

compos mentis

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Table of Contents

Introduction

Thomas Mann

- | | | |
|---|--|-------|
| 1 | Kantian Consistency and Military Atrocity:
Holding Military Personnel Responsible for Atrocity
Joel Anderson | 1–15 |
| 2 | Morality, Psychopathy, and Responsibility:
Can Psychopaths be Morally Responsible Agents?
Thomas Mann | 17–34 |
| 3 | Individuals, Identity, and Interest Groups
Areins Pelayo | 35–42 |
| 4 | Pursuit of Progressive Truths:
Cognitive Functionalism
Kaylie Provenzano | 43–62 |
| 5 | Lewis' Personal Identity
Paul So | 63–72 |

Introduction

Thomas Mann

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Thank you for your interest in volume 2 issue 1 of *compos mentis: The Undergraduate Journal of Cognition and Neuroethics*. The focus of this journal ranges from the burgeoning fields in philosophical neuroscience and cognitive science, philosophy of mind, philosophy of language, as well as issues in consciousness and personal identity. This is the first issue that is not based on a preceding undergraduate conference. One of our many goals is to allow for undergraduate philosophy work to flourish, and for it to be read. This is why we decided to include another issue of *compos mentis*, making it a bi-annual publication.

The review process goes through a number of stages. After there is a call for proposals and papers are submitted, there is a blind review process involving both students and faculty mentors. This ensures that the process is both as fair and unbiased as possible. Acceptance into the journal is based on the agreement of the review board, with particular weight placed on the opinions and suggestions offered by student members.

Students involved in this process, without whom the success of *compos mentis* would be in doubt, should be recognized for their hard work and dedication. The students also gratefully thank the help of the faculty members and advisors, Dr. Jami Anderson, Dr. Bénédict Veillet, and Dr. Simon Cushing, without whom the journal would not exist, and whose dedication to education is unrivaled. Final thanks should go toward the University of Michigan-Flint Department of Philosophy, to the Center for Cognition and Neuroethics, and to our devoted Production Editor, Zea Miller.

The current issue of *compos mentis*, following the inaugural issue, offers a diverse range of papers from across the United States and we are excited to offer these papers as a bold step forward in this burgeoning field in philosophy and are proud to publish them. We also eagerly await for what the next issue of *compos mentis* will offer us, which is accompanied by the Michigan Undergraduate Philosophy Conference, and look forward to its success.

Kantian Consistency and Military Atrocity: Holding Military Personnel Responsible for Atrocity

Joel Anderson
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ABSTRACT

Citing empirical evidence like the Stanford Prison and Milgram Obedience experiments philosophers like John Doris and Dominic Murphy claim individuals lack notions of character and military members who are present in military atrocities should not be held responsible for their actions in excusing conditions. They conclude military atrocities like the My Lai Massacre and Abu Ghraib Prison scandals have powerful situational forces present to warrant mitigation or acquittal of punishment. This essay contests their claim and argues for notions of a self-mastered character under what Wielenberg calls *Kantian Consistency*. The paper concludes this type of character survives situational attacks and argues that though situational forces are strong they do not remove responsibility from soldiers in military atrocities like My Lai and Abu Ghraib.

Keywords: Situationism, Character, Virtue Ethics, My Lai, Abu Ghraib, Atrocity, Responsibility, Kantian Consistency

Soldiers can never be transformed into mere instruments of war. The trigger is always part of the gun, not part of the man. If they are not machines that can just be turned off, they are also not machines that can just be turned on. Trained to obey "without hesitation," they remain nevertheless capable of hesitation. (Walzer 1977, 311)

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last fifty years there has been a great debate between social psychologists and virtue ethicists on the nature of character. Boiled down to the core argument the debate revolves around one central thesis; namely, whether or not a person's internal character is the best determinate of behavior or if the situation and context are, in fact, the greatest factor. Looming large in this debate are many

compos mentis

social psychologists that cite from empirical evidence that one's character means little in predicting behavior (Ross and Nisbett 1991, 1-8). From these sources and other situational evidence philosophers like John Doris and Dominic Murphy claim military members who are present or participate in military atrocities should not be held responsible for their actions in excusing conditions (Doris and Murphy 2007, 25-55). They conclude in many contexts enough situational forces are present to warrant excusing conditions, in which actors are either not criminally charged or punishment is mitigated based on judged responsibility, for both officers and subordinate personnel (50). It is the intent of this paper to contest their conclusion. Though combat is a great calamity capable of deceiving moral perception one's personal conduct should still be held responsible. Even when strong situational forces are involved officers, as well as enlisted personnel, to at least some degree, should be held responsible for military atrocities. Past the bullets, screams, and blood a soldier's character does survive. I therefore contend human beings, and soldiers, still have what Wielenberg calls *Kantian Consistency* (Wielenberg 2006, 467) which survives situational attacks and though situational forces are strong they do not remove responsibility from military atrocities in places like My Lai and Abu Ghraib (Upton 2009, 103-115).

1.1 Definition of Terms

On a clarifying note, atrocity will be described in this paper as any action that violates standard military ethical law. Because this essay is premised around American standards post Geneva and Hague Conventions it will follow the Law of War prescribed therein (FM 27-10 1956). Under this system a set of norms exists in conventional land warfare. For example, it is currently, and has been in the past, called wrong to kill unarmed civilians for no reason. Similarly, it is called wrong to torture and humiliate prisoners for no other purpose than entertainment. These examples are what is meant here as atrocity. It is intentional killing or harm beyond any military strategy or purpose for malicious ends. Though an accidental death of a noncombatant in a combat zone, despite the preventative measures done by belligerents, can be called wrong, it will not be in this paper discussed as atrocity. Atrocity for this paper's purposes is an intentional killing or harming of persons outside the bounds of military ethics.

Similarly, terms such as "cognitively degrading," "excusing conditions," and events like My Lai and Abu Ghraib need to be described. When factors are

“cognitively degrading” they can be considered to consist of ego depletion (the loss of will power) or tasks that reduce the ability to logically think or morally comprehend right from wrong. They are factors that stress the mind and hinder its ability to make decisions. “Excusing conditions” can be interpreted as factors that either mitigate, and thereby reduce punishment, or acquit actors altogether of criminal charges. Under these influences, actors are not held legally liable for their actions. Conditions of this sort must ultimately rest on a case-by-case basis and can only be determined through careful deliberation of the forces present.

1.2 My Lai and Abu Ghraib

My Lai and Abu Ghraib were atrocities committed by US military personnel in 1968 and late 2003 to early 2004. During the Vietnam War, a company of infantry men were sent to secure a village in the My Lai 4 area for war time operations. When the company entered the village they promptly began to round up civilians and then started to execute everyone they found. They did not discriminate as most of the civilians were old men, women, and children. Approximately 450 to 500 were killed with only three captured weapons (Hersh 1970, 74–75). Many of the killings were done point blank despite the pleas for mercy. US soldiers gathered up civilians, threw grenades into homes, and conducted mass executions. The Abu Ghraib scandal, occurring in the troop surges of the Iraq War, was a group of American soldiers who tortured and sexually abused prisoners in an Iraqi POW camp. The guards put the prisoners into various naked positions, subjected them to humiliating photo shoots, and threatened them with attack dogs. Because of the many “trophy” pictures, the military police group was ultimately caught and revealed to the American public (Zimbardo 2007, 324–337).

2. SITUATIONISM

According to Situationists, situations are stronger than character and it would be wiser to adjust responsibility to those who created the environment rather than the actors within it (Doris 2010, 204). It can then be no surprise that John Doris and Dominic Murphy can make such a claim that “Perpetrators of atrocity typically occupy excusing conditions and are therefore not morally responsible for their conduct” (Doris and Murphy 2007, 26). They claim cognitive degrading factors, lack of moral perception and the military hierarchal system should excuse, or mitigate the criminal charges, soldiers of misconduct in places like My Lai and Abu

Chraib.

Traditional virtue ethics, as espoused by Aristotle, means a virtuous individual becomes virtuous by always acting in a virtuous manner. In order to accomplish this, the individual becomes habituated to virtue through action. Over time, one can learn to correctly perceive the ideal action because they have become accustomed to it and have learned to do that action to the right extent. For example, a courageous person must overcome both fear and pride. To be too afraid is to flee the situation and to be too prideful is to foolishly seek danger. One has to find the right balance between the two to be properly called courageous. Through action and habituation one can find the right mean between the two extremes in whatever situation. The right mean is not an objective place but rather subjective to the individual and the context. After a while, these actions become habits and these habits become character traits. Thus, if one follows Aristotle's line of reasoning a truly virtuous person will always make what is personally perceived to be the most virtuous action possible in the specific context (Aristotle 1996, 1104a-1104b3). They will act courageously and possess a courageous character trait in every circumstance.

Maria Merritt, John Doris, and Gilbert Harman (2010) call these *robust character traits* (356). They are global traits which should influence and stimulate behavior in each context. Global traits imply that a person who has a character trait, say charity, should then behave charitable across situations. The problem with robust character traits, as the Situationists argue, is that they are not empirically valid (109). Situationists often cite a few key experiments that suggest seemingly insignificant situational factors considerably influencing the actors. For example, Darley and Batson found Princeton Seminary students who were rushed, to preach a message on the good Samaritan, helped an unfortunate person in obvious distress only 10% of the time. This is opposed to other students who helped 63% when they were not in any hurry. Even smaller factors were seen to be highly influential when Mathews and Cannon found subjects were five times more likely to assist an injured person when background noise was normal as opposed to a loud background lawnmower in operation (80% to 15%). The Milgram experiment is also frequently pointed towards as well. Milgram found that average people were willing to shock individuals because of small situational forces that suggested the experimenter had scientific authority.¹ When role permutations were introduced obedience to authority

1. The original experiment consisted of 40 males who believed they were conducting a learning experiment by shocking a "learner" when he failed to correctly match word pairs. The experiment was conducted at the prestigious university of Yale and the experimenter wore a lab coat. These situational

did not change but remained a constant. What changed, however, was how willing subjects were to obey based on how authority presented itself (Milgram 1969, 32–43, 89–112). A final example comes from Zimbardo’s Stanford prison experiment where students quickly acclimated to their roles as guards and humiliated and hazed (much like Abu Ghraib) other student prisoners (Zimbardo 2007, 380–443).² The conclusions drawn from these experiments demonstrate that robust character traits do not hold empirical water. Average people, who are expected by society to act in a decent manner, were found to act poorly when placed in difficult situations. If small factors like a lab coat or ambient noise can influence to a large extent then notions of character must be reevaluated.

Doris and others find it is much more likely individuals have a fragmented series of local traits that all influence behavior. This is empirically valid according to Doris. As in the seminary or Milgram experiment subjects’ moral sensitivities or perceptions seemed to be intact but they still failed to act morally. Their disposition and intellectual ability failed to act in a way their character should have predicted. They seem to have perceived the correct action, as virtue theory requires, but this did not motivate corresponding behavior. Their perception meant little when it came to doing the right thing.

3. ATROCITY AND CHARACTER

The above is just a sample of Situationist’s empirical evidence against character. Other philosophers like Peter Vranas, Jesse Prinz, and Gilbert Harman pose normative, epistemic, and illusionary claims against virtue ethics’ character.³ But, for now, the present thesis is enough to continue towards atrocity responsibility. It focuses the contention around military atrocity and character.

3.1 John Doris and Dominic Murphy’s Argument

Doris and Murphy center their defense of atrocities on a system of very persuasive premises. At the core of their argument is the idea that Aristotelian

forces are cited as giving the experiment authenticity and legitimate authority in the eyes of the subjects.

2. Because of the likeness of his experiment to Abu Ghraib testified on behalf of the soldiers responsible for the atrocity. He advocated putting the system on trial rather than the soldiers who were caught up in the situation.

3. For more resources on the Situationist Thesis see: Vranas, “Against Moral Character,” Prinz, “The Normativity Challenge” and Harman, “Skepticism About Character Traits.”

notions of character do not exist, or at least not strong enough to reliably motivate proper behavior. They reason correctly that justice systems do not hold accountable the “hopeless deranged for their acts because they lack the capacities that underpin normative competence” and that soldiers in combat situations are involved in very cognitively degrading tasks (Doris and Murphy 2007, 27, 30). At first glance, it is very hard to disagree with their assertion. Any military member would understand the complex situations in which they operate. Citing the empirical evidence above, the authors claim again how *insubstantial* situational factors have major influence (34). In combat, these factors are all the more present as stress, sleep deprivation, fatigue, and shock can reduce the ability to think clearly and perceive right from wrong. Logically comprehending anything other than staying alive or accomplishing the mission becomes a difficult task.

3.2 Will and Wielenberg’s Kantian Consistency

However, as E.J. Wielenberg admits, Doris and Murphy neglect will in their evaluation of degrading cognitive factors. Will power is “signified [as] an ability to resist temptations, to suppress feelings of desire, to practice self-denial, to overcome habits” (Wielenberg 2006, 484). It is a conscious, intentional effort that is integral to real notions of character. Doris comments that Situationist experiments show dispositions have been “overridden” by insignificant situational factors (Doris 2010, 201). That is to say situational factors were too powerful for individuals to make appropriate moral choices despite their best intentions. According to Wielenberg, Doris’ and other Situationists attack what he calls *Socratic consistency*, by which he means broad-based cross-situational consistency (the *robust character traits* already mentioned), but not *Kantian consistency* (467). As Wielenberg puts it, “Kant sees virtue as a kind of self-mastery or strength. A fully virtuous person is one who has mastered the various desires and temptations that continually threaten to pull him from the path of duty” (465). As a soldier, ideas of duty and self-mastery are central to personal identity.

Wielenberg’s notion of Kantian consistency is a powerful contention against situationism for atrocity responsibility. It strongly asserts a part of character which survives the experiments is the will to be self-mastered. Though individuals do not exhibit global traits in all situations this does not discredit the effect will power has in situations that involve military atrocity. The presence of counter-imposed psychological urges in the Milgram experiment demonstrates that individuals had

competing desires to act. They realized there was an option or choice available. Milgram makes this distinction when he comments on the prevalence of strain inherent within the experiment (Milgram 1969, 155–156). Subjects were caught between competing desires to listen to the instructor and shock the victim or disobey. Perception was not the issue. Subjects lacked the will power to stop the experiment and walk away. However, a strong authority figure or realistic prison scenario is not something to be overlooked as a slight force but should be fully evaluated in the context of one's will power to act ethically. The tension between obedience and disobedience is especially strong when one considers ordinary people followed authority so easily. Soldiers, who are trained to obey the commands of their superiors, can be surmised to perceive authority as a much stronger factor than those in the social experiments. But, as Wielenberg argues the experiments Situationists cite do not establish the lack of character in resisting orders but rather the role will power and the power of perception plays in ethical action. It is important to admit that in all experiments someone resisted or acted ethically despite the authority forces present (Wielenberg 2006, 488). This strain was inherent in the subjects of the experiments and the soldiers in combat. When some report the subjects perceived correctly but acted contrary it does not mean their actions were not in their control. Their actions were not "overridden" and taken out of their hands. It actually attests to the fact that even if they did perceive the situation correctly they may have lacked the will to reflect on their possible actions. German Holocaust policemen who participated in their first Jewish shootings cited "sheer physical revulsion" against what they were doing (Browning 1998, 74). A soldier at My Lai shot himself in the foot rather than participate. In later years, soldiers from My Lai still suffered from the anxiety of upfront killings (Hersh 1970, 181–187). Why? Because they were appalled by their actions. Some may have recognized they had the burden of choice but did not will the better of the two options. Others may have believed the punishment they would have received outweighed the moral prospects of disobeying. Regardless of the two options will power ultimately played a role in their acts.

