

PHILOSOPHY IN PURSUIT OF A BETTER WORLD

by

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A thesis submitted to the Department of Philosophy

In conformity with the requirements for

the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Queen's University

Kingston, Ontario, Canada

(February, 2024)

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Abstract

This thesis comprises five chapters that span across (overlapping) domains in analytic philosophy, continental philosophy, and traditional philosophy, including the philosophy of mind, epistemology, hermeneutics, ancient philosophy, the philosophy of science, virtue ethics, political philosophy, environmental ethics, animal ethics, and feminist philosophy. While covering a lot of terrain, the chapters are united in employing philosophy in pursuit of a better world.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

In his recently published *What's the Use of Philosophy?* (2023), Philip Kitcher presents the following alarming metaphor for the state of academic philosophy in the English-speaking world:

Once upon a time, in a country not too far away, the most prominent musicians decided to become serious about their profession. They encouraged their promising students to devote hours to special exercises designed to strengthen fingers, shape lips, and extend breath control. Within a few years, conservatories began to hold exciting competitions, at which the most rigorous études would be performed in public. For a while, these contests went on side by side with concerts devoted to the traditional repertoire. Gradually, however, interest in the compositions of the past—and virtually all those of the present—began to wane. Serious pianists found the studies composed by Chopin, Liszt, Debussy, and Ligeti insufficiently taxing and dismissed the suites, concertos, and sonatas of Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Bartok, and Prokofiev as worthy of performance only by second-raters. Popular interest in the festivals organized by the major conservatories quickly declined, although the contests continued to be attended by a tiny group of self-described cognoscenti. A few maverick musicians, including some who had once been counted among the serious professionals, offered performances of works their elite ex-colleagues despised. When reports of the broad enthusiastic response to a recital centered on the late Beethoven sonatas came to the ears of the professionals, the glowing reviews produced only a smile and a sniff. For serious pianists, the fact that one of their former fellows had now decided to slum it was no cause for concern. Compared to the recent competition in which one pianist had delivered *Multi-Scale 937* in under 7'10" and another had ornamented *Quadruple Tremolo 41* with an extra trill, an applauded performance of the *Hammerklavier* was truly small potatoes.

As time went on, the outside audience for "serious performance" dwindled to nothing, and nothing, and the public applause for the "second-raters" who offered Bach, Chopin, and Messiaen became more intense. The smiles of the cognoscenti grew a little more strained, and the sniffs were ever more disdainful. (2023 1-2)

Would it matter much if academic philosophy were indeed set up in a way that bears resemblance to such a demented state of affairs as pictured above? Kitcher suggests that yes, it would matter quite a lot. He advises "philosophers, as well as members of the

wider intellectual community and even reflective citizens” to take seriously the possibility that the “sad tale” he shares – henceforth, his “demented musicians metaphor” – may bear a lot of resemblance to how academic philosophy is presently functioning, and there may be an urgent need for “reconstruction in philosophy” (2),¹ a phrase he takes from John Dewey. While noting that most of his colleagues are apt to think his assessment “mad,” Kitcher shares estimation of Dewey as the greatest philosopher of the twentieth century (2). Making it clear that his own position takes the state of philosophy as indeed in urgent need of being reconstructed, Kitcher offers “a slogan for a much-needed revolution: No philosophical clarification without methodological edification!” (15).

Kitcher’s demented musicians metaphor was first published more than a decade ago (2011). He has, both before its publication and since, shared his concerns about the state of philosophy in several forums.² In *What’s the Use of Philosophy?*, he notes that there are many graduate students who are sympathetic to his position and eager to do the sort of work that he presents as marginalized, but find themselves in a difficult situation; if they proceed in the field as it is, and do the sort of real world work that they agree is

¹ In a reprint of *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, published in the aftermath of World War II, Dewey indicates that were he first releasing his book at that time, a “more suitable title” for it would be “*Reconstruction of Philosophy*” (1920/2004, iii).

² “Philosophy Inside Out” began as a talk prepared for the fortieth anniversary edition of the journal *Metaphilosophy* and was first published in a corresponding anniversary edition of the journal (2011). He also shared related ideas while giving a keynote address for the European Society for the Philosophy of Science (7 September 2017), which was later published in the *European Journal for the Philosophy of Science* (2019), and he shared related ideas again in his John Dewey Lecture, given by Zoom (due to the Covid situation) in 2021 meeting of the Eastern Division of the American Philosophical Association and published in the *Proceedings* of the APA. He also includes pertinent material in many of his other work as well, including his *Preludes to Pragmatism: Toward a Reconstruction of Philosophy* (2012) and in *The Main Enterprise of the World: Rethinking Education* (2021).

most worth doing, given the extent of the field's biases against such work, pursuing such a path would be "career ruining" and "suicidal" (vii).

This thesis comprises the following five chapters, which are based on papers initially written between 2000 and 2006, while I was aiming to navigate concerns of the sort conveyed above, namely, that the real-world work I have long been especially keen to focus on is work that the field at large is presently, and has for some time been, biased against. While covering a range of topics and (often overlapping) approaches to philosophy, the five chapters that constitute this thesis are united in employing philosophy in pursuit of a better world.

The first of the following chapters, Chapter 2, is titled "Weighing the Analogical Argument for Other Minds: MacLachlan's Challenges to Wittgenstein and Strawson."¹ It enters into and articulates a debate addressing "the problem of other minds," and considers analogical arguments for other minds as discussed by Ludwig Wittgenstein, Peter Strawson, and D. L. C. MacLachlan, under whom I was taking a course in the Philosophy of Mind when the initial version of this chapter was written. The chapter presents, builds upon, and agrees with MacLachlan's critiques of Wittgenstein and Strawson. As part of my drive to link the debate to more pressing real-world concerns, and unsure but hoping that Professor MacLachlan would be open to real world

¹ Revisiting the paper now, I am struck by the lack of attention that I now recognize as called for to pertinent empirical research that would help to shed light on how our awareness of other minds develops, and I am struck as well by a lack of attentiveness to how results that may seem apt to take-for-granted from within a contemporary Western worldview may prove problematic when considered in ways that pay (what I now recognize as due) heed to historical shifts of worldview as well as cross-cultural variations of worldview which, when sought after, can show surprising and drastically different views about who or what is taken as a bearer of a mind, some of which may be less out-to-lunch than they may at first appear, while our own views about what is obviously the case, and appropriate to take for granted, may themselves ring true largely due to our familiarity with them, much as with other views that might appear to be outlandish and shocking from a contemporary Western vantage point.

expansions of the debate, I wrote most of the paper in keeping with reigning norms in the field and set what was most interesting and real to me at its end as a possible avenue for further consideration. In finding myself in such a situation, I was in a position with a lot of company in the history of philosophy, given that such mismatches between the real and one's own ideal are a recurring theme in philosophy's history, and have been met with a variety of different strategies, as discussed by Arthur M. Melzer in *Philosophy Between the Lines: The Lost History of Esoteric Writing* (2017). It is pertinent that one of the most widely repeated lines in the history of animal ethics began as footnote material: Jeremy Bentham's claim that "The question is not, Can they reason? Nor, Can they talk? but, Can they suffer?" (*An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, 1789, Ch. 17, n. 122).

My end-of-paper bid for more of a real world connection offers the suggestion that it might be fruitful to pay attention to what might be called "othered minds" – that is, minds different from that of a typical adult human, such as the minds of infants or very young children or of people with severe dementia or nonhuman animals – while considering how such othered minds themselves conceive of other minds. In adding material that was far more real to me at the end of the paper, I hoped that Professor MacLachlan would find value in my proposed expansion in ways that might help to redress some of the real-world problems I was and remain deeply concerned about.

The version of the paper under discussion that is included in this thesis adds further links to real world concerns by considering a recasting of "the problem of other minds," while also bringing into consideration what Roméo Dallaire has shared about his harrowing experiences in the midst of the Rwandan genocide, in which he desperately

and in vain sought to persuade the international community to take seriously the hells in which he was in. As I recast the problem of other minds, I focus on coming to terms with ourselves as, and knowing ourselves as, minded beings who live in a world populated by billions and even trillions of other minded beings, including many who are suffering and in want in ways that can be overwhelming to face. This raises what has long been called “the problem of evil,” a phrase which may now land as anachronistic, and which, as Susan Neiman shows in *Evil in Modern Thought: An Alternative History of Philosophy* ([2002] 2015), occupied a far more significant place in the history of philosophy than today’s standard histories of philosophy suggest.

A major challenge when it comes to aiming to better know our own and other minds is that of communicating across difference and ascertaining when or whether we are justified in taking some positions as more legitimate than others. Overcoming this challenge is important if we are to identify and move towards more legitimate positions than our starting points, an aim, in keeping with my creed, that is oriented towards ameliorative ambitions towards a better world for all. Chapter 3 of this thesis, “Legitimizing Authority: Lessons from the Gadamer-Habermas Debate,” engages with a well-known debate between Hans-Georg Gadamer and Jürgen Habermas. Filtered through my traditional approach to philosophy, I sought to find what might be valuable in this debate in relation to efforts towards wise lives and wise institutions. Among the lessons here are: (1) the recognition that much (or more) of our thinking is of a hermeneutic sort so that, as we encounter material, our earlier views are often revised in light of the new material; (2) the importance of approaching other positions with humility and with efforts towards considering one’s own prejudices, including prejudices against

prejudices and against reliance upon authorities, which in some cases may be neither problematic nor realistically avoidable; (3) the importance of paying heed to ways that (sometimes unjust) power structures and quite different life experiences can mar efforts at successful communication across differences; and (4) the need to guard against naïve overestimations of the extent to which it is reasonable to expect progress towards a more just world to come about through a focus upon verbal communication.

The third chapter in this thesis, “Aristotle’s ‘Exhaustive’ Account of the Character Excellences,” is bound up with efforts that began in my undergraduate days, and are ongoing, towards reconciling academic philosophy and traditional philosophy, so that again, our academic institutions are oriented to wisdom. This involves taking seriously the importance of the cultivation of character, and recognizing ways that revived attention to the cultivation of character and wisdom could significantly improve the state of education at large. In its first iteration the chapter was a paper seeded during a graduate course I took under Stephen Leighton, which had us engaging with the question about how Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* would manifest in a contemporary context. The seed in question was planted when, to the best of my recollection, and much to my surprise, Professor Leighton presented a position by which Aristotle would take us as only periodically called upon, during our waking lives, to exhibit one or more of the excellences of character that Aristotle describes in his *Ethics*. Under such a reading, Aristotle would have it that much of our waking lives take place in a sort of ethically neutral zone. I was stunned as my own take on Aristotle’s *Ethics* had Aristotle’s approach to ethics as far more pervasive and far more demanding than Professor Leighton’s interpretation indicated.

Spurred by such a surprising disagreement, I worked towards clarifying my own views on Aristotle's account of the scope of character excellence. My conclusions supported my initial position, which I coined "the ubiquity thesis", according to which we are, throughout our waking lives, ubiquitously expressing or failing to express excellence of character (save during rare exceptions such as having a seizure or being deep into an Alzheimer's condition or drugged through no fault of one's own). When I turned to the contemporary body of literature to see how Aristotle's views on the scope of character excellence were being handled, I was surprised to find the matter given very little attention, and also to see others who were similarly defending a position incompatible with the ubiquity thesis, which, at times, took Aristotle as taking "the character excellences" as limited to specific excellences that he explicitly discusses. I coined another term, "the exhaustive thesis," to refer to such (and similar) positions. I continued developing my views on Aristotle and character excellence after the above-mentioned course under Professor Leighton ended and went on to present a version of the chapter at a Canadian Philosophical Association conference at York University on May 31, 2006.

The chapter focuses on the question of how we might gain clarity on Aristotle's views about the scope of character excellence and offers a sketch of the position I expect to emerge were such an investigation undertaken, which would be a far more involved project than was reasonable for me to take on at that time in my life. Even so, enough had been brought together and laid out to identify significant faults with the exhaustive thesis, representatives of which are identified, who portray Aristotle as defending the explicit

virtues he mentions, and, as (at least implicitly) as committed to a position that is incompatible with the ubiquity thesis.

After offering some preliminary grounds against the exhaustive thesis and in favour of the ubiquity thesis, I call attention to the possibility that I have identified a significant gap in contemporary Aristotelian literature where one might expect to find attention paid to Aristotle's views regarding the scope of character excellence in our lives. I consider what might be gained by seeking an improved understanding of Aristotle's views on the scope of character excellence and find that such clarity could also help us to gain a better grasp of Aristotle's views on other matters such as ethics and education, and philosophy itself which, in turn, may be beneficial as a contrast to prevalent contemporary positions. Indeed, the ubiquity approach may prove helpful for working towards, not only better theories about character (and ethics, education, and philosophy), but also better practices as well, helping us move towards more eudaimon lives and institutions.

The question of how (and whether) we might make effective progress towards eudaimon lives and institutions is further considered in Chapter 5 of this thesis, "Constructing Sustainable Societies," which, in its earliest iteration, began as a paper for an Environmental Ethics course I took under Michael Allen Fox, who was also my M.A. supervisor. I read Professor Fox's *Deep Vegetarianism* (1999) when it was still recently published. As my introduction to animal ethics and environmental ethics, I found it captivating. The methodology I was taught as an undergraduate student at Western University in the 1990s emphasized the importance of seeking after and earnestly and charitably considering the best available opposing views to a position that is being taken

on and defended. Biding that method, I visited the library and signed out a large stash of related books that covered a wide range of at-times conflicting positions. After a long night of looking over those books, it was clear to me that I was in need of making changes to how I was living. I decided to give veganism a go. I was not convinced that it is wrong to consume animal products even if they come from the most idyllic sort of conditions. Rather, I found the challenge of identifying such products with any degree of confidence far more cumbersome than it would be worthwhile to take on and decided to opt for a more straightforward heuristic. A contributor to my decision to take on such a heuristic and give veganism a go is my decision that it would be a good idea to err on the side of caution given that my pertinent intuitions and judgment regarding whether it is acceptable to harm or to kill other animals even when there is no need to do so may be informed (and deformed) by prejudices along the same lines as those that enable “otherwise good people” to continue buying animal products that (if in a hazy way) they know (or at least somewhat know) to be tied to cruel practices while also often implicated in an array of additional harms and threats.¹

It was not long after waking up to animal ethics and working towards making adjustments to my life that I started gaining a lot of disconcerting evidence that was leading me to the view that it is very rare for people to really even want to engage with such matters as it was my inclination to run towards. People I expected to show significant concern and to also make a point of learning more and showing clear

¹ The “otherwise good people” phrase is from Louis Pojmans’s *Global Environmental Ethics* (2000). Unfortunately, I do not have access to the book to offer the exact page number. I was surprised, delighted, and amused to see Pojman asking his readers a wollop of a loaded question that was sure to jar many of them: “Why do otherwise good people eat meat?” I was further surprised when I saw his biographical sketch presenting him as both someone with a background in theology and as a professor at an institution of a sort that I had not even known to exist: The West Point Military Academy.

indications of taking the challenges seriously rarely did so. I found myself repeatedly gaining evidence that most people would rather tune out and away from such information and discussions which was deeply disappointing. I was grateful to have a few connections in my life with people who were also recognizing the cruelties tied to intensive animal agriculture practices.

In Chapter 5 of this thesis, “Constructing Sustainable Societies,” I engage with the difficulties of aiming to bring about much needed changes towards sustainable ways of living when humans are humans (myself included) and things are as they are. The chapter is framed around a consideration of autobiographical material offered by J. Baird Callicott in *Beyond the Land Ethic* (1999), which has him offering accounts of his own efforts to take on the daunting challenges of trying to help bring about such far-reaching changes.

As each of Callicott’s three approaches are considered, I consider his self-assessments while also incorporating considerations and insights from other thinkers that, together, help to show various inconsistencies, complexities, and challenges that can accompany attempts to bring about such far-reaching changes. Considerations are given to how we might improve our own efforts in ways that help us put ourselves and our own contributions in perspective. Callicott is shown to be modeling humility along with an ability to accept (more than once) that he may have heavily invested in misguided approaches towards sustainability that it would be best to leave behind, and, at times, in quite drastic ways.

Given the passage of two decades since I laid out the first version of much of the material in this chapter, hindsight offers added insights as now, Callicott’s earlier efforts

and self-assessments can be set into a broader view that considers his contributions in a more holistic way. He is found to have accomplished vastly more than he seems to have appreciated or anticipated while writing *Beyond the Land Ethic*. After one earnest attempt and then another, ever evaluating himself and aiming to be effective, he was able to go on to play a pioneering role in bringing about significant changes, including by being (so far as I have seen) the first person to offer a philosophy course dedicated to environmental philosophy, and his related efforts at foundation-laying continue to exert a significant influence on how environmental ethics is discussed today. While the challenges of moving towards sustainability seem far more daunting now than two decades ago, Callicott's contributions helped to change institutions, to create resources, networks, academic courses and programs through which increasing numbers of people are working towards sorting out how we might effectively make pertinent progress.

Weaving together and building upon material that emerges through discussing Callicott's efforts, the chapter turns towards some further considerations about how we might move towards sustainable lives given the extent, in such pluralistic societies as ours, of disagreements and conflicts and at-times vying aims and strategies and worldviews. A defense is given of a pluralistic approach towards bringing about more sustainable societies that grants the at-times major disagreements about aims and strategies are sure to continue. I propose using disagreements in ways that can help connect environmental concerns and other concerns in ways that would bring more people into environmental ethics and likewise, connect people already concerned about environmental ethics to other movements.

In addition to what is most explicitly said in the chapter under discussion, the ideas there enabled me to develop my views about environmental ethics and ethics more broadly, and to consider again the importance of ways of living and relating to others, along with governing institutions that aim: (1) to be attentive to other minds and to our sometimes staggering differences; (2) to cultivate and to model good judgment and good character (which is, of course, ever easier said than done); and, likewise, (3) to work to develop worldviews and societies that cultivate citizens who are more mindful and able to work together across our differences, including by identifying and building upon our strengths and common ground, while also working towards being better able to identify and ameliorate or guard against our weaknesses.

An effort towards a common ground approach to ethics aimed at bridging differences emerges in the final chapter of this thesis, Chapter 6, “Should Feminists Be Humanists?” which was written with a target audience in mind: feminists who take feminism, done well, as calling for opposition to oppression and unjust forms of domination across the board. The pertinent reasoning recognizes that there is something perverse and embarrassing about taking oppression as significant only when those being oppressed are girls or women. Girls and women also fall unto different groups and are themselves often oppressed or otherwise subjected to unjust forms of domination in ways that call for the amelioration of not only sexism but also classism, racism, ableism, ageism, and the list keeps continuing onwards. While it is easy to ridicule the expansion of ever more identities and while concerns about taking on too much merit attention, such a wide-reaching commitment to anti-oppression theory and practice has come to gain considerable support among many feminists.

As its title, “Should Feminists Be Humanists?”, suggests, the chapter deals specifically with the question of whether humanism is compatible with a sound approach to feminism. It makes a case that, at the very least, a sound approach to feminism should reject the extreme sorts of humanist positions that, as things stand, are often implicitly embraced in both feminist theory and feminist practice. By appealing to David Sztybel’s work on humanism (2000a, 2000b), and by conveying it as what was, so far as I was aware, the most compelling defense of humanism available, my aim was to invite readers to consider what their own implied or lived-by humanist commitments would amount to if explicated and laid bare. In particular, I argue we should consider whether such commitments are in keeping with our own best judgment or in need of significant rethinking and revision, in ways that may also call for us to make changes to how we are living our lives and pursuing our feminist (and other) aims.

Chapter 2 Weighing the Analogical Argument for Other Minds: MacLachlan's Challenges to Wittgenstein and Strawson

[E]ven primary meanings depend on unspoken mappings, and so in the end, . . . all meaning is mapping-mediated, which is to say, all meaning comes from analogies.

—Douglas Hofstadter, *I Am a Strange Loop* (2007, 158)

Introduction

In *Perception and Conception*, D. L. C. Maclachlan defends an analogical argument for the existence of other minds (n.d., Chapters X and XI).¹ According to this argument, an individual recognizes certain other bodies and behaviours as similar to his or her own and justifiably infers that, as in his or her own case, they too are conscious beings. Not surprisingly, and aligned to our common sense view of the world, we are more likely to grant consciousness to beings who are like ourselves (e.g., humans and other great apes), than to less analogous beings (e.g., ants or spiders or fish), and we are not at all inclined to grant consciousness to things – such as erasers, books, and necklaces – that bear no relevant resemblance to our own bodies and behaviour (79).

¹ Maclachlan (1933-2020) did not publish the manuscript discussed in this chapter, though some of the pertinent material appears in *The Enigma of Perception*, in Chapter 5, “The Private Language Argument,” and in Chapter 6, “Other Minds” (2013). Some overlapping content may also appear in *Why Consciousness is Reality: A Philosophical Alternative to Materialism and Classical Dualism* (2010). A memorial page about Dr. Maclachlan, published shortly after his death in the fall of 2020, describes him as “hard at work on a commentary on Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason, putting the final touches on the manuscript during his last few weeks while in palliative care. The work will be printed locally and made available for future students in the Kant course he taught for more than 50 years” (QDP 2020). It adds as well that “Dr. Maclachlan and his wife Janet Faddies Maclachlan established the Janet Faddies Award, named after his wife’s grandmother, to help support graduate students” (QDP 2020). An obituary for Dr. Maclachlan, published in the Kingston-Whig Standard, shows him as predeceased by his wife, Janet Faddies Maclachlan (nee Shields), and as the father of four, the step-father of two, the grandfather of eight, as well as the great-grandfather of four children. That is a lot of other minds! The obituary ends by noting that “As an expression of sympathy and in recognition of the exemplary care Lorne received in hospital, donations may be made to U.H.K.F. (Providence Care Hospital for Palliative Care)” (Kingston Whig Standard 2020).

The argument from analogy rests on the premise that we can have and use a concept of the self before we develop an awareness of the self as a person among similarly situated people. This premise is attacked in the private language argument found in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* ([1953] 1973, henceforth *PI*), and more explicitly, in P. F. Strawson's most esteemed work, *Individuals: An Essay on Descriptive Metaphysics* ([1959] 1964). This four-part chapter recounts and analyses Maclachlan's defense of the analogical argument against these formidable opponents. The first part, which is divided into two sections, offers exegetical accounts of the relevant arguments from Wittgenstein – and by proxy, Norman Malcolm (1963), who is a fullhearted supporter of the private language argument – and Strawson. The second part, similarly subdivided, details Maclachlan's defense of the analogical argument against the aforementioned foes. The third part analyses the success of Maclachlan's position and aims to determine whether he has, indeed, demonstrated that the analogical argument can survive the attacks by Wittgenstein and Strawson. Finally, after concluding that Maclachlan's arguments are indeed successful, the fourth and final part of this chapter considers new pathways that may be fruitfully explored that are inspired by Maclachlan's position, which, if they also prove successful, may help to bring about not only further theoretical improvements, but also practical improvements to our understanding of and our engagement with other minds.

Part 1

2.1.1 Wittgenstein's Private Language Argument

In the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* ([1921] 1998, henceforth *TLP*), Wittgenstein aimed to transpose the logic of Frege and Russell from its fixed realm of pure language into the mire of ordinary language. The goal of this move was to deflate the problematic of philosophy, i.e., to expose the (supposedly) nonsensical nature of philosophical discourse via an understanding of grammatical structure. To accomplish this feat, or to try to, anyway, Wittgenstein forwarded a picture/model theory of language according to which individual words name and derive their meaning from objects in the world. That is to say, a meaningful word corresponds to that object in the world that it is meant to picture/model.

While the goal of the *Philosophical Investigations* (*PI*) is much the same as that of the *Tractatus* (*TLP*, preface, *PI* §§90, 209), the former work attacks the earlier work's *a priori* conception of language as simplistic and insufficient (*PI*, §§3, 39, 60).

Wittgenstein's method of studying language progresses from logical analysis to a pragmatic spectacle approach that examines the inculcation/training and usage of language through an empirical method of the general form: "don't think, but look!" (*PI*, §§77, 66). At the core of the *Investigations*' examination of language is the recognition of language as a complex rule-governed activity that Wittgenstein compares it to an interlocking series of games (*PI*, §66). Using chess as an example, he notes that the meaning of each piece can only be determined when it is viewed as a game-piece whose possible movements are determined by the relevant set of rules (*PI*, §§108, 199). Without this background structure, a game piece would have no meaning. Likewise, in the more

general case of language as a whole, the meaning of a word is not – as he formerly believed – contained in the word itself, but rather in the *usage* of the word as regulated by the language-game of which it is a part.

After emphasizing the importance of rules in language, Wittgenstein turns to a discussion of the possibility of private language (*PI*, §§243-313). By “private language” he has in mind a language that refers to an individual’s immediate sensations and as such is known and knowable by her alone (*PI*, §243). He provides the example of a diarist who names a private sensation “S” and tracks each experience of it in a calendar (*PI*, §258). Wittgenstein carries his understanding of public language into the private realm and hence assumes that for private language to be meaningful it must also consist of definitions and rules. That is, “S” must be defined in a manner that regulates its usage. However, in order to define his private sensation “S,” the diarist cannot rely on words given in, or translatable to, ordinary language. To do so would render the language publicly assessable. Thus, the diarist must define “S” in a way that does not make use of our barrage of sensation terms. With these possibilities eliminated, the only remaining potential mode of definition is ostensive. That is, perhaps the diarist can define his sensation by simultaneously focusing on it and uttering the name he has chosen as its coin.

