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Aurantium means orange in Latin - except it doesn't really because oranges weren't introduced to the European world yet during the era that Latin was spoken so they did not have a word for orange. Fun fact, the concept of the color orange was created in reference to the fruit (something looking like the color of an orange) in the late 16th century – the color orange 'didn't exist' for most of human history. But if you google "orange in Latin" *aurantium* is what shows up so it's good enough for us.

This issue is the first of hopefully many and a strong way to connect the Syracuse philosophy program to the global community. This is a passion project that is the result of hundreds of hours of hard work from a large number of Syracuse University students and administrators. When we originally took on this task, we truly had no idea of the sheer amount that has to be done behind the scenes to present a product that we are proud of and that represents us well. But we also didn't realize that it would be a wonderful opportunity to meet new people, learn new skills, and feel the satisfaction of making something worth reading.

We hope you enjoy reading the works from our outstanding student philosophers. Enter each piece with an open mind, a critical lens, and an eagerness to expand your own understanding of the universe around us.

Warmly,

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Enjoying 'Unaesthetic Art'

Miranda Mellon

Philosophy of Art, Aesthetics

When studying art history, it becomes quite apparent that, starting around the 19th century art was no longer required to be beautiful. Up until that point, there was a strongly held belief that art had to be 'aesthetic' in the sense that it was pleasing to look at. Most people believed that the main function of art was simply to be beautiful. However, when artists started producing what was considered 'unaesthetic' artworks, while originally dismissed by the general public at the time due to their lack of appeal at face value, the works often had much deeper meanings and usually coincided with significant historical events. In the art world today, these first 'unaesthetic' works are seen as some of the most crucial to the study because of their role in the development of deeper meanings that can be achieved within art. These artworks are presently very much enjoyed by many despite their objective 'ugliness.' But this raises the question: if a sense of 'aesthetics' plays such an important role in our enjoyment, how is it possible for us to enjoy works of art that are 'unaesthetic'? While there are many theories that attempt to explain this concept or something similar, none seem to make the claim that the negative feelings themselves can be enjoyed. This paper will attempt to argue that not only do the negative feelings contribute to the overall enjoyment of the work, but the actual feelings themselves can also be enjoyed. While those familiar with and experienced in the study of art generally understand the importance of the 'unaesthetic', those with less experience "... were reported to show a tendency to focus on pleasingness of features and not on style or structure when evaluating art" (Muth et al, p.8). Thus it is important to examine how 'unaesthetic' artworks can still be enjoyed, which will be achieved in this paper by analyzing specific examples, the context which frames them, and the reasoning behind their expressive ability.

First, we have to establish what is meant by 'unaesthetic' and in turn what is 'aesthetic'. In this context, 'aesthetic' would be the formal qualities of a work of art, such as symmetry, composition, color-coordination, theme, etc., that are completed in a way so as to be pleasing for the audience. Therefore 'unaesthetic' would be the lack thereof or even a complete inversion of these characteristics, either done deliberately or not by the artist, that seem to inspire negative emotions. Secondly, we can determine that a sense of 'aesthetic' is not always the foundation of our enjoyment. For example, almost all paintings created under the Impressionist movement are considered highly aesthetic. They primarily served to be pleasing to look at, most depicting

serene landscapes or simple domestic scenes represented with appealing color palettes, however, they almost never serve much more purpose than that. In Claudia Muth's journal entry, "Sensory appeal beyond beauty", she puts it as, "On one hand, it is possible that sensory impressions are aesthetically pleasing but at the same time artistically of a negative value (lacking relevance, being boring, etc.). On the other hand, artworks can displease aesthetically but be of high value artistically." (Muth et al, p.4) This explains that while an artwork is not necessarily "aesthetically pleasing", it can still be highly valued and enjoyed. A crucial component for the concept of 'unaesthetic art' is the paradox of tragedy. It was first discussed centuries ago by Aristotle in regards to the renowned play *Oedipus*, the supposed "most tragic play" that was enthusiastically received and enjoyed by the Greeks. In lay terms, the paradox of tragedy simply notes that as a general rule humans avoid pain and suffering in the real world, then why is it that they actively seek out works of art that induce pain and suffering? While the paradox can be observed in almost all art forms, this paper will strictly be discussing the visual arts. As this phenomena has been observed for centuries, many philosophers have attempted to explain it. One of the first theories to gain popularity and acceptance comes from the philosopher David Hume. He was noticeably quite perplexed by tragedies due to his stance as a hedonist, who generally believed that feelings of pleasure were the basic requirements for great art.

In response to the paradox of tragedy, Hume stated that "... the uneasiness of the melancholy passions is not only overpowered and effaced by something stronger of an opposite kind; but the whole impulse of those passions is converted into pleasure..." (Hume, p.191). He argued that the negative feelings invoked from tragedy are converted into positive ones through the artwork's "formal qualities" or "craft". This is now known as the conversion theory and is one of the five most well-established theories currently available. The other four are known as the control, compensation, power, and rich experience theories. The control theory simply states that we are able to enjoy "painful art" because the negative emotions elicited are weakened by our control of the situation in how we can stop experiencing them whenever we choose. Most similar to Hume's theory is the compensation theory which claims we are able to enjoy tragedies when the pain is compensated by other feelings of pleasure that can come from the ingenuity of the narrative, or even from the awareness that we are sympathetically responsive to the work. As the name suggests, the power theory argues that the enjoyment comes from feelings of power experienced due to "either the realization of the endurance of humanity, or through the

overcoming of our fear” (Smuts, p.40). Lastly, the rich experience theory claims that we enjoy painful art when we are aware that the experience itself is valuable and stimulating. While these five theories cover a broad range of ideas, none make the claim that the ‘pain’ or negative emotions actually contribute to the overall enjoyment.

One of the most highly regarded and well-known examples of ‘unaesthetic’ art is easily Francisco Goya’s *Saturn Devouring His Son*. The painting has been interpreted as a depiction of the ancient Roman myth of the god Saturn devouring his children following the prophecy that one of them would eventually usurp him as king of the gods. However, Goya’s representation is highly unusual and unsettling, and he achieves this through multiple means. Firstly and arguably most shocking was the distinct image of Saturn represented as some animalistic and psychopathic monster, whom we as the viewer seem to interrupt, seen in the wide, bulging eyes that peer out at us. The child being consumed is actually not a child at all, which was typical for depictions of this myth. Goya instead painted a full-grown adult, albeit with their head and arms already chewed off, which happens to be noticeably more terrifying. Other techniques such as the stark black background juxtaposed with the singular use of color in the bright red that drips down the corpse of the ‘child’, achieve a grossly horrifying image. At the Prado museum in Madrid, where this painting and the majority of Goya’s work is held and exhibited, the art historian Teresa Vega who leads several tours around the museum made the statement that “Some people can hardly even look at them ... I’ve had plenty of clients who didn’t like them at all. But when they walk in, they are always surprised. I don’t think I’ve ever seen a visitor whose expression hasn’t changed” (Phelan, par.8).

In this sense, the ‘unaesthetic’ comes from the violent and grotesque imagery further perpetuated by artistic techniques employed by Goya himself. *Saturn Devouring His Son* is actually part of a series of fourteen painted murals labelled “The Black Paintings”, which were discovered covering the walls all throughout Goya’s house, Quinta del Sordo (‘villa of the deaf man’), in which he spent the later years of his life in isolation. During this period as a seventy-something year old man, he was now completely deaf, a slow process that started very early in his life, and was also slowly succumbing to multiple illnesses, both physical and mental. None of “The Black Paintings” were actually intended to be viewed by anyone. They were part of a private collection that Goya himself never spoke of, never wrote on, nor ever even titled. The

current titles for each work were actually given to them by other people and were simply based upon the presumed content and meaning of the work. Goya's work was not always the dark and satirical images that are now so closely associated with his name. The majority of Goya's earlier works are quite the opposite with their bright, warm colors and clear-cut compositions. This brings us to the question of why an artist would deliberately choose to depict the 'unaesthetic'.

To understand this shift away from 'the aesthetic', we must take a deeper look into the context in which Goya made this shift. The years where he produced his 'aesthetic' works are the same years he was employed by the Spanish royal family as an official court painter. He was hired mostly to paint portraits of members as well as frivolous scenes of aristocratic pastimes. We can see the unique elements Goya is known for even in these early works. Many portraits have been interpreted as satire in how they are in no way flattering for the sitter, and this is achieved through techniques like figural placement, facial expression, etc, that seem to give us a glimpse at the corruption within the courts of this time. Goya's first shift began when an undiagnosed illness slowly began to take away his ability to hear. After this, he became much more reclusive, and his art in turn became much more obvious in its satire. This is also where we see Goya begin to step away from the traditionally 'aesthetic' in order to successfully communicate his satirical messages. His most popular works of this period come from his published book of etchings titled, "Los Caprichos" which translates as "The Caprices". Goya himself described the works as depicting "the innumerable foibles and follies to be found in any civilized society..." (Wikipedia, par.2). These etchings were clearly scathing critiques and commentaries on the social, political, and religious corruption Goya observed.

Here we also see Goya beginning to use whimsical imagery such as fantastical creatures, imaginary scenarios, and even references to popular myths in order to further develop the overall meaning, techniques that are very much used in his "Black Paintings". The most notable shift comes after the Peninsular War fought between Spain and the invading France. During this time Goya witnessed a great deal of violence, death, and religious persecution which seemed to deeply unsettle him. While Goya himself remained neutral by painting portraits for French patrons, he was able to reflect his great distress through his art. He famously completed a series titled "The Disasters of War" which depict the brutal reality of the effects of war. He etched several images of executions, assaults and rapes, mutilated bodies, and starving and grieving

civilians, all of which were regular occurrences during wartime. While it seems obvious that images of these events should not be 'aesthetic', Goya was actually one of the first artists to show the full brutality of it without the fanciful dramatization that was typical of other wartime depictions. This series is now viewed as one of the first and most significant cases of art being used for anti-war messaging. By analyzing the context in which Goya was completing his art, it becomes obvious that his exposure to the depravity of his society followed by the violent atrocities of the war greatly influenced his decision to step away from the 'aesthetic'. We can trace the origins of his 'unaesthetic' depictions as deliberate in order to fully express the intended message. We can also see the process that led up to his famous "Black Paintings" which were completed at the very end of Goya's career. While his earlier series were obvious critiques and commentaries made available to the public, "The Black Paintings" were a much more personal means of expression for Goya due to their private nature.

This then leads us to art's function as a means of expression. One of the most prominent philosophers to emphasize the expressiveness of an artwork is Leo Tolstoy. His central argument claimed that the primary function of art is in its ability to transmit the emotions of the artist, through the work of art to be experienced by the audience. In his book, *What is Art?*, where he establishes this argument in great depth, he states that "And it is upon this capacity of man to receive another man's expression of feeling and experience those feelings himself, that the activity of art is based." (Tolstoy, p.49) He is arguing that the emotions experienced at the hand of an artwork are the same emotions the artist had experienced which inspired the work. He takes this claim a step further when he argues that it is the strength or weakness of this ability that determined the "greatness" of an artwork. Tolstoy then goes on to explain how the emotions are transferred "by means of movements, lines, colors, sounds, or forms..." which he refers to as "external signs" (Tolstoy, p.50). Put more simply, the emotions are expressed through the artwork's form and the physical characteristics that we established earlier in our definitions. However, though the expression is achieved through its form, the actual emotions being expressed originate from the artist themselves.

If this is the case, then with 'unaesthetic' works of art the negative feelings evoked also come directly from the artist. This significantly coincides with Goya and his infamous "Black Paintings" which are intensely expressive of the emotions he seemed to be experiencing during

the time of their creation. In the privacy of his home Goya painted to express his many negative emotions regarding the illness that were slowly killing him, and perhaps his own fear of death. When observing any one of the paintings from this series, these intensely negative emotions are extremely palpable, and while difficult to put into words I will attempt to do so. Specifically with *Saturn Devouring His Son*, the feelings that arise are generally described as ones of disgust, hopelessness, and dread. According to Tolstoy then, these specific feelings were the same emotions Goya was experiencing whilst creating the work, which makes sense when considering the deteriorating state of both his mind and body. Goya's distress and negative feelings regarding his personal situation are transferred through the paintings' physical characteristics, or "external signs" as Tolstoy would describe them, and are similarly experienced by all those who view the paintings.

However, because there remains a great variety of responses and a wide range of emotions evoked by the works it becomes difficult to fully understand the exact feelings Goya was experiencing. Tolstoy mistakenly claims that "Every work of art causes the receiver to enter into a certain kind of relationship both with him who produced... the art, and with all those who, simultaneously, previously, or subsequently, receive the same artistic impression" (Tolstoy, p.48). He is stating that emotions provoked are not only the same for everyone who experiences the artwork, but also the same emotions that the artist had felt, which we previously just disproved. Unsurprisingly, this total disregard of individual interpretation is the basis for most criticisms against Tolstoy's theory which I will further discuss in the next paragraph. Nevertheless, Goya's "Black Paintings" are so much more well-known mainly in part to the extreme expressiveness they possess which is only achieved through its use of the 'unaesthetic'. His later works are so much more expressive and carry so much more emotional weight than his earlier works which seem flippant in comparison. While Tolstoy's theory has many flaws, it is successful in explaining the origins of the expressive ability of an artwork which are crucial for Goya and his "Black Paintings".

There are several very valid counter arguments and criticisms to both Hume and Tolstoy. One of the most prevalent critiques against Hume's theory actually comes from Tolstoy himself. He even dedicates the entirety of the fourth chapter of his book, *What is Art?*, to address and refute the idea that art must be pleasing. He states "And in the same way, beauty, or that which

pleases us, can in no sense serve as the basis for the definition of art; nor can a series of objects which afford us pleasure serve as the model of what art should be” (Tolstoy, p.44). Tolstoy incorporates this counterargument into his main thesis in how he explains that the emotions linking artist and spectator have never strictly been feelings of pleasure. The common critique against Tolstoy underscores his misbelief of direct communication between artist and audience established through some “union”. In fact, Tolstoy felt that interpretation was irrelevant to an artwork. He believed that if the work was truly good, it would be able to express thoughts and emotions that are clearly understood simply through its form. He also stated that any attempt to explain these thoughts and emotions would be redundant because the expressiveness of an artwork could never be put into words. With Goya’s *Saturn Devouring His Son*, there are several differing but well founded interpretations, further perpetuated due to the private nature of the work and how Goya never even assigned it a title, much less gave any sort of explanation for the depiction. This concept of individual interpretation happens to be very important for “The Black Paintings” as well as for the countless other artworks, and Tolstoy’s theory that all who observe the same work of art will experience the same exact emotions is undoubtedly incorrect. Clearly, neither Hume nor Tolstoy provide us a complete or flawless explanation, and so we must look to Aristotle’s ideas of ‘catharsis’ as a sort of middle ground.

There are several interpretations as to what ‘catharsis’ actually means. Some understand it as ‘purification’ which derives from a religious context meaning “... cleansing the spirit and sublimating the emotions in order to prepare for or to achieve a state of exaltation” (Schaper, p.132). However, the religious nature of this definition seems to involve “moral overtones” that can obscure its use. The most widely accepted and “morally neutral” definition of catharsis derives from its medical context as ‘purgation’ which is the healing or curing through the expulsion of harmful elements. Aristotle’s belief was that the tragedies of his time (like *Oedipus*) function to arouse negative feelings and “thereby effect the catharsis of these emotions” (Aristotle, ch.6). Therefore, ‘unaesthetic’ artworks similarly bring about negative emotions in order to ‘purge’ them. The catharsis described is experienced by the artist themselves through their process of creating the work, but then also experienced by the audience upon observing the work. As we discussed, the emotions experienced are not exactly the same and there is always an element of individual interpretation that greatly contributes to the act of catharsis. There is a specific kind of pleasure that comes from the release of these negative

emotions which we can label as psychological relief. This concept of catharsis successfully links the expressive nature of an artwork with the feelings of pleasure and enjoyment that arise, thus linking Tolstoy and Hume.