3.3 The Character of Kantian Consistency

But when Situationists cite "cognitively degrading factors," they argue will power is not as strong as Wielenberg holds. As Baumeister, Vohs and Tice (2007) can attest will power can be depleted (351–355). This is apparent and can be a cause to consider mitigating punishment. But to assume a person's will power was

compos mentis

completely drained is a difficult claim to make. What happened at My Lai and Abu Ghraib was the failing to resist causing harm unnecessarily. It was a lack of discipline. This does not mean soldiers forgot the difference between right and wrong or were running empty on will power. It seems much more likely the officers at My Lai were looking for an excuse to kill rather than acting in a cognitively drained state (Hersh 1970, 43). The unit had received heavy casualties previous to the massacre, but this does not constitute a mitigation of responsibility. No one would suggest murder is justified because a belligerent wanted revenge for an antagonistic action. When one gets angry and has the opportunity to do evil things they are expected to control themselves and resist by using their will power. In warfare, soldiers are expected to suffer rage for enemy actions but they are not expected to let a lack of discipline allow emotions to govern their actions. They are supposed to have a *Kantian Consistency*. Abu Ghraib was also a site where the guards were under physical and psychological stress. They were afraid and probably did their actions to "relieve the pressure of deep-seated, unmet needs for physical safety and self-esteem" (Snow 2009, 68). But as soldiers they are expected to understand fear and still accomplish their mission. An aspect of discipline is the mastery of emotion. It is the conscious choice to will the better of options, make the hard choices despite the situational forces present and exhibit *Kantian Consistency*.

What happened in these events was the failure of a *Kantian* character rather than a superior situation. Ego depletion is a serious phenomenon but considering the aversion and strain present in individuals, and some who resisted altogether, it is apparent this type of character can prevail. Situationists can claim the resisters were extraordinary people but that claim must have evidence. They were more likely average people who acted correctly when they realized the actions they were doing. They were subject to the same cognitive draining milieu the others were. Although ego depletion plays a role in atrocities, it cannot explain or dismiss responsibility to the extent the Situationists claim. Doris and Murphy must somehow distinguish the resisters from all the others in order to definitively claim ego depletion as a cause for acquittal.

An argument can be raised here to state not all people have the same ability to will actions and make moral judgments. Some people are better in these areas than others. But society does not make laws premised around the plurality of moral capabilities. It expects all people have the capacity of a baseline set of moral capabilities. This standard consists of looming moral laws such as not needlessly killing people or torturing prisoners. The acts done at My Lai and Abu Ghraib are

much more salient than testing whether or not a lawn mower influences small moral actions. Military atrocities concern truly terrible acts and are not comparable to these experiments. In situations where people are shooting women and children society expects not only would the moral saint, who has spent years cultivating virtue, object but also the ordinary person. Both the saints and the laypersons undoubtedly possess the capacity to realize, and to will against, such a horrible moral wrong. The distinction is more likely not some natural or biological difference between the resisters and compliers but the failure to will the better of options.

3.4 Moral Perception

Another claim by Doris to excuse misconduct is the lack of moral perception in combat. Doris and Murphy are right in their contention that moral behavior requires an accurate interpretation. Without a clear vision, the lines separating right and wrong become indistinguishable and what else can be more uncertain as accurate perception in warfare? Sleep deprivation and other combat pressures can reduce moral clarity to a foggy haze. War is by nature a place of deception and deceit. Frontline soldiers are seldom only aware that they are being shot at. The average soldier cannot be expected to know what is entirely happening. To this stimulus soldiers are taught basic battle drills to respond instinctively. Their combat experiences consist of what they must do to survive and fight reflexively rather than a slow, methodical evaluation before action. Doris and Murphy contend soldiers adjust to wartime pressures and undergo "moral drift" where once atrocious behavior becomes acceptable (Doris and Murphy 2007, 35, 38). Actors involved in scenarios are prevented by battle from perceiving not only what was once morally right and wrong but what it has become in a state of warfare.

It would be difficult to deny warfare can desensitize individuals, but it would also be hard to say the soldiers who pulled men, women, and children out of their homes, ignored their pleas for mercy, and calmly set up a machine gun had no opportunity to think otherwise (Hersh 1970, 50). The inherent racism of the Vietnam War and the "us" vs. "them" distinction in Abu Ghraib ultimately influenced the actors, but it is a bitter pill to swallow to suggest individuals could not have perceived the effects of their actions. It is often thought soldiers blindly follow orders without second thought but this is much too limited a perspective to take. Upon landing, the soldiers of the My Lai massacre received little to none enemy contact (45–46). What the attack amounted to was the wholesale murder of innocent civilians. This

compos mentis

is not denying the fact clear moral perception is difficult in wartime and its lack of clarity affected the actors in these atrocities but to assume the situation completely overrode a person's ability to refuse is difficult considering the fact that average people did. Joe Darby, who exposed Abu Ghraib, was considered to be a "hero" by Zimbardo. Darby commented the activities of the prison, "didn't sit right with me" (Zimbardo 2007, 330). Contrary to My Lai, the scandals at Abu Ghraib occurred without direct order. Though Situationists may claim the area had been given a "carte blanche" it does not morally permit their activities (Merrit, Doris and Harman 2010, 356). It is one thing to be directly ordered to do so and another to act malicious because leadership is not present. Breaking into an empty house is still illegal.

This does not entail the soldiers at Abu Ghraib were all vicious people with an evil character. Studies looking into the perpetrators of genocide and the holocaust can show not all of them had evil characters. These tragedies alongside My Lai and Abu Ghraib demonstrate that mostly ordinary people carry out the gruesome acts (Walzer 1977, 94–123). What befell the military atrocities is exactly what the Situationists have pointed to. Strong situational forces such as social conformity and role orientation, like the Stanford Prison Experiment, expressed its influence on the actors who, through their choice, chose not to resist the temptations and master their emotions as a strong *Kantian Consistency* describes.

3.5 Orders to Kill

When subordinate personnel are under orders to act unethically responsibility can become harder to determine. On one hand soldiers are expected to follow orders but on the other hand they are also held to act "in accordance with our societal values and the rules of war" (Mastroianni 2011, 7). Milgram's experiment demonstrates obedience in a civilian populace and its results can, with a reasonable degree of accuracy, be transferred to a military setting. Soldiers, especially the rank and file, are taught to obey orders to accomplish the mission. In one sense soldiers are in a contradictory position. They are trained to obey yet disobey when the orders are highly unethical or illegal. As was seen at My Lai this is a difficult task to accomplish.

However, this does not entirely excuse them either unless they were forced to obey orders or believed disobedience would lead to hugely significant consequences. If soldiers are aware they can refuse orders on ethical grounds without sufficient penalties then they cannot be excused for not doing so. It is important to note here

that even if soldiers are given the permission to refuse malicious leadership may still punish them. This is dependent on leadership. The officers at My Lai, Lieutenant Calley and Captain Medina, had been seen by past example to be ruthless to the enemy and this undoubtedly affected the way subordinates viewed them. But there was no incident where these officers killed or lashed out in a significant or physical fashion toward disobedient soldiers. Their most likely course of action, which was seen by personnel, was verbal accusations (Hersh 1970, 18-31).⁴ It can be posited this is not significant enough to constitute being forced.

Furthermore, leadership is also concentrated in the sergeants and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) of the units. Leadership in the armed forces is not exclusive to officers but is present whenever there is a team operating. NCOs are the closest to individual soldiers and their presence, though often overlooked, cannot be dismissed. Rank and file soldiers report first to NCOs who then report to the officers. The NCOs are considered the backbone of the US military and are not only present among the lower enlisted but also mentor younger officers. In the case of Abu Ghraib officers were absent yet leadership was not. NCOs were present and responsible for the actions of their subordinates (Zimbardo 2007, 346).

When assigning punishment for atrocities soldiers who were under orders have the greatest cause for excusing conditions. Again, either mitigating punishment or acquitting altogether is something that must be done on a case-by-case basis. It can be presumed the youngest members and lowest ranked soldiers often occupy the most excusing cases. But, higher leadership does not. Leaders are expected by the military to understand the laws of war, lead by example and demonstrate control over their emotions. They are undoubtedly most responsible and liable for punishment.

4. A HOLISTIC CHARACTER

In the beginning of his book Zimbardo invites the reader to continually ask "Me also?" (6). His suggestion forces the reader to consider if they would also act in the morally irreprehensible way as the soldiers did at My Lai and Abu Ghraib. Situationists claim those who deny what their actions would be cannot do so without actually being tested in the situation. It is easy to say one would do the right thing

4. Captain Medina beat and terrorized suspected Viet Cong members. Lieutenant Calley also killed a farmer thought to be innocent by the translator present. Both officers are generally remarked to have been ruthless toward the enemy. In the end this would have undoubtedly influenced their command platform.

compos mentis

when asked but "in the thick of it" is a different story. But this is not to say a character of *Kantian Consistency* does not survive in such places nor should individuals in bad situations not be held responsible.

As Kamtekar states, general notions of character are a holistic inclusion of a person's desires, aspirations and beliefs (Kamtekar 2010, 211). Despite psychologists' attempts, they cannot test for specific character traits in order to ascertain whether or not whole character really exists. Testing for the presence of one trait, such as honesty, is not the same as testing for an honest controlled character. Kamtekar goes farther and claims the Situationists miss a subject's construal (213). Each person has his or her own beliefs and these ideals cannot be separated from their character. To admit the situation is the cause of a person's behavior and to neglect what that person's ultimate goal may be is a large error to commit. An individual's construal of their own important traits in specific situations cannot be forgotten in any character-based experiment. In this examination the important traits are undoubtedly dutiful action. Some soldiers may interpret following orders as the right character trait of their profession but it does constitute their whole character. Following orders is only one part of being a soldier, there are many more parts to soldier's identity. Soldiers fight wars, not kill civilians for no reason. Those who think otherwise may be the deranged Doris spoke of but the entirety of the actors of My Lai and Abu Ghraib are undoubtedly not within their number.

Finally, as Kamtekar states, "*virtues* are not dispositions to perform stereotype actions popularly associated with a given trait, but rather dispositions to respond appropriately – in judgment, feeling, and action to one's situation" (216). The virtue of soldiers is the discipline to act as is needed in often terrible situations. They have to be held to a high standard to always react in appropriate ways consistent with the rule of law. When Situationists hold situational factors are ultimately superior to a person's character they dismiss a *Socratic Consistency* but not a *Kantian* one. They go too far as to suggest the immense amount of forces drive soldiers in their actions. Though human beings are not always rational and warfare is very emotional they forget people have the power to master their character and thus their actions. A soldier's ultimate goal is to master their body and actions to do what is necessary. In order to do their job, they must. When situations get tough they are expected to rise above the powerful situational forces. It is a difficult claim to make, but it is not without its merits and truths.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper does not make the conclusion that the situation is not important; it should have been revealed that it is indeed very much so. As Zimbardo asserts, putting the system on trial is a valid option and should often be done. Officers who are incompetent, cruel, and undisciplined or poorly trained prison guards and “green” soldiers should not be sent into environments where unethical action can be done. There will be time when soldiers do legitimately occupy excusing conditions. Sometimes subordinate soldiers should be acquitted. But this does not discredit a *Kantian* character or responsibility at My Lai and Abu Ghraib. Self-mastery involves constant work and habit in order to correctly proceed in any context. Every person will behave to varying degrees of virtue with the most virtuous a rare phenomenon indeed. Ultimately virtue ethics is about training oneself through action and habituation to be as virtuous as possible as much as possible. As an ethical system, virtue ethics is about discipline which is the ultimate goal of any soldier. Any soldier quickly realizes the necessity of will power and hopefully uses it always. It is engrained from day one of any training. What occurred at My Lai and Abu Ghraib as a military atrocity thus did not happen because of situational forces, but from the lack of a *Kantian Consistency* and discipline to act in an ethical manner. They let their emotions affect their discipline. To presume behavior is determined by the situation rather than character “reduces soldiers to automatons or puppets unable to control themselves in the face of ‘situational pressures.’ Our soldiers deserve more respect than that” (Mastroianni 2011, 11). Indeed, we all do.

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compos mentis

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Morality, Psychopathy, and Responsibility: Can Psychopaths be Morally Responsible Agents?

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ABSTRACT

While many researchers are still pessimistic about possible treatment methods for individuals with psychopathy, burgeoning research in treatment methodology and neuroscience is beginning to reverse that trend. Broadly construed, the individual with psychopathy suffers from a large constellation of symptoms, each varying by degrees of severity. Psychopathy is primarily associated with aggression, callousness, and manipulation, and to a lesser degree, murder, psychosis, poor judgment, and an inability to learn from past mistakes. Perhaps most striking is the psychopath's total inability to experience certain affects such as guilt, empathy, and remorse. Past treatment methods of psychopathy have ostensibly failed, leading to the premature pessimistic view that psychopathy is an untreatable illness. Recent research in neuroscience, however, seems to have shed some light on the possible neural loci of some of the behavioral deficiencies in psychopaths, especially locating some of the possible neural causes of certain emotions, prompting some to say that psychopathy can be treatable. In this paper, I will hope to show that the primary conversations that have taken over this debate, namely, whether or not non-treated psychopaths have moral responsibility, is a rather benign argument. Since there is little argument that severe psychopathy is and should be considered a mental illness, and that psychopaths should be treated if able, I argue that we should be primarily concerned with the *treated* psychopath's moral responsibility. Nevertheless, I argue that psychopaths neither can *gain* moral responsibility through treatment (supposing they do not have it), nor *maintain* it (supposing they do). I conclude that those many who argue that psychopaths do have moral responsibility must also accept that a psychopath will lose moral responsibility for his actions if treated properly, and vice versa.

Keywords: Psychopathy, moral responsibility, moral agency, amygdala, serotonin

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I can be made responsible for whatever was contained in my purpose, and this is the chief consideration as far as crime is concerned. But responsibility involves only the wholly external judgment as to whether I have done something or not; and the fact that I am responsible for something does not mean that the thing can be imputed to me.

—Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right*

Not to mock, lament, or execrate, but to understand human actions.

—Baruch Spinoza, *Political Treatise*

While many researchers are still pessimistic about possible treatment methods for individuals with psychopathy, burgeoning research in treatment methodology and neuroscience is beginning to reverse that trend. Broadly construed, the individual with psychopathy suffers from a large constellation of symptoms, each varying by degrees of severity. Psychopathy is perhaps the most severe version of antisocial or dissocial personality disorder (ASPD), primarily associated with aggression, callousness, and manipulation, and to a lesser degree, murder, psychosis, poor judgment, and an inability to learn from past mistakes. Perhaps most striking is the psychopath's total inability to experience certain affects such as guilt, empathy, and remorse. Past treatment methods of psychopathy have ostensibly failed, leading to the premature pessimistic view that psychopathy is an untreatable illness (Reidy 2013). Recent research in neuroscience, however, seems to have shed some light on the possible neural loci of some of the behavioral deficiencies in psychopaths, especially locating some of the possible neural causes of certain emotions, prompting some to say that psychopathy can be treatable. This paper will not serve as a blueprint for which researchers can follow to treat psychopathy; rather, I will hope to show that the primary conversations that have taken over this debate, namely, whether or not non-treated psychopaths have moral responsibility, is one that is missing the mark because it glosses over the tension between the seemingly uncontroversial issue of treatment against the psychopath's moral responsibility. I will first describe common diagnostics psychologists use to determine psychopathy in an individual, and then I will discuss the biological and neural etiological possibilities that seem to match the most morally significant psychosis in the psychotic. Finally, I will suggest that there are strong reasons to believe that some untreated psychopaths do *not* have moral responsibility because

of neurological predispositions. I will also mention a further point, namely, that if the burgeoning treatment methods are successful, psychopaths cannot *gain* moral responsibility. Conversely, if a psychopath does have moral responsibility, he can only lose it through treatment, and thus this is where the discussion should lay.

