the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia will be the same. As a result, the argument that Pancasila, which refers to the values formulated in the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, is a value that cannot be changed, and therefore it is final or closed, becomes more compelling. As a result, Pancasila cannot be considered a *grundnorm* within the context of Hans Kelsen's teachings. This is because the *grundnorm* was not established through official procedures by the state, and this was done for various reasons, which were stated in the discussion presented earlier.

Pancasila cannot be considered as a *grundnorm* within the context of Hans Kelsen's teachings, as stated in the preceding description; nonetheless, this does not imply that Pancasila's validity has been diminished in any way. Therefore, Pancasila was initially positioned as "*philosofische grondslag*", which means the principles, philosophy, deepest thoughts, soul, and deepest desire for the "building" of Independent Indonesia to be built upon (Prawiranegara, 1984). Soekarno initially introduced Pancasila. The ideals that are stated in Pancasila are a combination of values that are found in Western philosophy (such as democracy, nomocracy, human rights, modern legal system, and republic) as well as the values that are found in Eastern philosophy (such as religion, cooperation, and the sense of togetherness (communalism). Besides that, Pancasila was constructed based on the ontology-based conviction that Indonesian persons are social creatures whose existence cannot be divorced from the existence of other humans. A factor that binds together the contrasts and variety that make up the Indonesian nation is the formalization of Pancasila principles by the state, and this is a must. It is abundantly obvious that the presence of the state is necessary for the presence of Pancasila and its strengthening.

On the other hand, *grundnorm* was initially conceived by Hans Kelsen within the framework of the rational-individualist school of thinking in society—this school of thought positions individuals, along with their rationality, as the focal point of change. Hans Kelsen's thinking about law and politics is heavily influenced by his conviction that the outcomes of the French Revolution 1789 are accurate. These outcomes include individualism, democracy, nomocracy, human rights, the modern legal system, republic, and free market. Therefore, according to Hans Kelsen's teachings, it is impossible to discuss Pancasila within the framework of the *grundnorm*.

According to some other languages, Pancasila can be understood as a collection of concepts that represent and reflect the ontological views of the Indonesian people. These concepts are believed to have originated from experiences that the Indonesian people have had in their lives. The Pancasila values result from the crystallization of historical and cultural experience. These values originate from a variety of sources, including the religiosity of the Indonesian people, local wisdom, customs, the views or philosophy

of thought and ideology that developed at the time that Pancasila was born, culture that grows in the life of the nation, and the conception of the relationship between individuals and society that has become ingrained in Indonesian society. According to the Indonesian thinking style, reality is not interpreted with the preponderance of empirical (factual) reasoning; rather, it is always balanced by involving divine qualities (religiosity). From the point of view of the Indonesian way of thinking, humanism is conceived of as a spirit that places an emphasis on humanity and is founded on the spirit of working together with one another. A humanist belief in Indonesia differs from the conventional way of thinking, which holds that an individual is a component of society as a whole and that God is the creator of society.

In another way, according to the beliefs of the Indonesian people, as reflected in Pancasila, humans are inherently communal beings. The earlier ontological perspective discussed that, in the view of the Indonesian people, humans are created by the Almighty God and exist as social creatures living together. In contrast to the Western viewpoint on human existence, which holds that people are born free and have the freedom to choose their own destiny. In the Indonesian context, while people possess the ability to make their own choices, their existence is fundamentally understood as communal and interconnected with others.

Conclusion

Grundnorm means a doctrine developed by Hans Kelsen. It is incorporated into his theory and called the Pure Theory of Law. Its origins can be attributed to the belief in the valifity of Immanuel Kant's philosophical teachings regarding the rational-practical character inherent in every human being. It can be concluded that the *grundnorm* does not come from a psychological will triggered after an individual has seen reality, compelling them to comply with demands. It is the highest step in human recognition of the cosmos since it is based on free will to accept necessity, which does not need to be presented. This makes the most advanced stage.

Grundnorm is the highest source of legal necessity, accept by every human being, based on his free will, to submit to orders that are no longer argued since they are acknowledged as fact. This is because people have come to accept them as they are. Because of this, it is referred to as an a *priori grundnorm*. Therefore, the substance that is contained within *grundnorm* is neither something that is established by the state through formal constitutional processes nor something that is formed as a result of political processes that occur inside a country. Regarding human recognition of the universe, which is imperative-categorical, *grundnorm* is considered the peak of human achievement.

Pancasila cannot be considered a *grundnorm* as it is derived from the experiences of the people of Indonesia. Therefore, the values that are outlined in Pancasila are a reflection of reality. Pancasila is also considered to be in the realm of rational theory when it is connected to the teachings of Immanuel Kant. This is because a cause-and-effect phenomenon already present in the Indinesian people live. The formulation of Pancasila, which is enshrined in the Preamble to the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, which was ratified in 1945, constitutes the result of formalization processes carried out by the state. Legally and officially, the sequence of events that took place between June 1, June 22 and August 18 1945, was a political process formalized as an Indonesian constitutional process that resulted in the establishment of Pancasila as the State Foundation.

It is not because Pancasila is a *grundnorm* that it is considered the source of all sources of state law; rather, this is because Pancasila has been approved by the state (by legislative and executive powers) through

statutory regulations. This is the reason why Pancasila is considered to be the source of all sources of all sources of state law. The reason that Pancasila is considered the foundation of all sources of state law is not due to the concepts included within it but because the state has validated it in the form of statutory rules.

It is impossible to minimize the significance of Pancasila in the process of ensuring the continued viability of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, even though it cannot be positioned as a *grundnorm*. Because Pancasila is the common denominator, or the point that brings together the disparities in ethnicity, race, and religion in Indonesia, its significance extends beyond only serving as a source of the legitimacy of legal rules. This is because Pancasila is the point that brings this diversity. Pancasila is not a religion but a set of principles that should be followed in social, national, and state affairs. On top of that, Pancasila serves as a source of motivation for Indonesia in its efforts to contribute to the establishment of a global order that is founded on social justice and unending peace.

References

Austin, J. (1995). *Austin: The Province of Jurisprudence Determined*, Edited by W. E. Rumble, Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511521546

Bergmann, G., & Zerby, L. (1945). The Formalism in Kelsen's Pure Theory of Law. *Ethics*, 55(2), 110–130.

Bindreiter, U. (2002). *Why Grundnorm?: A Treatise on the Implications of Kelsen's Doctrine*, Vol. 58. Springer Science & Business Media.

Dedek, H. (2021). Private law rights as democratic participation: Kelsen on private law and (economic) democracy. *University of Toronto Law Journal*, 71(3), 376–414. https://doi.org/10.3138/utlj-2020-0039

Delaney, T. (2020). *Darkened Enlightenment: The Deterioration of Democracy, Human Rights, and Rational Thought in the Twenty-First Century*. Routledge.

Emmerson, D. K. (2015). *Indonesia Beyond Suharto: Polity, Economy, Society, Transition*. Taylor & Francis.

Freeman, M., & Mindus, P. (2012). *The legacy of John Austin's jurisprudence*, Vol. 103. Springer Science & Business Media.

Gragl, P. (2018). The Epistemological Necessity of Legal Monism. In *Legal Monism: Law, Philosophy, and Politics*, Edited by P. Gragl, Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198796268.003.0003

Hall, S. (2001). The Persistent Spectre: Natural Law, International Order and the Limits of Legal Positivism. *European Journal of International Law*, 12(2), 269–307. https://doi.org/10.1093/ejil/12.2.269

Hangabei, S. M., Dimyati, K., Absori, A., & Akhmad, A. (2021). The Ideology Of Law: Embodying The Religiosity Of Pancasila In Indonesia Legal Concepts. *Law Reform: Jurnal Pembaharuan Hukum*, 17(1), 77–94. https://doi.org/10.14710/lr.v17i1.37554

Hanna, R. (2015). Rationalism Regained 2: A Priori Knowledge and the Nature of Intuitions. In *Cognition, Content, and the A Priori: A Study in the Philosophy of Mind and Knowledge*, Edited by R. Hanna, Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198716297.003.0007

Hastuti, P. (2019). Shifting the Character of the Constitutional Court Decision Influenced by Political Constellation in Indonesia. *Constitutional Review*, *5*(2), 330–357. https://doi.org/10.31078/consrev526

Heidemann, C. (2004). Hans Kelsen and the Transcendental Method. *Northern Ireland Legal Quarterly*, 55(4), 358–377. https://doi.org/10.53386/nilq.v55i4.780

Hirsch, P.-A. (2023). Kant, Immanuel. In, *Encyclopedia of the Philosophy of Law and Social Philosophy* (pp. 1689–1696). Edited by M. Sellers & S. Kirste, Springer Netherlands. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-6519-1_431

Hofmann, H. (2016). The Development of German-Language Legal Philosophy and Legal Theory in the Second Half of the 20th Century. In *A Treatise of Legal Philosophy and General Jurisprudence: Volume 12: Legal Philosophy in the Twentieth Century: The Civil Law World, Tome 1: Language Areas, Tome 2: Main Orientations and Topics*, pp. 285–365, Edited by E. Pattaro & C. Roversi (Eds.), Springer Netherlands. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-1479-3_10

Hosen, N. (2005). Religion and the Indonesian Constitution: A Recent Debate. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 36(3), 419–440. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022463405000238

Jestaedt, M., Poscher, R., & Kammerhofer, J. (2020). *Die Reine Rechtslehre auf dem Prüfstand / Hans Kelsen's Pure Theory of Law: Conceptions and Misconceptions: Tagung der Deutschen Sektion der Internationalen Vereinigung für Rechts- und Sozialphilosophie vom 27.–29. September 2018 in Freiburg im Breisgau*. BiblioScout. https://doi.org/10.25162/9783515125796

Kähler, L. (2017). Kelsen and the Problems of the Social Fact Thesis. In *Kelsenian Legal Science and the Nature of Law*, pp. 23–42, Edited by P. Langford, I. Bryan, & J. McGarry, Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-51817-6_2

Kammerhofer, J., & D'Aspremont, J. (Eds.). (2014). Theorising international legal positivism. In *International Legal Positivism in a Post-Modern World* (pp. 21–210). Cambridge University Press. https://www.cambridge.org/core/product/7C69AC706A282B51C18BF12E9FA9170E

Kant, I. (1998). *Critique of Pure Reason*. Cambridge University Press.

Kelsen, H. (2009). *General Theory of Law and State*. Lawbook Exchange.

Kelsen, H. (2013). *The essence and value of democracy*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Kleinman, P. (2013). *Philosophy 101: From Plato and Socrates to Ethics and Metaphysics, an Essential Primer on the History of Thought*. Simon and Schuster.

Kletzer, C. (2011). Kelsen, Sander, and the Gegenstandsproblem of Legal Science. *German Law Journal*, 12(2), 785–810. https://doi.org/10.1017/S2071832200017090

Langford, P., Bryan, I., & McGarry, J. (2019). *Hans Kelsen and the Natural Law Tradition*. Brill. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004390393

Latif, Y. (2018). *Wawasan Pancasila: Bintang Penuntun Untuk Pembudayaan*. Mizan.

Law, S. (2013). *The Great Philosophers: The Lives and Ideas of History's Greatest Thinkers*. Greenfinch.

Manullang, E. F. M. (2020). Mempertanyakan Pancasila Sebagai Grundnorm: Suatu Refleksi Kritis Dalam Perspektif Fondasionalisme. *Jurnal Hukum & Pembangunan*, 50(2), 284–301. https://doi.org/10.21143/jhp.vol50.no2.2584

Minkkinen, P. (2023). Caught Between Theoretical and Practical Reason: Immanuel Kant's 'Inscrutable'sovereign. In *Edward Elgar Research Handbook on the Law and Politics of Sovereignty*. Edward Elgar.

Naugle, D. K. (2002). *Worldview: The History of a Concept*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing.

Ochtorina, D., & Efendi, A. (2021). Pancasila Dalam Teori Jenjang Norma Hukum Hans Kelsen. *Jurnal Legislasi Indonesia*, 18(4), 514–525.

Paulson, S. L. (2008). Formalism, “free law”, and the “cognition” quandary: Hans Kelsen’s approaches to legal interpretation. *The University of Queensland Law Journal*, 27(2), 7–39.

Paulson, S. L. (2017). Metamorphosis in Hans Kelsen’s Legal Philosophy. *The Modern Law Review*, *80*(5), 860–894. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2230.12291

Paulson, S. L. (2019). Hans Kelsen on Legal Interpretation, Legal Cognition, and Legal Science. *Jurisprudence*, 10(2), 188–221. https://doi.org/10.1080/20403313.2019.1604887

Pinasang, D. (2012). Falsafah Pancasila Sebagai Norma Dasar (Grundnorm) Dalam Rangka Pengembanan Sistem Hukum Nasional. *Jurnal Hukum UNSRAT*, 20(3), 1–10.

Pomerleau, W. P. (1997). *Twelve Great Philosophers: An Historical Introduction to Human Nature*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Prawiranegara, S. (1984). Pancasila as the Sole Foundation. *Indonesia*, 38, 74–83. https://doi.org/10.2307/3350846

Rumble, W. E. (1981). Legal Positivism of John Austin and the Realist Movement in American Jurisprudence. *Cornell Law Review*, 66(5), 986–1031.

Safa’at, M. A. (2010). Islam and the State in Indonesia from a Legal Perspective. *Review of Religious Research*, 51(3), 293–294.

Samekto, F. A., & Purwanti, A. (2017). Normativity of scientific law in the perspective of neo-kantian schools of thought. *Hasanuddin Law Review*, 3(1), 59–66. https://doi.org/10.20956/halrev.v3i1.761

Samekto, F. X. A. (2021). *Pancasila Pandu Indonesia Dalam Taman Sari Dunia*. BPIP RI.

Samekto, F. X. A., & Purwanti, A. (2023). Perubahan Tatanan Sosial dan Transformasi Pemaknaan Pancasila. *Pancasila: Jurnal Keindonesiaan*, 3(1), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.52738/pjk.v3i1.132

Saunders, J. (2016). Kant and the Problem of Recognition: Freedom, Transcendental Idealism, and the Third-Person. *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 24(2), 164–182. https://doi.org/10.1080/09672559.2016.1152286

Schafer, K. (2023). Transcendental Philosophy and the Self-Consciousness of Reason. In K. Schafer (Ed.), *Kant’s Reason: The Unity of Reason and the Limits of Comprehension in Kant* (p. 0). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780192868534.003.0002

Schuett, R. (2022). Professor Kelsen’s Amazing Reappearing Act. *Österreichische Zeitschrift Für Politikwissenschaft*, 51(3), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.15203/ozp.4048.vol51iss3

Septian, I., & Abdurahman, A. (2021). Legal Status of Law Elucidation in The Indonesian Legislation System. *PADJADJARAN Jurnal Ilmu Hukum (Journal of Law)*, 8(1), 92–120. https://doi.org/10.22304/pjih.v8n1.a5

Siagian, A. (2021). Omnibus Law Draft in the Perspective of Constitutionality and Legal Politics. *Jambura Law Review*, 3(1), 93–111. https://doi.org/10.33756/jlr.v3i1.7222

Soekarno. (1947). *Lahirnja Pantja sila: Boeng Karno menggembleng dasar-dasar negara*. Goentoer.

Soekarnoputri, M. (2021). The Establishment of Pancasila as the Grounding Principles of Indonesia. *Jurnal Pertahanan: Media Informasi Ttg Kajian & Strategi Pertahanan Yang Mengedepankan Identity, Nasionalism & Integrity*, 7(1), 122–136. https://doi.org/10.33172/jp.v7i1.1206

Stewart, I. (2023). Hans Kelsen, Legal Scientist: Review essay on Thomas Olechowski, Hans Kelsen: Biographie eines Rechtswissenschaftlers (Hans Kelsen: Biography of a Legal Scientist)1. *Journal of Legal Philosophy*, 48(2), 119–192. https://doi.org/10.4337/jlp.2023.02.03

Sumakto, Y. (2012). Pancasila Di Dalam Pembukaan UUD 1945 Bukan Grundnorm. *ADIL: Jurnal Hukum*, 3(1), 1–22. https://doi.org/10.33476/ajl.v3i1.832

Viola, F. (2017). Hans Kelsen and Practical Reason. In P. Langford, I. Bryan, & J. McGarry (Eds.), *Kelsenian Legal Science and the Nature of Law* (pp. 121–139). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-51817-6_7

Vlastos, G. (2006). *Plato's Universe*. Parmenides Publishing.

Von Bernstorff, J. (2010). *The Public International Law Theory of Hans Kelsen: Believing in Universal Law* (Vol. 68). Cambridge University Press.

Widodo, A. T., & Riwanto, A. (2023). Harmonizing Regional Spatial Arrangements As Effort To Improve Law Number 11 Of 2020 On Job Creation To Optimize Regional Development. *Jurnal Dinamika Hukum*, 23(2), 286–304. https://doi.org/10.20884/1.jdh.2023.23.2.3289

Willaschek, M. (Ed.). (2018). Kant's Conceptions of Reason and Metaphysics. In *Kant on the Sources of Metaphysics: The Dialectic of Pure Reason* (pp. 21–45). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108560856.004

Journal of Philosophical Investigations
Print ISSN: 2251-7960 Online ISSN: 2423-4419
Homepage: https://philosophy.tabrizu.ac.ir

The Functions of Preunderstandings in ʾAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī's Hermeneutics

Asghar Vaezi✉ [1] | **Esmail Ghaedi** [2]

1. Corresponding Author, Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, Shahid Beheshti University, Iran. Email: a_vaezi@sbu.ac.ir
2. Adjunct Professor, Department of Philosophy, Shahid Beheshti University, Iran. Email: ghaediesmail@gmail.com

Article Info

Article type:
Research Article

Article history:
Received 23 December 2023
Received in revised form 10 April 2024
Accepted 30 April 2024
Published online 07 September 2024

Keywords:
ʾAllamah Ṭabāṭabāʾī, Qur'an, hermeneutics, preunderstanding, understanding, interpretation

ABSTRACT

Drawing upon the hermeneutic basis that understanding and interpretation of a text is conditioned by the reader's preunderstanding, this article examines ʾAllamah Ṭabāṭabāʾī's interpretive preunderstandings. In so doing, the article first, will explore ʾAllamah's constitutive and non-constitutive preunderstandings. As the foundation of his Qur'anic interpretation, the constitutive category is divided into three subcategories: text-specific, interpreter-specific, and interpretation-specific. The non-constitutive category is studied under the following two subcategories: the imposed and non-imposed preunderstandings. Although the article studies ʾAllamah Ṭabāṭabāʾī's interpretive preunderstandings, this categorization can be applied in studying any scriptural hermeneutic discourse. The contribution of this article to the field, is not limited to Allamah Ṭabāṭabāʾī's interpretive preunderstandings. The method applied in this study can be used in the study of any scriptural hermeneutics.

Cite this article: Vaezi, A. & Ghaedi, E. (2024). The Functions of Preunderstandings in ʾAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī's Hermeneutics. *Journal of Philosophical Investigations*, 18(48), 339-360. https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.54580.3433

© The Author(s).
Publisher: University of Tabriz.
https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.54580.3433

Introduction

The modern hermeneutics has emerged as the means that allows for the combination of interpretation of texts and a spectrum of understandings with new concepts and novel meanings, resulting in the formation of what is known as 'preunderstandings' that requires the presence of background knowledge vis-à-vis concepts and meanigs in the process of understanding and interpreting texts. Prior to the rise of modern hermeneutics, it was widely believed that one can interpret and understand texts without preconceptions or any form of prejudice; such a belief, has been challenged by *Hiedegger* and *Gadamer*'s philosophical hermeneutics.

In chapter thirty-two of *Being and Time Heidegger* explicates that interpretation can never exist without preunderstanding of a given "*something*". Rather, interpretation as being the "development of understanding" is structured around pre-structures of understanding, or in Heidegger's terms: in interpretation "understanding appropriates what is understood" as it never becomes "something different", but rather itself. Interpretation is existentially based in understanding, […] interpretation is not acknowledgement of what has been understood, but rather the development of possibilities projected in understanding (Heidegger, 1996, 141). In *Truth and Method*, the second section of Chapter four, after evaluating Heidegger's conception of pre-structures of understanding, Gadamer engages with an analytical reading of the concept of prejudice, introducing it as an inseparable element in the process of understanding and interpretation (Gadamer, 2004, 267-273). Gadamer begins his analysis by reflecting on the concept of prejudice, analyzing a contextualized conception of the term as given during the Enlightenment and Romanticism; only then he reads "prejudice" and its connection with "authority" and "tradition", eventually confirming prejudice as a justifiable form of authority of tradition (Gadamer, 2004, 277-305). Gadamer's shows that Enlightenment and Romanticism go wrong, becaous there is no contradiction between tradition and reason.

Examining the concept of interpretive preunderstandings and their implications in the process of interpreting and understanding the Qur'an is a new research phenomenon in the world of Islam, attracting the attention of scholars in the Qur'anic studies and other religious intellectuals. For instance, in the field of contemporary Iranian thought, in his article *The Text in the Context AbduldKarim Soroush* discusses the relevance and presence of preunderstandings and preconceptions in the process of interpreting the Qur'an; moreover, in *Hermeneutics, the Scrpture, and the Tradition* (1996), also in his various writings entitled "Prophetic Reading of the Universe", *Muḥammad Mojtahed Shabestari* makes distinguishing references to the necessity of interpretive preunderstandings and preconception in one's reading and interpretation of the Qur'an. Although other Muslim scholars have widely written on the method and principles of interpreting the Qur'an, which can be regarded as the presence of interpretive understanding in their studies, it has been commonly believed that understanding the Qur'an requires no specific presupposition or preconception.

ʾAllāmah Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabātabāʾī (1903-1981) a notable exegete in the *Shiʿi* world and a renowned disciple in Ṣadrā's transcend theosophy, has written extensively on the principles, methods and the bases of interpreting the Qur'an, especially in his *Tafsir-e al-Mīzān*[1] which exceeds twenty volumes. By reading through his works, we can form a harmonious and unified theory of interpretation that can address metatextual qustions, namely, questions that are bound by neither the contentual nor structural propositions of the given text. Rather, these questions target the epistemological as well as ontological essence of interpretation and understanding texts, appearing as questions about the methodological and perceptual aspects of interpreting Qur'an, and about the norms of interpretation, and eventually about the constitutive preunderstandings necessary for the process of interpretating and understanding the Qur'an.

Contradiction between intratextual interpretation of the Qur'an and interpreters' preunderstandings

A notable feature of *Tafsir-e al-Mīzān* lies in its wide practicality of intratextual method in interpreting the Qur'an, namely, interpreting the Qur'an by Qur'an. In his preface to Tafsir Al-Mīzān, while assessing a number of other common interpretive approaches, ʾAllāmah Ṭabātabāʾī introduces the intratextual interpretation of the Qur'an and at once claims that each of these approaches is founded on the commentator's various presuppositions. On the contrary, he postulates that to understand and interpret the Qur'an one should distance themselves from any preundestandings, instead only referring to the verses (*Āyyāt*)[2]. The approaches assessed and critiqued by ʾAllāmah are as follows: interpretive methods of some philosophers (*Fīlsūfān*)[3], Sufis *Ṣūfīyān*)[4], theologists (*Mutikalimān*)[5], and descriptivists (*Ikhbārīyan*)[6], as well as the interpretive method of contemporary commentators (*Mufassirān*)[7] familiar with the modern sciences (Ṭabātabāʾī, 1996, Vol. 1, 3-10).

For some narrators of *hadith* (*Muḥadithān*)[8] and descriptivists (*Ikhbārīyan*), understanding the meaning of the Qur'anic verses is only possible through mediators of description (*Ikhbar*) as for them the Qur'an is the word of God, allowing only for the Infallibles (*Maṣūmīn*)[9] to understand its meaning. Hence, to understand the meaning of the Qur'an we should turn to the Infalibles' statements, that is *hadith*. some narrators of *hadith* and descriptivists have only examined the verbal

[1] *Al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'an*, which is well known as "*Al-Mīzān*"
[2] *Āyyāt* (plural) *Āyyah* (singular)
[3] *Fīlsūfān* or *Falāsifih* (plural) *Fīlsūf* (singular)
[4] *Ṣūfīyān* (pluran) *Ṣūfī* (singular)
[5] *Mutikalimān* (plural) *Mutikalim* (singular)
[6] *Ikhbārīyan* (plural) *Ikhbārī* (singular)
[7] *Mufassirān* (plural) *Mufassir* (singular)
[8] *Muḥadithān* (plural) *Muḥadith* (singular)
[9] *Maṣūmīn* (plural) *Maṣūm* (singular)

meaning of verses based on their perception of the claims made above, and thus have confined their examination of the Qur'an to recounting the statements made by infallibles (*Maṣūmīn*), prophet's companions (*Ṣaḥābīn*[1]), and followers (*Tābiʿīn*)[2]. Confining one's reading of the Qur'an to only verbal meaning will prevent any intellectual attempt at understanding and examining the inner meaning, hence intellectual ability redundant. Nevertheless, a number of Sufis and mystics have adapted a different approach, the sort that differs from that of descriptivists, namely, disregarding the verbal meaning of verses and instead indulged in a reading of the Qur'an that emphasized inner meanings. Sufis, it should be noted, have highly emphasized the essence of creation; therefore, the realm of appearance and as a result sings upon horizons (*Āyyāt Anfusī*) were hidden from their attention, only examining signs in one's being (*Āyyāt Āfāqī*). ʾAllāmah Ṭabātabāʾī believes this approach will marginalize the common sense from having any share from the Qur'an and its meanings; for Sufis and mystics have only dedicated their reading to hidden or obscure meanings. Moreover, by ignoring the lingual structure of the Qur'an and disregarding verbal meanings this approach would lead to irrelevant understandings and at once arbitrary interpretations of the Qur'an, followed by various claims by Sufis and mystics that lacked proper foundation (Ṭabātabāʾī, 1996, vol. 1, 1 & 5; Mojtahed-e Shabestari, 2014, 125). Additionally, a number of theologists and philosophers too have interpreted the Qur'an so that it would match their readings and perspectives, contradicting ʾAllāmah's definitional understanding of interpretation, and calling it appropriation (*Taṭbīq*). This latter approach has been appropriated by commentators familiar with modern sciences, accepting whichever verbal meaning that complies with their knowledge and for the rest engaging with an esoteric interpretation of the verses so much so that they would also confirm their points[3] (Ṭabātabāʾī, 1996, vol. 1, 4 & 6-7).

As ʾAllāmah Ṭabātabāʾī argues, these methods of interpretation all draw upon presuppositions and preconceptions or in other words commetators' preunderstandings to form. For ʾAllāmah, however, the presence of such preunderstandings in the process of interpretation leads to distortion and falsification of understanding, claiming that by departing from preundestandings and preconceptions and only by referring to the text one can have proper perception of the meaning of the Qur'an. To this end, ʾAllāmah regards intratextual reading as the proper method of understanding the Qur'an, namely, interpreting the Qur'an by way of reading and understanding the Qur'an; for ʾAllāmah, therefore, intratextual reading of the Qur'an requires no recourse to any statement of infallibles (Hadith), philosophical, scientific, or mystical preunderstandings

[1] *Ṣaḥābīn* (plural) *Ṣaḥābī* (singular)

[2] *Tābiʿīn* (plural) *Tābiʿī* (singular)

[3] In his preface to Tafsīr al-Mīzān, ʾAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī reads Taʾwīl within a common perception of the word, namely, a reading of meaning that is obscure, especially as appropriated by philosophers and theologists; for he has yet to introduces his definition of Taʾwīl as an objective reference of verses.