In conclusion, we can see that there is not a complete conversion of negative emotions through its “formal qualities” as Hume argued, nor are the negative emotions experienced the exact emotions that the artist themselves had felt as Tolstoy claimed. Rather there is a specific feeling of pleasure, which we can call relief, that arises from ‘unaesthetic’ works through the act of catharsis. Experiencing negative emotions can become pleasurable when accompanied by the act of ‘purging’ them through catharsis. Therefore, the negative emotions brought forth by ‘unaesthetic’ works of art actually greatly contribute to the overall enjoyment of the work. Additionally, the catharsis is experienced by both the artist through the physical act of creating the artwork, and in turn by the spectators who have emotional responses when viewing the work. Goya’s *Saturn Devouring His Son* served as an act of catharsis for himself as a means to express his discontentment and suffering, but also, we in turn experience our own catharsis that then directly influences our enjoyment. Goya’s “Black Paintings” captures the several agonies of a dying man and taps into something inherently human within us that results in the extremely visceral reactions many experience upon viewing them.

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Saturn Devouring His Son (1819-1823), 4' 8" x 2' 8"



(El Gran Cabrón/Aquelarre), *Witches' Sabbath*, 1819-1823



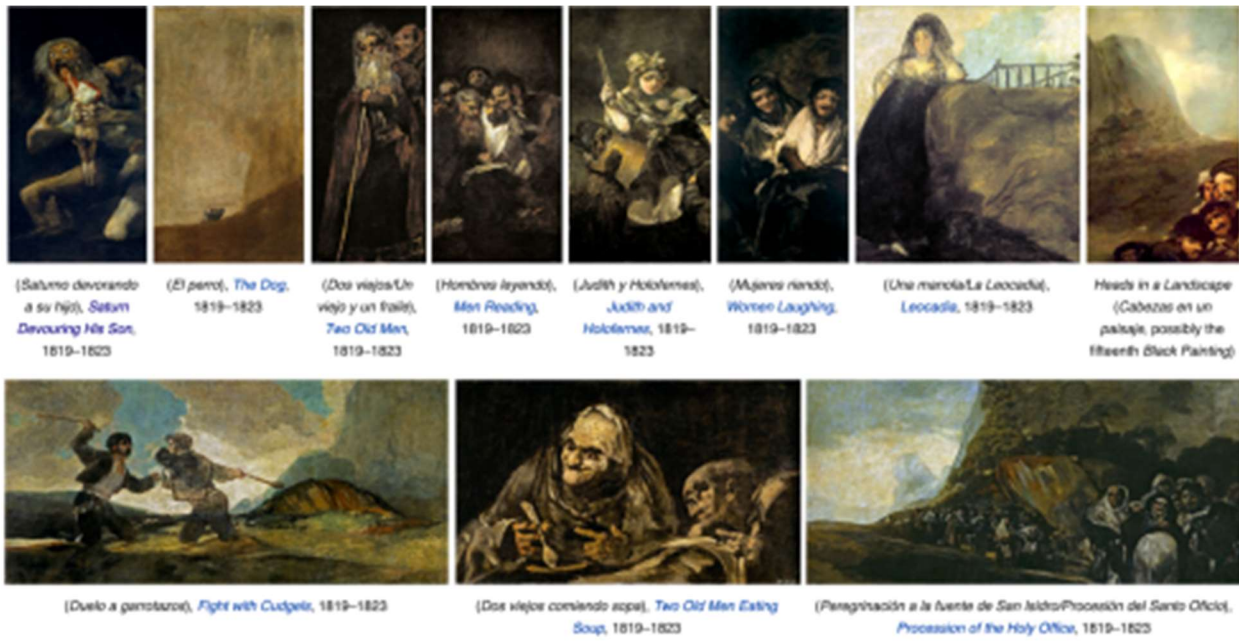
(La romería de San Isidro), *A Pilgrimage to San Isidro*, 1819-1823



(Vision fantástica/Aemodée), *Fantastic Vision*, 1819-1823



(Átropos/Las Parcas), *Atropos (The Fates)*, 1819-1823



Complete series of his infamous “Black Paintings”



Six prints from his series, ‘The Disasters Of War’ of eighty two prints

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Civic Discourse Surrounding the Portrayal of Mental Illness in Film

Leana Bashar

Philosophy of Art, Psychology, Applied Ethics

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This research paper examines the phenomenon of young men and women being easily influenced and misguided by mentally ill character portrayals in film, most notably on social media. *Girl, Interrupted* (1999) and *Joker* (2019) are discussed due to their cult-following as “unconventional” films. Research into social media and gender socialization contributes to this phenomenon as well. Keywords: film, mental illness, social media, women, men, misinterpretation, socialization.

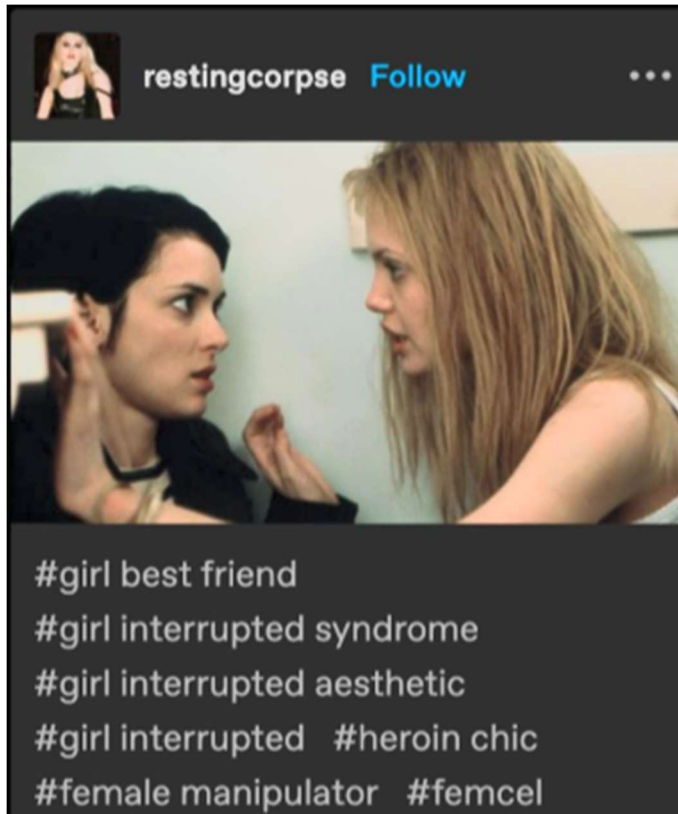
Civic discourse is the practice of respectful, verbal engagement amongst others that can span any topic or genre. Discourse is usually practiced in the academic or political sphere, but due to its subjective application, and the many outlets that one can practice in pop culture and film can also be the topic of civic discourse. Film can translate deeper, more nuanced topics to audiences through visual and written excellence, but also has the capacity to display taboo subjects as well, like mental illness. Two of the most accomplished yet controversial films about mental illness are *Girl, Interrupted*, and *Joker*.

At the turn of the millennia, Columbia Pictures released the film *Girl, Interrupted*, based on Susanna Kaysen’s best-selling novel of the same name. The film explores Kaysen’s (depicted by Winona Ryder) 18-month stay at a New England psychiatric ward during the 1960s, where she is diagnosed with borderline personality disorder after a recent suicide attempt. Other patients are also viewed through Kaysen’s eyes, like the chillingly charismatic sociopath, Lisa Rowe (played by Angelina Jolie). The film was an immediate success, winning numerous Academy Awards for both the cast and crew. Almost 20 years later, Warner Bros expands their

DC cinematic universe through the release of *Joker*, starring Joaquin Phoenix. The film subverts the perception of the Joker through the raw portrayal of his actual identity Arthur Fleck, as he struggles to keep his narcissistic personality disorder undercover while living in the city of Arkham, which stigmatizes mental illness. Just like *Girl, Interrupted*, success at the box office occurred, and Academy Awards were quickly given to Phoenix, as well as the crew of the film. The two films are still discussed in the film community as brilliant examples of character development, even gaining a cult following from particularly young fans. While the films expose young audiences to authentic portrayals of mental illness, those with similar diagnoses fail to understand the cautionary aspect of the film, and instead find solace in these morally grey

characters. Thus, the release of films like *Girl, Interrupted* (1999) and *Joker* (2019), can lead to online communities of young men and women that misinterpret and internalize the struggles faced by the characters of these films, creating civic discourse on the ethics of both portraying characters like that in the first place, as well as the limits of seeking refuge into mentally-ill media. This is clear in the female dominated aestheticization of both Winona Ryder's and Angelina Jolie's characters in *Girl, Interrupted* (1999) on platforms like Tumblr, as well as the formation of male-dominated Reddit communities supporting the violence portrayed by the *Joker*.

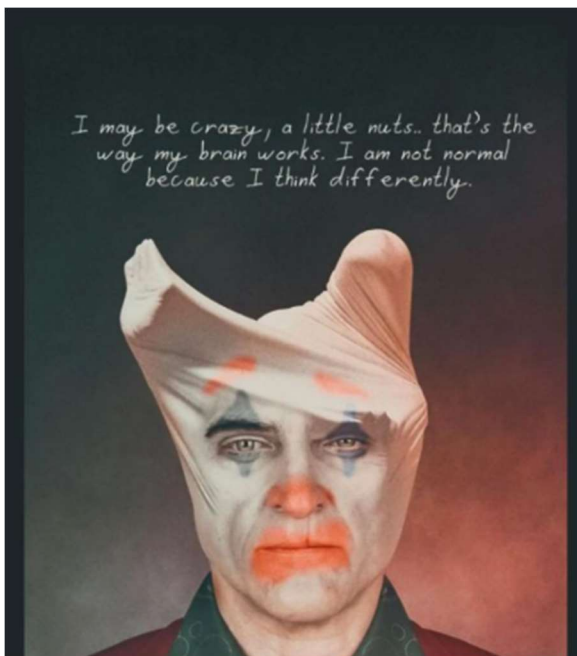
Susanna Kaysen was 18 years old when she was admitted to McLean Hospital, thus, her portrayal as a troubled teenage girl has resulted in online communities of young women blurring the line between the struggles of womanhood and the dangerous reality of living with a personality disorder. In the film, Winona Ryder's/Kaysen's existential dialogue and attitude throughout the film contribute to this: "Then what's wrong with me, huh? What the f**k is going on inside my head? Tell me, Dr Val, what's your diag-nonsense?" (Mangold, 1993). Kaysen's dramatically charged speech resonates with a female audience over a male one due to her indulging in emotional outbursts rather than ignoring them, a traditionally "feminine" trait to display in media: "[women] their socialization encourages psychological growth in connection, interdependence, and expression of feelings" (Tantillo and Kriepe, 2006). To an older audience, she is lacking in judgment and awareness, however to a younger audience, Kaysen is seen as an accurate and even empowering force. Winona Ryder's physical appearance and acting in the film have also contributed to this mass misinterpretation: even though her character is sick, she still attains conventional attractiveness like a skinny figure, bright skin, and effortless hair. This can also be applied to the rest of the characters Kaysen meets, most notably, Angelina Jolie's "Lisa", who is equally as attractive and has even found contempt for being a sociopath. Because these actors are visually pleasing, their characters have fallen victim to fan pages on Tumblr, as shown below:



(restingcorpse, 2022)

The hashtags at the bottom create a narrative to young women online that Susanna and Lisa are the newest fads, even noting Lisa as “heroin chic” in the fifth hashtag (a 90s beauty trend that glamorizes extreme skinniness and pale skin). Conventionally attractive actors portraying morally grey characters spark civic discourse on how we psychoanalyze “pretty” people versus “ugly” people. If Winona and Angelina were replaced with unconventional (less-skinny, BIPOC, lack of Eurocentric facial features) actresses, then perhaps younger audiences would be more aware of their deeper mental state over their surface-level portrayals. The usage of hashtags on misleading blogs like Tumblr immediately creates a specific algorithm, filled with a biased view of the film. This can also spark civic discourse on if algorithm building is unethical, as it can create rabbit holes of misinformation, instead of providing a holistic user experience. All in all, both the original performances in *Girl, Interrupted*, (both literary and visual), as well as the interpretations online have guided a demographic of young women on attaining a very dangerous mindset when it comes to coming-of-age.

On the other hand, with the 2019 film *Joker*, lead actor Joaquin Pheonix voiced his opinion on the supporting fans of the mentally disturbed character Arthur Fleck, calling into question who is at blame for the mass misinterpretation. In *Vanity Fair*'s exclusive issue on Pheonix, the fans of *Joker* have also identified as "involuntary celibates" (Hagan, 2019), or colloquially, incels. Incels are groups of predominantly men who abstain from intimate relationships with (usually) women, due to feelings of social outcast and low self-esteem. The article draws parallels to the incel movement and the rise of mass shootings in America; how the rise of the mentally disturbed being depicted on film has historically been connected to a violent event in US history (the article draws an additional parallel to the 1979 release of *Taxi Driver*, and the 1981 assassination of Ronald Reagan). With all these coincidences now presented, Pheonix is then asked how the *Joker* should be perceived. He responds that the interpretation of the film is entirely subjective to the viewer, and "[Referring to the *Joker*] His satisfaction comes as he stands in amongst the madness" (Hagan, 2019). While it is relevant that the lead actor of a controversial film is openly discussing the potential effects on a fanbase (an aspect that was not achieved by *Girl, Interrupted*), Pheonix's claim that subjectivity ultimately gives the *Joker* meaning may not be enough to some fans. This could be because using the typical statement that art should be subjective doesn't erase the fact that some fans create dangerous views under the excuse of subjectivity like this fanart posted on Reddit:



(Posted by username: Awkward-Pollution-33, 2023)

The discourses on Reddit about Arthur Fleck have embraced this ideology of chaos, as it resonates with struggles of “thinking differently”. The extreme fans that intertwine the film with their livelihood exist peacefully under Phoenix’s neutrality on the discourse and, therefore are unchecked by the rest of the film community.

Now that both films and their respective fanbases are examined, the question of how external factors contribute to this misinterpretation is still left to answer: What is the connection between mental illness and gender? Does gender socialization contribute to a gender disparity in certain diagnoses? In *Girl, Interrupted*, Susanna’s borderline personality disorder affects her lifestyle aspects like “...self-image, sexual orientation, long-term goals or career choice, types of friends or lovers to have, and which values to adopt.” (Cheever, 1993). Since borderline can dictate so much of an individual's brain function, Kaysen sees herself as both in control and out-of-control of her own life—a feeling that draws parallels to the gender liberation movement that was happening during the context of the film/book. In the exclusive interview with the real Kaysen during the release of *Girl, Interrupted*, the opening line solidifies this parallel: “At times, in this country, troublesome women -- whether their trouble is promiscuity, alcohol, depression or just plain orneriness -- have been confined to private mental institutions, where, their families hope, they will "get better." (Cheever, 1993). It seems that the “troublesome” woman and the diagnosed one can’t be told apart, misguiding groups of young women into thinking one must, essentially, “go crazy” to be taken seriously as an individual outside of the gender binary. This aligns with research findings on female adolescents: “...they transition from defining care as an enterprise in which they can care for self or others to one in which they can care for self and insert personal power...” (Tantillo and Kriepe, 2006). The transition into female self-empowerment, combined with the blurred lines of defining oneself as mentally unwell, leads lots of young women to view femininity as two sides: the docile woman who exists to care for others, or the “troublesome” one who overindulges in behavior to mimic personal power.