1. PSYCHOPATHY, A CLARIFICATION

It is unclear whether psychopathy is a mere product of Nature, that is, a peculiar cocktail of chemical imbalances found exclusively in the brain, a result of a particularly bad upbringing, or a mixture of the two (Brogaard 2012). There are numerous possible and interrelated symptoms that may manifest into a psychopathic person, but it would be deceiving to posit that persons can be divided into “psychopathic” and “non-psychopathic” (Brogaard 2012). Much like the Kinsey scale, the range of psychopathic behaviors consists in a diverse field of possibilities and the distinction between a psychopath and a nonpsychopath is not always, if ever, a clear one. Psychologist Robert D. Hare famously devised a “Psychopath Test” (of which there are now many versions), which lists a number of behavioral traits that could manifest in individuals with psychopathy; the higher the score on Hare’s Psychopathic Personality Test, the more complex and severe the psychopathology, and therefore the more difficult to both identify and treat it (Blair 2007). Attributes listed include superficial charm, grandiose sense of self-worth, lack of remorse or guilt, shallow affect, callous and/or lack of empathy, poor behavioral controls, and so on. The most severe attributes on the list include criminal versatility, revocation of conditional release, and failure to accept responsibility for own actions (Blair 2007).

According to Kossen, what makes a psychopath unique, that is, what distinguishes him from nonpsychopaths or even individuals with the most severe cases of antisocial personality disorder is precisely the psychopath’s lack of certain emotions, such as a lack of guilt, remorse, and empathy for others. Running concurrently to these traits is the psychopath’s unusually high tendency for aggression, violence, and outbursts of rage (Pickersgill 2011). It seems that *lack of certain emotions* is most relevant to a psychopath’s moral behavior for two reasons. First, it is what distinguishes them particularly from others with antisocial personality disorder, who are generally accepted to be able to make at least basic moral decisions; and second, it seems that these particular traits, namely, the lack of empathy, guilt, and remorse, are the primary motive for performing the most

heinous crimes. Furthermore, there is some argumentation that the psychopath's lack of emotion is the fundamental characteristic that *leads to* the other symptoms. In other words, those qualities that are enhanced, like manipulation and glibness, are enhanced precisely because they are compensating for missing affects.

It is important to note here, however, that numerous studies have shown that the reasoning faculty, that is, the moral reasoning levels, of the psychopath is *not* a diseased faculty as it could be in psychotics. It seems that psychopaths are in fact particularly adept at reasoning and planning out that situation which they need or want to manipulate (Kossen 2013). To give a clearer picture, consider for a moment the distinction between a psychopath and a psychotic. Recall that a psychotic *does* have significant deficits in the reasoning processes; for example, the psychotic would hallucinate, hear voices, and have a completely alternate sense of reality. The psychopath, on the other hand, maintains a sense of reality, even a sense of "right and wrong," but displays the characteristics of one who is manipulative, grandiose, and shows a total lack of empathy. Psychotics are not responsible for many violent crimes, whereas the psychopath is responsible for a disproportionate amount of crime (Kossen 2013).

2. BIOLOGICAL CAUSES OF PSYCHOPATHY AND THE NEUROBIOLOGICAL THEORY OF PSYCHOPATHY

In this short section, I want to illustrate the complexity, diversity, and degrees the many facets that might contribute to the etiology of psychopathy. My hope here is to suggest that some of the neural structures of some psychopaths are dysfunctional in such a significant degree that they may not have moral responsibility for some of their actions. Most neurocriminologists and psychologists today agree that psychopathy is likely caused by a set of predetermined biological structures of the brain, which can be *triggered* by bad social conditions in the adolescent stage of life—that is, it does not seem that a bad childhood is sufficient to make a psychopath, whereas a dysfunctional brain could be. Profound dysfunction in the brain is often coupled with poor adolescence, but the latter has never been reported to be the sole cause, and it is not generally accepted to be. A basic principle in neurobiology and neuropsychology is the notion that "certain functions are, to some degree, localized within certain areas of the cerebral hemisphere, whereas others are lateralized to one hemisphere of the brain" (Brogaard 2012). Recent tests have shown strong associations and correlations among individuals with psychopathy

and fundamental biologic differences from nonpsychopaths, insofar as a structural difference exists between the two.

As has been stated, the individual with psychopathy has strong dysfunction in emotional processing, which places them in a unique position in the umbrella term for antisocial personality disorder. While individuals with the most severe cases of antisocial personality disorder display certain characteristics, such as an unusual lifestyle, antisocial behavior, and crime, it is only the individual with psychopathy that has all of the factors of antisocial personality disorder, *as well as* dysfunctional emotional processing. Such unique attributes in individuals with psychopathy, as well as the fact that psychopathy does not show up suddenly in the midst of adulthood, seems to imply an abnormality of the brain itself, where such dysfunctions are a result of a brain that disallows psychopaths to process certain emotions (Brogaard 2012). Herpertz and Sass have shown some evidence of a "close association between the difficulties that psychopaths have in emotional processing and poor prefrontal functioning" (2000, 587).

There is now agreement that amygdala dysfunction is a major underlying neural component that disallows individuals with psychopathy to process emotions. The amygdala has long been implicated as crucial neural loci of moral emotions. This is a result of the association of the amygdala with "averse conditioning and instrumental learning, as well as recognition of fearful and sad facial expression responses" (DeLisi 2009, 1242). Brogaard writes, "brain scans revealed that psychopathy in criminals was associated with decreased connectivity between the amygdala, a subcortical structure of the brain that processes negative stimuli, and the ventromedial prefrontal cortex" (Brogaard 2012). And Harenski, "functional neuroimaging has identified brain regions associated with voluntary regulation of emotion, including the prefrontal cortex and amygdala.[...] Reduced amygdala activity might be particularly associated with the affective component of psychopathy" (Harenski 2011, 9). Blair, "moral emotions implicated in amygdala and ventromedial prefrontal cortex, when it is dysfunctional there is significant chance of psychopathy" (Blair 2007, 390-392). And Moul:

More recently, research into the genetics of psychopathic and antisocial personality disordered populations has suggested that serotonin may play a role in psychopathy specifically (demonstrated that individuals with greater expression and function of the serotonin transporter gene (5-HTT; a gene that

compos mentis

codes for a protein responsible for the removal of serotonin from the synaptic cleft) show, similar to psychopathic populations, less amygdala activation when processing emotional facial expressions in comparison to individuals with less expression of the gene. (Moul 2012, 790-791)

Along with the Amygdala, other neural loci have been identified as likely factors in the psychopathic individual's incapability of emotional processing. The first and most important is the Orbitofrontal Cortex (OFC), which is "involved in the modulation of reactive aggression, which is physical violence elicited in response to frustration and/or threats" (Mitchell 2011, 872). The OFC and Amygdala are the main centers of attention for a neurological cause of psychopathy, but recent research has indicated that there may also be poor interhemispheric communication, namely, deficits in the ventromedial prefrontal cortex, physical damage, such as lesions, to the corpus callosum and posterior hippocampus (Reidy 2013; Mitchell 2011; Pickersgill 2011; LaBrode 2007).

In a study concluded this year, researchers tested 80 prisoners to gauge their levels of psychopathy. Under a functional MRI, the prisoners were shown pictures of people being intentionally physically abused. Those who scored highest in psychopathy showed significantly less neural activation "in the areas of the brain involved in emotional reactions, social behavior, and decision making," such as the amygdala, than those who scored lowest in psychopathy (Nicholson 2013). Interestingly, subjects that tested high in psychopathy also showed significant activity in the insular cortex, which is highly involved in emotion and self-awareness (LaBrode 2007). Researchers suggested that this could be a result from the psychopath imagining *themselves* in pain. In a yet unpublished study in which participants were told to imagine the painful photograph happening to someone else, "those scoring high in psychopathy had a lesser reaction" (Nicholson 2013). Thus, it appears that the psychopath is able to relate to pain, so long as it is his own.

3. PHARMACEUTICAL APPROACHES TO TREATMENT METHODOLOGY

Research identifying neural loci with emotional output is only in its embryonic stage and so far does not yet clearly reveal a precise set of neural regions. But despite the etiological complexities, researchers are now becoming fairly optimistic about possible treatment methodology for individuals with psychopathy. Treatment

methods so far have been unsuccessful, but Beech, Polascheck, and Daly write that because the psychopath is quite unique in his mental dysfunction, it has been traditional treatment *methods*, not treatment *itself* that has failed. Many treatment methods have been poorly planned, intrusive, and unethical in today's standards, making it unsurprising that the individuals with psychopathy have become *worse* psychopaths post-treatment. But many have written that there are, so far, a number of known pharmaceutical medications that have been effective in treating uncontrolled behavioral symptoms, among them aggression and impulsivity.

Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, or SSRIs, such as Prozac, "are agents that inhibit the reuptake of serotonin as part of a more widespread effect on neurotransmitters" (Crockett 2010). Serotonin, Crockett and Clark explain, "is richly involved in the biology of social behavior. [...] The serotonin system densely innervates structures previously implicated in moral judgment and behavior, including the ventromedial prefrontal cortex insula, and amygdala" (Crockett 2010). A common explanation for this is the relationship between serotonin and the promotion of control over emotional impulses, particularly those that are violent. Perhaps most importantly for individuals with psychopathy, serotonin has recently been found to have involvement in "enhancing expectations of averse outcomes," suggesting that serotonin actively works to discourage antisocial behavior, such as harming others (Crockett 2010). While the research in pharmacotherapy is not a widely researched subject, there is, nevertheless, reported success when it has been coupled with new and unique approaches to psychopathy.

4. MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

In a provocative and persuasive paper, philosopher David Shoemaker writes that psychopaths "may be criminally responsible [for their actions] but not, in an important way, morally responsible" (Shoemaker 2011, 100). He admits that this is a highly provocative suggestion, and it is one that I shall use to suggest that even with treatment that alleviates all known symptoms, the individual with psychopathy cannot *become* morally responsible for his actions. I do not wish to argue either way whether or not untreated psychopaths have moral responsibility, though I have and will suggest that there is reason to believe they do not, I simply wish to make the suggestion that psychopaths cannot gain moral responsibility if they do not have it, and if they do have it, can only lose it with proper treatment—which would involve pharmaceutical medication, if we have stipulated correctly that the brain itself must

compos mentis

be changed. Before we discuss this possibility, however, a clarification on what is meant by moral responsibility.

Taken very generally, individuals who are morally responsible for their actions are praised or blamed for two reasons. Either they are praised because they perform a morally significant action or they are blamed for refraining to do what would have been a morally significant action. Note, however, that the converse is also true; namely, praised for refraining in certain situations or blamed for acting. Eshleman and Fischer provide the most succinct version of moral responsibility, viz., one that is composed of two-parts: *accountability* and *attributability*. They write, "Moral responsibility as accountability entails a warranted belief in an agent's capability to govern her actions in a way that they accord with social norms and expectations. Moral responsibility as accountability is a social notion that implies a full membership in the moral community and that the individual is praiseworthy or blameworthy for her actions" (Eshleman 2009; Fischer 1999, 95). For example, if my cat knocks over my prized crystal vase, my indignation seems to be unwarranted because he did not act from a reference to right or wrong, nor from insidious motives. My jealous, rightly-minded, nonpsychopathic friend that destroys my crystal vase because he does not want me to enjoy or profit from it, *would* justly be the object of my resentment and moral indignation (Eshleman 2009).

Others have formulated moral responsibility in slightly different, but altogether similar ways. For example, Glannon writes that being morally responsible requires "requires the capacity to critically reflect on and revise or reinforce his motivational states and thereby come to identify with them as the springs of his actions" (Glannon 2008). Thus, moral responsibility can be roughly conceptualized either in *attributability* and *accountability*. If an agent's actions result in certain ends from freely chosen means, through what Glannon may call a "deliberative" process, they belong and are *attributed* to that person. Moral responsibility as *accountability* simply means that a moral agent is capable to conform her actions in a way that they are governed to general social norms and expectations, i.e., he can recognize or accept *that* there are certain social norms a violation of which could be considered immoral. A fully morally responsible action, then, must have both accountability and attributability; that is, there must be both a general recognition of the accepted external social norms and expectations as well as a well-functioning internal cognitive function that allows for the most maximal amount of self-determination.

5. PSYCHOPATHIC MORAL AGENTS?

Many philosophers have argued that no matter how pathological a psychopath may be, he is nevertheless morally (and criminally) responsible for his actions, no less because there does not seem to be any indication that his reasoning faculties are faulty. In other words, he knows what is right and wrong, but simply “doesn’t care” (Cima-Knijff and Hauser 2010). However, the neuroscience behind such claims is far from conclusive. I want to argue that in some cases, particularly in the most extreme cases, individuals with psychopathy are not morally responsible for their actions because the neural structures of the brain make it impossible to act from freely chosen means. In order to suggest that some individuals with psychopathy may not be held morally responsible, there ought to be some ground or basic level of stipulation to which we can separate those who can be held morally responsible for their actions, and those the cannot. Because of the complexity and breadth of the topic, which covers neuroscience, philosophy, and many subsections of psychology, especially in the theoretical realm, I will not be able to defend this idea adequately here. Rather, I, like Shoemaker, will “wave my hands vigorously for a bit, toss out some stipulations, and hope to begin to make a not entirely implausible presumptive case for this position” (Shoemaker 2010). Unlike Shoemaker, however, I will make the further suggestion that he does not make, namely, that even though we should have serious doubts that psychopaths, with proper treatment, can hope to *gain* moral responsibility, i.e., that moral responsibility can *emerge from* proper treatment methodology. In the following section, then, I will only suggest that it is still reasonable to think that some psychopaths may not have moral responsibility in certain (particularly more extreme) cases.

Before we get into the argumentation, consider the following quotations from two convicted criminals with psychopathy.

Tommy Lynn Sells, now on death row in Texas and classified as one of the most violent and dangerous offenders in the United States, told an interviewer, “To look at me is to look at hate. I don’t know what love is. Two words I don’t like to use is ‘love’ and ‘sorry.’” (*The Mind of a Psychopath* 2010)

Ted Bundy has been quoted as saying “I don’t feel guilty for anything. I feel sorry for people who feel guilt.” (Brogaard 2012)

compos mentis

Blair (1995) conducted a study that found that psychopaths were less able to “distinguish between moral transgressions” like arbitrarily harming another person and “conventional transgressions,” like poor table manners than nonpsychopaths (Blair 1995). If this is true, and if the distinction is strong enough, then perhaps we can imagine the psychopath committing moral transgressions (like harming others) the way nonpsychopaths routinely and without emotion break convention, like driving the speed limit. It is suggested that this distinction, however, is not one that is likely freely chosen, a distinction that cannot be grasped because the psychopathic brain itself is not structured to grasp it.