(Ṭabātabāʾī, 1996, vol. 1, 13-14). Nevertheless, preunderstandings of this essence can be examined in ʾAllāmah's various sections of *Al-Mīzān* and his hermeneutic discourse.

In *Al-Mīzān*, philosophical tenets have been used to the extent that the Aouteor of *interpretive schools* refers to it as a contemplational exegesis (*Tafsīr Ijtihādī*) of the Qur'an and compared to other contemplational exegeses, remarks *Al-Mīzān* as philosophical commentary (Babaei, 2010, 200). In his reading of interpretations of the Qur'an by *Ṣadra*[1] (1571-1640), *Seyed Hossein Nasr* (1933-) [1312 SH] too believes that *Ṣadrā'*s interpretive work on the Qur'an can be regarded as the most extensive work of commentary done by a scholar wellversed in the tradition of Islamic philosophy; yet, it pales in comparison with *Al-Mīzān* and its depth and breadth (Nasr, 2003, 201). Moreover, in his introduction to *The Principles of Philosophy and the Method of Realism*, *Murtḍa Muṭahharī* (1920-1979) alludes to the presence of a philosophical perspective in ʾAllāmah's conception of *Al-Mīzān*, understanding such a presence as his scientific and philosophical depth (Muṭahharī, 1971, 23-24). These remarks confirm the philosophical essence of *Al-Mīzān*, and in return the structure of the work confirms the author's intellectual prowess in using philosophical teahings or tenets; in other words, the work confirms the author's close and deep familiarity with philosophical presuppositions.[2]

The other source of insight and understanding in ʾAllāmah Ṭabātabāʾī's interpretive preunderstandings is mystical doctrines. Scholars such as *Seyed Hossein Nasr* in *Islamic Philosophy from its Origins to the Present* (2007) and *Majed Fakhri* (1923-) in *Islaimic Philosophy Theology, and Mysticism: A Short Introduction* (2000) both confirm ʾAllāmah's illuminative attitude and praise his mystical taste, highlighting his remarkable knowledge to be highly influenced by mystical teachings (Fakhri, 2000, 128; Nasr, 2007, 252). *Massimo Campanini*, the renowned contemporary Islamologist and scholar in Islamic philosophy, engages in a critical discourse analysis of ʾAllāmah teachings in a chapter of his book, *the Qur'an: Modern Muslim Interpretations* (2010). In his careful engagement with CDA, Campanini find a close affinity between ʾAllāmah's ideological tenets and those of Henry Corbin, introducing both scholars as thinkers with commendable mystical taste (Campanini, 2010).

Knowledge acquired by examing statements of the infallibles is the other source of knowledge and insight to ʾAllāmah Ṭabātabāʾī's interpretive preunderstandings. Although he finds the process

[1] *Ṣadr al-Dīn Mohammad ibn Ibrāhīm Shīrāzī* is well Known also as "*Ṣadr al-Mutiʾalihīn*" or "*Mullā-Ṣadr*ā"

[2] The authors of *ʿAllāmah's Philosophical Ideas in "Al-Mīzān*" finds the following examples among many as accurate instances of Allamah's philosophical interpretation in *Al-Mīzān*:

- Interpreting *Sūrah al-Ḥamd*, Verse 1: on causality and its rules
- Interpreting *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, Verse 1: cognition and the credibility of senses
- Interpreting *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, Verses 26 & 27: on the concept of free will or its lack there of
- Interpreting *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, Verse 48: on the concept of intercession (*Shifāʿat*) (Mūsāvī-e Tabrīzī, 1984, 321-327)

of interpreting the Qur'an impartial to statements by the infallibles, and emphasizes that the Qur'an must be interpreted depending only on the Qur'an itself (Ṭabātabāʾī, 1974, 75-76), he allows for commentators to refer to *Hadith* for a proper understanding of the Qur'an to the extent that sometimes understanding the Qur'an essentially demands such references to be formed (Ṭabātabāʾī, 1977, vol. 5, 335 & vol. 10, 243). To provide a richer reading of the Qur'an in *Al-Mīzān,* except for a few instances,[1] ʾAllāmah offers a sub-heading as a "Discussion of Statements by the infallibles" wherein a *hadith* that relates to the verse he had just examined is selected from *Sunni* and *Shiʿi* sources and discussed at length. In *Interpretive Schools*, *Babaiee* highlights ʾAllāmah's various references to hadith and infallibles' statements and their influence on his interpretation as follows:

> In *Al-Mīzān* ʾAllāmah Ṭabātabāʾī's interpretation Qur'anic verses (*Āyyāt*) has remained loyal to this school of exegesis wherein no references to Infallibles' statemen (*Hadith*) is required, yet the meaning he offers as his understanding of the verse (*Āyyah*) is closely tied to the infallibles' interpretations and statements on those verse, spreading the possibility that he had sought help from hadith and the infallibles' statement. In other words, first the statement has referred him to the verse and then by examining the style of that verse and other verses he has found the meaning (Babaei, 2010, 265).

In *Methodology for Interpretation of the Qur'an*, *Babaei* discusses "the significance of tradition (*Sonnah*) and the infallibles' statement (*Ahādith*[2] or *Riwāyāt*[3]) as sources required for a proper understanding of the knowledge imparted in the Qur'an" again refers to *Al-Mīzān*, highlighting it as an exemplar of intratextual iterpretation of the Qur'an. He claims that even in the most notable examples of intratextual the Qur'anic interpretation, the interpreter ineveitably refers to the ineffable role of tradition as a source of interpretation and understanding the Qur'anic. For instance, in his interpretation of *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, verse 6, ʾAllāmah notes:

> It's not clear in God's word what does middle prayer (*Ṣalāt Wustā*) mean and only tradition (*Sunah*) interpretes it (Babaei, Azizi-Kia & Rowhani-Rad, 2013, 199; Ṭabātabāʾī, 1996, vol. 2).

Along with philosophy, mysticism and *hadith*, theology is among the sources of ʾAllāmah Ṭabātabāʾī's interpretive preunderstandings; since the foundations of some of discourses of *Al-*

---

[1] According to a recent computerized report, there are 527 instances of discussions with the infallibles' statements *(Riwāyāt*) as the sources of insight. After each discussion, ʾAllāmah had examins connections between the Qur'an and relevant *Riwāyah*, except for a few instances wherein only the verse of the Qur'an has been examined without any references to infallibles' statements. For instance, the following verses in *Sūrah al-Baqarah* are dealt discussions with the infallibles' statements: 28, 29, 40, 44, 118 (Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 1996, vol. 1; Babaei, 2010, 208 & 266)

[2] *Ahādith* (plural) *Hadith* (singular)

[3] *Riwāyāt* (plural) *Riwāyah* (singular)

Mīzān can be traced back to the religious beliefs and theological ideas of the author, while examining their coherent expression in other works such as the *Qur'an in Islam*. In this book, while discussing prophecy (*Nabuwwat*), ʾAllāmah outlines the principles and foundations (Ṭabātabāʾī, 1974, 5-11 & 24-26), which are understood by Mojtahed Shabestari as ʾAllāmah Ṭabātabāʾī's preunderstandings, Shabestari claims that the most important interpretive issues in Al-Mīzān are based on such preunderstandings. *Muḥammad Mojtahed Shabestari*, citing topics in *The Qur'an in Islam*, has cited All's preunderstandings within twelve clauses, referring to them as ʾAllāmah Ṭabātabāʾī's presupossitions. Shabestari claims, although ʾAllāmah directly deals with the issue of prophecy in this discussion, these also inform the foundations of his conception of prophecy and revelation; hence, these can be considered as the most important interpretive preunderstandings of the author of *Al-Mīzān* in his understanding of the Qur'an and tradition (Mojtahed-e Shabestari, 2014, 127-128).

On the basis of what has been examined, for ʾAllāmah Ṭabātabāʾī, on the one hand, presuppositions in the form of philosophical, theological, scientific, mystical, as well as examination of hadith result in nothing but an arbitrary interpretation or semantic misunderstanding, replacing interpretation with appropriation; and on the other, such presuppositions have not only greatly contributed to the consistency of his interpretive theory and to the discussion of the mechanism of understanding and interpretating the Qur'an, but also positively affected his interpretations of the Qur'anic verses. In this respect, in a hermeneutic analysis of the preunderstandings and evaluation of their role and function in their interpretative discourse are inherently met with difficulties, forcing the researcher and the reader familiar with modern hermeneutics to choose between either of the approaches: ignoring ʾAllāmah Ṭabātabāʾī's preunderstandings, or underestimating the significance of the method which interprets the Qur'an by Qur'an; that is, the reader either simply ignores his interpretative preunderstandings, or by regarding that ʾAllāmah Ṭabātabāʾī's approach is ultimately not free of any presuppositions or preconceptions the reader discards intratextual interpretation as an unrealistic approach, calling it an regulative ideal in the process of interpretation.

However, we can also form a more liberal approach by neither ignoring ʾAllāmah Ṭabātabāʾī's preunderstandings nor downgrading his interpretive method to a mere or regulative ideal; and also, by organizing preunderstandings in his discourse into a range of constitutive, non-constitutive, authentic and non-authentic, destructive and non-desctructive. To this end, first this range of preunderstandings such as preconceptions or presuppositions must be identified and categorized within ʾAllāmah Tabtabai's corpus.

Categorization of ʾAllāmah Ṭabātabāʾī's Interpretive Preunderstandings

Given the breadth of the term 'preunderstanding' in ʾAllāmah's exegetical discourse, in what follows first by delving into his interpretive theory it is aimed to categorize whatever that can be

found as a variety of preunderstanding in the form of presupposition, preconception, prejudice, or conceptual equivalent of the term; and then, by analyzing the features of each, we can systematically categorize the preunderstandings that dominate ʾAllāmah's interpretive theory. Of course, different patterns can be used to make such a classification; the model used in this essay, however, divides the interpretive preunderstandings of ʾAllāmah Ṭabātabāʾī into constitutive and non-constitutive. The constitutive preunderstanding can be regarded as the foundation of ʾAllāmah's interpretive discourse and forms his theoretical principle in the process of interpreting the Qur'an. Nevertheless, the non-constitutive preunderstandings have no role in the process of interpretation and only conduct it. Constitutive preunderstandings include both presuppositions that are conditions of possibility of understanding and interpreting the Qur'an in All's theory of hermeneutics and presupposition that releat to fucnctions of interpreting the Qur'an usally used in jurisprudence or inferring tasks of worship. In this respect, the category of constitutive preunderstandings includes both structural and contentual preunderstandings, while the non-consitutive preunderstandings only include contentual preunderstandings.

The constitutive preunderstanings, however, include preconceptions and presupossitions vis-à-vis hermeneutic structure of the divin text, the method of interpretation and the interpreter's hermeneutic nature on the one hand, while the non-constitutive preunderstandings might prove valid and be useful in the process of interpreting the Qur'an or might be invalid, distorting the process entirely. Hence, within the secondary division constitutive preunderstandings we shall form three sub-categories of: constitutive text-specific preunderstandings, constitutive interpreter-specific preunderstandings, constitutive interpretation-specific preunderstandings; same applied to non-constitutive preunderstandings, dividing them into imposed or destructive preunderstandings, and non-imposed or non-destrcutive. As this article proves, there are no differences between destructive and non-destructive preunderstandings, rather the only difference lies in the method and mechanics of use in the process of interpretation. In this respect, a teaching with roots in the hadith, a scientific knowledge or a philosophical idea can be destructive or non-destrcutive. indeed, we shall prove that what makes a non-constitutive preunderstanding destructive or non-destructive doesn't lie in its content but in its compatibility or non-compatibility with other constitutive preunderstandings.

Constitutive Preunderstandings

The constitutive preunderstandings include an array of preconceptions on the hermeneutic structure of the Qur'an, hermeneutic nature of the man as the interpreter and subject of understanding the Qur'an, as well as preunderstandings vis-à-vis the applicability of hermeneutics. Under this category there are also preunderstandings on the epistemological and ontological process of interpretating and understanding the Qur'anic meaning, each standing as a methodological agent of interpreting the Qur'an. Due to the wide range of preunderstandings that fall into this group, we

will continue to analyze them in three subgroups: text-specific, commentator-specific, and interpretation-specific preunderstandings. In this categorization text-specific preunderstandings permit the Qur'an to be meaningful, while the interpreter-specificpreunderstandings enable the interpretor to find meaning in divin text; and eventually interpretation-specific preunderstandings make Permit the interpretation and understanding the Qur'an to be possible.

Constittutive Text-specific Preunderstandings

This subgroup of consititutive preunderstandings includes those that examine the hermeneutic structure of the Qur'an, as well as those about its hermeneutic functions and purposes. Longitudinal plurality and autonomy of meaning are the most prominent structural preunderstandings dominant in the hermeneutic structure of the Qur'an.

These preunderstandings can be defined as follows:

- The text of the Qur'an is constituted of several semantic levels, the relation between these levels is a longitudinal relation, proving that the meaning at each level completes the meanings of the previous levels.
- The text of the Qur'an is formed from a coherent and consistent network of meanings, so each verse of the Qur'an must be understood with respect to the other verses.

These preunderstandings require acceptance of the coherence, consistency, and semantic integrity of the text, since the interpretation of a text cannot be mediated by the same text unless we have already assumed a comprehensive meaning for that text, so that understanding the meaning of that text requires nothing but the text itself; hence the semantic integrity is a prerequisite for the exegetical method of interpreting the Qur'an by Qur'an. In addition, the different parts of the text should be considered as consistent as possible so that the meaning of each part can be understood by referring that part to other parts of the text. However, accepting the Longitudinal plurality and Autonomy of meaning also depends on accepting coherence and consistency of meaning on multiple levels. As a result, the integrity, coherence, and consistency of the meaning of divin text are preunderstandings about hermeneutic structure of the Qur'an, all falling into the group of structural and constitutive preunderstandings in ʾAllāmah Ṭabātabāʾī's hermeneutics. These issues can be better understood by examining ʾAllāmah Ṭabātabāʾī's writing that follows:

> The Qur'an is a universal book (Ṭabātabāʾī, 1974, 22).
>
> The Qur'an is complete book (Ṭabātabāʾī, 1974, 24).
>
> The Qur'an is an everlasting book, as its expression regarding the concepts it address is complete and full, impartial to temporal specificity (Ṭabātabāʾī, 1974, 25).
>
> The Qur'an is independent in its denotation (Ṭabātabāʾī, 1974, 30).

> The Qur'an has both inner and outer reality (Ṭabātabāʾī, 1974, 32).
>
> It is obvious that there is layer of interpretability of verses (*Āyyāt*) of the Qur'an whereby some may lend themselves more to interpretation than others, hence explaining a concept (Ṭabātabāʾī, 1996, vol. 3, 121).
>
> There are varieties of meaning present in the text of the Qur'an, each being set up next to one another; these are not opposing each other, which allows for the formation of lexical meaning[1] (Ṭabātabāʾī, 1996, vol. 3, 121).

In addition, although all of structural preunderstandings about the hermeneutic structure of the Qur'an, all's interpretive discourse rests on a number of exegetical presuppositions, namely, those that engage with a hermeneutic application of the Qur'an. These preunderstandings which can be called contentual or material preunderstandings are commonly used to infer jurisprudence rules and tasks of worshiping God. These preunderstandings are:

> The Qur'an warrants the richenss of worldview and completeness of man's life (Ṭabātabāʾī, 1974, 5).
>
> The Qur'an seeks and offers human perfection, expressing it in the clearest form (Ṭabātabāʾī, 1974, 24).
>
> The issue of knowledge by faith as pointed in the Qur'an, is pure truth and pure reality; so is true with the ethical and scientific rules it has set (Ṭabātabāʾī, 1974, 26).

The Constittutive, Interpreter-specificPreunderstandings

Just as the longitudinal plurality of meaning and Autonomy of meaning are the most important items in the subgroup of constitutive text-specific preunderstandings, the most prominent items in the subcategory of constitutive interpreter-specificpreunderstanding are the human spiritual degree as the interpreter and the subject of understanding. ʾAllāmah Ṭabātabāʾī has repeatedly highlighted that the higher the level of human spiritual degree and his affinity with God, the deeper and better his understanding of the Qur'an; hence, such a man can have access to the deepest layers of meaning of God's word (Ṭabātabāʾī, 1974, 30-39).

Moreover, it seems that the historical and social situation of man as an interpreter and subject of understanding the Qur'an is also a constitutive interpreter-specificpreunderstanding; since as ʾAllāmah Ṭabātabāʾī occasionally points to differences in the historical and social situation of man as agents affecting the understanding nad the interpretating the Qur'an; for instance, while discussing *Mohkamat* and *Tashabohat*, although he considers the existence of *Mohkam* and

[1] Lexical meaning or the problem of using a worl mor than one meaning (*Istiʿmāl-e lafḍ dar akthar az maʿnā-ye wāhid*)

Moshabeh verses in the Qur'an to be essential, he also believes that the *mohkamat* and *moshabehat* discussed in the Qur'anic sciences can be regarded as "relational attributes" (*Waṣf-e Iḍāfī*); he claims that each verse of the Qur'an will be regarded as *mohkam* or *moshabeh* when compared to other verses (Ṭabātabāʾī, 1996, Vol. 3, 121). In this respect, the question remains: on what basis can *mohkam* and *moshabeh* be verified between two verses?

The answer to this question lies in his discussion of "incorporating *Mohkam* and *Moteshabeh* in the Qur'an" (Ṭabātabāʾī, 1996, Vol. 3, 105-128). In this discussion, in addition to the differences between individuals in terms of spiritual virtue, ʾAllāmah also explains the diversity of human beings and the difference between human beings in terms of social and historical status as the relevant reason vis-à-vis the inclusiveness of the Qur'anic verses of *mohkamat* and *moshabehat*. He thus considers the significance of the social and historical context of the interpreter in the process of understanding and interpreting the Qur'an. However, if the historical situation of the interpreter influences the process of understanding and interpretation, then it may be concluded that some of the interpreter's preunderstandings that have derived from his situation can also influence his understanding of the meaning of the text.

Accordingly, while longitudinal plurality and self-sufficiency of meaning are included in the text's structuralal and constitutive text-specific preunderstandings, revealing the hermeneutic structure of the Qur'an, individuals' difference in terms of spiritual virtue as well as differences in social and historical situation shape the structural and constitutive interpreter-specificpreunderstandings, which represent the hermeneutic nature of the human being as the interpreter and the subject of understanding the Qur'an. Nevertheless, just as the text-specific preunderstandings subgroup contains some contentual preunderstandings in addition to the structural ones, in the interpreter-specificcateogory too exists contentual preunderstandings. Contentual interpreter-specificpreunderstandings correspond to conttual text-specific preunderstandings, and these two categories of texts together provide the basis for inferring jurisprudences and the duties on worshiping God; for instance, the presupposition that "the Qur'an warrants the man's life and objective program" corresponds to "to achive to happiness in life, the man needs a plan". Based on his readings as laid out in *The Qur'an in Islam*, one can perceive ʾAllāmah Ṭabātabāʾī's definition of constitutive and contentual interpreter-specificpreunderstandings as follows:

> The Man has no purpose in his life except happiness, salvation, and good fortune (Ṭabātabāʾī, 1974, 6).
>
> The work of human life is to pursue happiness and to success, whether it be in the realization of its true happiness or in its plight (Ṭabātabāʾī, 1974, 7).

> The human's life never takes place without a plan. [This is] obviously an issue, and if it is done stealthily, it's due to intensity of clarity (Ṭabātabāʾī, 1974, 7).
>
> Creation is specific to man, as well as the creation of the world, of which man is an integral part (Ṭabātabāʾī, 1974, 11).
>
> The best and most enduring way of life is to direct human creation towards it, not what emanates society or individualis emotions or feelings (Ṭabātabāʾī, 1974, 9).
>
> The rule of law is solely in the hands of God, and without him is not permissible for anyone to enact law and order (Ṭabātabāʾī, 1974, 14).

Constitutitve interpretation-specific Preunderstandngs

ʾAllāmah Ṭabātabāʾī's interpretive discourse, along with the text-specific and the interpreter-specific preunderstandings, also warrant the interpretation-specifi preunderstandings. Although this subgroup fits under the category of constitutive preunderstaidngs, unlike interpreter-specific and text-specefic preundestandings they are neither about the structural or hermeneutic function of the text, nor about the human hermeneutic nature; rather they are assumptions and preconceptions about the method of interpreting the Qur'an. This subgroup of constitutitve includes assumptions about language and mechanism of interptetion and understanding, as well as some principles of logic ans Islamic jurisprudence (*Usūl al-Fiqh*) by which the linguistic structure and semantic denotations of the text can be understood, leading to a uniform understanding of the author's intention.[1]

In ʾAllāmah Ṭabātabāʾī's Hermeneutics, the most prominent preunderstanding in the subgroup of constitutitive interpretation-specific, is the intentionalism, which means that the meaning of the text is the intention of the author. Therefore, in the process of interpretation one must seek the intended meaning of the text. Each of these assertions is also followed by such complementary

---

[1] There are three forms:

a) Corresponding Denotation (*Muṭābiqah*)

b) Including Denotation (*Taḍammun*)

c) Accompaning Denotation (*ʾIltizām*) (See: Al-Muẓafar. 2006, p37-38)

In addition to these forms of reasonings, scholars also introduced other forms such as:

a) Requiring Denotation (Iqtiḍāyī) b) Admonishing denotation (*Tanbīhī*)

b) Remarking denotation (*Ishārī*) d) conceptual Denotation (*Mafhūmi*)

In *Interpretive Schools, Babaei* refers to *Al-Mīzān* and claims that although *ʾAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī* hasn't used or referred to these forms directly in his reading, he hasn't limited his reasoning to conforming reasoning; rather, his reasoning and reading at times reveals concepts that can be understood by referring to other forms of reasoning. (Babaei, 2010, p299-305) & (Babaei and Azizi-Kia and Rowhani-Rad, 2013, p243-259)

notes, "in either human or revelatory text, the language is a human phenomenon, and thus the mechanism of understanding and interpreting the Divine Word, is similar to the mechanisms of understanding the human word." In this respect, "the language of the text and its application is the same as that of God's word and human's word." These two can be seen as constitutive interpretation-specific preunderstanding in ʾAllāmah's interpretive discourse. Moreover, we can refer to what follows as subgroup of constitutive interpretation-specific preundestanding: instrumental, preunderstandings by semantic signs, and preunderstandings raised by concentrating on the style.

Instrumental preunderstandings are the means of comprehending the text and understanding the author's serious intentions; although there are disagreements about the kinds of instrumental knowledge, familiarity with grammar, the knowledge of the Qur'anic pronunciation, as well as the discourse about words in principles jurisprudence are accepted as necessary instruments in understanding and interpreting the Qur'an, which have been confirmed as the instrumental knowledge by the experts in the field of the Qur'anic interpretation (Vaezi, 2011, 306).

The preunderstanding by semantic signs is also those that fall into the category of Constitutive interpretation-specific preunderstandings. The function of these preunderstandings is making meaning by textual analogy, helping the interpreter to understand the serious intention of the author beyond the verbal meaning of the text. In *Theory of Interpreting Text*, Ahmad Vaezi claims that although the preunderstnaindg by semantic signs play no role in the process of grasping verbal meaning, they appear to have an impact on the process of understanding the intended meaning of the author (Vaezi, 2011, 307-308).

Another consititutive interpretation-specific preunderstanding is preunderstanding raised by concerning the style. *Sayyid Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr* (1935-1980) considers the style in the text as a sign that helps in understanding the meaning of the text, whether it be literal signs or signs that conditioned the meaning to situation in the text that may signify a particular meaning. Literal signs include all the words that are associated with the word in question, and that together create a coherent meaning; the signs that condition meaning to situation are the conditions of creating the word and language that can provide the reader or the interpreter with accurate understanding of the text (Al-Ṣadr, 1989, 103). According to some scholars, ʾAllāmah Ṭabātabāʾī's method of interpretation of the Qur'an by itself has emphasized the style more than other commentators, and at time has interpreted other commentators by highlighting their stylistic presentation (Babaei, 2010, 278; Al-Uwsī, 2002, 254). Given that precision in style is one of the pillars of intratextual interpretation for understanding the meaning of the text, one can regard precision in style also as subgroups of constitutive preunderstandings and falling under the rubric of interpretation-specific preunderstanding.

Non-Constitutive Preunderstanding

As noted earlier, constitutive preunderstandings shape the theoretical foundation of the process of understanding and interpretation; yet, there are other set of preunderstandings whose function is to guide this process. Thus, while the constitutive preunderstandings are the assumptions and knowledge about the hermeneutic structure and functions of the text, the hermeneutic nature of man as the interpreter and the subject of understanding, as well as the mechanisms of understanding and interpretation of the text, the non-constitutive preunderstandings are Interpreter's presuppositions and their anticipations of menaning, being rooted in his hermeneutic situation. Although many of the knowledge, wisdom, as well as theological, philosophical, scientific, mystical, and teachings on statements of Infallibles (*Ahādith*), are not constitutive of understanding and interpretation of the divine text, they create anticipations and interests in the interpreter that guide the process of understanding and interpreting the Qur'an; these expectations too influence the process of understanding. In the following sections, these preunderstandings will be introduced as non-constitutive and will be divided in two categories: imposed and non-imposed preunderstandigs.

Imposed Preunderstandings

It was suggested earlier, ʾAllāmah Ṭabātabāʾī refers to the interpretive approach of some scholars, philosophers, theologians, mystics and a number of commentators familiar with the new sciences, criticizing their approach for imposing presuppositions on interpretation reading of the Qur'an; although he does not explicitly name any philosopher, theologist, or mystic, and only mentions the tendency of the Prepatetics and pragmatists, it appears that ʾAllāmah only intends to emphasize the approaches that he considers destructive to the process of interpretation. Such approaches, he argues, ultimately lead to appropriating the text instead of interpreting it, leading to a semantic misunderstanding or an arbitrary, idiosyncratic interpretation of the Qur'an. ʾAllāmah's claim regarding appropriation can be concluded that appropriating the revelatory text with pre-interpretative knowledge and beliefs is the result of two destructive interpretive approaches: one ignoring the verbal and outer meanings of the verses, and the other ignoring their inner meanings. Disregard for outer meanings has led to an arbitrary interpretation, while ignoring the inner meanings has been accompanied by a stasis of intellect and a halt in the verbal structure of the divin text; remaining statically in the verbal structure verses, as well as the context has paved the way for semantic misunderstandings. In this respect, appropriation usually has been accompanied by two interpretive deflections:

- The deviation that results from ignoring the outer meanings and leading to an arbitrary, idiosyncratic interpretation of the text.
- The Deviation that results from ignoring the inner meanings and leads to semantic misunderstandings.

It is worth noting that analyzing ʾAllāmah Ṭabātabāʾī's claims implies that the use of imposing preundestandings in the process of interpretation is invalid, irrespective of whether such preunderstandings are as such accurate or inaccurate and regardless of their practical fucnctions in the process of interpreting the Qur'an. In other words, a philosophical thought can be considered right or wrong, a scientific finding can be true or false, a hadith can be regarded as authentic or inauthentic; each of these can be used in interpreting the Qur'an, imposing the interpretor to ignore the inner or outer meanings of verses, resulting in these to be regarded as invalid preunderstandings. Therefore, such preunderstandings are not invalidated because of their propositional content, but because of their unproductive and inaccurate use in the process of understanding and interpreting the Qur'an.