In *Joker*, incel culture has made itself a prominent contributing factor to the misguided fans of Arthur Fleck, but what deeper aspects of male socialization results in finding solace through depressed and isolated characters? One common pattern documented in particularly

male adolescence is the detachment from the mother or motherly figure: “A boy’s sense and value of self tends to grow and change... more autonomously and separately...often left on their own to develop their masculinity” (Tantillo and Kriepe, 2006). The male experience is significantly more individualized and starved of emotionally vulnerable role models in both life and media, therefore when characters like Arthur Fleck become mainstream for his honest and depressing lens on society, these young men feel a sense of community over their overlooked experience. In a YouTube video essay titled “Edgelord Movies and the Men that Love Them”, the creator outlines a “fantasy” that many of these misguided Joker fans hold: “... You the individual are powerful and special enough on the inside, that you can be the one that can do something about it to fix it and set it right. This delusion of grandeur is typically what separates your typical online troll, from your mass murderer” (Edgelord Movies and the Men That Love Them, 2021, 17:35). These “edge lords” (a term loosely defined by the creator as men who have nihilistic views on society and thus attempt to create radical change) that go above and beyond to defend, idolize, and personify the Joker have clung onto the childhood trauma of detachment, and need a sense of purpose that only can be found in rabbit holes of the internet. The civic discourse presents itself quite clearly: are men who fall victim to “edge-lord” culture worth saving? In the very preliminary stages, yes, as the social commentary in *Joker* is objectively true: “They don't give a sh*t about people like you, Arthur. You don't have a voice and they don't care what happens to you or to us for that matter.” (Phillips, 2019, scene 40). This scene takes place during Arthur’s appointment with his social worker, where she admits that the Arkham government has defunded her office, and his medication for his antisocial personality disorder is at risk of not being covered. This event parallels the continuing discourse surrounding free healthcare and other social programs for disadvantages Americans, therefore the audience can’t help but feel a sense of relatability to the issues of Arkham and the issues of the United States.

After careful analysis of both *Girl, Interrupted* as well as *Joker*, it is evident that these films can lead to online communities of young men and women that misinterpret and internalize the struggles faced by the characters of these films, creating civic discourse on the ethics of both portraying characters like that in the first place, as well as the limits of seeking refuge into mentally-ill media. This is clear in the Tumblr algorithms leading young women into thinking Susanna and Lisa should be idols due to their conventional beauty, while the incel movement

creates online spaces for young men to praise the Joker for his rejection of society. The socialization of gender also plays a role in why certain mentally ill characters have a fanbase that is disproportionately one gender over the other. Overall, the two films have unearthed unconventional fanbases, leaving many upcoming film directors and producers skeptical of future projects involving taboo topics. The truth is solutions to handling misguided audiences require action from both the film's side and the audience. Film artists should consider the ramifications of casting conventionally attractive actors as morally grey characters, as unconscious bias in specifically young audiences is inevitable, while the audience itself should practice sharpening their media literacy, through practicing civic discourse about film that challenges different ways of perception.

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Disproving God: Using Probabilities of Possible Worlds to Determine the
Likelihood of God's Existence

Lucio Maffei

Metaphysics, Philosophy of Religion, Epistemology

This paper seeks to break what I call the Theist-Atheist Stalemate – atheists say God can't proven and theists say that God cannot be disproven, seemingly arriving at an en passé where no affirmative stance can be taken on divine existence. My hypothesis we actually can break this stalemate for the atheists and functionally disprove God. To demonstrate that, this paper will delve into an investigation into the most basic structure of our universe. Using this information and some determinations about the nature of statistics and large numbers, we will evaluate the likelihood of God's existence in a sea of inconceivably many possible worlds. This will be done through a series of premises and conclusions that come to the ultimate conclusion that the probability of God's existence is unimaginably close to zero.

Definitions

To start we need to define some terms as the strict definitions become important.

God – an omniscient (all-knowing), omnipotent (all-powerful, within the bounds of logic),¹ omnibenevolent (all-good) being that was the primary cause of our universe. In the context of modern global religion, this is often rooted in Abrahamic religions, although they are not totally unique to have this concept.

Possible World – Any logically possible version of our universe that we do not definitively know is not actual.

Continuous vs Discrete – When discussing the universe as an object, if it is continuous then it can be segmented infinitely, if it is discrete then there is some most basic unit of spacetime.

Initial Premise

An important initial premise is that in this paper, we will start from a neutral position on the question of if there is proof of God. That we do not currently have any convincing evidence for or against the existence of God.

¹ Murphy, "Are God's Hands Tied by Logic?"

How many possible worlds are there?

To begin the argument, we must delve into the world of metaphysics to come to some understanding of the basic structure of our universe.

Premise 1: There is a finite number of things in the universe.

There are an incredibly large number of things in the universe, but there is some upward bound. The physical objects situated in our universe must have come from somewhere and the very nature of coming from somewhere inherently rules out the possibility of there being infinite objects. Most in the academic community agree that this initial, or at least the most initial we can track, starting point is the Big Bang and this massive explosion resulted in a finite amount of matter being formed in our universe.² However, it is quite likely that if you are debating with a theist over the existence of God, they might subscribe to a different account of how the universe began, namely that everything in the universe was created, directly or indirectly, by God.

I would assert that this still means that there are a finite number of things in the universe because we generally accept that God is still bound by logical possibilities.³ If God cannot do the impossible then He cannot create infinite things because that, at least seems, logically impossible. He would have to consciously think of/know of infinitely many things in infinitely many places. Thus, I assert that no matter how the universe was initially created, there are a finite number of things within it.

Premise 2: There are a finite number of states in which those finite number of things can be in

The root of this issue is the question of if our universe is discrete or contiguous. Put simply, can things truly be 'anywhere' and in any 'way' or do they follow some incredibly small unit of measurement? The greatest minds in modern physics still toil over this question. However, the concept of digital physics or digital philosophy is on the rise. This is the idea posed by quantum physicists which states that the world is a large but finite system where all physical quantities are

² Funk, "Chapter 4: Evolution and Perceptions of Scientific Consensus."

³ Putting aside Descartes objections to the matter

discrete and all physical processes are only finitely complex.⁴ Thus, the term ‘digital’: the idea being that there is fundamentally a most basic unit like a pixel on a computer screen or the most basic bit of code. So, there is a certain amount of distance, as unimaginably small as it may be, that is the smallest amount of distance that an object can truly move or exist within. It cannot and never does exist in between those points.⁵

This comes from that we seem to understand that spacetime is not merely a concept. It is not like space is just the concept of height, width, and length, and objects move through the emptiness. Rather, modern science points to the idea that, in some sense, spacetime actually is a ‘thing.’ Einstein showed that it is affected by gravity and velocity in his theory of relativity, but the question remains as to what it really is. But it seems undeniable that it *is*.⁶ Stephen Wolfram is one of the most innovative physicists of our time and the leading expert on the concept of discrete space. He poses that this spacetime can be modeled and understood as a complex network of nodes that make up the very fabric of reality.⁷ Spacetime itself might have its own smallest unit. If you zoom in far enough there will be a bound as to how little an actual piece of space can be. Some unit that makes up our universe at the most basic and fundamental level.⁸ Dr. Abhay Ashtekar, a world-renowned physicist from Pennsylvania State University, describes these discrete components as “chunks or atoms of spacetime.”⁹

If space is discrete then that means that there is an upward bound on the number of places in which an object can be in. All other states are much easier to account for. There is only a set number of colors a thing could be, for example. And if there is a most basic unit of spacetime then there is also only a set number of velocities at which certain objects can move. So on and so forth. All of this is to prove that there really are a finite number of states in which those finite number of things can be in.

⁴ Amit Hagar. 2014. *Discrete or Continuous? : The Quest for Fundamental Length in Modern Physics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://search-ebscohost-com.libezproxy2.syr.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=e000xna&AN=761501&site=ehost-live>.

⁵ Fredkin, “An Introduction to Digital Philosophy.”

⁶ “GP-B — Einstein’s Spacetime.”

⁷ “Finally We May Have a Path to the Fundamental Theory of Physics... and It’s Beautiful—Stephen Wolfram Writings.”

⁸ “What Is Spacetime, Really?—Stephen Wolfram Writings.”

⁹ Glanz, “SCIENTIST AT WORK: Abhay Ashtekar; Taste-Testing a Recipe for the Cosmos.”

Conclusion 1: There are a finite number of possible worlds.

Given premise one and premise two, this conclusion must logically follow. If there is some number, no matter how unimaginably large, that describes the amount of things that are in our universe. And then we have a number, no matter how unimaginably large, for each of those things that describes the amount of ways in which it can possibly be. We can take those numbers and multiply them to get a number that represents the amount of possible versions of our universe or ‘worlds,’ to use the philosophical term. This then means that the number of possible worlds is not infinite, and this is critical if we are to find the likelihood of some situations over another. If there truly were infinite possible worlds, then we would be forced to compare which set of infinities is larger than the others. The question of if this can be done and in what situations is still undetermined within the mathematical community but ultimately, we avoid that issue.¹⁰ Essentially, infinities are purely conceptual and do not truly exist in nature. And this idea, that the mere concept of infinity is paradoxical to natural logic, has been deeply explored by physicists and philosophers alike from David Hilbert’s Grand Hotel paradox to modern papers by leading MIT researcher Max Tegmark.¹¹¹²

How many possible worlds have a God?

Premise 3: Specificity decreases likelihood.

Moving back into the realm of traditional philosophy, we will start this section with a general statement. When evaluating likelihoods, the more specific something is, the less likely it is. This is just derived from basic logic. Imagine you have a deck of cards in front of you and you are going to draw one card at random. If your goal is literally just to draw a card (i.e., the set is completely unspecific) then the likelihood of your output being positive is 100%. However, if you make it more specific by say looking for only red cards, your likelihood of being successful is now 50%. And if you get ultra-specific like if you are only looking for the seven of spades, you now have only a 1/52 chance of being successful.¹³ This is a quite simple but incredibly important idea moving forward:

¹⁰ Goldstern, “A Deep Math Dive into Why Some Infinities Are Bigger Than Others.”

¹¹ “Welcome To Hilbert's Grand Hotel: A Crash Course In Understanding Infinity”

¹² Tegmark, “WHAT SCIENTIFIC IDEA IS READY FOR RETIREMENT?”

¹³ “Probability of Picking From a Deck of Cards.”

when something is being evaluated for likelihood and none of the options are weighted more than the others, specificity and likelihood have a strong negative correlation.

Premise 4: The existence of God is a very specific situation.

Before we can get to the heart of this premise, we must set some understandings about our possible worlds. There are some philosophers, like Alvin Plantinga, who argue that a maximally great (omniscient, omnipotent, and omnibenevolent) God is necessary for the existence of a universe. And thus, God exists in every possible world.¹⁴ However, we have already agreed on coming in from a neutral position which means that we have no evidence or concrete reason to believe that that is the case.¹⁵ There are also many successful arguments like the one laid out by William Rowe that rebut against Plantinga's necessary God argument without taking an evidence neutral position.¹⁶

Now that that is set, we reach the claim at hand. That God's existence is a specific scenario. God, as we previously defined Him, is an inherently specific scenario, more specific than the general set of all of the possible options. There are as many possible causes for the universe as causes that we do not know are not true. If we are imagining all possible worlds only within the bounds of logic, we can imagine that the vast majority of them would not be structured exactly as depicted in the one book that is circulated here on Earth in the 2020s.¹⁷ Of the inconceivably many versions of the universe that could be actual, if one were randomly selected, we can say that it would be very unlikely that it would be one in which the Abrahamic God is actual.

So, imagine all the possible scenarios in which God does exist. We can start with all of the versions that already exist as religions on Earth, there are already thousands of those.¹⁸ But we can continue and think of many other versions with slight tweaks. However, we can also think of just as many scenarios for any other possible universe cause that we can conceptualize – what if the universe was created accidentally by a magical marshmallow on a journey to the great hot cocoa cup

¹⁴ Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity (Clarendon Library of Logic and Philosophy)*.

¹⁵ Leftow, *Anselm's Argument: Divine Necessity*.

¹⁶ Rowe, "Reply to Plantinga"

¹⁷ By one book I do not mean to assert that there is only one unified religious text or that each Abrahamic religion has the same beliefs. But each version would be evaluated separately meaning that the specific version of God you are attempting to prove using this method is a singular religious description.

¹⁸ "Religion by Country 2022."

in heaven? - and inconceivably more that we are not creative enough or just don't have the time to conceptualize. Thus, the set of possible worlds in which God exists is a specific subset of the total possible worlds. It is important to keep in mind that we can plug any non-evidence-based scenario in for God. The claim at hand is that any explanation for the cause of the universe that is without supporting evidence is equally specific and unlikely, God is simply one of those explanations that we are focusing on because there are not many who worship hot cocoa mugs.

Conclusion 2: There are fewer possible worlds in which God exists than those in which He does not.

Since God's existence is a specific and non-necessary condition, and we can think of all of these different situations that do not involve God's existence that are each just as complex. These premises then bring us to the conclusion that there are fewer possible worlds in which God exists than those in which He does not.

Conclusion 3: Odds are that God does not exist

Following directly from conclusion 2 is conclusion 3 just as a matter of statistical definition. If we are purely deciding odds by how likely a possible world is to be randomly selected, we have shown that more times than not, a no-God world would be selected. The important thing to remember is my initial base premise that we have no actual evidence of God's existence. And since we do not really have any evidence disproving the existence of God, from an evidence standpoint, we are forced to be unsure so we cannot assign different probabilities to different outcomes. Rather, we have no basis to add more weight to the possible worlds where an all-great God exists over the worlds with the magic marshmallow. Thus, we are left with the conclusion that odds are that God does not exist. Crucially though, I do not want to stop there. The goal is not just to show that the chance of God's existence is improbable but that it is functionally zero.

Comparing unimaginable numbers

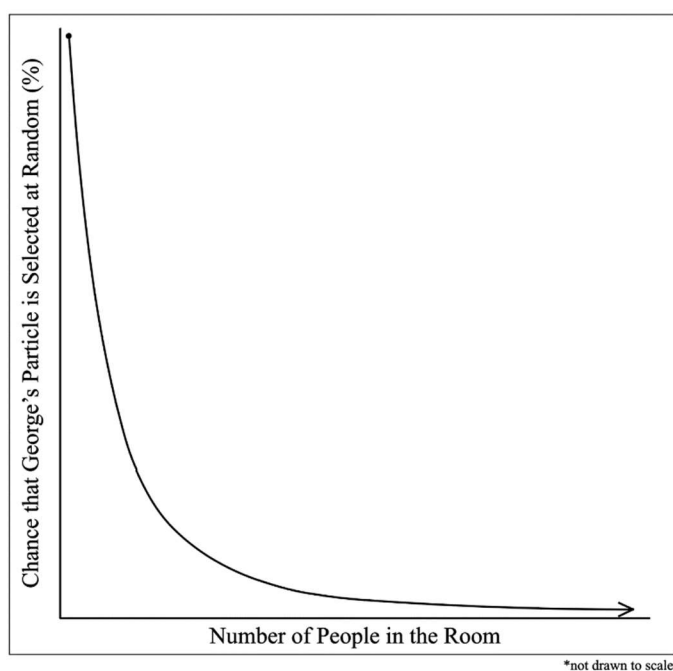
Premise 5: There are unimaginably more worlds in which God does not exist than worlds in which He does.