In order for the ostensive definition to take, however, it must be determined in a way that establishes its regulatory usage in the rule-governed activity of language. Just as a signpost cannot direct a person unless she has knowledge of the established rules governing the usage of signposts within her language-game, “S” also requires a directive system in order to be understood (*PI* §198). Thus, before “S” can meaningfully be

utilized, the diarist must position it as a meaningful player within the language-game. Again, this cannot be done by appeal to publicly ascertainable definitions as so doing would eradicate the desired private nature of this language. With this criterion, it seems to be the case that the creation of a single private word would entail the creation of an entire private language. On the other hand, if ostensive definition is somehow possible without reference to public or publicly knowable terms, perhaps a private language can exist as an independent attachment to a public arrangement of words – a suburb accessible to a single individual, as it were. Wittgenstein’s combination of public calendar and private language is hinged on this possibility.

However, even if we grant the possibility of private ostensive definitions, it nevertheless seems impossible to get a private language off the ground. The proper usage of “S,” for instance, must depend on adherence to rules, and as such must be capable of mistaken applications (as rules are part and parcel with criteria of correctness). Since the diarist is the sole user of “S” he must rely on his memory to determine whether each articulation of it is rightly applied. It can, however, easily be imagined that the diarist may fail to remember the original definition and hence unknowingly use “S” inconsistently. Aside from the possibility of such mistaken usages, could it be possible for our linguist to use his private language successfully, albeit in a restricted sense, as limited to the length of time that his memory keeps the usage consistent and aligned to his self-determined regulations? As in public language a person may learn a word and use it properly for a day and then ever-more forget or misapply it, can our private linguist likewise have a short-lived proper application of a private term? Wittgenstein would respond to this in the negative. For him, the satisfaction – or lack thereof – of the

aforementioned criteria, i.e., adherence to rules, must be *reliably ascertainable*. The diarist's memory does not qualify as reliable since one cannot check the validity of something against itself. This would be akin to buying several copies of the daily newspaper to verify that what it says is true (*PI* §265). As such a move is clearly absurd, it would likewise be ridiculous for the creator of a private word to rely on himself to check for the correct usage of his personal lingo.

What is more, there would be no need for the private linguist to check the consistency of his utterances. Suppose he has two bags, one of words and another of meanings (with repeats in each bag); he pulls a token from each bag and uses the pair to create a word-meaning combination. Over time, he may pull the same word several times with different meanings, and vice versa. Irrespective of the extent of inconsistency and confusion within his language usage, none of his uses can be considered faulty as he is the master and maker of the language (*PI*, §258). Clearly though, such a chameleon collection of words and meanings does not make a language, at least not a meaningful language that accords to Wittgenstein's desideratum.

To curtail ascriptions of meaning to such grab-bag languages, Wittgenstein asserts that there must be *independent criteria* by which to verify correct and incorrect usages of language (*PI*, §265). He is not making the weak epistemic claim that knowledge of consistent word use requires independent checks. Rather, he is making the stronger claim that for a language to be meaningful its usage must be subject to independent regulation. An example of independent regulation is via the use of a train schedule to determine the destination and departure time of a particular train (*PI*, §265). While the private linguist

would assent to the validity of a mental image of the schedule, a reasonable person would check the actual schedule to ensure the reliability of the information.

One might interject that the marks of “S” on the calendar function as independent criteria. However, this misses the mark. Lacking a publicly knowable definition, “S” is – at least pragmatically speaking – an empty referent. Regardless, could this be one of the counter-instances to Wittgenstein’s claim that in *most* cases, the use of a word establishes its meaning? (*PI*, §41). Or, could it be the case that the diarist *has* established a regular usage of “S” that conforms to his self-made rules? That is, whenever he experiences “S” he follows the custom of inscribing a sign onto his calendar that indicates its occurrence.

The problem with this, however, is that the diarist has not succeeded in defining “S” in a private manner. Either the sensation is articulable in common language and hence is not private at all, or the diarist is under the illusion that he is using a private language when in reality he only *believes* that he is doing so (*PI*, §260). This follows from the above arguments that there can be no ascertainable criteria of correctness for a private term, and that a language must contain rules. Perhaps the diarist can get around these difficulties by using a non-linguistic token, e.g., an image, to create a private representation of the experience. To the chagrin of our would-be private linguist, this also fails to alleviate the difficulties as “image” is also a publicly defined term. With publicly accessible language and its progeny brushed aside, the private diarist is cornered into the impossible challenge of emitting “an inarticulate sound” (*PI*, §261).

What about a person who is unfamiliar with the public usage of “word,” “image,” “pain,” etc. and creates private parallels to these? Wittgenstein would render a language so created public as its usage is regulatory and thus can be deciphered and translated into

common languages. But what for internal sensations, such as pain, that are private and thus one knows of them only by her private experiences? To this Wittgenstein would answer that her experience, private though it may be, can only be articulated under the auspice of a public language. Aside from this it is not a linguistically-compatible phenomenon, but rather a brute experience. He need not and does not deny the existence of pain *qua* personal experience (*PI*, §304). However, “pain” is only experienced by a form of life that has been initiated in a way that causes her to replace her brute whimpers with verbal expressions (*PI*, §244). The importance of this distinction is that it removes the possibility of pain as a metaphysically given truth. Since it is unknowable, Wittgenstein reduces the referent of “pain,” i.e., the internal sensation, to an idle wheel that is no real part of the mechanism (*PI*, §271). The upshot of this is that for a person to speak of “pain” she need not have experienced pain. Thus there is no necessary correspondence of internal pain to the word “pain.” Following this, and as his well-known beetle in the box example illustrates, there is no possibility of confirming that what I experience as pain is the same as what *X*, *Y*, or *Z* experiences as pain (*PI*, §293).

While private language about pain is not possible, and we cannot know the similitude or difference between your and my personal experiences, we are nevertheless able to use pain terminology in a meaningful way. It is only when we attempt to elevate ourselves above everyday discourse and peer into the nature of pain-in-itself that problems arise. Since we cannot define pain – or *any* sense-datum – in a private way, and since the public analogues do not pertain to (e.g.) the essence of pain, treatment is in order for victims of the delusion that meaningful discourse may be had about the essence of sense-data. This insight furthers the aforementioned goal of the *Investigations*, i.e.,

deflating the problematic of philosophy, by shunting those projects – à la Descartes, Berkeley, Locke, and Russell – that aim to build an epistemic firmament upon direct access to “given” phenomena. Furthermore, in resting on the “mistaken assumption that *one learns from one’s own case* what thinking, feeling, sensation are,” the argument from analogy “leads first to solipsism and then to nonsense” (Malcolm 1963, 202). The analogical argument begins with a denial of the claim that we can appeal to such things as the behaviour, species, or our daily interactions with other living beings to prove that they have minds. Had the analogical argument not rested on this denial, it would have collapsed into itself and proceeded no further (Malcolm 1963, 202). Given such denial and emphasis on introspection as necessary for the determination of psychological phenomenon, it seems that this position is committed to a rigorous solipsism; if I must introspect in order to know what pain is, “I cannot attribute pain to others *in the same sense* that I attribute it to myself” (Maclachlan 203). In other words, if “I can only know from my own case what . . . mental phenomena are,” then I can never know what or that they are in isolation from my own case (Malcolm 1963, 203).

In the end, though, we need not fret that we are stalled in the mire of solipsism. For the reasons outlined above, the starting point of the analogical argument is nonsensical and thus the argument “destroys itself” (Malcolm 1963, 204). The following passage from Malcolm’s *Knowledge and Certainty* offers a succinct and spicy review of the relevant features of Wittgenstein’s private language that is worth including here.

[The private linguist] supposes that one inwardly picks out something as thinking or pain and thereafter identifies it whenever it presents itself in the soul. But the question to be pressed is, Does one make correct identifications? The proponent of these “private” identifications has nothing to say here. He feels sure that he identifies correctly the occurrences in his soul; but feeling sure is no guarantee of

being right. Indeed he has no idea of what being right could mean. He does not know how to distinguish between actually making correct identifications and being under the impression that he does... Suppose that he identified the emotion of anxiety as the sensation of pain? Neither he nor anyone else could know about this “mistake.” Perhaps he makes a mistake every time! Perhaps all of us do! We ought to see now that we are talking nonsense. We do not know what a mistake would be. We have no standard, no examples, no customary practice, with which to compare our inner recognitions. The inward identification cannot hit the bull’s-eye, or miss it either, because there is no bull’s-eye. When we see that the ideas of correct and incorrect have no application to the supposed inner identification, the later notion loses its appearance of sense. Its collapse brings down both solipsism and the argument from analogy. (Malcolm 1963, 203-204)

Before outlining how Maclachlan aims to overcome the above concerns raised by Wittgenstein and Malcolm, I will further build the case against the analogical argument by presenting Strawson’s often cited challenges to it.

2.1.2 Strawson’s Lived Position Argument¹

As, to some extent, is true of Wittgenstein, P. F. Strawson takes the main task of philosophy as a descriptive task; more specifically, Strawson takes the main task of philosophy as that of uncovering ways that a (purportedly) philosophical view of the world bypasses common sense and enters into the territory of nonsense.² In addition to holding this view of philosophy, and unlike Wittgenstein, Strawson argues that there are also nontherapeutic ways that philosophical inquiry can lead to positive conclusions that help us to better understand our place in the world (cf. Avramides 2000, 230). While both Wittgenstein and Strawson advocate a descriptive methodology that is rooted in common

¹ The use of “Lived Position” in this context is borrowed from Anita Avramides’ *Other Minds* (2000, 229). A challenge to the analogical argument that is similar to Strawson’s is offered in Malcolm’s *Knowledge and Certainty* (1963, 196-198).

² Unless otherwise noted, all parenthetical references in this section refer to Strawson’s *Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics* ([1959] 1964).

sense, Strawson utilizes a method that diverges from Wittgenstein's approach by appealing to metaphysics. He describes this method, which he calls "descriptive metaphysics," as similar to "philosophical, or logical, or conceptual analyses," but differing in that it is of a broader scope and significantly greater level of generality (9). This difference of scope and generality leads to "a certain difference in method" in that it requires a careful scrutiny of "the actual use of words" with the aim of getting beneath our daily usage of words to expose the underlying structure of our "categories and concepts" (9). While such underlying structures often go unnoticed and unexamined, they form the foundation on which the arguments of even the best of thinkers are built (10). That being the case, a close scrutiny of (1) our commonplace categories and concepts and (2) how they are interconnected may help to reveal problematic assumptions within philosophical discourse that would otherwise go unchallenged (10). In particular, Strawson notes, descriptive metaphysics is concerned with "a massive central core of human thinking which has no history – or none recorded in histories of thought; there are categories and concepts which, in their most fundamental character, change not at all" (10).

In *Individuals: An Essay on Descriptive Metaphysics* ([1959] 1964), Strawson applies his descriptive metaphysics to our usage of mental predicates. In ordinary discourse, i.e., in a nonphilosophical view of the world, the mental predicates that a person uses to refer to himself or herself (e.g., "I think," "I am in pain," "I find that joke amusing") are used to convey the same general meaning as they are used when applied to others (e.g., "you think," "you are in pain," "you find that joke amusing"), and this is done without any bewilderment on behalf of the speakers (99). In philosophical

discourse, however, this use of language generates many seemingly unsurpassable questions including, of course, the problem of other minds. Given that there is a significant difference between other beings and myself – namely, the fact that I have direct access to my own experiences and can only perceive their actions – how can I justify generalizing my own experiences to other beings? In other words, how can I be sure that they have experiences that are similar to mine, or that they have experiences at all, for that matter? Similarly, how can I take myself as justified in using the same word (e.g. “pain”) to refer to my own experiences in some instances, and to refer to the (purported) experiences of others in other instances?

Strawson notes that the above questions rely on a Cartesian view of the self. According to this view, an individual can have private access to her own experiences and thoughts without knowing that there are others who are similarly minded and thus also have experiences and thoughts. Strawson aims to debunk the problems of solipsism and of other minds by showing that the common sense way of speaking about other people (and their minds) is sensible, preferable to the approach taken by Cartesian-minded philosophers, and, most importantly, prevents these “problems” from emerging in the first place. That being the case, he aims to show that the argument from analogy is both unnecessary and ineffectual.

The germ of Strawson’s argument is contained in the following passage.

One can ascribe states of consciousness to oneself only if one can ascribe them to others. One can ascribe them to others only if one can identify other subjects of experience. And one cannot identify others if one can identify them only as subjects of experience, possessors of states of consciousness. (100)

Let me attempt to unravel this argument and make it more perspicuous. The central claim that is being made is that the Cartesian concept of the self as “a pure individual consciousness” is not logically primitive (100). Before we can arrive at this conception of the self, we must already have the concept of other individuals who are, in turn, more than pure egos. That is, if I understand the concept of individual consciousness, I must already understand when the term applies. To understand when it applies, I must be able to differentiate between those to whom the term applies (i.e. other people) and those things to which it does not apply (e.g. stones and chairs). Contrary to this, the Cartesian stance begins with a supposed awareness of experiences, which are identified as belonging to a single individual (the *cogito*). But, given this starting point, in virtue of what does it make sense “to talk of *ascribing* in the case of oneself?” (100). That is, “If, in identifying the things to which states of consciousness are to be ascribed, private experiences are to be all one has to go on,” then one cannot know whether the experience is actually her own, or whether it belongs to someone else! (100).

Clearly, Strawson argues, this conception of the self is deeply mistaken. To encapsulate the above, such a conception is problematic for two key reasons. First, if I genuinely understand the concept of self, I will be able to apply it to others. Second, and following from the first point, if I can identify other selves, they must not be disembodied egos – if they were, how could I identify them and moreover, how could I distinguish them from myself? Following from these points, Strawson concludes that any concept of the self that is capable of leading to the conclusion that there are other minds must already begin with an ability to differentiate between individuals, and in order to do this, the individuals must be embodied (100). Accordingly, one must begin with a starting

point that acknowledges that there are experiences that do not belong to himself or herself (101). In short, if I am able to ascribe mental states to myself, I must also be able to ascribe them to others; and if I can ascribe mental states to others, there is no problem of other minds and thus no need for an argument from analogy to prove that they exist.

Expanding on the above, Strawson presents an alternative way of approaching the concepts most pertinent to the problems of solipsism and other minds – a way that is rooted in common sense and prevents these problems from ever getting off the ground. Rather than begin with a philosopher’s Cartesian ego as a starting point, he argues, it is far more sensible to begin with a starting point derived from our lived experience: the concept of a person (101).¹ In our lived experience, we find the concept of person – “a type of entity such that *both* predicates ascribing states of consciousness and predicates ascribing corporeal characteristics, a physical situation &c. are equally applicable to a single individual of that type” – to be primitive and logically prior to the concepts of disembodied self and animated body (102). Starting with the idea that there are people – i.e., individuals who consist of both minds and bodies that interact with each other – we find that the “problem” of other minds does not emerge. One must have the concept of a person before she can arrive at the abstracted, secondary (and perhaps incoherent) concept of a disembodied self (102). With the realization that the concept of person is logically primitive, we can move beyond false philosophical starting points that begin

¹ A similar argument is offered in Christine Overall’s “Feminism, Ontology, and ‘Other Minds’” ([1988] 1992): “[A] very young child clearly does not recognize its mother (or anyone else) as being an ‘other mind’ but then it does not see itself that way either, for it is not yet a developed person. The recognition, or more fundamentally the constitution, of oneself as a self requires the presence of other selves. Thus the relationship to other persons provides a context for the development of oneself; and each of us comes to recognize others as persons as we come to recognize ourselves as separate beings” (Overall 98); and also, “the very condition of seeing oneself as a self is the recognition of other selves” (Overall 98).

with the likes of disembodied egos and of other (purported) people as (potentially) insentient zombie-like entities or subsumed within one's own consciousness.

The common sense approach that Strawson offers to the problem / “problem” of other minds is, as Anita Avramides indicates, “an explicit challenge to the Cartesian framework”:

Where Cartesian philosophy introduces a logical gap between the mind and its body, Strawson is proposing that we start with a whole to which different types of predicate are applicable. The asymmetry in our use of mental concepts can then be taken to be part of one unified concept. (2000, 234)

As indicated above, through a Strawsonian, framework – rooted in our lived experience – the concept of a person is logically prior to the concept of a disembodied individual ego. Working within this framework, though there is a significant difference between my own experiences and those of other people – namely, that I experience the former but not the latter – both are expressions of a general concept and we cannot make sense of one without having an understanding of the other.

Part 2

2.2.1 Maclachlan Contra Wittgenstein

As we have seen, Wittgenstein's private language arguments casts a shadow over the analogical argument, which takes publicly inaccessible inner experiences as the necessary starting point from which we can achieve knowledge of other minds. Before proceeding to outline Maclachlan's criticisms of Wittgenstein's position, as presented in *Perception and Cognition* (n.d.), it will be helpful to distinguish between two distinct ways that the

expression “private language” can be interpreted. In the first instance, and that which accords to Wittgenstein’s explicit definition of the phrase, “private language” is meant to refer to language that is, in principle, incapable of being understood by anyone but the user of the language in question (*PI*, §243). Following Maclachlan, I will refer to this interpretation as “logically private language” (94). In the second interpretation, “private language” refers to a language that is, in practice, created and used by a single individual. I will refer to this usage as “factually private language.” Language that is factually private need not also be logically private.

Maclachlan does not contest Wittgenstein’s conclusion that “any language must, at least in principle, be capable of being understood by someone other than myself” (93). Assuming the language used by the Cartesian ego¹ need not be logically private,² the legitimacy of this particular aspect of Wittgenstein’s private language argument has no bearing on the legitimacy of the analogical argument. There are, however, remaining features of the private language argument that raise pertinent questions about factually private language, the possibility of asocial knowledge, and the ability to speak about our inner sensations in meaningful ways.

Having eliminated the possibility of a logically private language from our concerns, we can turn to examine the possibility of a factually private language: “Can I

¹ Here, I am using the term “Cartesian ego” to refer to an individual who is not yet aware that there are other minds.

² One possible argument that a Cartesian ego can only speak a logically private language builds on the charge that if we use our inner experiences as the foundation for knowledge, we will not be able to surpass solipsism. If it can be established that the solipsism that is (allegedly) a consequence of the analogical starting point is logically incompatible with the existence of other minds, then the language use of this being would have to be logically private; if it is logically impossible that there are beings other than myself, then it is logically impossible for anyone except for myself to understand my language. Of course, such a rigorous solipsism is implausible beyond comprehension, but aiming to formulate and counter such a position may lead to informative philosophical insights.

construct such a language which no one else understands? Alternatively, can I construct such a language without having to presuppose that it is understood by other people?” (94). Following Wittgenstein’s private language argument, it seems that the answer to both of these questions would have to be no. Maclachlan argues that these nays are ungrounded and that we can, indeed, have a factually private language of a sort that could be used to found an analogical argument for other minds.

To convey faults in Wittgenstein’s position, Maclachlan asks us to imagine a factually private language that is based on a sensation that I alone can experience (94). Consider, for instance, that I was born with mutated genes that enable me to experience a sensation that has never been experienced by anyone else. Suppose I decide to call my unique sensation ;qwäzl. For reasons that were elaborated above, Wittgenstein would immediately interject that whatever it is that I am doing, I have not given meaning to the utterance “;qwäzl.” Were I to define ;qwäzl in a meaningful way, it would have to be possible for me to reliably differentiate between correct and incorrect uses of the term, and this requires access to that which a private linguist necessarily lacks: external corroboration. The capacity to reliably distinguish between false and accurate uses of ;qwäzl is part and parcel of its being a word. Thus, even if, theoretically speaking, my language *could* be understood by others, so long as it is not, it cannot be a meaningful language at all.

Maclachlan offers at least two core responses to this challenge. First, and following Kant, he disagrees with the contention that the capacity to reliably distinguish between false and accurate uses of a word is part and parcel of its being a word (101). So long as we have established rules to govern correct and incorrect uses of a word, it *is* a

word that can be used correctly and incorrectly – and this, irrespective of Wittgenstein’s verificationist concerns. Wittgenstein’s private language argument rests on his particular understanding of the *modus operandi* of language. He does not consider alternative conceptions of language that appear just as or more plausible than his own (101). Given this, it takes no more than a denial of the legitimacy of Wittgenstein’s conception of language – ideally, of course, coupled with sound reasons demonstrating the greater strength of an alternative conception – to derail his private language argument.

In Maclachlan’s second response to the above challenge, applied to the thought experiment I provide above, Maclachlan argues that it is simply not true that it is impossible for me to differentiate between correct or false applications of “;qwäzl” (96). The belief that this is impossible rests on a schizophrenic exaggeration of the possibility that I will not be able to differentiate between legitimate memories and pseudo-memories. To appreciate how overblown this concern is, suppose that ;qwäzl is intensely enjoyable and unlike anything else I have ever experienced. It is easy to imagine that the reemergence of this sensation would lead me to rejoice, “Ahhh... ;Qwäzl!” Likewise, while in the midst of pain or boredom, I may think, “I could really use some ;qwäzl.” Given that the sensation of ;qwäzl is so unique, it is difficult to imagine that I would mistakenly start referring to a different sensation – say, a hiccup or some more familiar pleasurable experience – as though it were ;qwäzl. Suppose that I have decided to use the term ;qwäzl to identify my unique experience and proceed to use it correctly (if only once). Have I not established and properly used a private language?¹

¹ Maclachlan goes on to argue that we need not even use the word properly in order to create a language.

Bringing this example into the realm of the mundane makes the central point I am conveying more perspicuous. Imagine it is not the case that I am the only person who can or ever has experienced ;qwäzl and that, instead, I learn that my precious ;qwäzl is not the result of a genetic mutation as I had suspected, but is, rather, what other people refer to as a caffeine rush.¹ Is it not possible that I was able to properly identify several experiences of caffeine rush as ;qwäzl prior to having any awareness that there are others who enjoy the named sensation? This does not seem to be out of the ordinary. Similarly, some women experience a recurring sensation in the left or right side of their lower abdomen. While few are likely to label the sensation “ocahon,” “Sally,” or any other name save the ostensive “that sensation in my lower left abdomen,” when it recurs, they may remember it for what it is (*that* sensation). Through talking with others and explaining the sensation to them, a woman who is having such experiences may come to identify that “that sensation” is ovulation. There is nothing peculiar or counter-intuitive about this; myriad variations of similar experiences could be conjured. What is happening in such cases, if not the creation and use of a factually private language?²

Wittgenstein’s argument against the possibility of other language would, if sound, render the possibility of my successfully using the term ;qwäzl as incapable of counting as a private language and, instead, akin to buying multiple copies of a daily paper to verify whether the news it reports is true. Maclachlan argues that Wittgenstein’s

¹ This and the following example are alterations of examples used by Maclachlan (99).

² It might be suggested that for the language to be genuinely factually private, the speaker must be the only individual to experience the particular sensation in question. This suggestion seems misguided to me. I see no relevant distinction between creating a word that describes something that I ultimately find to be common or creating a word that I never manage to find anyone else capable of understanding. Similarly, assuming I coin a term to identify a sensation that is unique to myself, and then have a child who inherits my ability to experience and identify the sensation, it is artificially *ad hoc* to differentiate between these scenarios to question whether the one case (that is ultimately verified by my child) is a *bona fide* use of language whereas the other (that is never verified by anyone save myself) is not.

reasoning, when it comes to the move just indicated, is terrible. The private linguist is not checking one memory against other instances of it – whatever that would mean (96). Rather, she is checking (or is aiming to check) different memories or pseudo-memories against each other – an experience that each of us is familiar with. While reflecting on Dostoevsky’s *Notes from Underground* ([1864] 1993), for instance, I may “remember” the plight of the narrator who had a horrible taste in his mouth that putrefied as his health deteriorated. I may then recall other potent aspects of the book – e.g., the narrator’s toothache and his obsession about being brushed aside in a crowd – and eventually come to realize that my initial “memory” was false; the foul breath anecdote was not from Dostoevsky, but from Tolstoy’s *Death of Ivan Ilyich* ([1886] 2012). I am capable of discovering such mistakes and legitimately recognizing them as mistakes without consulting the books or any other external corroborating sources (cf. 96).

Unless we raise the spectre of skepticism to unrealistic heights, there is little reason to doubt that a person with a decently functioning memory has the capacity to correctly remember the meaning of a term that he has established. Moreover, it is not clear why we would need to accept far higher epistemic standards when it comes to private language that we often flout when it comes to public languages. If we apply the strict standards that Wittgenstein uses for private language to public language, we could just as well argue that there are no sufficiently reliable criteria to get a public language off the ground (96). We might, then, get buggy over the possibilities for error in public language. How am I to reliably ascertain whether my friends identify or bother to correct my mistaken uses of words? How can I be certain that my family does not use words in ways that violate their established rules? Even if I toted about *The Authoritative*

Dictionary and diligently corroborated each of the words I use, how could I ascertain whether I properly interpret and apply all the definitions?

No doubt, there is room for error within public language usage and it is not always clear that or how pertinent errors would or could be identified and set straight. Moreover, it is not clear what would count as a reliable criterion of the sort that Wittgenstein is after (96), nor is it clear why he assumes that it is readily available when it comes to public discourse yet completely lacking in private language type discourse.

From this discussion, it should be clear that Wittgenstein's repeated emphasis on the need for reliable criteria and the possibility of error in private languages relies on an epistemic double standard that we have no reason to uphold. We could either accept the excessive standard across the board and embrace a severe form of skepticism, or we could adopt a reasonable standard in both cases. I vote for the latter. In any event, we can accept that there is a greater likelihood of error in a private language – perhaps even a significantly greater likelihood for error – but still, it appears that the difference between private and public language is one of degree rather than kind (96).

