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PHILOLOGOI:

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Φιλολόγος

Philologos (mas. noun): “student, scholar.”

From the conjunction of *philos* [a friend]
and *logos* [word, idea, reason];

philologoi are “fond of words, *i.e.*, talkative, argumentative,
learned, philological.”

—*Strong's Greek Concordance.*

It was said of Socrates, that he was a *philologus*—one fond of words, talkative, keen of speaking (*Phaedrus* 236e). According to Aristotle, it is one who is fond of dialectic or of philosophical argument, a lover of learning and literature, or one who is literary (*Rhetoric* 1398b14). For Zeno, the *philologoi* are lovers of reason; they are students and scholars, learned in conversation, and studious of words (*Stoic* 1.67).

—*Liddell Lexicon.*

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Mission Statement:

Philologoi: The Belmont University Undergraduate Journal of Philosophy is a student-run scholarly journal deeply rooted in the history of philosophy. Our mission is to provide an engaging and reflective forum for showcasing exceptional undergraduate work, particularly that which explores the idea of philosophy as a way of life.

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Editors' Letter

Three years ago *Philologoi: The Belmont University Undergraduate Journal of Philosophy* was founded from our desire to truly dirty our hands, work our muscles, and do our share to cultivate the community dedicated to philosophical exchange. We hoped to forge relations within our local intellectual community, amongst undergraduate philosophers worldwide, and produce something of unique value with the philosophical community at large. Further, we hoped that through this goal we might create a multifaceted philosophical exercise for the authors we publish and the staff involved in the making of the journal. By continuing our now-annual journal cover art contest, we have further engaged the students of Belmont University into our publishing forays, introducing many non-philosophers into the ways of thinking philosophy's application to other fields of study.

Leo Strauss' famous address "What is Liberal Education?" connects the product of education, a cultured human being, to the agricultural activity of the cultivation of land in accord with its nature, or, the cultivation of mind's native faculties in accordance with the mind's own nature.¹ While neither a land-grant university nor a liberal arts college, situated in Nashville, America's heart for country music, Belmont University is known for its professional and

¹ Leo Strauss, "What is Liberal Education?", Address delivered at the Tenth Annual Graduation Exercises of the Basic Program of Liberal Education for Adults, June 6, 1959.

performative programs in music, and many of our lovers of wisdom are equal lovers of song. Cultivation, though, is hardly opposed to musical crafts. Whether it is an Aristotelian perfection of one's function—the harmony of the soul in accordance with reason—so as to become a virtuoso, or the Pythagorean investigation uncovering and attuning one's self to the harmony of the spheres, engaging in philosophical cultivation is transformative work creative of polyphony: the combinations of parts, each productive of a melody, together becoming harmony, yielding a pleasing whole that is both a product of culture and productive of culture. Our work in the field, the cultivation that brought forth this journal, the cultivation it enacted upon us, our engagements of dissonance played out to harmony—all of this has helped to create not only the work you now hold in your hands, but also us who present it to you.

It is, thus, our great honor to present six fine essays here that demonstrate the breadth and talent of undergraduate philosophical research. The works span our canon's historical periods from Plato to Foucault, as well as engage contemporary scholarship; they explore eminent metaphysical and ontological questions of self, will, and consciousness; they methodologically engage realism and physicalism alongside the phenomenological and cosmological, as well as making these methods the very objects of analysis. What unites these works is that each uniquely demonstrates our journal's emphasis of philosophy as a way of life. Surely, philosophy is a conceptual study, an activity of the mind, one that offers tools and hones skills, but it is as much an exercise that transforms lives. In seeking to grasp the meaning of being, the process of judgment, the forms, God, Nature, or freedom, one learns to be this thinking thing that one is—or, better, to become a cultured human.

Our opening essay, Amer Amer's "Platonic Realism in the *Categories*," introduces the volume's leitmotif—philosophy

as a way of life—by beautifully showing the harmonious flow from rigorous theory to reflective, lived experience in his movement from the Scholastic dissection of Aristotle’s *Categories* to a revelation of ontology to the demonstration of the pedagogic relation between a student and his teacher. In her essay, “On Judgement and Freedom of the Will in the *Meditations*,” Eleanor A. F. Gower similarly interprets philosophical praxis as she reconceives the relationship between judgment and reason in Descartes, which proposes an unique liberty for the will, and reveals a fascinating way to unthink the sense of paradox that arises between freedom and constraints in that Fourth Meditation that so markedly offers readers a model of judgment exportable to all manner of philosophic and lived questions.

The interplay between epistemology and ethical action and judgment is further explored in Hanna Jones-Eriksson’s work, “A Foucauldian Analysis of Culpability in Fricker’s *Epistemic Injustice*,” which radically opens new ways of thinking testimony that allow for its dynamism in the face of social nuance. Such challenges to dynamic models of understanding the self are also examined in Michael Thorne’s essay, “Hume on the Self,” as he challenges criticisms about identity’s stasis in order to develop Hume’s own dissatisfaction with his theory of self into a more phenomenologically elaborate indication of the limit of an empirical approach to the moral subject.

Continuing the innovative methodological approaches to seminal philosophical questions that the first four essays demonstrate, Taylor P. Smith’s “The Cosmological Argument: Agnosticism and Silence,” dialogically enacts a mystification of three approaches to the cosmological argument forged by Spinoza’s *Ethics*—from the atheist, the theist, and the agnostic—in order to render their very harmony. While Smith’s work begins with premise of the big bang, William Wilson’s essay, “A Case for Physicalism

about Consciousness: Can Evolution by Natural Selection Adequately Explain the Emergence of Mind?”, works from neuroscience’s insights into evolution in order to reconcile the challenge of consciousness to the mind-body problem. These fine works collected together in our third volume exemplify polyphony: each work has its own melody, is its own whole, yet, together, their combination is harmonious and forges a new harmony, something more deeply expressive of the rich fertility of undergraduate philosophical research.

The creation of *Philolогоi*—from its germination and first note of founding, and through the harvest of each edition bearing the development and symphonic composition of new features—represents a seminal example of one of the ways we have each individually come together to practice philosophy in our lives. As our work on this latest volume comes to a close, we still realize that philosophy is not something simply *completed*, even as it produces something nourishing and wholesome. The yield is turned back into nutrients to further cultivate the ground from whence it came and the individuals engaged in life-long labors. Philosophy is a continual pursuit and provides a constant enjoyment in its activity itself. Though most of us will soon graduate and move on to new acres and circumstances, our roots remain in this fertile ground of the philosophical world, and we will always remain within the *Philolогоi* community.

Sincerely,

The Editorial Staff

AMER AMER

**Platonic Realism in
the *Categories***

ABSTRACT: This essay has two main inquiries: First, to give an educated opinion as to whether Aristotle's *Categories* ought to be interpreted as a work concerned with syntax or ontology. This is framed in the Nominalist/Realist language of the medieval scholastics. However, I maintain that this language is not anachronistic, but that it engages the debate in a way that is native to the 4th century context of discussion; this can be seen in the opening discussion of Plato's *Parmenides*. Second, this essay presents an argument for why the *Categories* ought to be interpreted as in-line with Platonic doctrine, and presents both the immediate and long-term implications of this assertion. Ultimately, "Platonic Realism in the *Categories*" is an introductory essay into the philosophical relationship between an older teacher, well along in his intellectual development, and a younger student in the midst of philosophical challenge and development.

I. Historical Context and Motivation

Diogenes Laertius tells a story of a public reading of the *Phaedo* given by Plato. This lecture is said to have not been a public success and people gradually slipped away, until it was only Aristotle that remained through to the end.¹ It is widely accepted that Aristotle entered the Academy at the age of seventeen, and studied there for the better part of twenty years, only leaving upon Plato's death. In this time, he would have been exposed to the later works of Plato, including the *Timaeus* and the *Philebus*. More importantly for this discussion, however, Aristotle would have been exposed to the *Phaedo*, one of the first texts in which Plato develops a "Theory of Forms," addressing the important philosophical question of "why are things the way they are?"² It is also likely that Aristotle was exposed to teachings that were transmitted only orally (as Plato harshly criticizes all written transmission of *epistémé* in the *Phaedrus*). With regard to his own work, some scholars have considered the *Categories* one of Aristotle's earlier works, as it lacks the material/formal distinction that is otherwise consistently central within his philosophy.³ On this basis, a cross-examination of the *Categories* with the *Phaedo* provides insight into the fascinating interpretational puzzle of knowing whether the younger Aristotle preserves or rejects Platonic doctrine—and the Pythagorean tradition altogether. Furthermore, the *Phaedo* in particular is a great introduction to the intellectual challenges that Aristotle must have faced in the Academy, notably in its stimulation of Aristotle's "Doctrine of the Causes," for example. It is important to note that this puzzle cannot be fully solved without taking into account the remaining evidence of Aristotle's published (lost) dialogue

¹ For the account from Diogenes Laertius, cf. *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, Book III, 35, 37. The account he gives is based upon accounts given by Aristoxenus and Simplicius, neither of whom report a reading of the *Phaedo*, but rather a lecture (or lecture-series) entitled *On the Good*.

² John M. Rist, *The Mind of Aristotle: A Study in Philosophical Growth* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 37.

³ The work is "named the *Categories* in the tradition, though probably not so named by Aristotle ..." (*Ibid.*, 93). For a statement of the view that it is one of his earlier works, cf. *Ibid.*, 77-8.

Protrepticus. However, since this is an obscure zone of scholarship with which I have yet to sufficiently engage, I will be concentrating on the evidence in surviving works, particularly that of the *Categories*, a work that Aristotle prepared for students in his Lyceum, whom already had an understanding of where Aristotle's thought differed from Plato's.

II. Preliminary

This study of the *Categories* investigates the extent to which the text can be interpreted as Nominalist or Realist. This lens of inquiry occupied medieval and scholastic thinkers and for this reason might seem to be superimposed here onto the earlier documents in question. However, the terms in which I examine this issue are not anachronistic. In fact, Plato himself lays the ground for this debate in the opening philosophical conversation of the *Parmenides*, preceding the central dialectical gymnastics. It is for this reason that the outcome of this Nominalist-Realist deliberation affords a rich discussion of whether this text is more or less inline with Platonic tradition, which is the primary inquiry of this paper. It is my contention that the text warrants a strong Platonic Realist reading, on the grounds that Aristotle (1) insists that essential universals are 'Secondary Substances' and (2) that essences and differentiae cannot be mind-dependent. Furthermore, although there is a fundamental conflict between the Platonic and Aristotelian notions of essence, a Platonic reading remains defensible primarily due to the text's deliberate lack of any material/formal distinction.

This thesis will be presented as follows: First, a summary of the "Four-Fold Distinction" will be provided so that the subject of investigation is adequately situated in the broader scheme of the text. Second, the Nominalist account will be provided, supported with references to a Nominalist reading by M. J. Cresswell. Third, the Realist account will be provided, supported with references to a Realist reading by David Henry. Fourth, a brief summary of Realism in Platonism (limited to that of Plato's *Phaedo*) will be provided, followed by

a discussion of whether the Platonic and Aristotelian notions of essence are compatible. Fifth, an argument for the Realist interpretation of the *Categories* will be presented. Finally, a discussion of the consistencies and inconsistencies of the Platonic reading of the *Categories* is presented, which connects the discussion of substance in the *Categories* to the development of Aristotelian substance theory in the *Metaphysics*. This essay assumes that the sequencing of Aristotle's texts is correct and that it is licit that they be used to interpret each other.⁴

III. The 'Four-Fold Distinction'

In the *Categories*, 'secondary substances' are conceptualized as part of a complete system of subject classification.⁵ Predication is the principle of this categorical division, which has come to be known by scholars as the "Four-Fold Distinction." In this text, Aristotle differentiates between two types of predication: *said of* predications, which predicate both the name and definition of a subject; and *in* predications, which never predicate definition, but occasionally predicate the name of a subject.⁶ For Aristotle, a definition is a singular denotation of what is required for a subject to be 'what it is.'⁷ Consequently, *said of* predications are referred to as 'essential', and *in* predications as 'accidental,' due to the latter connotating no definition. In other words, the addition or subtraction

⁴ "It is an ungrounded hypothesis to suppose that all-cross references in Aristotle were added by later editors. They may be useful for purposes of dating and should be rejected only when there is good reason. In fact they enable us to construct an unexpectedly intelligible sequence for the texts of the logical and rhetorical works ..." (*Ibid.*, 76).

⁵ *Categories* is considered the first text in his collection of works on logic, the *Organon* or 'toolkit.'

⁶ The *said of* designate the synonymous: "Have the name in common and the definition of being which corresponds to the name is the same" (Aristotle, *Categories*, 1a7). The *in* designate the Homonymous: "Have only a name in common and the definition of being which corresponds to the name is different" (*Ibid.*, 1a1) and paronymous: "When things get their name from something, with a difference of ending" (*Ibid.*, 1a14); concerning the predication of the name, this is only by accident for words without an adjectival derivative like "White."

⁷ A definition is: "A phrase signifying a thing's essence" (*Ibid.*, 101b37-40), and 'What it is' translates '*Ti Esti.*'

of an accidental predicate has no effect in altering the identity of the subject of its predication, as identity persists independently of accidentals.

On this basis, Aristotle distinguishes four categorical classes: (1) 'Non-substance particulars' (as 'accidental'): predicates that are not *said of* but *present in* other subjects; (2) 'Non-substance universals' (as 'essential'): predicates *said of* and *present in* other subjects; (3) 'Individual substances:' designated as 'primary substances' because they are neither essential to another's being nor accidentally *in* other beings; (4) 'Universal substances' (as 'essential'): *said of* but not *present in* other (primary) substances.⁸ From this, it follows that 'universal substances' are deemed 'secondary substances' precisely because they "reveal the primary substance" by being *said of* them, *i.e.*, by predicating their essences.⁹ However, there is ambiguity here about the way in which primary and secondary substances interact, and the nature of their relationship, which generates interpretational disagreement between conflicting Nominalist and Realist scholars: it is unclear whether Aristotle intends this system to apply purely as a science of logic, which is concerned only with correct application of the logical structure and semantics of rational agents, or whether he intended for the system to function as a procedure for empirical science and ontology's interactions with the external world, which contains distinct material and formal aspects.¹⁰ Additionally, there is disagreement as to whether or not the "Four-Fold Distinction" is conceptually exhaustive, and whether it ought to be understood as an alternative to, or supplement for, Plato's Form-based theory of substance-hood. There is no unanimity amongst the scholars that engage in this debate, hence, this dialectic will provide the basis of discussion for this paper.

⁸ Concerning (3): "It is because the primary substances are subjects for everything else that they are called substances" (*Ibid.*, 2b36-37).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 2b30-32.

¹⁰ The problem of interpreting *ta legomena* as *ta onta*, *i.e.*, whether it applies to words only, or objects in the external world as well: "The *legomena* must be words, names, phrases, or sentences uttered. But they are not merely linguistic terms; they must refer to existing items in the world, and the structure of the words or sentences must reflect or indicate (or purport to reflect or indicate) the objects in the world or their structures in relation to one another" (Rist, *The Mind of Aristotle, Op. Cit.*, 94).

IV. Nominalism

Nominalism, in this context, rejects the external existence of universals, maintaining that the only things that exist external to us are particulars. Universals like ‘animals’ are mere names, designations of sets of concrete particular objects. These designations extrapolated from observing ‘biological kinds’ and are merely conceptual, “the actual existence of which is mind-dependent.”¹¹ As I understand it, the concept of ‘mind-dependent’ holds universals to be the result of the subject-predications in the minds of rational beings. Furthermore, it is in the rational being’s nature to project distinctions upon studying differentia in individual substances and categorizing commonalities. This is analogous to the dependence of knowledge on the existence of minds. The Nominalist view promotes a reading of the *Categories* in which the categorical division, of which I spoke about earlier, is deemed a theoretical categorization of subjects of predication, one established by rational animals, which is also non-reflective of nature.

Cresswell offers a Nominalist reading of the *Categories* where “the meaning of universal terms can be explained in terms of non-universal pointables,” a view he grounds in the Aristotelian notion of ‘specific identity,’ such that belonging to a particular class of beings is to be identical to the members of a species.¹² Cresswell describes his view as “the primitive logical notion of specific identity” which allows us “to define a class by means of a pointable thing, assuming that the members of the class are pointable things.”¹³ Cresswell appeals to the notion of ‘ostensive’ or ‘extensive’ definition, a concept in the semantics of predicate logic wherein a definitional meaning is captured by ‘pointing out’ examples in the world. This is contrasted with the notion of ‘intensive’ definition, a language-based dictionary definition. This ‘pointing’, Cresswell

¹¹ Jennifer E. Whiting, “Metasubstance: Critical Notice of Frede-Patzig and Furth,” *The Philosophical Review* C.4 (1991): 607-39, 638.

¹² M. J. Cresswell, “What Is Aristotle’s Theory of Universals?,” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 53.3 (1975): 238-47, 241.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 242.

maintains, “need not be thought of as a physical pointing” and that “the metaphysical talk can be made precise if we think of a theory of universals as set out in the language of first-order predicate logic.”¹⁴ This interpretation of the theory of universals is formalized “in a first-order language containing ... only finitely many predicates” bound by “infinitely many individual constants.”¹⁵ In this view, the answer to the question ‘what it is’ requires one to be able to identify one of the primary substances of a class, such that to be X is to be ‘specifically identical’ with X. Cresswell maintains that “equivalence classes” are species, and that the term ‘specific identity’ is a reference to the attributes that all members of a species share in common. Therefore, a universal is an idea that abstracts the essential characteristics that specific primary substances share within their class. Cresswell concludes that “we do not find a theory of universals in Aristotle because Aristotle did not see a problem of universals,” meaning that Aristotle did not have a problem understanding how one thing could be many.¹⁶ The immediate implication here is that Aristotle allows for the sharing of identity between particular subjects insofar as they all belonged to a larger unit, in this case, to a biological class. However, this thought can be seen as strongly Platonic; insofar as uniqueness of identity is incrementally lost, the closer a particular comes to that from which it receives its essence. This is discussed at length in Section VI.

Moreover, if a Nominalist interpretation of the text is to be plausible it must be capable of explaining how mind-dependent secondary substances can give essence to primary substances, which are real metaphysical objects. The Nominalist’s way of understanding this is to make the process of essence-predication epistemological, such that one must know the universal to identify the individual, as it is the secondary substance that explains the ‘why it is’ of a subject.¹⁷ This

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 246.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 247.

¹⁷ “The key to this approach is Aristotle’s insistence that the answer to “Why is it?” which states a cause, and the answer to “What is it?” which states an

reading regards essence purely as the object of understanding. Importantly, Aristotle maintains that primary substances are the basic subjects of which everything is predicated, constituting our ability to perform scientific inquiry. Aristotle defines “science” as a process of attaining understanding, and “understanding” as knowing “the explanation because of which the object *is* ... and that it is not possible to be otherwise.”¹⁸ Hence, insofar as primary substances are the subjects of scientific inquiry, a secondary substance predication *is* the scientific ‘definitional’ explanation of a primary substance, without which primary substances would not be understood. Ontologically, an understanding of what a subject ‘*is*’ is not necessary to the subject’s existence, since primary substances already exist actually and do not require secondary substances for their being. However, understanding essence is necessary for scientific knowledge because it reveals what is necessary for the primary subject’s existence.¹⁹ This raises a concern that if universals are only epistemological phenomena, then it could be posited that essences do not exist in nature, but are only established in the mind.²⁰ For example, if we hold that ‘rationality’ is what makes an *anthropos* unique from any other animal (*i.e.*, is the essence of this species), then the assertion that essences do not exist in nature restricts all claims that exercising this characteristic activity will allow for its class-specific excellence to be derived, and so for its specific *eudaimonia* to be attained. This is because the possibility of asserting a larger world system that connects essence-predication to personal fulfillment, one that regulates itself

essence, are identical” (David Henry, “Aristotle’s Realistic Pluralism,” *The Monist* 94.2 (2011): 197-220, 210; he cites Aristotle, 90a15-19).

¹⁸ Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, 71b18-20 and 71b9-11, respectively; italics added.

¹⁹ “On this account, universals proper (like time) would not exist in the absence of minds capable of actualizing them in thought ... this would allow us to explain how universals are necessary for knowledge—which is after all mind-dependent—without being necessary for the existence of those realities” (Whiting, “Metasubstance,” *Op. Cit.*, 638-639).

²⁰ Such a reading would refer to *Physics* I.I in his claim that nature only knows particulars. However, this is a very problematic reading, since this would ultimately damage a teleological view of nature, especially in regards to final causality and natural end, due to its removal of the possibility of definitions; “it is either only, or primarily, substance that can be defined; yet now it seems that not even substance can. There cannot, then be a definition of anything ...” (Aristotle, *Physics*, 1039a18-24).

independently of the particulars it contains, is restricted. If essence is only a predication from the mind, then ‘purpose’ is made contingent to the accidental discovery of patterns. Indeed, all essence would die with the mind. Whether this view of essence is compatible with Aristotle’s worldview will be discussed in Section VII of the essay.