This premise is truly the crux of this entire argument. That not only are there more possible worlds in which God does not exist than those in which He does, but that there are *unimaginably*

essentially, similar to comparing the possible worlds in which God exists versus the worlds in which He does not.

Premise 6: Any number divided by an unimaginably larger number is approximately zero

Considering George and his massive room with ‘ α ’ many people in it (imagine the line for the bathroom), what if we are to pull, at random, a human particle from the room? What is the chance that that particle will be from George? If we were to make a graph of this relationship it would look something like this:



We see the pattern I mentioned earlier where if there is only George in the room the chance is 100% but the more people you add, the closer the percentage moves towards zero. Even with just 100 people in the room, there's only a .1% chance of George being selected. As the x-value increases, the y-value becomes exponentially closer and closer to zero. So consider the point where the value on the x-axis is α . Since α is unimaginably large, the chance of George being selected is unimaginably close to zero.²¹ We can then determine this to be approximately equal to zero (≈ 0). It is not zero, but the chance of outputting a positive result is so unfathomably close to zero that for just about any determination, we consider it to be zero.

²¹ Shabbir, "Properties of Infinity | Superprof."

Conclusion 4: The chance of God existing is approximately zero.

We can now bring it all home. We determine that even if there are unimaginably many possible worlds in which God exists, there are unimaginably many other subsets, each at least as unimaginably large, that make up the rest of the total set of possible worlds. So, to determine the probability that any of the possible worlds in which God exists is actual, we take an unimaginably large number, but we divide it by an unimaginably larger number and that outputs approximately zero. Therefore, given that there is no evidence pointing either way, the probability of God existing is approximately zero; the stalemate is broken.

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A Conceptual Guide on the Importance of Belief Statements

Will Ervin

Epistemology, Philosophy of Language, Qualia

I would like to make everyone reading this intensely aware of the presence of doubt. Doubt is what will move my arguments and this paper forward. I expect you to be skeptical of my skepticism. I am asking you to challenge my claims with doubt. Now, to be clear I find myself sympathetic to the first part of Descartes' meditation of thought (Descartes, 2016), and his dismissal of his claims in the second mediation is unsatisfactory. I am a skeptic much to my dismay. So, the argument of this paper will be focused on luminance (knowing what we know). I believe that we know very little. The thing that brings me great concern is the nature with which I hear my peers and others speaking. It seems they do not share this sentiment, as they state belief as if it is fact. Everyone seems to be so sure of their cognitive faculties. Yet, Descartes and many others have shown that these faculties have led us astray many times before. I fear that we as humans do not have the correct cognitive capacities to understand absolute truth. So, the fact that we often speak as though we do is of great worry to me. The manner of these thoughts has us arguing over things that cannot be known (yet, or maybe ever) instead of things that can be. I am not suggesting that these sorts of discussions should be removed outright, but the nature in which they are done requires revision. These discussions pose a danger to the structure and validity of science, philosophy, politics, and possibly other fields. Thus, I believe it to be important to reconstruct the way these subjects are thought about and discussed if they are to progress.

Knowledge is a difficult subject to address in its totality, much like most definitions. It is difficult to make a definition that entails that the individual understands the concept while also holding a universal truth value, this attempt at explaining what is required of knowledge may in fact be insufficient. So, I will instead be focusing on a formation of negative knowledge, what we are incapable of knowing.

I find it important to understand my thoughts on knowledge. To do so I need to establish that truth is absolute and certain. This is made clear by Leibniz via the law of the excluded middle (Leibniz, 1908). Something either is the case or it is not the case. For example, one of the sky's properties is to be a particular color, as being a particular color is a property something can have or lack. Thus, it must be the case that the sky has or does not have the property of being green. The sky has other properties as well and lacks others. Thus, defining the sky can be done by understanding its properties in its totality. Now it should be noted that properties in this context include all spatial and temporal instants of an object: where and what is happening to it during a particular instance in time. Since we lack the ability of temporal clarity/understanding (seeing all of the time all at once).

So, determining if something is or is not the case seems too often for a particular property depending on the definitional standpoint, for our limited minds, as I will attempt to make luminance. In the example above the property of the color green is a property that the sky does or does not have, however, it is difficult to determine if it does have this property due to the nature of color. In the field of philosophy, color has been a difficulty for some time. To make this clear I will demonstrate the reverse color argument (Block, 1990). The argument asked us to imagine a person that has a standard normal vision (whatever that is supposed to mean) and imagine that they had gone through eye surgery. This surgery inverted their eye's color perspective: dark blue is now orange, and so on and so forth. This individual now refers to an orange -the fruit- as dark blue, as that is what they see, dark blue. However, over time after being re-habited, they respond to oranges as oranges. This is curious. It seems that the agent in this thought experiment refers to orange differently at different times. Both of these references seem valid, or understandable. However, now it seems to be unclear which one most refer to when they speak of a particular color and if it is the same kind of reference -sense. Secondarily, if her situation was never made clear it would be impossible to know that she saw different things than the majority because she would co-refer with others on descriptions and names for colors. This makes it impossible to know that she sees the opposite spectrum, so, it also seems plausible to conclude that all our visions may slightly vary; if we can not know of inverted spectrum cases existence in an individual then how could we know about the nuance spectrum difference between peoples? Thus, making the sense of color very confused. So it seems that once again due to our limits in our cognition -mainly the inability to access other minds and a lack of temporal clarity. We can only define things definitionally and not on any sort of actual truth. This is a common occurrence as I will demonstrate further. Our language seems to lack the ability to explain the world in its totality and thus when we speak our language should reflect this in some regard.

To demonstrate my point it is imperative that I disclose my thoughts on skepticism and how to approach such a subject. Descartes attempted this journey in his *Meditations on First Philosophy*, however, I found his dismissal of the subject repulsive. While Descartes' methods are successful, at least for me -in the first meditation- I find them to be too abstract and distant for most to take them seriously (Descartes, 2016). Instead, I wish to discuss something more fundamental, applicable, and simple: If a tree falls and no one is around does it make a sound? The initiative answer -for me and many- is yes. While intuition is a useful tool it should not be a replacement for thought. It is clear to me, at least in theory, that sound does not exist in the external world. Before I continue, I must

define what I mean by sound: sound is the noise something makes -the experience of hearing something. Thus, sound requires something to hear it, for sound is qualia. Qualia made evident by Nagel is something that must be experienced by something that has stage 3 awareness. If you accept sound as qualia then it follows that the tree does not make a sound when no one is around, however, in how I have defined sound it appears that I have defined it as a qualia -thus making this argument circular. Thus, I must now demonstrate why sound is qualia to resolve such errors.

Sound is produced by a disbursement of air. This disbursement of air moves at a rate that determines its frequency -Hz. This disbursement of air is “sound”, in a way, but it would be strange to say that this air disbursement has noise. Since it doesn’t have noise it seems that this cannot be sound. It is more accurate to say that this is an aspect of what produces sound. These frequencies of air disbursement then enter the ear and hit the eardrum. When this membrane is displaced from the standard position the bones attached to it move with it. This movement causes a disturbance of liquid within the inner ear. These liquids then move at a rate of frequency similar to the air disbursement. This movement of the liquid is then picked up by the cilia in the inner ear which then sends this information up to the neuron fibers and up to the brain. This too must be an aspect of what produces sound, but it is not sound; just like the tree falling is not sound. Both do not produce noise. Noise is found in experience. Thus, sound must only exist within experience, for nowhere else has sound, not in the external world. While it may be true that the tree falling instantiates a state of sound itself is not enough to produce sound. Without anything to hear the tree fall noise can not be experienced.

Now the disconnect that the idea of qualia produces should be made more evident. The Veil of Perception has been raised and cannot be removed. It should be called into question whether color exists in the external world, and other things in its likeness. It seems that all things that we use to make sense of the world -via a format of measurement- such as color, sound, etc. Thus the very means by which we understand the world must come into question. Possibly including things such as continuity of objects -but that is a topic for another paper. At the very least it seems that we should be skeptical about the contents of the external world. Now by no means is this the most comprehensive or in-depth account of the veil of perception, however, it should still demonstrate something very clearly and distinctly: that being that we can be certain of very little, doubt (Descartes, 2016). Descartes later claims that this sort of thing is useless and dismisses it outright. Yes, in some regard we can not completely think this way, however, it does not mean that the underlying assumption: of us being wrong should not be upheld. The removal of this assumption

that is simply waved away is the true danger. Almost all things are an assumption from these bases, and thus, the true nature of this paper is presented. While I am interested in skepticism I am mainly interested in how it can sow the seeds of doubt. While not the most efficient way it is thorough. Mainly though I am interested in how doubt may impact our speech.

Now how we go about changing language and concepts, conceptual engineering, is difficult. Some argue that it may be fruitless to the extent of hoping for widespread change (Cappelen, 2018). Conceptual engineering, the different ways of approaching it, and the extent to which it could be successful are topics I do not feel well-versed in discussing. However, I do feel well-versed enough to discuss a very specific problem in language that I believe needs addressing. That being lexical effects. In particular, one very specific lexical effect that I believe is making a widespread impact. Lexical effects have been used for some time to manipulate people's faculties in marketing, politics, and other such areas. I believe this should be avoided completely, much like Cappelen. In particular, I am noticing a non-word lexical effect; due to its sneaky nature and prevalence I would like to demonstrate it and how doubt/skepticism can help avoid such issues.

I have recently discovered the extent to which concepts and language can be manipulated in such a manner to reserve said concepts. To be clear I am not talking about something as plain as lying. In particular, I fear the prevalence of linguistic effects and the non-usage of belief statements. There is a famous paper by David Lewis that helps demonstrate my thoughts on belief statements well. It states a case where a woman named Mary has three criteria:

1. Mary has never seen color, she has only experienced the world in black and white.
2. Mary is the world's leading neurologist and knows everything there is to know about brain states, including **every** detail about early to late vision -the experience of vision.
3. For the sake of clarity and cohesion, it is to be assumed that this argument has no holes, besides the conclusion itself.

Now I am not going into grand detail as to why all of this is the case. Instead, if you are interested in the validity of this argument I suggest you read the first two pages of Lewis's paper, but is not particularly important for this paper. What is important is the end of the thought experiment. It is stated that one day Mary exists here confined space, a confined space where everything is black and white including herself -due to genetic pigment manipulation. When Mary goes outside she sees a red rose. According to Lewis, Mary would be surprised as he believed -at the time of writing the paper- that she was learning something new. That being the qualia red. Others argue that Mary

doesn't learn something new (Jackson, 1986), others argue that Mary learns new know-how (Nanay, 2009), and others argue other things. Most of these approaches skip an important step in the argument, which is proving that we can know what Mary knows. I think that since this part of the argument is absent we can not assume any of these conclusions to be valid. Mary has a completely alien understanding of neurology; she is said to be more knowledgeable than everyone in the field combined at the current moment. It is absurd to make claims about what Mary knows before establishing that we can know that kind of information.

Sadly, this entire tangent in philosophy could have been avoided -or more likely lessened- if only Lewis stated that he believed Mary learned something new. This implies that he doesn't know if Mary will learn something new. Thankfully this error was made in philosophy where you will be contested, usually on the validity, if you make an argument. I worry though about the influence of this in the political scene and science. I see this non-word lexical effect rephrasing doubt.

Inherent doubt and skepticism may be too extreme and general to address my worries. A much better approach for integrating such worries would be to address the issues that lexical effects cause and several instances of this, instead of an education in skepticism and speech. It would likely be best to educate people via these methods. However, for the purposes of this paper, I wanted to be utterly clear on my worries and I did not find my argument completely sufficient without the integration of doubt. I do not expect this to be integrated into normal speech. I am simply at the moment trying to show the importance to those who will listen. I am hoping that this small integration that may be applied to those who listen to language may compound over time. In particular, my over-extension of my argument allows those who read this paper to understand and identify, in a broader and general sense, this problem; and to address the problem when it occurs.

The elimination of this non-word lexical effect would allow for more opportunities for critical thinking. I believe this because moving to a format of if conditionals and belief statements will make it clear to those receiving the belief statement/if conditional that this statement is no fact; as we move away from phrasing them like they are. Secondarily, and more importantly, phrasing things like this promotes a more accurate depiction of knowledge, my reason for believing so is illustrated in the above section. I find myself to be convinced of the importance of the phrasing of belief statements, perhaps though I have had a lapse in judgment. I implore you to be doubtful of my claims, for it is the tent I wish to demonstrate most of all.

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Sublime in Aesthetics

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Philosophy of Art, Aesthetics

The sublime, as an important activity for aesthetic judgment, also operates through the reflective judgment of the aesthetic while following the principle of subjective co-purposefulness. Since the object of the sublime is, to a certain extent, without tangible form and the naturally presented phenomena are not beautiful and sublime, one cannot intuitively feel and judge the sublime by the senses alone. The judgment of the sublime, like the judgment of beauty, is based on existence (Moland, 2005). Through the continuous search for nature, the human subject can still form the aesthetic feeling that "the object is sublime." In this process, the imagination assists people in perceiving things beyond their understanding, but the emotions that arise are not about absolute pleasure but awe and fear. This paper aims to examine the relationship between the sublime experience and our sense of self. Does the relationship challenge or confirm our understanding of our place in the world?

The paper will draw out the argument through an account of the sublime and the sublime in tragic art. According to Kant, there are two types of sublime: the "mathematical" sublime and the "dynamic" sublime, which are based on the quantitative magnitude of one and the enormous power that can be exerted by the other. In this case, imagination leads one to understand the concept of infinity. We consider something substantial sublime based on Kant's definition of the sublime (Kant, 2002). A typical example of mathematical infinity is nature because nature presents "absolute largeness" as relatively intuitive, while at the same time, it is inherently strange and indifferent (Carlson, 2019). The unknown and irresistible nature makes us, as humans, feel impotent and powerless. We cannot accurately gauge the size of this type of sublime object. When the power of this perceived object is so great that it cannot be described by experience or existing understanding, those subtle moments that arise in our minds become the sensations to which we subconsciously turn (Shaw, 2017). Thus, the unfathomable sea and the cliff make us feel the sublime with an overwhelming force, which is a side reflection of the subtle moments of the sublime that are not always pleasant, but more of a fear of the unknown scope. According to this dimension, the sublime breaks through with a new substantial aesthetic concept that opens up a different kind of beauty from the narrow sense, a beauty that is the product of thinking based on the gap between the perceived object and what one perceives, which does not seem to be in line with Kant's definition of the process of beauty, which, according to Kant's definition of beauty, must not be mixed with any interest nor be thought. Beauty calmly expresses to ourselves the act of the object itself (Murdoch, I, 1959). Natural landscapes such as the sea and cliffs, which are considered to be more likely to bring

about a sense of the sublime, also have, at the same time, a free beauty as defined by Kant because they are not attached to a concept of purpose to be appreciated. This means that these objects have aesthetically pleasing physical properties and necessarily carry with them the harmony that contributes to the beauty of freedom. However, these things that can also bring about the sublime do not themselves have the properties of the sublime, nor do we possess a common sense based on the sublime, which does not have a form that prescribes what is sublime. These feelings of awe and fear are obtained through analysis, and the sense of the sublime is stimulated step by step. In this process, the rational aspect of cognitive ability inevitably overrides the perceptual one. Our rational analysis subconsciously establishes order for us. However, the object to be analyzed may not only be beyond the existing human perception but also beyond where the imagination can reach, and the faculty fails (Murdoch, I, 1959).