Moral insensitivity is generally acknowledged to be a result of the psychopath’s predisposition to emotional impairments, such as a lack of empathy. However, Harenski and Kiehl posit that the psychopaths “have wide-ranging abnormalities in emotion processing” (Harenski 2011, 299–301). For example, an individual with psychopathy is, on the one hand, more likely to “engage in behaviors that are dangerous to themselves and others.” On the other hand, poor self-regulation for affects may justify the psychopath’s belief that a moral transgression (“this person gets what they deserve”) was itself justified. If we accept that psychopathy is at least partially genetically or biologically determined, then, as Berit Brogaard argues, “one would expect some abnormality in the brain,” which would be the “immediate source of psychopathic traits” (Brogaard 2012). It therefore seems implausible that some psychopaths, with biological predispositions that make him unlikely or unable to refrain acting humanely, could be a viable, robust moral agent.

To say that an individual with psychopathy is not a morally responsible for certain actions, however, does not then mean that they are morally irresponsible. A morally irresponsible person would still maintain certain cognitive functions that a psychopathic individual would not have. Among criminal psychopaths, then, in which it seems evident that the worst neural dysfunction exists, we should rather consider them morally nonresponsible. A morally nonresponsible agent, such as criminal psychopaths, significantly lacks enough cognitive ability that his or her otherwise immoral actions do not render blame. In order for otherwise immoral actions to not be blameworthy, it seems as if the regular rules of moral responsibility simply do not apply. For this paper, it seems sufficient to say that there is little doubt that under certain circumstances, the individual with psychopathy fails the test of *attributibility*. As we have seen, in many cases, the individual with psychopathy, especially criminal psychopaths, do not appear to have freely chosen the *means* to certain ends. Even if it is not *impossible* for the some psychopaths to refrain from

acting in such violent ways to a certain end as a result of biological and genetic predispositions, it does seem *unreasonably difficult*, given the complexity and amount of damage to the brain to expect that they are a vibrant moral agent in the way nonpsychopaths, or even bad cases of individuals with antisocial personality disorder, may be.

6. THE SEEMING IMPOSSIBILITY OF A COMPLETELY MORALLY RESPONSIBLE PSYCHOPATH

If we suppose that treatment methods for psychopathy will continue in the years to follow, that advancements in neuroscience will show more accurate and detailed maps of the “disturbed minds,” that rehabilitation methods will be refined and sharpened, and that developments in pharmaceuticals will be made and connected to certain parts of the brain that affect psychopaths strongest, it is not entirely inconceivable that individuals may be fully treated of their psychopathy. I do not want to say, however, that the psychopathic individual will behave perfectly under these circumstances; that is not the point. The idea here is that the psychopath is treated in such a way that the most morally relevant factors seem to be mitigated to a significant degree. This would entail significant improvement in feeling emotions such as guilt, remorse, and empathy. It would also mean a reduction in impulsive anger. This would not necessarily mean that psychopaths are nonmanipulative, nonnarcissistic, nongrandiose, or noncharming, and so on. Indeed, it seems like people with merely these traits can be considered “jerks,” but they are hardly incapable of moral responsibility. A lack of certain emotional traits, as we have seen, set the psychopaths, and especially the criminal psychopath, apart from all the other individuals with antisocial personality disorders, and may be the very foundation of their psychopathy.

Nevertheless, what makes some individuals with untreated psychopathy incapable of moral responsibility is precisely his lack of freedom in certain actions otherwise considered immoral. He is unable to “control” certain emotions like anger, while, on the other hand, he is totally lacking in other emotions such as empathy, guilt, or remorse, which, even on a basic utilitarian model, could stop him from performing certain immoral actions. Under treatment, namely, under an idealized pharmaceutical treatment, in which the patient is *able* to feel guilt, empathy, and remorse, as well as an ability to control what was an overwhelming sense of rage and aggression, the individual with psychopathy may be less likely (perhaps even

much less likely) to perform certain immoral acts, such as arbitrary murder. My worry here is that, in a certain fundamental sense, the individual with treated psychopathy still does not have attributability (freely chosen means) to his actions, where it does seem they have accountability (a notion of socially acceptable moral rightness and wrongness); however, to have moral responsibility, both factors must be present.

The treated psychopath appears to have moral accountability because he appears to be able to conform most of his actions to certain social norms and expectations—he does not spend his days arbitrarily murdering, robbing, or raping. When it comes to attributability, in which his actions must be freely chosen means to a certain end, it becomes trickier. A nonpsychopathic individual does have certain predispositions—she may be more or less grandiose, may feel more or less empathy, guilt; she may be more aggressive than another person, or have a high sense of glibness—and in this way, admittedly, is not *completely free* to choose certain means. However, her brain is not *so* distorted in such a *complex* manner that she becomes inhibited by her own neural structure—she may be prone to anger, but this is something she can “get over” (by counting to ten, or by other somewhat trivial means). The treated psychopath, however, is only conforming to certain standards because he, like the framework of a building, is being supported by certain temporary changes to the brain. There is no indication that a psychopath’s brain can be changed *permanently*, and thus without constant assistance, he will slide back into the psychopathic lack of emotions we fear and which may lead to other psychopathic symptoms. But the reason some (as I have argued) untreated psychopaths and all treated psychopath do not have moral responsibility is a lack of attributability, but for different reasons. One cannot point to the treated psychopath with much confidence and say that he has freely chosen to choose some means to an end, at least in some significant cases. Rather, depending on the prescription, the strength of the dose, how strong the psychopathy is, and so on, the moral pseudo-agent is really the pharmacist, who calculates *how* empathetic the psychopath should be, *how much* guilt he should feel, *how much* remorse, and *how much* anger should be felt. In this way, the source of these emotions is outside the body, in another person’s diagnosis. Like a mechanic calculating the speed and internal diagnostics of a robot, the treated psychopath can only feel as much emotion as he is prescribed, as much as his amygdala, OFC, and other neural functions have been given.

I also want to briefly discuss the converse situation to psychopathic moral

responsibility—and it may be a more troubling idea. In the first instance, the psychopath (as I have suggested) has no real moral responsibility because he, in certain situations, is not free to choose the means to his actions, not in any real sense. Under treatment, any means he ‘chooses’ to make are really predetermined by the pharmaceuticals prescribed to him. In the second situation, which has been widely argued, in which the psychopath *has* moral responsibility, the *same holds* if he is treated, namely, he will *lose* his moral responsibility as an implication from treatment. I have not come across anyone who seriously argues that psychopaths are not mentally ill, nor that they should not receive some form of treatment (of which the only effective method is biological combined with rehabilitation methods), or that psychopaths do not need nor deserve some treatment. Thus, those who argue that psychopaths have moral responsibility must also argue that they ought not receive treatment, lest they *also* lose moral responsibility.

7. AN OBJECTION

In a certain sense, one could reasonably say of the individual with psychopathy that he is simply weak-willed. He has an end in mind, knows that there are certain means to that end, which are considered wrong by the society at large, yet performs the action anyway because he *seemingly* cannot resist the temptation. One example that recently arose¹ is the situation in which a person simply cannot resist eating a donut, for he does not have sufficient willpower to walk away. We can suppose that the person is freely able and has a right to eat the donut (she has purchased them, for example) and that the person may or may not have reasons to eat or to refrain from eating the donuts. If the person weighs her options, thinks that it is better to refrain from eating the donut, yet does so anyway, perhaps we can say that in a certain sense she is not totally free in choosing her actions—she seems to lack what we called “attributability”; i.e., certain freely-chosen means to reach certain ends. However, this situation seems to refer to what Gilbert Ryle called a *category-mistake*, for deciding eating a donut (at least in the above configuration) does not seem to be described as a situation in which *moral* responsibility is required. Therefore, let us consider a more severe example in which, it seems, moral responsibility is more obviously at issue.

Consider the case of William Heirens. Heirens, deemed the “Lipstick Killer,”

1. Thanks to Dr. Jami Anderson, Dr. Simon Cushing, and Dr. Stevens Wandmacher for this suggestion and example.

because after he had killed one of his many victims, hastily scribbled the words "For heaven's sake, catch me before I kill more. I cannot control myself" on the wall next to the victim in lipstick (Martin 2012). If we take Heirens at his word, we can apply our two requirements of moral responsibility to his case. Recall that both are needed for a morally responsible agent. The first, accountability, maintains that Heirens must have known that murder was socially unacceptable. Due to his pleas to stop his crimes, this seems to be the easiest to assume. *Attributability*, on the other hand, requires that Heirens, if morally responsible, was able to freely choose his actions from freely chosen means. Given what little psychological information we have in Heirens' case, it seems impossible to say whether or not he, like the severe psychopath, lacked sufficient amount of cognitive capability such that it would be impossible or extraordinarily difficult to refrain from committing the crimes. Here it seems reasonable to introduce what I will call the *cognitive stipulation* to the attributability argument. The cognitive stipulation states that the *brain itself* must be dysfunctional to such a point that it prohibits or disallows the person to refrain from committing the most heinous crimes if or when he has the inclination to do so. Thus, for Heirens, in order to fit the cognitive stipulation, must have had a sufficient amount of cognitive dysfunction that attributability would be impossible or extremely unlikely.

I foresee a complaint that may arise with this stipulation, namely, a complaint that states that those who lack moral responsibility (because of the cognitive stipulation) may not all be severe psychopaths, for the cognitive stipulation may apply to them for other reasons. This may be true (and I would say certainly is true), but my only hope in the present work is to suggest that it is likely that the *severely psychopathic individual* may not have full or any moral responsibility for their crimes. There may be many other beings that fail the test for moral responsibility and the cognitive stipulation (and Heirens may be a case even if he was not psychopathic), but it does not weaken my argument to say that psychopaths *and other* similarly cognitively dysfunctional beings do not possess any or much moral responsibility.

The severe psychopath is therefore a quite unique case, insofar as he, built into his cognitive apparatus (before any decisions are made) a series of symptoms for which attributability becomes impossible. Far from simply being able to control his will, there are a host of symptoms that are working against the free deliberation of the psychopath. Thus, I simply wish to suggest that the psychopath, in his unique case, is sometimes exempt from moral responsibility because he is incapable of attributability. As for the Heirens case, however, we are forced to wave our hands

at a conclusion, for we simply do not possess sufficient psychological information.

8. CONCLUSION

What I have attempted to avoid in this argument is to say that all psychopaths should be completely absolved of any moral responsibility for their actions. Rather, we must remember that both psychopathy and moral responsibility comes in degrees. It is very troubling to consider, however, that in the most extreme cases of psychopathy we will find more fundamental dysfunction in complex parts of parts of the brain, and thus, it seems to suggest that the worst psychopaths that commit the worst crimes are the least morally responsible for their actions. Of course, this is not to say that all of the most psychopathic individuals will commit the worst crimes, or that the least psychopathic individuals will commit the least bad crimes, or that any psychopath is *determined* to commit any crime at all. My primary concern is the notion that criminal psychopaths could acquire more moral responsibility, especially if we decide (through brain scans, psychological tests, and so on) that he is dysfunctional in such a way that he is mitigated from most or all moral responsibility. Simply supplying a criminal psychopath to *behave* better does not make him any more morally responsible for his actions, since it still does not seem to allow him to act from a place of deliberation or from free choice and action, whereas a nonpsychopath seems to be able to do so, at least to a much higher degree. I also do not want to suggest that psychopaths should *not* receive treatment, but wish to warn that whenever we seek out pharmaceutical methods to therapy, we are likely to lose some amount of responsibility. I have not attempted to say at any point that a psychopath should not be held *criminally* accountable for his actions, however, and would certainly suggest that a combination of mental health treatment and civil punishment be appropriate for him (though this is pushing the limits to this paper). However, the psychopath is a unique case, and many types of punishment and mental health treatment, namely, those that have already been used in ineffective ways, will only enhance the problems associated with psychopathy. The trick is to seek treatment methodology that will enhance social functionality and improve behavior—though, if effective treatment involves invasive drugs, as it likely must to alter the brain itself, we may not be able to confidently say that the psychopath has moral responsibility for his actions. Further research can question the interconnections of the psychopath's reasoning faculty, which appears to be unaffected by his psychopathy and his affects and emotions and to study the

compos mentis

etiology of ruthless instrumental reason that is not furnished by certain "moral" emotions.

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compos mentis

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Individuals, Identity, and Interest Groups

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ABSTRACT

Within his work *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*, M.H Abrams contends that literary criticism tends to emphasize either one or two of four areas. These four areas are the work, the author, the world, and the readers. Historically, formalist approaches of literary criticism stress just the work itself while romanticist approaches stress the work's relationship with the universe, the author, and his or her readers. However, Abrams did not portend the rise of Postmodernism, which fails to stress any of the previous four areas. Indeed, Postmodernism approaches are prone to interpret literature by asking whether a work assumes either racial or gender biases, and emphasizes the cultural, or socio-economic and political circumstances that occurred during the production of a given work. Postmodernists believe that this approach will assist historically oppressed groups in gaining a sense of equality and self-identity. In this paper, I agree with postmodern goal, namely to help historically oppressed groups gaining a self-identity and equality; however, I disagree with their methods toward this goal. I first argue against "interested readings" for interest groups, since, insofar as interest groups are a collection of people, the important differences between individuals within the interest groups are abstracted away, and stunt the growth of an individual's self-identity within that interest group. After, I argue for a blend of formalism and romanticism, and I claim that this approach in literature is the best means for assisting historically oppressed groups to achieve self-identity. I then entertain an objection and argue that there should be nothing wrong with favoring a hierarchal model if it is a necessary condition for assisting historically oppressed groups.

Keywords: Literary Criticism, Identity, Formalism, Romanticism, Postmodernism, Immanuel Kant, bell hooks, Nominalism, Nagel, Racial Bias, Gender Bias

INTRODUCTION

Paying due attention to the bias assumption in literature, postmodernists such as Annette Kolodny argue that an important method of literary criticism is to recognize the partiality the work assumes in order to further self-identification for historically oppressed groups. Additionally, some postmodernists believe that Kolodny's approach is enhanced by not just the decentralization of the author's importance, but also with an emphasis in a wider method of examination in areas such as class, gender, race, and ethnicities. It appears that one central aim of postmodern readings of literature is to raise awareness for historically oppressed individuals, and help these persons gain a sense of self-identification.¹ While I agree with the central goal of postmodern literary critics, I do not believe their approaches are the best means to achieve this goal. As a result, the purpose of this paper will be to demonstrate a different method for literary theorists, in case they want to assist historically oppressed groups in their quest for self-identification. The first part of this paper will focus on interest groups, and the second part will concentrate on the author's position in relation to readers, language, and culture, in light of the arguments provided in the first part, that is, the arguments concerning interest groups. Equally important, in both parts of this paper, I will formulate arguments drawn or influenced by Virginia Woolf, Immanuel Kant, bell hooks, and other philosophers or literary theorists. The central point I will make in this paper is that individuals from several gender, ethnic, or racial backgrounds state their point of view as the "interest group," but this position fails to illustrate his or her own unique situation within that interest group and invalidates their self-identity; hence, the author and text's position in literature must be re-edified insofar as the individuals in these interest groups want to show their point of view as authors, that is, allow readers to comprehend, sympathize, or immerse themselves in the author's gendered, ethnic, racial or cultured artistic consciousness.

1. By "historically oppressed individuals," I mean those races and ethnicities that are practically absent from literary classics or canons. Indeed, "interested readings" are for interest groups that are either Hispanic, chicano black Asian, Arab, mestizo or from Native American ancestry; that is, whatever is generally accepted to be a historically oppressed group. Unfortunately, issues of "borderline identities" and issues in philosophy of race are beyond the scope of my paper and will not be addressed.