V. Realism

Realism, in this context, maintains that universals are not mere names but are naturally occurring substances that exist outside, and independent of, thought. Furthermore, universals are responsible for predicating the essences of primary substances, meaning that they are capable of causal interaction. Ellis defines Realism as “a mind-independent reality; that consists fundamentally of physical objects that have causal powers.”²¹ The Realist view promotes a reading of the *Categories* in which it is stated: “some correct metaphysically privileged list of mind-and-language-independent highest kinds as well as a correct account of the relations between them.”²² Henry offers a reading in which Aristotle is “committed to Realism”, because “the kinds from which the inquirer selects are *natural* kinds delineated by objective, mind-independent boundaries.”²³ Henry maintains that “sharing certain objective properties in common” and having “essence” are what establish ‘kinds’ as natural.²⁴ For Henry, the basis for a Realist reading is Aristotle’s interest in “general kinds”, in which are found “groups that (1) share a ‘single common nature’ and (2) contain ‘forms that are not too distant’.”²⁵ He maintains that the second condition has to do with “a distinction between higher-level kinds ... which are divisible into forms, and so called *infinima species*.”²⁶ Though his reading does not pertain to the *Categories* directly, its argument for essences as forms, and

²¹ Brian Ellis, “Physical Realism,” *Ratio* XVIII (2005): 371-84, 371.

²² Paul Studtmann, “Aristotle’s Categories,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2008 Edition)*, ed. Edward N. Zalta.

²³ Henry, “Aristotle’s Realistic Pluralism,” *Op. Cit.*, 210.

²⁴ *Cf.*, *Ibid.*, 198.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 208; he cites Aristotle, *Categories*, 644b1-6.

²⁶ Henry, “Aristotle’s Realistic Pluralism,” *Op. Cit.*, 208.

forms as distinguishing classes, allows for a powerful argument for Realism in the *Categories*.²⁷ This will be returned to in Section VII of the essay, in which an argument for Realism in the *Categories* will be presented.

If a Realist interpretation of the text is to be plausible, however, it must be compatible with the idea that the existence of secondary substances depends on that of primary substances. Aristotle plainly maintains that if all individual cases of a certain secondary substance disappear, the secondary substance will cease to be as well, “if the primary substance did not exist it would impossible for any of the other things to exist.”²⁸ Nonetheless, a discussion concerning the extent of Platonism in the *Categories* is required before addressing this challenge.

VI. Realism in the *Phaedo* and a Comparison of Essences

The *Phaedo* is the Platonic dialogue primarily concerned with the question of the immortality of the soul. However, the dialogue’s conclusions on the soul are dependent on the existence of purely intelligible, universal and unchangeable entities identified as Forms, which perform two explanatory functions: First, in what is referred to as the “Recollection Argument,” Plato states that learning is a matter of the soul’s recollection of the intelligible realm of Forms, a process triggered by interaction with sensible objects, thereby limiting the process of understanding to re-familiarizing with the abstract universals that exist in reality (albeit in a separate realm).²⁹ Plato’s assertion that the soul comes in contact with

²⁷ See footnote 11, above, for a brief articulation of Realist interpretation of the *Categories* by Rist.

²⁸ Aristotle, *Categories*, 2b5-7. It is not apparent that the existence of primary substances is independent of that of the other categories, due to the undetermined causal capacity of secondary substances. This requires an investigation into the role of final causes in the *Categories*.

²⁹ “We must then possess knowledge of the Equal before that time when we first saw equal objects and realized that all these objects strive to be like the Equal but are deficient of this” (Plato, *Phaedo*, 75a). These arguments will be examined only in regards to their contribution to the explanatory capacities of the Forms.

the Forms prior to embodiment establishes his philosophy as Realistic, since the Forms exist externally and independently of rational agents.³⁰ Second, in the latter portion of the dialogue, Plato posits an account of how things are what they are by virtue of their partaking in the Forms,³¹ thus attributing to the Forms the capacity to explain the existence of beings and objects in the sensible world.³² The account of the Forms in the *Phaedo* maintains that the ‘being’ of the sensible is dependent on the existence of Forms. Though particulars are ‘what they are’ in virtue of partaking in the Forms, Forms have no requirement that ‘sensibles’ partake in them, in any way. This ontological asymmetry establishes the Forms as logically prior to particulars, since their subsistence is independent of particulars.³³

If partaking means that some Form is essentially part of the particular, then the relationship is *synonymous* in that both the name and the definition are attributed to the primary substance, making for a kind of Aristotelian Platonism.³⁴ However, if in participating in the Forms, what is meant is that the particular only resembles the Form, and that there is no essence within the particular, then the relationship would be *homonymous* in that the particular and the Form only share a name in common, if not *paronymously*, and is thus in conflict with Aristotelian substance theory.³⁵ The essence-predication view is upheld here, as follows: Insofar as ‘essence’ is some-

³⁰ “In working through the Aristotelian corpus with a mind open to the Neoplatonic assumption of harmony, I have found time and again that Aristotle was, it turns out, analyzing the Platonic position or making it more precise, not refuting it” (Lloyd P. Gerson, *Aristotle And Other Platonists* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 290). Gerson maintains that fundamental Platonism features a rejection of Nominalism and materialism, while appealing to the intelligible over the sensible in the overall hierarchical structure of being.

³¹ “If there is anything beautiful besides the Beautiful itself, it is beautiful for no other reason than that it shares in that Beautiful, and I say so with everything” (Plato, *Phaedo*, 100c).

³² “About all the things with which we mark with the seal of ‘what it is’ ...” (*Ibid.*, 75d).

³³ The ontological asymmetry refers to the soul’s inclination to return to the forms in its post-sensible stage of being.

³⁴ “Each of the Forms existed, and that other things acquired their name by having a share in them ...” (*Ibid.*, 102b).

³⁵ Despite Plato neglecting to disclose the nature of the relationship between particulars or the Forms in the *Phaedo*, “nothing else makes it beautiful other than the presence of, or, the sharing in ...” (*Ibid.*, 100d).

thing without which another subject cannot be what it is, particulars maintain essential-relations with Forms because they provide the explanation for what something is.³⁶ However, this requires Plato to either posit a Form for everything in order to explain the being of all particulars, which he is against, or to differentiate between things that do and do not require Forms for explanation.³⁷ As will be discussed in Section VIII, this is one of Aristotle's reasons for rejecting the "Doctrine of the Forms."

Both philosophers consider their philosophies as answering the question of 'what it is.' However, their understanding of 'what it is' explanations (hence essences) are inherently different. Cresswell describes the *Phaedo* account of essence relations between Forms and particulars as "identity in respect of" such that the answer to the question 'what it is' is that something's identity is relative to some Form.³⁸ For Plato, 'Socrates is man' and 'Socrates is wise' are equally relations to Forms, not differentiating between essential and accidental predications, resulting in both 'man' and 'wisdom' being equal substance universals. Aristotle, on the other hand maintains that attributing something to a Form does not contain understanding and that the partaking-relations of Forms with particulars only predicate names, but not definitions. Therefore, under Aristotle's view, Forms do not predicate essence at all. There is a clear substance and non-substance division in Aristotle's *Categories*, in which, Socrates' wisdom is due to his man-ness, insofar as this accidental property is *in* him due to his rational capacity, which is essential to his being a man, differentiating him from other species of a genus. This puts Aristotelian essence in direct conflict with the essence-view of the *Phaedo*.

³⁶ Consider, first: "Essence is understood to be a membership-determining property that is both necessary and sufficient for belonging to a kind" (Henry, "Aristotle's Realistic Pluralism," *Op. Cit.*, 198); and, for the latter, refer to footnote 33, above, for the relevant *Phaedo* passage.

³⁷ Concerning the claim he is against, *cf.*, "Form of mud" (Plato, *Parmenides*, 130c).

³⁸ This passage interprets the Socratic "Simple Hypothesis" of the *Phaedo* as the principle of Platonic essential predication (Cresswell, "What Is Aristotle's Theory of Universals?," *Op. Cit.*, 239).

Additionally, Platonic Forms are never presented as themselves existing on different ontological levels in the *Phaedo*. In the *Categories*, Aristotle maintains that among secondary substances, some are more substance than others, “the species is more a substance than the genus, since it is nearer to the primary substance.”³⁹ Insofar as secondary substances are explanatory, scientific categorization (as opposed to the mathematical categorization in later Platonic Form-theory) regards the degrees of separation that distinguish secondary substances as designated by predicability: “the species is predicated of the individual, the genus both of the species and the individual.”⁴⁰ Hence, the ‘what it is’ explanation provided by one secondary substance is often predicated by a more abstracted secondary substance (genus).⁴¹ This results in many essential predications of a primary substance as opposed to one essential relation to a Form.

While there is a conflict between the Platonic and Aristotelian notions of essential identity and predication, it is not required that the conflict remove the possibility of maintaining a Platonic view of the *Categories*. This is so because both views permit essential relations, despite having different understandings of what constitutes ‘essence.’ The current essay resolves that the two notions of essence are incompatible, however, I maintain that the conflict does not remove the possibility for an experimental Aristotelian-Platonism, a notion that will be discussed in Section VIII of the essay.

VII. Argument for Realism

With regards to the Realist and Nominalist debate, this essay supports a Realist reading of the *Categories*, for the following reasons: First, it is clear that Aristotle holds that essential universals are substance and that they “reveal” primary

³⁹ Aristotle, *Categories*, 2b8-10.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 3a37-40.

⁴¹ “And the primary substances admit the definition of the species and of the genera, and the species admits that of the genera” (*Ibid.*, 3b2-3).

substance.⁴² Therefore, a Nominalist reading would also have to maintain that primary substances are also mind-dependent, to avoid requiring two differing notions of substance, since the nature of substance in universals is regarded by the Nominalist as mind-dependent. It is implausible that primary substances can be mind-dependent, due to the required existence of metaphysically real rational agents capable of projecting epistemological distinctions in the first place.

Second, because Aristotle maintains that primary substances receive their essence from secondary substances, the Realist reading allows for a notion of essence that is more consistent with a material/formal understanding of nature, while not prohibiting a theory of epistemology. It is a more plausible reading that essences are not mind-dependent, especially if the *Physics* is to be taken into account, because forms are essences as well as actual.⁴³ If forms did not exist in nature there would be no means by which a rational animal can project epistemological distinctions, *e.g.*, there would be no way of making material distinctions, since any such distinction presupposes shape or structure (*morphê*). Furthermore, it is because human understanding involves interaction with the world that we would be unable to identify ourselves as separate from other entities, or exercise the induction necessary for understanding (*i.e.*, distinguishing universals, insofar as knowledge is contained in them, and induction is the first stage of understanding), “it is necessary for us to become familiar with the primitives by induction; for perception too instills the universal in this way.”⁴⁴ Therefore, a Nominalist view could not be upheld because essences must exist actually for anything that has material potentiality (including all primary substances) to come into being, but also to be capable of being

⁴² *Ibid.*, 2b30-32. Aristotle states that all substances signify a ‘this;’ secondary substances are ‘*poion ti*’ but not ‘*tode ti*.’

⁴³ Concerning their being essences: “the primary reality, and the essence of a thing, *i.e.* the form; for this is the end or that for the sake of which” (Aristotle, *Physics*, 198b2-3). Concerning their actuality: “The form indeed is nature rather than the matter; for a thing is more properly said to be what it is when it exists in actuality than when it exists potentially” (*Ibid.*, 193b7-9).

⁴⁴ Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, 100b3-5.

thought or understood at all.⁴⁵ It is interesting to note that though Aristotelian epistemology explicitly involves induction as a first step, it is not inconsistent with Platonic epistemology involves interaction with ‘sensibles’ as the first step in the process of Form recollection, as discussed in Section VI.

Third, the Realist account avoids the Nominalist circularity with regards to differentiae.⁴⁶ Differentiae are attributes that distinguish both individuals from each other and species from genus.⁴⁷ Though differentia are essential, they are not substances.⁴⁸ Insofar as they are essential, however, following the same line of reasoning as in the argument above, differentia would also need to exist external to mind in order to allow any substantive distinction.

VIII. Inconsistency as a Testament to Plato

In the *Categories*, there is a Platonic position that regards the relationship between particulars and universals as one of essence-predication, but also regards universals as having immaterial existence in reality. However, there is a clear anti-Platonic “commitment to the priority of individual substance to the kinds to which they belong” in the *Categories*.⁴⁹ Therefore, when both supported claims are combined, one is left with a concerning ‘inconsistency’, namely: That which gives essence depends on that which receives essence for its own being. In this text, Aristotle seems to principally disagree with Plato on the ontological independence of universals from particulars. This is an important challenge that any Platonic

⁴⁵ *Cf.*, the development of this argument from the Realist position presented by Henry in Section V, above.

⁴⁶ It suffices to say that this is an issue in which nominalists and realists conflict; the nominalists maintain that differentiae are further epistemological divisions that do not exist outside of the mind, and the realists maintain that there is an intricate relationship between what differentiae and primary substances, such that primary substances can only exist if differentiae themselves exist. It should be noted that there is a controversy concerning their categorical identity, although this is outside the scope of the essay.

⁴⁷ Aristotle, *Categories*, 3b1.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 3a34-39. This is problematic because it suggests that the “Four-Four Distinction” is not conceptually exhaustive.

⁴⁹ Whiting, “Metasubstance,” *Op. Cit.*, 615.

reading of Aristotle must necessarily confront. Taking into consideration that this is an earlier work (assuming that our chronological placement of the texts is correct), I maintain that there is strength in interpreting ‘Aristotle the student’ as attempting to make the Platonic teachings compatible with his own observations of the world, a truly inspiring and empowering display of philosophical growth that speaks to Plato’s influence as a teacher and demand from his students. Within this context, I view the Platonism of the *Categories* as an experimental Aristotelian-Platonism, or a “Platonism without the Forms” as Rist suggests.⁵⁰ It is experimental insofar as Aristotle’s intention was to account for the ways in which universals can exist within particulars, providing an explanation for how secondary substances could exist independently of matter. Secondary substances are themselves immaterial in that they do not have material parts, though they are necessarily enmattered, *i.e.* non-material but dependent on material substances for their being.⁵¹ That Aristotle was unsatisfied with the “Theory of Forms” is evident in his critique of this doctrine in the *Metaphysics* and the *Nicomachean Ethics*.⁵² A central concern, in this regard, was the inability of the Forms to support a sufficiently scientific enterprise, one he viewed as necessary for understanding.⁵³ Therefore, since the Platonic Realist reading of the *Categories* is supported here, an argument for interpreting Aristotle as an expander of Plato’s thought, as one of the few to have direct access to Plato in his last years, must be provided.

I maintain that the basis of this argument is precisely Aristotle’s lack of reference to any form/matter distinction in the

⁵⁰ Cf., Rist, *The Mind of Aristotle, Op. Cit.*, 37.

⁵¹ “When we spoke of things in a subject we did not mean things belonging in something as parts” (Aristotle, *Categories*, 3a33-35).

⁵² Cf., Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 990b1-993a and *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1095a15-1103a10.

⁵³ “Aristotelian epistemology has a potentially non-mysterious account of our scientific knowledge of universals and suniversals: experience-based scientific investigation of the natural world, abstraction from it, induction—including higher level induction—and aporematic are sufficient to provide it. Platonic epistemology, by contrast, seems much more mysterious, since somehow our minds must be able to grasp uninstantiated universals—objects with which it apparently cannot be in causal contact” (C. D. C. Reeve, “Aristotelianism,” in *Substantial Knowledge: Aristotle’s Metaphysics* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 2000), 294).

Categories. Had the “Four-Fold Distinction” been presented within the context of the *Physics*, assuming that Aristotle is true to any scientific and systematic method, his next step would be to contemplate whether secondary substances are purely formal or if there is a particular hylomorphic account that applies to them: “The salient feature of the *Categories* is surely its commitment to the primacy of individuals, and Aristotle could no doubt have avoided this commitment without having to introduce form and matter had he been writing the *Categories* with the *Metaphysics* up his sleeve.”⁵⁴ To the contrary, the *Categories* particularly avoids a discussion of the relationship between matter and form, as Cohen states “the concept of matter, of course, plays no role in the *Categories*.”⁵⁵ I find it most plausible that the text’s attempt to develop a theory of substance-hood, without the complications of material/formal relations, is an indicator of thought within a Platonic framework, further strengthening the Platonic reading of the *Categories*.

I regard the text’s inconsistency in its account of substance-hood as the result of a deliberate absence of discussion on the roles of matter and form in substances. That there is an inconsistency in the *Categories* is evident from Aristotle’s return to these issues of substance-hood, particularly in *Metaphysics Z*. Ultimately, though Aristotle is unsatisfied with Plato’s Forms, it is not the case that he abandoned the reasoning that founded their philosophical importance. Indeed, when deliberating whether form or matter was ‘more nature’ (signifying priority or essentiality) in the *Physics*, he responded that “the form indeed is nature rather than the matter; for a thing is more properly said to be what it is when it exists in actuality than when it exists potentially.”⁵⁶ This, then, reverts to the superiority of essences (which come from

⁵⁴ Whiting, “Metasubstance,” *Op. Cit.*, 615. Whiting, here, is responding to Furth’s *Substance, Form, and Psyche: An Aristotelian Metaphysics*, in which it is hypothesized that the *Metaphysics* is a return to Platonism, against which the *Categories* rebelled. She deems this view a “Closeted Platonism” (*Ibid.*, 615).

⁵⁵ S. M. Cohen, “Essentialism in Aristotle,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 31.3 (1978): 387-405, 397.

⁵⁶ Aristotle, *Physics*, 193b7-9.

secondary substances) against the main anti-Platonic position in the *Categories*, found amongst the many consistently Platonic assertions he makes within this text.

To conclude, looking forward into future paths in philosophical research, such paths include a study of what a 'Platonism without Forms' entails, which requires a more comprehensive study of the evolution of essence-theory in Platonic philosophy outside of the *Phaedo*, and into explicitly self-critical texts such as the *Parmenides*. Additionally, a study of the development of essence-predication within the hylomorphic framework, a major feature of Aristotelian philosophy, the priority of which is discussed even beyond the scope of the natural and logical works.

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Φιλόλογος

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**On Judgement and Freedom of
the Will in the *Meditations***

ABSTRACT: In this paper, I expand upon recent work aimed at nuancing understanding of the concept of the will presented in Descartes' *Meditations*. The principal confusion in interpreting the text arises in virtue of two claims: that judgements ought to aim to be true, and that judgement is a free act of one's will. However, Descartes has the tools to avoid accusations of incoherence. This is so firstly because he takes the will to be self-determining and further because he takes the will to admit of qualitative degrees. I argue that previous readings have simply not gone far enough in their drawing out of the implications of these two features. The conclusion which I draw is that Descartes does want to draw a relation between judgement and reason, but one that is contingent, not conceptually necessary. The will's self-determining nature is such that it elects that the highest realisation of freedom in the *Meditations* is directed towards truth—the crucial claim, though, is that this need not be so. So it is that the will is at liberty to act contra to that which reason calls for, and epistemic responsibility does not in fact constrain the will in the way which has so often been argued.

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The *Fourth Meditation* is often depicted as an unfounded anomaly, out of tune with Descartes' otherwise analytic and rigorous style.¹ Such accusations tend to point to alleged discrepancies between his positions here and in other works, as well as claiming that his construal of both judgement and of freedom are ad hoc and incoherent. I aim to go some way to vindicating the *Fourth Meditation*. I highlight that Descartes' conception of freedom differs from standard conceptions, specifically in admitting of qualitative degrees and its self-determining nature.² This latter attribute entails that in the realisation of the highest grade of freedom, the will is never externally bound: it is limitless. However, also as a result of its autonomy, it is at liberty to impose internal constraints upon itself. This understanding places us in a position to explain firstly why Descartes makes the will responsible for judgement and secondly, how he can assert that our judgement is always constrained by reason, in spite of the infinite scope of the will seeming to imply that we are free to judge as we please, without deference to reason.

I. The Theory of Judgement in the *Fourth Meditation*: The Intellect and the Will

According to Descartes, judgement requires two separate faculties of the mind: the intellect and the will.³ The intellect apprehends ideas, which are units of mental content, and presents them to the mind. So defined, ideas are mere representations; they do not make any assertion about extramental reality, and so cannot be described as true or false. Among the ideas presented to the mind, some are clear and distinct, some are not. A clear idea is one by the possession of

¹ All quotations from René Descartes' works are referenced to the volume and page number of the collection *Oeuvres de Descartes*, ed. C. Adam and P. Tannery, (Paris: J. Vrin, 1904), henceforth noted as AT; the translation used comes from *Descartes: Selected Philosophical Writings*, trans. J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, and D. Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), unless stated.

² On the qualitative, *cf.*, Andrea Christofidou, "Descartes on Freedom, Truth and Goodness," *Noûs* 43, 4 (2009): 633-655; on the self-determining nature, *cf.*, R. Davies, *Descartes: Belief, Scepticism and Virtue* (London: Routledge, 2001).

³ AT VII, 56.

which I fully understand the nature of what is conceived. An idea is distinct if as well as being clear it can be delineated from other ideas. This variety occurs because our intellect is limited by nature; if it were not limited we would clearly and distinctly understand everything. Further, both of these features are indicators of truth, in so far as that “‘truth,’ in the strict sense, denotes the conformity of thought with its object.”⁴ If an idea is recognised clearly and distinctly, the idea is an exact representation of the object that it corresponds to in the extra-mental world, and so must be true.

A judgement is produced when a cognitive attitude; assent, dissent, or the withholding of judgement, is applied to an idea. It is the will that is responsible for this; it contributes the necessary cognitive attitude and thus produces an affirmation or denial. Thus Descartes draws a clear distinction between the roles of the intellect and of the will in judgement; the intellect perceives a matter, the will affirms or denies it. On this construal, “understanding is properly the passive aspect of the mind, and willing its active aspect.”⁵ As the will has the active role, it is responsible for the production of judgements by the mind.