Non-Imposed Preunderstandings

In the interpretive discourse of ʾAllāmah Ṭabātabāʾī, the meaning of the Qur'an is necessarily obtained at one of the semantic levels of the text that is commensurate with the particular situation and status of the commentator. The semantic levels of the text and the spiritual rank of the interpreter, of course, are both perfunctory, so one can skip the textual levels and gain deeper meanings. The correspondence of the hermeneutic structure of the text with the hermeneutic nature of the interpreter also leads to the conclusion that the situation and status of the interpreter significantly influences his or her understanding of the meaning of the text. It can, therefore, be argued that some of interpreter's prejudices and their anticipations of meaning influence the understanding of the meaning of the divin text and guide the process of interpretation. Considering the results intended in the writings of ʾAllāmah Ṭabātabāʾī, it seems that his interpretive discourse is ready to recognize some interpreters' preunderstandings, those which derive from the hermeneutic situation of the interpreter. The interpreter's situation is also primarily a spiritual status, being proportional to his closeness to God; nevertheless, this situation also has its roots in his historical and social circumstances.

ʾAllāmah's understanding of the concept of situation in the process of understanding and interpretation is rooted in Ṣadrā's conception of the word. In Ṣadrā's opinion, the situation in which man encounters the Qur'an is a spiritual situation or in other words, an existential situation;[1] for he has a different level of meaning for the divin text on the one hand, and on the other, for the human as the commentator and the subject of understanding the Qur'an, he also has different spiritual levels. In Ṣadrā's writings, the semantic structure of the Qur'an is commensurate with the spiritual degree of human beings; for example, in the beginning of the seventh volume of *al-Asfār al-*

[1] A similar analysis of the function and role of the hermeneutic situation in the process of understanding and interpreting the Qur'an can be studied in Chapter Four of *En Islam Iranien: Aspects spirituels et philosophiques*. According to *Henry Corbin*, the situation for the followers of the scriptures is essentially a hermeneutic situation in which, in addition to the meaning of the scriptures for believers, a true meaning is revealed to them that make their existence a real existence. (See: Corbin, 2013, 247-249)

Rabaʾa's volumes, Ṣadrā refers to three semantic levels in the divin text, namely upper, middle, and lower speech (Ṣadrā, 1981, vol. 2, 5-6) and in the interpretation of *Āyya- al-Kursī* he also analyzes three interpretative modes, namely, philology, method of thinkers, and the method of firms in knowledge (Ṣadrā, 1987, 34-35). In the fourth *Fatihah* of *Mafatih al-Gheib*'s second chapter, he also studies four attitudes and forms of interpretation: analogy, negation, combinig analogy and negation, and denying analogy and negation (Ṣadrā, 1984, 73-75). In all these cases, Ṣadrā attempts to show the situation of understanding and interpreting the revelatory text is essentially an existential situation in which each level of the semantic levels of the divin text corresponds to a degree of human spiritual order.

ʾAllāmah Ṭabātabāʾī, by acknowledging the significance of *Sadr al-Mutallah*, sees the capacity of individuals to understand and perceive the meanings of the divin text as a hierarchal system whichin each step is superior to the lower stage in terms of existential degree. Thus, the interpreter's hierarchy begins with the lowest level of understanding, that is, the understanding of the outer meanings of the Qur'an, and continues to the highest level of understanding, namely, its inner meanings (Ṭabātabāʾī, 1997, 87). On this he notes:

> Implicit in the ability to comprehend and think of spiritual concepts that are larger than the material world, vary in degree and ranking; there is an understanding that is almost nonexistent and verges on zero; there is another perception understood to be slightly higher, and thus the levels transcend so much so that they reach an understanding that is perceives the most complicated spiritual concepts extremely easy. The greater the intelligible ability to understand spirituality, the less its attachment to the material world and its deceptive appearance, and the lesser the attachment, the greater the spiritual understanding (Ṭabātabāʾī, 1974, 33-34).

Nevertheless, in ʾAllāmah's writings we can also find indications that, in addition to the spiritual status, he is also interested in the social and historical situation of man as an interpreter and subject of understanding the Qur'an, and that this situation influences the process of understanding and interpretation. These include his remarks on the "relation between the linguistic format of the Qur'anic text and divine knowledge" as well as his remarks on "the generality of divine guidance in spite of the divergence of common sense", as well as his discussion of "the effect of perfection and Social education in the understanding of divine theology" and "the difference in the means of understanding the divine knowledge" can also be cited as indications of ʾAllāmah's attention to the historical and social context of the interpreter and its effect on the understanding of the divine text. In what follows, we will have a brief reflection on these to show how ʾAllāmah Ṭabātabāʾī's interpretive discourse is ready to accept that some of interpreter's prejudices and anticipations of

meaning are permissible in the process of understanding and interpreting the divin text and their usage in the process is valid.

It is worth noting that according to ʾAllāmah Ṭabātabāʾī, the meaning of the Divine Word stated in the Qur'anic verses is sacred knowledge and truths; nevertheless, they will lose their original meaning when they are expressed in phrases and sentences and bound to linguistic features. According to him, although the sentences and phrases in which the divin word is incorporated imply divine truths and knowledg, they are nonetheless Ideal (*Mithālī*) in relation to divine knowledg. Whereas divine truths and knowledg have fallen out of proportion to common sense, that is to say, to a perception that is tangible, so to understand divine knowledg requires that divine meanings be abstracted from features which have no effect on the intent of the word; yet, such an abstraction is never safe from distortion. ʾAllāmah tries to explain the Qur'an in terms of its inclusiveness of mohkam and moshabeh verses, while also referring to the allegorical feature of the language, and does not attribute this feature to a particular language or specific text, such as the Qur'an (Ṭabātabāʾī, 1976, vol. 3, 116-120). He also has a human-like understanding of the language and sees no difference between divine and human words in terms of language structure and functions. The notion of language and the idea that linguistic structures are allegorical to the Qur'anic meanings, along with his understanding of the social contexts of language development, also imply that human linguistic preunderstandings ultimately influence his or her understanding of the meaning of divin text.

ʾAllāmah also permits the attainment of the Qur'anic meaning through the mind and through the mediation of mental information, and believes that mental information is acquired through human life and worldly life (Ṭabātabāʾī, 1976, vol. 3, 114). Thus, the understanding and interpretation of the Qur'an is realized through the conceptual structure of the human mind, while all the mental resources, including pre-existing knowledge and experiences of life, are rooted in the social and historical situation of man, forming the conceptual structure of the mind; hence the commentator's mental reservations and previous knowledge influence how he or she interprets the divin text.

Moreover, it should also be noted that while ʾAllāmah considers the guidance as an inclusive concept, he finds guidance of human beings to be the most important purpose of divine text. He believes that divine guidance is not specific to a particular tribe or group of people, rather it is intended for all human beings; therefore, the Qur'anic expressions for the guidance of Must convey meaning through the concepts and mental conventions which are familiar for their audiences (Ṭabātabāʾī, 1976, vol. 3, 114-115). Whereas, according to ʾAllāmah, human mental concepts and conventions are also formed in society and are influenced by historical and social conditions (Ṭabātabāʾī, 1976, vol. 3, 110). The belief that divine knowledge is expressed in the form of human's mental concepts and conventions, when considered alongside the notion that mental concepts and conventions are the products of social and historical conditions, results in the concept

that regards human's understanding of God's word is influenced by their social and historical situation.

On the basis of what has been said, it can be concluded that ʾAllāmah Ṭabātabāʾī's interpretive thoughts lead to the idea that man, as the interpreter and subject of understanding the Qur'an, necessarily understands or interprets the deving text in a particular situation, which is primarily spiritual. However, one cannot ignore the fact that the historical and social circumstanc of the interpreter is also influential in shaping this situation, since as ʾAllāmah claims, on the one hand, the Qur'anic text has multiple semantic levels, and on the other hand, the interpreter deals with the text at a specefic spiritual statuse, as well as in the concrete social and historical circumstance, reaching the meaning under such situation. While the situation of man is commensurate with his spiritual rank; moreover, his previous knowledge and the semantic expectations that arise from his historical and social situation also influence the formation of this situation and lead the process of understanding and interpreting the divin text. It is worth noting, however, that ʾAllāmah Ṭabātabāʾī's interpretive theory does not in any way imply an unambiguous acceptance of the commentator's perspective and it cannot be deduced from their interpretative arguments that all the interpreter's perunderstandings, including their presuppositions, prejudice and their anticipations of meaning are valid and applicable to the process of interpreting and understanding the Qur'an. Rather, the interpreter's presuppositions, prejudices, and anticipations of meaning are valid as far as they are consistent and compatible with the consititutive preunderstandings, and hence are justified in the process of interpretation.

Imposed and Non-Imposed Preunderstandings: Differences

The consistency and adaptability of non-imposed preunderstandings with the constitutive ones can be transformed into a measure, distinguishing between non-impposed and imposed preunderstandings. By using such a cornerstone it is also possible to account for the invalidity of some philosophical, theological, scientific, mystical, or narrative precepts from the perspective of ʾAllāmah Ṭabātabāʾī's interpretive discourse; since the interpretive approach of some theologists, philosophers, mystics, and Sufis, as well as some contemporary commentators familiar with modern sciences have been associated with an neglect of a number of preunderstadings, resulting in the misunderstanding of the meaning of the revelatory text or its arbitrary interpretation.

ʾAllāmah Ṭabātabāʾī's view of arbitrary interpretation or exaggeration of the revelatory text has been the result of ignoring the outer meanings of the Qur'an, so it can be said that this approach has ignored these constitutive text-specific preunderstandings:

- The Qur'an has inner and outer meanings.
- The inner and outer meanings do not oppose one another in the Qur'an.

According to ʾAllāmah, the interpretive approach of some mystics and Sufis has ignored the outer meanings of the verses. He also criticizes this interpretive approach for ignoring the linguistic structure of the revelatory text. On the basis of this analysis, it can be concluded that this destructive interpretive approach has neglected a number of constitutive preunderstandings. Although ʾAllāmah refers only to the mystics and Sufis and considers their interpretations to be arbitrary, such a condition can be generalized and any interpretive approach that ignores the aforementioned preunderstandings can be regarded as a destructive approach, or an interpretive diversion. He notes that such diversive interpretations ultimately leads to an arbitrary interpretation of the revelatory text.

According to ʾAllāmah Ṭabātabāʾī, stasis of intellect and the subsequent distorted misunderstanding have been the result of the ignoring the inner meanings of the Qur'an; hence, it can be said that this approach has ignored such constitutive text-specific preunderstandings:

- The text of the Qur'an includes various layers of meanings.
- The relationship between these layers of meaning is longitudinal and ascendental.

ʾAllāmah considers the interpretive approach of some narrators of *hadith* and descriptivists of this kind, he also remarks that some narrators of *hadith* and descriptivists simply avoided contemplative interpretation of the inner meanings of the Qur'an, and lacked the advantage of rational thinking by limiting their interpretation to the outer meaning. Thus, the interpretive approach of some narrators of *hadith* and descriptivists has ignored a number of constitutive preunderstandings. This condition can also be generalized and, in addition to interpretive approach of narattors of *hadith* and descriptivists, includes any interpretive approach in which the perunderstandings have been ignored. Such an approach is also considered to be destructive to the process of interpretation and at once an interpretive diversion, since by not thinking about inner meaning, this approach culminates to semantic missunderstandins; for instance, remaining static at the outer meaning of certain verses and creates an anthropomorphic image of God, resulting in a distorted understanding that God has a body and a corpoeal presence.

Conclusion

Engaging with any text, including religious texts, and attempting to understand, interpret, describe, critique, evaluate, is always accompanied by a hermeneutic approach. It, however, doesn’t mean that our approach to the text all the time occurs in a hermeneutic theoretical discourse, but rather that our meta-beliefs about the text, about the meaning, and about the understanding and interpretation, determine how we interact with the text. When we try to understand the meaning of the text, it is consciously or unconsciously an epistemological reading of meaning fermented in our mind by which we search for meaning in the text. We have preunderstandings about the text, the author, and the subject of the text that guide our process of understanding and interpreting.

Hermeneutics teaches us how to organize these preunderstandings, how to recognize our own prejudices and to recognize valid from invalid, to recognize non-desctructive and destructive and to to identify constitutive and non-constitutive, how to direct our approach to the text, and how to interact with the text and what to look for in that interaction. In other word, hermeneutics enhances the unconscious side of the process of understanding and interpretation to the area of conscious reflection.

ʾAllāmah Ṭabātabāʾī's interpretive approach to the Qur'an is undoubtedly distinguished from other text, and by his belief in its distinctive hermeneutic privileges. Although he is following a path that had previously been followed by the *Mu'tazala* theologians and could be termed a humanistic way of examining the concept of revelation; nevertheless, he does consider special privileges for the revelatory text. Although ʾAllāmah does not see any difference between human language and divine language in terms of structure and linguistic functions, this does not mean that he does not distinguish the divine text from human texts; rather, he believes that the distinction between divine and human word is intended in its distinctively different meaning. ʾAllāmah, therefore, despite having a thoroughly humanistic conception of the nature and mechanism of understanding and interpreting the Qur'an, attributes specifications to the meaning of the divin text that distinguishes it from other human texts and added specific norms and principles of the Qur'anic interpretation to the general interpretive norms and principles.

Although the cases studied here as constitutive and non-constitutive preunderstanding, imposing and non-imposing, as well as non-constituttive and non-imposing are all interpretive preunderstandings of ʾAllāmah Ṭabātabāʾī's hermeneutic discourse, and all have been obtained by analyzing and examining his writings; nevertheless, the existence of such preunderstandings in this examination, allows for the formation of a new categorization wherein interpretive preunderstandings can be used in other studies, especially in examination of the sacred texts by referring to the following division: constitutive and non-constitutive, and dividing non-constitutive preunderstandings into imposing and non-imposing. Thus, what is considered to be the privileges of the sacred text will be regarded as a constitutive preunderstanding in the process of interpreting. Some of these points are based on the interpreter's presuppositions about what is divin text, deriving from his theological beliefs. These are constitutive text-specific preunderstandings, others are based on the anthropological beliefs of the interpreter, being categorized as constitutive interpreter-specificpreunderstandings; while all of the interpreter's assumptions and predictions about particular ways of understanding and interpreting the divin text are considered to be the constitutive interpretation-specific preunderstanding. Non-constitutive preunderstandings, in so far as they are consistent and coherent with the constitutive preunderstandings are considered non-imposing, otherwise the become imposing and destructive to the process of understanding and interpreting the divin text.

References

Al-Muẓafar, M. (2006). *Al-Manṭiq (Logic)*, Dār-al-Taʿārīf li-l-Maṭbūʿāt. (in Arabic)

Al-Ṣadr, M. (1989). *Durūs fī ʿilm al-Uṣūl (lessons in Islamic Jurisprudence)*, Al-Jamʿīyat al-Modarisīn. (in Persian)

Al-Uwsī, A. (2002). *Ravesh-e Allameh Ṭabāṭabāʾī dar Tafsīr Qur'an* (Allameh Tabataba'i 's Method in Interpreting Qur'an), Translated by H. Mīr-Jalīlī, Islamic Development Organization (in Persian)

Babaei, A. (2010). *Makāteb-e Tafsīrī (Interpretive Schools)*, Research Institute of Ḥuwzeh and University in collaboration with Samt Press (in Persian)

Babaei, A., & et al. (2013). *Raveshshenāsī-ye Tafsīr-e Qur'an (Methodology for Interpretation of the Qur'an)*, Research Institute of Ḥuwzeh and University in collaboration with Samt Press. (in Persian)

Campanini. M. (2010). *Qur'an: Modern Muslim Interpretations,* Translated by C. Higgitt, Taylor and Francis Group

Corbin, H. (2013). *Islam Irani: Chashmandāzhāy-e Maʿnavī va Falsafī* (*En Islam Iranien: Aspects spirituels et philosophiques)*, Vol. 1, Translated by I. Rahmatī, Sūfīyā Press (in Persian)

Fakhri, M. (2000). *Islamic Philosophy Theology, and Mysticism: A Short Introduction*, Washington DC: One world Publications (in Persian)

Gadamer, H. (2004). *Truth and Method*, Translated and revised by J. Weinsheimer & D. M. Marshal, Continuum Publishing Group

Heidegger, M. (1996). *Being and Time*, translated by J. Stambaugh, State University of New York Press

Mojtahed-e Shabestari, M. (2014). *Hermeneutic, Ketab va Sonat (Hermeneutics, the Scripture and the Tradition)*, Tarh-e No (in Persian)

Moṭahharī, M. (1971). "introduction" in: Ṭabātabāʾī. Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn, *Usūl-e Falsafeh va ravesh-e Realism (The Principles of Philosophy and the Method of Realism)* Dār al-ʿilm Institute

Mūsāvī-e Tabrīzī, M. (1984). ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī's Philosophical Ideas in "Al-Mīzān" in *Dovomīn Yādnāmeh ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī*, pp. 328-350, The Institute of Cultural Studies and Researches, Iranian Research Institute of Philosophy. (in Persian)

Nasr, H. (2003). *Ṣadr al-Muteʾalihīn Shirazī va Ḥekmat-e Mutiʾālīyih [Sadr al-Din Shirazī and His Transcendent Theosophy: Background, Life and Works]*, Translated by H. Sūzanchī, Research and Publishing Office of Sohrevardī

Nasr, H. (2006). *Islamic Philosophy from its Origins to the Present*, Philosophy in the land of Prophecy, State University of New York Press

Ṣadrā, S. (1981). *Al-Ḥikmat al-Mutiʾālīyih fi al-Asfār al-Aqlīyat al-Arbaʾh*, Vol. 7, Dar Al-Iḥyāʾ wa al-Turāth al-ʿrabī

Ṣadrā, S. (1984). *Mafātīḥ al-Ghiyb*, revised by M. Khajavī, The Institute of Cultural Studies and Researches, Iranian Research Institute of Philosophy (in Persian)

Ṣadrā, S. (1987) *Tafsīr al-Qur'an al-Karīm*, Revised by M. Khajavī, Bīdār Press. (in Persian)

Ṭabāṭabāʾī, M. (1974). *Qur'an dar Islam* [*Qur'an in Islam)*, Tolūʿ Press. (in Persian)

Ṭabāṭabāʾī, M. (1996). *Al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'an [An exegesis of the Qur'an]*, Vol: 1, 2,3,5,10, Scientific Institute for Publications (In Arabic)

Ṭabāṭabāʾī, M. (1997). *Shiʿi dar Islam [Shiʿi in Islam]*, The Office of Islamic press, Society of Seminary Teachers of Qom. (in Persian)

Vaezi, A. (2011). *Nazarīy-eh Tafsīr-e Matn [A Theory of Text Interpretation*], Research Institute of Ḥuwzeh and University. (in Persian)

Journal of Philosophical Investigations
Print ISSN: 2251-7960 Online ISSN: 2423-4419
Homepage: https://philosophy.tabrizu.ac.ir

Mystic Intoxication (Mastī) and the Meaning of Life: Fayḍ Kāshānī's Mystic Poetry through the Lens of John Cottingham's Philosophy

Reihaneh Davoodi Kahaki✉ [1] | **Rasoul Rahbari Ghazani**[2]

1. Research Fellow, Department of Mysticism, University of Religions and Denominations, Iran. E-mail: reihaneh.davoodi65@gmail.com
2. Corresponding Author, Research Fellow, Department of Mysticism, University of Religions and Denominations, Iran; Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Philosophy of Religion, Istanbul University, Turkiye. E-mail: r.rahbarighazani@ogr.iu.edu.tr

Article Info

Article type:
Research Article

Article history:
Received 18 March 2024
Received in revised form 10 June 2024
Accepted 16 June 2024
Published online 07 September 2024

Keywords:
mystic intoxication, Fayḍ Kāshānī, John Cottingham, Persian poetry, meaning of life, Sufism, comparative studies.

ABSTRACT

Adopting a hermeneutic approach and horizontal and vertical interpretation methods, this study primarily explores the metaphysical concept of love-induced mystic intoxication in the Iranian polymath Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī's mystic poetry. Secondarily, it discusses the implications of mystic intoxication in the meaning of life. Furthermore, the paper briefly positions Fayḍ Kāshānī's account in the contemporary categories of the meaning of life: supernaturalism, naturalism, and nihilism. Additionally, elucidating the perspectives of the contemporary philosopher John Cottingham, the paper examines Kāshānī's view through Cottingham's philosophy. Central to Kāshānī's poetry, ignited by divine love, the spiritual seeker transcendends their self, getting absorbed into the Divine to the point where they become unaware of their self. This epistemic unawareness is mastī (intoxication) or bīkhudī (selflessness)—which, for Kāshānī, has profound implications on life's meaning. Unlike the "extreme God-centric" view—which situates the purpose of life solely in fulfilling God's purpose—Kāshānī's "moderate God-soul-centric supernaturalist" view recognizes that while divine love, intoxication, and knowledge infuse more profound depth to the meaning of life, other aspects also add to the meaning in life—like the simpler forms of piety and everyday existence. A framework in which morality is instrumental. Similarly, for Cottingham, life has value and meaning beyond solely fulfilling God's purpose. Nevertheless, while basic pleasures and desires might independently exist and have meaning, higher elements like moral virtue, crucial to life's meaning, are contingent on God's purpose.

Cite this article: Davoodi Kahaki, R. & Rahbari Ghazani, R. (2024). Mystic Intoxication (Mastī) and the Meaning of Life: Fayḍ Kāshānī's Mystic Poetry through the Lens of John Cottingham's Philosophy. *Journal of Philosophical Investigations*, 18(48), 361-380. https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.61028.3731

© The Author(s).
Publisher: University of Tabriz.
https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.61028.3731

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī (d. 1091/1681 H/CE) was a prominent figure in 17th-century Iran, born in Kāshān. Despite being strangely less well-known in the West, Kāshānī significantly impacted the intellectual and religious landscapes during the Safavid period. As a Twelver-Imam Shīʿa Muslim, Kāshānī's expertise spanned multiple disciplines: philosophy, mysticism, poetry, jurisprudence, and Quranic exegesis. Kāshānī's formative years were influenced by eminent mentors like Shaykh Bahāʾī, Mullā Ṣadrā, Mīr Findiriskī, Mīr Dāmād, and Allāmah Muḥammad Taqī Majlesī, associating him with the illustrious Isfahan school, celebrated for its Sadrain "transcendental theosophy."[1] His works reveal an interdisciplinary approach, intertwining Scripture with reflection and encouraging seekers to pair religious texts with personal introspection and faith-building exercises.[2]

Let us first clarify some critical terms. "*Mastī*," or "intoxication," in Persian mystical literature refers to a spiritual state in which an individual becomes so immersed in the Divine that they lose awareness of their self. This "epistemic unawareness" is also described as "*bīkhudī*" or "selflessness" in the same literary context (to elaborate).

Coming to another significant term, exploring the "meaning *of* life," we enter the existential domain, often a philosophical and theological discourse subject, to determine human existence's objective "ultimate meaning." It tackles questions like "Why do we exist?" with various interpretations from different cultures, religions, and philosophical schools. Some view the meaning of life as fulfilling a divine goal, while others see it as seeking knowledge or happiness. Shifting the focus to a more personal perspective, the "meaning *in* life" pertains to the individual's discovery of purpose, significance, or value in life. This concept is subjective, emphasizing factors that lend worth and satisfaction to one's everyday life. People may find this meaning through relationships, careers, achievements, or hobbies, essentially concerning what gives personal significance to one's life. This paper primarily explores the meaning "of" life and secondarily examines the meaning "in" life.

1.2. Research's Significance, Objectives, and Thesis

This study explores the concept of love-induced mystic intoxication, *mastī* in Farsi, through the poetry of Fayḍ Kāshānī. Secondarily, it discusses the implications of *mastī* in the meaning of life. Furthermore, the paper positions Kāshānī's account in the contemporary categories of the meaning of life: supernaturalism, naturalism, and nihilism. Additionally, the study examines Kāshānī's view through the lens of the contemporary philosopher John Cottingham's philosophy, drawing parallels and contrasts and exploring the potential for mutual enrichment between their viewpoints on the meaning of life.

---

[1] For a comprehensive study on the Isfahan school, refer to Nasr's work (Nasr & et al., 2006, 209-259).
[2] For further information about Kāshānī's biography in English, see (Algar, 1999).

Exploring life's meaning revitalizes philosophical discussions from their mere abstraction. This inquiry's significance and complexity persist, as Cottingham articulates in *On the Meaning of Life*, stating that "the problem does not go away; the search for life's meaning, confused or not, retains as powerful a hold on us as ever" (Cottingham, 2003, 2). This raises a pivotal question: What do we truly aim to comprehend in seeking life's meaning? Cottingham, there **s**uggests, "Partly, it seems, we are asking about our relationship with the rest of the universe—who we are and how we came to be here." Like Cottingham, to Kāshānī, the meaning of life is chiefly about our connection with God and our ties with the universe. Cottingham, a contemporary expert on this subject, offers substantial contributions. Equally, Fayḍ Kāshānī, paralleling mystic Persian poets like Rūmī, is notable for his emphasis on divine love and intoxication, rendering his insights highly relevant to this study.

The paper's thesis posits that Kāshānī's Eastern and Cottingham's Western perspectives complement each other and enrich our understanding of the meaning of life. Kāshānī's perspective helps Cottingham with the complexities of spirituality and its relationship to the meaning of life. Cottingham's broader view of spirituality provides a more comprehensive context for Kāshānī's focus on mysticism, allowing for a more holistic understanding of the spiritual journey across cultures and religions. Kāshānī's view is that divine love adds a profound depth to the meaning of life, leading to mystic intoxication and selflessness and culminating in divine enlightenment and unity. Unlike the "extreme God-centric" view, which places meaning solely on fulfilling God's purpose for human creation, Kāshānī's "moderate God-soul-centric supernaturalist" view recognizes that although divine love, intoxication, and knowledge add more profound depth to the meaning of life, more superficial forms of piety and everyday existence also contribute to the meaning in life. In Kāshānī's framework, morality is instrumental to realizing life's meaning. Similarly, for Cottingham, life has meaning beyond fulfilling God's purpose. However, while basic pleasures and desires might have independent meanings, higher elements like moral virtue, crucial to life's meaning, are contingent on God's purpose.

This paper contributes to comparative studies and presents contemporary individuals with a transcendental meaning of life. It presents a fiery love, inducing a mystical intoxication that eases life's challenges and offers a glimpse of transcendental realms of existence.

1.3. Methodology

This paper adopts a hermeneutic approach and intercultural and intracultural contextualization methods, placing Fayḍ Kāshānī's thought in the context of Persian, Islamic, Neoplotonic, ancient Greek, and contemporary Western contexts. The interpretive methodology of this exploration consists of horizontal and vertical interpretations. Horizontal interpretation clarifies specific terms and expressions in the poems and highlights references to the Quran and *ḥadīth*. Vertical interpretation, on the other hand, goes deeper into the meanings of the texts by connecting the

findings from the horizontal phase to the author's entire body of work, as well as the originating and other traditions.