PART ONE: ARGUMENTS AGAINST POSTMODERN INTEREST GROUPS²

Those who endorse interest groups and interested readings in literature are right to critique Kantian formalist approaches to literature. Indeed, it is difficult to deny that Kantian “disinterested” readings do not ignore racial, gender, cultural, and ethnic dynamics. Indeed, Kant’s prescriptions for “disinterested” judgments may appear to have the unintentional consequence of reaffirming oppressive or racist beliefs or manners at the subconscious level. As a result, several interest groups properly retaliate, and reveal the hardly justified assumptions that underlie Kantian readings. However, these interest groups are not immune to criticism. After all, these interest groups cannot explain how an individual can validate his or her self-identity without merely being a person who shares a similar property within the interest group at hand. To explain further, bell hooks and Virginia Woolf appear to deny interest groups insofar as they are abstractions or universals, and instead adhere to a soft and variable strain of nominalism. For example, in her work *A Room of One’s Own*, Woolf asserts that consciously writing with one’s own gender in mind distorts one’s work (Woolf [1929] 2010, 901–04). Further, I believe her arguments suggest that not only is such a hyper-conscious state detrimental to one’s writing, but also that most people share characteristics of both masculinity and femininity, though often revealed in different moments. As a result, Woolf’s underlying point could be that “masculine” or “feminine” are only particular moments of a certain sort, and do not have any pure existence other than their varying manifestation in writing. To illustrate, similar to how the color red is instantiated in different shapes and objects, or turns different shades when exposed to certain lighting, “femininity” and “masculinity” are just as elusive and inexact. To be sure, the biological aspects of “male” and “female” do have correspondences to the physical world, but insofar as the aforesaid adjectives are universals over and above particulars that have some property in common, then this is belief that Woolf, hooks, and I claim to be wrong. Thus, if nominalism is the belief that universals do not exist, that is, the belief there is nothing over and above a property other than the fact that it inheres to particulars,

2. To be sure, most postmodern theorists advocate reading for interest groups, also known as “interested readings.” That is, in contrast to the Kantian formalist approach adopted by “arts for arts sake” advocates, postmodernists believe that neither the author nor the work should be emphasized when analyzing literature. Instead, they hold that the political and socio-economic circumstances should be scrutinized, and seen as the primary forces that produce a literary piece. And so, postmodernism can be seen as retaliation to the “arts for arts sake” movement or Kantian-formalist “disinterested” readings.

then Woolf appears to have an underlying nominalist thesis since "masculine" and "feminine" are merely varying instances one reflects throughout writing; and therefore, an interest group for "feminism" or "masculinism" misses the mark, and makes the individual suffer from hyperawareness, or complete confusion of gender identity when writing (Rodriguez-Pereyra 2011).

Likewise, in her work *Post Modern Blackness*, bell hooks declares a critique against "essentialism" though, arguably, she also presents an indirect adherence to nominalism. For example, recollecting the definition of nominalism stated above, one may grant that bell hooks' arguments against "essentialism" are also against universals in general. Particularly, when hooks states how "critiques of essentialism...challenge notions of universality and static over-determined identity within mass culture and mass consciousness," she means that collective labels such as "black" or "white" must be scrutinized since there are only particular individuals that moderately share those properties of blackness, or whiteness. Indeed, hooks further argues that in order to "affirm multiple black identities" and a "varied black experience," critics must attack essentialism on the grounds of racism since collective racism is less impactful on each individual's life (hooks [1990] 2010, 2514). Surely, it appears that hooks adopts nominalism since she emphasizes how being black is a property shared by individuals; and hence, highlighting this fact will subject individuals to direct contact with racism, instead of indirect collective racism. More importantly, I believe that hooks' arguments are not restricted to race since collective labels are used for languages, ethnicities, and cultures. To the point, when hooks declares how postmodernists should not be so quick to eradicate self-identity, since there are some people who have yet been able to declare such identity, I believe that her point is made not only for blacks, but also for Asians, Latinos, and Middle Easterners. Thus, the interest groups for these ethnicities, cultures, and races are delaying their members' ability to acquire a unique and mature self-identity or recognition of individuality.

PART TWO: IDENTITIES WITHOUT INTEREST GROUPS

If interest groups are indirectly stunting the growth of their individuals' identity, then there must be some prescriptions that avoid the obstruction of self-identity, or enhance and cultivate individual identity. As a result, I will attempt to offer some prescriptions by arguing that the importance of the author and text must be re-prioritized since individuals in these interest groups must not merely tell, but show

his or her point of view as an author, and ultimately, allow readers to comprehend, sympathize, or immerse themselves in the author's gendered, ethnic, racial, or cultured artistic consciousness. To elaborate, the possibility of this level of reader-author comprehension depends on a specific interpretation of Kant. To demonstrate further, I believe that Kant's "disinterested" judgments allow audiences to immerse themselves in the author's artistic psyche, but this immersion and reader-author level of comprehension is possible only if the author illustrates his or her unique point of view, or consciousness through the text; that is, the author must neither write in the point of view of the interest group nor in the manner of crude factual or querulous statements, but as illustrations (Kant [1790] 2010, 406–449). Ultimately, I believe that Kant's prescriptions further minorities' ability for self-identification through illustration since his theory allows for a plurality of "formal reasonings." Kant's "disinterested" judgments allow for plurality because his psychology of the soul rests on formal aspects of humans, such as reason, or logic. However, unfortunately, Kant does not mention the theoretical possibility for different "logics" or formal properties that each corresponding individual instantiates, yet this reading of his work is consistent with what he does say explicitly. Indeed, I believe these different formal properties, and "logics" are innate in each individual and this is not inconsistent with Kant's theory. After all, if one accepts how there are numerous methods of musical notation, and yet, at the same time, each method participates in the "formal property" of recording down music, or how there are different forms of geometry, and several different methods to prove one tautology, then I do not see how it is impossible that our innate "formal" features are different, though, not so entirely different that it renders communication un-meaningful.

On the condition that one accepts this plurality of "formal" reasonings, then he or she will be able to understand how the importance of the author must be reestablished in order for the author to not explain, but *illustrate* his or her artistic view point and obtain, or cultivate his or her self-identification while also allowing readers to immerse themselves into the author's psyche or consciousness. To elaborate on "illustration," there is an undeniable difference between the statements "he sneezed," and "inhaling, he shoots a violent mist from his nostrils," though, each sentence describes the same occurrence. Similarly, there is a difference between explaining what it's like to be black, Latino, Asian, and Middle Eastern, and showing the "what it's likeness" or his and her artistic consciousness (Nagel 1974, 435–50). Granted, whites have shown "what it's like" to be him or her, but I contend that the individuals in interest groups must discontinue explanatory and often querulous

compos mentis

works, and instead strive to increase production of illustrative works, such as Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and August Wilson's *Fences*. These two works are paragons of how individuals in interest groups can cultivate their self-identification through illustrations. Since, in the former, Morrison writes in the first person as a means to illustrate the struggles of two young black girls in a society where blue eyes and pale skin is perceived as most desirable, and, in the latter, Wilson uses poetic American slang and dialogue means to illustrate how familial problems transcend race and class. Furthermore, if one considers poet and literary critic, Samuel Taylor Coleridge's account on how audiences ought to receive a given work, that is, if the reader "pauses and half recedes, and from the retrogressive movement collects the force which again carries him onward," the reader immerses him or her self into the author's "formal reasonings," and is able to affirm his or her self-identity and ascend to the level of reader-author comprehension (Coleridge [1817] 2010, 590). To further illustrate my points, consider the art of drama, the actor or actress must immerse him or herself into the character, and experience what is it like to be that character. Similarly, while reading dramatic literature, one is immersed into all the different characters rather than just one, and likewise, through immersion and illustration that the text provides, the reader can understand and affirm the author's identity. Consequently, it should be evident how on the condition that interest groups often hinder an individual's ability to achieve identification, the positions of the author and text must be re-emphasized. By re-emphasizing the author and text, critics allow these underrepresented individuals to nourish his or her identity through illustrations, and readers can obtain and re-affirm their identification through immersion and comprehension of the text.

OBJECTIONS

At this point, I believe a Marxist may object that I am propagating the capitalist agenda and vulgar consumerist behavior into the masses' sub-consciousness by asking for a reestablishment of the author and text, or perpetuating hierarchal values. Indeed, I acquiesce, though the Marxist must grant that these underrepresented individuals within interest groups have not been able to fully enjoy and participate in capitalism, or gain supremacy through the system in the way that whites have done. Moreover, such individuals have not participated in the self-interestedness so many whites already have and continue to experience. Now, I do not endorse any kind of supremacy, but if capitalism is a necessary condition for the historically

subjugated individuals to obtain a sense of self-identification, then the Marxist asks for the termination of self-identities that have hardly been cultivated. In fact, in her work *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*, hooks shows how blacks eradicate their cultural identities in the U.S by imitating white and their aesthetics, and so a Marxist society would enforce the annihilation of cultural identity from both parties, but this demand seems intuitively unjust. Moreover, it is at least theoretically possible in a non-Marxist society for a black person to embrace his or her own identity and a white person to respect the black person's identity without necessarily eradicating his or her own white identity either. Thus, though the Marxist's arguments are potent, and weaken my thesis since I am endorsing a hierarchal system of values, but I believe that this is not a reason to dispose my arguments as entirely out of the question, especially because Marxism itself both in theory and practice is vulnerable to heavy criticisms.

CONCLUSION

In sum, I have argued that since interest groups interfere an individuals' self-identity, reestablishing the importance of the author and text in literature, allows authors to achieve self-identification while also allowing readers to immerse themselves in the text and gain a level of comprehension with the author through illustration. Briefly put, interest groups are subject to criticism from a nominalist position. Indeed, I argue that Woolf, and, hooks adhere to the nominalist position while criticizing interest groups. If one accepts the conclusion that interest groups stunt the individual's ability to cultivate a self-identification, then he or she may accept my second argument that asserts how Kant's prescriptions of "disinterestedness" are consistent with the hypothetical possibility of individual's possessing different kinds of "formal" reasonings similar to how there are several ways to prove one tautology. Additionally, through illustrative texts, rather than explanative texts, individuals can present their artistic consciousness as authors and gain self-identification not only through the act of being an author, but also through readers when they immerse themselves in the text in order ascend to the level of comprehension with the author. However, the immersion of the reader with the text, and the affirmation of the author's self-identification, depends on the emphasis on the author and the text. Hence, I argue against postmodernist's "interested readings" and interest groups because they delay the maturation of an individuals identity. I also argue for the re-establishment of the author and text in

compos mentis

order for underrepresented authors to gain self-identification through illustration, and also for readers to comprehend an author's identity, or experience an author's poetic consciousness.³

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3. I would like to give special thanks to the anonymous editors for their helpful suggestions and to Thomas Mann for his correspondence and work as a prime mediator.

Pursuit of Progressive Truths: Cognitive Functionalism

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ABSTRACT

Cognitive Science is an up-and-coming field of research which has already identified the need for integration between philosophers, neuroscientists, biochemists, radiologists, linguistics, psychologists, and many more. One such a need for this field of research is from the acceptance of the consequences of neurological functionality. Society and individuals interact with the cognitively unstable, impaired, and the dysfunctional on a regular basis. These instabilities, dysfunctions, deficiencies, etc. have relational consequences such as irrational behavior and attitudes which stem from such defective cognitions. Seemingly "normal" or "regular" cognitions experience a sequence of events which will be referred to as "cognitive functionalism." This process often times behaves in ways which can misallocate, mistransmit, or group information causing a final result of phenomenal experience and understanding, which varies from the external information. Allowing irrationality to survive in a society can damage progression and understanding of truth. It is not easy to acknowledge seemingly "average normal everyday people" in our society are not functioning properly or to a potentially higher capability. In a society allowing liberty and autonomy, people must recognize a lack of understanding and practice with regards to cognitive science and its direct relation to attitudes and behaviors of everyday life. This essay briefly addresses the idea of cognitive functionalism and it's relation to belief formation as well as the logical, ethical, and aesthetic consequences of such beliefs. The aim of Cognitive Functionalism is to identify cognitive processes which may disallow an individual to accurately process or access truths about an external world.

Keywords: Cognitive-Science, Cognitive-Functionalism, Neuro-Ethics, Rational-Logic, Aesthetics, Truth

INTRODUCTION

There are two unavoidable gaps in any behavioral account: one between the stimulating action of the environment and the response of the organism and one between consequences and the resulting change in behavior. Only brain science can fill those gaps.

—B. F. Skinner (1989, 18)

The phenomena of thaumazein consumes both philosophers and scientists alike. Variation between defining the two is simple. Scientists observe, experiment, and make conclusions about relations held among various properties and phenomena occurring in the world. Such research and investigations for empirical data occurs when current knowledge is insufficient and cannot answer all questions and/or problems which arise. Although the scientist prepares, gathers, and reports the evidence of relations, a philosopher is needed to inquire about the nature of such relations and develop additional questions of concern. The symbiotic relationship between the scientist and the philosopher is one of checks and balances; a necessary team. True philosophers of science are not ones of a first-hand nature, but rather second-hand nature; those who are rationalistic and critically analyze by investigating problems as opposed to merely developing an idea or theory. "The checking of their proposed solutions should parallel the corresponding operations in science – that is, the method of philosophizing should be scientific" Bunge (1998, 246). The second-hand philosopher, unlike the first, follows through and compares theories to empirical data. An expectation which needs to be put upon a philosopher before analyzing a theory related to science is that s/he must be acquainted and well versed in such area of science which responds to the field which is being examined. Without such knowledge set, a philosopher could find his/herself aimlessly throwing a dart blindfolded. The ambition is appreciated, but his/her theories are not always in correspondence with a scientific reality. The objective for the philosopher and scientist team is to overcome an anthropocentric viewpoint; a shallow

interpretation and conclusion about knowledge of the world. Such limitations handicap human potentiality and progress.

—Provenzano (2013)

Science has a graveyard of deceased theories of thought. Fritz Machlup suggested that as anything else in this world, knowledge dies or evolves. Knowledge has been estimated to have a half-life of only five years in psychological studies. “Knowing” this, it can be assumed there is a causation for such error and redevelopment of theories.

Epistemology, the study of knowledge; what it is, how it is derived, and how it can be accessed, is a branch of philosophy which needs development in order to propel neuroscientific research forward into new domains which over cross relational boundaries concerning society, logic, morality, and aesthetic judgment. Several theories in Perceptual Epistemology have addressed raw feelings via sensory modalities (organs/part which interpret external stimuli—for example the eyes), which can vary. What is the meaning for such variance and how does it alter the perceptual interpretation of the world? Do these isolated experiences of qualia, the phenomenal experience and internal interpretation of stimuli, truly represent information about the external world from our own mind? What are the effects of superior and slow cognition in response to stimuli? In order to answer such questions, localized studies on deficiencies can give insight as to what sensory experiences are vacant or disturbed and the effects on conscious perceptual experience. If it is identified that particular deficiencies do cause variance in perceptual consciousness and interpretation of qualia, it can be hypothesized deficiencies or abnormalities can affect moral and logical cognition affecting an individual's ability to rationalize and/or empathize effectively; different cognitions cause different beliefs.

“Although notable exceptions exist amongst highly dedicated neurologists, neurosurgeons and rehabilitation specialists, the vast majority of patients with disorders of consciousness are a population who remain out of our gaze” (*Neurology of Consciousness* 2009, 235). Although this particular group is often ignored, what of those who appear “normal” yet have deficiencies or defects which are not as extreme? These minor errors could disrupt the authoritative stance of science of those with a higher ability to interpret sensory stimulation and prefrontal cognition with regards to rationality and emotional regulation. Issues which can arise from ignoring the proper recovery or acceleration of cognition can result negatively not only for the patient and family, but also society.