II. Error

In contrast to ideas, judgements involve cognitive attitudes, and so make a claim about the relationship between cognitive content and extra-mental reality. As a result they can be true or false, and because it is the will that asserts or denies the nature of this relationship, it is the will which is responsible for not only the judgement happening, but whether the judgement is true or false. However, since Descartes claims that the faculty of the will is perfect, he needs to provide some other explanation for how its use can result in false judgements.⁶

⁴ Descartes, Letter to Mersenne, 16th October 1639, AT II, 597.

⁵ AT III, 372.

⁶ AT VII, 56-57.

The way in which he does this is by reference to the difference in scope of the will and the intellect. The intellect is limited, and in contrast, the will is not: “the possibility of a further increase in its perfection or greatness is beyond my understanding.”⁷ As a consequence of this the will is able to act upon ideas that the intellect has failed to fully grasp. In other terms, we are able to assent to non-clear and distinct ideas, where the relationship between the idea and reality is unobvious, as well as to clear and distinct ideas, where it is.

When we pass judgement upon ideas that are not clear or distinct, the result will either be that we make a false judgement, or that “it is by pure chance that I arrive at the truth.”⁸ The former is a straightforward case of error and the latter still constitutes a misuse of the will for the truth is reached via epistemic luck. Were the will to restrain itself, so as to withhold judgement upon ideas which were not clear and distinct, then the human mind would be infallible in its judgements, for it would only assent to those “perceptions [that] are so transparently clear and at the same time so simple that we cannot ever think of them without believing them to be true.”⁹ These are the very ideas that allow Descartes to combat scepticism—those which are so intrinsically attractive, that we must see they represent reality exactly, and so our consequent judgements about them must be true.¹⁰

III. Why Make the Will Responsible for Judgement?

The form of the *Meditations* is conducive to the quick introduction of concepts without full explanation. Here though it is particularly unobvious why the will should bear responsibility for judgement. Below I set out why it seems unclear and then respond on Descartes’ behalf.

⁷ AT VII, 57. Concerning the limit of the intellect, *cf.*, section one, above.

⁸ AT VII, 60.

⁹ AT VII, 145.

¹⁰ AT VII, 58-59, 69-70, 144-145.

There are two forms of judgement to be distinguished; speculative and practical. Speculative judgement involves assenting, or withholding assent from propositions; it is this type of judgement that the *Meditations* focuses upon.¹¹ Contrastingly, practical judgement involves deciding upon a course of action. Here the mental act that spurs the judgement is more obviously conative, so associating it with the will is more intuitive. Contrastingly, speculative judgement seems just to be a case of deciding what it is that we truly believe. Such a process seems only to require cognitive evaluation, and not conative exertion; thus it is unclear why it should be a product of the will.

Arguing along these lines, Curley urges that there is no further need for the will to act, once the intellect has made its contribution to judgement.¹² Perception, he argues, is sufficient to produce an affirmation or denial. That perception is all there is to assent seems especially plausible in considering cases of spontaneous assent to clear and distinct ideas. Indeed, these considerations accord with the standard view of judgement within the tradition preceding Descartes. Aquinas, for instance, a key figure in Descartes' education, held that we were led to knowledge by a "natural or supernatural light," and the will was only necessary for other types of judgement.¹³ Surprisingly though, there is no questioning of the thesis in the Objections published alongside the *Meditations*, it is only in Gassendi's fuller *Instances* that Descartes is challenged on this.¹⁴

However, these dismissals are too quick. Curley's objection misconstrues Descartes by equivocating on the term "ideas." Descartes explicitly states that "all that the intellect does is to enable me to perceive without affirming or denying anything."¹⁵ Thus the ideas it produces are merely units of mental

¹¹ AT VII, 15.

¹² E. M. Curley, *Descartes Against the Skeptics* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1978), 173-174.

¹³ Anthony Kenny, "Descartes on the Will," in *Cartesian Studies*, ed. R. J. Butler (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1972), 1-31, 2-5.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁵ AT VII, 57.

content, which inarguably cannot be true or false alone because they make no reference to extra-mental reality. If this construal of the intellect is correct, then some other faculty must be involved for a judgement to be produced; it simply cannot stem from mental content in this bare sense alone. The onus is on Curley to substantiate why this is an incorrect understanding of the intellect. Returning to his other point, to say that our assent to clear and distinct ideas is spontaneous or temporally indistinguishable from perceiving the ideas, is not to say that assent is reducible to perception.

Moreover, as Rosenthal argues, because of how Descartes conceives of faculties, he can reject the distinction made between the speculative and acts of practical judgement, such as desiring and fearing.¹⁶ He holds that it is only “when we turn ourselves to the exercise of any faculty ... that we become aware of it,” and so being unaware of any conative effort in speculative judgement is insufficient to mark it apart from other forms of judgement, like desiring and fearing, where we are aware of this element.¹⁷

A further plausible suggestion is that Descartes grants the will responsibility for judgement for theological reasons; he needed to explain our epistemic mistakes, whilst absolving God of responsibility for them. He could only do this by placing judgement under a faculty of which we have control; that is, a faculty which is autonomous.¹⁸ The intellect as Descartes sees it evidently does not have this feature. It might be objected that nonetheless on this view due to providence we could not have judged otherwise, and so God remains responsible for our errors. However Descartes holds that a judgement needn't be avoidable to be voluntary, and thus can instil epistemic responsibility, even when we could not have judged otherwise. Therefore the objection is unsound.

¹⁶ D. Rosenthal, “Will and the Theory of Judgement,” in *Essays on Descartes' Meditations*, ed. A. O. Rorty (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986), 404-434, 411-16.

¹⁷ AT VII, 246-247.

¹⁸ This is not to say that the faculty must have the ability to choose otherwise than it does.

Moreover, by giving an autonomous faculty control of judgement, he can vindicate his wider hopes about the importance of a priori truths and incorrigibility in science. If the will, when acting autonomously, elects not to be complacent in habit but to adopt the method of doubt, and be driven by reason, then Descartes is able to use his theory of judgement to explain why man is not only free and autonomous, but also a highly rational being by nature. This could be used to encourage the intellectual cleansing of scientific thought, for which he called.¹⁹ So we see that Descartes' scientific and theological projects are dependent on judgement being the result of autonomy; these were likely his central motivations in his making the will primary in producing judgements.

IV. The Will

Substantiating the claim above—that it is essential to the will that it be self-determining—requires a more nuanced understanding of how Descartes understands the will, independently of judgement. This discussion will, in fact, lead to a stronger reason than those previously given as to why Descartes needed to make judgement the responsibility of the will: that it is in order for his whole project of proving our own and God's existence to succeed.²⁰

At points he claims that the will has “a positive faculty of determining oneself to one or other of two contraries,” so suggesting the ability to do otherwise than it does.²¹ Hobbes challenges this thesis in the third set of Objections.²² Indeed, this challenge is in part borne out by Descartes himself. For example, he says, “I could not but judge that something which I understood so clearly was true,” in the *Fourth Meditation*, and later, “so long as I perceive something very clearly and

¹⁹ Marenbon, “Seminar Notes on Descartes,” unpublished, 2013.

²⁰ *Cf.*, the second and eighth paragraphs in section five, and section six.

²¹ AT IV, 173.

²² AT VII, 190.

distinctly I cannot but believe it to be true.”²³ Thus we are faced with textual evidence that Descartes both does and does not want to attribute to our will the power to act otherwise.

Equally, Descartes does not straightforwardly accept that the will being free consists in it being free from constraints, so as to make free will compatible with determinism. Though he likely would agree the will should be free from constraints, in its acceptance of hard determinism that account seems to make reason “inert, indolent, with no efficacy to motivate the will”—and this he would have most certainly contested.²⁴ It is crucial to the success of the *Meditations* that reason can motivate the will, for otherwise our making judgements would be unconcerned by evidence, and the will would just assent to ideas at its pleasure.

Descartes draws on both accounts just given to salvage a more tenable position. The result differs from typical accounts in two respects: firstly, it differentiates qualitatively between different types of freedom, and, secondly, it construes freedom as inherently self-determining. The result of these two elements is a qualitative scale of freedom, where given the will’s autonomy, it will always be the ultimate decider of what the highest expression of freedom consists in. Therefore in a sense there are two orders of freedom; an inviolable second order freedom, which can elect to internalise certain motivations so as to restrict first order freedom.

Descartes posits that in actuality, the will is constrained by reason, and thus the highest grade of freedom is concerned with what is true. Accordingly the lowest grades of freedom find expression when the will is confronted with ideas that are not clear and distinct, and so where it is not obvious which idea best portrays the truth. In such a case the will might assent or deny, though it lacks a sufficient reason for deciding in either direction, thus allowing itself to be determined by an external reason. In contrast, Descartes claims, the highest

²³ AT VII, 58 and AT VII, 69, respectively.

²⁴ Christofidou, “Descartes on Freedom, Truth and Goodness,” *Op. Cit.*, 637.

grades of freedom are realised, when an idea is so clearly and distinctly perceived as to prompt spontaneous assent to it, thus guaranteeing a true judgement. However, as I go on to explain, it is only the case that reason is an internal motivating factor in judgement, so long as we autonomously judge that the highest expression of freedom is connected to truth.

V. Believing at Will and ‘Compulsion’ to Believe

Understanding Descartes in this way explains a seeming tension in his account. This apparent tension emerges from two claims he makes; that judgements ought to aim to be true, and that judgement is a free act of our will.

If judgement is an act of free will, and the will is infinite in scope, the will surely has direct control over belief. The will’s having direct control over belief would entail that we could will to assent to a given idea, and accordingly assent to it, without regard to the evidence. As a result the relationship between truth and judgement would be severed. All that is needed for Descartes to arrive at this position are the two claims above—judgement is an act of free will, and is infinite in scope, thus giving us, “the freedom to assent or not to assent.”²⁵ Yet, the whole project of the *Meditations* will be undermined if reason is not a motivating factor in making judgement, for Descartes’ argument ran as follows. Clear and distinct ideas are so vividly intrinsically attractive that we cannot but spontaneously assent to them. It is only such ideas that compel the judgement to assent, and as such it only these judgements that are immutably true, and thus it is only these ideas that can give us indubitable and genuine knowledge. To abandon the theory that clear and distinct perception necessitates the will to assent is to in effect abandon the whole validation of reason in which the *Meditations* culminates. Yet, this is exactly what the radically voluntarist idea that belief is under our direct control implies.

²⁵ AT VII, 61.

However, returning to the idea that the will is autonomous, we see that Descartes' presupposition that truth is the greatest good at which judgement can aim is not necessary. The self-determining will, on this presupposition, elects to impose a certain constraint upon itself, that being that it pay heed to reason and so set out to pass true judgements; but, crucially, it could have elected otherwise. The *Meditations* starkly presents the threat of scepticism, certain knowledge removes that threat, and certain knowledge is grounded in truth. Thus in the context of the *Meditations* we have a firm basis on which to judge that truth in judgement is the greatest good at which we can aim. In the *Second Meditation* the will is not yet constrained by reason, "[my mind does not] yet submit to being restrained within the bounds of truth," which evidences that the will is not conceptually necessitated to follow reason.²⁶ This shows then the inviolable nature of the will's autonomy. It must actively select that good by means of which it should best like to manifest its freedom, and accordingly this decision will constrain its activity at a first order level. Such a constraint then will be internal to the will, and so explains Descartes' claim that in exercising our highest freedom we are not "determined by any external force."²⁷

Understanding the will in this way also explains our "compulsion" to assent to clear and distinct perceptions. Descartes claims that when confronted with a clear and distinct perception, and the concurrence of authoritative reason and the autonomous will compel us to spontaneous assent, we are actualising the highest grade of our freedom. To this we must now add the proviso that this is so only when we have autonomously resolved to internalise reason. This explains how in such a case, though the will cannot act otherwise, it is wholly in control, for it is acting in accordance with that good which it has elected for itself to seek. Consequently, this is a perfect actualisation of its highest freedom, under the constraints it has set out for itself.

²⁶ AT VII, 29.

²⁷ AT VII, 57.

Nonetheless, it is theoretically possible, at the second order level, that the will identify some other good as greater than that of establishing what is true. In such a case the will is at liberty to act contra to that which is demanded by reason. Again, this would only be so if the second order evaluative judgement about what was the greater good in the given scenario, were a result of the will's autonomy. This is to say that, in spite of the examples just given (where compelled assent to certain ideas we agreed was the actualisation of true freedom) Descartes' theory also allows that we can (even if only theoretically), withhold assent from these very same ideas. This is confirmed by passages such as: "[it is open to us] to hold back from pursuing a clearly known good, or from admitting a clearly perceived truth, provided we consider it a good thing to demonstrate the freedom of our will by so doing."²⁸ This shows that *because* the will is self-determining, it is at perfect liberty to withhold assent to clear and distinct perceptions, in line with the proviso, that this be the best thing to do in the situation. Doing so would amount to a change in the internal restrictions that the second order freedom places on the first. The examples given before presupposed that it were a greater thing to uphold our epistemic responsibility than to demonstrate our free will. However, Descartes' theory of the will accommodates that this is not always the case.

It is worth noting that Andrea Christofidou, in "Descartes on Freedom, Truth and Goodness," emphasises that there are varying interpretations of the quote above in the literature.²⁹ According to her, some commentators dispute that Descartes intends to claim that we could even theoretically withhold assent to clear and distinct ideas. However, I take her arguments that these are incorrect readings to be convincing, and thus shall proceed on that assumption. Further, even if there is insufficient literary evidence to conclusively demonstrate Descartes held this view, being able to explain such

²⁸ Descartes, Letter to Mesland, 9th February 1645, AT IV, 175.

²⁹ Christofidou, "Descartes on Freedom, Truth and Goodness," *Op. Cit.*, 643-647.

cases strengthens his theory, and so it is charitable to presume that he does.

Descartes' understanding of the will then also helps support his theological aims as set out earlier. He writes that "the [will's] scope extends to anything ... even the immeasurable will of God."³⁰ This makes clear that the autonomy of the will is inviolable; we have the power to judge to use our will as we want, even if this differs from that path laid out for us by God. In being able to demonstrate this, we show that we are able to hold back even from a good set out for us by our maker. Consequently, when we do act in God's name it is as truly free agents, and thus we truly deserve the credit (or blame) for doing so.

VI. Concluding Remarks

To reiterate, the will, as Descartes sees it, has the theoretical, even if never realised, ability to withhold assent from clearly and distinctly perceived ideas. Given the will's self-determining character and the proviso Descartes sets out, this demonstrates that the will is not absolutely bound by epistemic norms governing the inquiry for truth (such as that clear and distinct perceptions compel assent). If a situation arose where a greater good could be demonstrated by the will refusing to judge as it would, were it seeking to reflect extra-mental reality as closely as possible, then theoretically it could refuse to so judge. Were the will to not assent in such a case, this would be a result of its self-determining nature. Thus it would remain an actualisation of freedom of the highest degree for in so acting we would manifest our autonomy. This establishes Descartes' claim that the will is never externally compelled.

Nonetheless, the will can be constrained by internal motivating factors that it has elected for itself; such motivating factors need not include reason or truth. In reality though, they nearly always will, and so Descartes' wider project—to prove

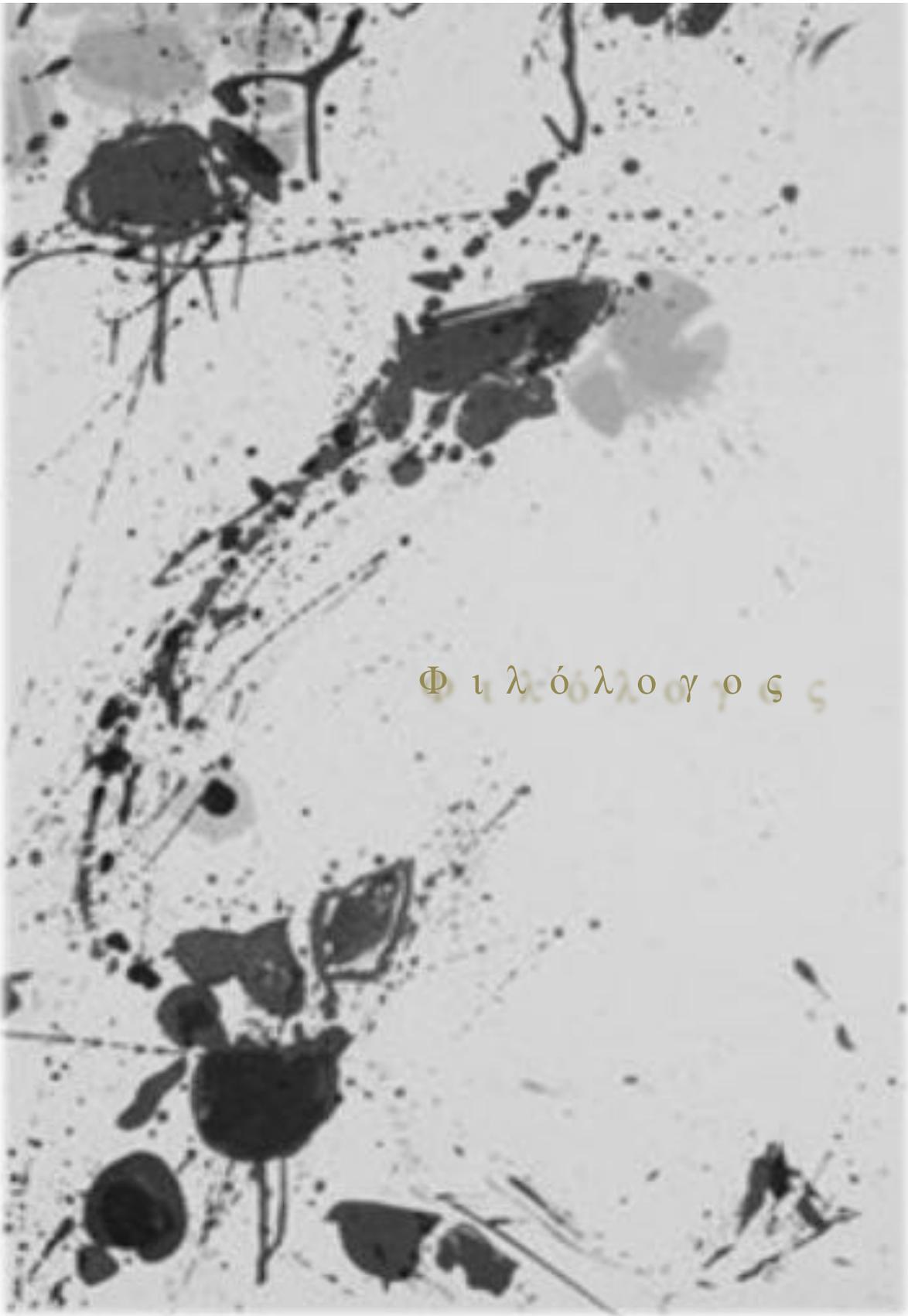
³⁰ AT VIIIa, 18.

our own existence, and God's from indubitable perceptions—is able to succeed. This dispels the air of paradox between the will being unlimited, and judgement being concerned with reason.

Thus, we see that a tight understanding of how Descartes sees the will is pivotal to demonstrating both the consistency and coherence of judgement and freedom as presented in the *Fourth Meditation*. In demonstrating this, I hope I have gone some way to highlighting the amount of pressure his theory can cope with and thus its strength and importance to a full reading of the *Meditations* as a whole.

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HANNA JONES-ERIKSSON

**A Foucauldian Analysis
of Culpability in
Fricker's *Epistemic Injustice***

ABSTRACT: My paper is a bridge between epistemology and ethics, specifically testimony in relation to Foucauldian notions of power. I address some of the problems with testimony, as illustrated by Miranda Fricker, and demonstrate how a different approach can open up the lines of reasoning and dissolve the dilemma. First, I present Miranda Fricker's theory of testimonial injustice and highlight the component I find unsatisfactory: her difficulty in accounting for how ethical attitudes change over time and in what way our epistemological positions should shift accordingly. I then present Foucault's innovative notions of power and demonstrate how using Foucault opens up Fricker's theory—allowing it to account for the complex social nuances and reveal underlying responsibilities. I believe applying a Foucauldian analysis can help solve some of the issues with testimony.

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I. Testimony as an Epistemological and Ethical Problem

In epistemology there is a debate about whether or not information received through testimony can count as knowledge, assuming knowledge to be justified true belief. Testimony holds a unique epistemic situation because it allows for belief sets to pass from one individual to another and across generations. It enables us to access the world beyond the direct observation of an independent and self-reliant knower. Testimony underpins beliefs about outer space or family history, and gives us the capacity to solve problems beyond a single individual's understanding or capabilities.¹

Using testimony as a source of knowledge becomes problematic when we consider that witnesses and informants can be unreliable, mistaken, or dishonest. As a result, we cannot blindly count their testimony as knowledge. But, what about the case when we cannot detect therein a lie; are we to take someone at his or her word? The unreliability of testimony is an epistemological issue because being thereby misinformed can result in ignorance and error. It is also an ethical problem because we must know to what degree we can trust other people.²

Typically, the solution is to ascertain the testimony's reliability by asking others about the speaker, comparing his or her testimony to already known information, or (as exemplified by academics) submitting his or her account to peer review.³ The problem is that each of these moves to gain certainty involves

¹ Cf., Ram Neta, "How do you know whom to trust?", April 30, 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aTfat5TZyI8>; and John Hardwig, "The Role of Trust in Knowledge," *The Journal of Philosophy* 88 (1991): 963-969, especially the latter's example of communal problem solving in de Branges' proof in math, which cannot be solved by just one person (*Ibid.*, 969).