An additional, and quite clever, argument that Maclachlan raises in defense of private language appeals to Wittgenstein's readiness to discuss the possibility that the (purported) private linguist may unwittingly use his or her words incorrectly from the get-go. Even if the (purported) private linguist did set a term and then consistently bungle it afterwards, Maclachlan notes, Wittgenstein is already assuming that the (purported) private linguist's words are the kind of thing that can be correctly or incorrectly used! (97). If the (purported) private linguist's words are indeed the kind of things that can be used correctly or incorrectly, then clearly – even if the (purported) private linguist never

follows the initially set usage correctly – his or her usage of the term can be correct or incorrect (97). This in itself could be taken as a proof that the private linguist is indeed a private linguist and has indeed created a language. While it seems that Wittgenstein would respond that Maclachlan’s reasoning, here, by claiming that it is not the case that a private language has indeed been established given his view that the meaning of a word can only be established through its consistent use, he does not offer a defense of that move and it is no more than an assumption, and not a compelling one, at that. To go along with Wittgenstein’s position “would be to argue in a circle” as it begs the question in favour of Wittgenstein’s own conception of language (101).

Why might an alternative account of language be preferable to Wittgenstein’s? What would such a conception entail? Maclachlan argues that there are expansive gaps in Wittgenstein’s conception of language. Wittgenstein takes his denial of the epistemological merit of inner experiences to its logical conclusion and ends with an account of language and epistemology that is void of phenomenological “stuffing” (101). That is to say, it cannot account for our inner experiences. Instead, it reduces the experiential oomph that each of us experiences to an “idle wheel that is no real part of the mechanism” (*PI* §271). There is, however, a vast difference between knowing how to engage in language games about sensations and understanding what it means to experience those sensations. For example, even if he or she were its author, a person who is congenitally and completely blind cannot fully understand the following sentence.

There is nothing more splendid than the sight of a lake that spreads across the horizon and catches the glare of the sun in its waves.

Why is it that a congenitally and thoroughly blind person cannot fully understand the above sentence? The answer is quite simple. He or she has never seen a lake, the sun, its glare, the horizon, waves, or anything else, at least in the pertinent sense of “see.” However well such an individual might learn how to use language in praise of beautiful sights, there is a significant difference between his or her understanding of the perceptual experience in question and those of another human being who is sighted. Wittgenstein’s conception of language cannot get at the stuffing behind these perceptually evocative words; so long as both speakers are properly following the rules of grammar, it cannot but treat the two as though each has the same degree of understanding of the concepts in question – a move that is clearly and profoundly mistaken.

As we have seen, a Wittgensteinian conception of language that focuses on social agreement, rule following, and reliable criteria of correctness has no real place for an understanding of mental predicates. In addition to going against our common sense and contradicting everyday scenarios, there are excellent reasons to believe that language simply could not function in the way that Wittgenstein suggests. It seems plausible that we cannot learn a language without first having “a capacity to construct general concepts” (97). As Wittgenstein’s conception of language lacks “any internal basis for the rules” of language that we are expected to learn and abide by, how can it account for the task of language acquisition? (98). It seems that we must introduce pre-linguistic concepts to make sense of our ability to learn and understand language (97). Such concepts, if necessary for acquiring and understanding language, are clearly more than social constructions. They must, rather, be “forged in the fire of private experience” (97). These pre-linguistic concepts begin with a private rather than a public gateway and

enable us to make sense of our common sense understanding of the world, *including* our perceptions of it. With these inner conceptions as our foundation, we can develop an increased understanding of the world that begins with our private experiences, but eventually expands past this private realm by recognizing analogous others and inferring that they too are conscious beings.

2.2.2 Maclachlan Contra Strawson

As explained above, Strawson argues that in order to have the understanding of self-consciousness that is required in the argument from analogy, one must first have a concept of a person and know how and when to apply it. Should his challenges prove compelling, the argument from analogy would be revealed as self-defeating as it would unwittingly assume what it sets out to prove: the existence of other minds.

Maclachlan raises two core arguments against Strawson's challenge. First, he argues that Strawson's challenge relies on a fallacious and indefensible equivocation. To elucidate this ambiguity, it will be helpful to consider Strawson's core position in its logical form. The argument is in the form of a conditional chain argument.

1. $P \rightarrow Q$
2. $Q \rightarrow R$
- C. PR

Adding flesh to the above structure, Strawson's core argument reads as follows.

1. If I can ascribe states of consciousness to myself, I can ascribe them to others.
2. If I can ascribe them to others, I can identify others who are conscious.
- C. If I can ascribe states of consciousness to myself, I can identify others who are conscious.

While the above argument may appear quite plausible at first glance, Maclachlan reveals an ambiguous usage of the middle term (Q). The first premise appeals to a “*conceptual* condition: one can ascribe states of consciousness to others only if one possesses the general concept of conscious state” (83). Rather than abide by this usage, the second premise appeals to a “*referential* condition: one can ascribe states of consciousness to others, only if one has a way of identifying the individuals to whom the concept may be applied” (83).

Despite the paralogism revealed above, there remains a possibility that Strawson’s argument can accomplish what it sets out to do. If Strawson could establish a logical connection between the conceptual and referential conditions by demonstrating that the former entails the latter, the equivocation would be of no consequence to the legitimacy of his conclusion (84). Given the importance of this connection to his theory, it is surprising that Strawson considers the connection only briefly and in a footnote; he attempts to connect the two conditions by suggesting that we can only understand a predicate if we are able to distinguish various individuals to whom it applies (Strawson [1959] 1964, 99 n.1, cited in Maclachlan n.d., 84). Strawson’s move here is reminiscent of Wittgenstein’s remarks about language as rule-governed and dependent upon usage: “the meaning is the use we make of the word” (*PI* §138). If we understand the word “consciousness,” we must understand the rules that govern its usage and have some criteria for determining when it should be applied. With this plausible suggestion, Strawson is able to forge a logical connection between the conceptual and referential conditions of his argument as follows.

1. If I have a general concept of conscious states, I will have at my disposal criteria for determining what it would be for another being to be conscious.
 2. If I have at my disposal criteria for determining what it would be for another being to be conscious, then I will be able to identify other conscious beings._____
- C. If I have a general concept of conscious states (conceptual condition), then I will be able to tell when other beings are conscious (referential condition).

Building on the insights contained in the above maneuver, Strawson aims to show that those who advocate the argument from analogy rely on a misunderstanding of the conception of self. As indicated earlier, the Cartesian ego initially takes all experiences to belong to himself or herself. Clearly, Strawson argues, a person who takes all experiences as his or her own does not understand the concept of self! Moreover, this egocentric position is unsurpassable; the rule that such an individual uses to (mis)identify consciousness (i.e., that all experiences are my experiences) precludes him or her from ever attributing consciousness to others – a critique against the analogical argument that we have encountered in Wittgenstein’s private language argument.

Has Strawson successfully safeguarded his argument through the maneuver described above? According to Maclachlan, no. This leads us to the second core challenge that Maclachlan raises against Strawson. Here, Maclachlan concedes that Strawson’s position is rigorous and persuasive so long as we agree that anyone who has a conception of the self must have a fully formed and complete awareness of what it means to be conscious (86). Be this as it may, this concession does not render Strawson victorious. Rather, it is his ultimate undoing. If we think of the actual way in which we use and understand language, we realize that we need not always have a fully formed and complete understanding of a concept in order to use it in a sensible way. Interestingly,

given that Strawson's position appeals to an understanding of language usage that appears to be Wittgensteinian, the point that Maclachlan raises against it is one that Wittgenstein readily accepts. Though Wittgenstein's work emphasizes the rule-governed nature of language, he does not maintain that these rules are rigid and static, nor does he hold that one must have a fully formed conception of a word in order to use it in meaningful ways and understand it, even if only in a limited and narrow or fuzzy way. In making this point, Wittgenstein explains the difference of an immature and a mature understanding of the verb "to read," explaining that it "is applied differently to the beginner and the practised reader" (*PI*, §156).

Similarly, Maclachlan argues that the initial conception of the self as the possessor of all experiences is the conception of an immature being. As in real life, this being is capable of maturing and ultimately arriving at a fully formed conception of the self – as a person among other people – the conception that Strawson takes to be logically primitive. Maclachlan challenges the necessary primacy of this starting point; "Instead of fixating on a single, static concept of the self, we must introduce a dialectical development from an initial phase, where the concept exists in a primitive and inchoate form, to a mature phase, where the concept is fully formed" (87). That we must do this is evident in that, were it not for an initial awareness of self – however primitive it may be – we would not be able to arrive at a conception of the self that contained any "mental stuffing" (87). How, for example, would we ever come to know what a person is if we did not first have a conception of what it means to have experiences? Where could such a conception come from, save an awareness of our own inner experiences?

Following the above line of thought, Maclachlan concludes that we can and should pull the rug out from under Strawson by introducing a stage of error into the equation (87). The Cartesian ego can slip out of its egocentric predicament by discovering her own errors and adopting a more thorough and inclusive conception of consciousness. Though the Cartesian ego cannot experience the consciousness of others, she can nevertheless come to link its own inner experiences to her own body and behaviour. Carrying this progression further, the Cartesian ego can realize that there are other beings with similar bodies and behaviours to her own, and that by analogy to her own condition, it is reasonable to assume that they are also conscious.

Part 3

2.3.1 Weighing Maclachlan's Arguments

In the foregoing, I have attempted to present the arguments of Wittgenstein, Strawson, and Maclachlan as accurately as possible while also being concise. The time has now come to consider whether Maclachlan has succeeded in defending the analogical argument from the challenges posed by Wittgenstein and Strawson. If I have succeeded in presenting an accurate account of the arguments from the aforementioned triad, I believe it should be readily apparent that Maclachlan has indeed accomplished that task. The positions of Wittgenstein and Strawson – on their own – appear to be a formidable weight in need of being lifted by anyone who would defend an analogical argument for other minds. As one proceeds through Maclachlan's arguments, however, it is revealed that these seemingly heavy structures are made of featherweight styrofoam. One is led to wonder how one managed to be fooled by the illusion of legitimacy.

In the process of accomplishing the negative task of demonstrating flaws with the opposing views that he engages with, Maclachlan also manages to offer a positive outline of a legitimate response to the problem of other minds that weighs heavily in favour of the analogical argument. The following four insights can be taken from Maclachlan's argument.

First, an insight that Wittgenstein and Strawson would agree with, and for good reason: common sense is a good thing. We need not exasperate ourselves attempting to prove with 100% certainty that we can indeed know that there are other minds.¹ Rather than focus on *whether* we can know that there are other minds, it would make far more sense to turn our attention to the question of *how* we can – and do – acquire knowledge of other minds.²

Second, and this is where Strawson begins to lose weight, we must admit to the possibility of degrees of learning when considering our knowledge (or lack of) of other minds. Unless we are born knowing that there are other minds, the Cartesian ego does not have a fully loaded toolkit of pertinent concepts at his or her disposal. To take such a toolkit as the starting point of the analogical argument is to torch a straw hut.

¹ In "Feminism, Ontology, and 'Other Minds,'" Overall ([1988] 1992) presents herself as arguing that there is no genuine problem of other minds; it seems more accurate, to me, to describe her paper as offering an argument against the legitimacy of the (dare I say foolish) goal of establishing that one is justified in believing that there are other minds. After arguing that we need not take seriously the possibility that there are no other minds, it seems to me that she simply begs the question in favour of a contentious social constructivist position, which is not to say that the account she offers is of no merit. On the contrary, I find the paper thought-provoking and worthwhile.

² Here Wittgenstein would start to leave our company given his opposition to talk of mental concepts. That is his loss and it is a hefty loss too. He is left with an emaciated conception of perception that refuses to speak about perceptions.

Third, we need not be afraid of Cartesianism. We can acknowledge Descartes' errors without running to the extreme of social constructivism.¹ There are excellent reasons to believe that inner experiences are the epistemic foundation of (at least) our knowledge of other minds. More than this, Maclachlan has offered persuasive reasons to believe that we must grant that this is indeed the case. How else could we pack experiential oomph into a theory of perception? Unable to account for this "mental stuffing," a social constructivist theory fails to account for the obviously real capacity that we have to learn language and to work with concepts from very early on in our lives. Following from this consideration, anyone who aims to explain how we know that there are other minds is wise to consider the possibility of pre-linguistic concepts that enable us to feel our way around and to make sense of the world in which we find ourselves.

Fourth, and finally, it is difficult to imagine how a social constructivist account of our knowledge of other minds doesn't simply beg the question about who is minded and who or what is not minded. By what means – if not by comparing the being or thing in question against more straightforward cases of consciousness – would such a theorist legitimate his or her conclusions about who or what is conscious? So far as I can imagine, the social constructivist tries to walk on air in this regard. The advocate of the analogical argument, on the contrary, has a foothold from which to differentiate between the minded and the phenomenologically barren.

In summary, Maclachlan has stacked the balance in favour of the analogical argument for other minds. While it would be a mistake to completely write off the opposing views he considers as beyond hope of recuperation, consideration of

¹ By "social constructivism" in this context I mean to refer to an epistemology such as Wittgenstein's that takes all knowledge and understanding to be rooted in social agreement.

Maclachlan's contributions to the debate open new vistas for inquiry while recommending the closure of certain stale and futile paths.

Part 4

2.3.2 Considering Other Minds and Other Minds' Other Minds

By way of conclusion, here is one such Maclachlan-inspired vista that may be worthy of further consideration. If we can justifiably use the argument from analogy to learn that other beings have minds, it may also be justifiable to use a similar analogical argument to show that beings who act in ways that one would act oneself in response to a being one recognizes as minded are themselves aware of other minds.

If we do not focus on language (in the narrow sense of word-usage) as necessary for understanding that other beings have minds, what is to prevent us from taking, e.g., what appears to be caring acts conducted by other species, as well as those of our own from an early age onwards, as evidence that they are acting in way clearly indicative of care-giving because they recognize the recipient or object of that (seeming) care as a fellow being?

Moreover, much as our language develops over time, it seems likely to me that our ability to arrive at knowledge of other minds, and to act in keeping with that knowledge, also develops over time as we continue to move towards maturity, and as we gain experience through interacting with the world and with others that in time, under usual conditions, we come to be able to recognize as others. What seems most likely to me is that our ability to recognize other minds and our ability to use language develops in relation with others and in ways that are mutually reinforcing, and that can be impeded by conditions of deprivation. For example, severely neglected infants and very young children in orphanages eventually cease to cry out for help when distressed, having gained abundant evidence that their cries are futile. Early on in human life, crying out for

help is apt to be instinctive rather than anything like a conscious cry for help, which the acquisition of experience plays a role in teaching the infant or young child to recognize as such in increasingly conscious ways. Pre-linguistic infants at times act with what appears to be kindness and empathy towards others. It is instructive, I believe, to consider why such actions occur. It seems to suggest some, if initially instinctive and rudimentary, awareness of others as others, and an awareness (at some level) of certain cues as bound up with pain, along with an awareness of pain as consequential and negative, and that they may be able to act in ways that help to relieve some of that pain, with an in-built motivation to do so (as with the experience of being pained by exposure to someone else's pain).

At the same time, of course, infants and very young children often appear oblivious to the mindedness of others, as with a nursing infant continuing (until prevented from doing so) to yank at the hair of his or her mother even while the mother is expressing clear indications of pain and frustration in response to her hair being tugged and repeatedly unclasping the infant's grasp of her hair. Under usual circumstances, such infants go on to learn to make the pertinent connections and to recognize that acting in such ways is apt to cause discomfort or pain to the person they are increasingly recognizing as their mother. I believe we are born as social animals with a built-in tendency to pay heed to clear indications of discomfort (or delight and much else besides) from others, that, when all goes as is typical of our species, with the passage of time, pairs with a growing awareness and recognition of other minds as minds that have much in common with one's own growing awareness of oneself as a being among other beings, and that is bound up with successful socialization as interdependent social animals.

When we step back and consider the "pale blue dot" that is our home,¹ and when we consider that same pale blue dot as the home of trillions of animals in all, who

¹ "Look again at that dot. That's here. That's home. That's us. On it everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you ever heard of, every human being who ever was, lived out their lives. The aggregate of our joy and suffering, thousands of confident religions, ideologies, and economic doctrines, every hunter and forager, every hero and coward, every creator and destroyer or civilization, every king and peasant, every young couple in love, every mother and father, hopeful child, inventor and explorer, every teacher of morals, every corrupt politician, every 'superstar,' every 'supreme leader,' every saint and sinner in the history of our species lived there—on a mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam.

variously walk, swim, crawl and fly, and when we take seriously the trillions of universes that there are, and when we consider uncomfortable and deeply unsettling facts about the extent of unmet needs and suffering being endured each minute of every day, that we would shudder to imagine ourselves or a loved one of ours enduring, we may be wise to ask whether, to a disturbing extent, our knowledge of other minds remains – in significant and highly impactful ways – incredibly weak, altogether inadequate, and fleeting.¹

Certainly that seems to be the case for all the suffering behind the vast majority of animal products which come from “factory farming” – practices that treat such beings as chickens and pigs and calves as if they are insentient widgets. Certainly, likewise, we seem severely deficient in knowledge of other minds when we consider what it is that enables us to pay little heed to, or to shut out, awful facts about world hunger and destitution, and what it is, even long after the “never again” atrocities of WWII, can account for the experiences of Roméo Dallaire who pleaded in vain to the international community to intervene as a genocide was spreading hell on earth around him.²

The Earth is a very small stage in a vast cosmic arena. Think of the rivers of blood spilled by all those generals and emperors so that, in glory and triumph, they could become the momentary masters of a fraction of a dot. Think of the endless cruelties visited by the inhabitants of one corner of this pixel on the scarcely distinguishable inhabitants of some other corner, how frequent their misunderstandings, how eager they are to kill one another, how fervent their hatreds.

Our posturings, our imagined self-importance, the delusion that we have some privileged position in the Universe, are challenged by this point of pale light. Our planet is a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark. In our obscurity, in all this vastness, there is no hint that help will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves” (Sagan 1994/1997, 6-7).

¹ My use of “trillions of universes” is taken from a friend of mine, Robert Shepherd, whose in-the-works book so titled I hope to someday read.

² Dallaire offers an account of his ordeal, and that far worse which he witnessed many others suffering in *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda* (2004), which was co-authored with Brent Beardsley, who was with Dallaire during the Rwandan genocide, as was Phil Lancaster, who has a PhD in philosophy (2004, 9) from the University of Ottawa (Menard and White 2019). Lancaster helped Dallaire to write parts of *Shake Hands with the Devil* dealing with war and genocide (2004, 9). An additional collaborator, Sian Cansfield, was helping with the project as a ghost writer; she killed herself before the book made its way to print (2004, 11), which calls to mind Nietzsches’s heavy question: “How much truth can a spirit [*geist*] endure, how much truth does it *dare*?” ([1888] 1968, foreword). The promotional materials for *Shake Hands with the Devil* describe it as follows:

In *Waiting for First Light: My Ongoing Battle with PTSD*, Dallaire explains that upon returning from Rwanda, while watching news with his family, he was horrified that they could sit through accounts of real-world horrors – as he himself had long done – without being profoundly moved and deeply shaken by the realities behind the broadcast (2016, 72 of 187). He shares in that work that after his beyond words experiences in Rwanda, while wracked with PTSD and repeatedly engaging in suicidal ideation, when he watched news stories depicting real world horrors, the terrible realities being depicted were all too alive within him. He could no longer relate to watching such news without really connecting with the realities being depicted. After what he had experienced, he was all too aware of how he, too, had once felt little compunction in living a life of comfort, security, and tremendous privilege, encountering harrowing information about hells on earth, and continuing on with business as usual. Such a detachment from reality was no longer possible for him; “those people and places ravaged by violence that were flashing

A brave, unforgettable first-hand account of the Rwandan genocide by a man almost literally haunted by the dead and by the spectre of his missions’s failure. Marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of this horrific event, this edition includes a new note from Roméo Dallaire.

Serving in Rwanda in 1993, LGen. Roméo Dallaire and his small peacekeeping force found themselves abandoned by the UN in a vortex of civil war and genocide. With meagre resources to stem the killing, General Dallaire was witness to the murder of 800,000 Rwandans in a hundred days, and returned home broken, disillusioned and suicidal. *Shake Hands with the Devil* is his return to Rwanda: a searing book that is both an eyewitness account of the failure of humanity to stop the genocide, and the story of General Dallaire’s own struggle to find a measure of peace, reconciliation and hope. (PRHC [2004] 2023)

I attended a Champions for Children and Youth summit in Vancouver, B.C. in 2008 at which Dallaire was one of several speakers who shared front-line accounts of their respective efforts to help children and youth in often unimaginably atrocious situations. It was not until many years later that I learned that Dallaire had some help from someone with a formal background in philosophy. Shortly after attending the Champions for Children and Youth summit, overwhelmed and horrified, and of the view (I still hold) that the field is not pulling its own weight and could and should be doing far more to help address significant real-world problems in dire need of more and better attention, I sent out a desperate plea to the Society for Women in Philosophy (SWIP). A few months later, I gave a desperate talk at a conference in Eugene, Oregon (Philosophical Enquiry Into Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Mothering) earnestly entitled (framed to fit the conference theme) “Is It Just Me, Or Are Philosophers Failing Mothers, Children, Each Other, and the World?” (2008).

up on the screen were as real to me as if they had been standing, bleeding and crying, in our living room” (2016, 72 of 187).

If we can improve our knowledge of other minds, and learn how to cope with the difficulties of bearing such truths as can be horrifying and nearly or actually unthinkable at times to face, then we may become far better able to set and live by sound priorities and to arrange our lives in ways that protect our own interests while doing far more to help others in dire need of help. Were the tables turned, we would surely want for others in vastly better situated positions to take our situation seriously and to strive to help us, all the more so if they are themselves complicit in the creation and maintenance of the situation that is causing us and our loved ones so much harm. Such may, truly, be the most significant and pressing problem of other minds. The widespread inability to adequately acknowledge other minds should perhaps be recognized as a sort of severe, pervasive, and rampant moral disability. If we can make significant progress towards truly learning about and knowing and holding the realities of other minds in our own minds, we may be able to help bring about significant real world improvements, and we might be far better able to face daunting problems that, as things stand, we are clearly – and sometimes, at least, culpably – failing to adequately face, as poignantly gestured towards, I believe, in such works as Peter Singer’s “Affluence, Famine, and Morality” (1971) and Peter Unger’s hauntingly titled *Living High and Letting Die: Our Illusion of Innocence* (1999).

Chapter 3 Legitimizing Authority: Lessons from Gadamer, Habermas, and Foucault

To punish me for my contempt of authority, Fate has made me an authority myself.

—Einstein, writing an aphorism for a friend, 18 September 1930, Einstein

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Introduction

In “Hermeneutics and the Critique of Ideology” ([1973] 1986, henceforth HHS), Paul Ricoeur presents, as nothing less than “the fundamental gesture of philosophy” the question of whether philosophy is historically effected and bound, as held by Hans-Georg Gadamer in *Truth and Method* ([1989] 2002, henceforth *TM*) and *Philosophical Hermeneutics* ([1978] 1997, henceforth *PH*), or capable of critical distancing, as meets the standards of Gadamer’s rival, Jürgen Habermas, as laid out in his “Review of Gadamer’s *Truth and Method*” ([1997] 1986, henceforth *RGTM*).¹ Whether agreeing with Ricoeur about the nature of the gesture he indicates, one path it points towards leads to what Ricoeur refers to, in “Ethics and Culture: Habermas and Gadamer in Dialogue” (1973, henceforth *EC*), as the “central antinomy of moral philosophy”: whether values are creations or essences to be discovered (*EC* 153). Whereas the former (values as creations) leads into the spectre of relativism, confidence in the latter (values as essences

¹ A thought-provoking account and application of Ricoeur’s conception of “distancing” is offered by Pia Sander Dreyer and Birthe D. Pedersen in “Distancing in Ricoeur’s theory of interpretation: narrations in a study of life experiences of living with chronic illness and home mechanical ventilation” (2009).

to be discovered) has taken a major beating and is now often taken as mistaken and naive if not a lot of nonsense.

The debate mentioned above leads into a wide array of thorny challenges and complexities that this chapter, by no means, aims to even sketch, let alone to settle. What this chapter does, rather, is examine the role of authority in the debate between Gadamer's situational hermeneutics and Habermas' critique of ideologies with the aim of learning from and building upon both positions, while also drawing from and learning from some of Foucault's pertinent contributions. In particular, through engagement with the Gadamer-Habermas debate, and by also drawing upon work by Foucault, as well as pertinent secondary literature that engages with Foucault's work, this chapter homes in on questions surrounding the plausibility of legitimating authority in the domain of ethics and anti-oppression theory and practice. The central questions contended with are as follows: By what legitimate authority, if any, can we aptly identify and ameliorate oppression? If, on one hand, we accept the legitimacy of historically effected authority, how, if at all, could we adequately (1) respond to the challenges of relativism or (2) distinguish between the dictates of reason and the stranglehold of dogmatism and ideology? If, on the other hand, we accept as legitimate authority the process and results of critical distanciation, how, if at all, could we adequately ground this authority? And, finally: what are our prospects for gaining any distance and objectivity in relation to what Gadamer refers to (perhaps problematically) as the "finite, historical mode of being" of beings such as ourselves? (*TM*, 277).

This chapter proceeds into the following three parts. Part 1 divides into two sections which, respectively, offer interpretations of Gadamer's and Habermas' answers

to the above questions. Part 2 also divides into two sections, the first of which outlines lessons that Gadamer and Habermas can learn from each other and that we can learn from them, and the second of which explores additional problems with both accounts and appeals to the work of Michel Foucault for insights that can help to alleviate some of these difficulties. Part 3 builds upon the preceding lessons by considering the extent to which Gadamer, Habermas, and Foucault can lead us to a position that merits taking as legitimate the claims to authority needed to offer a sound basis for ethical action and likewise for efforts towards identifying and ameliorating oppression.

