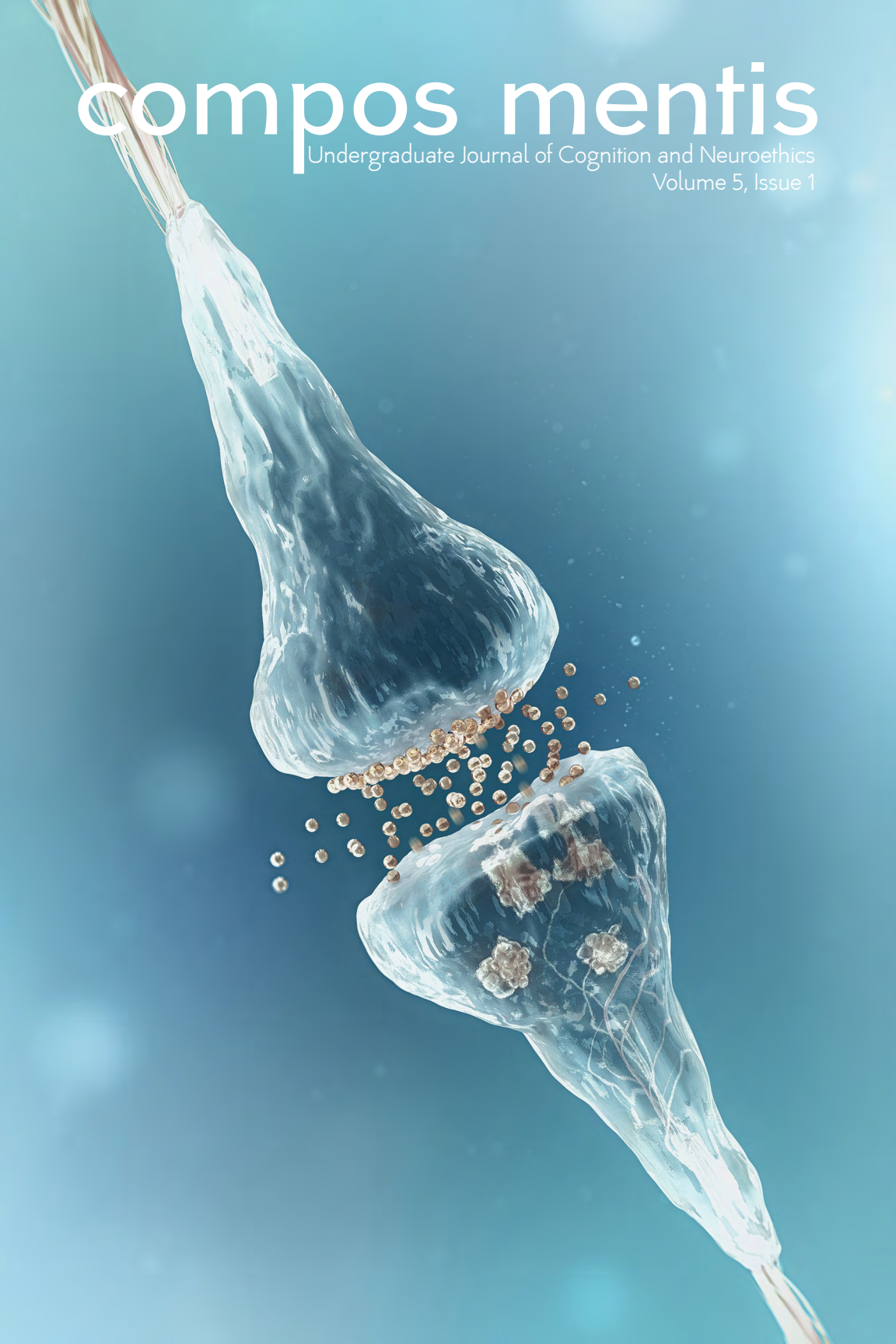


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Student Editor

Cody Hatfield-Myers

Production Editor

Zea Miller

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Center for Cognition and Neuroethics
University of Michigan-Flint
Philosophy Department
544 French Hall
303 East Kearsley Street
Flint, MI 48502-1950

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Mental Causation Under Two Types of Closure

Jonah Branding

Central Michigan University

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I argue that if mental events can cause behaviors, there is no way in which we could know. This is because belief in mental causation fails to satisfy what I refer to as the “descriptive condition for justified belief in causation” (DC), which states that a person p is justified in believing that event c causes event e only if p can give some account of how c causes e . It follows that in order to be justified in believing that a mental event m causes a behavior b , we must know what it is about the phenomenal content of m (rather than the mere physical correlates of m) which necessitates b 's occurring. In this way, to know that m causes b would require an answer to the problem of mental causation itself. Thus, insofar as we do not currently have an answer to the problem of mental causation, the belief that m causes b cannot be justified, since it fails to satisfy (DC). I go on to remark that if mental events do cause behaviors, the mechanism by which this cause occurs could even be unknowable in principle; that is, a solution to the problem of mental causation could be cognitively closed to human minds. I conclude that we should not hold mental events as being causally efficacious.

KEYWORDS

Philosophy of Mind, Philosophy of Science, Mental Causation, Epiphenomenalism, Justification, Mysterianism, Physical Closure, Cognitive Closure, Knowledge of Causation, Causal Inference

INTRODUCTION: CARVING A NICHE FOR MENTAL CAUSATION

How do our mental states cause our behaviors? How can my desire to drink tea levitate my arm toward this cup of earl grey? How does my opinion that Cage The Elephant is a wonderful band *cause* my fingers to click on their page on Spotify? How can the airy phenomenal experiences of our thoughts, feelings, desires, emotions, and proclivities impact the motions of our bodies, things which exist in the physical world?

It has been several hundred years now since Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia first framed this problem (known as *the problem of mental causation*) in a letter to Rene Descartes: "How [is it that] the mind of a human being can determine the bodily spirits in producing voluntary actions, being only a thinking substance[?]" (Soom 2010, 37) An objection which will be inevitably raised to anyone addressing the problem of mental causation in a modern context is that the problem itself is supposed to have been solved by modern science. Our new secular age has exorcised Descartes' supernatural discourse about "souls," and the "mind-body nexus." We recognize that mental states are linked in some fundamental way to states of the brain, and thus, it is thought, we no longer must worry about the difficulties involved in the messy dualism of Elizabeth and Descartes.

However, as Stephen Yablo notes, dualism "is not dead, only evolved. Immaterial minds are gone, it is true, but mental phenomena (facts, properties, events) remain. And although the latter are admitted to be physically *realized*, and physically *necessitated*, their literal numerical identity with their physical bases is roundly denied" (Yablo 1994, 264). We may no longer speak of minds as being fundamentally separate from their respective brains, but we still speak of the phenomenal content of our mental events (e.g., *the smell of roses* or *the feeling of happiness*) as being different in some vital respect from their physical correlates (e.g., *the uptake of 2-phenylethanol* or *the release of serotonin in the cerebral cortex*). Even if mental and physical events are in some sense two sides of the same coin, we can still reasonably speak of them as being at least superficially distinct. After all, even coins have a heads-side which is different from the tails-side.

None of this is to say that the footprint of our modern secular age is yet to grace the debate over mental causation. One of the principal contributions of our scientifically minded culture is that of "physical closure" (Crane 1992). It is supposed that every event in the universe has a sufficient cause in some

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prior physical event; on this view, all causal systems are physically “closed.” For example, strawberries don’t magically materialize on strawberry plants. Rather, the plant is determined to grow a strawberry by a set of prior physical conditions (e.g., the plant’s receiving such an amount of water and sunlight, the soil being such a way, the plant’s having such a genetic code). Similarly, it is supposed that since all human behaviors can be explained with reference to some prior set of physical conditions in the brain and body (e.g., *this set of nerves firing at this time, the release of this particular antagonist*), there is no room for mental conditions like desires, beliefs, opinions, etc. to cause behaviors.

Some authors have responded that behaviors could be “overdetermined” by having sufficient cause in both physical and mental prior conditions. On this view, it is both my neurophysical *and* mental states of say, desiring ice cream, which cause me to buy an ice cream cone. This might seem ad hoc, as it did to Jaegwon Kim, who referred to positing such overdetermining causal entities as “absurd” (Kim 1993, 281). I agree with Kim that we don’t have reason to believe that mental particulars overdetermine physical behaviors, but I think that we can give even more reason as to why this notion of overdetermination is unsatisfying.

In the following sections, I will not argue that mental causation does not occur. Rather, I will make the case that if some of our mental states do in fact cause some of our behaviors, there is no way in which we could know. This is because, lacking an account of *how* a mental event *m* causes a physical behavior *b*, we would not be justified in believing that any causal relationship exists between *m* and *b* in the first place, since such a belief would fail to satisfy what I will call the *descriptive condition for justified belief in causal relationships*. Though the arguments offered in this paper will thus be epistemic, rather than metaphysical in nature, the fact that we could not know that mental events cause behaviors (if in fact they do) should make us especially skeptical about the existence of any causal connection between mental events and behaviors at all. I conclude that an inference to the best explanation would explain human behaviors as being caused by merely physical events in our nervous and endocrine systems, with mental events arising as “epiphenomena” which lack causal power.

THE DESCRIPTIVE CONDITION FOR JUSTIFIED BELIEF IN CAUSAL RELATIONSHIPS

The following is what I refer to as *the descriptive condition for justified belief in causal relationships*:

- (DC) A person p knows that event c causes event e only if p knows what it is about c which is causally relevant to e 's occurring

To see how the descriptive condition is necessary for justified belief in a specific causal relationship, let us consider two different cases.

- I. Dr. Bruins is a modern-day physician with acute knowledge of how viruses affect the body. A patient comes to her one day complaining of a fever. After discovering the presence of a flu virus in the patient's body, Dr. Bruins concludes that the virus is the cause of her patient's fever.
- II. Dr. Grifka is a medical researcher in the 1930's who is just discovering the existence of the flu virus, and as of yet knows little about it. A patient comes to him one day complaining of a fever, and Dr. Grifka discovers that the virus is present in the patient's body. He also concludes that the virus is the cause of the fever.

In (I), it seems clear that Dr. Bruins is justified in believing that the flu virus is what is causing her patient's symptom. However, in the second case, it does not seem like Dr. Grifka is equally justified. The critical difference is that while Bruins has some idea as to *how* the virus is causing the fever (being a contemporary physician with extensive knowledge of viral behavior), Grifka has no such notion. If you were to ask Dr. Bruins *what it is about the flu virus* which is causing the fever, she would describe that the virus is prompting the release of pyrogens into the bloodstream, which are bonding to certain receptors in the patient's thermoregulatory system and raising his body temperature. If you were to pose the same question to Dr. Grifka, he would have to shrug his shoulders. In brief, Dr. Bruins' belief in virus-fever causation satisfies the descriptive condition, whereas Dr. Grifka's does not.

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(DC) allows us to distinguish between those factors which are genuine causes from those factors which are false causes. The fact that we have a clear account of *how* viruses cause fevers is why we can be so certain that it's the viruses, and not say, the tomato soup or the motrin tablets, which are causing the patient's fever. Dr. Grifka is not justified in believing that the virus is the true cause of the fever because he cannot say for certain whether the presence of the virus is a cause, rather than a mere correlate, of the fever. By giving a description of how one event causes another event, we can say which relations are true cases of causation, and which relations are merely cases of "constant conjunction."

I think that a causal belief's satisfaction of (DC) is a necessary condition for it to be considered justified. On a qualifying note, there are some cases where belief in a causal relationship does not need to satisfy the descriptive condition.

1. In cases where an event has only one possible cause, (DC) does not need to be satisfied. For example, if I put an egg on the stove and observe it to thicken and turn white only after I turn on the heat, I can conclude that the heat is what is causing the egg to thicken and turn white, since heat is the only variable being manipulated. This is why experiments in the physical sciences try to isolate one possible causal variable—called the independent variable—when trying to learn about causal relationships.
2. (DC) can also be satisfied indirectly. For example, I believe that smoking often causes lung cancer, even though, as a person with minimal training in physiology, I do not know *how* smoking causes lung cancer. My own belief in smoking-lung cancer causation thus fails to satisfy the descriptive condition, and would seem, from our prior discussion, to be unjustified. However, I do have good reason to believe that there are some people (namely, those with superior training in physiology) who *do know* how smoking causes lung cancer. In this way, my belief in smoking-lung cancer causation can indirectly satisfy the descriptive condition.