² Neta elaborates how an informant's dishonesty can either be directly dishonest (one is aware that one do not know about what one speaks), or one can be misinformed, and yet believes oneself to be telling the truth. Concerning the consequences, Neta points to how the 2008 Market Crash was caused by misplaced trust in people who turned out to be wrong. Being misinformed caused people to loose houses, jobs, and put the economy in to a recession (Neta, "How do you know whom to trust?," *Op. Cit.*. Hardwig offers similar insights, cf., Hardwig, "The Role of Trust in Knowledge," *Op. Cit.*, 700).

³ Hardwig, "The Role of Trust in Knowledge," *Op. Cit.*, 701-3.

the use of resources that must, themselves, be demonstrated as reliable—hence, creating a backward fact-checking process that repeats *ad infinitum*.

Miranda Fricker, in her book *Epistemic Injustice*, explores how testimony can itself be a source of knowledge, as long as the hearer (the interlocutor) gives the speaker the amount of credibility due to him or her. Hence, unlike a narrow epistemological account of testimony's relation to knowledge, Fricker believes the relation to contain a broad ethical dimension. In essence, her idea is that speakers can be given too much or too little credibility due to the interlocutor's social inculcation or assumptions. For example, may it not solely be because of systemic racism that an African-American man in the southern United States in the 1930's would be convicted for a crime for which he was entirely innocent?⁴ Usually, the interlocutor is deemed culpable (ethically or morally responsible and deserving of blame) for his or her beliefs. However, Fricker varies her stance on when interlocutors can be held morally and epistemically culpable. We will see this in my elaboration of Fricker's account of testimony.

I believe that Fricker's variation is a problem for her otherwise innovative approach. I will solve this dilemma through the work of French philosopher Michel Foucault, whose distinctive ideas of sovereign and disciplinary power integrate smoothly into Fricker's ethical epistemology. I will propose that while Fricker operates on a sovereign model of power, it would be better to approach her theory via a disciplinary perspective. This will shift her concept of accountability, opening up the application of responsibility and allocating blame more appropriately.

II. Explicating Fricker's Testimonial Injustice

In testimonial exchange there is a speaker, an interlocutor, and an assessment of credibility. According to Fricker's view of

⁴ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 23.

testimony, the degree of credibility given to the speaker by the interlocutor is determined by the speaker's identity—who one is, one's testimony, and distinct role in society—as indicated by a myriad of social cues. This determination is not an entirely subjective process productive of inaccurate assumptions without connection to the speaker. There is, Fricker explains, a linkage between the external and internal.

Fricker defines an individual's self-concept as one's "identity." A large part of one's identity stems from social identities or social types.⁵ Social types are generally understood qualities expressed by individuals categorized under basic labels. A component of who one is and how one coordinates one's behaviour to comply with these "types." For example, one exudes different behaviour depending on whether one sees oneself as 'man' or 'woman,' 'young' or 'old.' These identities are closely related to Fricker's understanding of *stereotypes*, which she defines as "widely held associations between a given social group and one or more attributes."⁶ Thus, it is acceptable for the interlocutor to use stereotypes (these external perceptions) in order to attribute believability to the speaker, since stereotypes and identity are markedly similar. In fact, Fricker calls stereotypes a "rational resource" that *should* be used, since they help interlocutors make "spontaneous assessments" by oiling "the wheels of testimonial exchange."⁷ This is important because Fricker wants her theory to imitate the quick judgments of our "everyday epistemic practices."⁸ The degree to which an interlocutor believes a speaker, or the level of credibility one attributes to the other *qua* stereotype, should correspond with the evidence one has that the speaker is telling the truth.⁹

Testimonial injustice arises when the degrees of credibility attributed to the speaker is lower than the level owed.¹⁰ This

⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 17, 32, respectively.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 21.

is a culpable mistake when it comes from an “ethical poison in the judgment of the hearer.”¹¹ For Fricker, this “ethical poison” stems from *prejudice*. Prejudices are pre-judgments about identity that are resistant to counter evidence.¹² Prejudices are different from stereotypes or identity types. They are automatic “images” and “pictures” that come to mind instantly, but also have a “residual internalization.”¹³ This is because “they persist in patterns of judgment” even when in conflict with the hearer’s belief—and stick around long after they are welcome. This is problematic because prejudices are always epistemically harmful since they prevent the transfer of knowledge. Through prejudices, the speaker is degraded *qua* knower and hence wronged in the speaker’s refusal to honor their capacity for reason.¹⁴ Using this groundwork, Fricker defines *testimonial injustice* through four components: *identity-prejudiced-credibility-deficit*.¹⁵ In other words, there is a lack of believability attributed to a speaker based on a pre-judgment relating to the identity of the speaker that pushes aside evidence to the contrary.

In general, one can be deemed culpable for enacting testimonial injustice—there is a responsibility borne by the fact of being a knower to not behave this way. Fricker, though, allows for one exception: historically contingent situations. This exception is best illustrated through her literary examples of Tom Robinson and Herbert Greenleaf.

In Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Tom Robinson is an African-American man living in Alabama in 1935 who is wrongfully accused of raping young, white Mayella Ewell. In actuality, Mayella attempted to kiss Robinson, and her father caught them, beat them, and turned in Robinson as Mayella’s assaulter. Fricker highlights the “obvious” evidence presented to the jury by Atticus Finch as the case comes to trial: Mayella

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹² *Ibid.*, 35.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 44. Fricker goes so far as to say that the speaker is symbolically degraded *qua* human: it is “dehumanizing.” Concerning epistemic harm, *cf.*, *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

was beaten by someone's left fist; Robinson's left arm is disabled following an accident as a boy; thus, Robinson could not have inflicted that damage.¹⁶ Unfortunately:

As it turns out, the members of the jury stick with their prejudiced perception of the defendant, formed principally by the racial stereotypes of the day. Atticus Finch challenges them to dispense with these prejudicial stereotypes to dispense, as he puts it, with the "assumption—the evil assumption—that *all* Negroes lie, that *all* Negroes are basically immoral beings, that *all* Negro men are not to be trusted around our women." But when it comes to the verdict, the jurors go along with the automatic distrust delivered by the prejudices. ...¹⁷

Fricker claims that the jurors are culpable for having remained prejudiced and thus they enact testimonial injustice against Robinson. They are provided with compelling evidence to the contrary of their verdict: Finch's defense and Robinson's lack of a left fist. In addition, Finch represents the possibility of a 'white' man believing in a 'black' man's innocence (as his daughter Scout represents such by the 'young,' 'white,' 'women'). And, if the Finches could do it, then the jury could have, too. Since they did not, Fricker condemns the jury culpable for their testimonial injustice.

Fricker outlines another case of testimonial injustice in Patricia Highsmith's *The Talented Mr. Ripley*. The play is set in 1950's Venice where the wealthy American Herbert Greenleaf has travelled to search for his missing son, Dickie Greenleaf. Dickie's recent fiancée Marge Sherwood believes that Dickie is not simply missing and she suspects his newfound friend, Tom Ripley, of foul play. She has a number of reasons for her conviction. Marge has been with Dickie for a long time and believes it is unlike him to suddenly take off or to commit suicide (which Ripley wants everyone think). She also found

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 23; cf., Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* (New York: HarperCollins, 1960); Gaile Pohlhaus, "Relational Knowing and Epistemic Injustice: Toward a Theory of Willful Hermeneutical Ignorance," *Hypatia* 27, 4 (2012): 724.

¹⁷ Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice, Op. Cit.*, 25; Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird, Op. Cit.*, 204.

Dickie's ring—her gift that he swore he would never remove—on a table at Ripley's house. However, Marge's testimony is “gently, kindly, sidelined by Greenleaf senior,” who calls her beliefs nothing more than “female intuition.” Greenleaf, with Ripley's help, pathologizes her conviction as the blabbering of a hysterical woman.¹⁸ Hysteria was a medical condition in the 19th Century, mainly diagnosed in women. Symptoms include nervous, eccentric or erratic behaviour, which fit with the “social model of women” at the time—or, as Fricker would call it, the “female social type.”¹⁹ There are further stereotypes surrounding women, such as “women must be protected by the truth of men,” and “feminine intuitiveness is an obstacle to rational judgment,” which Fricker sees Greenleaf applying to Marge.²⁰ Fricker's position is that:

Marge's suspicions should have been listened to; *she* of all people should have been given some credibility. But Ripley cynically exploits the gender attitudes of the day so that the kindly and well-meaning men around her effectively collude with him to make her appear epistemically untrustworthy.²¹

In employing female stereotypes, Greenleaf undermines Marge as a possessor of knowledge through a wrongful credibility judgment based on a prejudiced perception of the hearer.²²

Yet, unlike the case of the jury and Robinson, Fricker does not hold Greenleaf accountable—and, I believe this to be an error. As Fricker explains, even though the “spontaneous operation of Greenleaf's testimonial sensibility is flawed, for it is trained in part by the prejudices of the day,” he “is ultimately non-culpable because of the historical context;” she does not deny that Greenleaf is at fault for committing testimonial

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 86-88; cf., Patricia Highsmith, *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1955).

¹⁹ Natalie Dyke, Lois Fenton, Heather George, Kalyna Klymkiw, *et al*, “Restoring Perspective: Life and Treatment at the London Asylum,” 2008-09, <http://www.lib.uwo.ca/archives/virtualexhibits/londonasylum/hysteria.html>.

²⁰ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 90.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 89.

²² *Ibid.*, 87, 89.

injustice, but that he is not *culpably* at fault.²³ The epistemic and ethical consequences of this judgment are that we can neither claim that Greenleaf is a bad person, nor can we despise him for his actions.

Unlike the jury, Greenleaf is not culpable because he was not in a position to know better. Whereas the jury was presented with ample evidence and the immediately present example of a ‘white’ man believing in a ‘black’ man’s innocence, Greenleaf did not have similarly relevant knowledge. Fricker argues that, had the critical concepts been available to him, Greenleaf would have used them in forming his judgment. But, because of his historically contingent situation, they were not accessible to him. Greenleaf’s culpability-escape-hatch is here forged from Fricker’s aligning with the epistemic position that “ought does not imply can:” just because Greenleaf ought to have given Marge her deserved credibility, this does not necessarily mean that he *could* have granted her her due. Supposedly, there was no evidence Greenleaf could have used pointing to Marge’s rationality or her knowledge of Dickie. Only if Greenleaf retained his outdated views in the wake of a “relative advance in collective consciousness,” would he have become culpable, according to Fricker.²⁴

Throughout her ethical approach and concept of testimonial injustice, Fricker sidesteps the problem of trust and reliability in testimonial knowledge, in favor of fashioning a sort of Testimonial Swiss Army Knife that can be applied unscrupulously to all situations. Her knife handily carves out the credibility of the speaker, imitating the speed and ease of commonplace testimonial interactions. This is, in fact, one of Fricker’s very goals in writing *Epistemic Injustice*—and I believe that she achieves it. However, I remain troubled by Fricker’s consequent variability of blame. I believe that she ought to hold the jury *and* Greenleaf culpable, and that the reason why Greenleaf isn’t blamed is because her theory has an overly narrow view of responsibility and of the epistemically salient

²³ *Ibid.*, 100.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 100-01.

situational features. But, how do we broaden our moral horizons while maintaining an ordinary use rule for testimony—that is, how do we allow judgmental refinement and specificity to broaden our moral dispositions without placing an unbearable amount of responsibility on the hearer or require an infinite chain of fact-checking?²⁵ We do not want to hold people responsible for not “knowing better” when it is beyond their capabilities, but neither do we want a loophole through which people can wholly escape responsibility. Thus, I do not believe that this problem can be solved while working entirely within Fricker’s framework; instead, we need to open up her narrow account in order to be capable of better determining questions of culpability for the cases like that of Greenleaf. For this theoretical disclosing, I believe that we should turn to the work of Michel Foucault, who tends to run along another axis completely.

III. Foucault’s Theory of Power

Throughout his writings, Foucault develops two key concepts of power: the disciplinary and sovereign powers. They are not opposing forces of power that vie for control over an individual; rather, they are akin to two story lines that run through any situation. Depending on how one reads the story, one line can become more apparent than the other, but both are always present. The epistemic advantage to discerning these differing lines of power is that some situations are better read as disciplinary and other as sovereign, and, thus, by their duality, one is capable of more fully understanding certain events and responding to them better.

Foucault’s idea of *sovereign power* is similar to the usual concept of power wherein one person holds it and uses it to oppress or control others. Foucault calls it ‘sovereign power’ after the sovereign model of the king and the effects of his ownership

²⁵ Hardwig refers to these problems throughout his essay, “The Role of Trust in Knowledge,” *Op. Cit.*.

and usage of power.²⁶ In this classical, juridical theory of power, ‘power’ is “taken to be a right, which one is able to possess like a commodity.”²⁷ For instance, the king has the divine right to rule and thereby ‘has’ more power than his subjects. His ‘ownership’ marks a difference between those who exclusively possess power, and retain it, and those who do not have it and submit to it.²⁸ Foucault highlights the key to sovereign power as its basis in an asymmetrical relationship that links two people.²⁹ There is always a deduction on one side, and an expenditure on the other—a “general system of domination exerted by one group over the other.”³⁰ As a result, it becomes almost automatic to think and speak of power as an “organ of repression,” or a “mode of subjugation.”³¹

Sovereign power is also characterized by a number of rituals. First, there are the ceremonies of sovereignty and the rituals of service that impose sovereign power. These correspond to our image of the king: acts of coronation, signs of submission and allegiance, giving of rules and punishment. Simultaneously, there are the ongoing juridical procedures: “proclaiming the law, watching out for infractions, obtaining a confession, establishing a fault, making a judgment, imposing a penalty.”³² These acts may seem insignificant, but are definite gestures indicating the operation of sovereign power. They also indicate its binary nature, particularly, its opposition between the permitted and the forbidden.³³ As indicated, the juridical procedures have only two sides or two kinds of subjects. In proclaiming the law, the king determines what is permitted (in accordance with the law), and what is forbidden (discordant to the law). Likewise, the king establishes fault. He sets himself

²⁶ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 109.

²⁷ Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 88.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 98.

²⁹ Michel Foucault, *Psychiatric Power*, trans. Graham Burchell, ed. Arnold I. Davidson (New York: Picador, 2008), 42.

³⁰ Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 92.

³¹ Foucault, *Power/Knowledge, Op. Cit.*, 89 and Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Op. Cit.*, 92, respectively.

³² Foucault, *Psychiatric Power, Op. Cit.*, 32.

³³ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish, Op. Cit.*, 183.

(and, thereby, the law) up as ‘right,’ and the out of line criminal as ‘wrong.’ This has epistemic entailments. The king’s account is listened to, taken as true, and as providing knowledge of the event; the criminal’s account is sidelined, his or her testimony ignored, silenced, and deemed ‘false.’

IV. How Foucault’s Ideas of Power Resolve Fricker’s Inconsistency

The parallels between Foucault’s first image of power and Fricker’s concept of testimonial injustice are numerous, but I will focus on three similarities.

First, as previously discussed, Fricker defines testimonial injustice as when the interlocutor fails to give the speaker the level of credibility he or she is *owed* due to a pre-judgment that is resistant to counter-evidence. Fricker is thus working with a juridical model of credibility where credibility is held (or withheld) and exchanged. It is possessed by the hearer, and distributed to the speaker as they see fit—much like the king and his power. This leads to an asymmetric relation between the speaker and the hearer. The speaker is dependent on the interlocutor for his or her testimony to be heard and the knowledge passed on, and also for his or her sense of self and self-worth. Omitted from our previous discussion, Fricker believes that stereotypes can have a “terrible justificatory loop” where people start to embody the stereotype by which they are judged.³⁴ This happens either because they are held up against a stereotype so many times that it is how they come to see themselves as well, or because they are prevented from appearing in another manner.³⁵ Consequently, we can see sovereign power working in Fricker’s theory through her model of credibility.

³⁴ Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, *Op. Cit.*, 89.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 55-7, 89, respectively. While it can happen with most stereotypes, Fricker illustrates the first cause through how the stereotype “African-Americans are unintelligent” is so pervasive that it becomes self-fulfilling, as demonstrated through a psychological experiment. The second cause is seen in Marge’s inability to represent herself as anything other than a hysterical woman because of Ripley’s work.

Secondly, as a whole, testimonial injustice centres on the sovereign process of “making a judgment.” The hearer is supposed to judge whether or not the speaker fits a reliable stereotype—and what stereotype he or she judges that to be. Likewise, one is supposed to judge whether the speaker is correct. One is “watching for infractions,” or committals of testimonial injustice. At which point, there is the ritual of “establishing a fault.” Credibility is seized from the interlocutor, one establishes him or her as culpable, at fault, blameworthy, and, hopefully, then rectify the situation. Each becomes a mini-sovereign ruling over one’s epistemic world and performing juridical procedures.

Third, mirroring the consequences of sovereign power, Fricker’s theory sets up a series of binary pairs. There are structural oppositions such as the speaker and the hearer, but also conceptual oppositions. There is the permitted method of testimonial transactions, credibility, accuracy, knowledge, being right, and justice. On the other hand, there is the forbidden mode of testimonial injustice, non-credibility, inaccuracy, fallacy, being wrong, and injustice. Her theory, like sovereign power, is set up such that it is better to be on the side of the permitted. But, there is also the small-scale opposition of what is permitted and forbidden by different stereotypes. For example, it is permitted for Ripley to know more about Dickie’s disappearance than Marge.

Through these connections, I would like to suggest that Fricker’s version of testimony and testimonial injustice adheres to a sovereign model of power. The way testimony is structured, how testimonial justice is determined, and who places blame are full of juridical procedures that follow binary practices. This is useful for us because looking for sovereign power lets us see a narrow sense in which Greenleaf is culpable, or not; whether or not we can blame him; and if he is in one historical context or another. This is the framework with which Fricker generally works.

Foucault has another lens. His other mode of power, *disciplinary power*, deviates from its conventional conception. Instead

of an economic picture, disciplinary power is neither given, nor exchanged. It is a power that “is never localized here or there, never in anybody’s hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth.”³⁶ Disciplinary power is distinctly not an object. Foucault defines it as “the moving substrate of force relations.”³⁷ Power is, above all, a relation of force. For Foucault, how it shifts and flows determines the social relations of power, such as who is more powerful in a given situation. Instead of possessing power, one *exercises* it—and it is exercised from innumerable points. This is because “power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere.”³⁸ In its omnipresence, it is difficult to think of individuals as the point of application of power. Foucault prefers to call them “vehicles of power” who transport and move power around—but never own it.³⁹

It is important to focus on what Foucault means when he says “relations” of power. This indicates the interaction *between* vehicles of power, what happens in the network of forces. He is concerned with the “micro-physics” of power.⁴⁰ Foucault further emphasizes this through his terms for exercising power: the “strategies,” “dispositions,” “maneuvers,” “tactics” and “techniques.” Such is key for Foucault because it is the *tension* between force relations that engender states of power.⁴¹ The network of relations is always in tension: “they are not univocal, they define innumerable points of confrontation, focuses of instability, each of which has its own risks of conflict, of struggles.”⁴² Similar to sovereign power, the inequality of power between two people determines what can happen; however, unlike sovereign power, the forces are always shifting and changing the states of power.⁴³

³⁶ Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, *Op. Cit.*, 98; *cf.*, *Ibid.*, 89.

³⁷ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, *Op. Cit.*, 93; *cf.*, Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, *Op. Cit.*, 89.

³⁸ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, *Op. Cit.*, 93; *cf.*, *Ibid.*, 94.

³⁹ Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, *Op. Cit.*, 98.

⁴⁰ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, *Op. Cit.*, 26.

⁴¹ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, *Op. Cit.*, 93.

⁴² Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, *Op. Cit.*, 27.

⁴³ Foucault, *Psychiatric Power*, *Op. Cit.*, xvi. It is wrong to say that the states of power under sovereignty are not subject to change (indeed, they are: *cf.*, *Ibid.*, 43), but disciplinary power’s degree and rate of change are far more prominent.

Since there is no strict dualism in disciplinary power, like between the sovereign and his subject, it is understandable that this operation does not give rise to the same binary opposition found in sovereign power. Rather, because power is everywhere, it “tends to [have] an exhaustive capture of the individual’s actions, time, and behavior.”⁴⁴ That is, it has a total hold on the individual—but, it also indicates that there is not the same “forbidden/permitted” opposition within disciplinary power: all sides are encompassed.

V. Reading Foucauldian Lines in Greenleaf’s Case

Foucault’s concept of disciplinary power offers Fricker an opportunity to open up her analysis of testimonial exchange. In the above analysis of sovereign power, credibility was looked at *as* power. Taking up the template of sovereign power, I imposed it over Fricker’s testimonial injustice, and replaced power with credibility. I am going to use the same approach now with disciplinary power and credibility. Foucault’s disciplinary power focuses on the force relations between individuals that engender states of power. In the sovereign story line, it is possible to see a few force relations. There is a relation of force between Greenleaf and Marge—he withholds credibility and she is rendered hysterical. He has the power in the situation, and she does not—not even enough to express herself coherently. This is certainly one side of their relationship—and the one Fricker focuses on. In the movement towards a disciplinary view of the situation, it is not that this relationship disappears, but, there is certainly more to see: a richer picture emerges if we follow the lines of disciplinary power and focus, as Foucault does, on the tension and struggle between *all* force relations in an epistemic field.