1.4. Literature Review

Let us start with Fayḍ Kāshānī's works. A testament to Kāshānī's prolificacy is the extensive list of his writings, which totals 116, addressing topics from philosophy and gnosticism to poetry and religious studies. In philosophy and gnosticism/mysticism (*ʿirfān*), Kāshānī's contributions stand out. He elucidates the spiritual journey's foundational principles in *Zād al-Sālik*. His work, *ʿIlm al-Yaqīn,* draws upon the Quran, *Sunnah*, and the narratives of *Ahl al-Bayt* (PBUT). Conversely, *ʿAyn al-Yaqīn* delves deeper into philosophical and technical aspects. His poetic expressions, exemplified in his Ghazals, illuminate deep philosophical and mystical themes, often echoing the gradational unity of existence championed by the Sadrian theosophy. Kāshānī's extensive commentary on the Quran and contribution to *ḥadīth* are particularly noteworthy. Some of his distinguished works include *Tafsīr aṣ-Ṣāfī* and *al-Wāfī*, as a Quranic commentary and Shīʿī *ḥadīth* collection, respectively. Additionally, his theological writings, such as *Muḥajja al-Bayḍāʾ fī Iḥyaʾ al-ʾIḥyāʾ*, which revises al-Ghazālī's *al-ʾIḥyāʾ al-ʿUlūm al-Dīn*. Fayḍ Kāshānī's multifaceted contributions have left an indelible mark on Islamic scholarship, rendering him a pivotal figure in the annals of Shīʿa intellectual history.

Farsi literature on Fayḍ Kāshānī, while not abundant, offers valuable insights into his works. Mostafā Fayḍ Kāshānī (2002b) provides a comprehensive overview of Kāshānī's life and works in four volumes. Rasoul Jafarian (Fayḍ Kāshānī, 1992a) has edited ten treatises by Kāshānī, adding depth to our understanding of his intellectual realm. Ibrahimi Dinani's (2018) detailed study of Kāshānī's mystical treatise, *al-Kalimāt al-Maknūna*, is noteworthy. Additionally, Mohammad Sadeq Kamelan (2008) delves into Kāshānī's unique philosophical approach, rooted in Islamic traditions and compared with thinkers like Mullā Ṣadrā and Suhrawardī.

The English literature on Fayḍ Kāshānī is less abundant. Lewisohn (2007, 63-134) discusses the perspectives of ʿAbd al-Razzāq Lāhījī and Fayḍ Kāshānī on *taṣawwuf*, *ḥikmat*, and *ʿirfān*. Rahbari Ghazani and Davoodi Kahaki (2024) examine love, attraction (*jadhbe*), and selflessness (*bīkhudī*) in Fayḍ Kāshānī's mystic poetry, and respond to Lewisohn's criticisms of Fayḍ Kāshānī's stance toward Sufism. Henry Corbin (1977, 176-179) offers insights into Kāshānī's view of the "intermediate world" connecting the physical and spiritual realms. Ahmadvand and Naqibi (2011) present a collection from a conference about Kāshānī, covering topics like jurisprudence, mysticism, and poetry. Zargar's (2014) piece evaluates four of Kāshānī's mystical writings, highlighting the influence of *al-Kalimāt al-Maknūna* on the rest. This work also outlines Kāshānī's engagement with Islamic sources and philosophical discussions.

1.5. Subsequent Sections' Overview

In the following sections, beginning with an in-depth analysis of Kāshānī's works, the paper examines his interpretation of love-induced mystic intoxication and its role in understanding life's

profound meaning. This exploration extends to a comparative study with Cottingham's Western philosophical viewpoints, specifically focusing on the role of spirituality and religion in comprehending life's essence.

2. Discussion

2.1. Fayḍ Kāshānī: An Intoxicated Journey to the Meaning of Life

2.1.1. The Metaphor of Wine

The *sharāb* or "wine," a frequent metaphor in Persian mystical literature referring to divine love and knowledge, is central to the spiritual progression. Fayḍ Kāshānī's work, particularly *Dīwān* (G.462:9 and G.544:3),[1] contrasts the effects of "earthly grape wine" with a "spiritual divine wine." Unlike grape wine, he asserts, spiritual wine grants closeness to the Divine. This wine emulates spiritual enlightenment, guiding the seeker towards truth and freeing them from worldly bindings. As Kāshānī describes (*Dīwān*, G.318:4), the divine wine is so potent that it illuminates the heart, acting as a conduit of divine Light.[2]

ساغری ساقی ارواح فرستاد از غیب نشأه‌اش بیخودئی داد که هشیار شدیم

From Unseen, the Saqi of souls, a cup did he bequeath,
Its potion brought selflessness and awakened us from slumber, beneath. (*Dīwān*, G.605:5).[3]

Kāshānī (*Dīwān*, G.349) suggests that only those who have tasted divine love, symbolized by wine, attain genuine awareness. Aligning with his poetic verses, in his treatise, *Mashwāq*, Kāshānī (1992b, 252) clarifies that this wine embodies a combination of taste, ecstasy, and transformative state. This experience brings intoxication and disrupts logical thinking, marking a profound spiritual transition.

In sum, for Kāshānī, divine love, symbolized by wine, signifies an awakening and enlightenment in the spiritual realm.

2.1.2. Divine Attraction and Intoxication

The quest for unity with the Divine is prominently showcased in Persian literature, with mystic scholars using metaphors, allegories, and poetry to illustrate the spiritual odyssey. Kāshānī's *Dīwān* stands out as it vividly narrates the soul's progression, navigating between reason and love, and self-awareness and selflessness, climaxing in a deep connection with the Divine. To our poet, the

[1] For Ghazals 318, 349, and 570, references come from (Fayḍ Kāshānī, n.d.). For other Kāshānī poems, unless specified, the source is (Fayḍ Kāshānī, 2002a). The publication year will be omitted for brevity, and only ghazal, denoted by "G," and line numbers will be cited. For instance, the in-text citation (G.744:1-5) means ghazal 744, lines 1-5.

[2] Similarly, but less frequently, Kāshānī mentions the intoxicating allure of divine "manifestation" (G.206:5), the "wine of unity" (G.432:16), and the "vision of His Eye" (G.415:4, G.631:4) intoxicate the beholder."

[3] All translations of the poems are ours; however, to avoid redundancy, "own translation" is omitted in the references.

meaning of life is closely linked with the soul's intoxicated journey toward achieving unity with the Divine. Kāshānī's poetry implies that the purpose of human life is to attain divine love and knowledge, which leads to divine unity. This section delves into Kāshānī's portrayal of this spiritual passage, its phases, and the profound moments defining each, emphasizing the synergy of knowledge[1] and divine intoxication in achieving ultimate union with the Divine.

In his *Dīwān* (G.744:1-5), Kāshānī delineates a comprehensive journey toward divine attraction, self-transcendence, and unity with the Divine. The voyage is initiated with reflection, understanding the limitations of reason, and then consistently contemplating God. This harmonious blend of reason and mysticism culminates in *muḥabbat*—an elementary state of divine love. As this love deepens, an overpowering attraction or *jadhbe*—an intensified divine love—surfaces in the seeker's heart. This compelling force leads to "selflessness" (*bīkhudī*) and union with the Divine.[2] This attraction signifies the profound relationship between human souls and the Divine, elevating life's meaning beyond the mundane.

Divine attraction transcends mere thought, manifesting as an intense, unconditional ecstasy characterized by sensations of purity and cleanliness. This experience resembles the transformation of a once-muddy glass into a state of clarity, evoking a luminous and pristine feeling "in" the heart. Accompanying this is a profound, meditative calmness and concentration akin to a deep absorption that brings one closer to God. Often, this state leads to a temporary diminishment of the five senses, comparable to sensations felt when awakening from sleep (Rahbari Ghazani and Davoodi Kahaki, 2024, 13).

Attraction is foundational to Kāshānī's mysticism, as exemplified in Dīwān (G.744:1-5). Preceding attraction is the experience of wajd, or "ecstasy," which designates brief flashes of attraction.

Here, Dāwūd Qayṣarī (Qayṣarī, 1978, 9) can elucidate Kāshānī's perspective on selflessness. The spiritual journey oscillates between *maḥw* (selflessness) and *ṣaḥw* (sobriety). While *maḥw* represents a state of intoxication bestowed by divine Grace, *ṣaḥw* epitomizes the sober reawakening from *maḥw*. As the father of Sufism, Ibn ʿArabī points out, following the "annihilation of the will," or *fanāʾ-i irāda*—in which the seeker's will aligns with the divine Will—the pinnacle of *maḥw* manifests during "annihilation of the attributes," or *fanāʾ-i ṣifāt,* where one transition from human attributes to divine traits yet preserving the individual's reality (Ibn ʿArabī, 2004, 36; Yasrebi, 1991, 450-459). The annihilation of will and attributes are often collectively termed "annihilation

[1] Pursuing knowledge is central to Islamic thought. For instance, according to al-Fārābī, the ultimate goal and meaning of human life is attaining happiness (*saʿāda*), which emerges through achieving initial perfection in the material world and subsequent perfection in the afterlife (Fārābī, 1991, 37). Human perfection is contingent upon acquiring virtues founded on knowledge and ethical living (Fārābī, 1992, 119). This synthesis emphasizes the interdependence of knowledge, moral existence, and the pursuit of ultimate well-being. It underscores knowledge's foundational role in achieving worldly and spiritual fulfillment.

[2] The pinnacle of the spiritual path, as Kāshānī emphasizes (*Dīwān*, G.744), is a transformative self-transcendence after attraction, where one's ego dissolves, leading to a profound shift in one's being.

in God," or *fanāʾ-i fi-llāh*. Notably, in the *fanāʾ*, the human self and attributes do *not* essentially perish; instead, the individual is absorbed into the Divine to the point where they become "unaware" of their self. This "epistemic unawareness"—contrary to the misnomer: "ontological perishing"—is termed in Persian mystical literature as *mastī* (intoxication) or *bīkhudī* (selflessness).

هر جا دلی که عشق تو در وی کند نزول هوشش رباید و خردش مست می‌کند

Any heart where your love finds its dwelling place,

Its awareness and reason are swept away, intoxicated in love's embrace. (Kāshānī, *Dīwān*, G.356:2)

In *Dīwān-e Shams Tabrīzī*, Rūmī echoes a similar sentiment:

آن لحظه باخود آیم کز محو بیخود آیم شش دانگ آن گهم که بیرون ز پنج و چارم

When from the *maḥw*, selfless I emerge, to myself I solemnly return,
Beyond senses and reason, in full consciousness, I discern. (Rūmī 1997, *Ghazaliyāt*, G.1693:8)

2.1.3. Primordial Covenant and Intoxication

Like Rūmī's work (1997, *Ghazalīyāt*, G.204:8), Kāshānī's poems frequently assert that love's intoxication started in the "Primordial Covenant," or *Alast* Day,[1] alluding to the Creation where God asked humans, "'Am I not your Lord?' they said, 'Yea, we bear witness' …" (Quran, 7:172).[2] Two exemplifying verses where Kāshānī links this intoxication to *Alast* and Creation are as follows.

از باده روز الست گشتند جانها جمله مست لیک از خمار آن شراب در سینه‌ها غمهاستی

From the wine of *Alast*'s Day, all souls drunken,
Yet, from that drink's haze all hearts by a sorrow haunted. (Kāshānī, *Dīwān*, G.879:4)[3]

دیده از خواب عدم نگشوده گردیدند مست چون ندای «کن» بگوش انس و جان انداختی

In non-existence's slumber deep, to intoxication they'd fall,
When "Be!" the divine Decree, echoed to human and soul, enthralled. (Kāshānī, *Dīwān*, G.930:7)

[1] The term comes from the Arabic word *Alastu*, which means "Am I not?"
[2] This paper draws its Quranic references from Nasr er. al. (2015), *The Study Quran*. The citations include only the chapter and verse numbers, omitting the publication year.
[3] The "sorrow" mentioned here alludes to the pain of separation, where the soul, already in oneness with the Divine, was separated and sent to the material world.

As mentioned in the above poem, the "Be" decree alludes to a Quranic verse (2:117) discussing God's Creation: "When He decrees a thing, He only says to it, 'Be!' and it is." With this verse in mind, let us examine the love theme in this poem more closely. The theme links to Islamic mysticism, where love initiates Creation. This perspective stems from a prophetic *ḥadīth* where God, the "Hidden Treasure," yearns to be recognized, leading to the universe's genesis. The *ḥadīth* states, "I was a Hidden Treasure; I loved to be recognized, so I created the creatures to be recognized." This *ḥadīth* suggests a "love" in God to be known. This thought intimates a "knowledge" distribution fundamentally rooted in love: God loves to endow knowledge upon Creation. Thus, Creation is the product of God's love and inclination to share knowledge.

When viewed through the prism of this *ḥadīth* and Quranic verse, the underlying message in Kāshānī's verse becomes apparent. He contends that divine love imbued the created beings through the Command "Be," intoxicating them and propelling them toward acquiring divine knowledge—and, ultimately, divine unity.

Kāshānī underscores that the very essence of life is rooted in God's intrinsic yearning to be acknowledged, which places love and knowledge as its central themes. This perspective goes beyond a shallow life, urging us to actively seek, recognize, and love the Divine. In doing so, we deepen our understanding and connection with the Divine. Kāshānī cites the Primordial Covenant to accentuate the innate bond between humans and the Divine. Through this reference, he conveys that each life is divinely ordained with a purpose deeply embedded in pursuing love and knowledge—two factors that chiefly correlate to the meaning of life.

2.1.4. Perfection Through Love and ʿirfān

Diving into the intricacies of love's impact on the spiritual journey requires examining the inner dimension of Islamic spirituality, which can be referred to through various terms. The most prevalent one is "Sufism," or *taṣawwuf*, often linked with Sunnism, while *ʿirfān*, usually translated as "Gnosticism" or "Mysticism," is a more inclusive term, though frequently associated with Shīʿī Islam. Given the extensive scope of *ʿirfān*, covering both Sunnism and Shiʿism—and considering Kāshānī's Shīʿī orientation—this paper opts for *ʿirfān* over *taṣawwuf*.

In this discussion, Jaʿfarī Tabrīzī's groundbreaking work, ʿIrfān-i Islāmī, is indispensable. According to Jaʿfarī (2022, 29), *ʿIrfān* begins with an "awakening" from purely natural life, a realization that one's existence is on a trajectory towards goodness and perfection, passing through "intelligible life" and striving "to be in the attraction of absolute perfection," culminating in *liqāʾ Allāh* (beatific vision; *vision Dei*). Jaʿfarī, there, defines *ʿirfān* as "the expansion and encompassing of the 'human I' in the cosmos by situating the 'I' on the path of absolute perfection's attraction, culminating in the *liqāʾ Allāh*."

As described by Qayṣarī (1978, 28-31), after the initial "awakening," referred to as *yaqẓa*, one turns away from the *Maqām-i nafs*—i.e., the station characterized by animalistic human aspects such as lust, anger, and greed—turning towards God, and through ascetic practices, progresses to

the illumination of the heart and spirit, referred to as *maqām-i qalb* and *maqām-i rūh*, where they receive intuition and divine knowledge.

As the intellect and heart are perfected, the human self transitions from the "natural I" to the "celestial (*malakūtī*) I," unlocking their potential and enabling them to expand, encompassing the cosmos (Jaʿfarī Tabrīzī, 2022, 33). Ibn Sīnā discusses such individuals in *al-Ishārāt* (*Namaṭ* 8; *Tanbīh* 13), where he (2013, 354) points out that the *ʿurafā* (plural of *ʿārif*, a practitioner of *ʿirfān*) are cleansed from the desires and animalistic lusts, freed from the worldly distractions, and turned entirely to the realm of divine and bliss, receive highest of perfections, reaching spiritual constitution and the greatest pleasures. This state greatly influences the meaning of life. *ʿIrfān*, in bringing about the greatest pleasures—as Ibn Sīnā points out—results in freedom from worldly desires, thereby allowing for a life filled with profound meaning and a continuous journey toward perfection.

Returning to the concept of love, its relationship with *ʿirfān* becomes apparent. Love, characterized by a desire for perfection and an inclination towards divine Beauty, sets the seeker on a path of absolute perfection, with *ʿirfān* serving as a knowledge-based and practical guide along this path. This shared relationship highlights that love and *ʿirfān* are mutually complementary, guiding one towards perfection in their journey towards the Divine (Jaʿfarī Tabrīzī, 2022, 61).[1]

2.1.5. Kāshānī's Portrayal of Intoxication and the Quest for Meaning

Kāshānī's poems portray the intoxicated person as living beyond the bounds of conventional morality and religious formalities; they dwell in a perpetual divine bliss created by divine love (*Dīwān*, G.128:4; G.147:2, G.892:9). Kāshānī's portrayal suggests that a true understanding of life's essence may exist beyond superficial righteousness or religiosity. Genuine meaning is transcendent and rooted in a profound spiritual connection with the Divine. Kāshānī neither dismisses morality nor piety; he fervently practiced and wrote about them. Here, he is only challenging superficial perceptions.

Kāshānī (G.420:1-5) further portrays the divine wine's intoxication as a heart cleanser and a path towards justice and fairness. The divine elixir's arrival is marked by the metaphor of a mythical bird descending from a mountain. The poem emphasizes how spiritual intoxication has different impacts on the spiritual lover and the pious. It brings empty boasting to the latter but self-transcendence to the former. The pure wine leaves no heart untouched, leaving nothing but the heart's name behind, making them signless—i.e., making the journeyer transcend their self.

[1] On the spiritual journey, as Mullā Aḥmad Narāqī (1245/1829–1830 H/CE) points out (2012, 711), the most profound love should be reserved for God, as none but He truly merits such devotion. Love for others is justified only by their connection to God. Any affection stemming from different reasons reveals ignorance about God. Thus, humans should love all created beings as arrays of the Absolute Existence's Light. In Islamic mystical texts, this generic affection is termed "metaphorical love," distinguishing it from the "real love" one has toward God. This all-encompassing love enriches life's meaning, leading one to show affection and compassion to all the created realms—humans, animals, and the environment.

However, the pious only understands the superficial traits of this wine, unaware of its inner transformative powers.

Thus, Fayḍ Kāshānī adds a profound layer to the meaning of life by highlighting the transformative power of intoxication and portraying the heart's role as a transformative vessel, making clear that receiving divine truth requires internal purification. By embracing divine love, not only does one's heart undergo cleansing, but it also directs the individual toward justice. This underscores each person's indispensable personal journey to fathom life's meaning. Kāshānī lays out spiritual stages that offer a structured lens through which one can discern life's meaning—an evolution guiding one towards self-transcendence and intoxication. Kāshānī's representation of this love-induced intoxication epitomizes a metaphysical journey that beckons one to address life's most profound queries. Such an experience intimates that the true meaning of life surpasses mere earthly bounds, touching the divine realm.

2.1.6. Weaving Kāshānī's Insights into a Picture of Meaning

Fayḍ Kāshānī's works offer a nuanced perspective on the meaning of life, presenting it as a journey toward divine unity deeply rooted in love, intoxication, knowledge, and transcendence. In his poetry, Kāshānī eloquently depicts a transformative journey where the seeker cultivates a deep and intimate connection with the Divine. Employing intoxication metaphors, he illustrates how this relationship transcends conventional understanding, infusing life with a deeper, more meaningful dimension.

Kāshānī challenges individuals to transcend superficial notions of religiosity, urging them to seek a more profound connection with the Divine. He contends that true spirituality surpasses mere outward expressions of piety, advocating for a transformative love for the Divine that can lead to a richer, more fulfilling existence. His works portray life as a metaphysical journey, a quest for divine knowledge and unity, intertwining the Creation narrative with themes of love and intoxication. This portrayal presents life as an opportunity to transcend the self and embrace a grand, divine reality.

Centering on Shīʿī *ʿirfān*, Fayḍ Kāshānī's poetry emphasizes the inner spiritual journey toward achieving divine knowledge and unity. This journey necessitates transcending human animalistic traits, perfecting intellect and heart, and cultivating a life of perfection. Kāshānī depicts divine love as a transformative force capable of purifying the heart, inspiring justice and fairness, and deepening the understanding of life's purpose. This spiritual awakening empowers individuals to shed worldly desires and pursue a relentless quest for perfection. This inspired justice imbues life with significance and depth, guiding individuals toward moral and just behavior. Additionally, religious perspectives suggest that justice extends into the afterlife, offering hope and infusing life with purpose. This belief motivates righteous conduct and deters immoral actions, fostering humane, ethical, and just societies.

Furthermore, Fayḍ Kāshānī advocates for a universal love and compassion that extends beyond the individual to encompass all creation. This all-encompassing love enhances life's significance, encouraging a collective existence marked by affection and empathy toward all living beings and the environment. Kāshānī's works contribute profoundly to our understanding of the meaning of life.

Along with his poems, Fayḍ Kāshānī's (1992c, 211) discourse, as presented in his treatise *Ulfat Nāme* or *The Book of Companionship*, spans various domains of life, including social, religious, political, ethical, psychological, and spiritual spheres, offering a practical approach to meaning *in* life. He stresses the importance of developing brotherhoods in pursuing God's pleasure and advocates for unity through spiritual and ethical bonds. This unity is actualized in the communal ties that foster social harmony and collective well-being.

Fayḍ Kāshānī urges seekers to cultivate mutual affection. This is achieved by adorning themselves with qualities such as congeniality, graciousness, and the ability to overlook each other's faults. He suggests that such interactions could gradually evolve into natural affection, strengthening over time. By doing so, individuals embody the spirit of *ukhuwwat*, or brotherhood, enhancing their social, religious, psychological, political, and spiritual lives (Kāshānī, 1992c, 212).

To ensure the efficacy of this brotherhood, Kāshānī (1992c, 210-216) prescribes establishing a community with a fixed number of brethren governed by principles aligned with both the *Sharīʿa* and the spiritual path. Kāshānī calls seekers to carefully select a group whose hearts possess a certain purity and spiritual affinity and establish a brotherhood bond among them, as the Prophet (PBUH) did among his companions. Kāshānī's point suggests that not everyone is suited for such brotherhood; the brethren should be spiritually and ethically prepared and committed. Members are to set ground rules and hold each other accountable to the principles, thereby habituating themselves to virtuous behaviors. Such disciplines include refraining from gossiping, lying, sinning, safeguarding each other's secrets, honoring commitments, and engaging with kindness and patience.

In his brotherhood discussion, Kāshānī (1992c, 216) uses the Persian term *ulfat*, or "affinity," encompassing affection, love, and fondness in friendship. He delineates three degrees of affinities: "most exclusive affinity" (*ulfat-i akhaṣṣ*) is possible only between two individuals, "special affinity" (*ulfat-i khāṣṣ*) is suitable among five or six persons, and "general affinity" (*ulfat-i ʿālam*) that can encompass an entire community. Each level carries its responsibilities, though differing in scope. Additional obligations may be determined among the brethren to further this interconnectedness.

In his *Dīwān*, specifically Ghazal 612, Kāshānī (2002b) poetically encapsulates the essence of *Ulfat Nāme* treatise, illustrating the depth of companionship where individuals are not only friends and confidants but also supporters and healers to one another. They stand united, sharing joy and sorrow, wisdom and folly, and are collectively resilient against hardships.

In Kāshānī's *Ulfat Nāme*, coupled with the expressive verses of his ghazal, a model is presented where the search for meaning *in* life is deeply rooted in community engagement. This community is not merely a social grouping but one designed with the threads of divine guidance, weaving its members into a tapestry of shared purpose and unity. Within this community, individuals work collectively to eliminate negative traits and cultivate virtues; they serve as the healers of difficulties and the facilitators of divine proximity for one another. This model shifts the focus from the isolation of individualism to the rich yields of a communal existence.

2.2. John Cottingham: Meaning of Life

Understanding the meaning of life requires contemplating profound questions about human existence and place in the cosmos. Born in 1943, a preeminent figure in religious studies, philosophy of religion, moral philosophy, and early-modern philosophy, John Cottingham delves into these existential inquiries in his book *On the Meaning of Life*. Cottingham explores our relationship with the universe, seeking to unravel the mysteries of who we are and the meaning of our lives. His insights offer a valuable perspective for assessing the thoughts of other philosophical figures, such as Kāshānī, and their interpretations of life's meaning.

2.2.1. Religion as a Frame for Life's Meaning

In his book *On the Meaning of Life*, John Cottingham (2003, 2-11) asserts that religion provides a framework for understanding the meaning of life. According to him, religion transcends individual or cultural perspectives and proposes that a divine or cosmic plan might bestow life with inherent purpose. The pursuit of the meaning of life transcends mere existential inquiry—it taps into our fundamental connection with the universe, our self, and our origin. Cottingham highlights that our relentless search for meaning persists despite its enigmatic nature. This quest often collides with the boundaries of scientific explanation, which, while "aims to provide as complete and comprehensive a description as it can of the universe, no matter how successful and unified the theory it ends up with, it cannot explain why there should be a universe there to be explained" (Cottingham, 2003, 7-8). The profound philosophical question "Why is there something rather than nothing?" suggests that if they exist, answers would be outside space and time, potentially inaccessible and indefinable within our conventional frameworks.

As Cottingham (2003, 8-11) puts it, while science may reach its limits in explaining why there is existence rather than non-existence, religious language stretches to express what science cannot: it attempts to convey the inexpressible and to reveal the unobservable, seeking to endow the universe and human existence with meaning. This spiritual paradigm does not offer a scientific resolution to the existential riddle; however, it can mitigate the existential discomfort of struggling with the bare enigma of being. By positing our destiny as a union with a divine creator, religious belief fosters a sense of security and purpose, countering the fear of insignificance and offering solace in the conviction that our lives hold intrinsic worth within a more extensive, meaningful framework.

In his discourse on religion's role in providing life's meaning, Cottingham (2003, 71-73) examines the challenges of finding purpose within a purely secular framework. He argues that viewing human nature simply as a result of evolutionary processes leaves us without a firm foundation for consistently pursuing goodness. It lacks the normative force to elevate our actions beyond mere survival instincts. In contrast, religion offers a transformative lens. The virtues of a morally good life may be justified without religion; however, religion situates human nature within a broader, divine context. This framework imbues our nature and actions with greater significance, envisaging them as aligned with the desires of a benevolent higher being. This alignment not only lends weight to our moral pursuits but also instills a hopeful resilience. In the face of life's adversities and moral challenges, religion maintains that our efforts contribute to a larger cosmic moral order, thus offering buoyancy to the human spirit in its quest for goodness.

As Alizamani and Daryaniasl put it (2010, 106), adopting a religion and believing in God can give more meaning to life by explaining the universe's creation, suggesting that humans are not a product of chance or purposeless explosion but rather the outcome of a deliberate and meaningful process. This belief offers comfort and peace, acknowledging a spiritual realm that imbues the physical world with meaning and posits a harmonious connection between our existence and a higher reality. It promotes an optimistic view where good ultimately triumphs over evil, and a universal justice exists to compensate for suffering and penalize wrongdoers. Additionally, religion offers a moral foundation—even in its basic form—encouraging ethical behavior motivated by the promise of divine retribution or reward, answering, "Why should we live morally?"

2.2.2. Exploring Spirituality's Role in Personal Transformation and Life's Meaning

John Cottingham (2003, 77-80) examines spirituality's significant impact on bestowing life with meaning and fostering personal change. He emphasizes spirituality's role in catalyzing inner growth. This shift reorients us from material pursuits to valuing existence as a significant gift, promoting a transformation in our perception of life as a blessing and a path to enhanced insight and fulfillment. This shift hinges not solely on beliefs in an afterlife but on valuing virtue and righteousness for their own sake.

According to Cottingham, a meaningful life necessitates a profound internal shift, a new perspective on the universe and human existence, and spiritual journeying. This path to meaningfulness requires adopting, recognizing, and embracing religious beliefs, which enables us to justify life's challenges, typically viewed as barriers to meaning, and achieve tranquility. This awareness-based peace is significant to life (Alizamani and Daryaniasl, 2010, 107).

Notably, Cottingham (2003, 86-88) distinguishes between doctrines and practice, asserting that spirituality's crux lies in actively "practicing" religious tenets over merely "accepting doctrines." This preference for praxis implies that spiritual life's essence embodies religious principles, deepening our connection and understanding of the divine.