Danto, in *The Abuse of Beauty*, mentions that the sublime involves a feeling of imperfection - a feeling of something beyond our understanding. This leads to the first argument of this paper that the experience of the sublime reveals the limits of our knowledge and ability to understand the world around us. The true sublime is the excitement with which we experience the absence of self (Murdoch, I. 1950). The experience of the sublime, then, has to do not only with overwhelming or awe-inspiring object encounters but also with our own subjective experience of incompleteness. This awareness of our lack makes the sublime experience truly exciting because it allows us to transcend ourselves and recognize our place in a more extensive system. Then, even what Kant calls the sublime, i.e., the sensible natural object that possesses infinity, cannot express the rational content that exists as an idea (Han Zhenjiang, 2015). Whereas the imagination shortens the distance between reason and the object of perception by constantly expanding the boundaries of our perception's limitations, reason provides the security needed to transform fear into pleasure (O'Sullivan, J. 2017), and super sensibility follows. The supersensible experience from the sublime can lead to increased self-awareness, and those subtle moments that are produced slowly become apparent as one captures them further due to the impact of the perceived object on one's sensory blind spot. Immediately afterward, the subject's initial displeasure evolves into pleasure as reason conforms to the supersensible world.

The infinite meaning that the sublime brings is liberating because, on the one hand, the sublime is not subject to any constraints or limitations, and on the other hand, experiencing the

sublime is an experience of liberating self-consciousness. This experience allows the individual to focus on concerns beyond their everyday ones and to connect with something greater than themselves, resulting in an experience of the sublime that transcends the realm of pain and pleasure, which is the source of the sense of freedom. Schopenhauer explains how we can take aesthetic pleasure in terrifying or overwhelming scenarios. That is, in order to contemplate the idea of a hostile object aesthetically, the subject must first acknowledge the frightening or vast object but then "consciously turn away" from the threat and "violently break free of his own will" (WWR I, 226). This intentional separation of ourselves from our instincts and desires involves a kind of break with the will that allows us to view the scene from a relatively transcendent perspective and thus to feel the sublime, thus explaining Schopenhauer's view that even though the sublime brings a sense of terror, we do not lose our sense of self as a result. Moreover, the sublime demonstrates a shift from an overwhelming sense of abstraction to the concreteness of what is awe-inspiring, which means that the sublime, as a springboard for artistic expression, can be imbued with much emotion and more content. The tragedy is one form of artistic expression of the sublime and an example of the dynamic sublime. It's also the special case of the aesthetic. The sense of tragedy is a form of the sublime, and the unique attributes of tragedy are pity and fear (Zhu, 2014). Tragedy, as a form of aesthetic sublime will help us explore the sublime further. Tragedy often inspires the audience to recreate real emotions through the dramatic portrayal of emotions.

The ephemeral nature of life and love is often chosen as a theme for tragedy. By portraying the ephemeral nature of life and love, the audience is presented with a close-up and great misfortune. This usually brings people a strong sense of uneasiness and thus a sense of loneliness, a sense of loneliness that arises from the contradiction between the portrayal of loss in the tragic drama and our attachment to our possessions, relationships, or identity in the real world, the experience of the sublime is precisely related to confronting this contradiction. In his *Psychology of Tragedy*, Zhu Guangqian posed the question of why, while people certainly abhor suffering, they enjoy watching tragic events performed on stage. We must admit that, as sensual beings, we are never immune to illness, loss, and death, but we know that we can face unknown destruction with dignified calm. This is the highest expression of humanity, the recognition that we can overcome our sensual nature; in tragedy, we sympathize with the protagonist, which brings us joy (Moland, Lydia L, 2021). This leads to the second argument of this paper, that the experience of the sublime challenges our understanding of our place in the world.

While beauty always symbolizes goodness, the sublime does not. *Oedipus Rex* is considered one of the greatest tragic works in Western literature. It is the story of Oedipus, the king of Thebes, who inadvertently fulfills the prophecy, killing his father and marrying his mother, thereby bringing a curse upon himself and the city. The play opens with the city of Thebes afflicted by a plague, and the heroic King Oedipus vows to find the source of the curse and end it. During his investigation, Oedipus discovers that he is the source of the curse and unknowingly fulfills the prophecy of killing his father and marrying his mother. Horrified by this revelation, Oedipus becomes desperate. He is exiled, leaving Jocasta, his wife and mother, to hang herself and his two sons to face an uncertain future. The sublimity of *Oedipus Rex* tragedy is that it evokes a strong sense of pity and fear in the audience by showing the sublimity and destruction of an individual. The audience witnesses the great transformation of Oedipus from glory to tragedy as a tragic hero of great power and wisdom, a heroic spirit that evokes in us a sense of praise as an essential part of the tragedy, a passion of a heroic nature that inspires us to realize that we have the passion for overcoming all resistance, and thus a sense of the sublime. This heroic spirit is the source of the aesthetic pleasure that the audience derives from the tragedy (Sun, 2020), and the heroic color is one of the key elements of the play's sublimity. The portrayal of the nature of fate is one of the key elements of the play's sublime. The audience has a God's-eye view that the characters on stage do not have, so the play's hint of a tragic end makes the audience well aware of the terrible fate that awaits Oedipus. The potential foreknowledge of the plot creates a sense of inevitability and pathos in the audience as they wait for the pain to come, which elevates the play to a sublime level as the audience is forced to face the full weight of Oedipus' tragic fate. The third element of the sublime is the tragedy's exploration of ethical taboos, which forces the audience to confront disturbing truths about human nature and the human experience that the audience may find offensive or unpleasant. Because Oedipus kills his father and marries his mother, this is an ethical and moral challenge.

The story can be seen as a metaphor for Freud's highly pioneering psychoanalytic theory based on the plot --- "Oedipus complex." According to Freud's definition, the Oedipus complex can be interpreted as a manifestation of his unconscious desire for his mother and his unconscious competition with his father. His attempt to avoid prophecy can also be seen as his struggle with the Oedipus complex. From a psychoanalytic perspective, the play is sublime in its ability to tap into the universal human experience and emotions associated with the Oedipus complex. The fourth element of the play's sublimity is its profound questioning of the limits of human agency.

Oedipus unwittingly kills his father and marries his mother, fulfilling the gods' prophecy. Even though Oedipus keeps trying to avoid this ending, when everything becomes a foregone conclusion, he learns the truth, knowing that he has not escaped this prophecy of killing his father and marrying his mother. The main character in it can only respond to the play of fate with endless collapse. The prophecy is finally authenticated proving the irresistibility of fate, which fits Schiller's first classification of sublime----- the physical power of the object, here, the object, i.e., fate, is more accurately described in the play as prophecy. The tragic end of the fulfillment of this prophecy is the utter despair of Oedipus after realizing the terrible truth of his actions, and he wants to repent by committing suicide. However, because he feels innocent, he finally turns to gouge out his own eyes. This truth was too much for him to bear. In Greek culture, blinding oneself was seen as a form of punishment and a way to atone for one's sins. Atonement implies Oedipus' struggle against fate for the continued existence of moral principles, even if this struggle does not turn the tide, and still implies a self-consciousness that does not want to be influenced by great forces. Nevertheless, this self-blinding reveals the disparity between fate and human power to the audience. By destroying his eyes, it also means that Oedipus symbolically rejects the world of appearances, i.e., he does not want to face this fact. This complex suffering contains the multiple contradictions of atonement and resistance to accepting reality. Moreover, Oedipus' mother, Jocasta, responds to this painful reality with death. The portrayal of the character's unawareness of the process of atonement and escape from the choice fits Schiller's last two classifications of sublime representations - the moral superiority of the subject and physical weakness. As portrayed in the plot, Oedipus does not have the subjective intention to break ethics and morality, i.e., to kill his father and mother. Rather he cannot escape from his predicted final destination. This passive fact also makes the audience feel pity for Oedipus, even though Oedipus' self-blindness act implies self-deceiving through objective analysis. The powerlessness of the protagonist also touches the audience's sense of powerlessness, so one accepts that no matter how powerful the protagonist is portrayed in the early stages, he can only end the tragic story with a helpless submission to fate. The above analysis of the plot and characters of Oedipus the King presents the essence of what makes the play sublime, namely, that the theme of the work and the values used in the world of the characters are not sublime in themselves. However, the result is sublime through a combination of artistic expressions. Just as a work of art can present a beautiful subject, it is not beautiful in itself (Kuplen, 2015).

This tragedy is not only full of challenges to the existing social ethics but also full of conflicts between free will and destiny. So how can we experience the sublime "aesthetic pleasure" in the face of these things that challenge our emotional and moral perceptions and can even be called unbearable? In his book *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche mentions that the form of tragedy, including its rhythm, musical shape, and overall structure, can transform the harsh reality of human suffering into something aesthetically pleasing. Thus, even if tragedy is presented in a form that destroys the sublime for all to see (Sun, 2020) the form of tragedy produces a new paradigm that helps us understand the terrible as a helpful illusion (Peacocke, Antonia, 2023) and keeps us from joining the characters portrayed when confronted with themes that are difficult to be "destroyed." Then, because the same mechanism does not produce the sublime as beauty in the general sense, the "aesthetic pleasure" of the sublime will not be the same as the "aesthetic pleasure" of beauty in general. Through the analysis of the mathematical and dynamic sublime, we can know that the aesthetic pleasure of the sublime comes from an unpleasant pleasure, from the finiteness of the individual's understanding of the infinite sphere, and from the failure of the sensuous and imaginative powers in concert to feel something beautiful or transcendent. This unpleasantness is a prerequisite for the pleasure that follows because the unpleasantness caused by this failure reveals the presence of reason and keen sensibility in our minds (Kuplen, 2015). At the same time, intuition as perceptual awareness is a prerequisite that cannot be ignored because sensibility makes abstraction tangible. Then, when we become aware of the power of reason and supersensibly, we can recognize higher, more abstract concepts outside our direct experience. Pleasant pleasure, on the other hand, arises from the purposefulness that we seek inwardly. Then the delightful pleasure resulting from the response of reason and imagination should be the order in the supersensible world by jumping out of the disorder of the world in which the subject exists. This order cannot be locked in scope in the world of existence and therefore is disorder, which represents a sense of chaos because it is not generalized by reason and expanded by imagination, which causes our aesthetic vision to be blurred at this time. But co-purposefulness in the supersensible world allows self-consciousness to perceive it as if it were a natural being, even though the perceived object itself does not have the property of being revealing and is, therefore, an order. Our awe generated by the sublime becomes a recognition of transcendental reason in another sense and is, therefore, pleasurable.

I believe that the sublime, as Danto sees it, without order, lies only at the emotional level and that the final experience of the sublime should be orderly, whether the imagination expands to the

point where it begins to intersect only with the real infinite or approaches it infinitely, the final experience can only be orderly because only if it is orderly is the "concept" of the sublime that we seek inwardly confirmed in the self-consciousness and can be paraphrased in a logical system. Thus, we can realize that these ideas respond to art (Clewis, 2010). The aesthetic pleasure of beauty reveals the role of the a priori principle, where natural beauty is arranged in a pleasing regularity when the perceived subject submits to our cognitive faculties. However, at the same time, nature, which represents the mathematical sublime, is removed from the realm of the a priori principle in another haphazard combination when our cognitive faculties submit to the perceived subject. Among the moral qualities that represent the dynamic sublime, not only true virtue is sublime, as Kant believed, we can find counterexamples in works of art, then, subversive of moral perception, and evil can also be sublime. With these subversive moral perceptions, we sympathize with the characters in a tragedy, but we do not share the tragedy of the characters. The position between the stage and the audience is not only a physical distance but also a distance that constantly reminds people of the position of the bystander. In sympathy, we return to our sense of self, find our place in the world, and then develop a sense of moral superiority so that these unbearable things are denatured by sympathy and superiority. We thus feel pleasure, which is certainly not a recognition of that quality, but more like a cathartic pleasure. This affective state "is state in which the representational forces play freely on a given representation toward general awareness" (Kant, 2002).

In sum, the sublime brings us a state of mind that transcends immediate pleasure and pain. Although we may label these vague moments as fear, the sublime still brings aesthetic pleasure on a supersensory level. Moreover, the experience of the sublime challenges our understanding of our place in the world by revealing the limits of our knowledge and ability to make sense of the world around us.

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A Parfitian Deconstruction of the Multiverse in Everything Everywhere All
at Once

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Philosophy of Art, Parfitian Philosophy, Epistemology

Everything Everywhere All at Once (A24, 2022) is a science-fiction, comedy-drama film where Evelyn Wong, an unfulfilled Chinese immigrant mother, learns to harness her abilities from her different multiverse counterparts to save the universe. Although the film's premise appears to be a typical multiverse film, the driving conflict comes from the familial issues between Evelyn, Waymond (her husband), and Joy (her daughter and the film's main antagonist). The multiverse is a collection of diverse universes or alternate realities where different counterparts of these characters have unique skills and personalities. One of these counterparts includes Alpha Waymond, Waymond's counterpart who serves as Evelyn's mentor. Due to the subject matter portrayed in the movie, analyzing this film from a personal identity perspective is not far-fetched. This paper aims to discuss the thought experiment of multiverse splitting. This analysis discusses how the multiverse splitting relates to Parfit's account of personal identity as multiverse splitting resembles his fission case. The multiverse is composed of an infinite number of universes and our observable ones. These universes contain every possibility of every choice, action, or conceivable event. Since the film shows that a universe splits into multiple branching universes with non-identical counterparts of a particular person. Therefore, there is a parallel between multiverse splitting and fission cases, which are thought experiments where a single person splits into two non-identical persons. Everything Everywhere All at Once is consistent with Parfit's theory that psychological continuity and connectedness are important in survival through the similarities between the movie's multiverse case and Parfit's fission case. However, the film disagrees with Parfit's theory that identity does not matter in survival since Evelyn's motivation is driven by self-interest.

Derek Parfit's theory of personal identity controversially argues that identity has no importance in survival. He lays out this argument through a fission case – the philosophical dilemma where one person splits into two continuant persons – where consciousness is unified until the moment when fission occurs. Parfit's example of the fission case is the split-brain case, his thought experiment where one-half of the brain is transplanted into someone else's "brainless body," and the resulting person retains the original characters and apparent memories of the original brain's life (Parfit 200). He uses this case to demonstrate that psychological continuity and connectedness matter in survival – not identity. Parfit introduces the following dilemma to this case: "My brain is divided, and each half is housed in a new body. Both resulting people have my character and apparent memories of my life. What happened to me? There seem only three possibilities: (1) I do not survive; (2) I survive as one of the two people; (3) I survive as both" (Parfit 200-201).

Ultimately, Parfit disputes all three possibilities, stating that (1) cannot be correct because half a brain is enough to survive. (2) does not make sense given the assumption that both hemispheres are identical, so neither option is more likely to be identical to the original brain. There are no grounds to support one over the other. Finally, (3) is wrong because it is inconsistent with Parfit's view that the two resulting hemispheres are not identical to the original person. Ultimately, Parfit believes that because identity does not branch out after fission cases, identity is one-on-one (that the person bears a relation to oneself). There was one stream of consciousness that branched into two streams, and there was no one and the same person over time. The split-brain case demonstrates Parfit's view that identity does not matter in survival since there is no identity over time in that the person loses their identity after the split. Parfit does not think fission is the same as death since psychological continuity and connectedness are preserved after fission.