Part 1

3.1.1 Gadamer's Rehabilitation of Prejudice, Authority, and Tradition¹

In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer presents a phenomenological account of understanding (*Verstehen*) that defends the ability of the “human sciences” (*Geisteswissenschaften*) to arrive at knowledge. Aiming to build on strengths and remedy errors in the hermeneutics espoused by his predecessors – most notably Friedrich Schleiermacher, Wilhelm Dilthey, Edmund Husserl, and Martin Heidegger – Gadamer offers a balm to quell the hubris of Enlightenment quests for objective knowledge. More specifically, he aims to derail the positivistic quest of modeling the human sciences after the natural sciences (*Wissenschaften*) and to expose as implausible the notion that we might ever manage to construct a rigorous scientific methodology capable of assessing truth claims within the human sciences in ways that are objective and disinterested.

¹ This section is heavily influenced by Georgia Warnkes's *Gadamer: Hermeneutics, Tradition, and Reason* (Stanford University Press, 1987), especially Chapter 3, “Hermeneutics and the problem of Subjectivism” (73-106), and, to a lesser extent, by Jack Mendelson's “The Habermas-Gadamer Debate” (1979, especially pages 51-56).

Gadamer's project is best understood as a response to modernity, the philosophical tradition with René Descartes as its impetus. That being the case, as a prelude to Gadamer's project, it will be helpful to briefly recall especially pertinent aspects of Descartes' position. In *Meditations On First Philosophy* ([1641] 2008, henceforth *MFP*), Descartes begins with the concern that, though he has learned many things through the process of his education, as he examines his beliefs and those of his acquaintances and the thinkers he has studied, he finds that none of them rest on a firm foundation. Upon discovering that his erudition is all leaf and no root, Descartes is left with the unsettling sense that he does not know anything at all. While presenting himself (whether earnestly) as searching after a foundation to his beliefs, he shows himself presenting and applying his now famous methodological doubt – a strategy of doubting everything that can be doubted. The point of such doubting is presented as a quest to either affirm that nothing can be known for certain (which may be better than having a host of false beliefs), or, more optimistically, to find an indubitable truth that can be used as an Archimedean point on which to build an unshakable body of knowledge. As is well known, Descartes introspects his way to one of the most frequently repeated lines in the history of philosophy: “Cogito, ergo sum”: I think, therefore I am. Upon this purportedly indubitable foundation, he proceeds to present himself as able to prove: the existence of a benevolent God, the separation between thinking substance (mind/soul) and inert substance (matter/body), the immortality of the soul, and an atomistic account of the universe. However compelling is Descartes' project taken as a whole, the influence of his rationalism and his treatment of mind and matter have been immensely influential.

We have seen that coursing through Cartesianism is the (at least implied) belief that the means to knowledge is through engaging in a deliberate and complete separation from our historical situatedness. Checking all of the elements of our belief system against the voice of reason “delivers us from all prejudice” and frees our minds from the dogmatic acceptance of authority and tradition (*MFP*, Synopsis). As noted above, it is Gadamer’s aim to expose this “objective” reflection as impossible and to demonstrate a path that can yield knowledge that need not have recourse to such a manoeuvre of alleged distanciation.

The first thing that Gadamer stresses in response to rationalism, and he stresses it often, is the inescapability of our historical situatedness and embeddedness. Gadamer draws from the Heideggerian concepts of *Dasein* (existence, human being) and of “thrownness” (*Geworfenheit*) ([1927] 1962). An articulation of what Heidegger means by “thrownness,” in relation to group membership, is offered by Iris Marion Young in *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, as follows:

one *finds oneself* as a member of a group, which one experiences as always already having been; our identities are formed by how others identify us, which they do in terms of groups which are already associated with specific attributes, stereotypes, and norms. ([1990] 2022, 46)

In addition to being apt to find oneself, as far back as one can recall, as a member of a group or groups (e.g., as a daughter, a sister, a human), one may also recall the development of and changes to one’s self-identity across time as for instance, when coming (as pertinent) to see oneself, e.g., as a schoolgirl, as black, as heterosexual, as

from a working class family, as Western, able-bodied, dyslexic, a first generation university student, a feminist, an advocate of academic freedom, and so on, one finds oneself with a language (or more than one), a belief system, and, in short, a way of thinking and being that is inescapably linked to one's historical-cultural heritage(s), and that comes, in a typically inchoate way, with what might be referred to, as done by Ellyn Kaschak, as a mattering map (2011). Even when one may come to challenge or reject some of the groups to which one is taken by others to belong, along with related value judgments, as with the experiences described by Talia Mae Bettcher in "What is Trans Philosophy?" (2019), one remains thrown all the same, which may come with challenges tied to striving to understand or to sort out how to respond to (sometimes horrifying and sometimes terrifying) mismatches between one's own self-conception (e.g., in Bettcher's case, as a woman) and how one is taken by others, as with Bettcher's accounts of being a victim of a hate crime and subjected to death threats (2019, 8, 14).¹

Though Descartes took himself to be tearing off the prejudices of his dogmatic past to feel his way around his mind in pursuit of pristine insights, Gadamer appeals to our ontological status as *Dasein* to show that the "ability" to do this is illusory. Not only does Descartes think in a language – or in languages, rather (French and Latin) – tied to his upbringing and enculturation, his purportedly objective reasoning is also intimately

¹ "What does it mean to say that I'm a woman, I've wondered? And why does *so much* appear to hinge on it? How do I make sense, for example, of being assaulted in the middle of Santa Monica Boulevard by someone who wanted to prove I was really a man? Why do people want to kill us? WTF? To some philosophers, trans people may appear to be fascinating cases to investigate in answering questions like 'What is a woman?' and 'What is a man?' Because of these philosophers' particular locations, they may not have the same philosophical interests that trans people do. One interest that some of us have is this: Why do people want to kill us? The presumption that the first question is more philosophically important or at least 'fascinating' than the latter is debatable. Alas, the fascinated philosopher may not even be aware of the host of other philosophical questions that arise for trans people—particularly as they are geared towards illumination in the WTF. In fact, they may be completely unaware of the trans WTF as an impetus for philosophical inquiry at all" (Bettcher 2019, 8, 14).

bound up with the language and the traditions he has inherited. As we think in language, and as languages are rooted in culture, history, and tradition, it is not possible to forge a complete separation from that which has been handed down to us. Moreover, it is superficial to attempt to separate introspection itself (or attempts at such from which one's mind may wander) from the aims of the introspection as though the two are not inextricably tied, as if for instance one might walk to a well to gain water and imagine one's walking as explicable unto itself without consideration of the context in which one is moving one's legs thus and so, bucket in hand. To gain a sense of what Descartes aims to be doing through his *Meditations* ([1641 [2008]], for instance, and why he has written it at all, and as he has done so, it is helpful to consider the traditions in philosophy (apologetics) he is contributing to and to consider his motivations for aiming to persuade powerful church leaders at the Sorbonne to accept the compatibility of Church doctrine and atomistic physics. As will be further elaborated upon in the pages to come, the meaning that Descartes aims to convey in his *Meditations* cannot be understood in isolation from a consideration of the historical and situational factors that led him to stare into his head (or at times, perhaps, to feign doing so) in the first place.¹

Gadamer argues that the attempt to use reason to scourge ourselves until we are free from prejudice is based on the equation of prejudice with false beliefs caused by “overhastiness” or acquiescence to “authority” (*TM*, 271). While some prejudices result from these means and do indeed lead us to hold false beliefs, Gadamer argues, it is not the case that all prejudices work in this way. This becomes evident if we return to the pre-

¹ Vivid and fascinating examples of ways that knowledge of contextual matters is vital for understanding a text appear in Pierre Hadots's *What is Ancient Philosophy?* (2004), Susan Neimans's *Evil in Modern Thought: An Alternative History of Philosophy* ([2002] 2015), and Arthur M. Melzers's *Philosophy Between the Lines: The Lost History of Esoteric Writing* (2014).

Enlightenment conception of prejudice as “prejudgment.” Here we find that “[a]ctually, 'prejudice' means a judgment that is rendered before all the elements that determine a situation have been finally examined” (*TM*, 270). The assumption that all such judgments are necessarily wrong is clearly false, and itself amounts to a “prejudice against prejudices” (*TM*, 272).

Moreover, on Gadamer’s account, if we think of ourselves as historical *Dasein*, we realize that we cannot have any understanding that is not preceded by a prejudgment of whatever text that we are engaging with. (Gadamer uses “text” broadly to refer to any possible object of understanding, be it a philosophy book, poem, conversation, artwork, obituary, and so on.) In other words, Gadamer has it that there is a hermeneutical circle involved in all our attempts at knowledge. Consider for instance the following sentence:

The hallway monitor was found in the garbage, along with the rest of the missing computer equipment.

While reading the above sentence the first time, one might at first take “the hallway monitor” as a person who watches for misbehaviour in the halls of a school and call to mind related associations (e.g., of a “goody-goody” or “a snitch”). As the reader continues to read the sentence, they may be surprised at first and perhaps amused by the thought of a hallway monitor in the garbage, or perhaps led to painful thoughts and recollections or thoughts about bullying. With such an interpretation in mind, the reader may then, upon reading onwards, become momentarily confused as the end of the sentence does not make sense if one continues to read the “hallway monitor” as a person (unless one wants to take the person as sensibly referred to as “computer equipment”).

After reading and considering the full sentence, the initial interpretation of “hallway monitor” is realized to be mistaken and the monitor in question is then reinterpreted as a computer monitor so that it is coherent in relation to the sentence as a whole. In this example, we find that understanding the sentence requires a circular relationship between the parts of the sentence and the sentence as a whole; it is not possible to understand the former part of the sentence without understanding the latter and vice versa.

Gadamer argues that such a hermeneutical relationship between parts and whole is central to human understanding. If we had no preconception of what a particular text is – if that is even possible; imagine, for instance, how a one-year-old baby might perceive a framed diploma on the wall – we would not be able to make sense of it. To understand that framed diploma (or whatever a perception of such would mean to a baby), one must understand words, writing, universities, academic programs, degrees, and likewise with the practice of framing such documents).

We are heavily linguistic beings who perceive the world in ways that rely heavily upon language, and this language is not value neutral or abstract, but conveys its relationship to our traditions. Think, for example, of all that is conveyed by a simple wedding invitation, or even by the word “wedding” or the word “invitation.”¹ This leads

¹ There is a lot of ongoing research and controversy regarding the relationship between language and thought. The position that our thought is entirely reliant upon language is extremely contentious and highly disreputable. It is linked to the work of Benjamin Lee Whorf and, to a lesser extent, Edward Sapir, one of Whorf’s mentors. The position is referred to, variously, as Whorfianism, the Sapir-Whorf thesis, “linguistic relativity,” and “linguistic determinism” (McWhorter 2016). For a review of literature on the relationship between language and thought, see Chapter 1 of Ji Fengyuan’s *Linguistic Engineering: Language and Politics in Mao’s China* (2003), and see Chapter 26 of *The Cambridge Handbook of Thinking and Reasoning* (Holyoak and Morrison 2005), “Language and Thought” (2005, Gleitman and Papafragou). Both Fengyuan (2003) and Gleitman and Papafragou (2005) agree that while there is a lot of empirical evidence in favour of the *moderate* influence of language on thought, extreme accounts that take thought as *entirely* dependent on and limited by language are implausible, to say the least. A more recent overview of the pertinent body of literature, offered in John H. McWhorter’s *The Language Hoax: Why the World Looks the Same in Any Language*, lays out a case that the relationship between language and thought is not

us once again to Gadamer's central point: We have no pristine vantage point through which we can perceive an object or text without recourse to our preconceptions. We are "historically effected" beings and cannot escape this condition; on Gadamer's account, if we are to arrive at any understanding, it must be through our traditions and enculturation, including when aiming to create some distance from them; regarding the historical *Dasein* that we are, then, any adequate epistemology must offer a "theory of hermeneutical experience" that does "justice to the historicity of understanding" (*TM*, cited in Mendelson 1979, 53).

Thus, Gadamer builds on an insight from Husserl: that if we are to perceive an object as something, we must perceive it through the medium of language.¹ When we perceive an object or attempt to understand a text, we cannot help but begin with an impression of it as a certain kind of thing. Even if it is a mysterious thing or a thing that we find incomprehensible, it is mysterious or incomprehensible in relation to that which we do understand (or think that we understand). As we proceed to arrive at an

even moderate, but minor (2014). McWhorter offers a theory about why so many of his fellow Americans seem stuck on gross exaggerations about the extent to which language shapes our experiences:

Crucially, a connection between language and thought does exist. The problem is how that connection has percolated into public discussion, reminiscent of how the rumor mill magnifies the blip into a cataclysm. . . . The language-as-thought idea vibrates in tune with impulses deeply felt in the modern enlightened American's soul. Ethnocentrism revolts us. Virtually as penance for our good fortune in living in a wealthy and geopolitically dominant society, as well as for the horrors we have perpetrated on so many groups in the world, we owe it to the rest of the world to stress our awareness that the less fortunate are our equals. . . . Attractive, then, will be the idea that each language is its own mind-altering cocktail. All of us are seeing, as it were, different colors ("Man, the colors! The colors!"). Just imagine all of the untapped ideas and perspectives out there among peoples we generally hear too little about, as well as among the ones we see every day. We Westerners have learned our lesson: we are only one way of being human, and not the best one, much less the most important in the grand scheme of things. Under Whorfianism, everybody is interesting and everybody matters. (2016, Introduction)

¹¹ While Gadamer and Husserl may both overemphasize the role of language in human perception and cognition, and while it is good to be wary of and to avoid overblown assessments of the role of language in relation to thinking, it seems to me that the lessons drawn from their works discussed herein can withstand accommodations for the correction of any such overassessments and can also point towards considerations that merit additional attention.

understanding of something novel, we learn to incorporate it into our existing philosophy (in the worldview sense of the word) by relating it to that which is familiar. In the terms that Gadamer uses, we come to understand a new object by fusing the meaning it reveals to us with our horizons (*TM*, 307). These horizons are the traditions that we find ourselves thrown into.

Considering the situation in which we find ourselves, Gadamer makes a case that the Enlightenment's disdain for prejudice and for authority are both overblown and ill-considered. Whereas Enlightenment philosophers often take appeals to authority as "diametrically opposed to reason and freedom: to be, in fact, blind obedience" (*TM*, 279), there is no compelling justification for presenting reason and authority as dichotomous. While of course some mindless deference to authority is deeply mistaken, in many cases, the acceptance of authority, he argues, is far less an act of subordinate acceptance than it is an acknowledgement of expertise (*TM*, 279). Indeed, if we think of why we find ourselves often turning and deferring to authorities, it is because we realize our own limitations and finitude and appreciate that someone else – e.g., a doctor, a plumber, a mechanic, a teacher – is a better authority on certain matters than we are. John Hardwig discusses on inevitable reliance upon authority in "Epistemic Dependence":

I find myself believing all sorts of things for which I do not possess evidence: that smoking cigarettes causes lung cancer, that my car keeps stalling because the carburetor needs to be rebuilt, that mass media threatens democracy, that slums cause emotional disorders, that my irregular heart beat is premature ventricular contraction, that students' grades are not correlated with success in the nonacademic world, that nuclear power plants are not safe (enough). . . . The list of things I believe, though I have no evidence for the truth of them, is, if not infinite, virtually endless. And I am finite. Though I can readily imagine what I would have to do to obtain the evidence that would support any one of my beliefs, I cannot imagine being able to do this for all of my beliefs. I believe too much; there is too much relevant evidence (much of it available only after extensive,

specialized training); intellect is too small and life is too short. (1993, 375-6)

In the above passage, we find several instances of Hardwig gesturing at his recognition of and deference to a wide array of authorities. When we consider such realities, we can recognize that it is often not at all the case that we are deferring out of a subjugation by which we fail to take on due accountability as mature adults, and likewise nor need it be the case that we are bowing down in an unreflective and irresponsible “obedience to commands” (*TM*, 279). Rather, it appears that in a great many instances, acceptance of authority, far from being an irresponsible or immature thing to do, “has to do not with obedience but rather with knowledge” (*TM*, 279). It is not at odds with reason that Hardwig often finds himself deferring to authorities; given his finitude and given his realization that in many respects he is less capable of arriving at an authoritative position than is an expert on the text in question, it is often rational for him to recognize the authority of these individuals over that of himself, and it would often be irrational and foolish for him to deny the authority of people vastly better positioned than he position to be making and assessing certain knowledge claims.

Having rehabilitated (at least many instances of) prejudice, tradition, and authority into the realm of epistemology, Gadamer argues that the central hermeneutical task becomes that of deciphering between legitimate and illegitimate interpretations of justified prejudice, justified traditions, and justified authorities. Fortunately, there are, he argues, ways to distinguish between good and bad prejudices, and it is clearly not the case that one individual’s interpretation of a text is just as good as that of other individuals. As with the interpreter, the interpretation being made is historically situated and has its place within the traditions of which it is part. Accordingly, he argues, its value

and legitimacy depends on its relation to the standards of the tradition to which it belongs. Thus, through attaining (or failing to attain) fluency with the pertinent tradition, an editor of an academic journal can legitimately or illegitimately evaluate the work of scholars who submit articles for consideration. If an article dismissed by one journal is soon after published by another journal in the same field and comes to be praised by the academic community as an exemplary piece of scholarship and as a remarkable contribution to the field, it is reasonable to take it that the reviewers who rejected the same article failed to appreciate its merits.

But the question then emerges: why claim that we are arriving at understanding just because there is a widespread consensus on the merits of a text (which, in turn, merely reiterates the standards set by the authority of the past)? Gadamer's response to this question – how we can differentiate between merited consensus views and those that are unmerited – is twofold.

First, he advises against taking the attainment of a consensus as necessarily or merely a deference to past standards or to prevailing prejudices of an illegitimate sort. Though we are necessarily conditioned by our traditions, and prone towards myriad prejudices, it is obviously not the case that standards deemed legitimate in the past are necessarily deemed legitimate today. While it has at times been taken as acceptable and even praiseworthy to defend slavery, for instance, so doing is far from acceptable to do so today. When we consider why that is the case, we can gain insights that our knowledge claims are at times responsive to criticism and prove unmerited and end up being discarded and amended rather than simply reiterated on and on due to deference to authority, tradition, or prejudice. At the same time, we also can recognize that it is far

too simplistic to take authority, tradition, and prejudice as if they do not have significant and often legitimate roles to play in our efforts – fallible though they are – to work towards legitimate interpretations of this text or the next one (taking “text” in the expansive way that Gadamer takes it).

Second, Gadamer grants that consensus *per se* is not a guarantee of understanding. There are, however, ways of consensus-building that do encourage an increase of understanding and can serve as checks against the possibility of accepting illegitimate prejudices. One such way is to expect that a text we are trying to understand is coherent before arriving at a judgment about it so that, for instance, parts of the text that might seem misguided or incompatible with other parts of it may come to be recognized as coherent once one is further into the work and better able to evaluate it. If we are approaching the text with a genuine interest in understanding it, we must respect its otherness and be open to its having something to teach us that we do not already know (*TM*, 308). In approaching texts in such open ways, we are acknowledging our own finitude as well as the possibility that some of our own prejudices and traditions and trusted authorities may be far less legitimate than we take them to be. With such openness to emendations in place, should we encounter indications that our prejudices are indeed mistaken, we will be less inclined to impose them upon the text from its very page (as it were), and approach the text in a way that grants – even if it may seem extremely unlikely – that what at first is appearing to be utter nonsense or clearly mistaken truly is such. When we consider the history of human efforts towards knowledge, such as once widespread views that women are less intelligent than men and ought not to be able to vote, we can better appreciate that in our own context as well. Thus it is possible that a

text that reflects our familiar and taken-for-granted ways of looking at the world may in time prove similarly and woefully mistaken as may well be the case, for instance, with the now widespread view that it is acceptable to kill other animals for food even if there are abundant other options to choose from, and even it is granted that we need not do so to meet our dietary needs.

It can often be difficult to have such discussions, especially when it comes to highly sensitive matters of ethics, as with encountering a critique of meat eating (save in conditions of genuine need) and leaping, as many do, to a reactive response that hears such critiques as if they entail that the person making them has no sympathy whatever for one's enculturation or one's situation and, rather, is essentially declaring: "You are a truly horrible excuse for a human being!" The ability to grant one's fallibility and to approach others with patience, and with the awareness that as one gets to know them more, one's initial or current assessment of them may prove wildly mistaken are vital for working towards improved understanding, for which dialogue can be especially well suited, especially if those engaging in it are able to consider even consensus views in a way that grants that they may prove in need of adjustments.

Following the charitable assumption of completeness indicated above – that is, that once one gains a fuller picture, what at first seems wrong may prove to have more legitimacy to it – interlocutors enter into discussions with the earnest aim of understanding the text in question, granting of course that our own perspectives are highly limited as well as fallible and that even if the other person's position proves truly illegitimate, as we take the time to understand how he or she has arrived at it, and to consider its place in relation to their broader philosophy (in the worldview sense), we

may see the other person far more fairly and be better able to engage in ways that might help him or her to recognize a genuinely illegitimate position as genuinely illegitimate.

A powerful case in point deals with a personal anecdote shared by Jacque Fresco who explains that to gain some insights about whether we are as hopeless a species as we often seem to be, he decided to join a Ku Klux Klan group in Miami in the late 1930s, with the aim of disbanding the group (Fresco 2015). He reports being able to achieve that aim in a stunningly brief period of time: within a mere month and a half. He explains that in order to help the members of the group recognize what a flawed position they are aligning with, he focused on gaining the respect and confidence of the leader of the group, who he seems to have genuinely respected even while granting that his KKK views are vile. By engaging with the leader of the group he was keen to shut down through his own worldview and values, Fresco was able to help him see that his KKK views are wildly mistaken which in turn had the leader of the group influencing other members of the group away from their own KKK allegiance (Fresco 2015).

While each interlocutor has an individual set of prejudices, dialogue is helped along when each participant appreciates the other as a fellow being who is apt to be a mixture of better and worse positions and who may have far more of value to convey than one's own prejudices may incline one towards expecting. Through a back and forth of question and answer, and a sharing of aspects of our own worldviews with each other, we can come to better appreciate the panoply that there is of often surprisingly different lifeworlds (to use a term from Heidegger) than our own. Having accepted the possibility that our interlocutors' position may have insights we lack, we arrive at discussions better able to come to understand others and better able to judge what it is that others are aiming

to convey to use through their own lifeworlds. By sharing our own conflicting and often competing horizons with each other in an open-minded quest for truth and for improved understanding, we are better able to recognize others' legitimate insights as legitimate, and better able to expand our own horizons, and to engage in ways that better convey our positions to others than is apt to happen if we approach them in ways that convey a lack of respect and a stance that is closed-off to what it is that they take to be true, legitimate, and important. When we approach others in such a spirit, we are also more likely to hit upon and engage with new questions and considerations, and such engagement may in turn lead us into meaningful insights that more arrogant and less wise positions are apt to preclude (*TM*, 375). Even if, after a genuine dialogue in which each participant aims to respectfully and earnestly understand the other, there remains (as is often the case) major disagreements, such engagement can help us to better understand the other and to leave the conversation having undergone a valuable transformation and expansion of consciousness (*TM*, 379).

It might be asked how an individual can assume the authority of a text, struggle to learn from it and interpret it as a unified whole, and then determine that it does not make a legitimate truth claim that is worth accepting. How is it possible, having done one's best to take a text in such a way, to arrive at a legitimate conclusion about whether the claims being assessed should be accepted, rejected, or left in abeyance? To make this kind of determination, Gadamer argues, we must possess the ability to apply general rules about understanding to particular contexts. Considering the nature of this task, we find that Aristotelian ethics can be particularly relevant and insightful (*TM*, 312). Paralleling the distinction between practical knowledge and theoretical knowledge in Aristotle's

Nicomachean Ethics (*NE*), Gadamer argues, hermeneutical consciousness must also determine the legitimacy of each truth claim on a case-by-case basis through the development and use of practical wisdom (*TM*, 317). Hermeneutical understanding aims to be responsive to our changing and historically effected consciousnesses; once we recognize our interpretations as hermeneutic and bound up with our lifeworlds, we are better able to recognize that heavily theoretical attempts at understanding how best to address conflicting lifeworlds that fail to really respect or engage with – or to be open to – the wide array of lifeworlds that there are constitutes a poor approach to learning and is more apt to impede than to help us move towards improved positions (*TM*, 321).

3.1.2 Habermas On Authority and Reason

As important and significant a contribution Gadamer's work has been to hermeneutics, it has not gone without its detractors. Jürgen Habermas ([1986] 1997), in particular, emerged as a significant critic of and foil to Gadamer. Whereas Gadamer's work is an offspring of romanticism, Habermas' is unabashedly an extension of Enlightenment philosophy. Not surprisingly, then, Habermas faults Gadamer for failing to come to terms with both the power and need for reflection vis-à-vis authority and tradition.