From a disciplinary power approach we can see how Greenleaf’s belief of Marge does not simply rely on her position as a woman in the 1950’s; a close reading of Fricker’s version of *The Talented Mr. Ripley* reveals a number of other factors in play.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 46.

First, Greenleaf (falsely) believes that Marge is “innocent of the tawdry facts of Dickie’s life” because she doesn’t know about his previous infidelity.⁴⁵ Fricker notes that this comes from Greenleaf’s preconception about what one does and does not say to one’s sweetheart. She hints that this stems from Greenleaf’s belief about what women can handle about men’s lives. Yet, it is possible Greenleaf considered how Dickie might be nervous to tell Marge about his infidelity for fear of their own continued relationship, and *that* is the reason men do not tell their sweethearts about infidelity.

Additionally, it comes to light that Greenleaf does not know his son. During the investigation “Greenleaf is only too aware of how little he himself knows his son” and hopes the detective will make up for that ignorance.⁴⁶ This is an interesting development that could lead to very different motivations for Greenleaf’s behaviour. It may lead Greenleaf to either be easily convinced about his son’s behaviour (as he doesn’t know what his son would actually do), or be less open to the evidence (particularly evidence that does not correspond with his outdated knowledge of his son). Thus, the force relations between Greenleaf, Ripley and the detective are made more prominent. We can see how Greenleaf enacts testimonial injustice because he feels pressured to follow Ripley and the detective’s hypothesis, dismissing Marge’s testimony because it doesn’t match how his son used to be. Greenleaf is making an effort to appear like he knows his son, and ignoring Marge—not because she is a woman, but because her testimony does not further his purposes.

Fricker also mentions that if there had been a Mrs. Greenleaf, she would have accepted Marge’s testimony. Similar to her treatment of the beliefs of Finch and Scout, Fricker thinks that evidence of external support would have swayed Greenleaf to consider Marge’s testimony. Although it is hard to predict Mrs. Greenleaf’s influence, assuming she believes Marge, it is possible that even just having one more person on

⁴⁵ Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, *Op. Cit.*, 87, 89, respectively.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 88.

Marge's side (woman or not) would have given Greenleaf pause for thought. And, reconsidering Marge's testimony, he may have accepted it, rather than briskly dismissing it. The cause of Mrs. Greenleaf's absence could be influencing Greenleaf as well. If she had died, perhaps Mr. Greenleaf would be unwilling to accept that his son is dead, too, and this would then motivate him to not listen to Marge. There are almost too many subtleties and variations to be accounted for.

VI. Conclusion

Examining the wider range of force relations present in Greenleaf's case is an interesting procedure, illustrating how the situation is much less 'cut and dry' than originally supposed. Each of the possibilities for Greenleaf's dismissal of Marge's testimony is *as possible* as the belief that he is simply a sexist man of the 1950's ignorant to feminist ideas. Yet, it leads to a different conclusion about responsibility. We know that Greenleaf, who ignores his son, tries to compensate with money and has various credibility relations bearing down on him from all sides. There is the pressure from society (about the role of a parent), from Dickie (what he expects his father to do), past connections (with his wife), and the current situation between Ripley, himself, and Marge—and each of these relations exerts a different force on Marge's credibility, pushing it up or down. From this broadened perspective, we can see how Greenleaf succumbed to some pressures, rather than others. He tries to save face as a father, run away from the possibility that his son is dead, solve the case quickly (a murder investigation would take time), and appear as a rational intellectual compared to others (it would appear poorly if Greenleaf's accusation was wrong, and, at least this way, he appears more intelligent than Marge). While I have neither considered all other possible force relations, nor have I explored each one fully, it is evident, nevertheless, that Greenleaf *is* responsible for testimonial injustice towards Marge for reasons that are not historically contingent. Historical contingency, then, cannot excuse him: Greenleaf is as culpable as the jury for his testimonial injustice.

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Φιλόλογος

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Hume on the Self

ABSTRACT: This paper explores Hume's view of the self, situating it within the context of the early modern empirical movement. I begin by noting the surprising compatibility of a Cartesian view of the self with much of the first book of Hume's *Treatise*, and use this to show how the grounds for his rejection of the existence of a Cartesian self were entirely phenomenological. Next, I consider Hume's positive 'bundle' theory of the self, and find that while traditional objections—regarding a bundle's projection of unity onto itself, or the change-preventing view of identity invoked in the argument for this theory—are unsuccessful, the view is further flawed in other ways. I end by suggesting that Hume's evident dissatisfaction with his view of the self becomes more intelligible if we see the murky phenomenology of self-searching as signaling a limit to the empirical approach to 'moral subjects' as a whole.

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I find myself both as a man and as myself something most determined and distinctive, at pitch, more distinctive and higher pitched than anything else I see; I find myself with my pleasures and pains ... when I consider my self being, my consciousness and feeling of myself, that taste of myself, and I and me above and in all things, which is more distinctive than the taste of ale or alum ... and is incommunicable by any means to another man.

—Gerard Manley Hopkins.¹

Let us begin by painting with a broad brush the empiricist background to Hume's view of the self. Locke's representative realism split the world off from the mind, leaving us with only some of our mental contents—our ideas of primary properties—as able to tell us about the world. Berkeley, at least on one reading, made the split total by leveling primary and secondary properties, leaving us with only the mind and its ideas. But, how could a phenomenalist such as Berkeley believe in a non-phenomenal mind? His remarks on the matter are unenlightening: he tacked *aut percipere* [or to perceive] onto *esse est percipi* [to be is to be perceived] by means of an underdeveloped theory of our having *notions* of spirits, the place of which in his idealism is far from clear. Hume, on the other hand, took the invisibility of the self more seriously. Specifically, he took it as reason to doubt that there is, at least in one sense of the word, a self at all.

The first half of this essay is devoted to discussing what the self was for Hume. After considering the possible reasons for his rejection of a certain commonsensical view of the self, I find that he did so because of a striking phenomenological point regarding introspection. I leave the defensibility of this point open, given some phenomenological remarks of my own. I then examine Hume's positive argument regarding the self: that it is a "bundle of perceptions."² In the second half of the

¹ Gerard Manley Hopkins, "Comments on the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola," in *The Poems and Prose of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. W. H. Gardner (London: Penguin 1953), 147-8.

² David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (London: Penguin, 1985), 300. Hereafter, all references to this text will be cited parenthetically in the text.

essay, I tackle Hume's genealogy of our mistaken view of the self, and find this defective in many respects. I end by discussing the wider significance of the self in Hume's work, and suggest that it might be seen as marking a limit to his 'experimental method' in the study of cognition.

It will be illuminating to begin with a negative question. There is a very commonsensical and, in certain respects, Cartesian view of the self which, as we shall see, fits very nicely with much of the First Book of Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Why did Hume *not* hold that view? I shall call it *the attractive view*; it is this: all our perceptions (ideas and impressions) appear to belong to a subject. When many perceptions occur at the same time, they all appear to belong to one subject; and when perceptions come and go, they appear to begin or cease to belong to one continuing subject. From this manner of appearance we form the idea of a synchronically unitary ('simple') and diachronically unitary ('identical') *substantive self*, to which our perceptions belong.

An immediate response to my question is that Hume's accepting this would contravene his 'copy principle', according to which "*all our simple ideas in their first appearance are deriv'd from simple impressions, which are correspondent to them, and which they exactly represent*" (52). The suggestion is that Hume would not have held the attractive view because it involves an idea that isn't caused by a resembling impression. Rather, it speaks of an idea that is caused by the manner in which all perceptions appear. Now, we might want to respond that the attractive view doesn't breach the copy principle because the idea of a substantive self might be complex (*i.e.*, "may be distinguished into parts" (50)), whereas the principle only concerns simple ideas (which "admit of no distinction or separation" (50)). But a complex idea must still be copied from simple perceptions; "all simple ideas and impressions resemble each other; and as the complex are formed from them ..." (51). The attractive view, however, held that we form the idea of a substantive self from neither simple nor complex perceptions,

but from something altogether different: a manner of appearance.

A better line of response is to show that Hume was happy to say that some ideas arise from manners of appearance. After stressing, in Part I, the importance of the copy principle as a philosophical tool, Hume ironically spends almost all of Part II explaining how some of our most important philosophical ideas—those of space, time and existence—derive more from the manners of appearance of impressions, than from impressions themselves. For instance, the idea of time “is not deriv’d from a particular impression mix’d up with others ... but arises altogether from the manner, in which impressions appear to the mind” (85). Many scholars take such claims to straightforwardly contradict the copy principle. I leave that question open. The very fact that Hume made these claims suffices to counter the purported explanation regarding his rejection of the attractive view.

Nor can we say that Hume eschewed the attractive view because the *subjective* manner of appearance of perceptions is not explicable in non-subjective terms. For Hume makes no attempt to explain spatial or temporal manners of appearance in other terms. “As ’tis from the disposition of visible and tangible objects we receive the idea of space, so from the succession of ideas and impression we form the idea of time” (83). We are told nothing about the “disposition,” but simply gather that it is a spatial one. Similarly, the “succession” mentioned can only be temporal. In the same passage, we read that it’s in “considering the distance betwixt these bodies [that] I acquire the idea of extension” (82), but “distance” is, of course, a spatial term. Hume evidently had no problem with manners of appearance being, in a sense, brute.

But in raising this question of the precise nature of the subjective manner of appearance, we approach the correct reason for Hume’s rejection of the attractive view. Manners of appearance are, of course, phenomenal; and that something appears in a certain manner is a phenomenological fact.

Hume's point was, quite simply, that the purported phenomenological fact embedded in the attractive view—that perceptions appear to belong to a synchronically and diachronically unified subject—is false. Despite the murkiness of the notion of *belonging*, we can plausibly say that a necessary condition on the purported fact's obtaining is that a substantive self appears, along with perceptions. This condition is just what Hume famously denies:

[W]hen I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other ... I never can catch myself at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception (300).

This phenomenological point—that trying to observe a substantive self results in the observation only of perceptions—is a profound one. Kripke, in his discernment of Wittgenstein making the same point, explains it thus:

[W]here Descartes would have said that I am certain that “I have a tickle,” the only thing Hume is aware of is the tickle itself. The self—the Cartesian ego—is an entity which is wholly mysterious. We are aware of no such entity that ‘has’ the tickle ... we are only aware of the tickle.³

He later notes how the phenomenological point can be demonstrated by translating all first-person perception-sentences into ones which lack the first-person pronoun: “I have a tickle” becomes “there is a tickle;” “I think of Kate” becomes “there is a thought of Kate.” So, the reason Hume shuns the attractive view is that the appearance it is committed to simply does not occur.

I want to ask two questions about the phenomenological point: What kind of truth does Hume take it to be? And is it, indeed, true? Regarding the first, there is much to suggest that Hume takes it to be an empirical truth, *i.e.* a truth about how things stand in the world, known by experience. He says that

³ Saul Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1982), 122.

the impression from which our idea of a substantive self might be copied would have to “continue invariably the same, thro’ the whole course of our lives” (299). Since no impression does this, there is no copied idea. But the empirical fact that the hunt for the “unchanging kernel” fails, it smacks of contingency, which doesn’t seem right.⁴ *Could* the self-searcher have succeeded? A remark of Hume’s suggests not:

From what impression could this idea [of self] be deriv’d? This question ’tis impossible to answer without a manifest contradiction and absurdity; ... self or person is not any one impression, but that to which our several impressions and ideas are suppos’d to have a reference (299).

Here the non-phenomenal nature of the self comes across as something of a conceptual truth, the negation of which would be an “absurdity.” Suppose I introspect, and claim to have found a perception of a substantive self, “P.” If there were a substantive self, “P” would “have a reference” to it, which we can take as roughly meaning that “P” would belong to it. “P” would then be a very strange kind of perception; it would be of its “owner.” But Hume rejects the self-to-perception relation of “ownership” (or “reference,” “inhesion”) as unintelligible, saying that the question, “*What [do] they mean by ... inhesion? ... we have found impossible to be answer’d with regard to matter and body: ... in the case of mind, it labours under all the same difficulties*” (281). So, the phenomenological point is, on this reading, much less of a contingency than it might appear.

Now, to our second question: is the phenomenological point true? The only honest response that I can give to this question is to suspend judgment. At times, I am compelled to say that we turn out, upon close inspection, to be radically more sparsely furnished, inside, than we tend to think. Yet, at other times, I cannot help but agree with thoughts such as those so deftly expressed by Gerard Manley Hopkins in this work’s epigraph. The phenomenology of introspection—that

⁴ Terence Penelhum, “Hume on Personal Identity,” in *Hume: a Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. V. C. Chappell (London: MacMillan, 1970), 238.

is to say, how things seem to me when I try to observe a substantive self—becomes so slippery and entangled, that any conclusion falls out of reach. To borrow from Hume, “I find myself involv’d in such a labyrinth” that picking a side in the Humean-Cartesian battle seems impossible (675). Indeed, the fact that in self-searching, the very nature of *how things seem to one* is unclear, probably goes some way (though certainly not the whole way) to explaining Hume’s second thoughts on his view, expressed in his Appendix. I shall return to this in the conclusion.

An idea of a substantive self would derive from an impression of such a thing, or (as on the attractive view) it appearing that perceptions belong to such a thing. The phenomenal point rules both out, so we have no idea of a self, “after the manner it is here explain’d” (299). How does Hume conclude that there is no such thing from there being no such idea? One way starts with his view of language, which in this essay I assume to be true. When “we talk of *self* or *substance*, we must have an idea annex’d to these terms” (675). Since no idea of a substantive self is annexed to the term “self,” it would be “unintelligible” to say that there is a self in that sense (675). There is no substantive self in the same way that there is no floogle.

That is Hume’s negative view. But how does Hume argue for his positive theory that the self is nothing but a “bundle of perceptions” related by causation and resemblance? Here we might borrow from Garrett, who sees the argument as being something like this:

- (1) There is no idea of a substantive self.
- (2) “All our perceptions are distinct. They are, therefore, distinguishable, and separable, and may be conceiv’d as separately existent, and may exist separately” (676).
- (3) Only perceptions appear when one tries to observe the self.

So,

- (C) The self is “nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with

inconceivable rapidity, and are in perpetual flux and movement” (300).⁵

But, it is not clear how the conclusion (C) follows at all. It needs some more support. Something similar to what Garrett calls “reductive empiricism” might help; this is the view that “a particular state of affairs [should be] defined in terms of a state of affairs that is more commonly regarded only as evidence for it.”⁶ What I have in mind is this:

- (4) The self is what I observe when I try to observe the self.

The argument would then be:

When I try to observe the self, I find no idea of a substantive self (1), but observe only perceptions (3), which are capable of independent existence (2). Since the self is what I observe when I try to observe the self (4), this bundle of possibly-independently-existing perceptions is the self (C).

The defensibility of this argument is compromised by its reliance on the phenomenological point: claim (3) is the point itself, and claim (1) is supported by the point plus Hume’s view of language. Given what was said earlier, I cannot fully endorse these premises. From a more exegetical point of view, however, the argument has merit in raising a question regarding (C), namely: why did Hume want to *reduce* the self to what is observed in introspection, rather than *eliminate* it? If the common thought that the self is substantive lacks empirical support, why not dispense with the self altogether? Why introduce the unusual thought that the self is a bundle? The answer is that elimination is ruled out by what Hume wants to say about the passions in the Second Book. There we read that “Tis always self, which is the object of pride and humility” (332). Indeed, if we see these two central passions as akin to self-love and self-loathing, the need for an analyst of

⁵ Don Garrett, *Cognition and Commitment in Hume’s Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 165.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 36.

emotion such as Hume to have a self of *some* kind in their conceptual toolkit becomes clear. This explains the reductive premise (C).

I want to turn now to the explanatory side of Hume's view of the self; that is, to his answer to the question: "What then gives us so great a propensity to ascribe an identity to these successive perceptions" which form a self (301)? But first, a word about Hume's general approach here. What he has to say is related to his overarching theory that the mind has a "great propensity to spread itself on external objects" (217); except in this case it is more a matter of its spreading itself on itself.⁷ This point might seem to count against bundle theory, but it needn't. There is no reason to suppose that one perception in a bundle can't perform the "mental act" of projecting unity onto the entirety of that bundle, so long as we see that, as Stroud points out, "for me to perform ... 'mental acts' ... is just for a certain perception to occur in my mind."⁸ This ties in with the aforementioned point that we can drop the first-person pronoun in sentences about perceptions (including sentences about what we want to call "mental acts"). "I project unity onto a bundle" becomes "there is the projection of unity onto a bundle." Stroud's point can also be used to quell Chisholm's worries about *who* it is that, entering into what he calls himself, finds nothing but perceptions: the failure to find a self is just the failure of a certain perception to occur.⁹

Now, to Hume's account itself. The relevant passages are messy, and many interpretations are possible, but given Hume's evident belief that the mechanism behind our forming a "fiction" of a substantive self is the same as that behind our forming a "fiction" of *substance*, I run together what he says

⁷ That Hume was not sure which kind of projection was at issue is suggested by his jumping between first person and third person examples—the latter still possibly counting as the mind spreading itself on the *world*, where that just means whatever is not *that* mind.

⁸ Barry Stroud, *Hume* (London: Routledge, 1977), 130.

⁹ Roderick Chisholm, "On the Observability of the Self," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 30, 1 (1969): 7-21, 10.

about both. Take a series of distinct objects, which are related by at least one of the following principles: causation; resemblance; teleological unity (the parts combine “to some *common end*” (305)); functional unity (the parts have “a mutual dependence on, and connexion with each other” (305)). Because the consideration of such a series and the consideration of one (unchanging) continuing thing “are almost the same to the feeling,” the imagination is apt to mistake the series for one (unchanging) continuing thing (302).

However, if we think of two objects in the series remote from one another, reason enters the picture and tells us that they are distinct. Here, we try to have our cake and eat it, too. We invent something called a *substance*, “continuing the same under very considerable alterations” (269). The substance is one (unchanging) continuing thing, so the imagination is satisfied; but change occurs on the level of the substance’s ‘form’, so reason is also satisfied. We can tell the same story regarding the substantive self, replacing objects with perceptions, which are related by causation and resemblance. In both cases, we “run into the notion of ... *self*, and *substance*, to disguise the variation” among perceptions and objects, respectively (302).

One challenge to the defensibility of this view comes from its obscurity. It looks like Hume ends up saying that, because our perceptions are appropriately related, the imagination tends to blur them all together. That is patently false. What is confusing is that Hume agrees: “the identity, which we attribute to the human mind ... is not able to run the several distinct perceptions into one” (307). An interpretation of the role of the imagination that avoids the result that Hume contradicts himself is, I admit, beyond me.

Another defect in Hume’s account is to be found in the claim that “We have a distinct idea of an object, that remains invariable and uninterrupted thro’ a suppos’d variation of time; and this we call that of *identity*,” which we confuse with the idea of closely related diversity (301). But our having such an

idea clashes with Hume's rather Berkeleyan view of time, according to which "time cannot make its appearance to the mind alone, or attended with a steady unchangeable object, but is always discover'd by some perceivable succession of changeable objects" (84).

Might it be that time must "make its appearance" via change, but, once we have an idea of it, we can, in some sense, apply it to unchanging objects? But we read that a "man in a sound sleep, or occupy'd with one thought, is insensible of time" (84). If occupation with one idea (the thought) entails insensitivity of time, so should occupation with an impression. How Hume supposes we gather the idea of perfect, changeless identity, I cannot fathom.

This leads us to a wider question about Hume's view of identity: why does he think it precludes change? Penelhum states the simple fact that, at least following ordinary thought and language, things can survive change, and takes Hume's disagreement with this to compromise his entire account of identity-ascription.¹⁰ But *why* did Hume think of identity in such a strange way?

One tentative answer is this: it is natural to credit Hume with the view that when it looks like the world divides into different objects whose identity-conditions allow them to survive particular changes, this is in fact a projection of the mind. A lump of clay can survive remoulding; a statue can't. This is because we have concepts like *lump* and *statue* that are concepts of things with certain identity-conditions, which we project onto the world. But Humean naturalism tells us to see our set of concepts as simply the way in which a group of advanced animals cut up the world; a way that is entirely dependent on the habits, sentiments, etc., of such animals. The upshot is that our concepts don't correspond to things in the world, like real lumps and real statues, which would be there with their identity-conditions whether we had the

¹⁰ Terence Penelhum, "Hume on Personal Identity," *Hume: a Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. V. C. Chappell (London: Macmillan, 1970, 213-39), *passim*.

concepts or not. Now, it might be that Hume, at least in his discussion of identity, wants to do something rather out of character and talk about the world as it is, not as we project it to be. But this he can only do by shrugging off the unprivileged conceptual scheme. He must now restrict his talk to that of basic ontological units, “objects,” whose identity-conditions are so bare—*they may not change*—that he runs no risk of conceptual projection. In sum, “identity” meaning invariable sameness might be the result of recognising that a picture of the world as containing things which can survive these changes and not those, is infected by one’s conceptual framework.