Secondly, Parfit argues that psychological continuity and connectedness matter for survival. Psychological continuity, which is the same consciousness over time from past memories to present, is one of Parfit's requirements for survival. Unlike identity, psychological continuity is not one-one but has a one-many relation. It branches out, as demonstrated in the split-brain case, where the two resulting bodies have mental continuity with the original as "both resulting people have my character and apparent memories of my life" (Parfit 200). In Parfit's case, the two halves of the brain have the same characters and memories as the original brain, up to the point of the brain split. The two halves would also have psychological continuity with one another until the split (since they were an entire brain before). Applying the fission case to the multiverse case, all counterparts of Evelyn have psychological continuity until the multiverse splits, but not to the Evelyns that have fissioned after the split.

Meanwhile, psychological connectedness is another of Parfit's requirements for survival, which consists of overlapping chains of direct psychological relations through quasi-memories (q-memories), character traits, and intentions. There is a difference between continuity and connectedness in that having the same stream of consciousness does not necessarily entail having consistent intentions and characteristics. Connectedness requires direct relations. And if these beings are like us, A cannot stand in such relations to every individual in his indefinitely long 'tree.' Q-memories will weaken with the passage of time, and then fade away. Q-ambitions, once fulfilled, will be replaced by others. Q-characteristics will gradually change. In general, A stands in fewer and

fewer direct psychological relations to an individual in his "tree" the more remote that individual is. And if the individual is (like B + 30) sufficiently remote, there may be between the two no direct psychological relations (Parfit 214). Q-memories feel like real memories, intentions, and characteristics, but the idea of q-memories is created to provide the same knowledge and information as real memories but to avoid presupposing that the rememberer and the experiencer are the same person. To further explain q-memories, Parfit stipulates that a person is q-remembering an experience if: 1. If the person believes that a past experience feels like memories; 2. The person did actually have such a past experience; 3. The beliefs of the memory are properly causally connected to the past event (Parfit 209). These are criteria for psychological connectedness.

Everything Everywhere All at Once's use of multiverse is consistent with Parfit's views on psychological continuity and connectedness, with the idea that every little decision creates another branching universe and the person in these universes is straightforwardly continuous until the moment of fission. The film explains much of the multiverse's mechanics through expositional dialogue. For instance, Alpha Waymond explains to Evelyn that "you underestimate how the smallest decisions can compound into significant differences over a lifetime. Every tiny decision creates another branching universe" (Everything Everywhere All at Once 33:52-33:59). The quote corroborates with the first observation listed – multiverses are created by branching points that split the universe through different possible decisions – since it implies a mental continuity and connectedness between the different universes until the moment of multiverse splitting. Although the multiple consciousnesses are from different universes, they still have the same apparent memories of their lives until the split, demonstrating direct psychological relations consistent with psychological continuity. The characters in the film are consistent with Parfit's idea of psychological connectedness because they fulfill the requirements of q-memories: 1. Evelyn believes that she can recall her past experiences and expresses regret from those experiences; 2. From the flashbacks, it is clear that these memories did happen; 3. Evelyn's beliefs, characters, and intentions are causally connected to past experiences. Alpha Waymond says that "every rejection, every disappointment has led you to this moment. Don't let anything distract you from it" (Everything Everywhere All at Once 22:23-22:33). Evelyn's belief in her life's disappointment is dependent upon a causal connection to the past event, in that the past experiences and decisions made caused the universe to split and shaped Evelyn to have different beliefs and personalities. For example, Evelyn, having chosen to run the laundromat and marry Waymond, is ultimately miserable and regretful, which is

demonstrated by this line: “No, let me finish talking with my husband [regular Waymond]. He needs to know how good my life could have been” (Everything Everywhere All at Once 2022 48:12-48:17). This line is important because it demonstrates that Evelyn can recall her memories from her multiverse counterparts and that she believes that her life’s regret and disappointment stems from being with Waymond. Overall, the movie shows a consistent representation of psychological connectedness.

Everything Everywhere All at Once is consistent with Parfit’s split-brain theory in that after the multiverse split, the original person survives as multiple multiverse versions. Parfit's split brain case supports the idea that multiverse splitting creates different persons since the multiple resulting persons will have different memories after the split. The film seems to agree that different universe versions of these characters are the same person before the split, especially since Evelyn’s counterparts are psychologically continuous until the split. After the split, the multiple Evelyns are not identical. Alpha Waymond briefly explains the verse jumping to a confused Evelyn: “[Alpha Evelyn] discovered a way to temporarily link your consciousness to another version of yourself, accessing all of their memories, their skills, even their emotions” (Everything Everywhere All at Once 34:51-35:06). Although the different versions of Evelyn have different skills, emotions, and memories, they are still psychologically connected to a degree, and properly causally connected to the past experience. Because the different counterparts remember the same experiences up to the point of the split, the multiverse case seems consistent with Parfit’s explanation of psychological connectedness in his split-brain case. As a result, in terms of psychological connectedness and continuity, the different counterparts of Evelyn survived the multiverse split, which is consistent with Parfit’s idea that psychological continuity and connectedness matter in survival.

Although the film is consistent with Parfit’s theory of identifying survival through psychological connectedness and continuity, it disagrees with Parfit’s theory that identity does not matter in survival. Instead, the movie's central message is that although there is no inherent meaning to the universe, people should value the present moment and find meaning (optimistic nihilism). This theme is especially relevant given the overarching conflict of the film, which is the interpersonal relationship between Evelyn and her daughter, Joy, who ultimately wants to erase herself, along with Evelyn. Ultimately, Everything Everywhere All at Once disagrees with Derek Parfit’s theory that identity does not matter in survival because the film embraces an egoist/self-

interested view. Parfit argues against acting in self-interest, in that if identity does not matter in survival, egoism should not be natural or instinctive; therefore, one should act in the best interests of everyone concerned. According to Parfit, if identity does not matter for survival, then “egoism, the fear not of near but of distant death, the regret that so much of one’s only life should have gone by... should be weakened” (Parfit 220). Parfit argues that there are two schools of thought: biased rationality – acting in one’s best interest – and the principle of impartiality – acting in the best interest of everyone. He suggests that self-interest holds no force because it is arbitrary in that there is no special reason to care about self-interest more than others. Based on Parfit’s previous arguments, acting in the best interest of everyone involves acting in the best interest of an individual’s past and present selves.

However, the movie does not seem to embrace Parfit’s moral view, given that Evelyn chooses to prioritize her interests over the fate of the multiverse. In the film, Evelyn expresses her dismissiveness of the multiverse when she says to Alpha Waymond: “So let her destroy the other bubbles. You said there are so many of them. Maybe it’s okay if we lose some, but just leave me out of it” (*Everything Everywhere All at Once* 36:28-36:34). Throughout the entire movie, Evelyn understands that there are different multiverse versions of herself. However, since they do not share an identity with her, Evelyn prioritizes her self-interests, as she feels that what happened to her counterparts ultimately does not affect her in any way. This would go against Parfit, who believes that “suppose that a man does not care what happens to him in, say, the more distant future... We must say, ‘Even if you don’t care, you ought to take what happens to you then equally into account.’ ... ‘You ought to take what happens to everyone equally into account.’” (Parfit 219-220). If identity does not matter in survival, Parfit would argue that it is a morally wrong judgment on Evelyn’s part to be acting on biased rationality (do what is best to achieve what one wants) over other people’s future. The second example of the film’s contradiction of Parfit’s moral view stems from Evelyn’s desire to preserve her relationship with her daughter. Although Evelyn is initially apathetic to her daughter’s destruction of multiverses, Joy’s revelation as the omniscient villain forces Evelyn to confront her. This ultimately makes Evelyn more emotionally invested in her daughter’s safety. Thus, Evelyn demonstrates that her self-interest motivates her and that she is willing to let the other “bubbles” be destroyed since she does not identify with her other multiverse counterparts. Parfit would argue that Evelyn should care for the fate of the multiverses and, to an extent, her counterparts. However, Evelyn’s character does not support this theory. In addition to forgoing the

safety of other universes, she only grows to care for the safety of her version of Joy. Evelyn's self-interest is a consistent characteristic throughout her counterparts, as demonstrated in an alternate universe, where Evelyn attempts to reconcile with Joy through this dialogue:

EVELYN: Maybe it's like you said. Maybe there is something out there, some new discovery that will make us feel like even smaller pieces of shit. Something that explains why you still went looking for me through all of this noise. And why, no matter what, I still want to be here with you. I will always, always, want to be here with you.

JOY: So what? You're just gonna ignore everything else? You could be anything, anywhere. Why not go somewhere where your daughter is more than just this? Here, all we get are a few specks of time where any of this actually makes any sense.

EVELYN: Then I will cherish these few specks of time (Everything Everywhere All at Once 2:06:15-2:07:44).

Evelyn disagrees with the principle of impartiality since she only cares about Joy, not the other versions of her daughter. Ultimately, Evelyn does not fit Parfit's mold, and the film's message plays against Parfit's idea that identity does not matter in survival.

This film has a nihilistic theme which contradicts Parfit's moral view since Evelyn embraces her daughter's view that nothing matters by the end. Although the film uses the multiverse premise to convey the story, ultimately, the film revolves around Evelyn and Joy's conflict. Through this conflict, the film embraces the theme that nothing makes sense and that people should find meaning in life. Given that nihilism entails "[denying] the existence of genuine moral truths or values ... and asserted the ultimate meaninglessness or purposelessness of life or of the universe" (Britannica), the mere idea of nihilism especially contrasts against Parfit's moral implication of his argument – that if identity does not matter in survival, then the egoism should not be natural. Nihilism matches Evelyn's personality throughout the film. At the film's beginning, she prioritizes solving her tax issues over saving the multiverse. However, toward the film's end, although Evelyn's financial situation does not change, she learns to find meaning in her present moment and to stop regretting her life's choices. Parfit would likely object to the film's moral message because the film embraces nihilism.

Everything Everywhere All at Once's portrayal of the multiverse conflicts with Parfit's argument of personal identity; although the film consistently portrays psychological continuity and connectedness, its egoist message disagrees with Parfit's stance that identity does not matter in survival. Furthermore, Evelyn's actions and motivations conflict with Parfit's stance that egoism and self-interest are not morally sensible ways to act since identity does not matter in survival. Since nihilism is the backbone for Evelyn's character motivation, conflict, and resolution in the film, Evelyn's motivation might paint her as an antihero to someone who supports Parfit's moral view. Everything Everywhere All at Once portrays an interesting counterargument to Parfit's theory in that identity is crucial to survival, and people need to find inherent meaning in their universe. Evelyn did when she started valuing and appreciating her daughter's personality and attitude.

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Haggling with Hobbes and Hume: A Comparison

John Parker

Ethics, Social Contract Theory, Epistemology

Thomas Hobbes and David Hume are two of the most influential ethical philosophers of all time. Both of their theories seek to derive morality and its expression from the passions. They approach the matter in astoundingly similar ways but, nevertheless, manifest a few critical differences. Hobbes seeks to ground his system in a single passion that he argues is natural as a mode of legitimizing it. At the same time, Hume is content to allow the idea of a moral sense to stand on its own merits on an individual basis and rejects further naturalistic explanations. This subtle difference in foundation gives rise to a myriad of allowances and restrictions that differ between the two men's theories. Still, I believe Hume's theory is superior because it is less susceptible to being trapped in counter-intuitive moral situations than Hobbes's is.

Hobbes's approach to the matter is most infamously characterized by his assessment of the state war that man exists in when in his natural state. Hobbes argues that progress, industry, and the like are impossible in this state of war and "worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death;" is always present "and that the life of man is, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." Hobbes explains that passions steer man away from this state. "The passions that incline men to peace, are fear of death; desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living; and a hope by their industry to obtain them. And reason suggesteth convenient articles of peace, upon which men may be drawn to agreement." The convenient articles of peace that Hobbes refers to are what he calls Laws of Nature, derived by reason from the seeking of peace, which forbids man to do "that, which is destructive of his life, or taketh away the means of preserving the same;" To Hobbes, this state war violates this law by posing considerable risks to security, and therefore all men should seek peace. "There can be no security to any man (how strong or wise soever he be,) of living out his time, which nature ordinarily alloweth men to live. And consequently it is a precept, or general rule of reason, that every man ought to endeavor peace, as far as he has hope of obtaining it."

Based on this, Hobbes asserts that men must be willing, if others are also willing, to forfeit their liberties, their "right to all things," to achieve this peace. However, Hobbes notes that a man cannot lay down his right to protect his own life, as that would be antithetical to the reasoning for forfeiting liberties in the first place. The critical moral implication of this forfeiture stems from the fact that many other men are doing the same simultaneously for the same reason. Hobbes explains how this mutual ceasefire creates the concept of injustice." And when a man hath in either manner abandoned, or granted away his right; then he is said to obliged, or bound, not to hinder those, to whom such right is granted, or abandoned, from the benefit of it: and it is his duty not to make void

that voluntary act of his own: and that such hindrance is injustice and injury." Essentially, once a proverbial ceasefire is agreed to, firing again is an injustice. Hobbes describes this act of undoing what was previously voluntarily decided to as an "absurdity," which he considers synonymous with injustice. This mutually agreed forfeiture of rights is referred to as a contract by Hobbes, the violation of which is immoral, generating the third law of nature: justice, "that men perform their covenants."

It is from this third law that all moral obligations stem from Hobbes and is what gives direct rise to various other laws of nature, such as a duty to forgive and a duty to acknowledge every man as an equal. It can even extend to character traits that do not directly harm anyone but indicate the individual's "aptitude to do injury." All of these moral implications are derived from the third law through reason, and the third law comes from the first law against self-destruction in the same way.

Hume approaches the relationship between reason and passion in a similar manner:

It is obvious that when we have the prospect of pain or pleasure from any object, we feel a consequent emotion of aversion or propensity.... It is also obvious that this emotion rests not here, but, making us cast our view on every side, comprehends whatever objects are connected with it's original one by the relation of cause and effect. Here then reasoning takes place to discover this relation.

Just as Hobbes's moral laws of nature are derived by reason relating them to the end of peace desired by passion, Hume describes the role of reason in the same way: to guide passion through determining cause and effect relationships to inform action. Due to this limited capacity, Hume argues reason is "perfectly inert." To this point, Hume asserts that moral obligations can impact the passions through an emotional sense of duty, which indicates morality originally stems from the passions, as reason itself cannot excite the passions in any way." While Hobbes does not make this argument explicitly, his theory implies a similar approach to reason, as it is never mentioned as a base motivational force and is only used as a describer of relations, the same role Hume describes.

This, however, is where the differences between Hobbes and Hume begin. While Hobbes sees the passion that drives self-preservation as superior to all other passions, such as passions to hold the various liberties that are forfeited to achieve peace, Hume never mentions such hierarchies. Hume is similar to Hobbes in believing that the passions reveal general principles that often suffice to determine the moral quality of an action. Although, unlike Hobbes, Hume does not list these

principles. Hume also does not see these principles as laws, as Hobbes does, but as loose guidelines. This difference stems from the differences in the foundations of the two systems.