On the one hand, Habermas argues, Gadamer fails to appreciate the role of reflection in historically effected consciousness. Although Habermas concurs with Gadamer that understanding is inextricably conditioned by tradition, as the interpreter of texts or text analogues is forced to make recourse to his or her inherited understandings as a bridgehead into his or her subject matter, it does not follow that these inherited "forestructures" remain a totalitarian authority over the subject. Of course, Gadamer does

not think they do either, given that he grants that as we strive to understand a particular subject matter that reflects a stance quite different from our own, our underlying prejudices are exposed by the otherness and difference of the text; our presuppositions are challenged, and so, to borrow an apt metaphor from Wittgenstein, in coming to grips with the meaning embedded in our subject matter, we must come to grips with our conceptual scaffolding (1969, *On Certainty*, §211), recognizing it as such, and are rightly faulted if we are closed off to considering that changes to our own views may indeed be called for. Even so, for Gadamer, tradition remains an authority in the aftermath of interpretation, as we can only distance ourselves from its reach by identifying its influence in our thought. To this extent, the authority of tradition, while (on Gadamer's account, real) is not authoritarian, as he calls for us to recognize its effects and hermeneutical legitimacy in our thought while also being open to the possibility that revisions may be called for.

Habermas disagrees. On his account, we are not constrained to identify, in a simple way, the authoritative role of tradition in our efforts at understanding; it can be important to approach tradition in a more head-on and evaluative way than Gadamer seems to recognize. Reflection is also important and is inadequately accounted for by Gadamer, Habermas argues, indicating that it is possible to free ourselves from "the dogmatism of life-practices" through the recognition of its "genesis of the tradition from which it proceeds" (*RGTM*, 268). In other words, on Habermas' account, by appreciating the historically effected nature of our consciousness, we are able to appreciate our relation to tradition and our given subject matter in a new light that is capable of creating more distance than Gadamer allows for. Reflection is not free of tradition, but it is able to

alter its relation to it – perhaps by rejecting significant aspects of tradition once its influences upon our consciousness has been exposed. To this extent, he argues, “authority and knowledge do not converge” (*RGTM*, 269).

On the other hand, Habermas continues, Gadamer’s position also fails to appreciate the need for reflection that runs contrary to authority and tradition. In some interpretive contexts, he explains, due to the distortive and covert effects of ideology, we will not be able to move towards truth if we limit ourselves to hermeneutical methods. Ideologies involve both linguistic and sociological structures. In particular, the social divisions of labour and power create meanings, norms, and interests that are not explicit at the linguistic level, which helps to show that it would be a mistake to hold too high of an estimation of how far we may get through even earnest attempts at dialogue. In fact, he continues, at the explicit linguistic level, ideology often acts to conceal its underlying sociological interests, meanings, and the like. At the linguistic level, it is often the case that our underlying interests are clothed in rhetoric that hides our real aims. As Habermas notes, “[l]anguage is also a medium of domination and social power; it serves to legitimate relations of organized force”; thus, “[i]nsofar as the legitimations do not articulate the power relations whose institutionalization they make possible... language is also ideological” (*RGTM*, 272). The economic and political interests of bourgeois liberal societies, for instance, are cloaked by the rhetoric of freedom, property, and efficiency.

Given that hermeneutical methods work with the self-understandings of their subject matter, Habermas argues, they are ill-suited to pierce the veiled meanings of ideology. Problematic prejudices may be unarticulated and unrecognized by subjects at the outset of their interpretations, which may, as Gadamer has it, eventually be exposed

as deeply flawed through efforts to fuse their horizons with others whose lifeworlds differ significantly from their own. Even so, ideological presuppositions are often missed by hermeneutical efforts towards understanding across difference. That is the case, on Habermas' account, as such approaches as Gadamer defends are not equipped with an adequate reference system against which to identify and test suspicious meanings. More is needed. Specifically, Habermas argues, a better way to assess positions in the face of conflict as legitimate or otherwise calls for the development and application of a well-considered critical theory of society that is attentive to the mechanics of labour and of power dynamics, something that Gadamer's approach is not well suited to recognize.

Part 2

3.2.1 Lessons from Hermeneutics to the Critique of Ideology and Vice Versa

What impact do Habermas' criticisms have on Gadamer's position and vice versa? How are we to conceive of the relationship between reason and tradition in light of the aftermath of the encounter between Gadamer and Habermas?

To begin, I think it there is ample evidence to claim that Habermas interprets Gadamer's account too narrowly and in so doing fails to appreciate the robust role the latter already makes for reflection. Indeed, in claiming that on Gadamer's account "reflection could move only within the limits of the facticity of tradition," and thus that "[t]he act of recognition that is mediated through reflection would not at all have altered the fact that tradition as such remains the only ground of the validity of prejudices" (RGTM, 269), Habermas clearly demonstrates a failure to appreciate the dialogical nature of understanding Gadamer forwards. On this account, the interpreter charitably assumes

the completeness and meaningfulness of the text and works to understand it through a hermeneutic method of projection and elucidation; one's prejudices cast an initial (and possibly mistaken) meaning of the text, which, while granting one's own position as possibly faulty, is used as a bridgehead into understanding the text. Once a foothold is established on particular aspects of the text, new light is often shed on the meaning of the whole. The refurbished global interpretation that results may then be applied to particular aspects of the text, shedding further light on previously opaque meanings. Of course, though, this circle of projection and elucidation not only brings to light the subject matter of interpretation, but also challenges our interpretive prejudices as well; our initial projections are challenged and must be revised in light of the bridgehead and subsequent progress they allow us to make. Likewise, though, the prejudices of the text may be revised as well, as they are confronted by the meanings and projections of the interpreter.¹ There is thus a two-way give and take of projection and revision that leads us to an ultimate consensus of meaning.

Insofar as understanding involves the reflective transformation of the initial positions of both interpreter and text, it is evident that the "recognition mediated through reflection" is not enslaved by the "limits of the facticity of tradition," as we may be forced to revise the premises of our tradition in our efforts to appropriate and integrate the insights of our texts. To this extent, our prejudices are preconditions of interpretation, but not ultimately limiting constraints on it, as they may be dialectically negated in the process of give and take that is inextricable to wholehearted efforts at interpretation.

¹ This is literally true in cases where the text is another person or culture; it is metaphorically true in the case of actual literary texts, as the initial context of the generation of the text is discarded, and the meanings that the bare text may have are cultivated solely through the frame of reference that our own interests cast on them.

Thus, contrary to Habermas' portrayal, Gadamer does provide a robust role for reflection in his hermeneutics, and so refutes the charge that the authority that tradition exerts over us is epistemologically constraining. Does this also save Gadamer from Habermas' second objection? Is the role Gadamer provides for reason sufficient to pierce the veil of ideology? Perhaps, but in order for it to do so, Gadamer must also be able to show that language and culture are not a stage removed from the material structure of society, but actually penetrate it. In other words, Gadamer must be able to show that language is able to access the socio-material medium of ideology. If it can, then the hermeneutical method may be able to expose the interests that distort communication in a similar manner to how it is able to expose prejudices that lay buried in forestructures of understanding.

Not surprisingly, Gadamer claims precisely this. Language is not separated from labour and power in some unbridgeable sense, but is rather "a limitless medium which carries everything within it" (Mendelson 1979, 66; quoting Gadamer *PH*, 31). Thus, although the material conditions of society may constitute some sort of ontologically distinct realm from that of symbolically mediated linguistic reality, they nonetheless ultimately reach into language, and so are present and analyzable within it (Mendelson 1979, 66).

Unfortunately for Gadamer, though, the mere fact that the material conditions of society are reachable through language does not entail that hermeneutical methods are able to deconstruct and evaluate them. Hermeneutics, after all, is only capable of confronting and processing meanings. The material buttresses of ideology, though they

influence meanings, are nonetheless in some important sense beyond linguistic structures; they are material conditions after all, not simply symbolic ones (Mendelson 1979, 66).

At this point, then, we can see that Gadamer's hermeneutics provides a robust role to reflection and critique, but is not adequately equipped to deal with ideology. Are we to conclude that hermeneutics ought to be subsumed under the auspice of critical theory? Are we only capable of unmasking power structures and liberating communication by recourse to an objectively oriented supra-traditional theory of society? In a word, no. To see why, we must consider at least briefly the shortcomings Foucault is able to expose in Habermas' proposal.¹ In doing so, we will see that Foucault – although by no means a hermeneuticist – may be appropriated by Gadamer, thus permitting a critique of ideology, but one which carries itself out comfortably within the dialectic of tradition. The lessons Habermas teaches may be realized through a synthesis of ideas from Gadamer and Foucault.

3.2.2 Lessons from Foucault to Gadamer and Habermas

Although Foucault certainly would not object to the general aims of Habermas' proposal aims – unmasking power relations – he finds the particular method Habermas adopts to do so to be problematic. A central component of Habermas' proposal is his theory of communicative action, which strives at “clarifying the presuppositions of the rationality of processes of reaching understanding” (Flyvbjerg 2000, 3, citing Habermas 1985, 196). The general idea here is that by identifying the universal presuppositions of uniquely

¹ The work from Foucault appealed to herein includes general insights from engagement with work by and about or in engagement with Foucault (Foucault 1980; Foucault 1996; Gunder 1998; Prado 1992, 1995, 2006; Flyvbjerg 2000; Woermann 2012).

rational discourse, we will be able to identify and expunge all non-rational elements of discursive intercourse, and so allow our wills to be determined on the basis of free reflection alone. This project rests on a transcendental claim about the inextricability of reason from discourse aimed at achieving understanding. Since human society relies on coordinated action between individuals, rationality and mutual efforts towards understanding must be at least implicitly present in discourse aimed at communicative action. As Habermas notes,

In action oriented to reaching understanding, validity claims are 'always already' implicitly raised. These universal claims...are set in the general structures of possible communication. In these validity claims communication theory can locate a gentle, but obstinate, a never silent although seldom redeemed claim to reason, a claim that must be recognized de facto whenever and wherever there is to be consensual action. (1979, 97, cited by Flyvbjerg 2000, 4)

By unearthing the “general structures of possible communication,” we will be able to create a context for discourse that is governed solely by the “validity claims” of reason itself – namely, consensus induced by the force of rational arguments themselves. In such ideal discourse situations, then, the only operative power is reason itself.

As discussed by Michael Gunder (1998), in focusing on the preconditions of communicative discourse and aiming to alleviate abuses of power through the creation of an oppression-free discourse situation, Foucault presents Habermas’ project is doomed to fail. The essential charges are two-fold. First, the end of creating a domination free discourse situation is both naïve and impossible, as communication is always and inextricably vitiated by power (Gunder 1998, 10). Although a careful evaluation of this claim is beyond the scope of this chapter, for the present purposes, it is safe to note that Habermas’ project is deeply challenged by this claim, precisely because much of his work relies on the intellectual hope that we will eventually identify and establish the

various pragmatic presuppositions of purely rational discourse, as well as the concomitant claims needed to ensure the universal validity of the point Habermas wishes to draw from it – such as a species-wide competence in rationality (Flyvbjerg 2000, 9).

The second charge against Habermas is more tangible and clearly problematic. In focusing on abstract issues pertaining to the preconditions of rational discourse, Habermas overlooks the real and specific manners in which social conditions generate ideological distortions. Foucault's method, by contrast, directly engages the specific social conditions of power through his genealogical investigations of particular power-
"knowledge" contexts. By digging up the particular historical evolution of power-
"knowledge" schemes, and showing that the particular social forms that they engender are not natural or necessary, Foucault is able to make real progress in not only unmasking power, but understanding it as well. Indeed, for Foucault, understanding and unmasking are not entirely distinct; unmasking involves genealogical narration.

It is with this realization that I believe Gadamer may ally with Foucault to some extent, thus safeguarding his position from Habermas' critique vis-à-vis ideology. Although Foucault and Gadamer are engaged in quite different enterprises – as the genealogy of power in social structures does seem to be a step beyond achieving shared understandings in a fusion of forestructures of understanding – there nonetheless does seem to be a coherent place for Foucauldian genealogy within Gadamer's hermeneutics.

Since Foucault's exercises in deconstruction take place entirely within specific traditions and have no pretensions of stepping outside of or beyond the frameworks of understanding provided to us through tradition (as Habermas' project seem to at least aspire to), Foucault's genealogy and Gadamer's hermeneutics seem complementary.

Part 3

3.3 Towards *Realrationalität* (“Real Rationality,” “Practical Rationality”)¹

Despite the differences in their theories, Gadamer, Habermas, and Foucault are united in “solidarity on the Enlightenment ideal of moral freedom” and “have all devoted their philosophical work to the ‘patient labor giving form to our impatience for liberty’” (Kelly 1995, 235). The following considers their theories in relation to this emancipatory goal and demonstrates that each of these players offers the others (and us) valuable insights and warnings.

A reading of the application of Habermas’ communicative ethics in Iris Marion Young’s *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (1990) suggests that this theory holds much promise as a means towards emancipation. However, Young also offers persuasive arguments echoing those of Foucault and Gadamer to the effect that the potential efficacy of this theory depends on its emendation on several fronts. Most notably, to use an expression from Bent Flyvbjerg (2000), Habermas needs to get *realrationalität*. A significant impediment to moving towards his emancipatory objectives is his clinging to problematic aspects of Enlightenment rationalism, or what is taken as such in any case, though the charges laid are by no means features of Enlightenment philosophy at large. However the faults in question are taken, as rightfully noted by his opponents – even his most sympathetic interpreters – Habermas’ “formalism, idealism, and insensitivity to context” hinder the practicality of his work (Flyvbjerg 2000, 12).

Among the Enlightenment baggage (or, again, what is often taken as such) to be discarded by Habermas are “vestiges of a dichotomy between reason and effectivity [that]

¹ The term *realrationalität* – meaning “real rationality” / “practical rationality” – is from Bent Flyvbjerg (2000).

firmly separates discourse about feelings from discourse about norms” (Young 1990, 118), along with his “implicit commitment to a homogeneous public” (Young 1990, 7). The first of these problematic bags relies on a conception of ethics that is simply too narrow to be effective or complete. In addition to our status as reflective rational agents, we are also beings who are affected by music, art, love, interests, pain, and of course, much else besides. As Foucault is right to emphasize, affectivity is inextricably connected with our knowledge and often cashes out in ways that sustain unjust power differentials. To construct a theory of communicative ethics that inadequately recognizes the influence of our affectivity, as Habermas does, is to fail to pay heed to the integral role that power differentials play in our responses to, our understandings of, and our engagement with others. As unjust power dynamics fuel oppression, adequate attention to power – and efforts towards understanding power and its role in our lives and institutions –are vital for any ethical theory that is not merely a theoretical exercise but aims after a more just world.

For similar reasons, Habermas’ implicit commitment to a homogeneous public is also problematic. This commitment threatens to lead to a failure to recognize power differentials that exist between individuals and groups and influence their respective engagement (and whether they engage or are heard at all). Moreover, insofar as Habermas treats the public as homogeneous, his approach to communication may lead towards an unnecessary and unjust cultural imperialism and assimilation that fails to duly respect real differences that are masked and missed when people the world over are treated as more similar than they actually are. Thus, it is wise for Habermas to adopt ideas from Gadamer about respect for difference and otherness. Following this, it may

also be wise for him to reconsider his acceptance of a monolithic universal mode of reason that is expected to apply and to be recognized as sound by humans the world over. Here too, it seems he would be wise to incorporate elements of Gadamer's appreciation for our historicity and embeddedness within traditions. So doing can capture the *Dasein* that we are and yields a position better able to guard against imperialism.

It seems that until or unless Habermas is able to establish his conception of reason as Absolute, his stance leaves him bound, without adequate grounds, to privilege his preferred modes of reasoning in ways that may fail to treat others, and their quite different worldviews, with due respect. Having said this, it is also important to mediate between competing ethical claims in a way that, if possible, legitimately and authoritatively identifies oppressive thought and action and makes the illegitimacy of certain acts and practices universally knowable. While we are in a position to make significant emancipatory progress working within our own traditions and cultures, the question of how to determine and authoritatively legitimate ethical positions is of course a question we are not about to ever reach a final answer to, and has, as its sharpest blade, questions surrounding how we are to deal with significant and seemingly (and perhaps actually) intractable cross-cultural and political disagreements, including in relation to cases in which flexibility is merited and others in which a just response might instead call for efforts to coerce compliance. Heeding lessons from the past, we must be wary of purportedly definitive statements of ethics. Due wariness and caution do not preclude our ability to make strides toward the end goal of emancipation that Habermas also embraces. This real possibility needs to be respected, and an approach such as Gadamer's offers a

great deal of insight into how we might encourage changes that, to the best of our judgment, are indeed merited if not long overdue, with the means currently available.

Finally, as urged by Habermas' fondest supporters and opponents alike, it would be wise for him to include a notion of *phronesis* into his theory and likewise to pay more heed to the development of practical wisdom and the importance of cultivating the broader social and political structures that can help such efforts along. This would better prepare him to account for the complexity and variability of our moral and epistemological lives that cannot be adequately covered with an overly formalistic rule-based account of reason.

Through a constructive critique of Habermas' theory we have found reasons to praise Gadamer's position which is able to: respect otherness and diversity; account for varying contexts; incorporate our affectivity as well as our reason; and pay serious heed to our historical situatedness. This last point is particularly important for emancipatory ethics. As Sandra Lee Bartky rightly emphasizes in *Femininity and Domination*, anti-oppression theory and action has at its core the recognition that the current state of affairs is, indeed, historically effected, and could be otherwise:

Women have long lamented their condition, but a lament, pure and simple, need not be an expression of feminist consciousness. As long as their situation is apprehended as natural, inevitable, and inescapable, women's consciousness of themselves, no matter how alive to insult and inferiority, is not yet feminist consciousness. This consciousness. . . emerges only when there exists a genuine possibility for the partial or total liberation of women. This possibility is more than a mere accidental accompaniment of feminist consciousness; rather, feminist consciousness is the apprehension of that possibility. The very *meaning* of what the feminist apprehends is illuminated by the light of what ought to be. The given situation is first understood in terms of a state of affairs in which what is given would be negated and radically transformed. To say that feminist consciousness is the experience in a certain way of certain specific contradictions in the social order is to say that the feminist apprehends certain features of social reality as

intolerable, as to be rejected in behalf of a transforming project for the future.
(1990, 14)

While Bartky is focused on the oppression of women in the above passage, the reasoning holds for the recognition of other forms of oppression as well. The past century has seen significant advancement towards the amelioration of oppression tied to class, race, sexuality, disability, age, citizenship status, species, even if there is still a long way to go. The list of categories of oppressed groups continues to grow along with often fiery debates about what does and does not count as genuine oppression and how we are to respond in situations in which rights claims of different groups are at each other's throats as it were, as with ongoing debates about the relationship between women's rights and trans rights.

Similarly, by encouraging us to fuse with horizons other than our own and to be open to the possibility that some of our prejudices and values may be (partially or even largely) illegitimate and in need of change, Gadamerian dialogue can encourage ethical growth and progress by "expos[ing] destructive power relations and ideologies" and providing "a ground of understanding from which to evaluate our situation and role as individual historical actors, that is, to decide to decide whether we act to save or dissolve elements of our individual and cultural tradition" (Templeton 1998, 286-7).

There are, however, shortcomings with the ability of Gadamer's position to arrive at the emancipatory goal that he, as with Habermas, claims as the end of his theorizing. First, the phenomenology of understanding that is the focus of Gadamer's work is just that. While it offers insights that we can use as individuals to expand our own horizons, it falls short of explaining how this ability can become incorporated into a broader ethical

goal of transformation. Again, in light of his practical ambitions, it would be wise for Gadamer to attempt to grapple with such questions as follows: Do we have reason to believe that people who claim some allegiance to the sorts of positions that he advocates are actually leading lives that are more aligned with justice and better able to recognize, while also more effectively working towards remedying oppression than is common among their fellow citizens at large or, say, among advocates who pay no heed at all to such matters as – and have never heard about, and do not care the slightest about – the Habermas-Gadamer debate?¹ How does his theory relate to the vast majority of people who – cynically, but I think realistically, speaking – are not philosophically minded and show little interest in re-thinking their prejudices and horizons, let alone reading his tome

¹ Consider for example the following concerns about academics who talk the talk but do not really or at least anywhere near adequately walk the walk as it were, raised by Cornel West in *The American Evasion of Philosophy*. I quote with surrounding context as I believe that context is worth including as it suggests that something significantly more radical than writing books that few read may be called for (as also stressed by Hilary Putnam in “Liberalism, Radicalism and Contemporary ‘Unrest’” (1970). Indeed, West calls attention to the broader contexts in which academic work of a (purportedly) anti-oppression vein is being produced:

This book is principally motivated by my own disenchantment with intellectual life in America and my own demoralization regarding the political and cultural state of the country. For example, I am disturbed by the transformation of highly intelligent liberal intellectuals into tendentious neoconservatives owing to crude ethnic identity-based allegiances and vulgar neonationalist sentiments. I am disappointed with the professional incorporation of former New Left activists who now often thrive on a self-serving careerism while espousing rhetorics of oppositional politics of little seriousness and integrity. More important, I am depressed about the concrete nihilism in working-class and underclass American communities – the pervasive drug addition, suicides, alcoholism, male violence against women, white violence against black, yellow, and brown people, and the black criminality against others, especially other black people. I have written this text convinced that a thorough reexamination of American pragmatism, stripping it of its myths, caricatures, and stereotypes and viewing it as a component of a new and novel form of indigenous American oppositional thought and action, may be a first step toward fundamental change and transformation in America and the world. Like Raymond Williams’ *Culture and Society* and Fredric Jameson’s *Marxism and Form*, this book is, among other things, a political act.

I write as one who intends to deepen and enrich American pragmatism while bringing trenchant critique to bear on it. I consider myself deeply shaped by American civilization, but not fully a part of it. I am convinced that the best of the American pragmatist tradition is the best America has to offer itself and the world, yet I am willing to concede that this best may not be good enough given the depths of the international and domestic crises we now face. But though this slim and slight possibility may make my efforts no more than an impotent moral gesture, nonetheless, in the heat of battle, we have no other choice but to fight” (1989, 7-8).

on the matter or even an attempt at a synopsis of his core ideas? How (if at all) can we engage with these individuals in an ethically productive way? Should we go out and about and attempt interventions of the sort done by Jacque Fresco that was discussed above? – which, to be clear, is not to suggest that I take all wrongs that we might aim to correct as on a par with allegiance to the KKK.

In response to such questions, I think Gadamer can appeal to the positive elements of Habermas' communicative ethics. As with Habermas, so too it seems that Gadamer would be wise to open his theory in ways that would better incorporate Foucault's insights about the need to pay heed to the role of power differentials when considering our lifeworlds and our ways of interpreting ourselves and others (cf. Moulton 1983 [2014]). As Alice Templeton writes,

What Gadamer calls a “fusion of horizons” is often a diffusion of female horizons, a pretense to dialogue that systematically oppresses women; and the tradition whose continuity he finally affirms is rife with sexism and exclusiveness. (1998, 288)

So too is it with the horizons of other individuals who are, in ways tied to injustices, lacking in power and opportunities for flourishing in ways that are kept in place by unjust conditions. In order for a plurality of voices to be heard, the voices require an audience and a forum in which they feel comfortable and in which what they have to say is given a respectful hearing. If we are really serious about working towards ameliorating oppression, it is necessary to be attentive to how rhetoric and power structures and dynamic tend to function in ways that enable those who are already in socially dominant position to hold discursive control and to respond in ways that are silencing or

disparaging towards the voices of those who are in disadvantageous positions (Young 1990).

It may be that popular views that take Foucault as a relativist are misconstruals of his position. Whatever Foucault's actual views, we may improve upon the sorts of relativistic positions often associated with him by supplementing such views with a Gadamerian appreciation that through charitable hermeneutical dialogues with others, we may not merely shift power dynamics towards whatever position we may ourselves prefer, but may successfully move closer towards insights into truths that are real and that are also of significant consequence. Even if such truths are recognized as bearing heavily on context, acknowledgment and considerations of such truths can help to correct for unwarranted relativism and cynicism. Whatever the extent of its faults, Foucault's theory about power does incorporate many of the insights mentioned above and includes some important considerations that are not adequately covered by Gadamer or Habermas. The study of history – as with Foucault's genealogical studies – can do a lot to show that ethical progress is not always (and is perhaps not even often) primarily brought about by dialogical engagement or by efforts towards rational consensus. Often people's views and conduct change for the better in ways that are predominantly a result of going along with improved social and cultural norms rather than as a result of their own reasoned or (otherwise) reflective awakening to some injustice or bigotry. There are also such effective modes to progress (if inadequate on their own) as political activism, commercial boycotts, and power struggles (Flyvbjerg 2000, 21). Advocacy efforts often push forward emancipatory projects in ways that make use of simplified slogans and propagandistic

strategies that focus far more on changing affect than on using reasoned discourse or heart-to-heart discussions with one individual at a time to bring about change.

As stressed above, the core “value of Foucault’s approach,” to which Gadamer and Habermas pay inadequate heed, “is his emphasis on the “dynamics of power” (Flyvbjerg 2000, 27). It would be difficult to overestimate the importance of the political and ethical insights that could be gained by arriving at a well-informed and sophisticated understanding of power and its role in our lives and institutions.

Chapter 4 Aristotle’s “Exhaustive” Account of the Character Excellences

Let us take up the several excellences . . . and say which they are and what sort of things they are concerned with and how they are concerned with them; at the same time it will become plain how many they are.

—Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (1115a4-5)

Introduction

What is the scope of *ethikē aretē* – that is, “character excellence” or “moral virtue” – in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* (*NE*)? Surprisingly, despite the vast research on this work, and the *Ethics*’ foundational role in contemporary virtue ethics, the just-asked question has been largely ignored. The cause of the inattention given to ascertain Aristotle’s views regarding the scope of character excellence is difficult to ascertain, but one significant contributor to it may be the perhaps even widespread acceptance of a position I refer to as the “exhaustive thesis.”¹ According to this position, Aristotle limits the scope of character excellence to that of the specific set of excellences (or virtues) that he details in Books III.6 through V of the *Nicomachean Ethics*: bravery, temperance, generosity, and so on. Though there are scholars who deny or question the exhaustive thesis,² so far as I have seen, none of them attempt a serious and sustained inquiry into scope of character excellence, as envisaged by Aristotle.