In this section, I have outlined what I take to be a necessary condition for a belief in any causal relationship to be justified, namely, the descriptive condition for justified belief in causal relationships (DC). I have explained that (DC) says that in order to be justified in believing that some first event is an actual cause of a second event, one needs to be able to provide some account of *how* the first event causes the second event. Finally, I have outlined two types of cases in which beliefs in causal relationships can be justified without meeting the descriptive condition: when there is only one causal variable worth considering, and when (DC) can be satisfied indirectly. In the next section, I will show that belief in mental causation fails to satisfy the descriptive condition, and therefore cannot be justified.

WHY BELIEF IN MENTAL CAUSATION FAILS TO SATISFY THE DESCRIPTIVE CONDITION

To repeat one last time, the descriptive condition states that in order for some person p to know that an event c causes another event e , p must know what it is about c which is causally relevant to e 's occurring; that is, p must know how c causes e . To translate this into terms of mental causation, we replace the arbitrary cause c with mental event m , and the arbitrary effect e with behavior b . Thus, in order for us to justifiably believe that m causes b , we must have some idea as to how m causes b . This means that before we can form a justified belief in mental causation, we must first be able to answer the problem of mental causation itself (which asks how it is that mental events cause behaviors).

To make this all more concrete, let's fix concrete values for m and b . Say it's the first Tuesday after November 1st (election day), and I go into the polls ready to cast my ballot. I have the opinion that Evan is the most qualified candidate for city council, so he is the person for whom I decide to vote. If we really believe in mental causation, we would say that the mental event *my belief that Evan is the most qualified candidate* (m) causes the behavior *my voting for Evan for city council* (b).¹ Now, the question which should leap out from our prior discussion of justified belief in causal relationships is the following: what is it about my belief that Evan is the most qualified candidate which causes my behavior of checking off his box on the ballot?

1. Of course, this cause itself would be held effective only relative to a certain set of background conditions, e.g., *I will vote for the candidate whom I think is most qualified.*

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The immediate answer (and in fact, the one which I endorse) is that *the physical state of my brain which corresponds to my belief* is what causes me to vote for him. But notice: by maintaining that the neural correlates of my mental state m are what cause my behavior b , we deny any causal agency to m itself; that is to say, we end up maintaining that the phenomenal content of m is causally inert. This is nothing less than a wholesale rejection of mental causation (since it is the brain, not the mind, which is supposed to be doing the causing here). In order to preserve our belief in mental causation, we would have to say that there is something about the phenomenal experience of m which necessitates b 's occurring. Furthermore, we would have to say exactly what that something is, lest our belief in m - b causation fails to satisfy the descriptive condition. To do so would require an understanding of how the phenomenal content of a belief can cause a physical behavior like voting. Therefore, if we do not currently have a solution to the problem of mental causation, we cannot justifiably maintain that mental events cause behaviors at all.

Of course, it could be responded that mental states are nothing more than brain states. If we maintain this, then since brain states can cause behaviors, our mental states can cause behaviors, and we can keep our notion of mental causation under a mind-brain identity thesis. Such a position was outlined by J.J.C. Smart in his 1959 essay "Sensations and Brain Processes," (Smart, 1959) but the identity thesis has its share of problems. The most troublesome of these problems, I think, is that of intentionality (i.e. aboutness). We readily admit that mental events can be "about" things: for example, I can have thoughts *about* the Dalai Lama. However, it would seem strange to hold that I can have a physical brain structure which has this same property of "about the Dalai Lama." For this and other reasons, many people hold that while mental states may arise from brain states in a purely naturalistic way, the two have certain differences. I mean to argue that insofar as we admit that mental states are somehow distinct from brain states, we must admit ignorance as to whether these mental states are causally efficacious.

Here I have stated why (DC) entails that we do not know whether our mental states are causally efficacious. Below, I will discuss how it may be possible that there is no way in which we could know how our mental states cause our behaviors by applying the work of "mysterians" such as Colin McGinn and Noam Chomsky to mental causation.

TWO KINDS OF IGNORANCE ABOUT THE CAUSAL EFFICACY OF MENTAL STATES

Here I would like to distinguish between two ways in which we can be ignorant of the causal efficacy of mental states, and briefly argue that the latter ignorance is the one from which we suffer.

The first type of ignorance is what I will call *contingent causal ignorance*. We are contingently ignorant of whether mental states can cause behaviors insofar as we are contingently ignorant of how this cause occurs (by [DC]). By “contingently ignorant,” I mean to say that the problem of mental causation is solvable, but we have not yet discovered its solution. Many problems in natural science are like this. For example, astronomers currently do not understand the nature of dark matter, and how it does what it does to the structures of galaxies. However, it is thought that the scientific problems associated with dark matter are solvable in theory—that we or our descendants will eventually come to understand what dark matter is, and how it makes galaxies behave as they do. In this way, we are *contingently ignorant* of the nature of dark matter.

However, I do not think that we are merely contingently ignorant of how our mental states cause our behaviors (if in fact they do at all). Rather, we may be *necessarily ignorant* of how this cause occurs. We are “necessarily ignorant” of how to solve a certain problem if and only if the solution to that problem is unattainable by us in theory—that is, the solution is *cognitively closed* to us. Just as a dog will never understand how the Krebs Cycle generates chemical energy due to the obvious cognitive limitations of dogkind, it is possible that humans will never understand how mental events interact with physical events, due to the cognitive limitations of humankind. This line of reasoning, dubbed “mysterianism” by philosopher/neurobiologist Owen Flanagan (Flanagan 1997, 313) has been well developed in the discourse about the hard problem of consciousness (that is, how physical events in the brain can cause mental events in the mind). In what follows, I will review the arguments in favor of mysterianism, and show how they can apply not only to the hard problem of consciousness, but also to our own discussion of mental causation.

Noam Chomsky, a defender of the mysterian camp, develops cognitive closure with the following examples: “we are not surprised to discover that rats are unable to run prime number mazes no matter how much training they receive; they simply lack the relevant concept in their cognitive repertoire. By the same token, we

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are not surprised that humans are incapable of the remarkable navigational feats of ants and bees; we simply lack the cognitive capacities" (Chomsky 2014, 7). Chomsky and others suspect that the relationship between the mind and brain is something which is "cognitively closed" to humans in the same way that an ability to run prime number mazes is cognitively closed to rats, or the workings of the Krebs Cycle are closed to dogs. For Chomsky, a solution to the hard problem of consciousness may be something about which humans are *necessarily ignorant* (as I have defined the term above). Other writers have more thoroughly argued skepticism about our ability to solve the hard problem of consciousness, which I think can be adapted directly to the problem of mental causation. Such skepticism has been articulated by Colin McGinn in his seminal 1989 paper "Can We Solve the Mind-Body Problem?"

McGinn argues that there are two ways in which humans can conceivably study the mind and brain. The first way is via introspection: the personal investigation of our own subjective mental lives. However, introspection alone will not be of help to the philosopher who wishes to solve the hard problem of consciousness. As McGinn notes, "Can we tell just by introspecting what the solution to the mind-body problem is? Clearly not. We have direct cognitive access to one term of the mind-brain relation, but we do not have such access to the nature of the link" (McGinn 1989, 354). For similar reasons, we would not be able to discover the link between mind and brain using purely empirical methods of neuroscience and psychology, what McGinn calls "perception" (as a contrast to "introspection"): "Conscious states are simply not potential objects of perception... No matter what recondite property we could see to be instantiated in the brain we would always be baffled about how it could give rise to consciousness" (McGinn 1989, 357).

To explain this last point, say that neuroscientists were to discover a certain strand of grey matter *B* just below the temporal lobe, which is somehow known to give rise to consciousness. No matter how thoroughly we investigate *B*, it would seem impossible for us to understand *how* consciousness emerges from it. To use McGinn's phrase, we would not understand how "the water of the physical brain is turned into the wine of consciousness" (McGinn 1989, 349). The conclusion McGinn and many other "mysterians" reach is that since we lack a means of studying the mind-brain *relation* (being limited perceptively to the domain of merely the brain, and limited introspectively to that of merely the mind), we will

never arrive at a satisfactory conclusion as to how conscious experiences are generated by the brain.

We can adapt McGinn's analysis of the hard problem of consciousness to our own discussion of the problem of mental causation. If we lack a means of discovering how events in the brain cause events in the mind (the hard problem of consciousness) due to the limits of our investigative capacities, then it seems like we must also lack a means of studying how events in the mind affect events in the body (the problem of mental causation), if they do at all. It follows that the belief that some mental event *m* causes some behavior *b* necessarily cannot be justified. This is because since (according to Chomsky and McGinn) the mechanism by which *m* causes *b* is cognitively closed to us; the belief fails to satisfy the descriptive condition.

I think that this limitation on our understanding of mental causation should give us even more reason to abandon the notion of mental causation entirely, and simply explain human behavior in physical terms. I will develop this conclusion in the following section.

IMPLICATIONS FOR A HUMBLE METAPHYSICS OF MINDS

Above, I argued that if mental causation occurs, there is no way we could know it occurs, since any belief in mental causation must fail to satisfy the descriptive condition, barring a solution to the problem of mental causation more broadly. I have elaborated that it's entirely possible that the problem of mental causation is unsolvable, by adapting the work of Chomsky and McGinn. If this is the case, then we could not even conceivably be justified in believing in mental causation. Given this epistemic conclusion, I think that we have good reason to exorcise the notion of mental causation from our discussion of the mind-brain relation.

As noted in the introduction, there is already more or less an established consensus regarding physical closure (that all physical events have prior physical cause). Most people believe that we can explain human behavior in entirely physical terms, by discussing the causal relationships between neurons, neural networks, and the organs with which they communicate. Belief in physical closure provides a problem for belief in mental causation, but not an unsolvable problem, since those who believe in mental causation can still say that physical behaviors are "overdetermined." However, if it is impossible for us to know how mental causation occurs, the idea of overdetermination seems much more suspicious.

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If we *could* specify how mental causation occurs, and we could also (as we can now) specify how physical causation occurs, then we would have two rival scientific theories: one of mental causation, and one of purely physical causation. We could somewhat plausibly maintain both types of cause to be co-occurrent, and our behaviors to be overdetermined. But if we cannot specify how mental events cause behaviors, we do not have two equally valid scientific theories. We have one theory (that of the physical causation of behavior) and one conjecture of sorts (mental causation), since the latter fails to satisfy (DC) and thus cannot be justifiably believed in.

Allow me to spell out what I mean with the following example: Say that two botanists are debating about what causes plants to grow. Botanist A posits that the moon exerts a “growing force” which causes the plant to become larger over time. She gives an account of the nature of this growing force, and describes how it causes plants to grow. Botanist B posits that plants have a genetic code which acts as a blueprint for how and when the plant’s cells will reproduce over time, given adequate physical conditions. They run some experiments and discover that Botanist B is in fact correct. However, Botanist A is not yet ready to eliminate her idea of moon-plant causation as theoretically superfluous; instead, she holds that both her moon model and B’s cell-reproduction model operate at the same time, thus overdetermining that the plant will grow.

It would seem strange (or even, to borrow Jaegwon Kim’s phrase, “absurd”) for Botanist A to cling to her belief in the growing force, given the newfound evidence for B’s model of plant growth. However, as long as A has detailed how the moon acts on these plants, A’s belief in the growing force satisfies the descriptive condition, and there are perhaps not any dire problems with her maintaining that the growing force model is co-occurrent with B’s model. But take a second case: everything is the same as the first example, except B leaves it completely ambiguous as to how the moon exerts the growing force on the plants. In fact, she claims that the mechanism by which the growing force operates is unknowable (as the mechanism by which mental events cause behaviors may be). Now it seems like B wasn’t at all justified in holding the moon to cause plant growth in the first place; her belief failed to meet the descriptive condition, and now that a satisfactory explanation of how plants grow (A’s model) has been verified, we have no reason to suppose that the growing force exists. We can eliminate it from botany.

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Similarly, since belief in mental causation fails to satisfy (DC), belief in mental causation is unjustified. We would only have reason to believe that mental causation occurs if such a belief meets one of the two criteria in which satisfying (DC) is not necessary for justification as outlined above: (1) if mental states are the only potential causal variables, or (2) if we know that someone else has a belief in mental causation which can satisfy (DC) indirectly. Before we had a thorough account of physical closure, we could justify our belief in mental causation by appealing to (1). But now that we understand the body and brain to be a causal system at least principally physical in nature, and are able to view every behavior in the context of the physical background conditions which generate it, we can no longer do so. It is time to relinquish belief in mental causation; we have neither sufficient need nor understanding of it in our discourse.