COGNITIVE FUNCTIONALISM EXPLAINED

This section will discuss a theory of Cognitive Functionalism which I have developed based off of empirical evidence provided both through the sciences as well as philosophical inquiry. In philosophy of mind, functionalism the idea that internal experience alone does not explain why the experience is occurring, rather a systematic explanation provides insight as to how particular functions of parts within the system cause variance in experience. Functionalism is what makes something a thought, feeling, experience, etc. Cognition defined in philosophy, is the process of knowing. Cognition as defined in regards to neurobiology is the awareness and appropriate behavior as the result of an interpretation of stimuli and internal motivations. Stimuli can be experienced both externally through sensory modalities as well as internally (for example, a hallucination). Oftentimes internal stimuli is dependent upon what is referred to as "brain states" or a type of process occurring within the brain which can be observed externally via the use of tools as well as an observation on behavior. These brain states reflect phenomenal experiences such as mood, emotion, memory, appetite, desires, disabilities, etc. If a combination of both definitions were to occur it would suggest that the neurobiological process of cognition is what causes the notion of "knowing." Behavior and final interpretation of the cognition would lead to an understanding of an external stimuli or internal stimuli. The result of the cognitive process is what appears to be highly misunderstood because the final product of cognition is not necessarily accurate in relation to the experienced situation, which can lead to detrimental consequences on personal psyche as well as societal beliefs which will be discussed in later essays.

There are relations between a phenomenal experience and the reaction held within a cognitive system. One of the largest mistakes in epistemology and philosophy of mind is the assumption that a phenomenal feel and the higher order cognitive function are of one singular phenomena as opposed to a complex string of cause and effects; the reactions of synapses, dendrites, and other biological/electrical/chemical components of the brain. If someone experiences pain, it has a cause which can be either internal or external. Accepting this viewpoint can eliminate skepticism and concern about phenomenal experiences such as phantom limbs where the person experiences feelings such as pain or movement which is internally relational to having an appendage which is no longer attached (which will be discussed in depth in a later essay) but is not directly relational. There are variances in the cognitive system during such experience which explains why the

relational feeling is not the same as the directly relational feeling. Easier accounts of understanding on such experience are those of hallucination and illusion (which will be discussed in depth in a later essay).

Cognitive functionalism is a cognitive processes including neurochemical, electrical and biological functions all work in conjunction with one another to form a perceptual experience. The end resulting experience is dependent upon cognitive processes; therefore, a change in one area of the process can alter the end result into a perceptual experience which is not aligned with the inputs received via sensory modalities from the external world. The following diagrams are meant to aid in understanding of how inputs and outputs can differentiate during cognition without any abrupt disturbances (which too can cause changes in allocation of information which will be discussed in a later essay).

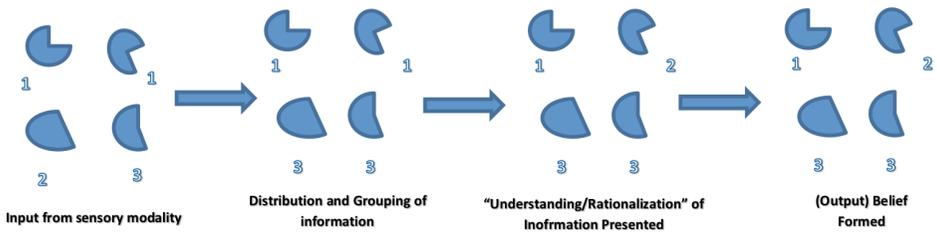


Diagram 1.1

Each symbol represents an external input stimuli. The numbers in the beginning picture accurately label the symbols in accordance to shape. The top two shapes are the exact same but have difference positioning; they are the same shape but rotated at different degrees on the focal point. The bottom two shapes are different than the top shapes and are also different than each other. In this case let us assume a visual stimuli of the symbol's shape (as you actually are viewing it on the document). Symbols 1 (which there are two of), 2, and 3 all hold similar, yet different shapes.

In the second stage of this sequence, the symbols are visually perceived (are assigned as holding a certain shape) via a sensory modality (eyes). In the first step, the sensory modality (eyes) saw the stimuli as top 1,1 and bottom 2,3 but the interpretation of that information changed to top 1,1 and bottom 3,3. This change occurred because of the cognitive process, not because there was a change in stimuli. During this experience, the symbol with the shape of 2 and 3 are interpreted as holding the same shape which is not what the original input indicated, therefore a flaw of cognition occurred in the second step and the process continues with

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inaccurate information. This misinterpretation of the external data in this stage is due to a defect, deficiency, etc. in the sensory modality. Another example of this occurrence would be an instance of colorblindness, there may be a problem with the optic nerve causing a change in what the brain perceives the color to be which is not reflective of the actual color of the object.

Sequence 3 of the diagram represents the cognitive processing of the visual input. During this process, the images are distributed and "understood" by cognitive functions. During this process in this example, the symbols 1 were not successfully "understood;" the cognition failed to perform a mental rotation and therefore, now interprets a symbol 1 as a different symbol which holds different shape than symbol 1. The person engaged in this experience then can formulate a belief which differs from not only the true symbols in the external world, but also from the visual input (inability to mentally rotate). In this situation, it is apparent that the belief formed about the symbols is not true to the actual external properties of the symbols, yet, this belief could be acceptable as a belief of epistemic ought. The person "ought" to believe that both symbol 1s are not the same symbols and that symbols 2 and 3 are the same symbols because the person's cognition and visual inputs gave evidence to believe so, however as seen in the diagram above that evidence was not presented and was skewed during a cognitive process.

FIXING/IDENTIFYING DEFECTS DURING COGNITION AND THE EFFECTS OF BELIEF FORMATION

Identifying areas of cognition and sensory modality deficiency can lead to more accurate belief forming practices. For example, if the above participant were to undergo a surgical procedure to correct a defect in his/her eye, then the belief forming process would appear as follows in diagram 1.2 where symbols 2 and 3 are no longer visually perceived as the same object and thus can be processed differently during cognition. This correction in stage 2 can lead to a higher chance of accurate belief formation about the input; the final stage is more likely to reproduce the first stage.

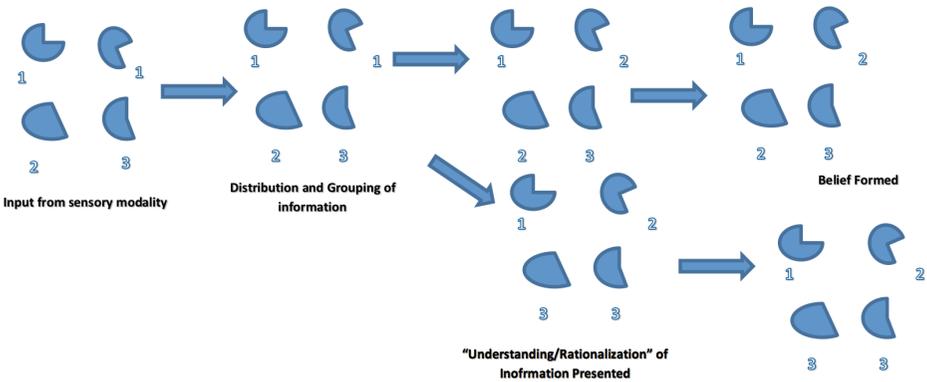


Diagram 1.2

Although the sensory modality was corrected by a surgical procedure in this example, it can still be shown that despite (once again) receiving the proper information via a sensory modality, cognition can modify this information. In this diagram stage 3 determines the output belief formulation which can be accurate or faulty. Accepting this information can lead to higher level questioning and theory development in epistemology, ethics, metaphysics, and logic.

At the level of the whole person, this neuronal goal reveals itself, in part, as the pursuit of knowledge or, more generally, the pursuit of stimulation. Of crucial importance in this process is the habituation mechanism. Without it, redundant stimuli could satisfy the neuron. Novel stimuli would not be sought knowledge would not be acquired, and the survival of the species would be unlikely...In the context of the present theory, knowledge is a collection of casual relations encoded in the form of synaptic transmittance values... it is only from the viewpoint of the whole brain that strings of excitatory and inhibitory impulses take on more complex meaning. (Klopf 1982, 89)

VARIANCES IN COGNITIVE ABILITY AND OUTPUT

The purpose of this section is to present information which suggests that all minds are not created equally, and discrepancy exist in cognitive abilities. As presented in the section above, problems of understanding information can occur

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during stage 3 or the "understanding"/cognition stage. The differences result in different outputs/beliefs. It is possible for the mind to be overwhelmed and/or malfunction. During cognition, information can be grouped and then signaled as a cluster. It is possible that individuals of this cluster (individual pieces of the information) are rerouted inappropriately. This body of evidence can easily be missed due to the lack of observation and/or underdeveloped technology. This grouped information processing is created for efficiency, but when a mind's quotient for information retention and processing is lowered, variance in output occurs; a variance in behavioral, attitudes, mood, etc.

Take for example functional IQ, a score assigned from standardized tests which reflect a cognition's ability to identify and accurately solve pattern related puzzles. A person with a higher IQ score can identify more patterns accurately in a shorter period of time than that of a person who scored lower on the same test. For example, if I have an IQ of 186 and BOB has an IQ of 101, then I identified more patterns accurately in a shorter period of time than BOB on the standardized test. Hypothetically, the person with the higher IQ should be able to problem solve better than the lower IQ. This suggests that the person with the higher IQ has a better cognitive functionalism because the output of the cognition utilized when taking the test produces a more accurate outcome. (In this example neither individuals have any other mental disturbances or issues- no Asperger's, etc). Oftentimes, a person with the higher IQ finds the lower IQ individual to be irrational or less moral because the person with the higher IQ has the preset ability to process and retain more information appropriately than the lower IQ which may be grouping information and not accurately processing the information. The belief formation (output) of the higher IQ individual is different than that of the lower IQ individual because of the mental capacity differences.

Additional types of intelligence have been recognized by the neuroscientific community such as general intelligence and fluid intelligence. General intelligence is the understanding of the correlations between cognitive tasks. General intelligence, if higher oftentimes results in an output of higher/accurate performance/understanding in social situations and academics. General Intelligence is often broken down into abilities in relation to spacial, numerical, social, verbal, logical, and casual intelligences. General intelligence is the totality of all of those categories. Granted a person with a higher general intelligence generally reacts appropriately, it must be recognized that deficiencies in any of the areas results in inappropriate outputs in that specific group. For example, if BOB scores low in the

area of logic, then his cognitive outcomes in relation to logic may be flawed more often than those who score higher, however, without testing, BOB would not know of this. Fluid intelligence concerns the ability to solve problems logically without previous information. It is linked with the logic and numerical domains of general intelligence. Higher IQs also oftentimes result in higher fluid intelligence. Inductive reasoning and deductive reasoning are abilities gained through fluid intelligence. Without these types of inference, appropriate behavior, mood, emotion, etc cannot be achieved. Therefore, if someone has a low fluid intelligence, than s/he will oftentimes have an inappropriate cognitive output.

Images of the brain have indicated that fluid intelligence and general intelligence is recognizable and quantifiable. Functional Magnetic Response Imaging (fMRI) is a tool used to analyze cognitive states via imaging which records variances in blood oxygen levels, neural activity, etc. Color differences in the images represent what is occurring biologically, electrical, and chemically in the brain. These color reactions are located on the brain and change depending upon the conditions which the person is undergoing. During cognition, parts of the brain are recognized as being activated or deactivated. Activation or deactivation of certain areas of the brain give insight to an individual's cognitive functionalism. The activations/deactivations recorded are compared to other studies and normalcies which consistently result in a particular output. For example, higher levels of grey matter (a part of the central nervous system composed of intra-level biological parts of the brain such as capillaries, dendrites, axons, etc) in the front of the brain are linked to higher levels of general intelligence, whereas the totality of grey matter does not have a direct link to general intelligence. Localization is needed to determine what location of the brain regulates and analyzes logical and rational information. A localized section of the brain, the prefrontal cortex for example, is noted as one of the main final processors of information in the brain. It determines behavioral response, planning, and expression—turning “thoughts” (input) into action (output). The parietal cortex has also been linked to problem solving activities. It has also been observed that the rear brain if damaged results in a lower IQ, whereas damage to the front of the brain appears to have no effect on IQ.

Putting aside a question of dualism of the brain and the mind (which to some is viewed as a problem in philosophy of mind for cognitive functionalism), there is evidence that processes in the brain directly correlate to phenomenal experiences. Particular brain structures and processes must be aligned in order for general intelligence and fluid intelligence to be functional and reliable. Without acceptance

and recognition of what I will call "cognitive functionalism," further development could remain stagnant due to illogical beliefs formulated during this process about the validity of such possibilities in the research field of cognitive science.

COGNITIVE FUNCTIONALISM EFFECTS ON LOGICAL BELIEF DEDUCTION AND FORMATION

One must conclude, as a firmly fixed scientific generalization, that the properties of the external world are rarely represented in a straight-forward way in the human responses triggered in that world. Should perception therefore be expected to be disorganized and chaotic? Not at all... The reason for the apparent disjunction between external stimulus properties and those of the final percept is not hard to find. (Geldard 1975)

Mathematics can be used as a metaphorical (and quite literal) representational tool when analyzing rationality and cognitive functionalism. BOB has access to external information. The totality of the information acquired and utilized by BOB is that of a specific domain, not of the totality of all the information in the external world. Because of this, BOB can only use a filter as opposed to an ultra-filter. In an ultra-filter, all real world truths are available, but in the non-ultra-filter, the domain BOB filter, only some truths are accessible and even possible. BOB's beliefs about a truth then can in reality be inaccessible. In addition, BOB's beliefs can become unaligned with the real truths (held in the ultra-filter). Higher ability and recognition (along with the desire for attention toward inputs) in cognitive functionalism would allow a larger domain. Fine tuning BOB's cognitive functionalism would in turn, allow BOB to access more potential truths. BOB's default is not the ideal, not for BOB or for society as a whole. Without a larger filter, with greater access to real truths, BOB can formulate invalid and unsound beliefs when compared to a real world truth.

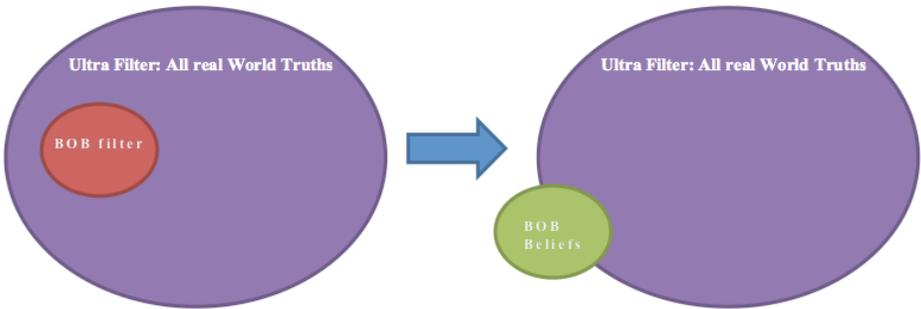


Diagram 2.1

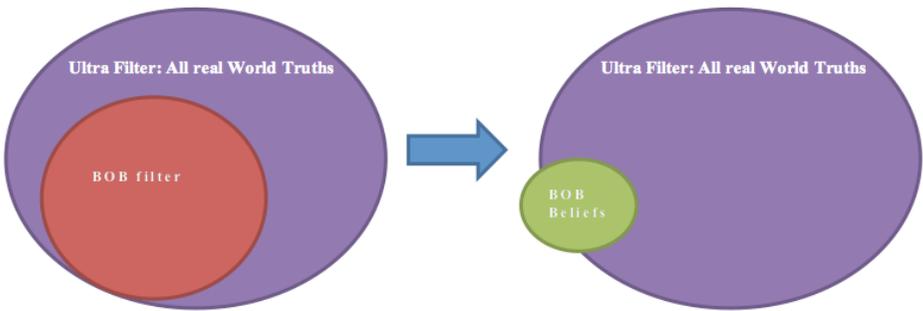


Diagram 2.1, top; Diagram 2.2, bottom.