The evaluative issue regarding Hume’s view of identity is now much more complicated. We cannot follow Penelhum in trying to rebut Hume by simply pointing out our ordinary notion of change-allowing identity. A proper rebuttal must engage with questions over whether reality has non-projected joints at which we carve—though, its pursuit would lead me too far astray.

Let us take stock of what we have found so far. Hume rejected the attractive view neither because of the copy principle nor because of the bruteness of the subjective perceptual manner of appearance, but because of the phenomenological point. He might have considered this a conceptual truth; considered on purely phenomenological grounds, however, it is far from secure. By his theory of language Hume got from our having no idea of a substantive self to there being none. Because he needed a concept of self to explain the passions, he forewent elimination of the self and argued, from the phenomenological point, that it reduces to a bundle of perceptions. Hume’s explanation for our mistakenly thinking the self to be substantive doesn’t fall prey to the objection that mental acts such as projection cannot occur in bundles. But the account is unclear as to whether we imaginatively blur perceptions into one, and it suffers from the fact that Hume’s view of time seems to preclude our having an idea of identity. We cannot, however, fault Hume on his conception of

identity as change-preventing, unless we are prepared to discuss the wider metaphysical issues on which that view rests.

As one final point, I want to suggest that one of the reasons Hume was so perturbed by the question of the self is that it challenged the methodology of the *Treatise*. Hume wants, according to his subtitle, to “introduce the experimental method of reasoning into moral subjects,” and it becomes apparent in the text that the “experiments” of moral philosophy consist of gazing inwards. On the assumption that one has special access to the Cartesian inner realm, this is epistemologically unproblematic. Hume clearly held such an assumption:

For since all actions and sensations of the mind are known to us by consciousness, they must necessarily appear in every particular what they are, and be what they appear. Every thing that enters the mind, being in *reality* a perception, 'tis impossible any thing shou'd to feeling appear different. This were to suppose, that even where we are most intimately conscious, we might be mistaken (240 ff.).

But, as I said above, when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I am not sure what I find. If Hume experienced anything like that, then he would have seen that sometimes, after consulting the place of which we are supposedly “most intimately conscious,” we are left none the wiser as to how things stand there. What this means is that the epistemological foundation for the “science of man”—that one can know about the mind simply by looking at it—turns out to be shaky. Sometimes one doesn't even know how it looks.¹¹

¹¹ I am indebted to Marina Frasca-Spada for her many insightful comments on this paper.

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TAYLOR P. SMITH

**The Cosmological Argument:
Agnosticism and Silence**

ABSTRACT: If one accepts the concept of a big bang, then how does one explain *why* the big bang happened? The cosmological argument for God's existence states that at some point in reality's past there must have been a self-existent being. How might an atheist respond? What of the agnostic who doesn't find the question intelligible? More interesting, what are the relationships between the different perspectives? This essay begins with an examination of Spinoza's *Ethics*, and his substance monism, in order to build a foundation from which to explore, first, a theist's use of Spinoza's text to argue for a self-existent being, next, how an atheist may interpret the *Ethics* and argue for dependency all the way down, and, finally, the agnostic is last to the stage, and will declare that, in the pursuit of an explanation, both theist and atheist have entered a kind of no-man's land. But, for the agnostic to do so, the principle of sufficient reason will have to be dismissed. If successful, the agnostic will be able to open a third response to the cosmological argument that necessitates mystification on behalf of all parties, but encourages a sort of epistemic harmony on the subject.

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An atheist, agnostic, and theist walk into a bar to discuss whether God exists.¹ Rather than arguments from evil, or teleology, or free will, the concept that structures their debate is the cosmological argument. The atheist will ask the theist, “What came before God if God is all that ever existed?” And the theist will trot out the usual line, “Well how can something come from nothing if there was a big bang and no God?” Meanwhile, the agnostic nurses her drink, entirely unconcerned with the present discussion—her silence, as will be argued, is the most plausible position.

The question this essay addresses is not to once and for all answer the question “which side of the argument is right?” but rather, “why do such discussions usually end in stalemate?” And, more to our point, “why do they have the discussion at all?” The atheist and theist find themselves happily in their own camps, entrenched and unable to sway the other an inch. Though, despite being at odds, both are actually after the same thing—an explanation. The two positions unite against the agnostic who does not think questions of these sorts to be worthwhile in the way they usually occur. What if the agnostic is right? How *could* the agnostic be right if she does not entertain the question? She must make the move of not answering “does God exist?” but questioning the cosmological argument itself.

In order to render all of this intelligible, we will examine some well known philosophical concepts: substance, the cosmological argument for God’s existence, and the principle of sufficient reason (*PSR*). Part I of this essay establishes Spinoza’s view of substance monism, expresses that everything in existence is attributed to this substance, and uses Spinoza’s four proofs of Part I, Proposition XI of his *Ethics* to show how this substance is thought to be God. Part II focuses on the mechanics of the modern cosmological argument while employing Spinoza’s view of substance as the proponent’s

¹ “Atheist,” “theist,” and “agnostic” are not blanket terms for traditional theological perspectives, but, within this essay, each expresses a certain view concerning how to explain the universe’s existence and origins.

God. Here, the proponent's position on the cosmological argument will be criticized by first explaining God to be unnecessary within the cosmological argument and, furthermore, that the principle of sufficient reason, on which the proponent depends, is an unstable and maybe impossible to satisfy principle. This part will also include a reading of Spinoza's *Ethics* that the atheist uses against the theist in explaining the universe's origins. Finally, Part III will engage the agnostic's silence and debate *PSR*—the heart of the discussion—with an end of dismissing at least part of its entailments as beyond humanity's reach.

I. Spinoza, Substance, and God

In Part I of the *Ethics*, Spinoza attempts to reduce substance dualism to substance monism. In order to lay the groundwork for what his four proofs will attempt to prove, there are several points that must be closely noted. In his beginning list of axioms and definitions, axiom I claims that “All things that are, are either in themselves or in something else.”² In his subsequent propositions, V asserts that “In the universe there cannot be two or more substances of the same nature or attribute.”³ A key term here is “nature,” which equates to a substance's essence, or what would distinguish that substance from other substances, provided that other substances exist. Spinoza uses the term again in Proposition VII: “Existence belongs to the nature of substance.”⁴ If the nature of substance is existence, and two or more substances cannot share the nature of existing, we may conclude that only one substance's essence involves existence. Thus, according to Spinoza, only one substance should exist.

Spinoza further builds his idea of substance monism by defining “self-caused” as that which its “essence involves

² Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*, in *Modern Philosophy: An Analogy of Primary Sources*, eds. R. Ariew and E. Watkinds (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2009), 144-99, 144.

³ *Ibid.*, 145.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 147.

existence.”⁵ Thus, it appears that only one self-caused substance could exist. More so, in Proposition II, Spinoza says that substances with different attributes—for example, existence and non-existence—have nothing in common and are totally distinct. He adds in Proposition III, “If things have nothing in common ... one cannot cause the other (also in Proposition VI: ‘one substance cannot be produced by another substance’).”⁶ If there exists only one substance, and this one substance is self-caused, then everything that indeed *does* exist must depend upon it for its existence—in other words, reality is an attribute of the existing substance.

But we must be clear on the relationship between attributes and their substances. Spinoza defines attribute as “that which the intellect perceives of substance as constituting its essence.”⁷ That is to say that the finite human intellect grasps two attributes—thought and extension—and it is by way of such that one recognizes substance.⁸

To briefly summarize what has been established so far: everything that is thought and everything that is extended, including the space in which it is extended, is an attribute of a necessarily existing substance that is self-caused. Spinoza calls this substance “God” in Proposition XI and then explicitly expresses his substance monism in Proposition XIV: “There can be, or be conceived, no other substance but God.”⁹ It is important to note, however, that this latter proposition depends upon the preceding one, which claims to prove God’s existence.

Due to this argumentative dependence, Spinoza must prove God to actually exist as a substance before he can commit to

⁵ *Ibid.*, 144.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 145.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 144.

⁸ While this is a contestable statement, and the debate surrounding his definition of “attribute” unsettled, further address of his usage of terms would stray too far from the current thesis. For a thorough examination of such, cf. Francis S. Haserot, “Spinoza’s Definition of Attribute,” *The Philosophical Review* 62, 4 (1953): 499–513.

⁹ Spinoza, *Ethics, Op. Cit.*, 149.

substance monism—and he does so through four proofs. These proofs involve a principle drawn from Axiom III, which reads: “From a given determinate cause there necessarily follows an effect; on the other hand, if no determinate cause be given, it is impossible that an effect should follow.”¹⁰ If “effect” were to be read as “any event,” then every state of affairs would have sufficient reason for its existence in some cause, namely, substance. To express it bluntly: if something exists, there must be a cause of its existence. This will be considered Spinoza’s principle of sufficient reason (*PSR*).

The axiomatic *PSR* is divided into two parts: *PSRa* states that there is an explanation for the existence of every being; *PSRb* states that there is an explanation for any positive fact whatsoever. This principle is required within Spinoza’s cosmological argument—for the argument itself is an argument that seeks to explain the origin of the cosmos—and well-suited to it, for *PSR* is all about causal explanation.

Having brought *PSR* into frame, we can now examine the divine proofs. Don Garrett proposes Spinoza to be “best understood as offering four interrelated arguments which resemble ontological arguments in being essentially *a priori* and relying on a definition of ‘God,’ but which resemble cosmological arguments in depending on a version of [*PSR*].”¹¹ The ontological proofs exceed the current study, but their mention here directs us by contrast to the insight that the cosmological argument and *PSR* are *a posteriori* in that they necessitate experience of the world and seek to describe probable causes. This directs us to now consider the third proof.¹²

Spinoza argues from the assumption that all that exists are finite entities:

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 144

¹¹ Don Garrett, “Spinoza’s ‘Ontological’ Argument,” *The Philosophical Review* 88, 2 (1979): 198–223, 198.

¹² I am indebted to Martin Lin and Don Garrett for formulating the proofs’ theses throughout this section; for their fuller examination, cf. *Ibid.* and Martin Lin, “Spinoza’s Arguments for the Existence of God,” in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 75, 2 (2007): 269–97.

- (1) To be able to exist is power; to not be able to exist is weakness—at *this point, such is ungrounded*.
- (2) If only finite entities exist, then they would be more powerful than an infinite Being—*by (1)*.
- (3) It is absurd for finite beings to be more powerful than an absolutely infinite Being—*self-evident*.
- (4) Therefore, either nothing exists, or an absolutely infinite being exists—*by (1), (2), and (3)*.
- (5) We exist and are finite beings—*the cogito, self-evident*.
- (6) An absolutely infinite being (God) necessarily exists.¹³

There is something curious about point (2). As Martin Lin proposes: consider it as parallel to the claim “this pond has more lily pads than the non-existent pond;” accordingly, it strikes me as odd to compare the two, for the non-existent pond cannot have actual lily pads, and actual lily pads are what we are really after.¹⁴ How could a being that does exist, as this third proof argues, be less powerful than something that does not exist, which the argument assumes? There is a further issue with (1): Spinoza has not yet connected infinitude and power. I agree with Lin that these two issues are enough for Spinoza’s third proof to fail, however, Spinoza’s final proof builds from this one and attempts a resolution.

The fourth proof is defined within the third proof’s scholium, and, hence, the two are heavily related. Spinoza says that the third proof was presented *a posteriori* for ease of the reader. He claims that he can rephrase the proof to explain God *a priori*:

- (1) At least one being is self-existent—*Axiom I*.
- (2) To be more powerful is to have more reality—*stipulation*.
- (3) The more reality a being or thing has, the more attributes it has—*Proposition IX and X’s scholium*.
- (4) If any being exists necessarily, the being with the greatest power to exist exists necessarily—*self-evident*.
- (5) God has all possible attributes—*Definition VI*.
- (6) God is the most real substance and therefore has the greatest power to exist—*by (3) and (4)*.
- (7) We may conclude God exists necessarily.

¹³ Spinoza, *Ethics, Op. Cit.*, 148-9.

¹⁴ Lin, “Spinoza’s Arguments for the Existence of God,” *Op. Cit.*, 280.

This line of reasoning allows Spinoza to conclude God as being the one absolute substance upon which all extension and thought is dependent, as per Proposition XIV.

Spinoza's first and second proofs, which are left unmentioned here, are insufficient because they fail to address why one cannot simply replace "God" with a substance of one attribute like extension or thought, *i.e.*, Spinoza never forces the reader to accept God from his arguments without possible recourse.¹⁵ But the third and similar fourth proofs succeed in forcing the reader to accept that such substances are ruled out as being lesser, and thus contingent upon a greater substance, God, as required by Axiom I and the fourth proof. If we accept Spinoza's definitions, axioms, propositions, and arguments, then he has sufficiently shown us the reason for everything that exists as thought and extension is contingent upon an absolute and self-existent substance, which is God, for there can only be one substance if God is defined by Definition VI.

What Spinoza is essentially arguing is that if there exists anything at all, there must exist a necessary being; proof four shows that necessary being to be God. Yet after concluding this, we need to address the question that this elaborate explanation is itself contingent upon, "Why do we need a reason for dependent beings at all?" The answer comes from Axiom III, Spinoza's *PSR*. His argument for God's existence is, consequently, necessary only if one accepts *PSR* and its requirement that any positive fact whatsoever, *e.g.*, that the universe exists, be explained by itself or another thing.

We have covered a decent amount of ground, but this alone should be considered precursory. In order to fully appreciate the point at which we have arrived, we will now shift our attention from Spinoza himself to the cosmological argument as a broader topic.

¹⁵ Garrett, "Spinoza's 'Ontological' Argument," *Op. Cit.*, 210-211.

II: The Contemporary Cosmological Argument Expounded¹⁶

The cosmological argument, in its crudest form, is reducible to an adage: “Which came first, the chicken or the egg?” That is, which came first: God, or nothing at all? And just as our adage assumes the need for a *PSR*, and therefore a need to explain which is contingent and which is not, so does the cosmological argument.

In seeking the universe’s origins, it seems intuitive to accept as impossible that something can come from nothing at all. If we consider our personal existence, the reason for our being is found within our biological parents; if we consider our existence further, we find it is further owed to our parent’s parents, and so on. Logically, given evolution, we can suppose that we must trace our ancestry back to the simplest organisms and, thus, the proto-Earth on which terrestrial life is dependent, the solar system, proto-Sun, Milky Way, etc., until we eventually reach the universe’s origin. Atheists and theists would share this interest with theologians and philosophers.

So, what does a cosmological argument actually look like? It is as follows:

- (1) Every being’s existence must be explained by another thing or by its own nature.
- (2) There must be an explanation for every being’s existence—*PSR_a*.
- (3) Thus, each being is explained necessarily by another being or by its own self.
- (4) Every being can only be dependent if an infinite series of dependent beings is all that has ever existed.
- (5) If all that has ever existed is an infinite series of dependent beings, then there would be no explanation for why there is such a series at all.
- (6) But there is an explanation for every positive fact—*PSR_b*.
- (7) Thus, not every being can be a dependent being.

¹⁶ I use the term “contemporary” to emphasize this subject’s continued relevance broadly across lectures, sermons, and amateur discussions.

- (8) Therefore, there exists, or once existed, at least one self-existent being.¹⁷

Where the *PSR* in Spinoza's Part I of the *Ethics* is a bit obscured, here it is obvious that, without *PSR*, the argument for God's existence fails. Where *PSR* becomes a problem for this argument's soundness can be traced back to Anselm's three cases for sufficient reasons to exist:

- (A) Explained by another,
- (B) Explained by nothing,
- (C) Or, explained by itself.¹⁸

The *PSR* only admits (A) and (C); (B) is simply presumed to be invalid and withdrawn from the conversation. Let us say that somebody would like to argue for (B). The proponent of the cosmological argument would object by asking the critic how they might explain the origin of any existence at all? In other words, if the cosmos and all therein can be traced back to the big bang, which is how all extension and thought first became expressed, then what or whom caused the big bang?

At this point, the critic may *have* to conclude as Bertrand Russell does during a radio debate with the Jesuit philosopher-theologian Fredrick Copleston: "It's illegitimate to even ask the question of the cause of the world."¹⁹ But, in order to do so, the critic must dismiss *PSR*, which, if it is permitted, leaves the critic with results that are impossible to comprehend (which will be addressed more in the following section).

So where does Spinoza stand with all this? Why *his* substance? Why his thoughts on this matter? Because, I propose, there is

¹⁷ Much of this argument has already been tacitly expressed when describing Spinoza's proofs for God and the types of arguments associated with Proposition XI; the simplicity of this formulation, though, is useful here.

¹⁸ [The "three cases" are famously codified as such by William L. Rowe, in his *Philosophy of Religion: An Introduction, Fourth Edition* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 2007), 11-12, 21-22, working from Anselm, *Monologium*, in *Saint Anselm: Basic Writings*, trans. Sidney N. Deane (La Salle, IL: Open Court Publishing Co., 1962), VI.—*Editors' Note*.]

¹⁹ Frederick Copleston and Bertrand Russell, "The Famous 1984 BBC Radio Debate on the Existence of God," BBC, Radio Third Programme (London, 28 January 1948, BBC recording number T7324W), Audio Recording.

a possibility that assuming Spinoza to have been arguing for substance monism *qua* God is a misunderstanding of some tacit hypothesis, one that has no need for a self-existent being.

There is an interesting reading, what I shall call the psychologically contextual reading, of Spinoza's *Ethics* as presented by Matthew Eshleman. It is as follows:

Put yourself in Spinoza's family's shoes. You've got some commitments to Judaism, and you've got a whole society that either wants to kill you, kick you out, or change your views. This also happens to be around the time that ... science is emerging, religion is fracturing, and you've just been kicked out of your country, and are in fear of your life and your sense of chosen identity. And then you read Descartes. So you have sympathies to science, and you'd prefer not to be killed or persecuted for talking about philosophy and your convictions.²⁰

Keeping in mind that Spinoza's life coincided with the Spanish Inquisition, such a reading sounds reasonable; Spinoza surely would have been hesitant to publish works contra the Roman Empire, *e.g.*, ideas like "God' is really a designator for a pantheistic concept.' If this supposition from the *Ethics*' context is to have merit, as I believe it does, then one could make the case that Spinoza is not arguing for the existence of *God*, but rather for the existence of God *qua* Nature—"Nature" (intentionally capitalized) being defined as the cosmos and all therein. This would make "God" unnecessary by virtue of Ockham's razor.

But the mechanics of such a system are not obvious and require some sorting out. In the previous section, we saw how God was proved to exist. However, interpreted through the psychologically contextual reading, Spinoza should be read as always having scare-quotes around the term "God." Everything that was discussed and proved for a Spinozistic God in the previous section does no more than place an unnecessary

²⁰ Matthew Eshleman, "Lecture on History of Western Philosophy: Modern Period," University of North Carolina at Wilmington, NC (March 2013).

title over whatever substance *does* necessarily exist, which we know is somehow related to thought and extension. The work is not done yet; if we are to satisfy *PSR*, as we must in order to remain consistent with Spinoza's Axioms I and III, we need to explain to what or whom extension and thought are attributed, if not God.

For clarity, let us initially lay out the only two seemingly possible arguments. First, if it is true that God—as in one self-existent entity from which all is derived—does not exist, then the only alternate explanation for existence that does not violate *PSR* is an infinite chain of dependent beings. This would make true the claim, “all there ever has been is dependent causation existing in infinitude.” It is dependency all the way down. If we now return to the concept of us, parents, grandparents, proto-Earth, Sun, and so on, *ad infinitum*, *without* stating that eventually we require a self-existing being at the end of the dependent chain, we can argue the proposition that God does not necessarily exist, even while using Spinoza's own framework. And, we can do so since the existence of Nature—*i.e.*, the infinite cosmos—is identical to Spinoza's definition of God (as shown above with Ockham's razor), which can account for everything in reality. Or, second, the only other seeming alternative is to dismiss *PSR* and conclude that there exists a being whose existence is by definition impossible to comprehend—an ineffable being.

Up until this point there was the proponent of the cosmological argument, who needed God at the end of the dependent chain to exist and explain Himself through Himself (our theist); there was the critic of the proponent who grabbed onto the psychologically contextual reading of *Ethics* and said that the infinite dependent chain was God, and called it Nature (our atheist); but now there exists a third, who does not accept either of the above views, and finds this entire discussion awry (our agnostic).

What's the split then between the atheist and the agnostic? It all has to do with *PSR*—the atheist wishes to fulfill *PSR*, while

the agnostic wishes to dismiss it. The agnostic wants to do so seeing as the view of God *qua* Nature as proved by the atheist's interpretation of Spinoza still begs the question, "What's the cause of the infinite series as a whole?" Spinoza's clever equation of God *qua* Nature, though sufficient to fulfill *PSRa* (that every being's existence is explained), cannot do the same for the series of infinite dependent beings as a whole, thus violating *PSRb* (that every positive fact has an explanation). So, it would appear that we have arrived at an impasse. Either one must accept or deny *PSR*. If one denies it, as I will partially argue is the wiser choice, then Spinoza's proofs for God, even God *qua* Nature, ultimately fail their own criterion of fulfilling *PSRb*.

All we have covered leads to this narrow way. To legitimize a position against those trying to satisfy *PSR*, we must establish the possibility and work out the implications of an ineffable being, namely, the infinite chain of dependent beings itself, as a whole, existing absent causal explanation with some absolute relation to extension and thought. This series as a whole will hereafter be referred to as the "Cosmos."²¹

III: Ineffability and *PSRb*

The *PSR* has already been thoroughly defined and used in our discussion within and without Spinoza; what we have not done with *PSR* is refute it. Even with an argument against it, this territory is a highly debated one for thinkers of every background, and my conclusion may be found lacking for those with opposing intuitions; though, I will attempt to use this very fact to my advantage.