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Depression: Symptoms May Include Akrasia?

Michael Fiorica

State University of New York at Buffalo

ABSTRACT

Much of the literature on weakness of will has focused on persons with some sort of mental illness. However, persons with various types of mental illness in the philosophical discourse are often cited as paradigmatic cases without a sufficiently nuanced discussion of what makes these cases akratic or how their rationality fails. In this paper, I attempt to shed light on the phenomenon of akrasia as it occurs in persons with depressive disorders. My goal is to explain the phenomenology of reasoning that leads to akratic action in persons suffering from depression. I argue that there are two types of akrasia: (1) akrasia as it traditionally understood, merely acting against one's better judgment; and (2) a more psychologically complicated type that features a person attempting to reason around acting in accordance with their better judgment. In persons experiencing a depressive episode, this second type of akrasia manifests as a result of a higher-order belief that the person's first- and second-order desires ultimately do not matter. I begin by setting out examples of the two types of akrasia as they occur in procrastinating students. I then construct analogous examples of persons with major depressive disorder exhibiting the two respective types of akrasia. I introduce psychologist Andrew Solomon's metaphors of the "veil of happiness" and the "grey veil [of depression]" to provide an additional way to understand phenomenology of depressive reasoning. Next, I respond to several objections to the series of examples that constitute the bulk of my argument and consider an alternative definition that captures the idea of akrasia as it occurs in the second type. Finally, I conclude with some implications for cognitive behavioral therapy for persons with depressive disorders in light of the conceptualization of akrasia I have described.

KEYWORDS

Akrasia, Weakness of Will, Depression, Practical Reason, Mental Illness, Phenomenology, Procrastination, Rationality, Psychology, Normativity

INTRODUCTION

Much of the literature on akrasia, or weakness of will, concerns cases of persons with some type of abnormal psychology or mental illness (Frankfurt 1988; Rorty 1997; Wedgwood 2007). Yet an in-depth analysis of akrasia in persons with major depressive disorder (MDD, commonly referred to as depression¹) is conspicuously absent. The absence is notable because akrasia—acting against one’s best judgment—seems almost inherent in some of the symptoms of MDD listed in the DSM 5: sadness, loss of interest, indecisiveness (American Psychiatric Association 2013). In this paper, I will attempt to shed light on akrasia and the phenomenology of patients with depression by arguing that there are two different types of akrasia commonly exhibited by patients with depression: (1) merely acting against one’s best judgment; and (2) attempting to reason around one’s all things considered best judgment with respect to achieving a specific goal. I begin with two examples of procrastination in persons free from any psychological abnormalities to flesh out the basic structure of the two types of akrasia. I then move to a discussion of what I call “depressive akratics” and examine their behavior and the structure of their reasoning, using two examples that are analogous to the examples featuring procrastination. Next, I consider some objections to my view, namely by addressing apparent inconsistencies in my examples. I conclude with a discussion of the possible implications for cognitive behavioral therapy that follow from the two types of akrasia I describe.

TERMINOLOGY

For the sake of clarity, I will stipulate some definitions here that I take to be uncontroversial or that I borrow from other authors. Akrasia traditionally has been understood as acting against one’s better judgment, i.e., when one takes into account all the relevant considerations one can² and forms a judgment that to ϕ

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1. Though major depressive disorder is the most common depressive disorder, it is worth noting that the analysis in this paper extends to depressive episodes caused by any number of mental disorders, e.g., bipolar disorder, seasonal affective disorder, etc. I focus on MDD for the sake of simplifying my examples.
 2. There is an open question about the possibility of akrasia in terms of acting against a better judgment *all things considered*, i.e., acting against a judgment that is best in light of all the relevant considerations, not just the ones to which the reasoner has access. In the examples that follow, whether the judgments formed are best in light of all the relevant considerations or only the considerations the reasoner entertains is immaterial.

is the best course of action, but does not ϕ . This definition is sufficient to capture both types of akrasia I wish to discuss. Reasoning will refer just to the reasoning process as it occurs in the minds of persons deliberating on a course of action. I will stipulate that the term "reasoning" as I am using it refers to a process that can be good or bad, depending on (1) how well the premises support the conclusion of the reasoning and (2) the extent to which the reasoning leads a person to act in a way that will help them accomplish the goal that motivated the reasoning.³ "Rational" and "irrational" will be used to assess the interaction between the reasoner, her reasoning, and her subsequent actions. In this sense, "rationality" is, as Nomy Arpaly describes, "a theory that tells us when people act rationally and when they do not, so that given a God's-eye view of a person's circumstances, beliefs and motives, one would be able to tell how rational or irrational said person would be in performing a certain action"⁴ (2000, 488). Finally, I use the phrase "personal project" to describe something that a person deeply cares about and has special obligations to in virtue of his caring. Borrowing from Frankfurt, a person who has a personal project "identifies himself with his [personal project] in the sense that he makes himself vulnerable to losses and susceptible to benefits depending on whether [his personal project] is diminished or enhanced" (1988, 260).

PROCRASTINATION

Perhaps the most salient case of quotidian akrasia, procrastination ("leaving too late or putting off indefinitely what one should, relative to one's goals and information, have done sooner"⁵) is something that most, if not all, human beings

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3. One further qualification: the reasoning must lead the person to act to accomplish the goal of the reasoning in a non-deviant way, i.e., the reasoning must connect to the goal in the right way. I have in mind something akin to the kind of deviant causation described by Davidson in his famous mountain climber case: Two men are climbing a mountain, and one falls and is caught by the other man. The man holding the first climber thinks that he could drop the first climber to his death. The thought of dropping the first climber causes the second climber to become nervous, lose his grip, and drop the first climber. In this case, the second climber's thought that he could drop the first climber to his death causes him to drop the first climber, but not in the right way.
 4. This quote is from an essay describing two different definitions of rationality. I do not mean to suggest that Arpaly endorses this account of rationality over the other one she describes. I merely use the quote to describe rationality as it figures in my paper.
 5. This cursory definition of procrastination is borrowed from Chrisoula Andreou.

have engaged in at some point in their lives (Andreau 2010; Stroud 2014). But even this relatively straightforward example of akrasia can manifest itself in different ways.

Consider the case of Bob. Bob has a paper to write for his Introduction to Ethics class that is due at 5:00 pm on a Tuesday. That same Tuesday morning, at around 10:00 am, Bob reasons that he ought to start his paper but instead sits on the couch for six hours watching TV. At 4:00 pm, Bob begins to panic because he acted against his better judgment and delayed writing his paper until an hour before it was due. Bob's case is a paradigmatic instance of akrasia.

But now turn to Bob's classmate, Al. Al has the same paper due at 5:00 pm and at 10:00 am begins reasoning about how to spend his day. Al reasons thusly:⁶

1. My paper is due at 5:00 pm.
2. If I start now, I can finish my paper by 12:00 pm.
3. The kitchen in my apartment really needs to be cleaned.
4. The cleaning in my kitchen will have to be done eventually.
5. Having a clean kitchen will make me more productive, as I will be less distracted.
6. Therefore, I will clean my kitchen.

And Al does.

Now it is 4:00 pm, and Al, like Bob, hasn't started his paper. But it seems plausible that either Bob acted akratically, whereas Al did not; or Bob acted, in some respect, more akratically than did Al, despite both of them being in the same circumstantial position at 4:00 pm. I argue that both Bob's and Al's failure to complete their respective papers are two instances of akrasia that differ not in degree but in kind.

6. The reasoning presented here is not meant to conform to any particular schema of practical reason. Rather, it is meant to realistically represent how a person who decides to procrastinate might entertain propositions in their deliberative process. In this paper, I take no stand on what is a "correct" account of practical reason, in terms of the types of premises and conclusions in the reasoning. I merely represent what is colloquially referred to as a "thought process" using a basic format with premises and a conclusion.

One method of distinguishing between the two types of akrasia would be to ask Bob and Al about their reasoning processes and assess their reasoning with a “God’s eye view” of rationality. When one asks Bob if he thinks he should have done his paper earlier, Bob would respond “Yes, I should have done the paper.” In this instance, Bob acted irrationally because his (enthymematic) reasoning led him not to complete the paper; instead he acted akratically and watched TV. Bob’s answers reflect the fact that to delay doing what one thinks one ought to do just is what it means to act against one’s better judgment.

But, if the same questions were asked of Al, Al has more resources to respond. He might say something like “Yes, I should have done my paper, but the kitchen really did need to be cleaned, and since I write in the kitchen, I couldn’t focus on my paper with plates cluttering up the sink.” One could then ask a number of follow up questions: Couldn’t you have written the paper somewhere else? Did you consider that cleaning the kitchen does not have a deadline, whereas the paper does? The relevant point is not whether Al acted in accordance with his best judgment, *all things considered*, or even whether Al acted in accordance with his best judgment taking into account only the reasons and motivations to which he had access. Al, in fact, did act in the way he judged best. The point, in Al’s case, is that his deliberative process looks like a piece of good reasoning, even if it is not infallible. When pressed on the matter of whether Al *actually* thinks he ought to have done the paper, Al can dig in his heels and say the kitchen needed to be cleaned. Moreover, he even has the fact that cleaning his kitchen will allow him to write more efficiently and perhaps produce a better essay. Though Al seems to be rationalizing⁷ (in the colloquial sense) not doing his paper, the rationalizing and the reasoning do not come apart very cleanly.

Let us now assess the reasoning in terms of how it helped Al to reach his ultimate goal, finishing the paper. One might be tempted to say that the goodness of Al’s reasoning turns on whether or not cleaning the kitchen *actually* helped him concentrate on the paper, i.e., whether or not Al was deceiving himself in his reasoning process. If Al took 6 hours to clean the kitchen and can write the paper in one hour, there seems to be no problem in Al’s reasoning; further, if the paper he wrote in that hour is better than the one he would have written had he tried to work in a dirty kitchen starting at 10 am, his reasoning, and subsequent actions

7. Hereafter, “rationalizing” will be used exclusively in the colloquial sense, i.e., to attempt to justify one’s (flawed) reasoning or action after the fact.

look especially rational. He is no longer in the same position as Bob (who, we'll say, takes a minimum of three hours to write a paper). However, in Al's case, and in the case of the akratic depressive later on, the relevant criteria for rationality is the reasoner's belief that his goal would be served. The belief in Al's case may or may not be true. The larger problem, and the one related to one type of akratic depressive patient, is that it seems like one could engage in reasoning like Al's several times over and become endlessly involved in quotidian or trivial tasks (or worse, become totally inactive) at the expense of fostering one's personal projects.⁸

AKRATIC DEPRESSIVES

While procrastination may seem to be a relatively harmless instance of akratic actions so long as the personal projects of those behaving akratically are not significantly disrupted, I will argue in this section that the way depression can infect reasoning and lead to akratic action is much more disruptive. The question of how reasoning like Al's can lead to alienation from both immediate and long term goals brings us to a discussion of two types of akratic depressives, roughly analogous to Bob and Al.

The term "akratic depressive" requires some exposition because of the way akratic is usually used to characterize actions. Actions (or inaction, as in Bob's case) can be akratic insofar as they diverge from the action a person judges they ought to undertake; persons can be akratic insofar as they act akratically. The modifier "akratic," then, does not seem to be something that can be predicated of a person without reference to a particular action. I wish to argue that a person can be akratic, if they are depressed, or, more accurately, in the grip of a depressive episode, even in the absence of a particular akratic action. A depressed person can be akratic because of the way in which their depression affects their reasoning. The analogs to Bob and Al can shed some light on this point.

Take the akratic depressive analog to Bob, Debra. Debra suffers from major depressive disorder (MDD) and is in the midst of a depressive episode. Debra is a high school teacher with a stack of final papers to grade. Debra knows that she ought to grade the papers—because it is a requirement of her job, because

8. In Al's case, we can say that he needs to do well on the paper to complete the course to graduate from college, and, in this sense, his finishing the paper is instrumental to one of his personal projects, namely, being a successful student.

she values her students' ideas and efforts, etc.—but in the grips of a depressive episode, she cannot bring herself to get out of bed to grade the papers. Debra's case seems straightforwardly analogous to Bob's. Both Bob and Debra's inaction is irrational, i.e., against their better judgment, and therefore akratic.