¹ The exhaustive thesis has been advanced by W.F.R. Hardie (1968), Alasdair MacIntyre (1984), Francis Sparshott (1994), Richard Kraut (1991), Susan D. Collins (1999), William A. Welton and Ronald Polansky (1995), and Stephen Leighton, July 2001, personal correspondence, though after reading an earlier version of this paper, Leighton indicated (in the fall of 2006) that whatever his earlier stance, as things then stood, he did not have a settled position either in favour of or against the exhaustive thesis.

² Non-exhaustive theorists include Sarah Broadie (2002), Ioannis Evrigenis (1999), Peter Losin (1987), David Bostock (2000), and Mark Young (2005).

After providing a brief background on Aristotle's account of character excellence, this chapter presents and critiques defenses of the exhaustive thesis, with the aim of showing that there is no good reason to attribute the exhaustive thesis to Aristotle. Rather, there are clear indications of (unnamed) virtues that Aristotle clearly recognizes that cannot be accounted for by the exhaustive thesis.

After finding significant faults with the exhaustive thesis and rejecting it as mistaken, a sketch is offered describing how progress might be made towards ascertaining Aristotle's views regarding the scope of character excellence. While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to offer a thorough application of the approach sketched, preliminary applications are made that lend reasons to take Aristotle as holding what I refer to as "the ubiquity thesis." Whereas the exhaustive thesis leaves much of our waking lives outside the scope of character excellence, the ubiquity thesis takes adult humans (with rare exceptions) as either expressing or failing to express excellence of character throughout our waking lives, save for rare exceptions such as seizures or severe forms of senility.

By calling attention to the paucity of attention given to Aristotle's views regarding the scope of character excellence, I may have identified a significant gap in contemporary Aristotelian scholarship. The chapter ends with a consideration of what may be gained by working towards careful assessments of the extent to which Aristotle takes character (good, bad, or mixed) as permeating our lives and as demanding vastly more of us than at all commonly expected even among people taken as today's leading experts in moral and political philosophy. I conclude that gaining clarity on Aristotle's conception of the scope of character excellence may help to shed light not only on

Aristotle's conception of character, but also on his views regarding education, ethics, and philosophy, all of which, in turn, may help us to reconsider and work towards better considered views, expectations, and practices regarding those same (heavily overlapping) domains.

4.1 Background

Aristotle argues that a person with character excellence has well entrenched dispositions to feel and act in accordance with sound practical reasoning (*orthos logos*) directed at the good, and as would be done by a *phronimos*, that is, a person of practical wisdom.

To help us determine which dispositions accord with right reasoning (1104a10), Aristotle presents his doctrine of the mean (II.6–7). According to this, it is the nature (*phusis*) of character excellence to be in an intermediate position between extremes of deficiency and excess, as called for by the context of its actualization. For example, good temper is a mean between spiritlessness and irascibility. A person with this excellence responds in a way that fits the provocation, neither minimizing the insult nor taking it for more than it is worth.

After defining character excellence, Aristotle details several character triads, that is, excellences and their respective faults, and shows how the doctrine of the mean applies in each case (III.4–V). His account of each excellence typically begins with a demarcation of its scope, which he often proceeds to narrow, and significantly so. For example, the scope of bravery is fear and confidence, and it is limited to cases in which one faces death or severe wounds while engaging in a noble act.

4.2 The Exhaustive Thesis and “Evidence” in Favour of It

Nothing in Aristotle’s account of character excellence suggests that it is only meant to apply to the dispositions that fall under the triads that he explicitly details. “But, in fact, [and] notoriously,” exclaims Francis Sparshott, following what may be the prevailing interpretation, “[Aristotle] insists on there being a definite, systematically established enumeration [and] does not even conceive of [it] as unfinished business to be tidied up at some future date” (1994, 140).

This exhaustive thesis is often assumed without defense. Those who do aim to defend it point almost exclusively to a single passage of the *Ethics*, and particularly the final clause of it, which has been set as a motto for this essay, and which is (again) as follows:

Let us take up the several excellences . . . and say which they are and what sort of things they are concerned with and how they are concerned with them; at the same time it will become plain how many they are. (*NE*, 1115a4-5)

Hardie refers to the above passage as “Aristotle’s claim to exhaustiveness” (1968, 117). To him, and others who read the text in this way, when Aristotle says that his discussion will reveal how many excellences there are, he means that there are exactly as many excellences as he details (cf. Collins 1999, 132). If this is Aristotle’s intent, he proceeds in ways that render his list incoherent and incomplete. To know how many excellences he discusses one would have to wade through the text and count them, even though there is no point in doing this; the precise number of excellences covered is not important to anything he says (cf. Broadie 2002, 22).

I suspect that the above “how many they are” passage is often read as done by Hardie and Sparshott, and without a second glance, as though its meaning is singular and self-evident.³ But, as Sarah Broadie indicates, the passage can also be read as meaning “simply that we shall see what a lot [of excellences] there are, as distinct from just one ([a la] Socrates), or four ([as found in] the *Republic*)” (2002, 22).¹ I take this to be the most sensible interpretation. It is compatible with the exhaustive thesis,² but does not guarantee it.

Sparshott points to a second passage in defense of the exhaustive position (1994, 140). The passage occurs after Aristotle’s discussion of the doctrine of the mean and immediately before he details various excellences; it is the final sentence of the passage in question, quoted below, that Sparshott interprets as clear evidence of Aristotle holding an exhaustive account of the scope of character excellence. The prior sentences are included for context.

We must . . . not only make this general statement [i.e., about the doctrine of the mean], but also apply it to the individual facts. For among statements about conduct those which are general apply more widely, but those which are particular are more genuine, since conduct has to do with individual cases, and our statements must harmonize with the facts in these cases. We may take these cases from our table [of the character triads]. (1107a29-33)

Though the *Ethics* does not contain a table of character triads, Aristotle is most likely pointing to a simple table of excellences and faults as is found in the *Eudemian Ethics* (*EE*, 1220b3-1221a13).

¹ For Socrates, this is wisdom; for Plato, wisdom, justice, bravery, and temperance.

² Given this compatibility, I wonder if Broadie misses the importance of the claim that she is making. Though she indicates that Aristotle does not insist that the set he offers is comprehensive (2000, 22-23), she does not delve into a deeper consideration of his account of the scope of character excellence.

As with the “how many they are” passage, the above passage is consistent with but does not entail the exhaustive thesis. Aristotle’s claim to show “how [the doctrine of the mean] fits the particular cases” need not be taken as suggesting that he intends to show how it fits all possible cases. As he notes, we should expect the general discussion to have “a wider application” than we can expect to find while looking at the particulars.

As mentioned above, it is the last sentence of the passage under discussion – namely, that “We may take these cases from our table” – that Sparshott takes as indicative of exhaustiveness (1994, 140). Beyond saying that pointing to the chart in this way “sounds very specific indeed” (140), Sparshott does not explain why he takes Aristotle’s plotting of excellences into a chart (or his use of such a chart) as indicative of exhaustiveness, and I have no idea of what such a justification would be. As noted above, Aristotle includes such a chart in the *Eudemian Ethics* (*EE*, 1220b3-1221a13). In this text, as well as in the *Rhetoric* (*Rhet.*), he unambiguously indicates that he is describing various excellences “by way of illustration” (*EE*, 1220b36-7; *Rhet.*, 1366a34).¹ I take him to be doing the same in the *Nicomachean Ethics* as well.

Those who still opt to accept the exhaustive thesis must explain how Aristotle determines such a precise set of excellences and why his account of character excellence does not extend beyond it. Attempts to do this are made by Kraut (1991, 342-343), MacIntyre (1984, 158-159), and Francis Sparshott (1994). I will not review these accounts, save to say that none of these theorists, or others who accept the exhaustive

¹ I owe this use of the *Eudemian Ethics* to Ioannis Evrigenis (1999, 401).

thesis, seem to notice that there are a multitude of dispositions that fit Aristotle's account of character excellence but are, on their position, excluded from its scope.

4.3 Gaps in Aristotle's "Exhaustive" Account of Character Excellences

If the exhaustive thesis is correct, the following eight spheres of human experience are, on Aristotle's account, excluded from the realm of character excellence, except when, and to the extent that, they overlap with the character excellences (and associated triads) he explicitly charts.

1. Self-care and self-presentation. Including fatigue and sleep, exercise, personal grooming, and most aspects of a person's decorum.
2. General life management. For example, dispositions relating to work, errands, time, and the care and management of subordinates and possessions.
3. Most physical pains and discomforts. Including nearly all of the physical pains, minor or major, that are humanly sufferable.
4. Most emotional pains. For example, pity, grief, sorrow, envy, and most cases of disgust, anxiety, and concern for one's self and for others (e.g., in cases of illness and misfortune).
5. Temperament. For example, whether we are realistic, calm, patient,

attentive, persistent, flexible, trusting, or skeptical.

6. Most emotional and many physical pleasures, such as dispositions relating to comfort, general well-being, worldliness, physical activity, camaraderie, and all manner of non-carnal delights, including the enjoyment of nature, games, music, literature, and impressive architecture.
7. Relationships with loved ones. Including *philia* (love for one's friends), *storge* (familial love), and more generally, relationships with friends and family, and related dispositions, e.g., whether one is authoritative, devoted, thoughtful, protective, supportive, and empathetic.
8. Social events, religion, and customs. Including dispositions that relate to: religion and religious traditions; major events such as the Olympic games; rituals surrounding death and the remembrance of loved ones; and the giving and receiving of hospitality (*xenia*).

Contrary to the exhaustive thesis, there is a lot of evidence that suggests that Aristotle does or would accept the existence of excellences and faults pertaining to the above (and other) spheres of life. Consider, for example, that he identifies excellence in household management as part of practical wisdom (*NE*, 1140b11; *NE*, 1142a9-10; cf. *Pol.*, I.3-13), thus implying that relevant dispositions are within the scope of one's character status.

Moreover, he faults people for: leading slack and careless lives (*NE*, 1113b30-1114a6), for being “ugly [not] by nature, . . . [but] “owing to want of exercise and care” (*NE*, 1114a23-26), and for being “soft and a slave to comfort, . . . as with the person who lets his cloak trail on the ground so as not to be troubled by the pain of lifting it” (*NE*, 1150b2-4). He disparages sensitivity to heat and cold (*NE*, 1148a5-11) and encourages “exposing babies to cold from their earliest years” reasoning that “human nature should be early habituated to endure all which by habit it can be made to endure” (*Pol.*, VII, cf. *NE*, 1148a5-11; *Rhet.*, 1384a1ff).

In the *Politics*, Aristotle discusses relaxation and leisure at length, stressing its role as “the first principle of all action” (*Pol.*, VIII.3). Like a medicine, he argues, relaxation helps us recover from work and return to it at our best (*Pol.*, VIII.3; *NE* 1176b33-1177a1; cf. *NE*, 1128b4). Though humour is not a major concern of Aristotle’s in the just-indicated passages, and at times given no more attention than to note that certain comedies can be harmful to young people (Collins 1999, 147), the only charted excellence he links to this realm of life is ready wit, a mean between boorishness and buffoonery (*NE*, 1128a2-3).

It seems clear that Aristotle would accept far more virtues (named and unnamed) in relation to leisure and relaxation than those that he explicitly indicates. In both the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Politics*, Aristotle identifies the fault of shunning work in favour of amusements (*Pol.*, 1339b15-18; *NE*, 1150b17-19). This implies the existence of an excellence that enables a person to balance work and relaxation, favouring the former without neglecting the latter. Aristotle argues that since leisure is a part of life, and an important one at that, a proper education must include the

development of dispositions that will allow the child, once an adult, to enjoy dignified leisurely activities (*Pol.*, VIII.5). That being the case, he advises that children should learn how to play music so that they can properly delight in music when they are older (*Pol.*, VIII.5). This fits with his claim in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that there is a proper way to appreciate music, which is neither excessive nor deficient (1118a3-9).¹

On Aristotle's view, learning to love music properly is done at an initial cost, as when it comes to the sustained effort that is required week after week and year after year, including at times when one may not feel the slightest inclination to practice music, so that "learning is no amusement, but is accompanied with pain" (*Pol.*, 1339a29). Whether his views are inadequately accounting for human variation or other possible pedagogical approaches that may be just as effective or more without being painful along the way, Aristotle makes a similar claim in his *Rhetorica*, purporting that "all acts of concentration, strong effort, and strain are necessarily painful; they all involve compulsion and force, unless we are accustomed to them" (1370a5-18).

Given this "sustained learning towards difficult tasks is initially painful" theory on human nature and human development, Aristotle must encourage the development of dispositions that correct for what (whether rightly) he takes as our in-built aversions to exercising our minds and bodies towards difficult pursuits that required sustained and prolonged effort so that eventually we are able to continue on in ways that are no longer painful and have become habitual and thus as he puts it, approvingly quoting

¹ In the passage at hand, Aristotle excludes various pleasures from the scope of temperance, such as those relating to the theatre, plays, smells, and beautiful sights, but he indicates that we can be rightly disposed in relation to them as well.

the poet, Evenus, as our second nature: “I say that habit’s but a long practice, friend, / And this becomes [one’s] nature in the end” (*NE*, 1152a31–32).

Aristotle takes the establishment of habits aligned with what is truly in our best interests as a task that deals with appetites (*epithumia*) that we ought to cultivate (*NE*, 1111a32). He faults people for failing to be appropriately attentive in ways that are tied to treating others with due respect, as in the case of not bothering to put in the effort required to learn people’s names (*Rhet.*, 1379b35–38). Casting a net far more broadly, he indicates that we ought to be ashamed if, through our own “badness of character,” we are less educated than our peers and shun hardships that they, and those who are (in some ways, at least) weaker than us, are willing to accept (*Rhet.*, 1383b26–1384a20). On Aristotle’s account, then, without the development of positive dispositions and accompanying appetites in relation to exertion, we are unlikely to develop the capacity to lead truly excellence lives. When talking with his students about the sorts of lives they ought to pursue, and about the extent of effort that is appropriate for that task, Aristotle presents the mean, in that case, as an extreme.¹ What is apt when it comes to “what is greatest and most noble,” he says, in Book X of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, is to tell them that “we must, so far as we can, make ourselves immortal, and strain every nerve to live in accordance with the best thing in us; for even if it be small in bulk, much more does it in power and worth surpass everything” (*NE*, 1166b27–28, *NE*, 1177b32–1178a2).² Without having, from one’s earlier years onwards, cultivated

¹ Cf. his claim that the mean is an “extreme in the order of excellence and of the good in relation to us” (*NE*, 1107a8).

² There is a well-known debate about how Aristotle can simultaneously take contemplation as distinctive to humans while also portraying contemplation as an activity shared with the gods. Bryan C. Reece offers a resolution that I find compelling in “Aristotle on Divine and Human Contemplation” (2020).

beneficial habits towards self-discipline, we are clearly, on Aristotle's account, apt to live lazy and stunted and ill-governed lives and to be pained by much of what it is in our best interests, and that of the *polis* of which we are parts, for us to do and to be.¹

4.4 Variations of the Exhaustive Thesis

I've set out to show that there is little reason to accept the exhaustive thesis and that it yields limitations on the scope of character excellence that are arbitrary and that Aristotle does not accept. One may agree with the gist of this but aim to save the exhaustive thesis by defending a variation of it, according to which each of the excellences, or several of them, are far broader than I'm taking them to be. Still, the mileage of this approach is limited. I see no way for it to bridge several areas of life that seem relevant to character status. For example, none of the charted excellences can be extended to include most of the physical pains that are humanly sufferable. Which of them can plausibly be taken as accounting for how a *phronimos* would cope with a toothache or with stepping on a nail?² Similarly, none of the excellences can be

¹ “[T]he good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim. . . . If, then, there is some end of the things we do, . . . [w]ill not the knowledge of it, then, have a great influence on life? Shall we not, like archers who have a mark to aim at, be more likely to hit upon what is right? If so, we must try, in outline at least, to determine what it is, and of which of the sciences or capacities it is the object. It would seem to belong to the most authoritative art and that which is most truly the master art. And politics appears to be of this nature; for it is this that ordains which of the sciences should be studied in a state, and which each class of citizens should learn and up to what point they should learn them; and we see even the most highly esteemed of capacities to fall under this, e.g. strategy, economics, rhetoric; now, since politics uses the rest of the sciences, and since, again, it legislates as to what we are to do and what we are to abstain from, the end of this science must include those of the others, so that this end must be the good for man. For even if the end is the same for a single man and for a state, that of the state seems at all events something greater and more complete whether to attain or to preserve; though it is worth while to attain the end merely for one man, it is finer and more godlike to attain it for a nation or for city-states. These, then, are the ends at which our inquiry aims, since it is political science, in one sense of that term.” (*NE*, I.1-2)

² We might instead add an excellence that might be referred to as hardiness and is a mean between weakness and indifference to pain. Cf.: “But it is difficult to get from youth up a right training for virtue if one has not been brought up under right laws; for to live temperately and hardily is not pleasant to most

stretched to aptly cover such emotional pains as the death of a loved one or most other sad events and misfortunes.¹

It may be countered that, beyond the charted triads, there may be additional dispositions that are proper or improper to a *phronimos*, but that are not meant to be taken as excellences – at least not in the focal sense of the term (Leighton, personal communication). Rather, there may be a variety of dispositions that only count as excellences “by extension of the word” (*NE*, 1115a15) or “in virtue of similarity” (*NE*, 1115a19) with those that are charted.² One may point out, e.g., that in his account of bravery, Aristotle indicates that we can expect a brave person to be well disposed in relation to several dispositions that fall outside the proper scope of bravery, such as coping with minor frights or with a tragic death at sea. How are we to make sense of this?

William Welton and Ronald Polansky explain the narrow scope of Aristotle’s excellences as a practical maneuver (1995). They refer to the excellences he presents as “major test” cases that are designed to cover the most important aspects of political and practical life (1995, 98). Aristotle’s idea, as they see it, is that if we can live up to these excellences, we can be sure to do well in all of the situations we experience (1995, 98).

If this were the case, why would Aristotle include generosity and proper ambitiousness as, respectively, minor excellences in relation to magnificence and

people, especially when they are young. For this reason their nurture and occupations should be fixed by law; for they will not be painful when they have become customary.” (*NE*, 1179b30-35)

¹ Consider, for instance, that Aristotle presents the *phronimos* as someone who will “bear . . . with resignation many great misfortunes, not through insensibility to pain but through nobility and greatness of soul” (*NE* 1100b34; cf. *NE* 1124a14-15). I do not see how it could be possible for the virtues he explicitly names to adequately cover the character excellences required to bear all of life’s major hardships well.

² My inclusion of these passages is owed to Byron Stoyles who reviewed an earlier version of this paper.

pride?¹ As with the case of bravery, Aristotle notes that a magnificent person will do well in situations similar to, but less important than, those covered by its proper scope. But, in opposition to this “major test case” theory, he identifies the relevant mean dispositions as excellences in their own right (*NE*, 1122a29). Nowhere does he suggest that a disposition must pertain to especially important – or even important – matters to count as an excellence. On the contrary, he describes generosity and proper ambitiousness as concerned with “middling and unimportant objects” (*NE*, 1125b5-6).

Without being hopelessly arbitrary, I can see no way for Aristotle to count the emotions and actions covered by the charted triads as pertinent to the proper scope of character excellence while denying this status to others that fit his theory just as well, e.g., those in relation to fatigue, decorum, love, boredom, and grief. Fortunately, I do not believe that there is any reason to accuse him of this arbitrariness.

4.5 How Might We Ascertain Aristotle’s Views on the Scope of Character Excellence?

As noted earlier, there are theorists who question or deny the exhaustive thesis. They include Sarah Broadie (2002), Ioannis Evrigenis (1999), Peter Losin (1987), and David Bostock (2000). It is common for these theorists to use sweeping language so that the doctrine of the mean, and hence character status, is said to apply “on each occasion” (Bostock 2000, 41; Urmson 1991, 32, cf. Broadie 2002, 23), and similarly, in relation

¹ It is unclear whether Welton and Polansky think the dispositions outside the proper scope of the charted triads count as excellences and faults in their own right, or as concomitants, or perhaps reflections, of them (cf. Collins 1999, 140). Since they take the “panoply of excellences of character to cover all the vital areas of political or practical life” (1995, 98), it does seem that they accept the exhaustive thesis, which would explain why they are eager to stretch the scope of the charted triads.

to “every situation that arises and awaits our response” (Evrigenis 1999, 409). These expansive claims do not come from nowhere. Aristotle makes several of them himself, e.g., in the unqualified claim that it is the nature of character excellence to “aim at what is intermediate in emotions and in actions” (*NE*, 1109a23; cf. *NE*, 1106b17-28), and in the qualified claim that the *phronimos* will manage to do this in all circumstances (*NE* 1113a34; cf. *NE*, 1106b18-24, *NE* 1108a15; *NE*, 1109a24-25, *NE*, 1178a11-14). Of course, exhaustive theorists have read the *Ethics*. They show no indications of taking such sweeping language as posing a problem to their position, and can be found using and quoting similar statements (e.g., Sparshott 1994, 136). Since Aristotle’s language can be interpreted so loosely, and since non-exhaustive theorists do not explain how they are taking it, it is not clear what Evrigenis, Bostock, Broadie, and others take the scope of character status to be. Nor is it clear that they have given much thought to this question or to the prospects of arriving at a worthwhile answer to it.

A variety of strategies can be used to arrive at a determination of what Aristotle took the scope of character excellence to be. The main approach that makes sense to me is to examine the key concepts that bear on his account of character excellence,¹ identify the scope of each, and consider the resultant limitations holistically and in relation to other pertinent aspects of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* and of his other works. To do this, a reasonable place to start is with Aristotle’s definition of character excellence. Aristotle defines character excellence as:

¹ For example, disposition (*hexis*), passions (*pathē*), action (*praxis*), pleasure (*hêdonê*) and pain (*lupê*), choice (*prohairesis*), mean (*mesotês*), right reasoning (*orthos logos*), practical wisdom (*phronesis*), person of practical wisdom (*phronimos*), function (*ergon*), happiness or flourishing (*eudaimonia*), praise (*epainetos*), and shame (*aidôs*).

a disposition [*hexis*] concerned with choice [*prohairesis*], lying in a mean [*mesotēs*], i.e. the mean relative to us, this being determined by a rational principle [*orthos logos*], and by that principle by which the person of practical wisdom [*phronesis*] would determine it. (1107a1-3)

Going through each of the key concepts in this definition, I believe that we will arrive at a better understanding of Aristotle's theory as a whole, and of the ways in which its various elements impose limitations on the scope of character status. For example, we might start with an analysis of what he means by a disposition and what we can glean from this concept, and his application of it, in relation to character status. Among the questions we might ask are the following. Under which conditions can a disposition be formed? Are the dispositions of a person who is well brought up broad enough so that she can actualize character excellence even when faced with rare and unprecedented events? And finally, are all our dispositions relevant to character status?

After a detailed and focused examination of the key concepts in Aristotle's definition of character excellence, as well as of other pertinent concepts, such as function, eudaimonia, praise, shame, and voluntariness, we can look at how the resultant limitations bear on character status and, I believe, arrive at a solid appreciation of Aristotle's conception of its scope. The resultant account can then be weighed against other factors to check for plausibility and for further supports or reasons to doubt the conclusions reached. We might, for example, weigh the conclusions against an account of how pervasive the scope of character excellence was thought to be by Socrates, Plato, and other Ancient Athenians, and likewise, against

the scope of ethics that Aristotle's students would most likely have expected him to defend.

4.6 The Ubiquity Thesis

Clearly, I do not have the time to pursue such an investigation as sketched in the above section here, but I think it's worthwhile to offer my hypothesis of the end results of such an investigation. What I expect it to yield is a position that I refer to as "the ubiquity thesis." According to this position, *ethikē aretē* applies throughout our waking lives so that, with few exceptions, whatever we are doing – be it brushing our teeth, walking down the street, or thinking immutable thoughts – we are manifesting character status.

This may seem implausible, but is it? Aside from obvious exceptions, such as being in the throes of a major seizure or otherwise acting involuntarily, I find it difficult to think of a situation in which there is no possibility for an excellence or fault of character. In an attempt to do this, Stephen Leighton suggests the case of an academic who is writing a letter while listening to and enjoying classical music (personal communications, 2001). If we dive into the contextual factors relevant to this situation, we find a variety of dispositions that are, or at least seem to be, relevant to character status. The scholar may be poised and dignified or slouched and picking at his nose on and on until it bleeds; he may be tidy and presentable, or unkempt, with matted hair and filthy clothes. He may be comfortable or continually readjusting himself ever distracted by matters (like even slight temperature shifts). He may be spending time well or neglecting far more important matters that he ought to be paying heed to. He may be calm and pleasant for others he lives with or he may be grouchy

and hostile. He may be confident about what he is writing or anxious, tentative, and biting his nails. His chosen environment may be well arranged and set up in such a way that is conducive to excellent work, or it may be haphazardly arranged, disorganized, aesthetically depressing or even repugnant and an impediment to his success (both at the present time and onwards into the future). His mind may be focused and clear or distracted and struggling to concentrate, which may be the case as a result of staying up too late for lack of due self-control the night before and as a result, being in a groggy and fatigued state. He may be striving for excellence or deterred by the effort required to do so especially if some illness or hardship might have degraded good habits that at an earlier time in his life he had managed to cultivate. And so on and so forth there are a multitude of ways in which Leighton's example of an academic listening to and enjoying classical music may be expressing, or failing to express, or expressing the very opposite of, character excellence.