Furthermore, Cottingham (2003, 92-97) discusses how spiritual practices can cultivate faith, even without initial doctrinal agreement. He suggests faith develops as a response to the limitations of human rationality and knowledge, acknowledging the need for transcendence. This view recognizes that while rational knowledge is finite, faith and spirituality offer a more expansive route to comprehension and life's significance.

In summary, Cottingham portrays spirituality as a transformative inner journey surpassing mere intellectual agreement with religious doctrines. This path enriches our appreciation of life's meaning, nurturing a bond with something beyond ourselves and leading to an impactful experience of faith and understanding.

2.3. Comparative Analysis of Fayḍ Kāshānī and Cottingham on the Meaning of Life

2.3.1. Similarities and Differences

Kāshānī and Cottingham's works provide rich insights into the meaning of life, yet their perspectives reveal notable similarities and differences, ultimately forming a complementary view. Both authors emphasize spirituality and transcendence, suggesting that addressing existential questions that lie beyond the realms of science and secular reasoning—where religion and religious language provide an essential framework. They challenge conventional views: Kāshānī criticizes superficial perceptions of morality and piety, while Cottingham questions secular frameworks' adequacy in fully grasping life's meaning. Additionally, they both underscore the importance of inner transformation, with Kāshānī emphasizing the purification of the heart and Cottingham highlighting spirituality's role in catalyzing inner growth. Moreover, they acknowledge human limitations in fully comprehending the essence of life and the mysteries of the universe. Both authors's works highlight the importance of praxis in spirituality—advocating for active engagement in religious practices over mere theoretical engagement—a domain reigned by love in Kāshānī's mysticism.

However, their approaches diverge in certain aspects. Kāshānī's views are deeply anchored in Islamic mysticism, whereas Cottingham's perspective, while recognizing religion's role, leans towards a more general spiritual framework. Moreover, their writings' cultural and philosophical contexts are distinct, with Kāshānī's ideas being shaped by Persian and Islamic traditions and Cottingham's by Western philosophical thought—with Kāshānī's perspective being more mystical, but Cottingham's more philosophical. Cottingham's philosophy can provide a more structured harmony to Kāshānī's emotive and poetic expressions.

Kāshānī would concur with Cottingham's view endorsing a spiritual approach—though, of course, harmonizing it with Tradition (Quran and *ḥadīth*). Notably, while recognizing religion's role in shaping the meaning of life, Cottingham's exploration does not thoroughly portray the complex interplay between spirituality and life's meaning. Specifically, he does not sufficiently explore spirituality's various depths and stages and how they specifically relate to understanding

life's significance. Here, Kāshānī's mystical perspective can fill the void. Let us examine the relationship between spirituality and life's meaning more explicitly.

2.3.2. Spirituality-Meaning Relationship

Practicing religion's outward aspects, individuals generally gain a self-oriented meaning *in* life, essentially trading actions for rewards or avoiding punishments in the afterlife. This "transactional" view aligns with Ibn Sīnā's characterization in *Ishārāt* (2013, *Namaṭ* 9, 439–61) of the *zāhid* or ascetic, who gives up worldly desires for the hereafter. In contrast, religion's inner dimensions offer more profound meaning. The journey involves adhering to outward practices and moral norms with greater dedication to attain ultimate divine unity. The highest stage in religion, as noted by Ibn Sīnā, is that of the *ʿārif* or mystic, who focuses solely on God, reaching divine illumination of the heart. This path requires constant self-monitoring, self-criticism, and self-improvement—akin to a sculptor constantly refining a statue, as famously illustrated by Plotinus in the *Enneads* (2018, I.6.9). This constant watchfulness and amelioration makes the journeyer an ever-perfecting being.

Progressing through spiritual stages, the self-oriented life diminishes, culminating in self-transcendence and unity with the Divine. In contrast to trading worldly pleasures for heavenly rewards, the spiritual journeyer—dominated and intoxicated by the "God-sent love-madness" Plato (1997, 244a-245b) discusses in *Phaedrus*—trades "everything" for the divine Beloved. Rūmī in *Dīwān-i Shams Tabrīzī* echoes this sentiment, likening it to a gambler losing everything yet yearning for another chance:

خُنُک آن قماربازی که بباخت آن چه بودش بِنَماند هیچش اِلّا هوس قمار دیگر

> Acclaimed is the gambler, his fortune all spent,
> Left with nothing but a craving for the dice's next descent. (Rūmī, 1997, G.1085:5)

From Kāshānī's lens, divine knowledge, love, and selfless intoxication add a profound meaning to life. Before reaching the pinnacle of intoxication, the individual engaged in religious and moral actions remains aware of their selfhood. However, upon attaining this stage, the individual's awareness of their identity dissolves, leading them to act purely out of love, acting for the Beloved and with the Beloved (thanks to the unity achieved)—a divine love symphony. As the Dominican Meister Eckhart (2009, 124-125) expresses it potently in his sermons, "He who has abandoned self and all things, who seeks not his own in anything and does all he does without why and in love, that man being dead to all the world is alive in God and God in him." It is precisely this intoxicated selflessness that unites the seeker with the divine Beloved, imbuing life with a transcendental meaning.

The complementarity of Kāshānī and Cottingham's views lies in enriching the understanding of life's meaning. Kāshānī's perspective elaborates on Cottingham's, portraying the intricacies of spirituality, which provides a lens through which spirituality's relationship to the meaning of life

becomes more apparent. Cottingham's broader view of spirituality, on the other hand, provides a holistic context to Kāshānī's focus on Islamic mysticism, offering a more comprehensive view of the spiritual journey across various cultures and religions. Integrating Kāshānī's Eastern insights with Cottingham's Western approach leads to a richer, more diverse understanding of spirituality and life's meaning.

2.3.3. God-Soul-Centric Supernaturalism

Turning the lens to another aspect of the subject, philosophical debates center on how God's purpose might distinctively confer meaning on human lives, with a prevailing view that *only* God's purpose can establish unchanging moral rules or objective values essential for making our lives meaningful. As Metz (2023, 11) highlights, this extreme God-centric interpretation posits that life's meaning is *exclusively* derived from fulfilling God's specific plan for the universe. In this context, an individual's contribution to actualizing God's plan, potentially in a way God envisions, gives life significance.

Cottingham (2005, 37-57) suggests that life gains profound meaning when human will and actions are aligned with God's inherently good and moral nature. He argues that if this alignment is disturbed, a solid foundation for objective values and moral rules would also be harmed, resulting in lives devoid of deep meaning and moral worth. Thus, failing to fulfill God's designated purpose would undermine the meaningfulness of existence. In this view, unlike the extreme God-centric view outlined above by Metz, life beyond fulfilling God's purpose also has value and meaning. Nevertheless, while basic pleasures and desires might independently exist and have meaning, higher elements like moral virtue, crucial to life's meaning, are contingent on God's purpose.

Kāshānī would concur with Cottingham that God's purpose imparts meaning to human lives—albeit with minor differences. In the *Dīwān* (G.9:1-13),[1] Kāshānī introduces servitude and worship as the purpose in human existence. According to Kāshānī, this servitude is not just an act of duty but the essence of life itself, criticizing the value of a life devoid of such servitude. Individuals can ignite a fervent love for the Divine through a spiritual journey that begins with servitude to God and progresses toward knowledge. Kāshānī views this journey as a transformative process orchestrated by God, leading from obedience to knowledge and finally to divine love (*Dīwān*, G.9:2). This, he implies, is how fulfilling God's purpose imbues life with true meaning. Notably, for Kāshānī, the ultimate purpose is not servitude—this obedience is a medium for achieving divine knowledge and love (G.9:2). This point is also confirmed when Kāshānī states that a love-

[1] Fayḍ Kāshānī (*Dīwān*, G.9:1-3; 13):

یارب تهی مکن زمی عشق جام ما — از معرفت بریز شرابی بکام ما
از بهر بندگیت بدنیا فتاده‌ایم — از بندگیت دانه و دنیات دام ما
چون بندگی نباشد از زندگی چه سود — از باده چون تهیست چه حاصل زمام ما
از بندگی بمعرفت و معرفت بعشق — دل می‌نواز تا که شود پخته جام ما

intoxicated person lives beyond the bounds of conventional morality and religious formalities, dwelling in a perpetual divine bliss created by divine love (*Dīwān*, G.128:4; G.147:2, G.892:9). This view suggests that true understanding of life's essence may exist beyond superficial righteousness or religiosity, having a transcendental root in spiritual connection with the Divine. Importantly, in this trajectory, morality serves as a means to achieve this meaning rather than being the end goal itself—morality facilitates the realization of life's purposes in the spiritual path of perfection.

Fayḍ Kāshānī's perspective significantly differs from that of nihilists, who perceive life as devoid of meaning, and naturalists, who attribute life's meaning solely to material aspects. He adopts a "moderate God-soul-centric supernaturalist" stance. Following Islamic metaphysics, Kāshānī views the purpose of life as obtaining divine knowledge and love—accomplished through the soul's journey—leading to the ultimate purpose: unity with the divine Beloved. Nevertheless, he would recognize that meaning also exists in simpler forms, though in a more elementary form. As Cottingham (2016, 132-135) points out—and Kāshānī would whole-heartedly concur—a finite life encompassing elements such as the good, the true, and the beautiful inherently possesses some meaning. This sense of meaning would be significantly amplified if such a life perpetually exhibited these higher values, encompassing an eternal relationship with God.

In the discourse on life's meaning, some God-centered supernaturalists neglect or deny the soul's existence, focusing solely on God, while some soul-centered supernaturalists overlook or dismiss God, concentrating exclusively on the soul. However, despite differences, both Cottingham and Kāshānī represent a distinct category that acknowledges both God and the soul. They advocate a perspective where the soul embarks on a spiritual journey toward a divinely bestowed meaning and, ultimately, divine unity.

3. Conclusion

This article has navigated the mystic expanse of Fayḍ Kāshānī and the philosophical breadth of John Cottingham, unveiling a multifaceted perspective on the meaning of life. It posits that the interplay between Kāshānī's Eastern and Cottingham's Western viewpoints enriches the discourse on life's meaning, highlighting the relationship between spirituality and the quest for understanding existence. Kāshānī's focus on divine love as a path to mystic intoxication and ultimate unity with the Divine elaborates on the intricacies of spirituality, offering a lens through which the meaning of life is examined. Contrarily, Cottingham's broader interpretation of spirituality provides a holistic context across cultures and religions.

Kāshānī's moderate God-soul-centric supernaturalist view and Cottingham's philosophical approach converge on the notion that life's value is not solely predicated on fulfilling a divine Will. Instead, they argue for a richer tapestry of meaning woven from the extraordinary experiences of divine love and enlightenment and the everyday occurrences of piety and moral virtue. This comprehensive exploration suggests that life's significance extends beyond the confines of rigid

dogma, embracing a spectrum of spiritual experiences that contribute to a transcendent understanding of existence.

In conclusion, this study underscores the importance of integrating diverse philosophical and mystical perspectives to comprehend life's meaning. By drawing from Kāshānī's mysticism and Cottingham's philosophy, it offers a broader view of the spiritual journey, inviting contemporary individuals to embrace a fiery love that not only eases life's challenges but also unveils the transcendental realms of existence. This contribution to comparative studies illuminates the path toward a deeper, more enriched appreciation of life's profound purpose and the eternal quest for divine union.

References

Ahmadvand, A. & Naqibi, S. A. (2011). *Fayd e Kashani: An Assorted Shi,i Scholar: The Collection of an International Congress of Fayd Kashani*. Saarbrücken, Saarland: LAP Lambert Academic Publishing.

Algar, H. (1999). Fayż-E Kāšānī, Mollā Moḥsen-Moḥammad. In *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. Original edition, Originally published December 15.

Alizamani, A. & Maryam Daryaniasl (2010). The Meaning of Life in Cottingham Viewpoint. in *Comparative Theology*, 1 (1): 97-108. (In Persian)

Corbin, H. (1977). *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth: from Mazdean Iran to Shī'ite Iran*. Princeton University Press.

Cottingham, J. (2003). *On the Meaning of Life*. Routledge.

Cottingham, J. (2005). *The Spiritual Dimension: Religion, Philosophy and Human Value,* Cambridge University Press.

Cottingham, J. (2016). Meaningfulness, Eternity, and Theism. In *God and Meaning*, edited by Joshua W. Seachris and Stewart Goetz, 123-136. Bloomsbury Academic.

Eckhart, M. (2009). Sermons. In *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, edited by M. O'C Walshe. The Crossroad Publishing Company.

Fārābī, Muḥammad bin Muḥammad. (1991). *Al-Tanbīh 'alā Sabīl al-Sa'āda*. edited by J. Āl Yāsīn. Hikmat. (in arabic)

Fārābī, Muḥammad bin Muḥammad. (1992). *Al-A'māl al-Falsafīya*. edited by Ja'far Āl Yāsīn. Hikmat. (in arabic)

Fayḍ Kāshānī, M. M. (1992a). *Dah Risāle-yi Muḥaqqeq-i Bozorg Fayḍ Kāshānī (Ten Essays of the Grand Scholar Fayḍ Kāshānī)*. 1st ed., edited by R. Jafarian. Imam Amir al-Muminin Ali (a.s.) Center for Religious and Scientific Research. (In persian)

Fayḍ Kāshānī, M. M. (1992b). Mashwāq. In *Dah Risāle-yi Muḥaqqeq-i Bozorg Fayḍ Kāshānī (Ten Essays of the Grand Scholar Fayḍ Kāshānī)*, edited by R. Jafarian, 237-273. Imam Amir al-Muminin Ali (a.s.) Center for Religious and Scientific Research. (In persian)

Fayḍ Kāshānī, M. M. (1992c). Ulfat Nāme. In *Dah Risāle-yi Muḥaqqeq-i Bozorg Fayḍ Kāshānī (Ten Essays of the Grand Scholar Fayḍ Kāshānī)*, edited by R. Jafarian, 203-219. Imam Amir al-Muminin Ali (a.s.) Center for Religious and Scientific Research. (In persian)

Fayḍ Kāshānī, M. M. (2002a). *Kullīyāt-i ʿAllāma Mullā Muḥammad Moḥsen Fayḍ Kāshānī (Complete Works of the Polymath Mullā Muḥammad Moḥsen Fayḍ Kāshānī)*. 4 vols. Vol. 2. edited by Mostafa Fayd Kashani. Osveh Publications. (In persian)

Fayḍ Kāshānī, M. M. (2002b). *Kullīyāt-i ʿAllāma Mullā Muḥammad Moḥsen Fayḍ Kāshānī (Complete Works of the Polymath Mullā Muḥammad Moḥsen Fayḍ Kāshānī)*. 4 vols. Vol. 1. edited by Mostafa Fayd Kashani. Osveh Publications. (In persian)

Fayḍ Kāshānī, M. M. (2008). *al-Kalimāt al-Maknūna*. edited by Imami Kashani & A. Asghari. Madreseh-ye Ali-ye Shahid Motahhari. (In persian)

Fayḍ Kāshānī, M. M. (n.d). Dīwān-i Ashʿār. in *Ganjoor: A Web Collection of Works by Persian Poets.* https://ganjoor.net/feyz/divanz/ghazalz. (In persian)

Ibn ʿArabī, A. A. M. (2004). *al-Risālat al-Wujūdiya*. 1st ed. Dar Al-Kotob Al-ilmiyah. (In Arabic)

Ibn Sīnā, A. Ḥ. A. A. (2013). *Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt*. Translated by H. Malekshahi. 2nd ed. 2. vols. Translation and Commentary. Vol. 1. edited by H. Malekshahi. Soroush Publication. (In persian)

Ibrahimi Dinani, G. 2018. *Sharḥ-i Ustād Dīnānī bar Risālat al-Kalimāt al-Maknūna Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī*. edited by A. Esmaili & H. Karimabadi. Nur-e Sokhan. (In persian)

Jaʿfarī Tabrīzī, M. T. (2022). *ʿIrfān-i Islāmī (Islamic Gnosticism)*. edited by A. Nasri. Islamic Culture Broadcasting Institute. (In persian)

Kamelan, M. S. (2008). Fayd Kashani's Philosophical School. in *Journal of Philosophical Theological Research*, 9 (3): 19-39. https://doi.org/10.22091/pfk.2008.257. (In persian)

Lewisohn, L. (2007). *The Heritage of Sufism: Late Classical Persianate Sufism (1501-1750): The Safavid & Mughal Teriod*. 3 vols. Vol. 3. edited by L. Lewisohn & D. Morgan. Oneworld Publications.

Metz, T. (2023). The Meaning of Life. in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2023/entries/life-meaning/.

Narāqī, M. A. (2012). *Miʿrāj al-Saʿāda (Nocturnal Ascent of Bliss)*. Behnashr Publications. (In persian)

Nasr, S. H. (2006). *Islamic Philosophy from its Origin to the Present: Philosophy in the Land of Prophecy*. Suny Press.

Nasr, S. H. & et al. (2015). *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*. Harper Collins Publishers.

Plato. (1997). Phaedrus. In *Plato: Complete Works*, edited by J. M. Cooper and D. S. Hutchinson. Hackett Publishing.

Plotinus. (2018). *Plotinus: the Enneads*. edited by Lloyd P. Gerson. Cambridge University Press.

Qayṣarī, D. M. (1978). Al-Tawḥīd wa al-Nubuwwat wa al-Wilāya. In *Rasāʾil-i Qayṣarī*, edited by M. R. Qumsheī & S. J. Ashtīānī, 1-42. Mashhad University Press. (In Arabic)

Rahbari Ghazani, R. & Davoodi Kahaki, R. (in press). Immortal Echoes in Mortal Words: 'Love,' 'Attraction,' and 'Selflessness' in Fayḍ Kāshānī's Mystico-Philosophical Poetry. In *Journal of Philosophical Theological Research*. https://doi.org/10.22091/jptr.2024.10015.2966 (in Persian)

Rūmī, M. J. D. M. B. (1997). *Kullīyyāt-i Shams Tabrīzī*. 14th ed., edited by B. Furūzānfar. Amir Kabir Publications. (in persian)

Yasrebi, S. Y. (1991). *Falsafe-yi ʿIrfān (Philosophy of Mysticism)*. Qum Islamic Preaching Center. (In persian)

Zargar, C. A. (2014). Revealing Revisions: Fayd al-Kāshānī's Four Versions of al-Kalimāt al-Maknūna. *Iranian Studies*, 47 (2): 241-262. https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00210862.2013.860333. (in persian)

Journal of Philosophical Investigations
Print ISSN: 2251-7960 Online ISSN: 2423-4419
Homepage: https://philosophy.tabrizu.ac.ir

Hegel, the Greeks and Subjectivity: the origins of modern liberty and the historical justification of liberalism

David Edward Rose

Professor of Social Ethics, School X Newcastle University, United Kingdom. Email: david.rose@ncl.ac.uk

Article Info

Article type:
Research Article

Article history:
Received 11 August 2024
Received in revised form 21 August 2024
Accepted 01 September 2024
Published online 07 September 2024

Keywords:
Hegel, person, individual personality, subjectivity, autonomy, Ancient Greece, liberal, liberalism.

ABSTRACT

Commentators oft cite the rather grand claim that for Hegel there was no concept of individual personality, subjectivity nor personal autonomy in Ancient Greece. Hegel's claim is either taken as orthodox and making sense in the Hegelian historical system as a whole and so little discussed; or is flatly ignored as the worst kind of metaphysical obfuscation; a response a little too comfortable for liberal thinkers. Neither reaction is entirely satisfying. Not enough attention has been paid to it, especially for the vast majority of social and political thinkers who would find it at least contentious, so the present paper aims to assert its significance both for Hegelian politics as a whole and to pay enough attention to it in order to make it very difficult for those who find it a contentious statement to continue to ignore it. One wants to ask what it might mean for one's self-understanding to be so radically different that, as a human being, I understand myself as first and foremost (and perhaps completely) not as a subjective individual. It is conceptually very difficult to be a self-conscious individual -- in even a minimal sense -- without some idea of being an atomic, individual unit. It is the claim of the following argument that a full understanding of this distinction, between ancient and modern self-understandings, would lead to a revision of Hegel's liberal credentials, though not entirely for liberal reasons.

Cite this article: Rose, D. E. (2024). Hegel, the Greeks and Subjectivity: the origins of modern liberty and the historical justification of liberalism. *Journal of Philosophical Investigations*, 18(48), 381-417. https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.18459

© The Author(s).
https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2024.18459
Publisher: University of Tabriz.

1. Introduction to the claim that there is no subjective understanding of the self in the ancient world

Commentators oft cite the rather grand claim that for Hegel there was no concept of individual personality, subjectivity nor personal autonomy in Ancient Greece.[1] The claim that there was no subjective understanding of the self is most standardly stated by Inwood (1984), Pinkard (2001, 218), Pippin (2008, 244) and Stern (1998, 26). Wood (2002, 140) elaborates by relating it to Hegel's own terminology: the Greeks had no equivalent of the "right of knowledge" and he contrasts modern responsibility with Ajax and Oedipus, Hegel's own examples, and ones that will be pertinent below. Franco, inspired by Hyppolite, states it succinctly: "It is only in the Philosophy of Spirit of 1805-1806 that Hegel finally and fully appreciates the difference between the "deeper spirit" of modem individuality and the naive unity of individual and collective in the Greek polis." (1997, 849) Farenth (2013, 1978) hints that the lack of subjectivity is because, as exemplified by Antigone, the laws of conduct and custom are withheld from scrutiny. Contrary to Velkley's (2006) claim that

> ... one must also say that the recent interpretive approach has given not enough attention to Hegel's claim that the spirit of free subjectivity and infinite personality actually first emerged in Greek antiquity, not indeed as a common Greek possession but in those individuals who called themselves variously sophists and philosophers and above all in the person of Socrates (2006, 578).

Writers have indeed concentrated on the emergence of a subjective understanding in late Greek history. The most obvious writers are those who see Socrates as the inventor, in some sense, of *Moralität*. Wood's reading links it directly to the lack of modern moral being and is in agreement with earlier statements found in Taylor (2018, 514-15) and De Seade (1979, 382). More broadly, Singer (2002, 18-21) cites the Persian Wars engendering free individuality due to the conflict between liberty in its primitive form (as being born a citizen of a free state) and oriental despotism. McCarney (2000), on the other hand, proposes that Hegel believed subjective freedom was introduced to the Greeks by the Sophists. The Hegelian discussion of the ancient world, and Greece in particular also relate to the very different Greek *spirit* from that of its predecessors in the East. Both Harris (1993, 31) and Stewart (2017) see Hegel's reading of the myth of the Sphinx and Oedipus' solution to the riddle as the transition to a humanized religion which is a precursor for later Christian humanism which is a necessary stepping stone for the development of individuality. Perhaps one of the most stark and political expressions of the idea is in Pelczynski which

[1] It is not a claim that is so rare in history, though. See Berlin (2002) and also Joyce discussing the Incas in Peru (2013, 101, 109).

encapsulates many of these various readings and contrast it with a modern, liberal understanding of the self:

> The ancient Greek thought of himself as a political animal by nature. He saw himself as a son of his city, a member of an ongoing and historical community and not as an independent individual, facing other similar individuals in an atomistic state of nature or some rather loosely structured society which they had voluntarily established. A Greek citizen was so wholly immersed in the politics and ethos of his city that he cared little for himself. He guided his actions not by his self-interest or some private conception of happiness and virtue, but by the traditional ideals of his city, which he accepted without questioning. One could say that he had no individuality in the full sense of the word; he was merely an instrument, a member of an organism, which acted through him in pursuit of its own universal ends (Pelczynski, 1984, 57).

Hegel's claim is either taken as orthodox and making sense in the Hegelian historical system as a whole and so little discussed; or is flatly ignored as the worst kind of metaphysical obfuscation; a response a little too comfortable for liberal thinkers. Neither reaction is entirely satisfying. So, in agreement with Velkey's claim that not enough attention has been paid to it, especially for the vast majority of social and political thinkers who would find it at least contentious, the present paper aims to assert its significance both for Hegelian politics as a whole and to pay enough attention to it in order to make it very difficult for those who find it a contentious statement to continue to ignore it.

It is apparent that Socrates definitely (as has already been mentioned), Antigone in some sense and most citizens who never featured in the pages of history (Sophocles' audience) had to have some sense of self, that is understand themselves as a subject. It is very difficult to imagine it otherwise and whether that is a limit to our imagination (bearing in mind the impact that has on the fidelity of our historical interpretations) is an important sceptical question that cannot here be considered. The aims of this paper are humbler. One wants to ask what it might mean for one's self-understanding to be so radically different that, as a human being, I understand myself as first and foremost (and perhaps completely) not as a subjective individual.[1] It is conceptually very difficult to be a self-conscious individual -- in even a minimal sense -- without some idea of being an atomic, individual unit. Moreover, it is the claim of the following argument that a full understanding of this distinction, between ancient and modern self-understandings, would lead to

[1] To define a little what is meant by self-understanding at the outset, even if I believe it will become clear as the article progresses, Berlin's use of the word "ideology" is pertinent, as those "attitudes, more exactly conceptual systems, frameworks that consist of interrelated categories through which and by means of which we judge periods." (Berlin, 2002, 288) And, of course, judge ourselves.

a revision of Hegel's liberal credentials, though not entirely for liberal reasons. Therefore, the reason why the distinction is so important, beyond a desire to understand better what it might be, is twofold: one, communitarian accounts of political obedience and legitimation rest on the idea of a situated, historical, social self which cannot be merely relativistic as it would be unable to legitimate political, social orders as required by Hegel's account of the post-Enlightenment social self. Following on from this, two, it can be argued that Hegel offers an historical, constructivist claim about identity which supplies the grounds to replace the legitimation of liberal states through a putative moral realism with a more communitarian one.[1]

2. The textual evidence for the claim

The textual evidence one finds in Hegel for the claim that the Ancient Greeks lacked a full and robust subjectivity (if compared to modern self-understanding) undergoes chronological development. The first period in Jena concentrates on discussions of the non-conformity of Socrates as an example of an emergent, different subjectivity (NL, 153-154)[2], and a year later, by publication, the first formulation of the want of subjectivity and the inability of Plato to articulate a rational understanding of this new, emerging self-understanding:

> … the higher principle of the modern era, a principle unknown to Plato and the ancients. In ancient times, the common morality consisted of the beautiful public life-beauty [as the] immediate unity of the universal and the individual, [the polis

[1] In writing this paper, it has also become clear that the sense of individuality, which is progress and a better self-understanding, may well form a more thorough argument for the existence of a limited institution of private property than the more common utilitarian or simpler libertarian arguments. I do not develop that here but may return to it in future.

[2] Abbreviations to the works of Hegel: NL: (1802/3) On the Scientific Ways of Treating Natural Law, on its Place in Moral Philosophy, and its Relation to the Positive Sciences of Right, trans. Nisbet, H. in Political Writings, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999; JR1: (1803/4) System of Ethical Life, trans. Knox, T. & Harris, H.; and First Philosophy of Spirit, trans. Harris, H. New York: State University of New York Press, 1979 (published together in one volume). PhG: (1807) The Phenomenology of Spirit, trans. Miller, A. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977; NP: (1808-1811) Nurnberger Propadeutik, Werke in 20 Bänden mit Registerband - 4: Nürnberger und Heidelberger Schriften 1808–1817. Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1986; LHP: (1816) Lectures of the HIstory of Philosophy. 3 vols. Trans. E. Haldane. Routledge, 1955; PR: (1821) Elements of the Philosophy of Right, trans. Nisbet, H. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991; PH (1822) Philosophy of History, trans. Sibree, J. New York: Prometheus Books, 1991; LFA: (1823-29) Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art, trans. T. Knox, Oxford: Clarendon Press: 1975. LPR: (1827) Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion: One volume edition, the lectures of 1827, translated by R. Brown, P. Hodgson, J. Stewart. University of California Press; EL: (1830) The Encyclopaedia Logic: Part 1 of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze, trans. Geraets, T., Suchting, A. & Harris, H. Indianapolis, USA: Hackett Publishing Co., 1991; EG: (1830) Philosophy of Mind: Part 3 of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze, trans. Wallace, W. & Miller, A. Oxford University Press, 1971. Unless specified by a section (§ -- 'R' refers to a remark and 'A' to an addition), or a paragraph (¶) sign, citations will be by page number.