In diagram 2.1 BOB filter's domain is smaller than BOB filter's domain in diagram 2.2. In this basic example, BOB belief domain in diagram 2.1 are not as accurate with real world truths as BOB belief domain in diagram 2.2. The increased accuracy in this example in diagram 2.2 is caused by BOB's access to additional real world truths. Ideally, if BOB had perfect cognitive functionalism, this would ring true, however, as discussed previously in this essay the chances of a person having such an ability (without technological, surgical, or performance enhancing supplements), this is improbable.

What kind of attitude is holding something to be true? What kind of mental function do beliefs serve? First of all, if I believe that A is the case, I normally act as if A were the case. For instance, since I believe that the weather will be nice tomorrow, I might make plans for a hike tomorrow with a couple of friends. So one role that beliefs play in our mental lives, is that decisions for action are based upon them. (Leitgeb 2013)

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BOB's filter domain dictates the attitudes and behaviors of BOB's beliefs with regards to certain propositions. There can be several instances in which BOB acts rationally, he acts as though the propositions and information he has access to be true. However, because of the possibilities in the ultra-filter, those which contain additional evidence and information which would add additional premises, ones which BOB is not accessing, a change to the conclusive truth-bearing quality can occur. BOB may come to a conclusion through deductive inference using a rational methodology, yet the conclusion could still not be true. BOB's aim for the truth is acceptable, but it needs to be recognized that BOB's domain filter does not equate to a necessary truth, something which often bewilders many.

Belief aims at the truth, just as science aims at the truth. In abstract terms, my aim is that if I believe the proposition X, then the actual world a member of that said X. My aim is for X to be true. Or in more concrete terms, if I learn a new piece of evidence, then if I am rational, I turn that piece of evidence into a belief of mine simply because I take that piece of evidence to be true. Moreover, if I am rational, my reason on the basis of beliefs to new beliefs on the rules of inference that I take to be truth preserving, that is logically valid because these rules are truth preserving and I am interested in the conclusion. (Leitgeb 2013)

For example, I believe the weather will be clear of rain tomorrow because the prediction of a meteorologist concluded the weather would be clear of rain tomorrow. Therefore, I can logically conclude using a rational methodology that the weather will be clear of rain tomorrow if the evidence is true and it is rational to accept this belief.

So,

X belief weather will be clear of rain

Y prediction of meteorologist says it will be clear of rain tomorrow

Believe: X because Y is True

Also Believe: -X, if Y is false or negated

However, I may be ignorant toward information in the ultra-filter such as, the meteorologist is a pathological liar and the cloud formations suggest it will downpour tomorrow. If I were to include this information into my domain filter, I then could not rationally conclude that X, the weather will be clear of rain tomorrow.

It must also be noted, is possible to abandon or change our beliefs irrationally. This is performed by ignoring evidence although it would be taken to be true. Another irrational belief process is to believe something to be true without any “good” reasoning, without aiming at the truth. This type of cognitive attitude is considered to violate a rational ought by philosophers—engaging in activity of what you rational not ought to do. Cognitive science is interested in these failures, whereas philosophers are interested in how we ought to reason, an idea of normative standards. Combining both desires of academia allow further progression. Identifying failures or insufficient processes during cognitive functionalism is supported by both scientists and philosophers desires and methodologies when determining cognitive relations to rationality and phenomenal experience.

APPLICATION OF COGNITIVE FUNCTIONALISM: AESTHETIC JUDGMENT

Aesthetics judgment is a final output of belief formation during “cognitive functionalism.” Oftentimes, it is argued that aesthetic judgment is that of a subjective manner. This subjectivity of interpretation of the qualia is caused by cognition. If a person has a higher capacity to interpret the stimuli, then s/he has the ability to truly experience the stimuli accurately in alignment with the external world. Phenomenal feelings associated with an aesthetic experience is oftentimes caused during the “understanding” stage of “cognitive functionalism.” A person can engage in projection which does not represent the piece of input at all, but rather an association of feeling/mood/emotion which is internalized and personal. In this section, aesthetic judgment will be analyzed from a non-subjective, non-biased perspective which will adopt “cognitive functionalism.”

This section of the essay was written in a separate essay discussing the perceptual experience of Aesthetics and will also be used for this essay. Can one see something for what is really is? If so, why would individuals continually seek out their infatuation? If s/he knows it to be truthfully something s/he loves and understands, it is contradictory to the journey in itself. Does the initial impression give enough evidence to justify such a belief—something as profound or ideal as an ideal aesthetic beauty? What if overtime, after investigation, an inspection of all dynamics, the once beloved dissipates into a disturbing and disappointing conclusion of disgust. Why wouldn't this be known from the beginning? Is this all due to a misinterpretation of the facts presented at first; do we, humanity have the

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capacity to make such a grand accurate phenomenal intuitive assessment?

"... we have an experience when the material experienced runs its course to fulfillment. Then and then only is it integrated within and demarcated in the general stream of experience from other experiences" Dewey (1934, p. 36)

What if mental capacity limited the amount of information which could be received and interpreted at one given time? Let us say a person, Sally, visually perceives a few paintings while wandering around an art museum.



Painting Green One



Painting Green Two

It would not be absurd to assume Sally's impression, reaction, and evaluation of painting green one was more immediate than painting green two. The logic behind such an assumption is simple, there are more components to painting green two than there is to painting green one; more color, varying depth of paint strokes, frame detailing, non-symmetrical shapes, etc. The amount of mental activity required to interpret painting green two is greater than painting green one due to all of the additional components.

t^n = time to interpret stimuli

$x^{\text{subscript}}$ = stimuli with a subscript of corresponding complexity value (the higher the number of subscript, the more complexity). For example:

$t^n = x^3$ will be greater than $t^n = x^{1/4}$

The increase in complexity directly correlates to an increase in time to fully interpret (perceive and place understanding) the stimuli via cognitive functionalism.

Using this scale, I will explain how painting green two holds higher time to interpret stimuli than painting green two for Sally.

Premise 1: Sally interprets painting green one of complexity x^1

P2: Sally interprets painting green two of complexity x^{23}

P3: It holds true that t^n is dependent upon the amount of x^n and an increase in t^n results from an increase in x^n

P4: x^1 is less than x^{23}

Therefore, the t^n for x^1 is less than t^n of x^{23}

Therefore, the time to interpret the information for Sally for x^{23} is longer than that of x^1

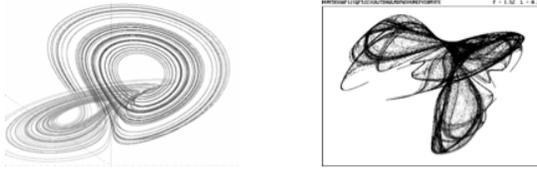
Therefore, the time to interpret the information of painting green two for Sally is longer than the amount of time for her to interpret painting green one

Although at first glance this information of aesthetic valuing may seem misplaced, it is in actuality essential for properly understanding and applying an epistemological approach to perception for a second-hand philosopher. Empirical data must be considered when determining what theories allow accommodations of the information/evidence. Is painting green one what it presents itself to be or is there something which is not seen by Sally's eye? If this theory rings true, painting green one would have to contain less complex properties received through her sensory modalities. Theories advocating ideas of unknown modalities and senses would also have to subscribe to the theory because this theory is calculated off of an entire experience. "Not knowing and understanding" how one sees does not disqualify the actual experience and mental process experienced by Sally. It is possible for Sally never to fully understand either painting, however, she will "understand" painting green one more than painting green two. To eliminate any concerns of assumption on my claims, experimental data as empirical evidence will be provided to eliminate such skepticism.

In an experiment conducted by Sillman University, *Judgments of Time*,

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Aesthetics, and Complexity as a Function of The Fractal Dimension of Images formed by Chaotic Attractors, Aesthetic judgments were assigned in correlation with a calculated complexity. Three-dimensional images of structures which are build off of a programmed algorithm or fractal can be calculated as less or more complex in mathematical structure. A chaotic attractor is a specific type of algorithm. Below are images (as merely only an example for understanding) of a "basic" type of chaotic attractor and a more "complex" chaotic attractor.



Less Complex Chaotic Attractor More Complex Chaotic Attractor

The theory of perceptual time exposure correlating with aesthetic judgment/assignment and complexity presented above is complimentary to the results of the experiment conducted at Sillman University. Results include: "the three lower levels of the fractal dimension, the participants scaled the aesthetics as increasing with increased complexity" and "The one difference compared to the results for the complexity judgments were that the 3-way interaction was also significant, a result difficult to interpret"—this could be due to the participants not having a full interpretation because the exposure time was limited." "The mathematical complexity (fractal dimension, D2) was positively correlated to both the complexity ratings ($r = .37$) and the aesthetic ratings ($r = .46$), but not the time estimations ($r = .03$). The highest correlation was between the aesthetic and complexity ratings ($r = .64$). The remaining two correlations were remarkably unremarkable, the one between time estimation and complexity ratings ($r = .07$), and the one between time and aesthetics judgments ($r = .05$). Thus, the three correlations involving relationships among fractal dimension, complexity judgments, and aesthetic judgments were strong."

Additional published studies, which were noted in the above study case, have shown similar evidence such as: "Randomly constructed polygons were frequently used for studies of complexity during the 1950s to the 1970s. Some studies found that the number of sides of random polygons were a major determinant of perceived complexity (Arnoult 1960; Attneave 1957; Attneave & Arnoult 1956; Day

1967; Munsinger & Kessen 1964; Stenson 1966). Generally, these studies showed complexity judgments as an increasing monotonic function of the number of sides, considered a measure of complexity, of the judged images (Day 1967). Attneave (1957) also showed that P^2/A (P is perimeter/ A area of a polygon) and angular variability also contributed to judgments of complexity." These studies once again suggest that an increase in the amount of visual stimuli (sides of polygons) are directly correlated with the perceived valuing of complexity. (Provenzano 2013).

Accepting this information could lead to a conclusion that aesthetic judgment could be analyzed on a quantifiable scale. Some individuals with a higher functioning cognition could perceive and accurately analyze information which is more complex and thus could make an aesthetic judgment which would be marginally "more complete" than an individual who has a lower functioning cognition. An area of philosophy which has often been ignored could in turn, teach cognitive scientists about the emotional and phenomenal assessments of qualia. Several studies suggest merely looking at art or listening to music can influence emotion and mood which are a fraction of cognitive functionalism.

CONCLUSION

The brain is composed of neurological responses which can be related to emotional responses and belief formation. Beliefs which are formed via cognitive functionalism are dependent upon a limited domain filter which contains a set number of possible truths. Additional truths are available in an ultra-filter, aka the external world. Information processing occurs during multiple processes in the brain. When particular processes are disrupted or inaccurate, an inaccurate belief can form. This conclusion however is viewed as rational if the individual's conclusion is logically derived from the domain filter. Expanding an individual's domain filter will result in more accurate truths. Accurate truth conclusions allow individuals to formulate moral attitudes and behaviors better than inaccurate conclusions. Higher levels of general intelligence, fluid intelligence, and IQ can result in more accurate aesthetic judgments. All in all, acceptance of empirical evidence provided by the neuro and cognitive studies can allow progression in multiple branches of philosophy including aesthetics, epistemology, philosophy of mind, and ethics.

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Lewis' Personal Identity

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ABSTRACT

In their debate about personal identity, Derek Parfit (1971) thinks that our common sense notion of personal identity cannot be preserved, since formal identity fails to preserve it in the fission paradox scenario; David Lewis (1976) thinks that it can be preserved with tense-identity, according to which two continuant persons C1 and C2 are tense identical at T1 iff they share the same person stages at T1. I argue that Lewis' notion of tense identity falls short of its intended goal to capture our common sense notion of personal identity, which is committed to numerical identity, not mere qualitative identity. Whereas for Lewis, two continuant persons C1 and C2 are *prima facie* numerically identical insofar as they are indiscernible, sharing the same person-stages, this indiscernibility relation between C1 and C2 only makes them qualitatively identical, rather than actually numerically identical.

Keywords: David Lewis, Derek Parfit, Personal Identity, Tense Identity, Numerical Identity, Qualitative Identity, Common Sense Notion of Personal Identity, Formal Identity, Survival, and Fusion Paradox

In this essay, I will survey the debate between Derek Parfit and David Lewis on personal identity and then identify the source of disagreement between Parfit and Lewis, which turns on whether or not our common sense notion of personal identity over time can be preserved given Parfit's argument against it. Parfit thinks that our common sense notion of personal identity cannot be preserved, since formal identity fails to preserve it, but on the other hand, Lewis thinks that it can be preserved with tense-identity (I will explain this term later). I will argue that Lewis' notion of tense identity falls short of its intended goal to preserve our common sense notion of tense identity. While Lewis' notion of tense identity does preserve some of our common sense notion of personal identity over time, it is insufficient in capturing numerical identity. I will not state any opinions or arguments about

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Parfit's argument against personal identity overtime; his argument only serves as a context for understanding Lewis' argument for tense identity.

PARFIT VS. LEWIS

Parfit points out an incompatibility between the formal nature of identity and the criterion of psychological continuity: the formal nature of identity requires transitivity, but psychological continuity can allow intransitive relations among psychological states, which obtain in the fission paradox (Parfit 1971, 8). For example, if my body is badly damaged in T1 and my right and left hemispheres are transplanted to two separate bodies respectively in T2, then two versions of me in T2 are psychologically continuous with me in T1, I am psychologically continuous with them, but they are not in psychological continuity with each other. Parfit argues that fission cases show that identity, which requires transitivity, does not matter, instead what matters is survival. Parfit writes: "The relation of the original person to each of the resulting people contains all that interests us-all that matters-in any ordinary case of survival. This is why we need a sense in which one person can survive as two." (Parfit 1971, 10). In other words, what matters is that two persons in T2 survive me from T1: they survive me insofar as they have my memories, personalities, beliefs, preferences, and values. In this sense, their existence are my legacy.

Lewis, on the other hand, disagrees with Parfit. While Lewis agrees that there is an incompatibility between identity and psychological continuity, identity does not need to be completely rejected. Lewis writes:

We can agree with Parfit (and I think we should) that what matters in questions of personal identity is mental continuity or connectedness, and this might be one-many or many-one, and admits of degree. At the same time we can consistently agree with common sense (and I think we should) that what matters in question of personal identity- even in the problem cases-is identity. (Lewis 1976, 19)

Instead, Lewis provides what seems like an another version of identity that is compatible with psychological continuity and it could handle intransitive cases such as the fission paradox. This notion of identity is that persons consist of temporal instances called person-stages. Person-stages are basically temporal moments or instances of a single person's life. These person-stages are psychologically related

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to each other by mental-connectedness (i.e. causal dependence of mental states) and mental-continuity (i.e. connections among mental states over time) (Lewis 1976, 20). Lewis thinks that a person is essentially an entire interrelation of person-stages, which he calls *continuant person* (Lewis 1976, 21). This is where Lewis introduces a distinction between the R-relation and the I-relation.