First, we must draw a final distinction between *PSRa* and *PSRb*. And, to do so, we must conclude everything discussed about the cosmological argument with three possibilities:

²¹ From here out, the lower case "cosmos" classifies the universe within Spinoza's system of Nature as God; the capitalized "Cosmos" designates the inexplicable universe for which the agnostic argues.

- (1) God is a self-existent explanation for all contingent beings, explained by Himself.
- (2) The infinite chain of dependent beings, *i.e.*, the cosmos, explains all contingent beings.
- (3) The Cosmos exists as a *brute fact* of which an explanation is by definition contradictory.

PSRa is satisfied in all three; *PSRb*, however, is satisfied in none—and this is the great hurdle for the cosmological argument. It has already been shown that (1) and (2) fail for identical reasons: though both sufficiently explain the existence of ourselves, our parents, our earth, and the universe, neither can explain the explanation of why there exists a creator or infinite chain at all. With *PSRb* in play, (1) and (2) fail. Possibility (3)—in the same way that (2) operates, for at the chain level they are both infinite—fulfills *PSRa*, but not *PSRb*. This time, however, it is per (3)'s definition, so it does not fail like the other two do. The narrow way gets narrower.

But, for (3) to be right, *PSRb* has to be rejected, which is no simple task. One problem with *PSRb* arises when one asks: “why accept *PSRb* in the first place?” If there must be a reason for every positive fact, there must be a reason that *PSRb* exists and that it is true, if it indeed is. Yet, the requirement to fulfill such a need is found within itself, akin to believing scripture because scripture says scripture is true and ought to be believed. One may react to this critique by claiming that *PSR* is intuitive, and thus an absolute, *a priori* fact shared by all rational beings. The proposition here only attacks *PSRb* if *PSRb* is false, although many (including, as we have and will again see, Bertrand Russell) simply do not accept *PSR* in full. This debate is of utmost importance. However, by contrasting it with the antithesis of *PSRb*, the ineffable Cosmos, we can declare that the question of *PSRb*'s validity is impossible to deny or verify—which is precisely what the agnostic wants.

Let us pretend that Spinoza's ghost tells the American Philosophical Association to disregard the foundations they

laid for *PSRb*, but not for *PSRa*.²² If this were the case, there would no longer be a required explanation for anything other than dependent beings. Possibilities (1) and (2) err regardless of this omission because God and the dependent chain still require explanations for *their beings* as a whole; possibility (3) is again not the same case. If *PSRb* is ignored, the only possible way to also fulfill *PSRa* is through (3), the Cosmos existing ineffably and expressing itself in relation to mind and matter perhaps throughout at least one expanding-collapsing universe.

The impasse earlier mentioned is now blatant: *PSRb*'s validity and the Cosmos are both unable to be argued for after this point, the participants fall back into their intuitive camps, usually right where they started. If *PSRb* is true, it would appear to be a *brute fact*; we do not have to debate *PSRb* unless one accept *PSRb*. Likewise, the Cosmos is defined as a *brute fact* that cannot possibly be debated within *PSRb*'s acceptance. The paradox is put forth as follows: "how do you argue for or against [*PSRb*], and how do you argue for or against the existence of something that's theoretically impossible to explain?"²³ This is where the debate has stalled.

Michael Della Rocca comments about this stumbling block: "It seems as though for the last 271 years a great deal of the best efforts of the best philosophers have been devoted to an assault on *PSR*."²⁴ This statement amplifies my own argumentative inadequacies, for I know I do not have the capacity to refute *PSRb* objectively, and, it appears, I am in good company. That for nearly three centuries the issue of explaining or not-explaining every positive fact has not been resolved is telling of a possible absurdity within *PSRb*. It is in accord with this train of thought that I conclude *PSRb* is not worth serious consideration. I submit that to fulfill *PSRb* is to enter territory in which the human mind has no purchase.

²² *PSRa* does seem intuitive: as easily explicable dependent beings, we want to view the universe similarly. If *PSRa* is intuitive, then it has a place in a version of the cosmological argument: it *is* Spinoza's argument for God *qua* Nature.

²³ Eshleman, "Lecture on History of Western Philosophy," *Op. Cit.*.

²⁴ Michael Della Rocca, "PSR," *Philosopher's Imprint* 10, 7 (2010): 2.

To put a final touch on the inability of humans to seriously inquire about the origins of the universe's reason for existing: it was above shown that, while the *PSR* was being seriously considered, (1), (2), and (3), were unable to provide a sufficient answer when asking "who or what caused the big bang?" Therefore any deliberation into this question, while employing *PSRb*, is rendered unintelligible. But, if something is beyond the human mind, would it not then be a negative fact? That Alexander the Great did not use radio, Tiger tanks, or the M-16 rifle are not positive facts, and thus do not require explanations, which is to say they do not require the *need* for an explanation. Our inability to fully explain the universe and its origins is a negative fact, and so forgoes a need to be reasoned—one more job in which *PSRb* has no part.

Conclusion

In the radio debate previously mentioned, Copleston states that an adequate explanation must be a total explanation, "to which nothing further can be added."²⁵ He is, as most Jesuits, committed to God as his total explanation. Russell does not take the side of the atheist in this debate; rather, he takes the side of the agnostic. Had Russell and Copleston both been dedicated to one side of the issue of explaining any positive fact whatsoever, I believe they would have ended in a circular stalemate, for it is impossible for the theist's and atheist's positions to be conjuncts, they must be disjuncts. In other words, they would both agree that *PSRb* is fulfilled by their self-existent being that has and will always exist, *i.e.*, the cosmos or God. Their positions begin to look eerily similar after the agnostic has raised her voice.

Yet, this does not happen during the radio debate, because Russell does not claim to know how to give a total explanation, and cannot proceed with *PSRb* still dictating the debate. In response to Copleston, Russell says, "I can only say you're

²⁵ Copleston and Russell, "The Famous 1984 BBC Radio Debate on the Existence of God," *Op. Cit.*.

looking for something which can't be got, and which one ought not expect to get."²⁶ Copleston forms a reply deserving of attention: "To say that one has not found it is one thing, to say that one should not look for it seems to me rather dogmatic."²⁷ And this point is quite appreciable; it is entirely plausible that everything in existence has a reason for that existence, as *PSRb* states is the case. But, it is also just as plausible to claim, as we have seen, that to give a reason for every positive fact whatsoever may be an absurd impossibility. Thus, the thinker must accept *PSRb* and think within its confines, or entirely abandon the need for *PSRb* using reasons similar to Russell's.

Much to the dismay of curious thinkers everywhere, the end of the Russell-Copleston debate ends as this:

Copleston: Your general opinion, then, Lord Russell, is that it's illegitimate even to ask the question of the cause of the World?

Russell: Yes, that's my position.

Copleston: Well, if it's a question that for you has no meaning, it's of course very difficult to discuss it, isn't it.

Russell: Yes, it is very difficult. What do you say—shall we pass on to some other issue?²⁸

I do not think that there is any argument that can make the atheist adopt the theist's position, or vice versa, and that this sort of intellectual conflict breeds only a stronger hold of one's beginning intuition. Further, I do not believe there to be any argument that can convince an agnostic of any explanatory theory of the universe. This opaqueness tells me that thinkers would do themselves good to not abandon the cosmological argument or *PSR*, but to know that if they wish to actually argue the cosmological argument and *PSR*, then they should not be surprised when, after a long philosophical day, things end much like the above debate: simply having to move on.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

The theist at the bar turns to his theist friends and asks, “those two are crazy, right?” The atheist does the exact same. The agnostic has had some fun, but really would wish that they could “pass on to some other issue,” one in which argumentation can bridge the gap of opposing intuitions.

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WILLIAM WILSON

**A Case for Physicalism about
Consciousness: Can Evolution
by Natural Selection
Adequately Explain the
Emergence of Mind?**

ABSTRACT: The mind-body problem has been the most essential problem in the philosophy of mind, and it still haunts scientists and philosophers alike today. The main concern with the mind-body problem is that of consciousness, which traditionally was not identified with a concrete function or relatability with the brain. This trend has been changed with recent developments in neuroscience. In this paper, I will to argue that the physicalist interpretation of consciousness has the most explanatory power, and is the most able to answer the “hard” and “soft” problems of consciousness. My argument is as follows: if evolution and naturalism held together make a coherent pair, and consciousness can be shown to have a function, and to have neural correlates to said functions, then these functions are adaptable. If these functions are adaptable, and the subjective phenomenological experience of being consciousness can be explained through physical processes, then evolution is adequate in explaining the emergence of mind in the mammalian brain.

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I. Introduction

There is no greater problem associated with the philosophy of mind than that of consciousness. It is present throughout any discussion of the mind-body problem, of mental content, or even instances of examining the intentionality of mental states. For centuries, and perhaps rightfully so, philosophy alone tackled this problem; however, as science has advanced, and the common view of the “black box” form of the brain and consciousness has been laid to rest, scientists have become more and more involved in the questions of what is consciousness and what are its functions. Consciousness is not *only* a scientific question at this point—as some have claimed, namely Francis Crick—but rather a question that must be answered by the combined forces of philosophy and science.¹ Indeed, it is the purpose of this paper to attempt to bring the philosophical and the scientific together to answer some of the classical questions about the mind and body. Central to this work is the question: is consciousness reducible to physical properties, and if so, could these physical properties be the result of evolutionary processes?

Evolution by natural selection is a central theme herein, and it is introduced not as a theory, but more of an assumption of truth; this is to say that my goal is not to prove the existence of evolution by natural selection, as the scientific community has done enough work to establish its credibility. However, argumentation for evolution’s ability to account for the physical properties of consciousness and its functions will play an immense part in the overall coherency of this thesis. In a word, my paper is a defense of physicalism or naturalism, and I will draw upon many different sources ranging from neuroscience to human evolutionary theory to provide a sufficient case for my stated position. My argument will follow as such: (assumption) evolution by natural selection is an actual force in the world; (1) consciousness has a function that originates from and affects material substances, such as our minds; (2) there

¹ Cf., Francis Crick and Christof Koch, “Towards a Neurobiological Theory of Consciousness,” *Seminars in the Neurosciences* 2 (1990): 263.

are neural correlates to consciousness in our minds and these correlates can help explain subjective phenomenal experience; (3) and finally, physicalism is a coherent concept to adhere to, therefore, evolution can explain the emergence of mind.

II. What is the Theory of Evolution by Natural Selection?

The general consensus of scientists today is that natural selection is an important factor in the process of evolution. Briefly, natural selection is one the basic apparatuses of evolution that involves the differentiation of specific traits in a population in accordance with their reproduction and survivability. This is to say that natural selection includes three fundamental aspects: (1) variation of traits among organisms in a reproducing population; (2) which often must be heritable; (3) and many times connected to the population's ability to survive and reproduce.² These three conditions are both necessary and sufficient conditions for the process of natural selection to take place; wherever you have an organism or population undergo these three main conditions, they can be said to evolve. Nevertheless, the importance of the selection process in populations is the accumulation and preservation of minor advantageous genetic mutations for that given population. Under the theory of selection, these variations directly correspond and affect the survivability and reproduction ability of the population; therefore, the selectability of the mutations is of the utmost importance, as most mutations are maladaptive.

The avenue in which scientists explain and demonstrate natural selection in populations is through genetics. Here is an example of such in terms of pollinating plants: suppose a plant population is full of plants that have one gene for color, of which there is one dominant (D) and one recessive (d) allele. The dominant allele codes for blue colored flowers, whereas

² Richard Lewontin, "The Units of Selection," *The Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* (1970): 1-18.

the recessive allele codes for red colored flowers. Those plants with the DD genotype will produce blue flowers, those with Dd will produce orange flowers, and those with dd will produce red colored flowers. Whichever plant population within the entire population pollinates more often and acquires more opportunities to do so, will become more common throughout the entire population. According to natural selection, the population will begin to change its genotypic frequency with this change in the individual plants when together; therefore, natural selection begins with mutations in the genotypes of organisms, which leads to changes in phenotypes, and, in turn, produces a selection on mutated genotypes in populations.

As with breeders who try to produce changes in a certain species of animal by selectively breeding certain individual organisms, and thus eliminating undesirable traits over time, natural selection is a process of elimination of “inferior” or less adaptable species. This feat is not accomplished in small periods of time, but through a gradual change over generations of the population. Essential to this gradual change is an apparatus of natural selection: sexual selection. The relationship between sexual selection and natural selection can be identified in regards to the reproduction of a population, but, as has been noted recently in modern evolutionary analysis, the relationship of these two processes and the resulting traits that have led to increased or decreased survivability is less clear. For example, the giraffe was first hypothesized to have an elongated neck because it was necessary to reach abundant food for survival; the long-necked populations survived, hence, modern day giraffes have elongated necks. Despite the somewhat tautological reasoning, this theory held until the concept of sexual selection in populations became more substantiated. Modern evolutionary biologists seem to believe that the best answer to the giraffe question, and perhaps many more related ones, is a combination of both trait usability and sexual selection within the populations.³ Regardless of the

³ Malte Andersson and Leigh W. Simmons, “Sexual Selection and Mate Choice,” *Trends in Ecology and Evolution* 21, 6 (2006): 298-299.

case, any organism that expends so much energy to use and maintain such an appendage must need it in some fashion that relates to their survival and reproduction.

III. What is Consciousness?

My argument is that consciousness is a physical phenomenon and can be explained through physical means. The “means” of this physical explanation come in the form of neural correlates of consciousness. In order to begin a discussion on whether there are neural correlates of consciousness, we must first define what we mean by “neural correlates to consciousness” (NCC). Unpacking this phrase, it becomes clear that what we mean is that a specific *system* of activity in the brain, being a collection of sub-activities, corresponds *directly* to a state of consciousness within the brain.⁴ Therefore, what we need to clarify is what a “state of consciousness is” and what makes up sufficient reasoning in asserting the directness of a correlation. Here we must keep track of two distinctions: one reflecting the difference between the states of consciousness that we are aware of, and ones that we are not; and the other reflecting the state of being consciousness itself, as *different* states of being conscious of *x*. What I am primarily concerned to unravel is a set of minimal NCC that can explain the relation of a specific conscious experience to a particular mental content. To accomplish this I will briefly introduce Francis Crick and Kristof Koch’s theory of NCC’s, and then analyze and discuss their conclusions, while also providing some of my own.

First and foremost, we must define what is a *state* of consciousness. There seems to be wide disagreements about the particulars of consciousness states, but for the purpose of the present discussion, we will assume there are three types: (1) active consciousness (being aware of being aware); (2) inactive consciousness (consciously unaware, *e.g.* motor functions); (3)

⁴ The key word here is “directly;” a direct correlation between mental states and neural activity needs to be established in a way that there cannot be much doubt in the relationship. An example of a direct correlation in the brain can be seen in the reticular activating system and sleep-wake transition states.

and qualitative consciousness (the feeling of being consciousness). All of these are states of consciousness, and most, if not all of them, are interrelated and run parallel to one another. It is important, when talking about NCC's, to identify *which* states of consciousness particular systems of neurons are being correlated to; in other words, there may be different neural correlations to different states of consciousness. Because all three states are still part of the conscious experience, it would seem that the NCC's would still apply to all of them; it just needs to be clarified to what extent these systems of neurons correlate to the specific states.

A possible site of neural correlations to consciousness may be seen in the visual awareness system, where a function of consciousness could be the process of turning visual stimuli into the best feedback of current information available for the brain to “digest;” or, in other words, to produce a coherent sensory picture of events, despite the fact that different cortical areas respond to different features.⁵ Crick and Koch outlined a scientific framework of consciousness in which any time there is a set of information displayed in NCC's, it will be conversely displayed in consciousness. Furthermore, they advocate for a structural level of specific circuits and specific classes of NCC's that relate to consciousness, rather than an emergent feedback circuit of activity bands; namely, these circuits are primarily located in the visual awareness system.⁶ Central to their theory of consciousness is the claim that, when someone talks about being conscious, we must assume that there is something about which he or she is conscious—something that stands in need of explanation. Their exploration into the visual awareness system of the brain to identify NCC's and explain consciousness follows from this basic assumption.

Interestingly, Crick and Koch identify different parts of the brain that they believe to be inactive during conscious

⁵ Crick and Koch, “Towards a Neurobiological Theory of Consciousness,” *Op. Cit.*, 267.

⁶ Francis Crick and Christof Koch, “Consciousness and Neuroscience,” *Cerebral Cortex* 8, 2 (1998): 98-99.

experience. An example of some of these can be seen in many of the structures in the midbrain or hindbrain, with the exception of the basal ganglia and the claustrum, which they include in a separate group called the cortical system. In this paper, I make the basic assumption that in order for NCC's to be sufficiently identified, they must be shown to have systematic activity in the first place. Crick and Koch also make this assumption, but they place emphasis on the cortical system, and theorize that there could be activity present in a possible subset of neurons, which could still be considered NCC's.⁷ They theorize that neurons fire in temporal conjunction with one another, even in different sections of the cortical system, and this phenomena can be named *binding*. Furthermore, they conclude that important functions are occurring in the cortical system that may relate to consciousness, and they arise from the *oscillation of neurons*, which is a term that can take the place of binding. With this binding or oscillating of neurons there appears to be a possible function of consciousness according to Crick and Koch: for the oscillating neurons to condense and combine information into a coherent percept, thus feeding underlying computational systems in the brain. They deem it fit to name this type of consciousness "working awareness."⁸

I want to argue that Crick and Koch are essentially correct in concluding that there are NCC's present in the visual awareness system, but I want to refine their theory by arguing that there are two different types of NCC's: very simply, pre-NCC's and post-NCC's. Here, pre- and post- are set to identify separate types of NCC's; ones in which there exist neural activity that organizes information used in consciousness experience, but is not part of the actual conscious state (pre-), and ones in which there exists neural activity that is consistent with being a consequence of conscious experience (post-). There is probably no single experimental technique within today's neuroscience research that could yield a clear

⁷ Crick and Koch, "Towards a Neurobiological Theory of Consciousness," *Op. Cit.*, 263-266.
⁸ *Ibid.*, 272.

distinction between the proposed different NCC's; nevertheless, I will earnestly attempt to make the messy relationship between NCC's and consciousness a little clearer.⁹

My argument is simple and follows a basic track of reasoning. Recent developments in neuroscience have (tentatively) concluded that there are stages to neural activity in oscillation circuits, most notably in the cortical system and temporal lobes, and that these stages reflect a type of pre-determined selection bias against incoming and stored information.¹⁰ What is important about this discovery is that it could possibly connect neural activity to the conscious phenomena of "attention."¹¹ What is further significant about this development is that it provides a basis for my first premise: that there are separate "moments" of oscillatory neural activity in the brain, that come to compose NCC's and sift through newly acquired information in order to develop a discrimination feedback circuit that allows the brain to make quicker and more accurate decisions. These moments that precede conscious experience are the aforementioned pre-NCC's. The pre-NCC moments are important because they establish a framework whereby the brain and the oscillatory process of producing NCC's can become aware of pertinent information about the world, without having to do additional work to sift through the basic stimuli of the visual awareness system. I argue that this state could also be counted as the spontaneous excitability of neurons before oscillation occurs. Why does this movement of neurons have to be considered separate from post-NCC's? Because the movements at this point contribute to the perception process but they alone are not sufficient for generating or maintaining conscious experience of said perception. This is because the pre-NCC's are vital in identifying targets of perceptions that are in consciousness, but are not part of the conscious experience itself.

⁹ Without a thoroughly schooled background in neuroscience, my project is better categorized as speculative than empirical.

¹⁰ H. van Dijk, J. M. Schoffelen, R. Oostenveld, O. Jensen, "Prestimulus Oscillatory Activity in the Alpha Band Predicts Visual Discrimination Ability," *The Journal of Neuroscience* 28 (2008): 1816-1820.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

My second premise is as follows: if conscious perception enables certain and specific functions which otherwise would not occur in unconscious states, then it follows that said functions are unique to conscious states, and these functions have internal processes of their own. These processes must be separate from the conscious state of perception, since the functions to which the processes belong are by products of the activity of perception. Thus, the neural activities in such processes, which do not quite correlate to a state of consciousness but are nevertheless related to one, are post-NCC's. An example of a possible post-NCC can be seen in the case of the storage of long-term memory. Integration of cognitive processes and differentiation of conscious information sustainability are conscious states of information processing with NCC's, if they exist, having some activity correspond to these conscious activities.¹² Advanced (pre-) or secondary (post-) NCC's are both involved in these processes. The pre NCC's would be involved in activities such as discrimination of incoming stimuli information, which builds to the "moment" any perception state of consciousness. This is where the NCC's that are directly correlated to consciousness would most likely be found. After this, the information process of storing perception stimuli in the hippocampus in the form of long-term memory could be the role of post-NCC's. Returning to the implication of the "visual discrimination study," it might be possible to identify NCC's in the form of brain arousal; this is to say that there are indications that consciousness is intimately related to the reticular activating system's (RAS) ability to release valuable neurotransmitters such as norepinephrine and serotonin.¹³ These neurotransmitters help control the excitability and activity of the thalamus and forebrain, and further, general brain arousal. The significance of this can be seen in cases of injuries to the RAS and eventual coma; when excitability is recovered in the thalamus and

¹² A. K. Seth, "Functions of Consciousness," in *Encyclopedia of Consciousness, Vol. 1*, ed. W. P. Banks (Philadelphia: Elsevier Press, 2009), 289-291.