Since Hobbes's "Laws of Nature" derive from a singular passion, reason permeates a much larger portion of Hobbes's theory and generates a stricter framework. Hume, however, rejects the centralized approach, calling it "...absurd to imagine that, in every particular instance, these sentiments are produced by an original quality and primary constitution." Instead of moral rules being a strict business, all ultimately chained to a singular passion, Hume sees these principles as convenient heuristics, given that ethical situations are too many and too varied for original instincts to cover. These heuristics form what Hume regards as the only artificial virtue, justice, breaking from Hobbes, who makes no such distinctions of artificiality. Hume argues justice is artificial because although executing justice may be contrary to the immediate passions, it is following the deeper, more essential passions that a given rule of justice was based on in the first place.

On the other hand, natural virtues generate positive impressions in the moment. Critically though, what these deeper passions are is not specified by Hume, and it is thus implied that they can vary from person to person. This is supported by Hume's rejection of nature being an adequate shorthand for morality. Despite referring to natural virtues, he argues that "nothing can be more unphilosophical" than associating the natural with virtue and the unnatural with vice," sharply differing from Hobbes even further. Hume must reject this notion as nature is just one more "original quality" that would be "absurd" to attribute all sentiments to.

Hobbes, however, does not see this singular grounding, nor the leveraging of nature as a tool for legitimacy, as absurd. He ties the passion for self-preservation to avoidance of the primordial state of nature as "war" and continually refers to "Natural Laws" throughout his work. While Hobbes calls these laws natural, they are best likened to Hume's conception of justice as an artificial virtue, as they follow a more profound passion. In Hobbes's case, that passion is self-preservation, even if following it is counter-intuitive at the moment. So where Hobbes has the sole passion for self-preservation serving as the linchpin to support his vast array of reason-derived natural laws, which, again, are really Humean artificial virtues, Hume has many passions, which often manifest as the delight in natural virtues, supporting the single, overarching artificial virtue of justice. In this way, Hobbes and Hume are building their theories with the same materials but with inverse orientations. Hobbes utilizes a single grounding point to support a broad branching tree, while Hume refers to a broad, undefined base under a single pyramid top.

In recognizing this inverse orientation, the benefits and drawbacks of the two theories become clear. Hume's theory involves passions so often that the framework becomes entirely subjective. Even though Hume floats the notion of sympathy as a shared passion for uniting the impressions of man, it is a feeble force. Any agent simply feeling unsympathetic at a given time is entirely unrestricted by the Humean system. Hume asserts there is no standard outside of the individual's passions to measure the morality of one's actions. As he says himself, "To have the sense of virtue is nothing but to feel satisfaction of a particular kind...". While the system works brilliantly as an explanatory framework, by its nature, it posits no moral standards of its own.

This particular problem does not plague Hobbes's theory. His framework sports a clear standard to do what is in one's best interest for self-preservation. While, as Hobbes says, this theory usually leads to keeping the peace, maintaining contracts, and various other generally good practices, the issue lies in the exceptions. Because the Hobbesian system relies on a single objective passion, it has direction and weight, yes, but has an easily exploitable Achilles heel; it is helpless to prevent an agent from being immoral at no risk to himself. If covenants can be violated without discovery for personal benefit, Hobbes's system could not condemn such actions, at least not without stretching. Hobbes calls the undoing of a contract an "absurdity" and thus unjust. Still, that idea derives from the risk to oneself avoided by keeping such a covenant under his system. If no such danger exists under a particular set of circumstances, neither can the injustice.

Similarly, taking any significant risk to one's own life, even for the good of others, would not be considered moral under the Hobbesian system, as it contradicts the fundamental basis of the entire theory: self-preservation. This means that any atrocity you dare to imagine would be considered moral by the Hobbesian if the agent is under the gun. For the Hobbesian, "just following orders" may be a legitimate moral argument instead of a paper-thin excuse for evil, depending on how those orders are being enforced. Worse still, acts that are generally thought of as among the most selfless and moral; such as jumping on a grenade, leading risky rebellions against tyranny, and even donating a heart to one's kin; are not seen as such under Hobbes's theory precisely because they are truly selfless.

Ultimately, I favor the Humean theory. While in a vacuum, it is subjective to the point of ineffectuality, no such vacuum exists in reality. Human nature is very deeply pro-social, which provides a level of bedrock beneficence in human passions and impressions that should usually prevent Hume's system from justifying outright evil in most cases. There are exceptions: including

psychopaths who lack this natural benevolence, and atrocities regarding in-group and out-group conflict, as pro-social instincts do not apply to out-groups to the same extent as the in-group. Still, overall, pro-social human nature sets a solid floor for the evil of the actions a Humean system can realistically justify, especially at larger scales, where aberrations are drowned out in the average of the populace.

In contrast, the Hobbesian theory fundamentally relies on the risk of adverse consequences to explain why breaking covenants is unjust. As said before, these risks are often so small they may as well not be present, especially for more minor transgressions. Meanwhile, Hume relies on the pleasure of integrity and a sense of internal guilt that comes with betrayal to explain why covenant-breaking is wrong. Neither theory catches everything, but the Humean standard applies much more often, as antisocial individuals and societies are rather rare, while situations for wrongdoing with little to no risk are incredibly common. And this is based on human nature alone. Otherwise, the Humean theory's directives primarily rely on the circumstances and culture it is nested in, as that culture inculcates its citizens' impressions and passions. This culture can use the Humean system for good or ill, but at the very least, it generally cannot be used to contradict in-group pro-social behavior, while the Hobbesian approach has no such limits.

This lack of limits is the Hobbesian theory's undoing. It is stuck with its problems and precepts, regardless of cultural context. This is by design and gives the system weight and direction, but it also damns it. The approach ultimately assumes the fundamental selfishness of human nature, even in the state of peace, seemingly allows for harmful deception and opportunism if it is sure not to backfire and disallows true altruism. These flaws are few, but they are significant and unavoidable. The problems with applying Hume's theory are unknown and variable, but they also have a floor for how bad they can realistically get. Overall, I prefer to roll the circumstantial dice and favor Hume.

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How Quantum Quirks Prove Simulation Theory

Ben Popkin

Metaphysics, Simulation Theory, Epistemology

P: If something shares design quirks, it's more likely there was a similar process of design than not.

P: Our universe shares design quirks with our attempts at simulated reality

C: The universe is more likely to be simulated than not simulated.

There is something beyond both our material universe and the vat of nothingness that the Big Bang emerged from to create our universe.

Modern Science concludes that the universe was once the size of a grapefruit (Lineweaver), then it erupted and started expanding interminably into the universe we know today. However, the universe is ruled by laws like Newton's laws of motion, or that the speed of light is 299,792,458 m/s. But what determined the speed at which light travels, and why was it not determined to be faster? Why even have a cap at all? What makes light behave that way? Was the decision arbitrary, or was it thought out? No matter why these laws exist, there is a rulebook for the universe, and its mere existence proves that there is something more that lies beyond the empty vacuum that the Big Bang emerged from. The existence of rules implies that the rules had to come from somewhere.

Typically, when simulation theory is argued, it is deduced that in the grand scheme of time, it's likely that a past civilization was able to create incredibly realistic simulations, and that it's more likely that we are living in one of these simulations than that we are not (Bostrom). I don't support this argument because although logically sound, it is making countless assumptions about our creation and our creators. In this paper, I will argue that we are living inside of a

simulation based on similarity. Our universe has mathematical and quantum quirks, and I will argue that these little quirks are also found commonly in the programs we write when we create computer simulations. I believe these shared quirks are evidence that we are simulated as it is more likely that a universe with “simulation quirks” is simulated than that it is anything else.

The first quirk has to do with our field of view and how what we focus on has an effect on reality. When programmers create a program that a computer will run, typically, if there is a lot of computation that needs to be done, programmers will find ways to take pressure off of the computer's graphics processing power. A way that you can take a load off of the computer is by only loading or rendering the players' field of view. This is a process called “culling,” and it's used in almost every video game. For example, if you are inside a video game and looking at a lake, if you turn around to look at the mountains behind you, the video game would render the lake out of existence as you aren't looking at it. By culling the lake, the game doesn't waste energy loading it in. Say before you turn around to look at the mountains, you throw a rock into the lake. Before the rock hits the water you turn around to look at the mountains, rendering the lake out of existence. If you later turn back to look at the ripples created in the water, they would be inaccurate in terms of their physics. A type of culling called prediction culling is “used in games where players only have a partial view of the game world at any given time.” (Photon). Prediction culling is known to affect the physics engines when enabled. “When *Prediction Culling* is enabled, they will only consider and update entities within the visible area on non-verified, predicted, frames.” In our example, ripple physics won't be as accurate if you are looking away.

This is an example of how the laws of physics inside a simulated reality are bent to save processing power. We see examples of these processing power-saving adjustments being made in our universe in famous quantum mechanic experiments. Similar to video games, our laws of physics are bent with the presence of an observer. We can see proof of prediction culling being enabled in our universe when entities update within *our* visible area.

In the famous double-slit experiment, Clinton Davisson and Lester Germer used an electron gun to fire electrons at a metal plate with two slits cut near the middle. The purpose of the experiment was to observe the interference pattern of electrons. After the electrons passed through the slits, they were intercepted by a screen that displayed where it was hit by the electrons. The process and reasoning behind the experiment are inconsequential to our argument, but what happened next revolutionized quantum mechanics and still upsets physicists. The electrons displayed an unexpected interference pattern. When confused by the irregular behavior of the electrons, physicists placed cameras to observe the electrons passing through the two slits. However, when observed by the camera, the electrons behaved normally and the outcome of the experiment showed a completely different pattern. Scientists have been recreating this experiment for the last 100 years, and the only variable that can change the outcome of the behavior of these electrons is whether or not we are watching (Bruckner). Entities are updating within our visible area.

It makes sense that a program that runs something as vast and comprehensive as our universe would need to cut corners and couldn't render every physics action with equal precision or attentiveness. But beyond our argument, this raises various more complicated questions: How does the program understand our cameras to be an extension of the observer, and does it know what a camera is and does? If so, how is it up to date with our recent

technological advancements considering the vastness of the universe? Maybe our simulators are still around and are watching, or the universe itself is a sentient being that is all-aware and is capable of strategically exerting amounts of quantum mechanical attentiveness. What else is a sentient universe than a God?

These quirks in the universe usually appear in places where basic laws of physics seem to bend.

One of these bending points in physics has to do with quantum entanglement. Einstein referred to quantum entanglement as “spooky action at a distance”. Quantum entanglement deals with particles that are entangled and connected (Winsburg). The two particles are generated in a way in which their states are undetermined until they are measured. Particles have an intrinsic property called “spin.” The way a particle spins is dependent on how you wish to measure it. If you wish to measure a particle horizontally the two outcomes would be a rightward spin or a leftward spin on a horizontal axis. If you wish to measure a particle vertically, the two outcomes would be an upward or downward spin on a vertical axis. Before measurement, the particle is in an undetermined state and could spin in any direction. This state is similar to a quarter that's mid-air and hasn't landed on the ground to show if it's heads or tails. Once one of the particles is measured, the other instantly adopts the opposite value permanently by collapsing its wave function and making its mind up about the direction it's spinning. Without an understanding or background in quantum mechanics, all you need to know is that even if the two particles were separated at opposite ends of the universe, the two particles would communicate instantaneously. This communication obviously occurs faster than the speed of light. Information travels instantly and violates the universe's locality. Locality exists when there is a need for a connection between two points in space. This teleportation of information that exists with quantum entanglement violates the universe's locality as the information does not travel, it is non-local.

This lack of locality is common in computer simulations. “Within a virtual reality code, all ‘locations’ (points) should be roughly equally far from a central processor” (Vopson). Quantum entanglement wouldn't be at all out of the ordinary inside a computer simulation as the instantaneous passing of information is commonplace in the nonlocal world of code.

This lack of locality on a quantum scale shows similarities with the lack of locality in our attempts at simulated reality. We find other similarities on the quantum scale, especially in terms of how things move.

- Movement is impossible within an infinitely divisible space
- Movement exists in our space
- Since we move, we must live in a discrete space
- Gradual motion is impossible within a discrete space
- We move with tiny syncopated jumps through the universe.

Movement is impossible within an infinitely divisible space. It is commonly assumed by the scientific community that we live in an infinitely divisible space. An infinitely divisible space is a space that can be divided an infinite amount of times. Consider a rectangle and bisect it vertically to produce two rectangles, taking the right-hand rectangle, bisect it vertically again to produce two more new rectangles, this process could continue indefinitely. You could perform this exercise with the cubic foot of air in front of your head. Could you not bisect it an infinite amount of times? Ancient Greek philosopher Zeno claims that if you were able to divide that cubic foot infinitely and we lived in an infinitely divisible space, that movement would be impossible.

Zeno proves this with the “Racetrack” paradox. Consider a runner trying to reach the end of a track. If the runner wants to reach the halfway point, he must first get 1/4th of the way there, but before that 1/8th, 1/16th, and 1/32nd, and so on. The runner has to complete an infinite amount of tasks, making it logically impossible for the runner to reach the end of the track. It doesn't matter the length of the track, it could only be a couple of inches. If Zeno's paradox is sound, all motion within an infinitely divisible space is impossible. Moving from point A to point B requires an infinite amount of steps. An infinite amount of steps cannot be completed in a finite amount of time.

Movement exists in our space. Upon hearing Zeno's argument, a famous Greek philosopher at the time, "Diogenes the Cynic," famously said nothing and stood up from his chair and walked around to demonstrate the falsity of Zeno's conclusion. Zeno's findings were highly controversial, partly because they were misunderstood by a lot of people, including Zeno himself. Zeno claimed that all movement was impossible and that is obviously not true because... things can move. Instead, Zeno's claim should have been that movement through an infinitely divisible space is impossible.

Since we move, we must live in a discrete space. As Diogenes the Cynic demonstrated, we are able to move. This suggests that if we do in fact move, and movement is impossible in an infinitely divisible space, we don't live in an infinitely divisible space. I propose instead that we live in a discrete space. A discrete space is an area that can't be infinitely divided. In a discrete space, there are smallest units of measurement that can not be further divided. A great example of a discrete space would be a computer screen. A screen is made up of tiny pixels that form a complete image. Pixels demonstrate a discrete space by providing a smallest unit of measurement. Your screen won't illuminate half of a pixel, as a pixel is the smallest unit and it makes up all of the computer screen.

Gradual motion is impossible within a discrete space. Continuing with the computer screen analogy, one of the aspects of a discrete space is that movement through said space must be syncopated. Though PacMan moving across the screen looks smooth and continuous, he isn't filling up the pixel $\frac{1}{8}$ full, and then $\frac{1}{4}$ full, and a $\frac{1}{2}$, PacMan teleports one pixel forward at a time creating the illusion of movement. All motion that occurs in a discrete space must occur in terms of the smallest unit of measurement.

This smallest unit of measurement would be a "bit" that is so small it's undetectable to the human eye and unmeasurably small with our current capabilities of measurement. When the ball leaves the pitcher's hand, it would teleport bit by bit towards the catcher's mitt, giving the illusion of motion. The idea of using bits for movement is not new, in fact, it's the way we simulate motion in virtual reality. If Zeno's paradox is true we can infer that we live in a universe that uses a similar form of "bit" movement that we use to create our simulations.