The analog to Al, whom we'll call Craig, presents a more complicated case. Craig is also a high school teacher; additionally, he is a husband and father, and an accomplished pianist. Before the onset of Craig's depression, Craig finds joy and purpose in teaching, in his relationships with his wife and children, and in playing piano. All of these parts of Craig's life are deeply held personal projects, which, in a very real sense, make his life worth living. The motivation built into such actions that further his professional career, his familial relationships, and his music is so automatic he never countenances the thought of why he acts thusly with respect to his roles as teacher, family man, and pianist: he simply acts.

Perhaps this is what Frankfurt had in mind when he spoke of "volitional necessity" (Frankfurt 1988). If that analogy is illuminating, we may say that Craig was subject to a volitional necessity to act in light of these personal projects. And if one were to ask Craig (borrowing from Anscombe) why he lectured or prepared Sunday dinner for his family or practiced piano, the conclusion of the chain of "why" questions would always end with Craig saying "because I love being a teacher, husband, and pianist," respectively. A "why" question beyond Craig's love for his job, family and music would be unintelligible to Craig.

But Craig's life changes when he becomes depressed.⁹ As a result of his depressive symptoms (sadness, loss of interest, lack of energy) Craig gives up playing the piano. He soon slips further into the grips of his depression and begins skipping his classes and missing his deadlines at work. His depression becomes so severe that when he looks into the eyes of his wife and his children, he does not feel love for them, though he knows he should. And even when he realizes that his family recognizes the absence of his love for them, he cannot bring himself even to feel sad about causing his family pain, though, again, he knows should.

The type of alienation Craig experiences from his personal projects is all too common in patients with severe depression. His second order desires to *want* to want to be a professor, husband, father, and musician are not strong enough to override the inertia caused by his depression. Craig's case, as described, is one

9. Here "becomes depressed" means developed MDD. The phrase is roughly analogous to "contracts a virus," rather than "feels sad."

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that is marked by a number of akratic actions: not practicing piano even though he reasons he ought to in order to hone his craft; not going to work even though he reasons he ought to in order to keep his job; and not showing his family his love even though he reasons he ought to in order to maintain and develop his relationship with them. In this way, Craig's akrasia extends over time. His inaction constitutes an akratic inability to do what he reasons he ought to do. Even though his depression causes alienation from discrete personal projects, the alienation which leads to akratic inaction is but one symptom of his depression. Thus, the term "akratic depressive" seems to capture akrasia as it occurs in Craig's life (and Debra's, should we provide a sufficiently three-dimensional account of her life) better than would describing each instance of inaction as akratic.

At this point, one might rightly wonder, where the analogy between Al and Craig lies. Seeing the analogy requires us to further examine the complexities of Craig's case and a specific instance of his reasoning. Perhaps, with regard to attending his lectures, Craig reasons thusly:

1. I love being a teacher.
2. Part of my job as a teacher is to lecture.
3. I *want* to want to be a teacher and to lecture.
4. But ultimately it does not matter if I miss my lectures.
5. The school will find a replacement for me.
6. I am expendable.
7. Given that I am expendable, going to my lecture is not worth the energy it would take for me to get out of bed.
8. Therefore, I will not go to lecture.

And Craig doesn't. He remains in bed. To analyze Craig's reasoning, beliefs and desires in the spirit of Frankfurt, we can say Craig has a first-order desire to stay in bed and not lecture, behavior which is symptomatic of his depression and a second-order desire to want to change his first-order desire. Finally, Craig has a third-order belief that his first- and second-order desires are inconsequential.

The problem with respect to Craig's akratic depression, and the way in which it resembles Al's rationalizing procrastination, is that it becomes almost impossible to undermine Craig's third-order belief that his desires, his personal projects, and perhaps his own existence are inconsequential. This belief provides a ready-made practical reasoning blueprint for Craig to assess whether or not he ought to entertain doing actions related to the maintenance of his personal projects.

Craig's reasoning exemplifies what psychologist Andrew Solomon means when he writes, "You don't think in depression that you've put on a gray veil and are seeing the world through the haze of a bad mood. You think that the veil has been taken away, the veil of happiness, and that now you're seeing truly" (Solomon 2008, 516). The use of the "veil" metaphor helps to eloquently capture the phenomenology of depressive reasoning. The "gray veil" can be understood as an impediment to goal-oriented reasoning, in terms of the neurological effects depression has on one's thinking, reasoning, and feeling. The grey veil, in this sense, actually does capture what is going on in the brain of akratic depressives. The belief that the "veil of happiness" is taken away helps to explain why Craig's reasoning seems in many ways compelling, especially to Craig himself. He believes he is seeing the world more clearly, and therefore reasoning better. Finally, the juxtaposition of the metaphor of the two veils, i.e., that the grey veil is not being added but the veil of happiness is being taken away, helps to explain the sense of alienation from one's personal projects that affects the akratic depressive's reasoning: the akratic depressive does not feel that the alienation he is experiencing from his vocation, his relationships, and his hobbies is a result of putting on the gray veil. Rather, he feels that the veil of happiness has been lifted and begins to question whether he can expend the energy needed to foster his personal projects. The belief that Solomon describes, that the world is colder and uglier in actuality than people not suffering from depression think, is what makes life for a person in the grips of a depressive episode necessarily akratic, and part of what makes MDD and other depressive disorders so difficult to treat.

The in-depth analysis of the way depression infects Craig's reasoning and renders it akratic has not merely been an exercise in exploring the phenomenology of persons with depression. The two types of akrasia exhibited by the pairs of Bob and Debra and Craig and Al, respectively, are different phenomena. In the case of the former, akrasia is acting against one's better judgment without rationalizing the action. In the latter case, akrasia manifests as acting against one's better

judgment and the action is supported by reasoning that seems good on its face, but is problematic precisely because it can be deployed as a way to avoid any action in one's judgment best, at the expense of one's personal projects. For persons with a depressive disorder, this type of akrasia is deeply connected to feelings of alienation from the things that make life worth living. Without anything to anchor a person with depression to their personal projects, the ability to work and reason toward goals becomes immensely difficult. Insofar as their ability to do goal-oriented reasoning is compromised, so too is their rationality.

OBJECTIONS

At this point it is worth discussing some objections, primarily to the hypothetical cases I have set forth, as they are the bulk of my argument. One obvious objection arises when considering how to define the scope of who can be considered rational: If depression fundamentally disorients a reasoner's ability to perceive the world around them, perhaps it would be best to set those cases aside when discussing akrasia and practical reasoning. My response to this is two-fold. First, as noted in the introduction, much of the literature on akrasia/weakness of will already concerns persons with some sort of abnormal psychology. Second, the analogous cases of persons without any mental illness (Bob and Al) seem plausible enough to suggest that the two types of akrasia for which I have argued can be exhibited in the absence of depression.

A more pointed objection with respect to Al and Craig's cases concerns their relationship to their respective reasoning and intentions. If akrasia is forming a judgment that to ϕ is the best course of action and knowingly choosing not to ϕ , it seems Al and Craig are not behaving akratically when they choose to clean the kitchen and stay in bed, respectively. In fact, they are acting in accordance with their intentions. Still, these cases seem to contain an element of akrasia, even if they do not fit the traditional definition: Both cases feature a reasoner having a goal, engaging in practical reasoning to achieve his goal, and choosing to do something that does not help him to accomplish his goal. The issue, then, is locating the disconnect between a piece of ostensibly good instrumental reasoning and a failure to act in one's best interest. A solution lies in the distinction drawn by Frankfurt between desires (and beliefs) with which one decisively identifies, and desires and beliefs that are epiphenomenal, self-deceptive or alien (Frankfurt 1971, 16). Reading about cases like Al's or Craig's, one might feel like Al really

should do his paper and Craig really should teach his class. The reason a person with a "God's eye view" has these intuitions is not merely because it is prudential for Al and Craig to do their work as student and teacher, respectively. These intuitions are more fully explained by an acknowledgment that the desire to be a student for Al and to be a teacher for Craig are desires with which they identify. In their complex mental landscapes, the identities of student and teacher are relatively stable, inflexible, and motivating. A more in-depth analysis of the beliefs and desires Al and Craig identify with will be illuminating.

In Al's case, one of Al's personal projects is being a successful student. Academic success is a desire with which he identifies and that he acknowledges as his own. If Al were, out of nowhere, forced to leave school and go to a work in a coalmine, or some other such field that is completely new to him, Al would experience a real sense of alienation, not only because he enjoys school and being successful in his academic pursuits, but also because before he was forced to switch from student to laborer, his identity of student and all the beliefs and desires connected to that identity were abruptly uprooted from his mental landscape. Al does not know how to be a coalminer. Further, he is aware that he knows how to be a student much better. One of the primary lenses through which Al sees the world is through his identity as a student. He assimilates new information into his mental architecture more easily if it is understandable in terms of his beliefs and desires as a student and less easily if it does not.

Conversely, a desire with which Al might not deeply identify could be his desire to have a chocolate chip muffin for breakfast in the morning. Al enjoys chocolate chip muffins, but were Al to see a sign advertising a new jelly-filled donut in the drive-thru of his favorite bakery-café, he is sufficiently distanced from his desire for a muffin to try the new donut. This idea of alternative options is especially important when one considers Al's original case. There are alternatives available to Al besides cleaning his kitchen, for example, writing the paper somewhere else. If Al were to write the paper elsewhere, this action would not disrupt his network of beliefs and desires. The premise in Al's reasoning stating that the kitchen really needs to be cleaned (at the time he is engaged in the reasoning) is a belief with which he does not identify precisely because the belief is not deeply integrated into his mental architecture. He has a good deal of plasticity in his response to the issue of a writing a paper with a dirty kitchen, whereas his belief that he needs to

complete the paper by 5:00 pm to do well in the class is more deeply ingrained in his mind.

In Craig's case and in the case of persons with depressive disorders more generally, alienation from the beliefs and desires with which one identifies happens as a result of the depression. The alienation is built into the diagnostic criteria for depression because it marks a departure from the stable, inflexible, and motivating beliefs and desires that were present in Craig's mental landscape before he became depressed. The premise in Craig's reasoning stating that Craig is expendable is similarly connected to his depression. Although Craig's belief that he is expendable feels at the time he engages in the reasoning to be true, it is not a belief with which he identifies. His second-order desire to *want* to want to teach is indicative of Craig's non-identification with his belief that he is expendable.

As a point of contrast, it is worth noting that there are people who do identify with beliefs that their place in the world is immaterial, that their attachments on earth are transient and their identities illusory. An ascetic is an example of such a person. If one can imagine a case were instead of becoming depressed, Craig adopted an ascetic lifestyle, his relationship to the beliefs and desires in his reasoning becomes very different. The belief that he is expendable is no longer a departure from his overall mental architecture, but rather an instantiation of his larger worldview.

Returning to the issue of akrasia, neither Craig nor Al genuinely reasons to the judgment that to ϕ is the best course of action because the beliefs and the desires that constitute the practical reasoning are not beliefs and desires with which they identify. Specifically, the disingenuous belief in Al's case that the cleaning needs to be done at present and the alien belief in Craig's case that he is expendable cause the practical reasoning to rear off-course. The reasoning arrives at a conclusion that does not help the reasoner to accomplish the goal he set out to accomplish. The "correct" path of practical reasoning, consisting of desires and beliefs with which the reasoner identifies, reaches an intention that allows the reasoner to achieve their goal, but these beliefs and desires are not occurrent in the reasoning processes of Al and Craig. In the cases of Al and Craig, akrasia consists in forming a judgment that he ought to ϕ based on self-deceptive or alien beliefs and desires and ϕ -ing, when ϕ -ing is not the all things considered best course of action.