¹³ The reticular activating system's (RAS) function is that of regulating arousal and sleep-wake transitions; it is sometimes known as the extrathalamic control modulatory system.

forebrain, the injured person is able to regain consciousness once more.¹⁴

If consciousness emerged through evolutionary processes of natural selection then it was either selected because of adaptive features, or appears in the lineage as a byproduct of some other adaptive features. My view is that consciousness is indeed itself an adaptive feature and that it plays some sort of crucial functional role in the evolution of the mammalian brain. Intuitively it seems the most important aspect of consciousness has to be the ability to perceive and organize sensory qualities. The sensory perception powers of the brain are quite impressive; the brain gives us an account of what is happening in the outside world, and also gives us a *feeling* of what is happening to ourselves in the process.¹⁵ What the brain offers up to organisms is to help distinguish sensations and perceptions. Both of these take some kind of sensory stimuli as their starting point but react to these stimuli in different ways. Sensation is simply a presentation of stimuli; conversely, perception is a more complicated story because it combines a re-presentation of sensation with contextual inferences, emotional feelings, and relations to previously stored memory. What consciousness does is to provide a “now-ness, me-ness” to the sensory and perception properties being taken in.¹⁶ Therefore, consciousness is essential for an organism’s ability to make sense of the world. By “sense,” here, I mean a mostly accurate representation of how the world appears to be over some other way it might have been.

There are still more important functions of consciousness that can be seen in early hominids and *Homo sapiens*. One such function is the ability of organisms with consciousness to plan and execute future activities in their mind, therefore giving them an advantage over those organisms that have a simple stimulus and response variety of perception and interaction.

¹⁴ Christof Koch, *The Quest for Consciousness: A Neurobiological Approach* (Denver: Robert and Company, 2004), 89-95.

¹⁵ Nicholas Humphrey, *A History of Mind: Evolution and the Birth of Consciousness* (New York: Copernicus Publishing, 1992), 127-128.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 72.

Certainly the early humans possessed this advantageous function of consciousness, if even in a very rudimentary form, and this helped them, especially *Homo sapiens*, survive and reproduce. This kind of conscious function can also be seen in some forms in other animals, even if it is normally seen in the form of the maintenance of internal states of stimuli and perception. Examples of this can be seen in the likes of African gray parrots and elephants, both of which have the ability to use tools and to differentiate between separate stimuli in order to better identify situations.¹⁷ These kinds of functions of consciousness provide a great advantage for these specific animals or early humans to survive through times of danger, famine, and great environmental change. Furthermore, there is evidence showing that animals with levels of cognitive ability similar to elephants possess the ability to remember complex past events such as the death of a family member or important member of the group.¹⁸ I argue that being cognizant of your own death is a strong sign of self-consciousness because death is a future event that cannot be quantified without relating it yourself. An organism with a feel for its own mortality beyond reactionary threats to danger seems to be better equipped to steer away from anticipated dangers.

The Darwinian process of natural selection is very adept at taking random variations and turning them into stable configurations. What I mean by this is to say that natural selection takes random mutation and creates variations within populations by “selecting” specific traits that will reproduce more effectively in individuals than other ones. The brain also has this ability, mostly due to the power of consciousness. For example, it is consciousness that allows someone to take, say a horse and eagle, and produce the imaginary form of a unicorn. This ability is not only useful to organisms because of its

¹⁷ Goodman, M., Sterner, K., Islam, M., Uddin, M, *et al.*, “Phylogenomic Analyses Reveal Convergent Patterns of Adaptive Evolution in Elephant and Human Ancestries,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 106 (2009): 20824–29.

¹⁸ Christopher R. DeFusco, *Animal Consciousness: Grounds for Ethical Treatment of Animals* (Colorado: Xlibris Publishing, 2005), 131–133.

creative and imaginative forces, but it may say something about how the inner workings of our brain actually proceed. As William Calvin suggests, the brain is like a small “Darwin machine” in itself, because it selects those processes that are most useful and advantageous for its ability to function as a whole.¹⁹ Deeming the brain such a machine, Calvin believes that the action potentials of neurons act like software within the brain’s network, and this combination of firing patterns creates a sort of “mosaic” of the mind. This mosaic product of the mind is what Calvin refers to as consciousness and intelligence.²⁰ What I believe Calvin is able to admirably show is that the brain is modeled after the process of natural selection itself, making it a mirror image of the basics of life on earth: either survive and reproduce, or perish.

IV. Arguments against Naturalism

Up to this point, my argument has attempted to demonstrate that natural selection is an essential component (albeit not the only component) of the evolutionary process, and that consciousness can be said to be connected to natural selection, if neural correlates of consciousness (NCC) are shown to be a viable method of mental activity and organization. I concluded that if there are NCC’s and consciousness is indeed explainable by only physicalist frameworks, then consciousness must be shown to have adaptable features. Therefore, if all of these hold to be true, naturalism is the most warranted framework of thinking about consciousness. One of the biggest obstacles for naturalism and a physicalist interpretation of consciousness is Alvin Plantinga’s evolutionary argument against naturalism, which attempts to show that naturalism is inherently self-defeating.

Plantinga’s “evolutionary argument against naturalism” (EAAN) has undergone significant modifications since its initial 1993 publication in *Warrant and Proper Function*.

¹⁹ William H. Calvin, “The Brain as a Darwin Machine,” *Nature* 330 (1987): 33-35.

²⁰ Calvin, *The Cerebral Code* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 175-180.

Regardless of these modifications, the general outlines of the argument are easy to identify: if we base the model of the brain and its consciousness, as well as the ideas and beliefs that it produces, on the shoulders of evolutionary processes, then we must admit that our beliefs and ideas may not be accurate or reliable, because evolution does not care about the truth value of a belief, but about its survivability. Thus, beliefs that arise from the evolutionary process do not necessarily have any isomorphic connection to reality.²¹ The key terms in his argument can be symbolized as follows: P, being the *probability* of cognitive faculties; R, being the *reliability* of our cognitive faculties; N, being *naturalism*; and E, being *evolution*—although, some clarification of Plantinga’s argument is needed before proceeding. First of all, “naturalism,” for Plantinga, means something more than explanations appealing only to physical forces operating in the world; it implies that there are no supernatural beings possible in the conception, or anything resembling the idea of a God or divine being. Secondly, Plantinga defines “evolution” as including the view that humans have come about through a process of selecting for traits relevant to fitness, including behaviors.²² “Reliability” is conceived as the prospect that for any cognitive faculty proposed to be aimed at truth, the majority of its deliverances are in fact true and accurate.²³ As mentioned before, the argument turns on the premise that evolution selects behavior on the basis of adaptability, but it is not clear how this corresponds to the content of the beliefs involved in such behaviors.

I will now sketch his argument. P₁, P₂, etc. represent the premises of the argument, and C represents the conclusion:

P₁. P [(R & (N & E))] is low, because evolution does not account for functionality of cognitive faculties.²⁴

²¹ Alvin Plantinga and Michael Tooley, *Knowledge of God* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), 20-22.

²² Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 232-237.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ The formula symbolizes the probability of our having reliable cognitive faculties given naturalism and evolution by natural selection to be low.

- P2. If P_I is true, then R can be called into question.
- P3. If R is low, then anyone has a defeater for any belief that is supposedly produced by reliable cognitive faculties.
- C. Therefore, R, N, and E are self-defeating and cannot be rationally held.²⁵

The most important aspect of Plantinga's argument is the relationship between behaviors and beliefs in organisms. Without a correlation being developed between the two, the plausibility of P_I seems to be quite low, because there would be no way to establish a connection between reliability of cognitive functions and naturalism without behaviors and beliefs being interrelated. Plantinga concedes this, and in order to provide a stronger basis for his premises, he provides an "exhaustive" list of the ways in which behavior can relate to belief in naturalism. He identifies four such ways: epiphenomenalism, the position that behavior is not caused by beliefs in any manner; semantic epiphenomenalism, the position that beliefs are related to behaviors in what he calls "syntax" (e.g. neurophysiological properties), but not their "semantics" (e.g. truth-functional value); beliefs could be related with behavior in semantics and syntax, but are maladaptive; and finally, beliefs could be related with behavior in semantics and syntax, but are adaptive.

What Plantinga attempts to do with these four categories is establish that the combination of them makes P_I (P [(R & (N & E))]) more concrete in its low probability. He attempts to show this by explaining that the first category, epiphenomenalism, correlates to the lowness of P_I because it already establishes the lack of a relation between behaviors and beliefs. The second category, semantic epiphenomenalism, is unlikely because the truth value of the beliefs does not correlate to actual behaviors, which means that category four may be more probable, because the lack of truth value in the belief could produce maladaptive behaviors in the evolutionary spectrum. The last premise seems to be intuitively true, taken

²⁵ Plantinga and Tooley, *Knowledge of God, Op. Cit.*, 44-45.

the assumption of natural selection, because it provides an explanation of the relation between beliefs and behaviors. Plantinga argues against this last category by saying that there *could* be many belief-behavior combinations that are adaptive, yet have a false belief in the pair. Therefore, P_I still remains exceedingly low, and irrational to hold to. Moreover, Plantinga comes to the further conclusion that because naturalism is self-defeating, demonstrated through the EEAN, it follows that the prospect of divine guidance through the evolutionary process seems more plausible, because this would be the best answer to our apparent ability to reason and know anything through rational faculties.

Plantinga provides a narrative example of his argument with this story: suppose Paul, an early hominid, very much likes the idea of being eaten by a tiger. So, he runs away from any tiger that he sees, because he feels that it is unlikely the tiger he is seeing will eat him if he remains stationary. This will provide Paul with behaviors useful for his survival, but the behaviors are based on false beliefs. Similarly, let us assume that Paul thinks tigers are very cuddly, and desires to pet them anytime he sees them, but thinks the best way to do this is to run away. Clearly, Plantinga surmises, there is any number of belief-desire combination systems that can fit a given bit of behavior.²⁶ This is simply a thought experiment, but it is effective in its manner of demonstrating that the importance of the belief-behavior pairing is essential for the naturalist who contends that evolution by natural selection correctly accounts for human rationality.

V. The EEAN Deconstructed

What can be said about Plantinga's argument? It is clear that Plantinga has produced a very robust argument against naturalism. Indeed, if the premises in the argument prove to be true, and the argument form is valid, then the premises will

²⁶ Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 225-226.

necessitate the conclusion. This makes his argument valid, and if true, a necessary conclusion on the relationship of belief and behavior within the evolutionary process. However, there have been many objections laid against the EEAN, and almost all of them have to deal with the correctness of the premises. My argument will focus on the first premise, as I will attempt to call into question the veracity of the statement that $(P [(R \& (N \& E)])$ is low. I hope to accomplish this by showing that there are many varieties of beliefs that could relate to P_1 , and further, that there is a problem with Plantinga's analysis of the belief-behavior relationship within the process of evolution by natural selection.

Is the statement, "the probability of accurate cognitive faculties implying (or given) reliable faculties, naturalism, and evolution by natural selection is low," warranted or not? Certainly, it is a legitimate claim in the system of his argument, in that if it proves to be true, along with the other premises, it necessitates the conclusion. However, is it warranted or otherwise cogent? I argue that it does not seem to be conceptually valid based on several objections. First of all, it is dubious to claim that the only purpose of a possible neurophysiological process in the brain is to produce behaviors that induce survival, and not truth-functional value; indeed, it is reasonable to believe that there *could* be a subset system of the brain's network that was concerned primarily with the production of true beliefs in service to the goal of survivability for the organism. It is here that I take issue with Plantinga and his early hominid named Paul. Paul is conceived to have cognitive faculties that produce false beliefs, but invariably produce behaviors that induce survivability. Plantinga does not really address where these behaviors come from, but just that it is conceivable to hold this kind of scenario as possible. I want to make the argument that it seems even less likely than the possibility of naturalism, evolution, and reliable cognitive faculties being true at the same time.

For instance, where does Paul's survival behavior originate if not from reliable cognitive faculties? I may concede that

perhaps Paul, or hominids similar to Paul, are able to evade danger on a number of occasions because of such a false belief, but I want to turn Plantinga's premises on themselves by saying that the probability of such an organism surviving and reproducing with such a dangerous set of false beliefs is inscrutable, and extremely unlikely at best. So, if we do in fact concede that Paul does not understand the reason why he should run away from the tiger in the first place, that is, he does not realize that he might be the tiger's next meal, how does Paul develop survival strategies without a reliable set of cognitive faculties? Here, I feel Plantinga does not take into account the adaptive process of natural selection; there is simply no circumstance in which dangerous false beliefs would produce behavior that was adaptable over long periods of time. Surely, organisms with more reliable cognitive faculties, or different types of faculties, would survive, and the organisms similar to Paul would not be so lucky. Because natural selection takes place over such great expanses of time, the conceptual conceivability of P₁ seems to be fairly weak, or at least weak enough to call its plausibility into question.

A different approach to critiquing the EEAN is to doubt the epistemological reasoning behind Plantinga's claims that false beliefs relate to behavior, by questioning the feasibility of false beliefs surviving in the evolutionary system. This is to question the actual impact that beliefs play when discussing adaptive behaviors. Here I will make a distinction between types of beliefs: basic beliefs and reflective beliefs. Basic beliefs are beliefs about properties of the external world only; they can only be explained insofar as they explain *something* about the world. Reflective beliefs are beliefs that one can have in reflection on one's own basic beliefs about the world; these beliefs arise when talking about beliefs about beliefs. For example, let's say Paul has the belief that if he rolls a rock down a hill, it will roll all the way down, gaining speed as it goes. Perhaps Paul holds this view because he posits that animal spirits are helping roll the rock down the hill rather than the law of inertia, and that the more animal spirits are involved, the faster it goes; therefore, for Paul the rock rolls

down the hill, which is a true belief, but his basis for the true belief is in actuality a false belief. Nevertheless, Paul knows to stay away from falling rocks, and this helps him develop survival abilities.

Paul cannot know that his basic belief is rooted in something false without having a reflective belief about his basic belief. It is hard to imagine, however, Paul being able to produce a reflective state on his beliefs, without having a set of reliable cognitive faculties. Indeed, Paul would have to possess a fairly advanced conscious state in order to produce reflective beliefs. In this example, the fact that Paul's belief is false is not significant, because believing one's beliefs are true cannot occur without one having reflective beliefs. Basic beliefs cannot be believed to be true or false then; they can only be adaptive or non-adaptive. Truth did not exist on this planet until consciousness had become developed; therefore, having the belief that "a tree is a monster" could very well be the same as "the tree is big." Behavior then is intimately tied to the adaptability of a basic belief, which has no content present worthy of being falsified or not. When reflective beliefs are provided with greater cognitive powers, the truth functional value of beliefs becomes important, but, by this point, the reliability of cognitive faculties has already been established through the evolutionary process. Evolution can only account for the adaptability or inadaptability of basic beliefs, and it is upon these basic beliefs that organisms evolve to include reflective beliefs. Therefore, evolution can account for true and false beliefs, and still provides a better explanation of reliable cognitive faculties than anything else.

VI. Naturalism Triumphant

There are some other ways in which the EEAN can be critiqued. For instance, we could discuss the possibility of there being instances in the evolutionary process where in possessing false beliefs would be adaptable. One can see this in the propensity of mammals, including humans, to believe themselves to be stronger and more powerful than they

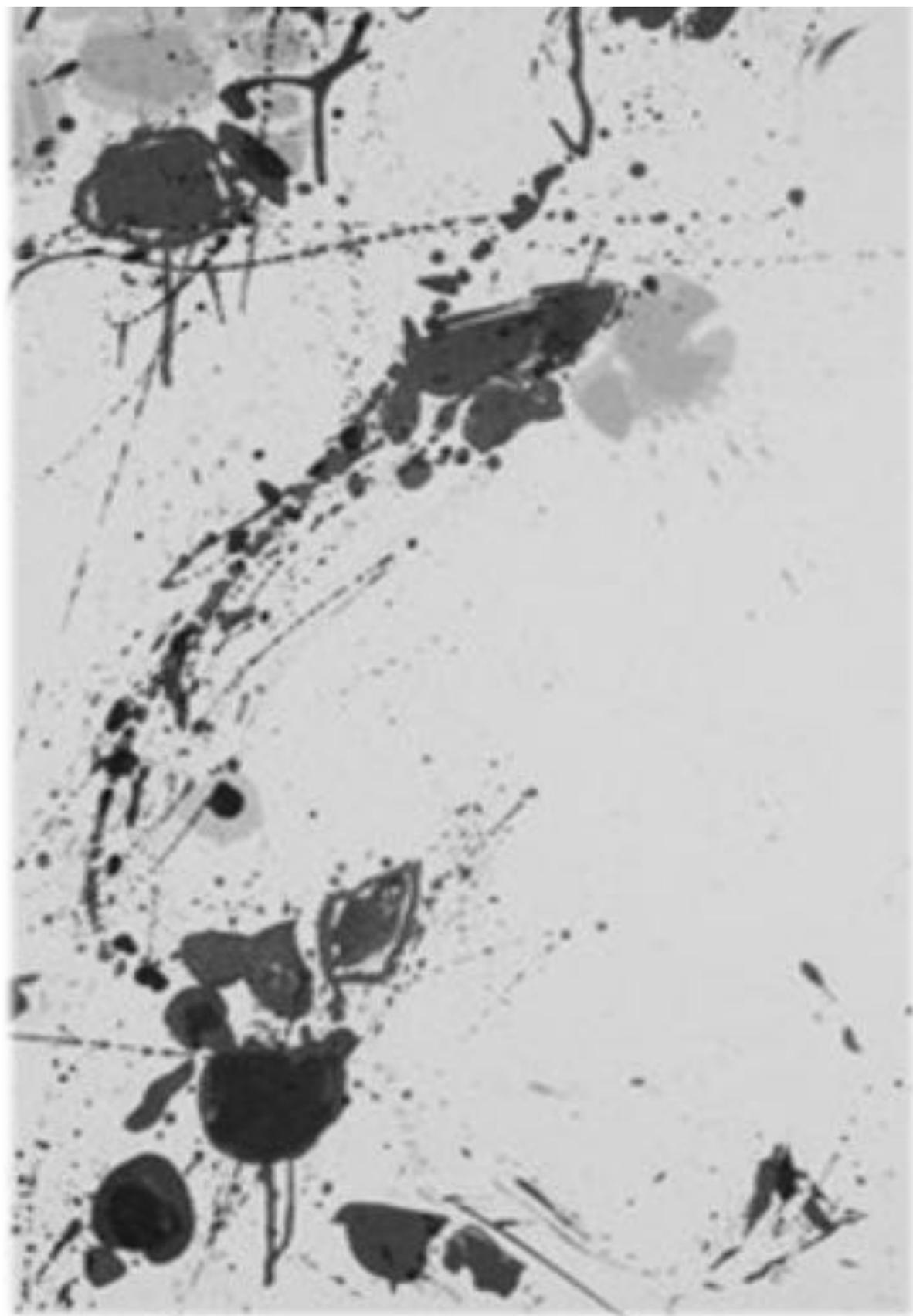
actually are in order to prepare for a fight or scare away a predator. Hormones flood the sympathetic nervous system, especially from the adrenal medulla, in the reaction to harmful or perceived harmful stimuli that is known as the fight or flight response. In this way, a false belief is present, but it does not necessitate the unreliability of the organism's cognitive faculties. Michael Ruse, philosopher of science, argues in this same vein by saying that Plantinga tries to establish an antagonism between the world as we know it and the world as it might be knowable in some other way. What Ruse concludes is that if indeed our cognitive faculties are unreliable and this world is but a mere illusion, then there can be no meaningful talk of it being an illusion, since we have no reliable touchstones of reality to measure ourselves against.²⁷

My conclusion on Plantinga and his EEAN is that although it is a very robust and well formulated argument against evolution by natural selection and naturalism, it is not sufficient to refute the coherence of holding both these views together. There are major problems with his premises, particularly P₁, that limit this argument from swaying anyone other than the most ardent dualist or epiphenomenalist. Therefore, I think it can be said with some certainty, that evolution, as a theory, is well grounded, and that naturalism as a conceptual framework for understanding the world is a viable interpretation of content and behavior.

²⁷ Michael Ruse, "The New Creationism: Its Philosophical Dimension," in *The Cultures of Creationism*, eds. Simon Coleman and Leslie Carlin (Aldershot, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2004), 189-190.

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ON JUDGEMENT AND FREEDOM OF THE WILL IN THE *MEDITATIONS*

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A FOUCAULDIAN ANALYSIS OF CULPABILITY IN FRICKER'S *EPISTEMIC INJUSTICE*

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HUME ON THE SELF

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THE COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT: AGNOSTICISM AND SILENCE

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A CASE FOR PHYSICALISM ABOUT CONSCIOUSNESS: CAN EVOLUTION BY NATURAL SELECTION ADEQUATELY EXPLAIN THE EMERGENCE OF MIND?

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AND WAS NEVER VICE VERSA

Alex Leach is a philosophically and artistically inclined Music Business major at Belmont University. His artwork bears two components, here reproduced as the front and back covers, which serve as a progression from one into the other.