The idea of living in a discrete universe is not uncommon to the scientific community, in fact, there are a number of hard scientists that are using data to come to a similar solution. Most scientists agree that on a larger scale, space is continuous. However, physicists like Steven Wolfram have dedicated their lives to proving that on a smaller scale, space is discrete. Wolfram concedes that Einstein's theory of general relativity considers space to be continuous and Einstein's theories work. However, as you approach way smaller scales of 10-35 Einstein's equations begin to fall apart. This minuscule scale is called Planck length, a Planck is so unimaginably small that it is difficult to observe or perform experiments on such a small scale. The fact remains, that basic theories of physics don't work at this small a scale. Most scientists will agree that on a larger scale, space is continuous, but on a smaller scale, we just don't know enough to make that assumption. In my opinion, the evidence suggests that space is discrete.

We move with tiny syncopated jumps through the universe. Since motion is impossible through a discrete space and the gradual form of motion we assume to move with is impossible in a discrete space, we must move by “jumping” bit by bit on a microscopic scale, similar to how a computer simulates movement. Although this statement is jarring, if virtual reality headsets continue to progress, the virtual reality produced will look indifferntiable to reality. Not only is a simulated universe where movement occurs with these parameters possible, we are decades away from creating it. If we had the technology to produce a hyper realistic simulation that was indifferntiable to reality, it would be created using this jumping form of movement.

Quirks are like footprints. To get around, you need to walk and you will leave footprints behind. A computer *needs* to use this mode of movement, a computer needs to lack locality, and most complex programs necessitate a form of culling. The quirks aren't “hidden” or created, these quirks are evidence of design similar to how footprints are evidence of feet.

Our universe displays many similarities to our attempts at simulated reality. However, these are not merely basic similarities; they are shared quirks, design flaws, and modes of function. This distinction between a similarity based on comparison and a similarity of design is important.

Imagine there are two similar-looking handmade bowls. Describing the similar color, size, and shape of the bowl would be considered surface level, similarities of comparison. But, if you took a magnifying glass and examined where the fingers indented small divots into the clay and looked at the flat bottom of the bowl that had been cut off of a wheel by a clay cutting wire, you

could determine that a similar process was used in their creation. There are unavoidable quirks of designing a reality virtually that we endure, we find these similar problem-solving techniques upholding the simulation we live in. Assuming that logic is not individual to humans and that it is a form of deduction obtained with intelligence then it makes sense we would draw similar solutions to similar problems. By examining these similarities of design, we can conclude that we used similar processes to get our results. Based on our design similarities held between our universe and our attempts at simulated reality, we can infer that our universe was created and exists virtually.

In terms of simulations, you wouldn't need that complex of a simulation to simulate a universe. You would need an open-world simulation with basic physics, great graphics, and no latency issues. We have multiplayer video games that were able to come close to this 10 years ago. A Minecraft multiplayer server simulated reality in an open world for multiple people with its own set of physics, decent graphics, and minor latency issues. If those categories of simulation were improved 10 fold, the game would begin to become a reality.

The interesting thing about simulation theory is that it doesn't matter. The fact of whether or not we are simulated doesn't change anything. My emotions feel the same and are equally as valid. There is no such thing as “reality,” worlds can be more or less complex, but a hypothetical simulation that is 10 times more complex than our universe and has more complex physics and better graphics isn't more real or more important. Despite a Minecraft world being significantly less complex than ours, if a conscious being was inside, a Minecraft world would be a capable reality. Substrate independence, the idea that consciousness doesn't necessitate organic material, is widely accepted. If you believe an artificial intelligence does not necessitate a biological organic brain and that a consciousness could arise from binary, any world could be an acceptable reality.

Rebuttals to Zeno's paradox:

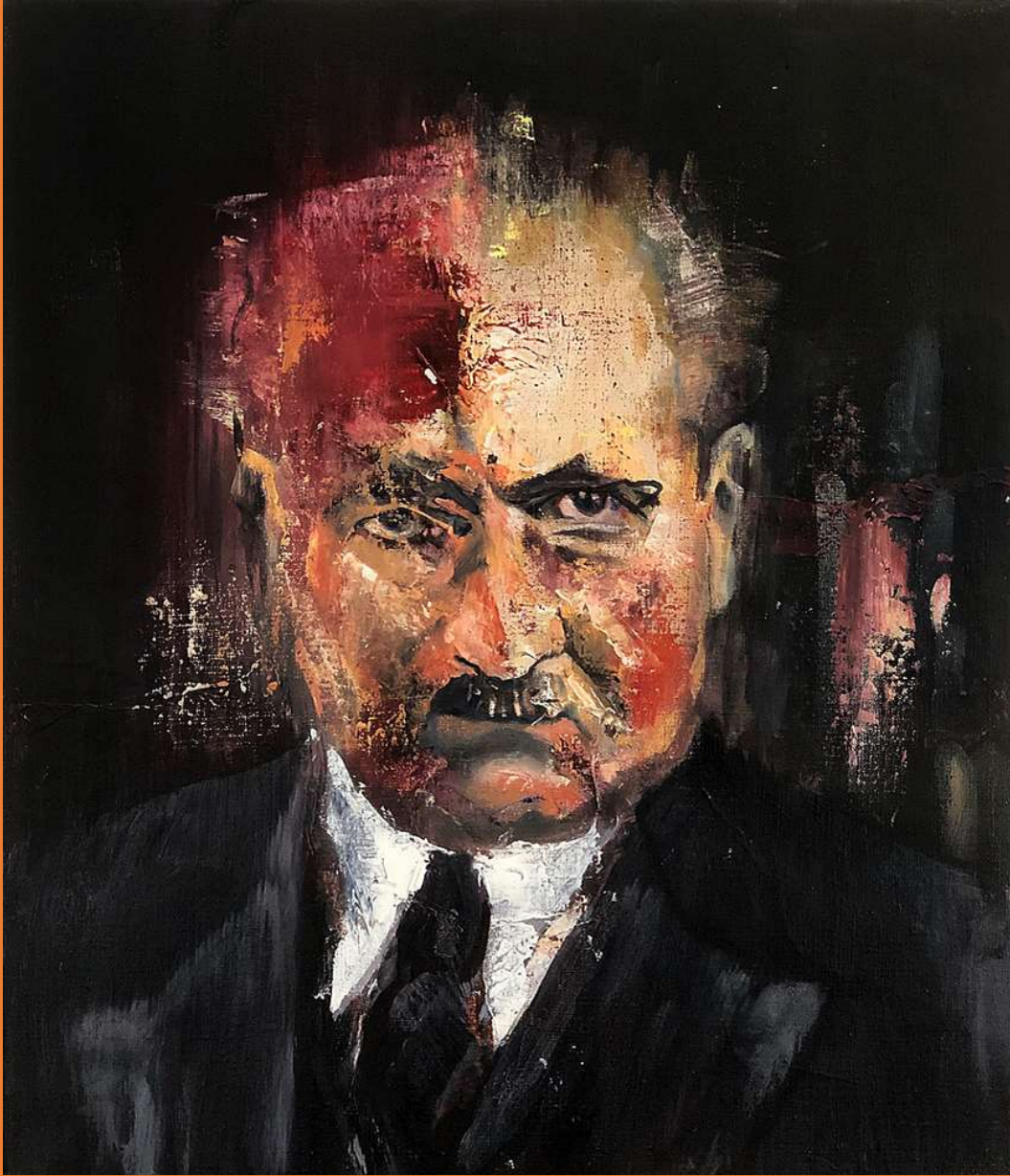
The most common rebuttal to Zeno's paradox is that it fails when put against a basic understanding of mathematics; Claiming that a series of numbers, or partial sums, that are approaching 1, will eventually equal 1. This conclusion would prove Zeno's paradox false as in the racetrack paradox, the infinite amount of steps that it would take to equal 1 would be considered equal to 1. If we take Z_1 to equal $\frac{1}{2}$ and Z_2 to equal $\frac{1}{4}$ and Z_3 to equal $\frac{1}{8}$ etc.... and Z^* is 1, then no matter how valid an equation can prove Z_1, Z_2, Z_3, Z_4 to equal Z^* you need a jump from Z_x

to Z^* . This rebuttal is false because an infinite process doesn't have a last step. in a physical journey that happens in tangible space, not an equation, a jump from Z^x to Z^* is needed.

However, math is usually right. This equational proof could defend theories about discrete space and how a jump *is* necessitated. A tiny syncopated jump would fill in the logical hoop that we were jumping through.

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Heidegger and Conceptual Engineering

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Heideggerian Philosophy, Philosophy of Language

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Martin Heidegger was a German thinker who had a profound influence on the field of philosophy, specifically in the areas of language, meaning, and ontology. Despite these areas being vastly different, one thing that connects them is the notion of conceptual engineering. Conceptual engineering seeks to evaluate our current notions of things and linguistic practices and improve them wherever needed. In this paper, I will discuss how the ideas portrayed by Heidegger can connect and enrich Herman Cappelen's theory that conceptual engineering is worldly in his book *Fixing Language: an Essay on Conceptual Engineering*.

Martin Heidegger's work is known for its emphasis on the human experience and, more specifically, the way in which this experience impacts our beliefs. Aside from determining our understanding of the world, he also finds language to shape our understanding of ourselves. One of the key insights of conceptual engineering is that concepts are not fixed but are subject to revision in light of new knowledge or changing circumstances. Heidegger's ideas about the flexibility of language and concepts provide a philosophical base for this approach. As mentioned before, conceptual engineering involves changing concepts to better serve specific purposes such as improving philosophical debate. Heidegger's ideas about the relationship between language and being suggest that this process is not simply a matter of changing the words that we use, but rather involves changing our conceptual framework. Furthermore, his emphasis on this suggests that conceptual engineering is an ongoing process that involves constant refinement.

More into this, according to Heidegger, since our language acts as a framework that structures our interpretation of reality, when we engage in conceptual engineering, we are not simply changing the words that we use, but changing the way that we see and understand the world. For example, if we were to change our concept of "marriage", which Cappelen argues we already have,¹ we would not be changing the word we use, but rather altering our fundamental understanding of what marriage is- namely from just a lawful relation between a man and a woman to one that includes same-sex couples- and how it relates to other concepts. So, the process of conceptual engineering would not involve only changing the words we use, but also the structure of our concepts and how they relate to each other. Therefore, when Heidegger suggests the idea that our language and being are deeply intertwined, he is highlighting the idea that our language not only reflects but also determines our being and the way in which we understand the world. Altogether, this suggests that conceptual engineering requires more of a fundamental change of our conceptual framework rather than just a change of words.

For Heidegger, language is not just important for communicating but is also a big part of being in the world and our experience with that. His concept of Dasein refers to a state of being in the world that is unique to humans alone. It is used to show the connection between humans, nature, and the world we live in. Both Cappelen and Heidegger emphasize the importance of language in changing our understanding of the world. Just as Heidegger argues that language is an essential aspect of our existence, Cappelen argues that language plays an important role in shaping our concepts and how paying attention to the subtle differences in it helps to revise our concepts. In his book *Fixing Language: an Essay on Conceptual Engineering*, Herman Cappelen believes that conceptual engineering is worldly in the sense that it is grounded in social interactions with the world rather than being something that is purely abstract. In this, he says that any change to concepts would be an object-level change (i.e., we would be changing the meaning of gender, race, marriage, etc.). With this, when we engage in 'Fixing Language: an Essay on Conceptual Engineering', Herman Cappelen argues that our concept of marriage has changed from strictly being the relationship between a man and a woman to including same-sex couples (Cappelen, H., 2018, p. 29). This conceptual engineering, we are not just changing the meanings of these words arbitrarily, but rather within a broader social context. Cappelen argues that successful conceptual engineering depends on our ability to understand these contexts and that, by doing so, we will avoid unintentionally continuing the use of harmful and outdated language, such as the use of slurs, and begin to move towards more accurate and inclusive language. He argues that, by engaging in conceptual engineering, we are able to expand our understanding of the world and develop new ways of thinking about it. Simply put, conceptual engineering is a worldly process because it emphasizes the idea that language and concepts are deeply rooted in social and cultural (worldly) concepts.

To enrich Cappelen's views, we can draw upon Heidegger's philosophies about language, namely those presented in his books *On the Way to Language* and *Letter on Humanism*. In *On the Way to Language*, Heidegger believes in the priority of speech over writing. Moreover, he believes that humans had speech before they had writing and that writing is derived from, and dependent on, speech. Furthermore, this suggests that any attempt to revise these concepts must begin with speech, more specifically, having conversations with other people about how the world works in order to further our understanding of the world. So, by starting with speech, we can also recognize our fundamental connection to the world which can further solidify our understanding of our place

within it. Next, Heidegger discusses the importance of social and historical context in understanding language and, I believe, this understanding can help us approach conceptual engineering in a more thoughtful way. Furthermore, he argues that language is shaped by our social context which must be taken into account when trying to understand that language (Heidegger, 1998). An example of this could be the word malaria, which originally stemmed from the words ‘mal’ meaning bad, and ‘aria’ meaning air. This disease was once thought to be transmitted through air, but now we understand that it is transmitted through mosquitoes. By understanding the history behind our language, we can better understand the ways in which our language has been influenced by this history and can learn to approach conceptual engineering in a way that takes into account the various ways our language has already been influenced and shaped. Furthermore, both Heidegger and Cappelen believe that language is deeply connected to history and culture. Even more into this, Heidegger believes that we cannot separate language from the historical context from which it comes and Cappelen believes that concepts are not fixed, but are rather continuously shaped by our social and cultural practices. According to (Cappelen, H.) “ordinary language...embodies...the inherited experience... and acumen... of many generations of men” (p. 25). Therefore, both Heidegger and Cappelen would agree that understanding the historical context behind our language is vital for engaging with conceptual engineering in a thoughtful and informed way.

In his book, *Letter on Humanism*, Martin Heidegger focuses on critiquing traditional humanism, which he sees as a subjective philosophy that places humans at the center of the universe. Heidegger argues this and says that this view has led us to forget the true depth of our existence and that we need to recognize the connection we have to the world in order to truly understand our place within it. In terms of language, this suggests that in order to engage in the revision of concepts, one must also take into account our relationship with the world and understand our place in it. Furthermore, his critique of humanism can help enrich Cappelen’s notion of conceptual engineering as a worldly practice by emphasizing the importance of recognizing our connection to the world as we attempt to revise these concepts. By recognizing that our understanding of the world is fundamentally shaped by our relationship with it, we can better engage with conceptual engineering in a way that is most responsive to the thing we are trying to change. More into this, Heidegger’s emphasis on language and its relationship to our understanding of the world can also help to enrich Cappelen’s view of conceptual engineering. In *Letter on Humanism*, Heidegger (1998c) says “Language is the house of being. In its home man dwells. Those who think

and create with words are the guardians of this home” (p. 1). This means, Heidegger thinks, that language is more than a tool, rather it is a part of us and shapes who we are. He thinks that language is not just a means of communication, but rather the fabric of our existence- language is what allows us to build our own reality, much like a house. Finally, he believes that by intentionally engineering our language, we can improve our understanding of the world and help to create a better future for ourselves.

Overall, Martin Heidegger and Herman Cappelen had a lot of overlap in their philosophies. The linguistic philosophies portrayed by Heidegger can enrich Cappelen’s theory about conceptual engineering being worldly by making us more in-tune with the world we are in which, in turn, provides us with a broader perspective on the ways in which our language is shaped by the world. Furthermore, we can also improve this understanding by prioritizing speech and dialogue to writing. Finally, by integrating Heidegger’s ideas into Cappelen’s theory of conceptual engineering, we can develop a more comprehensive approach to the revision and improvement of our concepts.

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Orange you glad you read that?



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