While this type of akrasia departs somewhat from the traditional definition of the term, one of the translations of akrasia, "weakness of will," is present in all the

cases discussed: for Bob and Debra, their will is just not enough to override their motivational inertia; for Al, his rationalization demonstrates a kind of will power, but not the kind that allows him to foster his personal projects by acting in his best interest; and for Craig, his will is infected by depression such that he is unable to foster his personal projects and uses reasoning as an attempt to make sense of his feelings of alienation, anhedonia, and exhaustion.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have argued for two types of akrasia, both of which are salient in the lives and the reasoning processes of persons with depressive disorders. The first, more well-known type is simply acting against one's best judgment. The second type involves a more complex psychological phenomenon, where a person attempts to avoid an *all things considered* best course of action through roundabout, specious reasoning that justifies or rationalizes not doing said action (and leads to some other course of action). The discussion of these types of akrasia vis-à-vis persons with major depressive disorder is meant to shed some light on the phenomenology of depression. Given these findings, there may be important implications for cognitive behavioral therapy: if a person who suffers from major depressive disorder is behaving akratically, perhaps the best course of action is to attempt to explain to him that his ability to reason well is being compromised by his illness.¹⁰ Solomon's grey veil metaphor might be helpful to explain this point to a person suffering from depression. And, once the person acknowledges that he is not in a position to act in accordance with his all things considered best judgment, assistance from family, friends, and psychotherapists can come in. Perhaps this is where something akin to second-person practical reasoning could be used to help depressed patients see what they ought to do in order to foster their personal projects during depressive episodes.¹¹ Further

10. This discussion, describing to a person who acknowledges that they are depressed that their rationality is being affected even if it feels like they are seeing more clearly, is a different discussion than trying to explain to someone who refuses to acknowledge that they have a mental illness that they are unwell.

11. At this point, there may be a worry about paternalism in the treatment of patients with depressive disorders. This worry is not unwarranted, but given the lack of a robust understanding of the mechanism of mental illness and the relatively recent emergence of modern treatments for mental illness, a talk therapy solution steeped in an acknowledgment of the alienating nature of the disease might be the best course of treatment.

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philosophical investigation into this relatively unexplored type of reasoning should be conducted to see if it can be incorporated into treatment plans. Any and all philosophical and psychological tools should be marshalled to combat akrasia in patients with depression because, in too many cases, leaving on the gray veil leads to tragic consequences.

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Mind as Action in Zen Buddhist Thought

Russell Guilbault

University at Buffalo

ABSTRACT

Many of the most influential and prevalent answers to the mind-body problem in the contemporary Western analytic tradition have taken a materialist, monist stance. In Zen Buddhist thought, discussion of mind is so ubiquitous as to characterize Zen itself. Most frequently, Zen teaching sets forth or seems to set forth a unity of mind and matter, of subjective and objective, much in the way of contemporary philosophy of mind. However, Zen Buddhism is also known for its partiality to paradox and the ineffable, as expressed in the collection of riddle-like koans, as well as in the complex and sometimes nonsensical writings of the Japanese Zen philosopher Eihei Dōgen (1200-1253). This way of regarding the world as irreducible is diametrically opposed to the materialist reductionism of modern science and associated theories of mind. In this presentation, I will examine the stance taken on the mind-body problem in Dōgen's *Shobogenzo*, in light of major theories in contemporary philosophy of mind. In this way I intend to show that Zen teaching offers a philosophy of mind which departs from the restrictive reductionism of Western philosophy of mind without introducing "spirit" and giving up monism.

KEYWORDS

Zen, Buddhism, *Shobogenzo*, Dogen, Japan, Eastern, Mind, Free Will, Monism, Materialism

INTRODUCTION

At least since the advent of radical behaviorism, many of the most prevalent theories about the relationship of mind or the experience of subjectivity to body or matter have taken a materialist, monist position. That is, mind and body are unified in one substance, while the experience of consciousness or subjectivity is reduced to a material phenomenon or epiphenomenon.

In Zen Buddhist thought, discussion of mind is so ubiquitous as to characterize Zen itself - cf. popular phrases like "zen mind, beginner's mind". Zen teaching is most frequently characterized as setting forth or seeming to set forth a unity of mind and matter, of subjective and objective - that is, nonduality with respect to the mind-body problem. This stance being a monist one, like those of many contemporary Western philosophers, a potential starting point for examining the possible relationships between these two realms of thought thus emerges. Indeed, modern cognitive science has lent support to the Buddhist theory that selfhood is inconstant or even illusory, a crucial part of the Buddhist argument for mind-body monism.

However, Zen Buddhism is also known for its partiality to paradox and the ineffable, as expressed in the collection of riddle-like *koans* used to teach students of Zen, as well as in the complex and often counter-rational writings of the Japanese Zen monk and philosopher Eihei Dōgen (1200-1253). This way of regarding the world as irreducible is diametrically opposed to the materialist reductionism of modern science and associated theories of mind. In this presentation, I will examine the conception of mind expounded in important Zen texts, particularly the *Shobogenzo*, Dōgen's collection of philosophical essays. I will build an argument for regarding his philosophy of mind as described in the maxim "mind is action". I will then sketch the philosophical implications of this alternative in comparison to and as a response to major theories in contemporary philosophy of mind. In this way I intend to show that Zen teaching offers a philosophy of mind which departs from the restrictive reductionism of Western philosophy of mind without introducing "spirit" and giving up monism. This solution will turn out to have counterintuitive but well-supported consequences for the assumed Western notions of intentionality, mental events, and selfhood.

FEATURES OF DŌGEN'S POSITION

For our purposes, I will first cite several short passages from the first fascicle of the *Shobogenzo*, *Bendōwa* (*A Talk about Pursuing the Truth*). The first states that: "...if we do not practice [the Dharma], it does not manifest itself, and if we do not experience it, it cannot be realized" (Nishijima and Cross 2006, 3). Here Dōgen sets our own action and experience as the necessary and sufficient basis for events in the real world, and vice versa. The two are equated, and the distinction between inner and outer worlds is done away with.

The next: "If a human being, even for a single moment, manifests the Buddha's posture... the entire world of Dharma assumes the Buddha's posture and the whole of space becomes the state of realization" (ibid. 5-6). There are two important features of this passage. One is that the human being spoken of has this effect if she "even for a single moment" achieves realization. "For a single moment", implying that the human being who has realized the state of Buddhahood may well recede from it in the next moment. There is no continual identity, but only a string of moments; one can be a particular way in one moment only to be completely different in the next. The other feature is that the experience of an individual person is again equated with all of reality. The practice of one person is mirrored by "the entire world of Dharma" and "the whole of space". There is no differentiation between the individual and the whole (or, the rest).

In this vein Dōgen also says in *Bendōwa* that "mind and external world enter together into the state of experience and pass together out of the state of realization" (ibid. 7). "The mind and external world enter together" - that is, mind and body, thought and action, manifest simultaneously. No separation shows itself to us, leaving no justification for dividing body and mind or thought and action. Dōgen's position is that there is ultimately only reflexive or non-intentional action which is inherently and inseparably embodied.

This position is indeed the standard for Zen Buddhism, and is given more succinctly in shorter Zen poems and chants. For instance, the Ten-Verse Kannon Sutra states: "This moment arises from mind, this moment itself is mind." The *Sandōkai* (*Identity of Relative and Absolute*) says: "The mind of the great sage of India is intimately conveyed from west to east", referring to Bodhidharma's bringing Buddhism to China. The *Xinxin Ming* (*Affirming Faith in Mind*) states: "If all thought-objects disappear, the thinking subject drops away / For things are things because of mind, and mind is mind because of things".

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This may be described as a conception of mind as action, and of reality as action. Gudo Nishijima, a Zen master and translator of the *Shobogenzo*, understands this, for as he says in his introduction:

[Dōgen] looks at a problem from two sides, and then tries to synthesize the two viewpoints into a middle way. This method has similarities with the dialectic method... Hegel's dialectic, however, is based on belief in spirit, and Marx's dialectic is based on belief in matter. Dōgen, through the Buddhist dialectic, wants to lead us away from thought based on belief in spirit and matter. Dōgen recognized the existence of something that is different from thought; that is, reality in action. Action is completely different from intellectual thought and completely different from the perceptions of our senses. (ibid xv)

In the fascicle *Mind Here and Now is Buddha*, Dōgen quotes a koan attributed to Chan master Guishan Lingyou:

An ancient patriarch said, "What is fine, pure, and bright mind? It is mountains, rivers, and the earth, the sun, the moon, and the stars." (ibid. 62)

Dōgen's commentary reads this statement as expressing the superfluous nature of the concept of "mind":

Clearly, 'mind' is mountains, rivers, and the earth, the sun, the moon, and the stars. But what these words say is, when we are moving forward, not enough, and when we are drawing back, too much.' Mind as mountains, rivers, and the earth is nothing other than mountains, rivers, and the earth. There are no additional waves or surf. (ibid. 69)

It is significant that Dogen frames his exegesis in terms of action: "*what these words say is*, when we are moving forward, not enough, and when we are drawing back, too much." In other words, Guishan's teaching doesn't just refer to the natural world, in case it wasn't clear; human activity is included in this unity without mind.

A final and very important feature of Dōgen's treatment of self, found throughout *Bendōwa* but also elsewhere, is that Dōgen also separates *intention*

from mind. Dōgen frequently refers to *jijuyū-zanmai*, samadhi of receiving and using the self, which Nishijima and Cross explain as a result of “making effort without an intentional aim” (ibid. 23).

This interpretation of Dōgen’s thought - that mind cannot be divided from the external, natural world; that intentionality is either illusory or at least to be greatly de-emphasized; that reality is only action, without aims and intentions - we will call “mind as action.”

IMPLICATIONS FOR PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

Before enthusiastically applying Dōgen’s theories to current issues in philosophy of mind, it may be necessary to clarify that his views are not easily dismissed as baselessly denying the existence of individuals or action. The sense in which Dōgen denies selfhood - namely, that of total independence from causality, *karma* - is a natural consequence of materialism. Action is likewise viewed in terms of the complex of cause and effect; being incapable of separation from causality, all actions are what could be called “karmic tics” or “karmic spasms”, and the peculiar “non-intentional action” of Dōgen indicates going along with these “spasms” without resistance motivated by the narrow view of the individual.

This theory of mind as action has a number of implications when considered in light of the major problems in Western philosophy of mind. First of all, this theory effectively dismisses the mind-body problem as based on a false premise. Mind and the external world appear and pass away together entirely seamlessly, and no phenomenological or experiential basis for the distinction between mind and body ever appears to us. This is a kind of monism, not a material or spiritual monism, but what may be termed “ineffable monism” - the *one* in question is not a substance, concept, or thing. It is not susceptible to empirical inquiry strictly speaking, but can be accessed through direct experience - as a confrontation with its reality or facticity - or thematically through discussion about it which can bring it up but does not capture it.

Nishijima and Cross understand this, as shown in their commentary on the fascicle *Mind Cannot Be Grasped*:

On the basis of our common sense, we usually think that our mind can be grasped by our intellect, and we are prone to think that our mind exists somewhere substantially. This belief also extends into the realm of philosophy; Rene Descartes... started

his philosophical thinking with the premise 'Cogito ergo sum'... Buddhism is a philosophy of action, or a philosophy of the here and now; in that philosophy, mind cannot exist independently of the external world. In other words... all existence is the instantaneous contact between mind and the external world. (ibid. 289)

To be clear, as Dōgen says in *Bendōwa*, this contact is taking place at all times, has never not been taking place, and does not cease. It is *immanent* contact. This, again, is the justification for doing away with the mind-body problem.

Furthermore, and perhaps more controversially, if action - reality - is totally separate from thought, then this breaks theories of mind based on explaining or pointing to external events as evidence of thought or mind. Any framework based on the link between mind and action or behavior has to be thrown away under this paradigm. It would seem that this is incompatible with the supervenience of mental events on physical ones. Dōgen might endorse some kind of externalism, while rejecting type physicalism, or indeed any kind of physicalism concerning mental events.

There is thus an opening for the case to be made that a Zen perspective on philosophy of mind might fall on the side of functionalism, which is the primary alternative in contemporary Western thought to supervenience and physicalism. It may even be in some way compatible with radical behaviorism, to the extent that Skinner sought to account for actions without invoking the concept of "mind", and ultimately concluded that there was no independent agent to be found. Such an investigation would merit an exhaustive treatment of its own, and thus falls outside the scope of this presentation, but could be a fruitful subject of further study.

These parallels, however, are extremely - perhaps fatally - limited. Dōgen's non-dualism of mind and reality goes both ways, with mental events and experiences being every bit as real as - ontologically indistinguishable from - physical objects. Even though the link between thoughts and actions is broken, thoughts are not to be de-emphasized any more than actions are to be singly emphasized; thoughts are still "received and used". This theory thus does not exactly give free license to reduce human life to a set of inputs and their automatic outputs.