> as] a work of art wherein no part separates itself from the whole, but is rather the genial unity of the self-knowing Self and its [outer] presentation. Yet individuality's knowledge of itself as absolute -- this absolute being-within-itself -- was not there. The Platonic Republic is, like Sparta, [characterized by] this disappearance of self-knowing individuality (JR1,160).

And we see here already Hegel placing Plato (but not necessarily all Greeks) into the same category as the ancients and, because of this, Plato's only political vision is a refusal of the democracy of Athens as a failure and a nostalgic intention to return to the earlier Greek modes of collective existence, as exemplified by Athens' great rival, Sparta. Plato's political thought is characterised by the "disappearance of self-knowing individuality." A few years later, Hegel moves the discussion on to Antigone in PhG ¶¶437 and 470. In this early period, Hegel is working through the want of individuality and expressing it through the consideration of the possibility of tragedy. Whether one understands oneself as either caught up in events beyond one's control or in control of one's life, albeit in a rather minimal way, is at the heart of the Hegelian understanding of modern subjectivity and expressed in the early discussions of Antigone.

In his more mature work (1822-1830), there are some quite direct quotations: "The element of subjectivity that was wanting to the Greeks, we found among the Romans..." (PH 319)[1] The idea had already been raised earlier in the same text:

> Since subjectivity was not comprehended in all its depth by the Greek Spirit, the true reconciliation was not attained in it, and the human Spirit did not yet assert its true position. This defect showed itself in the fact of Fate as pure subjectivity appearing superior to the gods; it also shows itself in the fact, that men derive their reasons not yet from themselves, but from their Oracles. Neither human nor divine subjectivity recognised as infinite, has as yet, absolutely decisive authority (PH, 250).

And he repeats this claim in EG §§482, 552 and PH 250-251 and links it to tragedy in LFA: "The individuals in the high tragedy of the Greeks, Agamemnon, Clytemnestra, Orestes, Oedipus, Antigone, Creon, etc., do likewise have an individual aim; but the substantial thing, the 'pathos' which, as the essence of their action, drives them on, has absolute justification and for that very reason is in itself of universal interest." (568)[2] Here we understand that the Greeks had some form

[1] However, note that in the Romans the element is merely formal, arbitrary and capricious and similarly unreconciled because the Romans lose completely the natural side of their spirit, the connection with the world; their religion is taken out of the world. They, we are told, can never be happy (PH, 278-283)

2 In LFA, this individuality is explained as representational. Talking of Aeschylus's Eumenides, Hegel characterises all classical tragedy as "moulded into a battle between these divine powers which make their appearance against one another in person." (463) and then quickly elaborates on this in terms of Antigone: "More interesting still, although

of subjectivity, but not "comprehended in all its depths". Thinking about Antigone, as we shall presently, the conflict between Creon's edict and her filial obligations, a space opens up for her to consider what is the right action, but without reasons or even arbitrariness (that the Romans will develop in abundance), she falls back on what is immediate, expected, conventional and traditional.[1] Antigone expresses the mean between absolute objectivity (the East) and absolute subjectivity (the French Revolution) and can exist in this indeterminant agential space, hence the reason why she cannot obey Creon -- there are no institutions which would ground an individual understanding that would enable her to step back from custom and overcome it rationally because she is ruled by " the inner gods of feeling, love, and kinship, not the daylight gods of free self-conscious national and political life" (LFA, 464). -- even if, according to Sophocles, the conflict of obligations brings to awareness the smallest possibility of a bifurcation in her destiny. *What she is, is her identity* and although it is put under question by a conflict, she cannot act otherwise. The point here is that subjectivity is lacking because "Men derive their reasons not yet from themselves". This is the defect in the self-understanding of the ancient world. The "defect" is described as "showing itself" as though the understanding is a symptom, but it is not a causal relationship, rather an interrelation. Furthermore, worth noting are the two institutions referred to in the quotation: one, religion whereby gods are inferior to Fate and what one is responsible for is written in the fabric of the universe and, two, political authority and moral conscience is made impossible by the fact that nomos, reasons, comes from Oracles which are beyond divine and human subjectivity.[2]

---

entirely transferred into human feeling and action, the same clash appears in the Antigone, one of the most sublime and in every respect most excellent works of art of all time. Everything in this tragedy is logical; the public law of the state is set in conflict over against inner family love and duty to a brother; the woman, Antigone, has the family interest as her `pathos', Creon, the man, has the welfare of the community as his. Polynices, at war with his native city, had fallen before the gates of Thebes, and Creon, the ruler, in a publicly proclaimed law threatened with death anyone who gave this enemy of the city the honour of burial. But this command, which concerned only the public weal, Antigone could not accept; as sister, in the piety of her love for her brother, she fulfils the holy duty of burial. In doing so she appeals to the law of the gods; but the gods whom she worships are the underworld gods of Hades (Sophocles, Antigone, 451), the inner gods of feeling, love, and kinship, not the daylight gods of free self-conscious national and political life." (p. 464)

[1] One colloquial way to understand this is the trouble I personally have with being late to social engagements with my Italian wife. To be on time, being punctual, is a very English preoccupation laid bare by her refusal to arrive anywhere on time. The only time this was reversed was when we were actually on time to dinner at some Sicilian friends and she began to feel anxiety worrying they would not be ready (and they were not). These sorts of conflicts bring to the fore our identity motivations very clearly and ask whether they are motivations we should value. Whereas we can rationalize them (even if we choose not to), Antigone could not.

[2] Velekley (2006) indicates that the voice of Fate is later replaced in Socrates by his Muse, the Daimon, and this is the reason for the accusation of inventing new gods, as though he has a different point of legal legitimacy. The Oracles which stamp authority on edicts are replaced by the voice of the Daimon, or the personification of reason. It is also an important distinction between ancient and modern tragedy: the unwritten, divine laws -- the external motivation -- is

It is in the texts of LHP in the middle period that the main evidence for his claims about Greek subjectivity are most fully elaborated. One finds there the repeated claim about Socrates' destructive influence on the Athenian state:

> The Athenian people had come into a period of culture, in which this individual consciousness made itself independent of the universal spirit and became for itself. This was perceived by them in Socrates, but at the same time it was felt that it meant ruin, and thus they punished an element which was their own. The principle of Socrates is hence not the transgression of one individual, for all were implicated; the crime was one that the spirit of the people committed against itself (LHP, vol I.447, see also 440).

Here one is made aware that, though Socrates is the prime example of this new reflection on the social mores and obligations of the Polis, it is not restricted to him alone, but "all were implicated". Hegel concentrates on, in these later texts, not Antigone's inability to fight her customary nature, but Socrates' idiosyncrasy where wilful assertion by an individual is seen negatively as a "hostile element, a corruption of the social order" (PR, §206R, see also in the preface, 20 and §138R) and positively as the inventor of morality (PH, 269-271).[1] There is something about Plato's failure to adequately express this emerging subjectivity that reveals precisely what is at stake. It is in fact Plato's response which most interests Hegel in these middle works, as it would in a series of lectures on the history of philosophy, but Plato's failure is revisited again and again in the mature works and Hegel concentrates on the destructive influence not just of Socrates but the principle of subjectivity itself:

> When individuals and nations have once got in their heads the abstract of full-blown liberty, there is nothing like it in its uncontrollable strength, just because it is the very essence of mind, and that as its very actuality. Whole continents, Africa and the East, have never had this Idea, and are without it still. The Greeks and Romans, Plato and Aristotle, even the Stoics, did not have it. On the contrary, they saw that it is only by birth (as, for example, an Athenian or Spartan citizen, or by strength of character, education, or philosophy (the sage is free even as a slave and in chains) that the human being is actually free (EG §482).[2]

---

replaced in modern tragedy by insanity or pathological determination; and ancient tragedy can know nothing of the romantic passion of love which often produces such madness (LFA, 233, 272, 564).

[1] See Velkley, 2006: 585; Taylor, 2018, 514-515.

[2] And Hegel's seemingly arbitrary preoccupation with a minor element of Plato's thinking is justified through his description of a good historian: "… even such singularities as a petty occurrence, a word, express not a subjective particularity, but an age, a nation, a civilization, in striking portraiture and brevity; and to select such trifles shows the hand of a historian of genius." (EG §549)

These concerns are best elaborated in the quotation where Hegel offers a reading of Plato's *Republic* which is seen as the despair of the thinker who has seen his city crushed by Sparta and Plato seeks to regain the Athenian ethical superiority of the Archaic and earlier periods and thus negate the historical change which is destroying the cultural harmony. Plato, however, ultimately cannot offer a way to reconcile this new element with Greek social existence:

> The want of subjectivity is really the want of the Greek moral idea. The principle which became prominent with Socrates had been present up to this time only in a more subordinate capacity; now it of necessity became an even absolute principle, a necessary moment in the Idea itself. By the exclusion of private property and of family life, by the suspension of freedom in the choice of the class, i.e. by the exclusion of all the determinations which relate to the principle of subjective freedom, Plato believes he has barred the doors to all the passions; he knew very well that the ruin of Greek life proceeded from this, that individuals, as such, began to assert their aims, inclinations, and interests, and made them dominate over the common mind. But since this principle is necessary through the Christian religion — in which the soul of the individual is an absolute end, and thus has entered into the world as necessary in the Notion of the mind — it is seen that the Platonic state-constitution cannot fulfil what the higher demands of a moral organism require. Plato has not recognized the knowledge, wishes, and resolutions of the individual, nor his self-reliance, and has not succeeded in combining them with his Idea; but justice demands its rights for this just as much as it requires the higher resolution of the same, and its harmony with the universal. The opposite to Plato's principle is the principle of the conscious free will of individuals, which in later times was by Rousseau more especially raised to prominence: the theory that the arbitrary choice of the individual, the outward expression of the individual, is necessary. In this the principle is carried to the very opposite extreme, and has emerged in its utter one-sidedness. In opposition to this arbitrariness and culture there must be the implicitly and explicitly universal, that which is in thought, not as wise governor or morality, but as law, and at the same time as my Being and my thought, i.e. as subjectivity and individuality. Men must have brought forth from themselves the rational along with their interests and their passions, just as it must enter into reality through the necessities, opportunities, and motives that impel them (LHP, vol. 2. 114-15).

Socrates plays a crucial role and hastens the end of the Greek model of political community through his demand for rationality. The emergence of the individual and subjective claims is seen as the destruction of the harmony of the Athenian state because the political and social institutions

just cannot support the demand. The quotation also reminds the reader of the oppositional nature of two one-sided views: Plato versus Rousseau which earlier Hegel presented as the balance Antigone is able to operate for that brief Sophoclean dramatic moment. Plato represents the objective nature of morality, how what is right can be known and demonstrated but, at the same time, how human beings were unable to comprehend this objectivity. But without this moment of understanding, the subjective individual's trust in the political structures is undermined. On the other hand, Rousseau is -- according to Hegel -- Enlightenment freedom of conscience raised to the extremes of the French Revolution where a law is always resisted because it is a seemingly external impediment on the free action of a subjective individual. It is capricious and arbitrary. This here shows that the real want of subjectivity is present in early Greek states (chronologically akin to the Persian and Eastern states where freedom is limited to the person, the king, of the state) and that Athens is very much the transitional period.[1] The liberty of the Greeks is to do what they want because they happen to live under a free (unoccupied) state of which the customary morality *happens to be* in accordance with the natures of these subjects. The Persians and those of the East, again according to Hegel, do what they are told because they are told to do it. They are nothing but tools of another will (the One) whereas some of the Greeks (free citizens) have the will of the social weal flow through their identity and act in accordance with it.

3. The status of Hegel's claim and historical context

There are, then, four theses which arise from Hegel's discussions:
The Greeks lacked a sense of individual subjectivity present in modern subjects;

Thesis 1

The Greeks, however, were different from the Persians and the imperial powers of the East because the Greeks had in place the social conditions for a development of individual subjectivity (as expressed in tragic conflicts -- an Eastern Antigone would have obeyed her master through fear like a dog which fears the hand of its master -- there would have been only do or be punished for such an Eastern Antigone);

Thesis 2

The development of individual subjectivity becomes self-conscious as a felt need during the Classical Period in certain figures (Socrates, but also present in the audience of the Classical Greek

[1] I here and throughout use "Eastern" as shorthand for Hegel's rather contentious understanding of the geographical and chronological space. Although I attempt to understand the historicism of the Greeks, albeit guided by Hegel, I do not reflect and question Hegel's meaning of "Eastern" which should be interrogated fully (and perhaps dismissed). For a better overview, see Pinkard (2017, Ch. 3).

tragedies who sympathise with the protagonists because they feel "they could act otherwise" when they could not -- Antigone is tragic for the audience, not for her!)

Thesis 3

The self-consciousness of this subjectivity is irreconcilable with the social harmony of the Greek Polis and destructive of it

However, there are a few background assumptions with the understanding of Greek citizens lacking full subjectivity that require a little clarification. The first is simply to decide which Greeks Hegel is talking about. The second is why the subjectivity is inferior to modern subjectivity and not just different. Antigone (and Hegel's other examples such as Ajax and Oedipus) are not examples of the archaic, let alone the classical, period. (PR §§117-18; NP 224) Greek history, and Hegel would have been aware of this, was created as an organic whole, as most histories are, by the unification of a narrative and a people much later. Historiography arose in Athens with the writings of Herodotus and Thucydides (5th Century BCE and contemporaries of Socrates) who are the first to date events and not just talk of mythological beginnings in vague phrases such as "the age of Theseus", for example. On a pre-reflective reading, there is a conflation of several ages under the auspices of one people, the Greeks, which Hegel would have known was false from Herder's influence on his early development.[1] The crucial fact of that matter is the people contemporary with historical Oedipus, Antigone and Ajax were those of the zenith of Thebes, Mycenae and Troy, a people perhaps united in a common language and culture, (1750-1100 BCE, see PH 226), but succeeded by the contentiously named Dark Ages of Greece after the collapse of the Mycenaean civilization (1100-800 BCE) and itself succeeded by the archaic period (800-500BC). It is during the early archaic period, the cusp and crisis of historical transformation from one era to another, that "Homer" (800-700BCE) begins the imaginative reconstruction of Greek identity and history and "Greeks" then become reimagined as a people. And it is in the archaic period that universal law is asserted by Draco's heavy handed and merciless imposition (according to Aristotle in *Politics,* 1247b), as well as the introduction of standard weights and measures, historical time, Solon (694BCE) and the self-conscious emergence of democracy as an alternative rule of law, overthrowing the capricious tyrannies. There may well have been something in the social structures of the first Mycenaean tribes, or their religions, that would allow for the

[1] See Onu 2016 and Stewart 2017. On the idea that one can talk pre reflectively of the Greeks (or any people) in any true homogenous sense, Herder was very much aware: "So I am likewise preparing myself for petty objections out of the great detail of peoples and ages. That no people ever remained or could have remained what it was for long, and that each one, like any art and science and what not in the world, had its period of growth, of blossoming, and of decline; that each and every such change lasted only the minimum of time that the wheel of human fortune was able to grant; that finally, in the world, no two moments are ever the same, and that, accordingly, the Egyptians, Romans, and Greeks were also not the same at all times."(2004, 23) Hegel hints at these developments in PH (226). For a fuller discussion of his use of the concept "a people", see Deseade (1979).

development of the individual subjectivity (that was absent from other social forms), but it was nascent and embryonic in those ages, slow to develop and mature. Antigone under Creon and the much later Greeks under Draco are little better than the Persians. The Classical period, that which is so immediately Ancient Greece for most readers, is home to Pericles, the first scientific thinkers, Socrates, Plato and the achievements in the arts and thinking and lasted from around 500BC until the more imperial Hellenistic age began in 320BCE, more or less. It is important to remind ourselves of these dates because both the Ancient Greek historians and thinkers, and ourselves, are guilty of a conflation of a "people" covering a span of 1500 years more or less and all of our information about this history comes mostly via the lens of the Classical Period and, as Hegel is well aware, from the point of view of Athens (Tierney, 1923, 263).

Hegel splits Greek history into three phases: one, the growth of real individuality as a people, identified in the origin of Achilles; two, its conflict with the previous world-historical people of Persia building up to Athenian dominance; and, three, the decline brought about by Alexander's successors. Hegel describes the origin of Greek Spirit in the Mycenae period and the Trojan War, seen as the event of the identification of a people as a people, and he is also aware of the fall of the royal houses after Troy, precipitating the dark ages (PH. 223- 234). More significantly, Hegel has a developmental understanding of a people and its consciousness. He tells us in PH (221-4) that if a civilisation does not suffer decline, it suffers stasis and that is worse. Persia becomes Greece (with the humanisation of religion) which became Rome (with the acknowledgement of the subjective principle). India and China remain in a static historical awareness that cannot distinguish between the inside and outside, the appearance and essence of things, and to which the Persians, though they began to glimpse this distinction, had no way to articulate (due to their natural and not human religion). For the East, thought and ideas remain a "given" floating above the world. Civilisation begins with the separation of thought from nature (thought is man, it is his world) and this separation was expressed by the Greeks as the Delphic human. The Greeks of the Mycenaean period share a culture with the Greeks of Athens, but Antigone and Oedipus have no sense of individuality and Plato only has, seven hundred years later, an inarticulate sense of it (much like the Persians had a sensuous idea of the inner-outer distinction but no way to articulate it) which Plato wishes to avoid due to being aware of its destructive influence, hence his criticism of democracy:

> In this realm, the substantial unity of the finite and the infinite is present, but only as a mysterious substratum, banished as a dim recollection into the recesses [Höhlen] and images of tradition. Reborn from the self-differentiating spirit into individual spirituality and the daylight of knowledge, this substratum is modified and transfigured to become beauty and a free and serene ethical life. Within this determination, the principle of personal individuality accordingly emerges, though it is not yet engrossed in itself [in sich selbst befangen] but still retains

> its ideal unity. Consequently, the whole splits up into a series of particular national spirits [Volksgeister], and on the one hand, the ultimate decision of the will is not yet assigned to the subjectivity of self-consciousness which has being for itself, but to a power which stands above and outside it […], while on the other, the particularity associated with needs has not yet become part of [the realm of] freedom, but is confined to a class of slaves [Sklavenstand] (PR §356).

So, the first background assumption one must reveal is that the "Greeks were also not the same at all times" (Herder, 2004, 23). More significantly, those with no sense of subjectivity were the pre-Archaic Greeks and it is of these we learn mostly from the Classical Greeks whose sense of self puts into question the very spirit which makes the Greek a unified culture. We learn about the past of the past via a sense of crisis. A more precise description of the Greek's want of subjectivity would read: Mycenaean and Dark Age Greeks have no sense of individual subjectivity, the Archaic Greeks are in the most part akin to Persians under the yoke of Draco's despotism whereas the Classical Greeks (Socrates, Plato, Sophocles) have a sense of individual subjectivity which is made possible by the same shared culture as the early Greeks (which differentiated them from the Eastern peoples) and has come to the fore through the organic development of that specific culture. And these initial comments allow one to broach the question of the second background assumption, that is why the subjectivity of the Eastern peoples and the earliest Greeks as well as that of the later Greeks is not just different from but also inferior to the modern sense of freedom. To do that one should shoot forward in history and understand modern freedom, but first one needs to revisit the role the early discussions of tragedy and Antigone play in Hegel's understanding.

4 The significance of Antigone

Antigone, in its most famous representation by Sophocles, is an Athenian drama, written in and for the Classical age.[1] There are again various readings of why Hegel is so taken by this play.[2] However, MacKay reminds us that the play was written for an audience very different from the protagonists' own time with different concerns and a different role for art: "... for the author and the first audience, it is probable that the play was primarily a dramatization of the two principles of political organization that were at that time competing for men's allegiance" (1962, 166) and he

[1] I assume a certain amount of knowledge of the myths themselves. I rely on Graves R., 1996. The Greek Myths. 2 vols. London: Folio as a plimsol line. Sophocles' play is, of course, expressing the same transformation as Plato's philosophy. Creon appeals to his audience in his attempt to rationalize the state, whereas Antigone will offer no justification except willfulness.

[2] The main point of contention is whether or not Antigone's rebellion is or is not an instance of pre-nascent individual subjectivity. Stern (1998) sides with Flesichmann (1971) and against Pietrcil (1978). The latter affirms that Antigone is a matter of particularity, but it is not -- she is living the dictates of family, that are "natural" --- "given" to her, she can do nothing else. Pinkard rejects the individualist reading of Antigone and then proceeds to read the play in this way (2001).

tells us that "Antigone receives our sentimental allegiance, but Creon has perhaps on the whole been less misunderstood; he is a man of our times; Antigone was already becoming obsolete when Sophocles wrote" (1962, 169). MacKay reminds us that trying to understand the actual historical Antigone through Sophocles, who was writing for his -- by comparison -- very modern audience, would be like understanding the Roman world through *Gladiator* or the medieval one through *A Knight's Tale*. Hegel surely knew this and his use of the play is to be found elsewhere, illustrated by the claims of theses 1 and 2, before later in his writings being developed into thesis 3. Hegel cites Antigone's famous rebuttal to Creon's edict about the treatment of her brother's cadaver:

> Zeus did not command these things, nor did Justice, who dwells with the gods below, ordain such laws for men. Neither do I believe that your decrees, or those of any other mortal, are strong enough to overrule the ancient, unwritten, immutable laws of the gods, which are not for the present alone, but have always been—and no one knows when they began (Sophocles, 2008, 155).

The first thing to notice about Antigone is that she never talks of her sentiments, what she wants or needs or thinks is right, but only about what should be done because the determinations of action are written unalterably into the fabric of the universe. Elsewhere, and dealing with other Greek figures from the pre-Archaic period, Hegel tells his reader: "The heroic self-consciousness (as in ancient tragedies like that of Oedipus) has not yet progressed from its unalloyed simplicity to reflect on the distinction between deed and action, between the external event and the purpose and knowledge of the circumstances, or to analyse the consequences minutely, but accepts responsibility for the deed in its entirety. (PR 118R) and "... Ajax, when he killed the Greeks' cattle and sheep in an insane fury because he had not received the arms of Achilles; he did not attribute the guilt to his insanity, as though in it he were another being, but took the whole action upon himself as its perpetrator and did away with himself from shame" (NP 224).[1] That she can question these edicts, that they come from an outside (from the essential which the Persians perceived but could not articulate) is already the beginnings of an individual understanding, but this is the Athenian understanding (Sophocles and his audience) and not a Mycenaean (the virtues of Achilles). The self's wants and needs do not have a role to play in what needs to be done. Creon's own dictate, whether it be divine or rationally human, falls on deaf ears and ultimately fails because it goes against the objectivity of the pre-archaic Greek institutions and world-understanding, the Achillean virtue of obedience to the tribe (remember that Achilles' own particular desire is negated by loyalty even if it continues to fester in the Trojan war). *Antigone*, the play, is tragic because she must do as her family obligations determine her and the audience of Athens wishes she could do

[1] Cited and translated in the notes to PR, 422. The reference to the distinction between deed and action is interesting for the debates on action which are central to M. Quante's (2004) reading in his book Hegel's Concept of Action, trans. D. Moyar, Cambridge University Press. I do not however have the luxury of time to be distracted here.

otherwise but knows she cannot (even if they could!). Antigone suffers no tragic dilemma; it is fated. Tragedy is only possible when one can point to circumstances that brought about an event which one could not have done anything about.

Once one is modern and responsible for one's actions that emanate from intentions, then one has no excuse for one's actions and that makes tragedy impossible: you could have done otherwise. The audience wants things to be different, but is incapable of having any effect on the events which unfold. Antigone is tragic for the audience because her sense of rightness or what she ought to have done is swallowed up by Fate, whereas *Antigone* for Antigone cannot be tragic because there is absolutely no sense in which she can even feel the pull of a possible alternative outcome. But Antigone's voice is almost chorus like in connecting with the audience and not actually how Antigone, the actual historical event, would have been. For the historical event of Antigone, there are two conflicting causes: fear of punishment (the edict of Creon) and customary morality (fidelity to the family). The former only wins out when Creon is crueler, fiercer more draconian and not because any perception of rightness or attempt at reconciliation on the part of an agent. It is the Athenian audience which experience this as a "choice" between two possibilities.[1]

Tragedy is when one could not have done what they did because it was written all along, by "immutable laws", that one was to be the site of an event whether one desired it or not, but emotionally functions because the audience sees a separate resolution if things were different for the protagonist. Once one's knowing the "reason why" one does things, then tragedy is no longer possible. Antigone knows no reasons because, according to Hegel, there are no institutions in the pre-archaic world which would support an understanding of rational practical motivation, her sphere of privacy has been so totally closed down, she can no longer despair against the Fates. Antigone's tragedy is felt by the audience but not by her; she is stoical in her acceptance. Antigone fails to be an individual. She also has no conscience, no space to question the motivations of her being and so falls back on the "given" of her nature which is immediately felt and demanding. Modern subjectivity resides in the capacity to stand back from the demands of nature, desire, putative authority and binding social values: "The moral point of view is the point of view of the will in so far as the latter is *infinite* not only *in itself* but also *for itself*. This reflection of the will into itself and its identity for-itself, as opposed to its being-in-itself and immediacy and the determinations which develop within the latter, determine the *person* as a *subject*" (PR §105). And

[1] A similar appeal to the audience is made in Oedipus at Colonus where the main character protests his individual innocence and the wrongness of the judgement of his deeds: "Listen—it is the effect of others' actions, rather than my own, which I have suffered. No need to mention my mother and father— I well know it is that story which frightens you. Yet how does it show me as evil-natured if, when attacked, I retaliate? Even if I had known what I was about to do, would that make me evil? But I knew nothing. Unaware, I went where my path led. It was the others who knowingly destroyed me" (Sophocles, 2008, 79). I am grateful to Nicholas Brignell for reminding me of this.

so, the understanding of tragedy opens the discussion of the thoroughly modern self and how it, historically, came about.