According to Lewis, the R-relation is the relation among person-stages and this relation consists of mental connectedness and continuity among person-stages (Lewis 1976, 20). For example, in T1 I am concerned whether or not I will survive. What this means is whether or not there is some future person-stage that is R-related to a person stage of me at T1. The I-relation, on the other hand, is a relation between *continuant persons*. C1 (*continuant person*) and C2 are I-related if and only if all their person-stages are R-related to each other. What this means is that C1 and C2 are identical to each other if they share all the same person-stages (Lewis 1976, 21). Lewis goes as far to claim that he “cannot tolerate any discrepancy in formal character between the I-relation and the R-relation” (Lewis 1976, 21). He explicitly states that “the I-relation is the R-relation ” (Lewis 1976, 22). The kind of discrepancy Lewis has in mind is that it is possible that the I-relation remains transitive whereas the R-relations are not transitive.

Lewis thinks that this notion of identity, which is based on the distinction between the I-relation and the R-relation, can handle the fission paradox. The fission paradox is that in a hypothetical scenario, a single *continuant person* in T1 can split into two *continuant persons* in T2, both of which are psychologically continuous with that single person in T1 and vice versa, but they are not psychologically continuous with each other. In terms of the R-relation, a single person’s person-stage in T1 is R-related to two person’s person-stages in T2 and vice versa. However, two persons’ person-stages in T2 are not R-related to each other. In terms of I-relation, two *continuant persons* in T2 are I-related to a *continuant person* in T1 insofar as both had shared a person-stage with a *continuant person* in T1 prior to fission. However, two *continuant persons* in T2 are not I-related to each other. Lewis points out that there is intransitivity in both the I-relation and the R-relation, which shows that Lewis’ notion of identity handles the fission case pretty well insofar as there is no discrepancy between the I-relation and the R-relation (Lewis 1976, 24–26).

However, there is a question about how we are suppose to count persons in fission cases. One problematic possibility is that there are in fact two *continuant persons* all along whose person-stages happen to overlap at a certain point until fission at T2. In fact, this description is quite compatible with Lewis’ distinction

between the I-relation and the R-relation, so his distinction cannot rule out the description that some continuant person in fact happens to be two continuant persons who happen to share all the same person-stages. Furthermore, this description leads to what Lewis calls overpopulation: there are more continuant persons than there are person-stages. In other words, prior to fission (T2), there are two continuant persons C1 and C2 whose person-stages happen to overlap (Lewis 1971, 25).

Lewis finds a way out of this problem by presenting a new term: tense-identity. Whereas formal identity requires strict identity across time, tense-identity allows identity at a certain time (Lewis 1976, 26). For example, in the fission paradox, two persons in T2 are not formally identical to a single person in T1, since there is an intransitive relation among them. Formal identity requires transitive relations among person-stages across time. However, tense identity allows that two continuant persons are identical (or I-related) to each other at a certain time if they share all the same person-stages that are R-related to each other. However, in T2, there is no longer tense identity between continuant persons.

According to Lewis, there are three conditions for tense-identity: "This is the relation that holds between continuants C1 and C2 if and only if (1) they both exist at some time no later than t , (2) at any time no later than t , either both exist or neither does, and (3) at any time no later than t when both exist, they have exactly the same stages" (Lewis 1976, 28). The relation that Lewis mentions is tense-identity and " t " refers to a moment when fission transpires. In the pre-fission scenario, C1 and C2 both exist no later than t and both share exactly the same person-stages prior to t . Given that two continuant persons in the pre-fission scenario satisfy (1)-(3), both C1 and C2 are identical (insofar as they are identical at a certain time) at any time prior to t , but not identical after t . Both C1 and C2 became two separate persons at t .

In the light of the debate between Lewis and Parfit, it is important to ask if there really is a genuine disagreement between them. After all, when Lewis decides to provide tense-identity as an alternative to formal identity, it seems that he is agreeing with Parfit that formal identity does not matter and survival matters. If one tries to be sympathetic to Parfit's view, it is difficult to see how Parfit would disagree with Lewis' tense identity. Parfit may agree with Lewis that two continuant persons C1 and C2 share all the same person-stages prior to fission, but Parfit might reply that tense-identity fails to capture our common sense view of personal identity.

The real disagreement between Parfit and Lewis is whether or not our common sense view of personal identity can be preserved at all given Parfit's argument.

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On one hand, Lewis thinks that our common sense view of personal identity can be preserved by his account of tense-identity. On the other hand, Parfit thinks that only formal identity is an appropriate means to preserve personal identity over time, which fails to do so. Lewis would disagree with Parfit that the failure of formal identity to account for our common sense intuition of personal identity over time is the failure of common sense intuition of identity. Parfit would probably think that tense-identity cannot preserve our common sense intuition of identity. Parfit might think that tense-identity merely redescribes survival.

In fact, in Parfit's response to Lewis is that he fails to establish his case that identity matters. Parfit agrees with Lewis that what matters is that C1 has a present person stage that is R-related to a future person stage. However, Parfit argues that in order to show that identity matters Lewis has to show that a future person-stage belongs to C1 just as a present person-stage belongs to C1. However, in the fission scenario, it happens to be the case that a future person-stage does not belong to C1, but rather it belongs to some other continuant person who merely survives C1. A future continuant person has a person-stage that is R-related to that of C1, but his person-stage does not belong to C1 in the same way C1's person stage belongs to him (Parfit 1976, 94-95). In other words, Parfit thinks that a future person-stage should not only be R-related to me but it also has to belong to me in the same way my present person stage belongs to me. However, in the fission case, a future person stage cannot belong to me the same way my present stage belongs to me.

COMMON-SENSE SAVED?

While I will not defend Parfit's position that identity does not matter, I do think that Lewis gives an unconvincing argument to support his case. In this sense, I agree with Parfit that Lewis does not succeed in supporting his claim that identity matters. My main argument is that Lewis' tense identity does not succeed in preserving our common sense intuition of identity. I will begin with identifying our common sense intuition of personal identity.

The common sense intuition of personal identity is that we are a single unified person who persists over time. The person at T2 is the same person as me at T1, this sameness is *numerical identity* rather than qualitative identity. Some person at T2 may resemble me at T1 in terms of physical appearance, intelligence, personality, beliefs, memories, and such, but it is logically conceivable that such a person is not me but rather my clone. My clone would be qualitatively identical to me, but not

numerically identical to me. If we consider the fission case, my cerebral hemispheres could be divided and then transplanted in different bodies, which leads to two separate persons who are not numerically identical to each other or to myself prior to split-brain transplant. These separate persons may have my memories, beliefs, personalities, and such, but, so far, they are only (partially) qualitatively identical to me prior to fission. They share my psychological qualities, but they are still not numerically identical to me.

Parfit argues that as long as these persons survive me insofar as they continue to preserve essential qualities from me, that is all that matters. Parfit seems to be content with qualitative identity in cases of survival and thinks that numerical identity does not matter. Lewis agrees with Parfit that, strictly speaking, survival matters and that formal characteristics inherent in numerical identity do not matter, but he seems to think that we can have another notion of identity called tense-identity which functions similarly to that of numerical identity under certain conditions. As long as C1 and C2 exist prior to fission and share all the same person-stages that are R-related to each other, then they are I-related to each other.

While Lewis' tense identity does allow us to count C1 and C2 as a single person prior to the moment of fission, it also counts C1 and C2 as two persons at the moment of fission. This seems like a virtue of tense-identity, Lewis tests the virtue of tense identity by applying it to the case of Methuselah. Methuselah is a biblical character who lived for 969 years, but by the time he lived to 969 he probably wouldn't remember what he was like at the age of 100. If one divides Methuselah's age in 100 years each in terms of person-stages, then there are continuum ways to divide Methuselah's age in 100 years. One can start from Methuselah's birth to his 100th year or start from his 50th year to 150th. If this is the case, then there are infinite persons named Methuselah. Given that Methuselah at the age of 969 forgets what he was like at the age of 100, his person-stages are not transitively R-related and I-related. Lewis says that his tense-identity can solve this problem, since all continuant persons share the same person-stages at a certain time, so there is in fact one Methuselah rather than an infinity of them (Lewis 1976, 30–31).

Tense identity seems to give us an answer we want to hear in both the case of fission and Methuselah. However, there are some objections to consider:

First, while tense-identity might generate answers that we want to hear in both fission cases and the case of Methuselah, it does not capture the essence of our common sense intuition of personal identity. The common sense intuition of our personal identity is that my present self is the same as my future self insofar as

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both are numerically identical to each other. For many personal identity theorists, what underpins this numerical identity between our present and future selves is psychological continuity. If my future self's mental states are an extension of my present self's mental states, then both are the same person.

On the other hand, Lewis' tense identity amounts to something quite different. It does not give us numerical identity between continuant persons, but rather qualitative identity between continuant persons. Strictly speaking, C1 and C2 are not numerically identical in the formal sense (i.e. transitivity, symmetry, and reflexivity), but they are qualitatively identical insofar as they share the same temporal properties (such as person stages) that renders them *prima facie indiscernible*. The reason why I use the term "prima facie indiscernible" is that C1 and C2 appear to be indiscernible because they share the same temporal parts, but they are still logically distinct from each other. Metaphysically, C1 and C2 are inseparable by virtue of sharing the same temporal parts, but logically they are still distinct from each other since logically they can exist independently of each other in the fission case. Just because C1 and C2 are inseparable from each other, it does not follow that we should logically treat them as a single entity.

Consider the following analogy: It is the case that programs are inseparable from hardwares, but logically they are distinct from each other. Softwares consist of the series of binary codes that consists the number 0 and 1. The physical hardware, on the other hand, consists of materials such as silicon microchips, motherboard, hard drive, and others. In other words, Softwares are analyzed primarily in terms of what binary codes they have, whereas hardwares are analyzed in terms of what relevant parts constitute them. Both software and hardwares can be analyzed independently of each other, so both of them are logically distinct from each other. Likewise, two continuant persons are inseparable from each other, but they are logically distinct from each other.

Second, Lewis might face the problem of the ambiguity of identity. Lewis already mentions this problem by using an example of someone named "Ned". The name "Ned" might suffer from an ambiguity, since if the person "Ned" is in fact two indiscernible continuant persons who will split up at the moment fission, then the name "Ned" is ambiguous between two continuant persons. Lewis responds to this objection by pointing out that this is not a problem as long as "Ned" is essentially about someone before fission. In other words, we count two continuant persons as "Ned" until they split up into two separate continuant persons. Furthermore, Lewis said that facts about "Ned" such as "Ned is tall", "Ned is frightened", and "Ned is

waiting to be duplicated" are true about "Ned" but not about two persons who split up at the moment of fission (Lewis 1976, 29).

What if we replace "Ned" with an indexical "I"? Suppose that someone named Ned uttered "I am shy" at T1 prior to the moment of fission (T2) and at the moment of fission there are two continuants who are also shy. If both continuants are indiscernible at T1, then both uttered "I am shy" at the same time, place, and other contexts. However, the indexical "I" from "I am shy" is not a single indexical that rigidly designates a single person, but in fact there are two indexicals that rigidly designate two persons. After all, the indexical from "I am shy" can only designate someone who utters that statement and it happens to be the case that there are two continuant persons at T1 who uttered that statement. How can we count both continuants at T1 as one person when an indexical from the statement "I am shy" is in fact two indexical rigid designators? It would seem unusual to count both continuants as a single person given the above argument.

With regards to the first objection, Lewis might respond that we do not have to preserve everything about our common sense intuition of personal identity, preserving some of it should be enough. As long as C1 and C2 are temporally indiscernible by sharing the same person-stage, then we should count C1 and C2 as the same person at a certain time. When C1 and C2 cease to be temporally indiscernible at the moment of fission, then we should count both as two persons. This way of counting is intuitive because we tend to count spatiotemporal discrete objects the same way. If X and Y occupy the same location at the same time, then we count X and Y as one thing. Likewise, if C1 and C2 share the same person-stages at the same time, then we should count them as one person.

While it is the case that we count object X and Y as one object if X and Y occupy the same spatial and temporal location (same exact place at the same time), it may also be the case that X and Y are logically distinct from each other even though both occupy the same location at the same time. In principle, X and Y can superpose each other. For example, in physics there is a phenomenon called interference or wave propagation. Two waves can superpose each other when their corresponding crests meet each other at the same frequency, such superposition leads to indiscernibility between two waves (i.e. constructive interference). While we might count these waves as one wave for practical purposes, logically both waves are distinct from each other. Likewise, one could say that both continuant persons C1 and C2 superpose each other by sharing the same person-stages, but they are still logically distinct from each other. Technically, we should count C1 and

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C2 as two continuant persons rather than one.

It also seems as though Lewis' method of counting could be forensic. For clarification, Locke believes that the term "person" is a forensic term insofar as it ascribes moral agency to someone who may not necessarily be a single unified agent. As long as some person is a moral agent who can be held culpable or praiseworthy for *his* (or *her*) action by simply remembering or being aware of that action, then we ought to treat it as though it is a single person. We may treat a split-brain patient as a single person even though he or she has two minds inside one body, since a split brain patient can remember or be aware of his or her action. How is this relevant to Lewis' tense identity? Lewis appears to think that as long as two continuants act as a single unified agent, then we should count them as a single person.

However, it may not be enough that we count both continuants as a single person just because they appear like a single person. We may really want to count someone as a single person because that person is authentically a single person. To count two continuants as a single person on the basis of indiscernibility comes as close to pretending that they are a single person. It would seem that we count someone as a single person, rather than two persons, simply because it is convenient to our need to ascribe moral agency to someone. This hardly corresponds with our common sense intuition about personal identity, so it seems that Lewis does not succeed in preserving our common sense intuitions about personal identity.

With regards to the second objection, Lewis might respond that given that two continuants are indiscernible, we should treat "I" from "I am shy" as a pseudo-indexical. In this case, "I" looks like an indexical that refers to a single speaker, but in fact it refers to two continuant persons who are engaged in the same speech activity in an indiscernible manner. If two continuant persons engage in the same utterance in an indiscernible manner, then we should count both as a single speaker until the moment of fission. However, at the moment of fission, when two continuants utter the same statement "I am shy" there is a genuine indexical that rigidly designates the speaker.

There are at least two concerns with this potential response. First, one concern is that all indexical statements with an "I" might be a pseudo-indexical, since nobody is a single continuant person under Lewis' view. Furthermore, If two continuants split up at the moment of fission, why assume that they will not go through another moment of fission again? If there is another fission moment, then both continuants would utter a pseudo-indexical. Logically, this could go into a potential infinite

compos mentis

regress. Second, suppose that I have a clone who is qualitatively identical to me and both of us uttered the statement "I am shy". In this situation, me and my clone are indiscernible, but the statement "I am shy" are two statements with separate indexicals that designate two speakers. This situation is analogous with the case of two continuant persons insofar as both cases are cases of indiscernibility. If we should treat two continuants as a single speaker due to indiscernibility, why not treat me and my clone as a single speaker? The point of this analogy is to show that indiscernibility is not an excuse to treat two persons as one speaker.

In conclusion, Lewis and Parfit agree that formal identity does not matter, but survival matters. However, there seems to be a real disagreement between Lewis and Parfit. The disagreement is whether or not common sense intuition of personal identity matters. Parfit does not think it matters, but Lewis does. Lewis attempts to preserve common sense intuition of personal identity with his notion of tense identity. However, I argued that Lewis' tense identity does not succeed in preserving our commonsense intuition of personal identity. I argued that our common sense intuition of personal identity inclines toward numerical identity. While Lewis' tense identity seems to give us something very close to numerical identity, it is essentially qualitative identity.

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