Aside from the question of mental events, Dōgen may also be construed as endorsing a sort of free will skepticism. If we can speak of free will skepticism in the sense that personal agency and intentionality is to be de-emphasized in

accounting for events in the chain of cause and effect, then Dōgen certainly falls under this classification. This is complicated, however, by the simultaneous presence of the *jijuyū-zanmai* principle.

ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

Finally, I would like to attempt to sketch some consequences of mind as action for a couple of particular ethical questions, while making clear that any such consequences would be extremely speculative. First of all, the concept of *jijuyū-zanmai*, receiving and using the self, is part of the more generally Buddhist position that our subjective perception of selfhood is illusory and not reflected in ontological reality. While there has been an increase in scientific interest in mindfulness and some aspects of the Buddhist view of selfhood in recent years, I have not found there to be much movement in the direction of reading Buddhism as having relevant and serious ethical implications in this area, and while I cannot hope to make an original development towards that end I do want to raise that question here. In terms of neuroethics, this Buddhist position on selfhood has consequences for how we deal with issues such as personality-changing cognitive interventions such as psychotropic drugs and persistent vegetative states and other forms of severe brain damage. Following Dōgen's principle, our personality is already materially conditioned; changing the particular conditions does not change the fact of our embeddedness. Since the self is something "received and used", we have distance from it, and thus may be ethically justified in modifying or acting on it the same way we would any external object.

The impact of free will skepticism on issues like personal responsibility, culpable intent, and so on are well-documented, and there are not necessarily any distinguishing factors to the sort of skepticism we might derive from Dōgen.

Speaking more broadly, Dōgen seems, on the reading developed here, to hold up non-intentional, effortless conduct as a normative ideal, an ethical guideline. This bears similarity to the Daoist teaching of *wu-wei*. Instead of running against the grain of the reality of our condition, the best route is to, again, "receive and use" it, with distance. *Jijuyū-zanmai* implies an ethical component.

Perhaps the most vehement objection to this whole way of thinking, that of breaking the thought-behavior link, could be that it attempts to throw away things that we seem to very clearly experience and have always formed the basis of our ethical and psychological thought, namely identity and intentionality. But the

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idea that many of the things we believe about ourselves, our minds in particular, are in fact illusions is by no means a novel or revolutionary idea. Buddhism, of course, has been propounding this theory for 2500 years. Even in contemporary philosophy, there are plenty of thinkers who seek to challenge and undermine our faulty assumptions about mind; Daniel Dennett may be the most prominent. He has argued that "consciousness is an illusion", and that for our natural assumptions about its existence and non-physical nature to be correct, we would need access to its workings - physical workings, for Dennett - that we are incapable of gaining subjectively or introspectively. In many ways this process of debunking assumptions and developing new understandings of the basic experiences of mind, subjectivity, selfhood, etc. is the primary challenge facing philosophy of mind today. In order for this thinking to be carried out fully, it must encompass the full range of human thought; as the above discussion has shown, Zen in particular constitutes a fruitful area for consideration on these questions.

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Does Scientific Realism Think For Us?

Leah Elizabeth Hasdan

DePaul University

ABSTRACT

My paper presents scientific realism in relation to the conception of free will, and the ways in which scientific realism shapes the discourse of our conscious deliberations. Specifically focusing on how such conscious deliberations arise, my paper investigates neuroscientist Michael Gazzaniga's account of cognitive functioning alongside Descartes's account of a thinking being, as well as Charles Darwin, Richard Lewontin, Karl Popper, and Thomas Khun's influence on how the external states of the world impact our mental processes. Consequently, it stands, that in order to productively navigate the contemporary physical world, scientists must step beyond the inquiries they have been responding to for several generations. I argue that we have subjugated our freedom to the omnibenevolence of scientific research, and have not taken into consideration that scientific research rests on a bed of evidence that will, in turn, be refuted in the future. Therefore, when we contemplate freedom, it does not mean that we are free from the causal functioning of the universe as neuroscientists suggest; rather we are free from allowing others to think for us beyond the causal stipulations of the universe.

KEYWORDS

Scientific Realism, Freedom, Will, Underdetermination, Philosophy of Science, Cognitive Functioning, Darwin, Lewontin, Popper, Khun, Lewens

In *The Meaning of Science*, Tim Lewens raises the question “has scientific research really imperiled the notion that our conscious deliberations often make a difference to what we end up doing?” (Lewens 2016, 187). We may undoubtedly regard ‘conscious deliberation’ as the source of action, so we are then lead to wonder: how do conscious deliberations arise? And most importantly, what are the factors that play into our conscious thoughts?

As Lewens posits ‘conscious deliberations’ against the notion of free will, he extracts neuroscientist Michael Gazzaniga’s account of cognitive functioning. Gazzaniga proposes that thinking beings are not free from causal-mechanical orders that characterize nature. However this is not an astounding claim, considering the neuroscientific evidence he falls back on is rooted in the assumption that the condition of our brain is causally influenced by prior internal and external conditions of the world, (Lewens 2016, 188).

Lewens asserts that in order for neuroscientists like Gazzaniga to affirm thinking beings have free will, they must go through a “heroic denial” of discarding human beings as a part of nature. For neuroscientists the notions of free will are rooted in the idea that human beings are exempt from the chains of influences that characterize the behavior of material objects. This notion of free will does not place emphasis on thinking beings’ ability to consciously deliberate, rather it emphasizes that a thinking being is free only in so far as they are not influenced by the external functioning of the world (Lewens 2016, 189).

Therefore, from a neuroscientific perspective, our conscious deliberations are causally impacted by the internal and external states of the world. If we consider this to be the case, then scientific research has not endangered whether or not our conscious deliberations impact our free will—rather scientific research asks a different question entirely. Scientific research points us in the direction: what happens in the peripheries?

If we consider Descartes’ account of a thinking being, or simply consider his *cogito ergo sum*, we uncover that he proposes an egocentric interpretation of how the mind relates to the world. This is most notably represented in his analysis of conduction when a candle approaches fire. As heat transforms the wax’s color, fragrance, and form, Descartes is aware that it nonetheless remains the same piece of wax. In order to confirm that the heated, altered form of wax nonetheless remains the same object Descartes relies on the mental process of imagination as well as the intellect. The intellect confirms that Descartes’s perceptions are

clear and distinct, whereas the imagination allows him to project the wax's transformative sensible qualities overtime (Cottingham 2013, 21).

According to Descartes, the intellect, imagination, and the senses are what factor into conscious thought, therefore constituting conscious deliberation as a predominantly mental process. From here we come to recognize that Descartes exercises a form of judgment, engages the faculty of the intellect so as to concede that the wax remains the same object despite its transformation. However Descartes presupposes that the faculty of judgment stems from God, just as the freedom of will. Given that judgment yields towards the power to perceive, the intellect is limited to the finite qualities of perception. Whereas the will is infinite, operating in accordance with the intellect yet remains distinct from the elements of conscious deliberation, and relies on the intellect to present perceptions that are clear and distinct (Cottingham 2013, 22).

Thus it follows, if the will is an extension from God that operates as a faculty of judgment, it appears a though Descartes presents us with a notion of freedom of will.

Yet this notion of freedom interferes with God's will and other abstract mental processes, therefore inadvertently placing ethical limits to the freedom of conscious deliberation. Descartes reveals that perhaps it is important to diverge from the self as the center of conscious deliberation: how do external factors—thinking beings that are not ourselves as well as the state of the world shape our cognitive functioning?

What is of interest here is that both Gazzaniga and Descartes discount the notion of free will as the freedom to deliberate consciously. Descartes focuses on the imagination as well as the intellect as integral elements of conscious deliberations, whereas Gazzaniga discards the freedom of mental processes all together. However both Gazzaniga and Descartes similarly place freedom outside of mental processes, for Descartes credits God for our ability to will and Gazzaniga credits our hypothetical freedom from the causal pushes and pulls of the external world. Interestingly so, both Descartes and Gazzaniga characterize freedom as the freedom *from* something—rather than the freedom *to* do something. The will is only free if it is free *from* God or if it is free *from* the casual stipulations in which the world functions. My question then stands, what is it that we are attempting to free freedom from, or where have we surrendered our freedom to will?

Lewens proposes how external factors shape our conceptual frameworks—beginning with Darwin. The Victorian bourgeois environment in which Darwin was raised shaped his theory of evolution, for he inherited his father's loans, investments, and entrepreneurial tendencies, which in turn framed his understanding of the external world. This is recognized in Darwin's idea of competition and struggle amongst biological species, and how he conceptualizes a "hidden hand" that favors the prosperity of a more diversified species over another (Lewens 2016, 129).

We come to recognize that Darwin's understanding of the natural world is influenced by the increasing industrialization of the time period, and the prosperity his family gained from this. The domination of these external factors, in respect to his cognitive processes, promotes us to spectacle the extent to which these external factors impaired his decision-making—is there such thing as choice in a capitalist society functioning behind a hidden hand?

Interestingly so, Lewens infers that although Darwin's "market-based rationale" led him to concede natural selection as the main agent for nature's diversity, it is more important to consider whether his bourgeois ideology distorted the framework in which we view the natural world. Lewens notes Karl Marx's interest in Darwin's economic terminology, and how Marxism in turn influenced Harvard biologist Richard Lewontin to undermine Darwinian "niche construction" (Lewens 2016, 130).

Lewontin recognizes the foolishness of viewing natural organisms as victims to active environmental forces, especially considering: beavers build dams so as to protect themselves from predators thus gaining leverage for better access to food, and earthworms ooze mucous that coat the walls of their tunnels which guarantees a semi-aquatic environment that suits their physiology. Lewontin, a professed Marxist, explicitly expressed his understanding of evolution through Marxist terminology so as to conceive the understanding of a natural organisms' interaction within its environment (Lewens 2016, 130-131).

It appears as though the conceptual frameworks scientists are operating within are influenced by other natural systems or other external evaluations of the world. Therefore, it is not necessarily that scientific research has imperiled conscious deliberation, rather scientists' conscious deliberations may be imperiled by external states of the world; which still leaves us to question free will, and the

extent to which these external states of the world factor into the type of research scientists conduct.

Fortunately, Thomas Kuhn and Karl Popper approach scientific enquiry with heavy speculation. Kuhn advocates if a scientific theory is admirable, then it is necessarily open for speculation (Lewens 2016, 66), whereas Popper proposes a “conjecture and refutation” (Lewens 2016, 14-25) approach to research by gathering data about the world in turn to refute it. Both Kuhn and Popper associate scientific research with the notion that it remains falsifiable and thus vulnerable for refutation. Consequently it stands, in order to productively navigate the contemporary physical world, scientists must step beyond the enquiries they have been responding to for several generations.

Thus we are left with the contemplation of freedom: how our environment potentially dictates our conceptual frameworks, and how this influences our faith in scientific research. Science is now the new appeal to authority, where individuals demonstrate their credibility by appealing to the eminence of scientific buzz words/jargon—rather than appealing towards a claim’s reason on its own grounds. This promotes a sense of “ticket-thinking” in our society, where we polarize our conception of the world based on “for” or “against” claims.

We essentially allow science to think for us and shape our discourse as we would rather have scientists prescribe our understanding of our behavior rather than investigate ourselves. Scientific jargon replaces the task of thinking, which then undermines our ability to conceive clear and distinct ideas. The emphasis our society places on scientific realism to determine our understanding of the universe demonstrates that we would much rather not have our freedom. We would rather have scientific realism think for us.

We have subjugated our freedom to the omnibenevolence of scientific research, and have not taken into consideration that scientific research rests on a bed of evidence that will in turn be refuted in the future. We in fact have allowed from scientific research to endanger our ability to freely consciously deliberate, but this does not have to be the case. When we consider the question: what are we freeing freedom from? We are essentially freeing ourselves from entrusting external concepts or conditions of the world to think for us.

This does not mean that we are free from the causal functioning of the universe; rather we are free from allowing others to think for us beyond the causal stipulations of the universe. However it appears as though science does not accept

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this definition of freedom, and it appears as though we would much rather subject our freedom to science, religion, or forms of government. It does not have to be the case that scientific research endangers our ability to consciously deliberate and ultimately influence our free will. In so far as we obtain the ability to deliberate consciously, and most importantly, act in accordance with our thoughts—we are free.