5 The emergence of the thoroughly modern self

5.1 Ethical will

The pre-Archaic self is an example of the Ethical Will or the formal grammatical subject as in the sentence, the subject did X: "the will immersed in its object or condition, whatever the content of the latter may be -- it is the will of the child, the ethical will, or the will of the slave, the superstitious will, etc" (PR, §26). This is an apt description of humans, animals and even objects such as in the statement: "The pen wrote the word." The Ancient world had a self-understanding correlative to this: the agent knows what he does, but does not know why nor has the space to speculate an alternative, it is written into the ways things should be: "individuality [Einzelheit] is submerged in its essence, and in which it does not yet have legitimacy for itself" (PR, §353). Even given the ambiguous use of the word individuality here, which refers to the individual unit or detail, this is the ethical (in its non-reflective meaning for Hegel) subjectivity of the ancients. The first shape of spirit is superseded by the second shape as positive content: "beautiful ethical individuality" brought about the humanisation of religion (below) and that, in turn, by the third principle: "self-absorption" to become "abstract universality". It is the fourth configuration which is the goal of this development when the subject "becomes at home in and reconciled with the objective world" in attaining its "concrete essence in its own inwardness" in a world of "legal actuality" (PR §353). The agent is aware of herself or himself not as an agent but as an instrument of external, other forces (as the pen, if it had self-understanding, would see itself as the slave of the hand not knowing what narrative it is writing, only that it moves according to a pattern). It is a minimal subjectivity, though, because it has an image of itself (which, of course, the pen cannot). And Antigone as our example of the Mycenaean self lacks full subjectivity because she cannot conceive of herself as a subject (she is unable to articulate reasons for doing or not doing x, to formulate intentions), nor less is she a person (her individual desires are unimportant to the course of action, Fate acts through her, she is sacrificed to the organism of the will which is external to her). There are pulsions for Antigone to do or not to do, just as the wind sways the tree, or the bang scares the dog, but there is no conscious identification of these pulsions as belonging to her: that she wants to bury her brother is no more a correct description than she wanted to fall when she tripped on the root of a tree. The desires, wants needs are not hers, she is not at home with them, they come from "outside." The pre-archaic selves are not fully subjective because they do not see themselves as in anyway an author of the events that succeed them. They are mere instruments for the will of another -- external -- agent. Hegel describes these as the objective will: "(β) but the *objective* will, inasmuch as it *lacks the infinite form* of self-consciousness, is the will immersed in its object or condition, whatever the content of the latter may be -- it is the will of the child, the ethical will, or the will of the slave, the superstitious will, etc.; " elaborated in the addition "... we may also describe as objective the will

which is completely immersed in its object, such as the will of the child, which is founded on trust and lacks subjective freedom, and the will of the slave, which does not yet know itself as free and is consequently a will with no will of its own. In this sense, every will whose actions are guided by an alien authority and which has not yet completed its infinite return into itself is objective" (PR §26, §26A). The objective will in this sense (and there are others) is the historical possibility of a subjective will, yet it still lacks the subjectivity of the will. Antigone can be described as superstitious because she sees her life as ruled externally and all attempts at subjectivity are illusions. The people of the East, according to Hegel's reading, lacked even this minimal awareness because of the lack of an objective institutional freedom -- and this is centred on the movement from animism, hybridism and into the humanization of religion. (Thesis 1) It is the institution of a non-absolute religion, the tolerant polytheism of the Greeks who see other gods as aspects of their own, or compatible with their own and not as wholly other and different.[1]

The East, according to Hegel, lacked even the illusory and minimal subjectivity of Antigone, the pre-conscious ability to understand the difference between inner and outer motivation. Her understanding was due to specific features of the Greek social fabric:

> Greek freedom of thought is excited by an alien existence; but it is free because it transforms and virtually reproduces the stimulus by its own operation. This phase of Spirit is the medium between the loss of individuality on the part of man (such as we observe in the Asiatic principle, in which the Spiritual and Divine exists only under a Natural form), and Infinite Subjectivity as pure certainty of itself — the position that the Ego is the ground of all that can lay claim to substantial. The Greek Spirit as the medium between these two, begins with Nature, but transforms it into a mere objective form of its (Spirit's) own existence; Spirituality is therefore not yet absolutely free; not yet absolutely self-produced — is not self-stimulation. Setting out from surmise and wonder, the Greek Spirit advances to definite conceptions of the hidden meanings of Nature. In the subject itself too, the same harmony is produced. In Man, the side of his subjective existence which he owes to Nature, is the Heart, the Disposition, Passion, and Variety of Temperament: this side is then developed in a spiritual direction to free Individuality; so that the character is not placed in a relation to universally valid moral authorities, assuming the form of duties, but the Moral appears as a nature peculiar to the individual — an exertion of will, the result of disposition and individual constitution. This stamps the Greek character as that

[1] Athens was the first to adopt Homer's gods as a pantheon, as anything like a standardized religion (Tierney 1923, 266) I admit tolerance may be over stating it here, but compare it to its predecessors and successors. For a better discussion, please see Garnsey, P. 1984. "Religious Toleration in Classical Antiquity", Studies in Church History. 21: 1-27.

> of Individuality conditioned by Beauty, which is produced by Spirit, transforming the merely Natural into an expression of its own being. The activity of Spirit does not yet possess in itself the material and organ of expression, but needs the excitement of Nature and the matter which Nature supplies: it is not free, self-determining Spirituality, but mere naturalness formed to Spirituality — Spiritual Individuality (PH 238-9).

The "spiritual individuality" is made possible by the humanization of religion.[1] Stewart sees the idea of a secret religion, of mysteries of faith (hangovers of which still persist in some forms of modern Christianity), as a sign of non-development, of a slavishness to nature. Like a draconian morality, a tribe morality of military authority, it is symptomatic of an undeveloped moral spirit and the manifestations of this is in religions that have deities in animal form (PH, 235; Stewart, 2017, 57-62). There is a development for Hegel from worship of stars, skies, natural elements, animism, to animals -- an embryonic idea of inner movement -- to the human form of deities (and, for course, finally Christianity where the human, to be contentious, replaces deity); for Hegel, the end of the Eastern world occurs with Odysseus who answers the riddle of the Sphinx (Thesis 2) (PH, 220; PhG ¶737. LPR, 327).

However, this self-consciousness of an inner will remain transitional, itself manifested in the transitional nature of the religion. Thus, the Greeks could idealise the human form and gods ceased to be animal hybrids which in most ancient cultures stands for properties and are symbolic. So, for example, the cheetah signifies speed, and the lion strength, but it is transitional because Herakles wears the lion skin to take on this property.[2] The transition is from the magical properties *being borrowed* to a later subject *owning* those properties:

> ... human beings did not know themselves as free; they are not the decisive subjectivity. Connected with this is that fact that they allow the decision to be given from without; here occurs the aspect of religion that we call oracles. These oracles have a natural origin, for here no articulated answer was given. Their manifestation is some sort of external transformation, metallic forms, the rustling of trees, the blowing of the wind, visions. Examination of sacrificial animals, and contingencies of the sort. People needed such things in order to reach decisions. The Greeks are not free in the sense that we are free, i.e., in their self-consciousness; they let themselves determined from without (LPR, 356).

[1] The humanization is also manifested in the institution of art, see LFA 86-88. Classical Greek art puts a representation and beautified human form at its centre (Hegel & Bryant, 1878, 147)

[2] A manifestation that persists in Christianity and its semiotics of the saints: Francis is with animals; Rocco is with a dog; Christopher, a child on his shoulders and so on.

Odysseus solving the riddle of the sphinx is a transformation of the generic conception of being -- or an objective morality -- into a human centred one (Harris, 1993). Humanization of religion allows for subjective reason to grasp the difference between ordinary objectivity (the drives of my identity just happens to be right and Greek's intuitive grasp of this in the social imaginative form) to the more modern, objective validity: "The Greeks were not 'moral' in the modern way at all, so the restoration of Greek *Sittlichkeit* as a harmony of desire and self-assertion under the guidance of Reason was not the same as 'respect for the moral law'" (Harris, 1993, 31). The later Persian Wars are for Hegel the war between the free individuality of the Greek states (individuality in its primitive form) and the preceding stage of history, an oriental despot who wants the world united under a single consciousness (and probably under a single, orthodox religion) (Singer, 2002, 18-21). The Greeks, in the main, had no individual conscience -- just an acceptance of their existence as part of a free citizen under an unoccupied state. However, this is one-sided because it requires the objective freedom of slavery and therefore cannot be stable. (Thesis 3) The sense of self awoken by the claim to liberty, "we" govern ourselves, must also develop into an "I" govern myself and many of the institutions of the Greek state, although able to allow for awareness of this requirement, are incongruous to its realization.[1]

5.2. Personal will

The person is Hegel's term of art for the atomistic, formal self in the pursuit of desires, projects and goals. As a subject I am identified as that which brings something about in the world: the plant produces oxygen, the lion roars, the human being plays cricket. This grammatical subject is nothing but the identification of the origin of the change in the world. The human being, if he or she is a person, differs though. As a person, I am myself aware of me as bringing about this change: it is me who buys and sells, me who desires and me who can relinquish the content of these desires. I somehow exist over and above them:

> The person is essentially different from the subject, for the subject is only the possibility of personality, since any living thing whatever is a subject. A person is therefore a subject which is aware of this subjectivity, for as a person, I am completely for myself: the person is the individuality of freedom in pure being-for-itself (PR, §35A).

[1] It is worth mentioning here the celebration of the Greek state by Hegel. He seems to suggest that the subjects found themselves at home in the Greek state because social identity was natural and in accordance with the right. This is true, but it lacks equality. The problem is that social harmony only exists for "some", the slaves and others, are not included here and for this reason the modern "I" cannot be fully realised. Otherwise, the modern state is only better because of a formal feature (the moral conscience) but this cannot be properly realized without substantial institutions which express equality. Reconciliation is not achieved by merely inserting the moral conscience into the polis; otherwise, we have Socrates.

The use of the contrastive "subject" here is in the sense of the grammatical subject, the subject-object relationship as in "the dog" (subject) "wags" its "tail" (object). It is this understanding which transcends the naturalness and full immersion of the Eastern self and sets up the inner-outer distinction, but does no more than this. The person is both formal and universal: to be a person is to have the capacity to be the author of one's actions and, as such, it does not identify any specific subject nor make reference to any substantial content of the will. A person can will whatever he or she likes. (Which, remember, Antigone cannot; she can see bifurcations in the causal destiny, but not conceive of them as a possibility.) Once we begin to describe the limitations of what one can want or desire, then we are into the realm of moral subjectivity (morality) and a full account of identity of the specific agent will also involve reference to his or her social position, relationships and specific moral fabric (ethical life). So, the "subject" in this sense is pre-Archaic, the person emerges undeveloped in Athens and finds its home in Rome. The self-understanding of the person is simply as an atomistic self which is the author of an action. A subject in the minimal sense of "he did X". This understanding differs from Antigone because she never identifies herself as the author of her actions, she is a mere instrument of Fate, no better than an arm which picks the keys up. The will (the mind) which picks the keys up, is external to the arm, makes the arm move. The person is the desiring self, freedom-in-itself, as an identification of the author of the events. In the pre-archaic world, there was no self-understanding of oneself as an agent but as the instrument through which external forces play out in the world. Yet the self-understanding of the person is different from the self-understanding of the moral subject (even if the latter relies or is dependent on the understanding of the former) since one is responsible for all those actions which begin with desire or will: coerced actions, temporary insanity, crimes of passion, kleptomania and so on: "With right in the strict sense, it made no difference what my principle of intention was…" (PR §106A) One does wrong when one break a law or violates the rights of others, it makes no difference what one's intentions were.

5.3 Moral will

The consideration of tragedy is pertinent, like any worthwhile literature, not for what it reveals about Antigone and her time, but for it tells the audience about their own Classical world. And what is important is the full understanding of freedom Hegel believes is lacking in both accounts and which may reveal more about the want or defect of subjectivity in the Ancient World but also made possible by its institutions (perhaps in the same way initial conditions of an environment make possible an evolutionary change but do not necessarily bring it about unless other conditions are met). The European Enlightenment (most notably in its Kantian apotheosis) had promulgated the tenet that autonomy and the free use of public reason is a capacity which is equally distributed and innate in rational beings. Otherwise, to put it simply, they would not be rational: the free use of reason, practical reason, is necessary for the spontaneity inherent in judgement.[1] Hegel, his

[1] See Kant (1998) and O'Neill (1990).

immediate successor, disputed this by stating that the Ancient Greeks were not free in the sense a modern European understands freedom, and that the social structures and institutions which constitute the objective freedom of *Sittlichkeit* had to take a step back in the Roman world to make such modern conceptions of liberty possible:

> As conscience, the human being is no longer bound by the ends of particularity, so that conscience represents an exalted point of view, a point of view of the modern world, which has for the first time attained this consciousness, this descent into the self. Earlier and more sensuous ages have before them something external and given, whether this be religion or right; by [my] conscience knows itself as thought, and that this thought of mine is my sole source of obligation (PR §136A).

"Morality" concerns the transition from prohibition to obligation, from *person* to *moral subject*, in such a way as to guarantee that the limitations imposed on one's will are those in which one can feel at home (PR, §105; EG, §503). The pre-Archaic Greeks, Antigone and Oedipus, are bound by "particularity," that is to say, custom, mores and social being. In short, their identity. Antigone must act according to the mores of the family because, even the momentary step into the question of whether she should or should not is unintelligible, a vacuous space in which only madness howls and she would be unable ever to explain her action to others who would despise and hate her. The oscillation to subjectivity, in Sophocles' depiction, is there, but it is merely an echo or a glimpse of a possibility for the benefit of the audience; it could never be determining. And that is what makes her tragic *for them*. The only understandable explanation for not performing her duty is physical obstruction or almost physical coercion of the immediate threat of violence by the will of a tyrannical master. This is not even the freedom of the person. With the person, rights enable or obstruct the satisfaction of subjective freedom and law determines the claims of individuals within a group made effective by punishment. However, the subjective freedom of the person is merely in itself, an external purpose imposed on him, be it by immediate inclination or blind obedience to the dictates of authority. In Part Two of the *Philosophy of Right*, we find the Hegel who is most consistent with the Enlightenment, since he sees the Enlightenment as the epoch of reason and reason which must be demonstrated to the individual. Hegel is here expressing certain intimate themes of post-Reformation Europe: just as the priest no longer mediates my relationship with God, neither do experts, nor teachers, nor men in power mediate my relationship with reasons for action. When a Pharaoh wanted a pyramid built, it was enough for all other Egyptians that he had ordered it since he was divine. When the Mycenaeans set out for Troy, it was enough for Agamemnon to demand the loyal allegiance of his fellow Greeks because their shared identity demands recompense for the slight struck at Menelaus. However, to secure the allegiance of other kings, he had to demonstrate the 'just' nature of his cause and the opportunity for glory (a good for these other kings). The Enlightenment now demands that the rationality of any dictate from authority be

demonstrated to each individual as all are now free (the equality of personhood): "The East knew and to the present day knows only that *One* is Free; the Greek and Roman world, that *some* are free; the German World knows that *All* are free" (PH, 104).[1]

The demonstration of the rationality of a dictate from authority can appeal to values or to reasons, but may just be the answer to the simple question of what is in it for the individual. It is the subject's intention, which reflects an inwardness as opposed to the external nature of the person, that is most readily named freedom (desires are not just given, but are to be rationalised):

> This subjective or 'moral' freedom is what a European especially calls freedom. In virtue of the right thereto a man must possess a personal knowledge of the distinction between good and evil in general: ethical and religious principles shall not merely lay their claim on him as external laws and precepts of authority to be obeyed, but have their assent, recognition, or even justification in his heart, sentiment, conscience, intelligence, etc. The subjectivity of the will in itself is its supreme aim and absolutely essential to it (EG, §503)

The will which obeys authority or immediate inclination acts only in itself, it is not aware of the rationality of purpose (Antigone). That is the will of the ethical self. The Person recognizes these motivations as her own, as given, and irresistible. The moral subject instead transcends and interrogates the content of his will asking if the 'I want x' is a good-for-her and if she perceives it so, she claims *responsibility* for the purpose as her *own* (Socrates). Hegel, in the above quotation, celebrates this modern, moral freedom; it is, for him, necessary for full, human freedom and any ethical substance which did not recognise and value it would be incomplete and not therefore rational.

Yet, even this self-understanding of oneself as a subject is one-sided for Hegel. In the introduction to the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel lays out in abstract how he understands human freedom. A human being is free-in-itself in that it is able to act upon the determinations of its will. (PR §6)[2] Sophocles' Antigone is free in this sense: she can act according to the determinations of

[1] See also, "The History of the world is none other than the progress of the consciousness of Freedom; a progress whose development according to the necessity of its nature, it is our business to investigate. The general statement given above, of the various grades in the consciousness of Freedom – and which we applied in the first instance to the fact that the Eastern nations knew only that one is free; the Greek and Roman world only that some are free; while we know that all men absolutely (man as man) are free – supplies us with the natural division of Universal History, and suggests the mode of its discussion." (PH 22) The idea that some are free in the Classical period of Greece reinforces the aristocratic element of tragedy: "And it does so not, as may be supposed, because it is aristocratic and loves the gentry, but because of the perfect freedom of will and production which is realized in the idea of royalty. So we see in Greek tragedy, for example, the chorus as the general background on which the specific action is to take place, a background, void of individuality, for the dispositions, ideas, and modes of feeling of the characters." (LFA, 192)

[2] For a fuller account, see Neuhouser (2003, chs 1-3) and Rose (2009, chs 1-4).

the laws of the hearth, but -- as a modern self -- one would state they are only minimally free because they could not have acted otherwise, they could only have been stopped acting by external factors or impediments (coercion of the master). The freedom of Kant and Rousseau is an example of freedom-for-itself (PR, §5) The human being is free-for-himself when he is able to deny his desires and the dictates of law, when he is free to say 'no' to immediate and pressing determinations of the will. A will in-itself is still free when it is coerced because it can satisfy the desire -- whatever it is -- but could feasibly state that he or she acted despite what they wanted. Notice how Antigone (because her own wants remain inarticulate, there is no moral language to support her rationalization of what to do -- and hence Plato's own failure -- because subjective wants without a language cannot bear on decision making) cannot imagine an intelligible "no." Subjective freedom -- freedom-for-itself -- is the existential moment of being able to disentangle oneself from all immediate determinations by asserting that they are mine but not me when the "no" is determining, not because of its content, but because it is a "no." This is spontaneity and the ability to act otherwise: "Whatever the will has decided to choose, it can likewise relinquish." (PR §16) The pre-Archaic world then had a subjective understanding which meant that the agents were free-in-themselves and so aware of themselves as acting on the world, as being motivated by desires, needs and social determinations, but unable to ask whether such determinations could be different, whether they could do otherwise. Again, Antigone sees herself as doing what is required but cannot explain or even comprehend the nature of the requirement. She is aware of herself not as an agent but as an instrument of external, other forces.

6. Modern human freedom: self-determination

Full human freedom, for Hegel, is the reconciliation of two elements in self-determination:

> (γ) The will is the unity of both these moments – particularity reflected into itself and thereby restored to universality. It is individuality, the self-determination of the 'I', in that it posits itself as the negative of itself, that is, as determinate and limited, and at the same time remains with itself, that is, in its identity with itself and universality; and in this determination, it joins together with itself alone. – 'I' determines itself in so far as it is the self-reference of negativity. As this reference to itself, it is likewise indifferent to this determinacy; it knows the latter as its own and as ideal, as a mere possibility by which it is not restricted but in which it finds itself merely because it posits itself in it (PR, §7).

When one enters in a car, the seat belt is put on habitually, without question and almost unconsciously. Yet, these external determinations when the agent hesitates can be rationalized, not just because it is law, but because "I" -- as individual -- can recognize the rationality of the law. Thus, "legal actuality" dictates what I would do independently of the presence of an authority: "Only in this freedom is the will completely with itself [bei sich] because it has reference to nothing

but itself, so every relationship of dependence on something other than itself is thereby eliminated." (PR §23) and also "I am free… when my existence depends on myself." (PH 17) Antigone would do what is right but only because it is present all along, as a dictate emanating from her identity. Self-determination depends upon the social sphere of public reason and its determinations because the self, unlike the Kantian self, requires determinations which are immanent and not transcendental. The objectivity of these determinations is the rightness as supported and justified by institutions in which the individual freely participates and allow us to understand ourselves as intentional agents with a subjective conscience.

Here we have what is lacking in the pre-Archaic Greek world and is destructive to it. (Thesis 4) They have, unlike the Persians and those in the Ancient East, enough agential space to oscillate away from custom and tradition, brought about by the conflict between incompatible customs and mores and (as we shall see, the awareness of a weakening of absolutism brought about by the recognition of different gods and masters) because they conceive of an "inner" world of motivation maintained and supported by religious, political and aesthetic institutions and understandings. However, there is no way to resolve this refusal or hesitation, no words or structure of reason -- because there are no institutions which give it a coherent voice -- so it remains a refusal without persuasion (unlike the Enlightenment and its revolutions, where it is a refusal that overpowers -- because of its subjective character -- the customary reason of the European states and takes its validity from its negation) (PhG ¶590; PR §5R, §272). For the pre-archaic Greeks, and for the historical Antigone and not Sophocles's reinvention of her for his Athenian audience, there would be no hesitation, no momentary consideration whether it is right to bury her brother, because it is just natural and determinant. The only thing that could stop her is the might and force of power in the hand of the King and techniques of fear.

Given this, the modern self-understanding is of an individual agent who is responsible for those actions which come about from my own will and not those which are brought about by external causes (a flood), inordinate desires (crimes of passion), temporary insanity or coercion. In none of these cases am I at home with myself. It is this self-understanding which is thoroughly modern and is the full and robust account of subjectivity which was lacking in the ancient world. The defect of subjectivity of will in the pre-archaic world is derived from Hegel's conditions of the subjectivity of the will:

> The *subjective*, as far as the will in general is concerned, denotes the will's self-conscious aspect, its individuality (see §7) *as distinct from* its concept which has being *in itself*. The subjectivity of the will therefore denotes (α) *pure form*, the *absolute unity* of the self-consciousness with itself, in which the self-consciousness, as 'I' = 'I', is totally inward and *abstractly* dependent upon itself -- i.e., the pure *certainty* of itself, as distinct from truth; (β) the *particularity* of the will as arbitrariness and as the contingent content of whatever ends the will

> may pursue; (γ) one-sided form in general (see §8), in so far as that which is willed, whatever its content, is still only a content belonging to the self-consciousness, an unaccomplished end (PR, §25).

Self-determination depends upon an agent's self-consciousness of itself. What I am in my concept (what I am by my nature) is to be an object for myself and hence not 'me'. The transcendental nature of this judgement determines the subjective will as (α) the form of judging, the cogito, the performative nature of judgement (note the reference to Descartes); (β) the will as mine, as the moment of directing the body and hence a particular "I want X"; and (γ) the nature of self-consciousness such that whatever is willed or thought is mine but as a content of consciousness and not me. Antigone is unable to understand herself as anything but a tool of Fate. She is superstitious and lacks (γ), has an underdeveloped sense of (β) and no idea of (α). Her self-consciousness of (β), in an inarticulate sense, comes from conflict and the tensions apparent in doing what is right in a social world which will not allow space for it. Hegel's account of the self is a radically constructed one consistent with modern liberalism and he supplies the grounds to replace the putative morally realist legitimation of such states with a more communitarian one. We do not have the institutions we do because of our understanding of the self, rather our understanding of the self follows on from the developments of our institutions. There is also a further point in that Hegel is not just saying that the Ancients had an erroneous understanding of themselves, he is making the rather more radical point that the self-understanding of the Ancients was constructed and determined differently from our own and that the institutions which make it so are necessarily to be overcome. (Thesis 4) Antigone understood herself perfectly well, it was just it would have been better had she been able to understand herself differently. Yet, she could not because the social world could not accommodate a different understanding. The Sophoclean audience, however, are beginning to see the tragedy because they -- were they in Antigone's place -- would have wanted to do otherwise.

7. Subjective and Objective Freedom

The development from person to subject is the reflection on the immediacy, the materiality of one's being, into an ideality (a nomos). The determinations of the in-itself are its matter, its social nature and its immediate desires. In order to grasp the relationship between subjective understanding and social institutions and especially given the role religion has played above, it is worthwhile to introduce two more terms of art from the Hegelian system: subjective and objective freedom. *Subjective freedom* stipulates that a reason for action be recognised as valid for the agent by himself because I am not "at home" when I act on external dictates imposed on me. The moral subject must endorse the good as his or her own good. Once more we have the celebration of the Enlightenment consciousness and this is crucial otherwise it is possible to describe the coerced or

deceived (whether by state, church or other authorities) as free when it is done in their own good. It also gives us the sort of responsibility demanded by our practices of punishment:

> The *right of the subjective will* is that whatever it is to recognize as valid should be *perceived* by it *as good*, and that it should be held responsible for an action – as it aims translated into external objectivity – as right or wrong, good or evil, legal or illegal, according to its cognizance of the value which that action has in this objectivity (PR §132).

There cannot be full freedom without subjective freedom because then subjects would be mere persons: the content of their will is given by the society they happen to inhabit (think of the reason why one supports a particular football team, it is never chosen, rather given by locale or family or contingent factors). This is not full freedom and any theory of action which begins from this cannot fully explain responsibility.

Objective freedom is the institutional and social structure of the world which makes it possible for the person or subject to satisfy his subjective freedom. It stipulates that a reason for action must accord with those categories and values of a rational form of life or ethical life. Otherwise, the agent acts arbitrarily on a whim, since how one can only know what is right by articulating and holding it up to the scrutiny of others. This is why Socrates cannot articulate opposition or even assent. The objective freedom of an agent is the institutions, moral values, social fabric, roles, civil, economic and political structures and so on that guarantee his or her identification as a subject of his or own deeds and his or her recognition as a moral agent (and not an animal, a very young child, a slave and so on). So, for example, capitalism, the family and the Christian tradition are all forms of objective freedom: they assign roles and duties that determine how we behave in certain situations and in behaving in accordance with their dictates (or, at times, violating them) we are able to be, and also understood as, a moral agent. Such objective determinations will differ from age to age, area to area and, as it is constituted by various concatenations of class, geography, age and so on, from person to person. Objective freedom must align with the wants, needs and desires of the people and the most basic of these is stability. A political order must be stable. Conflict is the emergence of an awareness of the separation between identity and the state and Sophocles uses a fictional Antigone to make clear the audience's own disquiet. A truly draconian state is stable to the point of stasis. To use a slightly different historical example, the Incas were the most successful of the South American tribes, and especially the city of Cuzco because they were able to stabilize inter-generational power through, and this is why I mention it, the reformulation of religion and political authority. Rather than conflict breaking out every time a strong king died, power based on strength and military acumen which does not pass naturally on to the son or daughter because these are particular virtues of a person, the Incas married the objective freedom of religion and instigated the ideology of an institutional divine order, a divine right of a certain family to rule, and that negated the recurrent inter-generational conflict and allowed progress in other areas because the

stability it afforded was in the interest of the other members of the state (Joyce, 2013, ch. 5). Hegel sees the same instability in the arbitrariness of the Eastern states: "the individual personality has no rights and disappears altogether" and the problem with this state is that objective freedom is arbitrary -- subject to change at the whim of the king-god -- it "lives only in the moment" (PR §355)[1] The humanisation of religion, making deities human, is the first step to rationalising the inner world of the subject, but that is only a necessary condition for its development, not a sufficient one and other institutions of the pre-Archaic and later Greek social worlds inhibit its full development.

8. The historical development of subjectivity and the institutions of objective freedom

Let us return to the impossibility for Socrates and Plato to express themselves subjectively even when their awareness of the actual pull of subjectivity is different from prior historical states. There is no possibility for subjective freedom because the objective freedom cannot support any endorsement of the ends and their self-understanding is not of a self that finds its satisfaction in its actions. In staking his claim to a sphere separate from the dictates of the immediate, Socrates goes furthest, but his is a destructive "no", a refusal of dictates he knows to be right and when push comes to shove, he too, as expressed in *Crito*, cannot break from customary morality without it being pure, unintelligible willfulness. The institutions and language of Athens are a form of objective freedom but an objective freedom unable to support such a self-understanding. Athens had developed as far as it could: "the Platonic state-constitution cannot fulfil what the higher demands of a moral organism require. Plato has not recognized the knowledge, wishes, and resolutions of the individual, nor his self-reliance, and has not succeeded in combining them with his Idea; but justice demands its rights for this just as much as it requires the higher resolution of the same, and its harmony with the universal" (LHP, vol. 2. 115).