I see no reason why Aristotle would exclude any of these examples from the realm of character status. Though this position may come as a surprise to contemporary readers of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, I think it fits well with what Aristotle's students would have expected and even taken for granted, and with his claim that after seeing how to apply the doctrine of the mean, it would be plain to them how many excellences there are. I think they would have seen that he intends for there to be a multitude of excellences, many unnamed and unidentified.

A far broader account of the scope of character excellences than aligns with the exhaustive thesis appears, for instance, in *On Virtues and Vices* (Aristotle, *VV*), which I quote at length below, and which is often included in compilations of

Aristotle's work, as in that just cited, though is also claimed by some to be more accurately taken as a work written by a Peripatetic from the first century BCE (Rackham 1935, 486). The material in question offers a fairly detailed perspective of the scope of character excellence as conceived by Aristotle or by someone who has been taken as Aristotle, and whose position is from within (or at least far closer to) Aristotle's world, as it were, than are contemporary positions. The scope of character excellence presented in it is extremely far-ranging and while not taken here as anything like certain proof that the ubiquity thesis can be justifiably attributed to Aristotle, it offers further indications that the exhaustive thesis may be severely at odds with a position that Aristotle would plausibly have held, and provides some further indications for considering the ubiquity thesis as possibly far closer to the sort of position that Aristotle is apt to have held in relation to the scope of character excellence. Here is the passage in question:

It belongs to wisdom to take counsel, to judge the goods and evils and all the things in life that are desirable and to be avoided, to use all the available goods finely, to behave rightly in society, to observe due occasions, to employ both speech and action with sagacity, to have expert knowledge of all things that are useful. Memory and experience and acuteness are each of them either a consequence or a concomitant of wisdom. . . . To Gentleness . . . [belongs] tranquillity and stability in the spirit. . . . Courage is accompanied by confidence and bravery and daring, and also by perseverance and endurance. . . . To sobriety of mind it belongs not to value highly bodily pleasures and enjoyments, not to be covetous of every enjoyable pleasure, to fear disorder, and to live an orderly life in small things and great alike. Sobriety of mind is accompanied by orderliness, regularity, modesty, caution. . . . First among the claims of righteousness are our duties to the gods, then our duties to the spirits, then those to country and parents, then those to the departed; and among these claims is piety, which is either a part of righteousness or a concomitant of it. Righteousness is also accompanied by holiness and truth and loyalty and hatred of wickedness. . . . Liberality is accompanied by elasticity and ductility of character, and kindness, and a compassionate and affectionate and hospitable and honourable nature. . . . Greatness of spirit is accompanied by simplicity and sincerity. . . . Folly is accompanied by unskilfulness, ignorance, self-indulgence, awkwardness,

forgetfulness. . . . Ill-temper is accompanied by excitability of character, instability, bitter speech, and liability to take offence . . . Cowardice is accompanied by softness, unmanliness, faint-heartedness, fondness of life; and it also has an element of cautiousness and submissiveness of character. . . . Profligacy is accompanied by disorder, shamelessness, irregularity, luxury, slackness, carelessness, negligence, remissness. . . The concomitants of uncontrol are softness and negligence . . . Unrighteousness is accompanied by slander, imposture, pretence of kindness, malignity, unscrupulousness Meanness is accompanied by pettiness, sulkiness, self-abasement, lack of proportion, ignobleness, misanthropy. . . Small-mindedness is accompanied by pettiness, querulousness, pessimism, self-abasement. . .

In general it belongs to goodness to make the spirit's disposition virtuous, experiencing tranquil and ordered emotions and in harmony throughout all its parts. . . Goodness is accompanied by honesty, reasonableness, kindness, hopefulness, and also by such traits as love of home and of friends and comrades and guests, and of one's fellowmen, and love of what is noble – all of which qualities are among those that are praised. . . . To badness belong the opposite concomitants: all the qualities and concomitants of vice are among the things that are blamed. (VV, 1250a3- 1251b40)

While it is possible that the author of *On Virtue and Vices*, if not Aristotle, has misinterpreted Aristotle's position or holds a far broader account of the scope of character excellence than was held by Aristotle, such material as quoted above offers a quite different position than entailed by the exhaustive thesis, and reflects a position I believe far more plausible to take as apt to have been held by Aristotle and by his contemporaries. It is also far more in keeping, than the exhaustive thesis, with the ancient Athenian emphasis upon *areté*, which, though often translated as "virtue," is also often translated as "excellence," which again suggests a far broader account of "virtue" than fits more prevalent contemporary notions of virtue, one that, in its fullest expression, refers to the attainment of the peak of one's potential. In keeping with this goal, the *Ethics* is framed as aiming to identify the very best human life so that, like archers with a mark to aim at, we'll be more likely to hit our target (NE, 1094a18–24). The terms familiar to Aristotle and his students and contemporaries often mere notions of ethics,

aesthetics, and class, as with the Greek word *kalos* which translates as “fine, beautiful, and noble,” and its opposite, *kakos* (from which we get *kaka*, for feces), which refers to that which is “base, ugly, and ignoble.” As noted above, he defines the *phronimos* as the norm and measure of all that is good for a human to be (*NE*, 1113a33-35). He goes so far as to present such a person as meeting such high standards as to be “foursquare beyond reproach” (*NE*, 1100b19-21) and refers as well to the “truly good” person as someone whose “finesse shines through” even when put to the most difficult of tests, “as when they bear with good temper many great misfortunes not through insensitivity to pain but through nobility and greatness of soul” (*NE*, 1100b-30-3).

4.7 A Significant Gap in Aristotelian Scholarship

I believe that I've identified a significant gap in Aristotelian scholarship. A lack of attention has been given to determining Aristotle's views regarding the scope of character excellence (and concordantly, the scope of character defects). This neglect is not for lack of importance. Arriving at such a determination is crucial for understanding Aristotle's conception of human flourishing and it bears heavily as well on Aristotle's conception of philosophy and its role in our lives and institutions. Aristotle's views on the scope of character excellence are also highly pertinent to understanding his views about the relationship between character excellence and theoretical excellence, and likewise for understanding his views about the relationship between the political life and the contemplative life. Gaining clarity regarding Aristotle's views on the scope of character excellence could also shed light on Aristotle's treatment of the life of pleasure as not fit for a human being while recognizing that pleasure is indeed an important aspect of any

good life for a human being. Working towards improved clarity about Aristotle's views regarding the scope of character excellence might also bear new insights on his views in relation to a wide range of other (overlapping) topics, such as the doctrine of the mean, his views on function, on the emotions and on psychology, and his views regarding religion, friendship and interpersonal relationships more broadly.

4.8 Towards Improved (Conceptions of) Character

Considering Aristotle's influence and his genius, if we're able to arrive at a much-improved understanding of what he takes the scope of character excellence to be, such efforts could also help us to work towards reconsiderations of contemporary views about character and also about ethics and philosophy. Considerations of the exhaustive thesis and rejections of it, as well as considerations of the ubiquity thesis can also help students being introduced to ethics at a subject of inquiry to gain an appreciation, preferably from a young age, that some of today's pervasive views about the scope of ethics – such as the stance assumed in Susan Wolf's still often assigned essay "Moral Saints" (1982) – may be impeding our ability to live eudaimon lives and to cultivate eudaimon institutions.¹

Reconsidering our views regarding character, and working towards improved views of character, may help us to draw from and to benefit from our species' long

¹ Wolf briefly grants that a more Aristotelian or Nietzschean approach to ethics may be presented as a challenge to the position she defends in her paper and then hastily discards such positions (1982, 433-434). She went on to become president of the American Philosophical Association (APA). It would be instructive for introductions to philosophy that refer to her "Moral Saints" to also consider her presidential address, "Good-for-nothings" (2010), and to do so in comparison to considerations about what a contemporary Benjamin Franklin might say to his audience if giving a presidential address before the American Philosophical Society.

record of attempts to understand who we are, what it is for us to live well and fare well, which may, in turn, help us to better identify and respond to the most significant obligations, opportunities, and challenges of our lives.

Chapter 5 Constructing Sustainable Societies

I actually think that philosophical theories make a tremendous difference to every aspect of our lives.

—John Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality* (1995, 197)

Introduction

A common theme running through much of environmental ethics is the notion that for a sustainable society to be actualized, there must be a shift of ethos and/or worldview.¹ The direction of this chapter is two-fold. First, an argument will be presented in support of the aforementioned stance. Second, there will be a survey and evaluation of strategies by which the required changes in worldview might be brought into effect. The personal story of J. Baird Callicott – as outlined in *Beyond the Land Ethic* (1999) – will provide an operational framework through which this discussion will follow. Finally, this chapter concludes by gesturing towards a theory of rightful action that promotes an improved cultural paradigm with respect to furthering the prospects for sustainability.

¹ “In recent anthropological discussion the moral and aesthetic aspects of a given culture, the evaluative elements, have been summed up in the term ‘ethos,’ while the cognitive, existential aspects have been designated by the term ‘worldview.’ A people’s ethos is the tone, character, and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mode; it is the underlying attitude toward themselves and their world that life reflects. Their worldview is the picture of the way things in sheer actuality are, their concept of nature, of self, of society. It contains their most comprehensive ideas of order” (Geertz, in Callicott, 36). Contributors to environmental ethics who affirm that a shift in ethos and/or worldview is required include, to name a few examples, J. Donald Hughes and Jim Swan (1986, 357), Lester Milbrath (1989, 58-87), Carol J. Adams (1990 [2015], 94, 98, 107), Rajni Kothari (1990, 29, 33, 36), Lester Brown, Christopher Flavin, and Sandra Postel (1991, 564), K. M. Sayre (in Callicott 1993, 34-35), Alfred Irving Hallowell (in Callicott 1993, 35), Clifford Geertz (in Callicott 1993, 36), Annie Booth (1997, 330, 345), William E. Rees (1998, 494-495, 497-499), Louis Pojman (1999, 21, 103, 360, 374), Holmes Rolston III (in Weston et. al., 1999, 110), Jim Cheney (in Weston et al. 1999, 48-150, 152, 154), J. Baird Callicott (1999, 30, 41), Michael Allen Fox (1999, 108), and Fox again in collaboration with Sue Hendler and Michael Imort (Hendler, Fox, and Imort 1999, 5, 12).

5.1 On the Need for Changes in Worldview

Given the subject matter of this chapter, as good a starting point as any may be that of John Searle's *Construction of Social Reality* (1995), in which Searle provides a genealogy of human institutions: At some point in the history of our evolution, humans became capable of intentionality, "the capacity of the organism to represent objects and states of affairs in the world other than itself" (Searle 1995, 6-7). With this capacity comes the ability for rudimentary language, which transforms into the collective imposition of functions onto physical objects or linguistic terms, under the general structure, "X counts as Y in C" (Searle 1995, 40). Such functions are "never intrinsic to the physics of any phenomenon but are assigned from outside by conscious observers and users" (Searle 1995, 14); in other words, using (slightly modified) terminology from Ayn Rand's *Philosophy: Who Needs It*, these ascriptions are *human-made* rather than *metaphysically given* (1982), which need not be taken as a denial that there is a significant and inextricable interplay between nature and nurture.

On Searle's account, though it is a fact that "nature knows nothing of function" (Searle 1995, 15), the child raised within the rubric of social institutions comes to take social reality for granted and accepts myriads of imposed functions as natural and enduring (Searle 1995, 4). These socially constructed norms create a mode of perception that (barring exceptional cases such as profound cognitive disabilities) direct children and their later adult selves to act in ways that conform with social norms and practices. At present, the standard Western vision is described by J. Baird Callicott as bespectacled with Baconian desires to overpower nature with science, a Cartesian dualism of mind and the inert world, and Newtonian mechanics (Callicott 1991, 51).

Given that ascriptions of status-functions are bound up with power relations (Searle 1995, 94) and that contemporary ascriptions are so often ecologically ruinous, it is to the advancement of society that dominant worldviews be recognized as not necessary or static realities but, rather, as views that we are in various ways together reinscribing in ways that better synthesize and align with our acquired knowledge about the world and our place and prospects in it.¹ Aided by this recognition of the need for changes to our dominant and governing worldviews, we become better able to learn “the rigors of discernment,”² and better positioned to see faults with, to challenge, and to de-institutionalize pernicious norms – leaving in their stead improved worldviews that are far better aligned with environmental renewal and betterment and with a sound approach to ethics and philosophy more broadly. If we can shift away from ecologically ruinous worldviews and to make significant strides towards ecologically sustainable worldviews, we will be far better positioned to bring about a more sane and sustainable relationship with our home and its multitudes of cohabitants.

The “we” in question cannot be limited to just a few of us, however. It is not enough for a (far more) sustainable worldview “to be made flesh” by just one’s own inner circle, if even that.³ What is needed is for (far more) sustainable worldviews to be successfully ambitious, that is, to ambulate – to go out and about – and gain votes and purchase far and wide, as it were. Such worldviews must come to be not only hopes and

¹ Overlapping insights extend far back into ancient philosophy, as found, for instance, in the following passage attributed to the ancient Chinese Daoist philosopher, Zhuangzi (from the late 4th century BCE): “things are so because they are called so. What makes them so? Making them so makes them so. What makes them not so? Making them not so makes them not so” (Zhuangzi, 35-36).

² This term is taken from Claudia Card’s *The Unnatural Lottery: Character and Moral Luck* (1996, 90), and attributed to Alice Walker.

³ My use of “to be made flesh” was inspired by Carol J. Adams’ *Sexual Politics of Meat*, especially Chapter 4, “The Word Made Flesh.”

aspirations within the minds of visionaries, and it would not be enough, even, for them to become widespread lip service; what is needed, rather, is for environmentally friendly worldviews to be internalized in our lives and relationships and institutions as default and taken-for-granted (and often even invisible) norms and practices. The changes in worldview needed must be embraced by a large portion of the human population and must be taken up by people who are in (or are capable of gaining) positions of influence and power whether as individuals or collectives (which is not to say that one cannot contribute in both individual and collective ways).

Writing in “Sustainable Development: Economic Myths and Ecological Realities,” William Rees goes so far as to indicate that it is not just a far-reaching change of worldview that is needed, but the changes that are called for must be internalized deep into the cores of our being; on his account, “people must acquire in their bones a sense that violation of the biosphere is violation of self” (Rees 1998, 499). Similarly, Rajni Kothari argues for a need for humans to view ourselves as parts of a broader ecosystem, and to identify “human beings [not as] masters but members of the Earth family” if we are to move towards worldviews that include due sensitivity to our shared need for and vested interest in wise stewardship (Kothari 1990, 32).

5.2 Living as Joe Bioregionalist or Jane Philoenviro

In the early 1970s, J. Baird Callicott (b. 1941) – a professor of environmental philosophy – thought it important to set an ethical example for his students and aimed to do just that. In so doing, he kept his VW Bug in his garage and utilized his feet or bicycle whenever possible. He converted his backyard into an organic garden; wore old clothes, patching

them as need be; spent his spare income on storm windows and on improving the insulation of his home; had only one child; and heated his house with wood that he “laboriously collected and sawed and split by hand” (Callicott 1999, 46). He sums up his eco-friendly, lead-by-example endeavour: “To put it succinctly, I was Joe Bioregionalist” (Callicott 1999, 46).

Callicott did not remain Joe Bioregionalist for long. “When the man who believed that trees caused pollution was elected president of the United States in 1980,” he explains, he “decided it was high time to reassess [his] strategy for infusing an environmental ethic at the practical level” (Callicott 1999, 47). He bought a new car and clothes far more associated with respectability than the second hand clothes he had been wearing and entered more deeply into academic philosophy.

The explanation Callicott gives for exiting the strict lifestyle he had taken on included his belief that environmental ethics is a holistic enterprise that must be widely taken up (even if implicitly) if it is to be successful. He distinguishes environmental ethics from individualistic ethics such as those concerned with human rights, fetus rights, and animal rights (Callicott 1999, 47). The just indicated rights stances are individualistic in that a single person is able to bring about a significant difference, e.g., by saving the life of one animal (or more), so that, for instance, by embracing vegetarianism and turning his or her pig farm into a sanctuary, a person is able to save lives that had been earmarked for the slaughterhouse and cellophane. “But environmental ethics concerns populations of animals and plants, species, ecosystems, and the biosphere as a whole. No purely personal practice of environmental ethics that I undertook or any that I could have undertaken would have prevented global warming or soil erosion or species extinction.

For any significant environmental benefits to occur our whole society and culture will have to undertake fundamental structural changes” (Callicott 1999, 48).¹

Garrett Hardin’s well-known “tragedy of the commons” is appealed to by Callicott in defense of moving away from his “Joe Bioregionalist” way of life. The idea behind Hardin’s tragedy is as follows. One person, acting in a (purportedly) rational way, considers that were she to cheat, her lot would be improved, at least, providing that she is a lone, or at least a rare, cheat, and she decides to cheat while doing her best to hide that fact from others, perhaps even becoming vociferous about how wrong it is to cheat and how we have a duty to avoid cheating. Other people also (purportedly) rationally make the same decision. Eventually, these individual (purportedly) rational choices “add up to a collective disorder [that] illustrates the role of moral rules in general” (Pojman 2000, 58). Callicott decided, then, that, considering the tragedy of the commons, and the task before us, the way forward calls for the widespread acknowledgement that “only mutual coercion mutually agreed upon will avert tragedy” (Callicott 1999, 47). That being the case, Callicott reasons, the method he had been following while living as Joe Bioregionalist was foolish and doing little if anything to deter such a tragedy, especially as people at large were not even bothered enough to pretend to be taking major environmental concerns seriously and striving to adjust their lives accordingly.

¹ Callicott’s division between individualistic and holistic approaches to ethics fails to pay due heed to overlaps between the two and does not seem to be a well-thought-out position. Consider for instance that it has long been common for people passionate about animal rights to also be passionate about human rights and environmental rights (with some also taking on a fetus rights position, if far less common). It would be a strange rights advocate of any kind to be concerned only about individuals and to take it as a success if some few people are spared from rights violations even as millions or even billions of others are not. It is possible that Callicott’s Joe Bioregionalist persona could have made some ecological improvements, even if slight in the large scale of things, and in keeping with his stated aim of being a role model for his students, he may have been able to inspire them and through them, others as well – including, possibly, other professors who might in turn also inspire some of their students and colleagues, and so on, which in all, may have been far more influential, and far more promising an approach, than it may have seemed at the time.

Continuing as Joe Bioregionalist would, he concluded, set him up in a position that was not only lonely but that that was also a great deal of work while being pretty much useless in relation to the ambitious holistic objectives he was after. “I was pissing in the wind (if you'll excuse a masculinist metaphor)” (Callicott 1999, 47).

As mentioned above, one of Callicott's reasons for entering into a Joe Bioregionalist way of life was that by doing so, he might serve as a beneficial role model for his students. He does not mention whether he was able to sway any of them to follow his example, even if not so wholeheartedly, or whether some might have taken inspiration from him in ways that might have led them to hold themselves to far higher standards of environmental stewardship even if they pursued that task through other means. Given his “pissing in the wind” comment, it seems that as of the time of his writing of *Beyond the Land Ethics*, at least, he did not see himself as having succeeded as a role model. Instead, he suggests that though he was acting (in a Kantian sort of way) to model the sort of conduct that others should also take on, others were not on board with that scheme and so it would be a ridiculous venture in puritanism to keep at it even in the face of (what he took to be) clear evidence that however universalizable such eco-friendly ways of living he strove to model were, when the world at large is barreling towards environmental ruin, if one is truly serious about ethics of a sane and reasonable sort, one had better seek out other approaches: approaches that have some real hope of contributing in a significant way to the far-reaching changes that are required.

The reasons that Callicott offers for rejection his Joe Bioregionalist phase overlap with an insight made by Cheshire Calhoun that “morality is a scheme of social

cooperation” (Calhoun 1999, 91).¹ Given this feature of morality, she explains, we should recognize the importance, if we are aiming to live moral lives, of striving to make our moral actions legible to others, and moreover, to a non-trivial extent succeeding at that task (Calhoun 1999, 97). That is, on her account, to live a sound moral life calls for not only acting morally oneself, as “acting morally” is now often widely taken in highly individualistic ways as with someone rightly appalled by factory farms who boycotts all such projects while “minding his own business” about what it is that others around him are doing. On this individualistic model, one carries on even when concerned that the number of factory farms is ever increasing, and that a growing proportion of the world’s human population are consuming such products and thus however unwittingly also contributing to the far-reaching harms associated with them.

Rather than pay no heed to what others are doing, or how one’s own (purportedly) moral stances are viewed, Calhoun argues, it is vital to consider – as part of one’s moral efforts – how it is that one is coming across to others, and to work towards effectively conveying one’s position to others so that they can see its value and be more likely to act towards called-for improvements as well. On Calhoun’s account, successful moral agents can convey their positions in ways that succeed in convincing others of the merits of their efforts and cause, and that draw them in as well. Naturally, she grants, the success of this will often be a matter that involves, perhaps to a significant extent, with “moral luck”; even a person of staggering moral genius who brilliantly articulates her stance by the

¹ There may be instances in which such a framing of morality does not apply, such as relationships between adults and infants and other beings who may not be in a position to cooperate with us socially but whose interests it would, I believe (and I think rightly) be wrong to fail to consider. Likewise, Calhoun’s framing, here, may inadequately consider the possibility that we may act in moral or immoral ways in relation to plants and inanimate things such as works of art, books, and buildings in ways that may not be captured well by considering morality as “a scheme of social cooperation.”

standards of an ideal moral community, will not be able to sway a group of people who are severely lacking in character and capacity to grasp the merits of her view. This is especially so if the position being presented is difficult and threatening, for example calling on us to face the possibility that along with many of one's loved ones, one is complicit in harrowing atrocities that are wildly incompatible with one's own long-professed ideals. Similarly, in some cases, one's audience may take one's standards as unrealistically high, especially if one lives in a time when moral flabbiness is the norm, and when it is common for even those who consider themselves ethicists to take the ethics equivalent of a slow 5k jog – which they are unable to do – as a feat akin to an ultramarathon, and so, settle for and model low ethical standards and carry on in morally unfit ways that they deem realistic and adequate or even impressive.

As suggested above, part of leading a sound moral life, on Calhoun's account, is working towards helping others to understand what one is doing and why one is doing it, and to see that for them, as well, it is within reach and worth doing. To deem Joe Bioregionalist morally successful even in the absence of indications that his actions were at all legible to or inspiring change in others would be to render morality "a kind of private language whose rules or conceptions . . . need not be accessible or meaningful to anyone else" (Calhoun 1999, 92). To do this is, on Calhoun's account, to deny the central reason for moral conduct – namely, aligning social order to that which is truly moral via cooperative agreement. Because of this, Calhoun concludes that people who are aligned with a sound moral position and do their best to make it legible to others are sometimes nevertheless, at least to some extent, what she refers to as "moral failures" in that they

have failed to bring about the social cooperation required to meaningfully instantiate their ideals.

After making such claims about morality and about people who are (purportedly) moral failures, Calhoun goes on to defend the conclusion that when it seems nearly inevitable that aiming to do what one believes to be right would end up with one being a moral failure, it would be reasonable to give that person an indulgence or free pass of sorts for doing what they recognize as wrong. “[W]ould we,” she asks, “find it forgivable, because understandable, if someone chose participation in a common moral life over doing the right thing?” To this question, and on behalf of the unspecified “we” she is referring to, she answers “yes,” we would find so doing forgivable.

Indeed, there would be something perverse about a person who cares only about how things would go between herself and others in a hypothetical, morally more perfect social world and who is morally untroubled by the fact that in her actual exchanges with others, she is received as arrogant, unfair, ungrateful, selfish, uncivil, and intolerant. (Calhoun 1999, 97)

The above move strikes me as hasty, particularly in its use of an example that associates a person who continues to do what is right in the face of fierce opposition, concluding that that person is “morally untroubled” that not only are others not doing what she recognizes as right, but that they are also interpreting her in degrading ways.

It is a rare human who does not care at all about social rejection. We are social and political animals. However, by using such a loaded example while also excusing those who go along with what they know to be wrong, Calhoun seems to be exhibiting the same sort of tendency she attributes to the people she discusses above, who interpret someone who is doing something right – which they are failing to do – in degrading

ways. It is not uncommon for people to respond badly when they are confronted with someone whose moral conduct holds up a mirror at their own conduct. Our own failings can be painful to look at, especially if we are sensitive to criticism or fear that if we accept what may be wrong as wrong, and change our conduct accordingly, we too may be the object of scorn. Calhoun does not engage with the need for us to work towards improving our character and learning how to step back when someone is posing an ethical challenge that may be hard to face, and when in response, they are being roundly castigated. To simply refer to the person doing the right thing as a moral failure fails to duly consider whether some pernicious social phenomena is at play, especially given our species' clear tendencies towards attacking messengers of hard-to-hear news and our tendencies for responding terribly to people who are different, and often leaping to negative categorical judgments about them.

When Callicott left Joe Bioregionalism behind, his reasoning for doing so seems to have had a lot of overlaps with Calhoun's position. There is a significant difference though in that he was not deciding to do what is wrong and to align with a "common moral life" that he took himself as with inadequate power to change. While he opted to outwardly live in ways that presented him as far more aligned than he had been with a "common moral life," he was not deciding to do what he took to be wrong (to avoid related social harms and the sequela attached to them). He had, rather, come to see his earlier self-focused and overly individualistic approach to environmental ethics as severely flawed. In his post-Joe-Bioregionalist days, he was, personally, less aligned to the lifestyle he deemed appropriate to the ideal citizen, at least, were his fellow citizens to get on board and do their parts. However, he had to sort out a new approach that better fit

the world as it actually is rather than stick to a position that was more aligned with how he thought his fellow citizens ought to be responding. “[T]he problem is,” he explained, “each one of us isn't doing his or her bit. Only a few of us are or were and our efforts have been swamped by the indifference shown to environmental ethics by the overwhelming Majority” (Callicott 1999, 47). For such reasons then, Callicott dropped his Kantianesque Joe Bioregionalist approach to environmentalist ethics and advocacy and moved towards a more utilitarian-oriented approach.