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What We Are: Our Metaphysical Nature & Moral Implications

Julia Lei

Western University

ABSTRACT

An account of our metaphysical nature provides an answer to the question of “what are we?” One such account called Animalism asserts that we are each identical to a biological organism. However, Animalism does not assert that we are animals essentially, but rather our being animals might be only a contingent or temporary feature of us. A different Neo-Aristotelian Hylomorphic view asserts that we are each composites of matter and form, or body and soul, respectively. Although strictly speaking, Hylomorphism seems to be an extended version of Animalism, proponents of Animalism have rejected the compatibility between these two conceptions because they cannot see how someone’s soul can continue to exist without being the form of anything. In this paper, I will argue for the possible persistence of our soul after our death by demonstrating and explaining how the soul can obtain separately from body, and vice versa. In turn, I will show that the persistence of the soul is necessary, but not sufficient for our persistence. By addressing how the soul subsists disembodied, and therefore responding to this concern, I hope to defend that Neo-Aristotelian Hylomorphism is congruous with Animalism. Additionally, I will explore Animalism’s commitment to the claim that each of us was once, and might someday become a non-person (i.e. as a fetus or in a persistent vegetative state). While investigating the influence of this non-person status on our direct moral obligations to fetuses, those in a persistent vegetative state, etc., I will examine how Neo-Aristotelian Hylomorphism may reshape our ethical debates surrounding our moral responsibilities to each other. Finally, I will argue in favour of the Neo-Aristotelian Hylomorphic conception of our metaphysical nature by showing how it better captures our intuitions concerning moral status through the dulling of the extremely sharp distinction between persons and us, which Animalism claims, when we are fetuses or in a persistence vegetative state.

KEYWORDS

Animalism, Hylomorphism, Personal Identity, Metaphysics, Morality, Thomism, Neo-Aristotelian, Soul, Persistence, Moral Status

At a glance, Eric Olson and Neo-Aristotelians such as Aquinas give differing accounts of what constitutes our metaphysical nature. On the one hand, Olson presents an account of animalism, which says that each of us is numerically identical with an animal (Olson 24). However, Olson's animalism does not assert that we are animals essentially, but rather our being animals might be only a contingent or temporary feature of us. Accordingly, animalism does not imply that we have only biological properties, or that we are no different in any important way from other animals (Olson 26). On the other hand, Aquinas develops a version of hylomorphism, which roughly states that each of us is a compound of form and matter, or soul and body, respectively. Strictly speaking then, Aquinas' hylomorphism seems to be an extended version of Animalism when the human *body* is understood to be the human *animal*. Yet, Olson explicitly rejects the compatibility of Thomistic hylomorphism with Animalism because he claims that he cannot see how someone's soul can continue to exist without being the form of anything (Olson 174). So, by addressing how the soul subsists disembodied in this paper, and therefore responding to Olson's concerns, I hope to defend that Thomistic hylomorphism is congruous with Animalism. In turn, I will give considerations for regarding hylomorphism as preferable to Animalism because it better captures our intuitions regarding our moral obligations to each other.

The first view, Animalism implies that we have the metaphysical nature of human animals while denying that each human animal is essentially rational. For Olson specifically, an animal is a material biological organism. An animal for Olson is not an object made up of a material thing and an immaterial thing (Olson 28). For the second view, Aquinas would agree that the organic material comprising our animal is not essentially rational, precisely because it is our souls that are responsible for our rationality. Aquinas describes that each of us is a compound of soul and body, and specifically that we not merely our souls. He argues that it is loosely correct to say that humans are souls only when it is understood that humans are not exclusively souls. He argues that in order for us to be identified exhaustively by our souls, the activity of sensation must belong to the soul alone, so that all activities attributed to us would then be attributable to our souls. However, sensation requires both soul and body and thus, Aquinas claims that we are both soul and body (Dominicans). Therefore, Aquinas thinks it is correct to say "man is said to be composed of soul and body, as a third thing constituted by

two things, neither of which is identical with it. For a man is neither soul nor body" (Klima 233) when we are strictly speaking.

So, both Thomistic hylomorphism and animalism claim that we are identical with a non-rational animal. But, Thomistic hylomorphism says we have an additional aspect that comprises *us*, which is our rational and immaterial soul. Thus, Aquinas' hylomorphism incorporates Olson's Animalism as a constituent part of his account for our metaphysical nature. Yet, Olson objects to this additional concept of the soul by saying, "I cannot see how a thing's substantial form could continue to exist without being the form of anything" (Olson 174). Then he likens the soul subsisting after the corruption of the body to a knot in a rope subsisting after the rope is burned or corrupted. Contrastingly, Aquinas advocates for the soul subsisting after death by discussing how, "the human soul, which we regard as an intellective principle, must of necessity be held to be incorruptible" (Dominicans). And in response to Olson's rope analogy, Aquinas may reply that such an analogy accurately depicts only non-human animal souls, which are nutritive and perceptive, but lack the rationality that is unique to human animal souls.

I will now turn to discuss a possible explanation to Olson's question regarding how souls *continue* to exist disembodied. Working within Aquinas' framework, I will argue for the possible persistence of our soul after our death by demonstrating and explaining how the soul can obtain separately from body. In turn, I will attempt to show that the persistence of the soul is necessary, but not sufficient for our persistence.

We are generated when our soul animates our body, and thus, the soul is the principle by which we have life (Dominicans). This relationship between the soul and the body is a relationship between form and matter, respectively. Of this relationship, we say that matter is the cause of the form insofar as the form exists only in matter. From the perspective of generation and time, matter is prior to form because "that to which something comes is prior to that which comes to it" (Klima 164). For example, a boy, the matter, exists before man, the form, and, in this sense, the boy causes the existence of a man. Likewise, body can be said to obtain prior to and separately from the soul because it is that which the soul must inform.

However, the form is the cause of matter insofar as matter has existence in act only through the form. From the perspective of substance and completeness, the form is prior to matter because matter has complete existence only through the

form (Klima 164). For example, man is prior to a boy in that man is the final cause of the boy. Therefore, soul is the cause of body in that it obtains separately and prior to body in order to actuate it.

From these different perspectives, the priority of either the soul or body indicates a kind of mutual separateness that is necessary in order for one to really cause the other. Since soul can obtain prior to and separately from body, we may acknowledge a real distinction between the soul and the body.

Now, our death is brought about by the process of our animal corrupting through increasing privations, which is an absolute necessity because it cannot be impeded (Klima 164). The 'corpse' designates privations of sensations, growth, and development in the body, as well as the lack of soul. And, these privations hinder or prevent the body's ability to supply the intellect with objects and thus, inhibit the soul's process of intellection. Therefore, it can be said that the soul is dependent on the body insofar as the body is necessary to supply the intellect with its object. Similarly, an animal is dependent on exterior sense-objects insofar that the activity of sensation requires sense-objects. However, this sense of dependence does not entail that the soul or animal is non-subsisting nor that the body or exterior-sense objects is necessary for the persistence of the soul or animal (Dominicans). In death then, despite the hindered intellectual abilities because of its dependence on the body, the immaterial soul can still subsist with hindered abilities.

In order to understand how immaterial souls can subsist without bodies, we can look to explanations of the natures of those immaterial substances that subsist without matter. The fifth chapter of Aquinas' *On Being and Essence* describes a gradient of existence among intellectual substances. The human soul is at the lowest grade among intellectual substances according to Aquinas, and therefore, "among other intellectual substances it has the greatest amount of potentiality, and it is so close to material substances that it attracts a material thing to share its existence" (Klima 241). Intelligences like angels can subsist without matter because of their closer proximity to the first principle, God, who is pure actuality, and therefore requires no matter for existence (Klima 273). The angels still contain potentiality, but their compositional potentiality-to-actuality ratio is low compared to that of rational souls. Thus, souls are unlike angels in that, "it belongs to the very essence of the soul to be united to a body [...] the human soul, remaining in its own existence after separation from the body, has a natural aptitude and

a natural tendency to embodiment” (Dominicans). Although the propensity for union with the body is part of the essence of soul, and the soul can only actually execute powers such as sensation and nutrition when embodied, it still retains these powers virtually when disembodied (Dominicans). So, the soul exists in a dormant or incomplete way when it becomes disembodied, or when we die. The soul persists as a virtual substantial form of the body instead of an actual one, and subsists via its natural proximity to the first principle. The soul as a virtual substantial form becomes an actual substantial form when it actualizes the matter, which is our animal. This actualization is the union of soul and body that generates us, and is therefore necessary for our existence. However, the soul’s subsistence in the virtual state when separated from body is not sufficient for our generation and existence. Instead, our life requires the actualization of our bodies by our souls.

So, the soul obtains independently from the body from the perspective of completeness and perfection. At death, rather than being the actual substantial form of body as when we live, the soul reverts to its being as a virtual substantial form of body. This persistence of soul apart from the body is made possible by the soul’s intellectual nature. This then addresses Olson’s concern about how souls persist after we die. In turn, the soul can finally be accepted as an immaterial addition to the account of Animalism, which is conveniently contained in Aquinas’ Hylomorphic account of what we are.

Now, Olson makes a careful and explicit distinction between giving an account of what we are from giving an account of personhood. Animalism is an account of the former and “implies no answer to the personhood question” (Olson 24). This personhood question involves identifying the required characteristics or qualifications to be considered a person, and what kinds of things possess those necessary characteristics or qualifications. However, an Animalist such as Olson can, and he in fact does commit to the account of personhood where a person is by definition a moral agent that is capable of answering for its actions and thus, possesses mental contents and capacities (Olson 57). This human being, alien, artificial intelligence, or other subject predicated with ‘person,’ in virtue of being a ‘person’ merits a full moral status and is therefore afforded direct moral considerations (i.e. the right to life). For Olson, the human fetus simply becomes a person when it becomes able to think, whereas you come into existence at the same time that the human animal that you are came into existence, or specifically about “sixteen days after fertilization, when the cells that develop into the fetus

become specialized and begin to grow and function in a coordinated manner” (Olson 91).

Differently, a proponent of Thomistic hylomorphism is committed to us increasing in moral status as we develop and actualize our potential rational functions and capacities. For Thomistic hylomorphism there is no sharp divide between personhood and us that is present for Animalism. Instead, there is a gradient of possessing more or less moral status, and so, there is a more constant direct moral obligation to those subjects like fetuses or humans in a persistent vegetative state, which animalism is committed to classifying as non-persons. The gradual acquisition of personhood through the actualization of mental capacities that the hylomorphic view heavily stresses seems preferable to the drastic acquisition of personhood that animalism proposes, precisely because the gradual activation seems consistent with the gradual process of psychological and brain development in human beings. Furthermore, the animalist must non-arbitrarily define what is to be considered an adequate expression of mental content and mental processes by a potential person in order to be considered an actual person. Then, animalists must decide on the methods by which to accurately gage these expressions or behaviours demonstrating mental activity. A worry may arise for the animalist account if we consider the possibility of a potential person having mental activities without the associated behaviours or expressions of them that we tract in those subjects we call actual persons.

The hylomorphic account avoids this difficulty of determining the precise moment at which a fetus or potential person may become a person that the animalist account faces. For the proponents of hylomorphism, as time goes on the fetus is growing in personhood and moral status and therefore our direct moral obligations to these subjects are increasing proportionally. By avoiding a sharp and possibly arbitrarily decided distinction between persons and us that the animalists seem committed to, Thomistic hylomorphism appears more desirable as an account for our metaphysical nature.

Now in summary, I have responded to Olson’s objection that Thomistic hylomorphism is inconsistent with animalism by addressing how our souls may indeed continue to subsist after our death in a disembodied state. In death, our souls continue to be the form of us or of our bodies in an incomplete state. Capacities such as understanding continue in our death, but capacities such as perception temporarily cease. Such momentarily ceased capacities of the soul are conserved

in the subsisting soul awaiting embodiment, in order to bring about activities such as perception once again. The subsisting rational soul obtains in virtue of its closer proximity to pure actuality, and its higher actuality-to-potentiality ratio compared to non-human animal souls. Therefore, I maintain that Thomistic hylomorphism is consistent with animalism. Furthermore, I uphold that this extended version of animalism that is worthy of our consideration because it dulls the sharp distinction between persons and us that Animalism casts, and therefore, better captures our intuitions about our moral obligations to and considerations for one another.