The point for Hegel is that self-understanding goes through three distinct historical phases: pre-archaic, person (emerges in Rome developing Athenian self-understandings) and the subject (Enlightenment). Such self-understandings are constructed and maintained by the institutional forms of objective freedom (religion, moral language, legal actuality, class, economic structures and so on). The subjective freedom of the modern self is not possible without the objective freedom of those institutions which make such a self-understanding possible and sustain it through the various events and experiences of one's life. Remember that Plato was guilty of "the exclusion of all the determinations which relate to the principle of subjective freedom" in his *Republic* and the family and private property are explicitly mentioned. The problem is that Hegel talks mostly about

[1] In the remark, Hegel also mentions why Stuhr's history is not able to foresee the longevity of the Germanic account of the state because he describes the individuality only "up to the point where it either appears as restless mobility, human arbitrariness, and corruption, or assumes the particular shape of emotion without having developed to the objectivity of self-conscious substantiality or to organized legality "(PR 355R).

the Athenian reinterpretation of the past, and never clearly distinguishes between the early and later Greeks. Athens was the crisis, the transition -- Socrates is idiosyncratic, an example of the "better will," but made possible by the institutions which were changing. (PR §138R)[1] If one clearly demarcates these different social stages and forms, differences can be clearly shown (table 1).

Table 1. ***Historical forms of objective freedom***

	Justice	**Property**	**Religion**	**Family**	**Individual**
Eastern subject	Arbitrary will of despot	Loaned from despot	God-King/Queen	State arranged	Instrument of will of despot
Mycenaean Greek	Vendetta, customary morality	Tribal collectivism	Humanized polytheistic pluralism	Mythical, divine	Tribal identity
Dark Age Greek					
Archaic Greek	Strict Draconian Law, heavy punishment			Tribal centred on Polis	Polis member
Classical Greek	Democratic Tribunal	Common for needs, private for surplus wealth		Common, extended Polis	Citizen and polis member
Modern subject	intentional individual	Private	Monotheistic and inclusive (evangelical)	Nuclear	Bourgeois, person, moral subject

In order to fully explain these differences, it is pertinent to briefly consider two of these institutions as examples of objective freedom: justice and property. Justice is perhaps the easiest entry point for the modern mind into this discrepancy of self-awareness. Consider for a moment, what one does when one engages in criminal court cases. The aim is to discern the innocence or guilt of the accused and one does so through the language of intentions, purposes and the idea of individual agency. The institutions constitute the idea of moral agency and, if this is how others will evaluate me, then through my actions and behaviour, I make the actuality of this objective freedom rational in my expectation (and my consent) to be treated in this way. The institutions of justice and punishment supply the categories of self-understanding of a subject. Simply put, without the modern understanding of justice and punishment, we would not have the modern conceptions of intentional action and individual responsibility. I would not understand myself as a self-willed, responsible unit without them. First, we have the institutions, then we have the self-understanding.[2]

[1] Berlin, 2002, 300.

[2] Although I am not going to claim this is a causal relationship.

Let us look at this in chronological order. Antigone remains our example of the Mycenaean ethical will. For the purposes of justice and punishment, we see from the above tables that law is given and to be obeyed. Its violation is wrong no matter the consequences or motivations. The "act" of Antigone is in no way her own, it is a symptom of deeper forces working through her. Harmony for the family, tribe or society is the goal of society to be brought about over generations through the resettling of disturbances in the cosmic fabric:

> The Substance, [the principle] of Justice, the common weal, the general interest, is the main consideration; but it is so only as Custom, in the form of Objective Will, so that morality properly so called — subjective conviction and intention — has not yet manifested itself. Law exists, and is in point of substance, the Law of Freedom — rational [in its form and purport,] and valid because it is Law, i.e., without ulterior sanction. As in Beauty the Natural element — its sensuous coefficient — remains, so also in this customary morality, laws assume the form of a necessity of Nature... The interests of the community may, therefore, continue to be entrusted to the will and resolve of the citizens — and this must be the basis of the Greek constitution; for no principle has as yet manifested itself, which can contravene such Choice conditioned by Custom, and hinder its realizing itself in action (PH, 251-2).

Given such an understanding, the "particular" agent is of no consequence, no more significant than the finger of the killer that pulls the trigger. We seek the will which caused the event and that is the mysterious unknowable forces of Fate. Such an understanding is made possible by the objective freedom of the institutions of vendetta and revenge, of tribal justice and generational guilt. It makes no difference "who" committed the wrong, only that harmony is restored through the punishment of the tribe, family and so on. I understand myself as guilty for my father's sins and as a tool of Fate to face what comes my way stoically, no matter whether I wanted it to be this way or not.

Prior to the historical emergence of individual responsibility, violations of bodily integrity and property were not evaluated through such institutions because vendetta was the model of criminal justice adopted by most primitive societies. When a wrong was committed, whether it be to a thing or a person, that was seen as a wrong done to the owners of that thing (the family or the tribe) and justice was then to be extracted against, not an individual, but the group from which that action originated. As such, it was enough to establish that a crime had been committed and who (identifying the family or tribe) would have most likely committed such a crime. Individual responsibility was irrelevant to questions of justice: it made no difference which brother actually stole, they represented a community through their actions and the community is guilty for encouraging or failing the act. The family or wider group of the agent were equally guilty in the eyes of justice (Faris, 1914, 62-3).

The rationality of vendetta was, however, unstable because it leads to ongoing claims for retribution and no, what moderns may call, closure (PR §102). More importantly here, it is irreconcilable with the feeling of being an agent which is emerging in Archaic and Classical Greece whereby the humanisation of religion has led to the recognition of the world as belonging, in some sense, to the human. A demand was made to treat the agent him or herself as the site of the crime and hence as the site of punishment.[1] The individual was first delineated by the claims of criminal justice. The body is the site of action and also the site of punishment. It sets limits to the possible consequences of crime and closes down the issue of justice of a group. The institutions of the society construct the individual and the individual feels at home in such structures when his or her requirement for self-determination is met. The "person" emerges as a product of institutional structures of justice (in the Roman world) in order to close the destabilizing nature of tribal revenge. A good society is a stable society and stability will be gained by punishing crimes immediately and completely, allowing the debt of the crime to be paid in full and leaving no excess which works against harmony.

The person as an author of an action is individual and begins to understand himself in this way and also as a possible victim as an individual wronged rather than a group wronged when violations occur. Why one violates or whether one wanted to transgress is immaterial, if it occurs, a debt is to be paid. Yet, if justice now points to an individual as responsible for the action which violates the law, the agent begins to understand itself in this way (much like playing a game, as we begin to understand the rules, we begin to play the part of the gameplayer).[2] If I am to be blamed as an individual for violations and transgressions, then I will begin to look at my actions not as instruments of my family or Fate, but as my own. We can now distinguish between the arsonist, the negligent and the event of purely accidental fire.

Of course, once such a system of justice is in place, further rational demands are placed on the understanding. The pre-archaic self could state: I understand myself as a descendant of X, Y, Z and

[1] "The Homeric virtues, the Achillean virtues, to ride well, to shoot straight, to tell the truth [...] the aristocratic virtues, courage, pride, boundless ambition and eagerness to dominate, unquestioning loyalty to a code, are all there, and receive their need of admiration; but they are the qualities of the Persians, not of the Greeks. The qualities whereby the Greeks win are the bourgeois qualities" (MacKay, 1962,172).

[2] One finds such a conception of agency throughout modern ethical writings. Almost at random, one can open the pages of Hobbes (1991, 57, 83-4) or Smith (2010, 93, 107) and find the judgement of individuals' intentions as a commonsensical and universal requirement of justice.Foucault has a radical take on this such that the subject is a production of ultimately arbitrary plays of power: "... for a long time, the criminal had been no more than the person to whom a crime could be attributed and who could therefore be punished, today, the crime tends to be no more than the event which signals the existence of a dangerous element -- that is, more or less dangerous -- in the social body." (1978, 2) For Foucault, the development of legal system is from what must be punished to a new obscure question of whom do you think you are punishing and treatment develops accordingly: "In the older systems, the horror of the punishment had to reflect the enormity of the crime; henceforth, the attempt was made to adapt the modalities of punishment to the nature of the criminal" (1978, 9).

am responsible for the past deeds of my family/tribe. Whereas for the modern subject, desires and situations which are "given" are not mine and I am not them (the existential moment of the for-itself): I understand myself as an intentional being, responsible for those actions which I understand as emanating from my will. If the agent commits the crime and must be punished, one must have a way to distinguish between the severity of crimes, the motivation of crimes and so on. And when the individual is marked, identified and judged in terms of intentions at the level of action, such intentions then through feedback into how people recognize themselves and actually become to determine action. In short, the moral subject is, according to one interpretation of Hegel, constructed by the system and demands of justice. Those institutions of individual responsibility (including moral language) are all forms of objective freedom in that they support and maintain the individual's subjective freedom and, in so doing, the individual can feel at home in them. He or she feels at home in them because the system of justice is reflected in the moral language, the goods of his family, his class identity, the system of needs, of justice and the representatives at the level of law-making. And thus, I as a self-understanding begin to understand myself in this way, identifying those desires which are properly my own and those which are not (coercion, strong passions, insanity). My account of my intentions must be given to the court of law in such a way to make sense of the action which occurred and I am to be treated accordingly.[1]

Putting aside the question of causality here, the institutions of justice go hand in glove with the institution of property. When crime is against the body of the tribe or the group, it makes no sense for an individual to talk of her or his own property. Property is distributed according to Fate or some other divine plan and individual merit or personal gain. The economics will be dominantly collectivist. The individual person arises in line with private property (the Roman world): once the body is an individual possession, then its violation is wrong done to an individual and the wrong is done by an individual.

Private property is necessary for an understanding of myself as an intentional subject because it territorializes the empirical 'I': my car is "me". Touch it and you touch the subject. Collectivist property would not support such an understanding: "The person must give himself an external sphere of freedom in order to have being as Idea" (§41) and in the addition: "The rational aspect of property is to be found not in the satisfaction of needs but in the superseding of mere subjectivity of personality. Not until he has property does the person exist as reason" (PR §41A) and a little

[1] Of course, our own understanding has its limitations: the idea of personhood is so entrenched in both the victim and the wrongdoer, we are now encountering conflicts which are irresolvable without progress in terms of corporate responsibility (holding a single CEO guilty for harm caused by her company), collective responsibility (a football crowd which chants racist taunts to players) and also intellectual property (what can an agent be said to own as his or her own creation; how many agents can claim to have produced the artistic or intellectual object). Foucault (1978) sees a similar conflict arising in the formation of the new criminalised insane which arose concurrently with the late period of subjectivity. I have begun to deal with these issues in an article (XXXX, 2019), but not yet satisfactorily.

later we are also offered: "Since my will as the will of a person, and so a single will, becomes objective to me in property, property acquires the character of private property; and common property of such a nature that it may be owned by separate persons acquires the character of an inherently dissoluble partnership in which the retention of any share is explicitly a matter of my arbitrary preference" (PR §46).[1] What is obvious with the emergence of the person and later the moral subject is of course the idea that I understand my body as my own because it is the site of action and also the site of punishment. It is also the site of being a victim and crime. The understandings of the institutions of justice would not be possible unless the individuality of the subject is supported by a sphere or territory of the body and its extension. Without personhood, we have no individual equality and that equality will form the objective freedom of Kant and Rousseau's account of the free moral conscience (PR §36). Equality of individuals is brought about by the recognition of personality as inviolable (thus being constructed by the territory of rights) and requires an extension of these rights into object which express the individuality of my person and subject (telling others what I value) (PR §38). The self-understanding of agents as agents who bring about external physical actions and are responsible for consequent events, the understanding which makes possible the subjective moral conscience, is impossible without the institution of private property.

9. Concluding remarks: legitimacy and constructivist subjectivity

In his presentation of the Greeks and their relationship to modernity, perhaps Hegel's greatest oversight, or omission, is not to remind his readers that history moves slowly. It is so easy to forget this as one is swept along by his early Jena works where history seems almost a personal, individual odyssey travelled at breakneck speed. His later works are slower, but less concerned, assuming his readers are by that time *au fait* with his system. The presentation of his understanding is important with relation to two claims: one, Hegel's liberalism rests on a conservative account of political legitimacy and obedience that is grounded in the idea of an historical, situated self; and, two, this self is a constructivist self more radical than is commonly supposed by Hegel's commentators or critics. Let us begin with the first claim. Any modern liberal state requires the subjective moral conscience to ratify its laws, institutions and policies. The liberty and equality of all persons is expressed in the liberal assumption: the laws, policies and institutions apply to the individual qua

[1] See by Laitinen (2017, section 4). The institution of private property is derived from the individual: the individual must have an external sphere of freedom and these entities must stand in an external relation to the individual. As I said earlier, I think this relationship is the wrong way round. The institution of private property makes possible the proper individual self-understanding. In my introduction I do insert a footnote about the relevance of private property as opposed to common property to the subjectivity of the individual and I think this is where the argument would originate. I do not have time to develop it. See Knowles who tell us Hegel's "intention here is to show that private property (Privateigenthum) through its connection with "a single will" is rational, whereas common property (Gemeineigenthum) is not" (Knowles, 1983, 61). I am still to be convinced of this, though.

individual if and only if these elements of the state can be rationalised to the individual qua individual (Rawls 1999, 578; Kant, 1991). For the modern subject to feel at home in his or her political organization, Hegel reminds us again and again that the moment of the subjective right of knowledge, that this is the individual's own law, has to be met (EG §503, PR §§132, 140). "Legal actuality" or the actualization, the understanding of the rationality of a law, is in place when a law is rational and known to be so by the agent (PR 20). However, if that individual's modes and tropes of reasoning are derived from his or her social identity, then this form of communitarianism can, at best, offer a simple circular reinforcement of social mores and customs. Antigone is convinced of what she does, there is no dilemma for her. Socrates is still convinced of the rightness of Athenian law, but he, and also Plato obscurely and worryingly, cannot given any rational expression to the felt need to feel at home, truly at home, in the determinations of his social existence. They remain one-sided. The enlightenment self, the moment of existentialism, is crucial for a rational distance from custom, but it is merely a formal negation derived from our status as rights-bearer equal to all. Antigone's one-sidedness is resolved by falling back into custom because she cannot follow another chain of events (even if conflict allows her to glimpse the possibility). The modern self has a different one-sidedness. When a different set of events is made possible, as a right the individual feels compelled to take them:

> Subjective opinion is at last expressly acknowledged as the criterion of right and duty when it is alleged that the ethical nature of an action is determined by the conviction which holds something to be right. The good which is willed does not yet have a content; and the principle of conviction contains further specification that the subsumption of an action under the determination of the good is the responsibility of the subject. Under these circumstances, any semblance of ethical objectivity has completely disappeared (PR §140R).

The existentialist moment is as one-sided as the communitarian one. And most liberal legitimations of the state amount to the assertion of entitlement of the subject, as Hegel forensically shows in the same remark. Liberalism rests on the metaphysical absolutism of a transcendental self (Rawls/Kant), or the putative moral realism of rights (Locke/Dworkin/Nozick), that when brought into conflict with other ways of life, appears no better than Antigone's or Socrates' own reliance on the rightness of their social existence.

Now, let us remind ourselves of the four theses arising from Hegel's concerns with the Greeks as an historical people: one, the Greeks lacked the sense of individual subjectivity of the moderns, but that, two, they had the social conditions in place for a development of individual subjectivity. Three, the development of individual subjectivity becomes self-conscious as a felt need but that, four, the self-consciousness of this subjectivity is irreconcilable with the social harmony of the Greek Polis and destructive of it. Hegel's claim that the subjective right of knowledge, and the objective validity required for freedom, is that it is not possible unless supported by certain

institutions (private property, freedom of speech, education and so on). Only a self-aware people, a people made people through an act of will, can fully manifest *Sitllichkeit*. A political organic whole or a people (as we have been speaking about the Greeks and now, we speak about the Europeans in Hegel's broad meaning of the word) is defined by its development of the concept of freedom. Enlightenment legitimation is one-sided, but only if taken as somehow universally existing independently of and transcendentally to the tradition which has brought it into being. The development of free individual subjectivity stalls for the Greeks because they cannot -- even Socrates who excludes himself in so many ways -- conceive of standing outside the social whole. Enlightenment rationality can conceive of itself as an independent and atomistic unit and can conceive of itself as standing in a consensual relationship with the state. Only, though, because of the institutions and objective freedom that has brought it into being.

The ratification of the laws, institutions and policies of my ethical being does not come about via an *a priori* moment of reasoning, an illumination or revelation. It is hard won through historical struggle. The ahistorical form of the liberal assumption, the moment of Rawls' original position or Kant's critical public reason, is only possible in the actual ethical status of liberalism and the form of reasoning expressed in these legitimation practices are devices made possible by the institutions of the liberal state and given the agential space -- unlike Antigone -- to articulate the reasons why the individual *as individual* endorses the law or policy or institution for him or her and for us. The liberal self is one way to understand ourselves made possible and supported by the ideologies of individualism, moral responsibility and their congruent institutions of free conscience, democracy, individual rights (aspects which are forms of objective freedom). The liberal assumption understood in its myriad forms from Rawls' original position, to Kantian public reason, or even the utilitarian greatest happiness principle, is made possible by and does not justify the liberal state, but it still offers us the possibility of a fair ethical harmony (like the Greeks) with a moral conscience which supports it (unlike them). It makes liberty a virus which can only be contracted fully when the conditions (temperature, lack of immunity system) are right. These conditions were present in the Greek state in part, but lacked the correct institutions: private property, a fully humanized religion, individual responsibility to allows for the self-understanding of an individual as individual.[1] Rawls' own political liberalism describes the growth of a liberal consciousness out of pragmatism and religious toleration as a necessity (1993, xiii-xxxiv). The conditions were in place in Europe for the fulfilment of individual subjectivity, but they required the political virtue of toleration which came about almost by chance. Liberalism is the best political order, but it would be a metaphysical error to deny it is a community or society which has an historical development.

[1] "However, in the PH Hegel points out, as he noted earlier in the PR, that their freedom was not fully conscious, it was a naive unconscious freedom which was only true for some and rested on the slavery of others. Greece ignored the subjective type of morality where personal convictions guide human conduct, the type which is a product of modern times, fostered by the spread of Christianity" (De Seade, 1979, 382).

Forgetting that will lead to bad normative consequences especially in international relation with other, non-liberal states and also our own understanding of our own communities and minorities. The individual conscience requires objective institutions in which to moor itself, otherwise it becomes arbitrary but these cannot be inviolable custom as in the Greek world because homeliness will then be happenstance, a relativism at the mercy of historical, economic and geographical change.

Hegel sees this in the actual institutions of private property, individual responsibility, democracy, the secularization of the state, the bourgeois family and the humanisation of religion; in short, the emerging forms of objective freedom which -- once a people or a nation identifies itself as self-governing and thus free -- leads to individual, subjective agency. Remember that Plato wants to return to pre-Archaic Greek social harmony by "... the exclusion of private property and of family life, by the suspension of freedom in the choice of the class, i.e. by the exclusion of all the determinations which relate to the principle of subjective freedom..." (LHP, vol. 2. 114-15). and just as the Greek religion humanised and made possible the understanding of inner-outer -- as a human world -- the Christian religion (and its secularization) which makes salvation an individual enterprise, makes subjective freedom possible but only with the connected objective freedom of private property, family life, and the ability to move from class to class. It is worthwhile to bear in mind that, in Athens, it is not Plato's, nor even Aristotle's ethics, which captured the spirit of the Polis as it progresses away from its defeat in the war with Sparta. Much more popular were the less conservative, the thoroughly modern, Epicureans and Stoics (LHP, vol 2, 232-235; McCarmey, 2000; Berlin, 2002).

Read like this, the self is a constructed entity and socially dependent, but the modern self is better for a series of reasons, including reconciliation and social stability. The theory itself may perhaps be more radical than actually credited: Hegel is making an historical, constructivist claim about identity which remains consistent with modern liberalism and supplies the grounds to replace the legitimation of such states by a putative moral realism:

> For the modern conceptions of Democracy this justification cannot be pleaded. These provide that the interests of the community, the affairs of State, shall be discussed and decided by the People; that the individual members of the community shall deliberate, urge their respective opinions, and give their votes; and this on the ground that the interests of the State and its concerns are the interests of such individual members. All this is very well; but the essential condition and distinction in regard to various phases of Democracy is: What is the character of these individual members? They are absolutely authorized to assume their position, only in as far as their will is still Objective Will — not one that wishes this or that, not mere "good" will. For good will is something particular — rests on the morality of individuals, on their conviction and

> subjective feeling. That very subjective Freedom which constitutes the principle and determines the peculiar form of Freedom in our world — which forms the absolute basis of our political and religious life, could not manifest itself in Greece otherwise than as a destructive Element (PH, 252).

We see here Hegel at his most modern: individual members of the community shall not just endorse the reasons which justify the actions, policies and laws of a state, but shall deliberate them. If not, such individuals are not at home. But conversely, these cannot just be individuals who are able to resist the immediate determination of social edicts and identity motivations, but individuals produced and cultured by the correct objective freedom, otherwise their entitlement to their own personal conviction is destructive.

References

Berlin, I. (2002). The birth of individualism: a turning-point in the history of political thought. *Liberty*. Edited by H. Hardy. Oxford University Press.

Knowles, D. (1990). The Right to Private Property. *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 40(158), 116-119.

Faris, E. (1914). The Origin of Punishment. *International Journal of Ethics*, 25(1), 54-67.

Farneth, M. (2013). Gender and the Ethical Given. *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 41(4), 643–667.

Fleischman, E. (1971). The Role of the Individual in Pre-revolutionary Society: Stirner, Marx, and Hegel." In Pelczynski, Z. (1971). *Hegel's Political Philosophy Problems and Perspectives: a Collection of New Essays*. Cambridge University Press.

Foucault, M. (1978). About the Concept of the 'Dangerous Individual in 19th-Century Legal Psychiatry. *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*. 1.(1), 1–18.

Franco, P. (1997). Hegel and Liberalism. *The Review of Politics.* 59(4), 831-860.

Harris, H. (1993). Hegel's intellectual development to 1807. In *Cambridge Companion to Hegel*. Edited by F. Beiser. Cambridge University Press.

Hegel, G. (2006). *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion: One volume edition, the lectures of 1827*, translated by R. Brown, P. Hodgson; & J. Stewart. University of California Press.

Hegel, G. (1999). On *the Scientific Ways of Treating Natural Law, on its Place in Moral Philosophy, and its Relation to the Positive Sciences of Right*, trans. H. Nisbet. *Political Writings*, Cambridge University Press.

Hegel, G. (1991a). *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. Translated by H. Nisbet. Cambridge University Press.

Hegel, G. (1991b). *Philosophy of History*. Translated by J. Sibree. Prometheus Books.

Hegel, G. (1999c). *The Encyclopaedia Logic: Part 1 of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze*, trans. T. Geraets, A. Suchting, & H. Harris. Indianapolis, USA: Hackett Publishing Co.

Hegel, G. (1986). *Nurnberger Propadeutik, Werke in 20 Bänden mit Registerband - 4: Nürnberger und Heidelberger Schriften 1808–1817*. Suhrkamp Verlag.

Hegel, G. (1979). *System of Ethical Life*, translated by T. Knox & H. Harris. State University of NewYork Press.

Hegel, G. (1977). *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, translated by A. Miller. Oxford University Press.

Hegel, G. (1975). *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*. Translated by T. Knox. Clarendon Press.

Hegel, G. (1971). *Philosophy of Mind: Part 3 of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze*, translated by W. Wallace & A. Miller. Oxford University Press.

Hegel, G. (1955). *Lectures of the HIstory of Philosophy*. Vol.3. Translated by E. Haldane. Routledge.

Hegel, Charles & Bryant, W. (1878). Hegel on Classic Art, *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 12(2), 145-160.

Herder, J. (2004). *Another Philosophy of History and Selected Political Writings*. Translated by I. Evrigenis and D. Pellerin, Hackett Publishing Company.

Hobbes, T. (1991). *Man and Citizen: De Homine and De Cive.* Cambridge: Hackett Publishing.

Joyce, T. A. (2013). *South American Archaeology: an introduction to the archaeology of the south american continent with special reference to the early history of Peru*. Cambridge University Press.

Kant, I. (1998). *Critique of Pure Reason*. Edited by P. Guyer and A. Wood, Cambridge University Press.

Kant, I. (1991). An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment? In *Political Writings*. Translated by H. Nisbet. Edited by H. Reiss. Cambridge University Press.

Laitinen, A. (2017). Hegel and Respect for Persons. In *The Roots of Respect*. Edited by G. Giorgini & E. Irrera. De Gruyter.

Mackay, L. A. (1962). Antigone, Coriolanus, and Hegel. *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 93, 166., doi:10.2307/283759.

Neuhouser, F. (2003). *Hegel's Social Theory: Actualizing Freedom*. Harvard University Press.

O'Neill, O. (1990). *Constructions of Reason: Explorations of Kant's Practical Philosophy*. Cambridge University Press.

Pelczynski, Z. A. (1971). *Hegel's Political Philosophy Problems and Perspectives; a Collection of New Essays*. Cambridge University Press.

Pelczynski, Z. A. (1971). Political Community and Individual Freedom in Hegel's Philosophy of State. in *The State and the Civil Society: Studies in Hegel's Political Philosophy*. Edited by. Z. A. Pelczynski. Cambridge University Press.

Pietercil, R. (1978). Antigone and Hegel. *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 18(3), 289–310.

Pinkard, T. (2017). *Does History Make Sense? Hegel on the Historical Shapes of Justice*. Harvard University Press.

Pinkard, T. (2001). *Hegel: a Biography*. Cambridge University Press.

Rawls, J. (1999). The Idea of Public Reason Revisited. *Collected papers*. Harvard University Press.

Rawls, J. (1993). *Political Liberalism*. Columbia University Press.

Rose, D. (2019). Tracing the subjectivities of the changing human: Hegel, self-understanding and posthuman objective freedom. *Journal of Posthuman Studies: Philosophy, Technology, Media*. 2(2), 190-212.

Rose, D. (2009). *Free Will and Continental Philosophy: the Death without Meaning*. Continuum.

Seade, E. D. D. (1979). State and History in Hegel's Concept of People. *Journal of the History of Ideas*. 40(3) (1979): 369-384.

Smith, A. (2010). *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Penguin.

Singer, P. (2001). *Hegel: a Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press.

Sophocles. (2008). *The Theban Plays: Oedipus the King, Oedipus at Colonus, Antigone.* Translated by R. Fainright and R. Littman. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

Stern, R. (1998). *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit and Logic*. Routledge.

Stewart, J. (2018). The Egyptian Religion. *Oxford Scholarship Online*, doi:10.1093/oso/9780198829492.003.0008.

Stewart, J. (2017). Hegel and the Egyptian Religion as a Mystery or Enigma: the inner and the outer. *Filosofia*. 72(1), 54-63.

Taylor, Ch. (2018). *Hegel*. Cambridge University Press.

Tierney, M. (1923). The Greeks and Ourselves. *An Irish Quarterly Review*. 12(46). 261-272.

Velkley, R. (2006). On Possessed Individualism: Hegel, Socrates' Daimon, and the Modern State. *The Review of Metaphysics*. 59(3), 577-599.

Wood, A. (2002). *Hegel's Ethical Thought*. Cambridge University Press.