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Plastic Surgery and Bodily Disconnect

Molly Ockert

University of Michigan-Flint

ABSTRACT

This paper tackles the connectedness of plastic surgery and gender norms. Gender norms are a set of rules or ideas that describe the way men and woman are thought correctly to look. They are not based in biology, but rather determined by a feeling that society then defines. This paper tackles the gender norm of the ideal female body image: firm, attractive, young, etc. In this paper, I argue that gender norms have corrupted the notion of our bodies and leave us feeling disconnected from them. Through an intuitive argument, I make that claim that, we, as a society, are becoming less and less connected to our bodies, due to plastic surgery. My paper pertains solely to women going under the knife, as they are more inclined to do so in order to live up the ideal beauty standards they are so often critiqued and scrutinized. In this paper, I highlight an extreme example of plastic surgery featuring young model Pixee Fox in order to discuss the concept of women choosing plastic surgery that could jeopardize their internal health in exchange for outward beauty, exemplifying the disconnect from their body's basic functioning as well as plant the question of whether Pixee and others will ever be able to stop getting work done.

KEYWORDS

Gender Norms, Plastic Surgery, Pixee Fox, Bodily Disconnect, Body Functionality, Rib Removal, Cosmetic Surgery, Ideal Body Image, Rhinoplasty, Augmentation

Plastic surgery and the notion of the ideal female body have coincided quite nicely for a while now. When society tells you that your forehead is looking wrinkled and your mouth is starting to sag and shouldn't be there's something you can do about it. Gender norms have only emphasized this notion. Women nowadays are under much scrutiny when it comes to their appearance, to keep everything tight and firm rather than loose and wrinkled. Plastic surgery is the answer for many women who feel uncomfortable in their skin, with many regarding it as something they do for themselves. However, in a society where gender norms are constantly rehashed and emphasized, this claim needs to be revised. In this paper, I would like to highlight an extreme case of plastic surgery in response to gender norms and affirm that, while women going under the knife may feel better about themselves afterwards, what they don't fully comprehend is the fact that they are willing to jeopardize their internal health in exchange for outward beauty, thus depicting a disconnect from their body's basic functioning.

When we think of gender norms in regards to women, we think of them under the male gaze. Therefore, it's not what a woman is per se but what makes her attractive that gets acknowledgement from the opposite sex. Even President Trump believes that women who are fat and those with flat chests are unattractive, and he is not alone in this assessment. Many woman can feel insecure about their bodies because of the male gaze that objectifies it and demands it to change to what they deem beautiful. This can be evidenced by the male artists who draw women with small waists, large breasts, and a big backside.

Take, for example, model Pixee Fox, aged twenty-five. She has just spent a total of \$120,000 on fifteen surgeries and has had six ribs removed in order to achieve a fourteen-inch-waist because she wants to look like a cartoon character (Brennan 2016). In fact, Pixee stated she was inspired to go under the knife because she wants to look like Jessica Rabbit, Aurora from *Sleeping Beauty*, and Holli Would from *Cool World*. Pixie claims, "Cartoon characters represent the idealization of the female body" (ibid). However, now that so many of her ribs have been removed, Pixee's internal organs, including her liver, have lost some of their natural protection. Pixee, though, isn't worried about the risk to her health if she's in an accident. She states, "Before if I was in a car crash I would have broken my ribs. If that happened now I'm probably going to break my spleen instead" (ibid). However, this also isn't a concern to Pixie as she wears a corset as her artificial ribcage twenty-four/seven.

Pixee's primary reason for going under the knife in the first place was because she felt like she didn't fit in, so after leaving school, she trained as an electrician and saved up for a nose job. Her boyfriend at the time then encouraged her to have two boob jobs that took her from an A-cup to a C-cup. However, it wasn't until after splitting from him that her obsession to become a real-life cartoon really picked up. In total, Pixee has had four rhinoplasties to sculpt the perfect nose and four breast augmentations to inflate her cleavage to a J-cup. Also, her upper eyelids have been operated on and she's had two rounds of liposuction. Pixee has also taken part in injectable fillers to plump her cheeks and lips, and a Brazilian butt lift to give her a more rounded backside. The aspiring model has even had a labiaplasty—a so called "designer vagina" operation that reduces the excess tissue from the labia, as well as CoolSculpting, a non-invasive treatment to freeze fat. She has paid for eleven of the procedures out of her own earnings and savings. The rest, including her fourth breast augmentation, were paid for by fans who have been following her transformation on social media and praising her for being an "inspiration" (ibid).

It is important to note that the inspiration that Pixee has become was almost not achieved, as it took her a while to find a surgeon willing to remove her ribs for cosmetic purposes. She states, "Getting my ribs removed has always been a dream of mine. But it was really hard, almost impossible, to find a surgeon to do it" (ibid). This is because rib removal surgery is not normally done for cosmetic purposes. In fact, the surgery is only recommended for extreme medical cases, such as to stop cancer spreading to the bone, or as a means to stop excess pressure in the thoracic cavity. The reason this is so is because there are heightened complications in the removal of ribs, such as collapsed lung, pneumonia, nerve damage, fracture to one of the other ribs, tearing of the diaphragm, and heaving scarring (ibid).

It is also important to note that Pixee is not immune to shaming. Many people have questioned her motives and deemed them "unhealthy" and "gross." However, as a response, Pixee states, "I see myself as a body-modification artist. This is my job. This is what I do and I'm going to keep on sculpting. It's your life and as long as you're happy and don't hurt anyone, it shouldn't be a problem" (ibid). Is Pixee correct in this assessment? Should she be able to modify her body to such extremes? I pulled up her picture at work to show some coworkers what I'd be writing about and they unanimously agreed that there was something mentally wrong with her for doing this to her body. But is there? After all, all she's doing is

taking gender norms and the notion of the ideal female body to the extreme. Are we allowed to think of her as capturing that concept or disconnecting from her body as a functioning entity?

As a means to answer this question I turn to two articles that deal with cosmetic surgery in different ways. The first article by Kathryn Pauly Morgan argues that cosmetic surgery leads to bodily disconnect, while the second article by Sander Gilman concludes with aesthetic surgery as a means to improve mental health. I would like to argue that through the use of gender norms, there is a disconnect from the body due to plastic surgery, regardless of improved mental health or not.

In her article titled "Women and the Knife: Cosmetic Surgery and the Colonization of Women's Bodies" Kathryn Pauly Morgan depicts the general unhappiness about bodies, specifically women's bodies, and the general cultural influences of the ideal body. She states, "There is no area of the body that is not accessible to the interventions and metamorphoses performed by cosmetic surgeons intent on creating twentieth century versions of 'femina perfecta'" (Pauly Morgan 1998, 329). What this indicates is that there is no part of the body that is safe from the scrutinizing lens of society and the gender norms they strive to fit into and represent.

Another important note that Pauly Morgan makes in her article is the idea of the creation of robo woman. Indeed the beauty culture is suddenly teeming with experts, which consumers of youth and beauty must address in order to ensure that their idealization of the ideal body is the correct one. Not only are there cosmetic surgeons to perform the initial surgery, but now nail technicians, dietitians, hairstylists, cosmetologists, and dermatologists may also be depended on by women who go under the knife as a means of keeping the look longer and on trend. It is important to acknowledge that all of these beauty experts provide services that can be bought. In other words, as Pauly Morgan states, "All these experts are perceived as administering and transforming the human body into an increasingly artificial and ever more perfect object" (Pauly Morgan 1998, 330). From here, we see the transition of the body from a functioning entity to an object that we can change and alter at will. What this indicates is that plastic surgery has caused us to be disconnected from our bodies and destroys our relationship between our bodies. As in the case of Pixee and her removal of six ribs, she never questioned whether or not it was good for her body. Instead, because removing her ribs had always been a dream of hers, she adjusted her lifestyle by mainly

eating vegetables, fruits, and nuts blended into a smoothie with extra vitamins in order to more comfortably wear her corset, which acts as her artificial ribs, and achieve the outcome of having the record-smallest waist (Brennan 2016).

In regards to the shaming that Pixee has received for the extreme alterations of her body, Pauly Morgan includes a paradox of choice in her article on the subject, which implies that after undergoing plastic surgery, one becomes more under the gaze of the male concept of beauty. This proves that gender norms are still a high contributing factor in regards to the notion of the idealization of the female body as well as a means for tempting a woman toward cosmetic surgery. It was mentioned above that Pixee's nose really bothered her, and so that was the first thing she altered when she got the chance. However, after that her boyfriend was able to encourage her to get a boob job from an A-cup to a C-cup, and to which Pixee complied. From there, we can assume that Pixee caught the plastic surgery bug. This is not something that is unheard of in regards to cosmetic surgery. People can form addictions to fixing what they and others deem are wrong with them, which highlights the fact that people nowadays no longer view themselves from the inside out, but from the outside in, contributing to this notion of feeling disconnected from our bodies.

In Sander Gilman's article "The Medicalization of Aesthetic Surgery" the disconnect from functioning body to merely a vessel is highlighted even further. In the Enlightenment, for example, "the desire to efface individual difference came to be part of the creation of a 'public' face, and it slowly became the task of the physician and surgeon to address this need to efface difference" (Gilman 2004, 222). This indicates that one of the main concerns of plastic surgery is to eliminate difference between the members of a society. If we think back to Pixee and her beginning to plastic surgery, she states that she didn't feel like she fit in. However, despite now looking like a cartoon, she feels more comfortable and confident because she believes she is the idealization of beauty. While her differences didn't necessarily get eliminated (instead they just became exaggerated), because Pixee resorted to something that encases the ideal body image, the overall effect is the same. She didn't feel confident but plastic surgery made her feel so.

While this can seem like a good thing, it is also dubious. If we consider Pixee's first rhinoplasty—her very first session of plastic surgery—we can understand how this highlights a form of bodily disconnect. Pixee stated that her nose always bothered her, which we can assume was because it was different than

the stigmatized “beautiful” nose. She goes under the knife in order to achieve a nose that is “just like everyone else’s” in order for it not to bother her anymore. However, functionally speaking, her nose was just fine, perfect even. The only thing that was “wrong” with it was that it didn’t look like how she wanted it to look—what society deemed “beautiful.” This proves the effect that gender norms have on Pixee and others when it comes to body appearance, and thus portrays how the relationship with our bodies has become something we nitpick and change instead of simply take care of.

It is also important to acknowledge that Gilman addresses the relationship between mental health and aesthetic surgery as well. He states, “Beauty surgery is understood as surgery to restore mental health. [...] Making the body beautiful through aesthetic surgery is a means of restoring (mental) health,” (ibid). While mental health does indeed have a strong relationship with one’s overall feeling about oneself, it is important that the body is not compromised in regards to this issue. If we consider Pixee again and her removal of six ribs, we can understand this notion further. In her removal of her ribs, Pixee jeopardizes her lower organs due to the fact that they are no longer naturally protected. While she may feel better about herself having only a sixteen-inch waist, she puts her body at more risk for internal damage if she were ever in a car accident. Therefore, once again, the notion of the body as a functioning thing is lost to a body that can now be changed and altered for aesthetic purposes without anything actually being wrong with it.

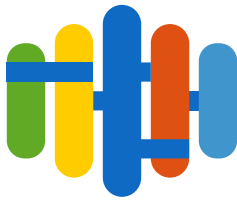
Let me be clear that I am not advocating that plastic surgery is a bad thing, or that women do not have the right to their bodies. On the contrary, plastic surgery in conjunction with gender norms, seems to have highlighted a disconnection from our bodies, which we change and alter at will in order to be perceived as beautiful and accepted by society. Plastic surgery, however, I believe, can be good in some cases; for example, reconstructive purposes as a result of an accident. In most circumstances, physical appearance provides some type of self-identity and as a means of how others identify each other. Cosmetic surgery can be viewed as a good thing in regards to an identity standpoint because it allows for facial reconstruction, among other things, that may help recapture the characteristics that someone lost due to a burn accident, for example. However, I do believe that plastic surgery has correlated to the objectification of the body, and therefore, led women specifically to feel disconnected from their bodies. Since a majority of the

time, women are not using plastic surgery for reconstructive purposes but rather as a means of improving their mental health, this skews the relationship between the person and the body. Instead of person and body being a unified thing, the body is seen instead as separate, something that can be accessorized, a mere fashion statement.

If we turn again to Pixee as an example, we can comprehend this sentiment a little better. Pixee has based all her surgeries on the concept of a cartoon, which she believes is the idealization of female beauty. However, we live in a society where these norms constantly change, so it may not be farfetched to assume that she will not always be the idealization of female beauty. We have to wonder, then, if she's willing to modify herself yet again in order to comply with everyone else's standards.

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