Jane Philoenviro might argue against Callicott’s betrayal of Joe Bioregionalist.¹ A well-functioning holistic system does not entail that acts are only highly consequential if promptly and widely taken on by others. Rather, some members within a system can go against the common flow and via what Calhoun calls “artful counter-stories” (1999, 80), exemplify environmentally friendly alternative lifestyles that others might follow. Or not. While there must often be a significant amount of uptake before significant material improvements are realized, significant improvements can come about with one or a few, or a dedicated group of individuals serving as inspiring leaders even if their own positions are far more ethically demanding than many people are at all apt to follow. Examples of such artful counter-stories are found in *Not For Ourselves, Alone*, a poignant documentary about the collaborative friendship between Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton (Burns and Barnes 2004), and in the biographies of “Marjory

¹ I am using “Jane Philoenviro” to refer to another individual who, like Callicott’s Joe Bioregionalist character, is deeply concerned about, and striving to live in ways that help to bring about, changes needed if we are to live in sustainable ways. The character is hypothetical. My inclusion of it here has three aims: first, to be more gender inclusive than the chapter would be if focusing more heavily on Callicott and his own various attempts at living well and faring well in relation to sustainability; second, to highlight the often quite different conclusions that people with common aims arrive at regarding methods and regarding which approaches they deem adequate or apt to be effective; and third, and finally, the “Jane Philoenviro” character is employed in this chapter as part of an evaluation of Callicott’s negative assessment of the Joe Bioregionalist phase of his life.

Douglas, . . . Henry Thoreau, John Muir, Theodore Roosevelt, Aldo Leopold, Herman Daly, Rachel Carson, Chico Mendes, and Louis Gibbs” (Pojman 1999, 370). The just-quoted passage is from Louis Pojman’s *Global Environmental Ethics*; he points to the people he names as examples of people of integrity and courage who have successfully inspired others to act on the notion that individuals can make a difference, a claim that I imagine he would readily take to apply to Anthony and Stanton and many others as well, and which he also seems to have lived in his life. They are offered as examples of “much-needed role models for simple living, local acting, and global thinking” (Pojman 1999, 371).

In support of Jane Philoenviro, Joe Bioregionalist, and J. Baird Callicott in his post-Joe-Bioregionalist days are Lester Brown, Christopher Flavin, and Sandra Postell. In “Vision of a Sustainable World,” Brown, Flavin, and Postell delegate environmental responsibility to each individual member of society, “for, in the end,” they explain, “it is individual values that drive social change. . . . Without a reevaluation of our personal aspirations and motivations, we will never achieve an environmentally sound global community” (Brown, Flavin, Postell 1991, 559). It is nevertheless important to recognize that even if vitally important for change, individual values and reevaluations galore are sure to be altogether inadequate if they are not paired with a willingness to *act* on one’s values and reevaluations, along with actual follow-through with pertinent changes to one’s conduct. Without actual changes to our conduct (save those tied to reevaluations and to one’s own professed values, however well-put they may be), our prospects of achieving an environmentally sound global community seem bleak to say the least. Indeed, failure to act on one’s deepest moral principles can serve to help people drive

away some tugs at their conscience and give them excuses to continue to fail to change their conduct other than by changing what it is that they claim to value and profess to align with.

Callicott would no longer have the time to act in ways that were more aligned with what his ideal citizen would do, under conditions in which his fellow citizens were pulling something at least somewhat closer to their own weight in response to the environmental challenges and threats that we face (or fail to face). However, he recognized that he was not living in anywhere near an ideal society (and there are, of course, different and conflicting accounts of what would count as such), which, as we have seen, led him to decide it best to change course. Though he does not explicitly say so, in changing course – and sharing that and why he had done so – he was, in another way, setting himself forward as a role model for his students and for others who read *Beyond the Land Ethic*. He shows, through his own example, the importance of earnest striving along with self-assessments and of an openness to change course if one's own best judgment ends up finding serious flaws with efforts that were initially taken on and heavily invested in with the best of intentions.

5.3 Striving to Bring About Change Through an Educational-Political Strategy

After his dismay at the lack of cooperation achieved using the above outlined practical-incremental approach, Callicott turned to what he refers to as “an educational-political strategy” (1999, 49). His revamped approach aimed to persuade as many people as possible that environmental problems are severe and demand attention; a strategy more

effective, he judged, than focusing on the rigorous strictures he had imposed on his own life.

Callicott concluded he should persuade as many people as possible to work together intelligently and effectively to bring about “fundamental structural changes that are necessary to avert the environmental disaster looming on the horizon” (Callicott, 1999, 49). While individual choices do matter, the problems are so significant, and individual responses, alone, are clearly inadequate when others are not doing their part. To bring about the sort and scope of changes needed, he came to hold, it is vital to convince enough people to demand and successfully vote in a government that is willing and able to act responsibly in keeping with the gravity of the situation at hand. His explanation suggests that his own diligence and hard work created frustration and impatience in him in response to the largely apathetic public around him who could not be bothered to make even small changes. If a competent government were elected, he reasoned, it could compel necessary changes.

Then those who are too lazy or too stupid to become enlightened or are or [*sic*] too warped by greed to care may be forced, coerced to comply. If everyone had to limit his or her number of children, give up his or her personal automobile, rigorously recycle, make a downward shift on the food chain, consume fewer forest products, etc., etc., etc., then, I dare say, significant improvement of environmental quality would follow. (Callicott 1999, 48)

Though perhaps simply a typo, the error in the passage above has it easy to imagine an exasperated and exhausted Callicott writing while in a state of agitation, perhaps tinged with fear and despair, or perhaps rushing, eager to do what he can and feeling ever more pressed for time as years continued to pass with inadequate uptake from the public at large.

Callicott tried his utmost then, once again, though in a different way, to persuade people, especially his students, of the need to become active and encourage others to work towards a better democracy that functions in our best interests and uses its collective power to bring much needed changes into effect.

Alas, yet again, and no doubt much to Callicott's disappointment, he found himself arriving at the conclusion that his educational-political approach towards sustainability also failed to lead to anywhere near the scale of the results that were called for in light of the magnitude of the challenges he was up against. For a second time, then, he arrived at the conclusion that his efforts were profoundly inadequate and largely futile in relation to persuading his fellow citizens to vote in a far more wise government. He took stock, as before, and once again, what he saw was not a flattering result. What he saw was not that he was helping to generate enough people to demand and elect in a government that could play a major role in significant changes of the sort that are necessary. Rather, he found that what he was really doing was further persuading the already persuaded as the public at large continues to ho-hum and looks the other way. Much to his dismay, it seemed to him that other educators who were also doing as he was doing – who were few and far between – were not really functioning as thought leaders and sparkers of a new and better regime who had any real prospects of helping, in an adequate way, to bring about the largescale changes that were called for. The sad truth was, it seemed to him, that whatever their good intentions, their efforts were altogether inadequate, and, on the whole, hardly, if any, better than pissing in the wind. “We preach to the choir while the congregation politely ignores us” (Callicott 1999, 49).

5.4 Values and Facts, Feelings and Science

One reason Callicott gives when explaining why his hoped-for audience was not more receptive to his efforts was that his words were heard (when at all), primarily by people who take values as an altogether different animal than facts. Once values are on the table along with factual considerations, and being evaluated, he found that his audience was primed to respond as if he were doing something worlds apart from science or from any intellectual program that garners genuine expertise. As his use of a preacher as a metaphor suggests, they were taking him as defending preferences of a sort not unlike a religion, and that (as many take to hold for religion as well), have no objective validity nor any sound method by which better and worse results can be attained. Such an assessment would be even more likely if his students, or the world at large, had a (perhaps partly merited) stereotype of philosophy professors as scientifically illiterate and unreliable when it comes to empirical matters.

At odds with the broader worldview he was being filtered through, judged by, and tuned out by, he said, the environmental values he was defending “are not independent moral surds,” they are, rather, integrated and part of a well-informed and well-considered worldview; he has not chosen them on whims or without any solid foundation; rather, he put serious effort into doing his best to ensure that the values he was embracing and defending were informed by facts (Callicott 1999, 49).

While Callicott does not argue for this position in *Beyond the Land Ethic*, his reasoning may have a lot in common with that offered by Lester Milbrath in *Envisioning a Sustainable Society: Learning Our Way Out* (1989). Like Callicott, Milbrath found that muddles about the nature of and relationship between facts and values posed significant

challenges to effective efforts towards a sustainable society. Milbrath thus aims to disabuse his readers of related confusions that can impede the ability to take environmentalist or other ethical positions with due seriousness or to engage intelligently with such positions. If one thinks that there is no such thing as sound reasoning when it comes to values, for instance, and that science, physics and math are all quite different from ethical and political reasoning, one may approach arguments that address values as though there is little point in expecting some positions to be, in any real and objective way, better than any other position. Or, if one does not incline so far towards relativism, one may approach a professor of philosophy who is dedicated to a value-soaked objective with skepticism and perhaps even with derision or contempt. It is often supposed that universities should be morally neutral zones and that it is wrong for professors to use their academic posts to assist in their broader advocacy efforts.

Part of what Milbrath aims to do in *Envisioning a Sustainable Society* is to help students and members of the public to recognize significant flaws and oversights that are packaged into such biases about the relationship between facts and values, and to recognize that there is no such thing as value-free science. Consider for instance that there are at least implicit values in place when aims are set and methods are chosen.

While people who are inclined to scoff at values talk may at first wonder if Milbrath's discussion aims to lower the status of science or even to discredit it, that is far from the case. What he does, rather, is to put science into a more accurate light. In so doing he imparts that far from values being separate from science, to do science well calls for a recognition of the importance acting in accordance with well-considered and

defensible values, which are not separate from but infuse scientific thinking, practice and teaching.

Milbrath explains, further, that it is also a common mistake to treat science as a stoic enterprise and to take values as associated with feelings – a mistake that also impedes adequate responses to urgent and pressing environmental threats and much else besides. People often put far too much weight, he argues, into the role of observable phenomena and assume that value evaluations are not linked to observable phenomena (1989, 61).¹ As he puts it, “[t]his important distinction between facts and values does not change the reality that all forms of knowing, facts as well as values, have a feeling component” (Milbrath 1989, 61).

Recognizing ways that feelings and likewise values are bound up with scientists’ training, research topics and projects, the quality of their work, assessments, distribution and applications, and much else besides, can help scientists have a more accurate understanding of what they are doing and how and why they are doing it and thereby also help them to create better and more worthwhile science. Once pointed out, such links between values and facts, and between feelings and science are not difficult to see, and before long, one may find oneself stunned that anyone could have managed to fail to recognize that science – and all of our pursuits – are shot-through with values (and

¹ The notion that value evaluations are not observable strikes me as often blatantly false. Consider for instance that there would be few adult humans who would be unable to observe value evaluations when witnessing a mother’s tortured collapse and primal wails upon learning about the death of her child. Again save exceptional cases, is it not the case that people can observe value evaluations when they see? Here are a few examples that I think apt to count as clear expressions of observable phenomena that are also objectively evident (to people with the pertinent capacities): clear signs of anger in response to injustices, unmistakable evidence of a couple in a gaga state over each other, or signs of reverence and awe upon entering a temple, a video of a near-dead and skeletal person receiving lovingly offered caring and medical help and then shown full of health and exuding joy, or photographs released to the public showing prisoners being subjected to horrific degradations and torture. My point here is not that such assessments are foolproof, altogether reliable, or fine-tuned, but simply that it seems blaringly clear to me that observable value evaluations do indeed exist.

likewise, with feelings). A far more accurate way of describing ideals of scientific inquiry is as attempts to have control of one's emotions and to be able to use them (emotions come from *emote*: to move) in ways that help one to do the task at hand well and to approach it while duly on guard for errors and problematic biases.

A valuable aspect of Milbrath's defense of links between science and values is that it also helps to call attention to and debunk other ill-considered notions about values, such as the presumption that "[m]any people" hold, that "values become known to us by an essentially irrational process. Values seem to flow to us from tradition, religion, or societal authorities" (Milbrath 1989, 61). Contrary to popular opinion, Milbrath argues, reason can guide people to discover and to persuade others to accept that "[s]ome values are more important than others, and it is possible to 'reason to ground' about values. That is, we can use rational argument to persuade each other of the validity of a value position or of the meaningfulness of a value hierarchy" (Milbrath 1989, 61).

In some cases, little needs to be done to show that some values are indeed more important than others. It does not take a lot of life experience, for instance, to learn that the value of gaining what may be highly appealing in the here-and-now is often a value that ought to be subordinated to a clearly more important value. The value of a young child freely and happily running without a care in the world, however full of wonderful, joyous feelings and a great sense of freedom, is rightly forfeited when one yanks the child away from the car he was running full speed towards. The value of preserving the child's life, relational and interpersonal values (considering the child's family and community), values tied to the life ahead that the child has yet to lead, and much else besides, should take priority over the child's joy running unimpeded. Philosophy as traditionally

conceived as the love of wisdom, leading examined lives, cultivating judgment, and striving to do one's own part form the context for weighing some values as trivial in comparison to others.

Milbrath offers an additional reason as to why he takes on the task of defending links between science and values. The explanation he offers overlaps with Callicott's explanation for turning away from his earlier Joe Bioregionalist self and towards an educational-political approach to environmental advocacy. "My aim," Milbrath writes, "is to . . . encourage you to rethink your own value structure. I seek a structure of values that will make achieving and maintaining a long-run sustainable and harmonious relationship with nature easier for our society" (Milbrath 1989, 58).

Given shared goals between Milbrath and Callicott, it is a curiosity that Callicott presents confused thinking about the nature of and relationship between facts and values as a reason *against* his continuing to educate people to help them better understand and to be more inclined to take with due seriousness the gravity of the environmental problems we are facing (or, by and large, failing to face). What seems to be called for is to recognize that muddles about facts and values are doing a lot of damage and there is a significant need for related improvements to public education.

As things stand, decades after Milbrath and Callicott wrote the texts under discussion, muddles about facts and values persist and continue to stoke intellectual rifts, while also continuing to impede the uptake of long-called-for reunions of the sciences and humanities. Some of the positions that seem to have increased since the late 1980s and early 1990s is a growing distrust in science which seems especially rife when it comes to environmental issues. If Callicott's teaching approach was leading him to the

impression that he was merely singing to the choir, might that not be an indication that there is a need not to abandon that approach but to seek out different pedagogical approaches and to do more to reach and engage with students who he compares to tuned-out parishioners, and likewise with members of the public at large?

If he was finding himself being treated as a preacher, perhaps the fault lay in his overlooking how the task of addressing the biases and confusions of his audience were impeding his ability to help people recognize their vested interest in taking what he was trying to convey seriously and giving it an earnest hearing through their own best judgment. Callicott might have got further by working towards ways to gain (and perhaps to better earn) people's trust that he is not heavily biased, that he is someone who takes their perspectives and concerns seriously, who they can engage with earnestly.

While the above may suggest otherwise, Callicott does present the environmental philosophers, himself included, presumably, as beneficial for the environmentalist movement – “a necessary first step” (Callicott 1999, 51). Still, though, he was not satisfied that he was doing enough, concluding that the educational-political approach was impotent when considered against what was required to successfully inspire large-scale environmental changes. One argument he provided for that conclusion had to do with the small number of students that he taught. Only a small proportion of the broader population will end up in environmental philosophy classrooms (or the like) or sufficiently interested to read “a serious book” on the subject such as the ones that he and others were putting a lot of effort into writing (Callicott 1999, 51). Furthermore, he laments, even the television is not an effective tool given that most people prefer to watch “*Wheel of Fortune* and *Night Court* over *The Planet Earth* and *The Flooded Forest*”

(Callicott 1999, 51).

5.5 Environmental Ethics Then, Now, Tomorrow, and In-Between

Today, more than twenty years after the publication of *Beyond the Land Ethic*, one might point instead to the public's tendency to watch all manner of shows on Netflix that only rarely engage in (at least somewhat) serious ways with environmental concerns of great and far-reaching magnitude. Today, one might likewise point to the low level of related space given to such matters on social media outlets and compare that to the high levels of traffic landing on ever more violent and debased forms of pornography. One might also update his concerns by calling attention to echo chambers as well as pundits and ill-educated people who present themselves as experts and throw up dust while dangerously downplaying or even denying that we are indeed facing major threats tied to what is, indeed, our terrible stewardship practices. We are beset with such people who present themselves as unbiased and trustworthy as they spew what competent scientists can readily debunk, selectively cherry-picking (or dung-picking, as may be more apt) for outlier figures who are clearly chosen for the conclusions they are defending and not because those choosing them have managed to evaluate what is being said with any competence at all.

As was said above in response to Callicott's negative assessment of and departure away from his Joe Bioregionalist days, he might have paid more heed to the possibility that the work he and others were doing had far more promise and was doing a lot more good than seemed to be the case. Even if his immediate audience was not nearly as large as he would like, and likewise with that of other educators seeking to help people

recognize urgent problems, far more change may be taking place, some of it hegemonic and of a sort that helps to change the air that we breathe as it were, including for those who are not at all inclined to watch environmentalist shows or attend related classes or read related books.

The passage of more than two decades since the publication of *Beyond the Land Ethic* offers more distance than Callicott had at his disposal. I think it suggests that the past work of environmental philosophers and advocates has helped to generate a significant interest, progress and momentum towards much needed change. For all his self-doubts and worries about not doing enough to help, his curriculum vitae is daunting and humbling and offers a sense of what a significant reach his efforts have made (Callicott, n.d.). Callicott is believed to be the first person to have taught a philosophy course in environmental ethics in the world (Callicott, n.d.), which he did at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point in 1971 when “environmental ethics” was not even a thing, which he played a lead role in helping it to become, as indicated by an anthology dedicated to Callicott’s contributions, published more than two decades ago: *Callicott and Environmental Philosophy* (Ouderkirk and Hill 2002, 344). The opening paragraphs of the introduction to that anthology, written by Wayne Ouderkirk, are worth quoting at length:

Over the last twenty-five years, environmental philosophy has exploded into a vigorous and important area of research and writing. at first a form of applied ethics, it has rapidly become a matrix of ethical, metaphysical, epistemological, social, and political speculation, with an array of special problems or issues, several major theoretical models or paradigms, and the other fundamentals—journals, conferences, graduate programs—that mark a philosophically significant area of study. This vigor is partial testimony to its importance because the creation of an environmentally benign, beneficial worldview, which would include a defensible and practicable environmental ethic, is clearly a major necessity resulting from our continuing and deepening environmental crisis.

J. Baird Callicott has been, and continues to be, one of the central figures in the development of environmental philosophy. To say that he has helped to set the terms of discussion, that he has developed one of the central theoretical models in the field, the land ethic, and that his work has provoked reactions and reflections that have both clarified other models and opened new avenues for continued work is no exaggeration.

This book examines environmental philosophy by analyzing Callicott's views critically. There are several reasons for this approach. First, one cannot discuss the field without considering Callicott's views. And the reverse is also true: If one wants to examine Callicott's views, there is no escaping a discussion of the larger field. He is that important a figure. Third, because he has been such a force, his theory warrants extended examination and analysis. Finally, by presenting his critics' evaluations of his theories, their own preferred ideas for future work, along with Callicott's response to those ideas, we can get a partial picture of some of the next important developments in the field. Not that there is here a crystal ball, but certainly that potent mixture—Callicott and his critics—will be at the center of whatever environmental philosophy becomes in its next twenty-five years. (Ouderkirk, in Ouderkirk and Hill 2002, 1)

I think it is clear now, in a way it was not clear when Callicott wrote *Beyond the Land Ethic* in the late 1990s, that he was making significant and impressive progress towards helping, as best he could, to make tangible progress towards more sustainable societies. As suggested by my response to Calhoun's loaded – and, I think, deeply problematic – use of “moral failure,” the extent to which Callicott's efforts helped bring about significant change depends, in no small part, on how others respond as well and so on and so forth. He is, of course, only one person.

It is true that as things stand, few members of the public are apt to end up in university philosophy classes that focus on environmental ethics, or likewise with other courses that if well done would help students to better understand the problems we are facing. Rather than take that as a reason to significantly lower one's estimation about the potential that philosophy has to help bring about significant improvements, it is far better to consider that philosophy has rarely been taken as just a single academic discipline, and

to work towards a revival of more traditional approaches to philosophy which would also re-embrace science (natural philosophy) as part of philosophy.

More helpful than to lower estimations about the power and promise of education is to (quite aptly I think) borrow a phrase associated with the Institute of Humane Education, to fuel the still little-known ‘philosophy for children’ movement which, I believe, is best taken as part of a broader and nascent ‘philosophy for all’ movement. More attention should be given to children’s rights to an education that safeguards and protects their futures and that is sensitive to the significant and extremely contentious ethical decisions that are being made on their behalf and that many of them would not choose for themselves with informed consent.

Harkening back to Searle, who as indicated in the motto of this chapter, indicates in his *Construction of Social Reality* that philosophy is of significant importance to all aspects of our lives, it is helpful to remember that “we live, move, and have our being in an ambient intellectual ether” (Callicott 1999, 35) – the value of which far too few stop to contemplate let alone to strive to examine and improve. Few individuals, to say the least, delve into epistemological and normative inquiries such as those discussed by Milbrath (and others) above. People are often comfortable with their lives and hesitant to modify their long-entrenched practices even when it becomes clear that they are not living in ways that resonate with their own values. They often refuse to deal with hard-to-face topics, often ridicule or brush off people who raise major ethical challenges that, if taken seriously, may prove to be a rude awakening. Similarly, people are often all too satisfied with intellectually lazy and impoverished justifications for the continuance of actions that, at some level at least, they do recognize as unethical. In *Deep Vegetarianism*,

Michael Allen Fox discusses this unfortunate phenomenon and refer to it as “compartmentalization,” and defines as “our ability and our tendency to hold apart, intellectually or emotionally, those things that we do not want to compare or investigate too closely” (Fox 1999, 41). Fox notes a sibling problem to compartmentalization as well – inconsistency – which, he explains, “can arise from some kind of blind spot in our thinking, from a misalignment of thought and behaviour or of thought and feeling, or from a failure to apply principles that we willingly follow in one context to relevantly similar or even identical circumstances” (Fox 1999, 44).¹

It would, of course, be naive to think that any of us could live fully in accordance with a complete, coherent, and altogether consistent worldview. The messy world we live in would make a mockery of any such venture. Even so, it would be just as naive and deluded to think that it is not still of great importance to work towards consistency and to consider implications of the values we hold dear, which can help us to recognize corollary values that follow from them. Thus, for instance, someone who arrives at a vegetarian position on ethical grounds has reason to consider harms tied to dairy and eggs and leather and vivisection as well (Fox 1999, 45). Fortunately, Fox tells readers of *Deep Vegetarianism*, there are indications that ethical vegetarians are increasingly aware of links between vegetarianism, environmentalism, and opposition to various forms of oppression (Fox 1999, 47), associations and connections that have become far more

¹ An example of compartmentalization and inconsistency is that of the Dalai Lamas’s diet. Though “the most basic Buddhist teaching is to abstain from causing harm to sentient beings” the Dalai Lama continues to eat animal flesh (Tuttle, 6). A leading animal rights magazine: *The Animals’ Agenda*, cites him as “an enormous impediment to the cause of animal liberation” for the reason that “He is particularly influential with Buddhists and educated Americans and Europeans, and his example of supporting cruelty while preaching compassion for all beings allows many people to justify their own meat-eating” (Tuttle, 6). An excellent discussion of excuses made by Buddhists to act in ways that are clearly at odds with the spirit of Buddhism is offered by Norm Phelps in *The Great Compassion: Buddhism and Animal Rights* (2004, Lexington: Lantern Books).

widely known about in the interim. In relation to links between vegetarianism, environmentalism, and opposition to various forms of oppression, he alerts his readers to specifically feminist approaches to animal ethics (which offer call for vegetarianism, context permitting, and often recognize the importance of paying serious heed to the environment as well). Similarly, pointing to links between animal ethics and environmental ethics, he agrees with an assessment made by Susan Sperling in *Animal Liberators: Research and Morality*, that “a high degree of concern about pollution and technological manipulation of the environment and living organisms is expressed by most adherents of the modern animal rights movement. . . [and their] goal is, ultimately, the restoration of harmony between humans and nature through the achievement of animal rights” (Sperling 1999, 200, 128, cited by Fox 1999, 47).

Deep Vegetarianism is, on the whole, an optimistic work. Contrary to Fox’s optimistic approach to animal ethics and environmental ethics, Callicott – here turning back in time again, to the Callicott of 1993 – expresses concerns about the plausibility of trying to urge the public at large to lead examined lives and strive after integrity; as great as “deep vegetarianism” may sound to those favourably disposed towards philosophy, and who are keen to better identify their compartmentalizations and inconsistencies and follow hard-to-hear truths into a beautiful (or not so beautiful) efforts towards ongoing self-improvement, the public at large just isn't all that deep and, moreover, he wrote, doesn't seem at all likely to become so anytime soon.

Only intellectuals, and more especially philosophers, live in a world of ideas, concern themselves with self-consistency, and ask questions like, Given that this is the kind of world we live in and this is the kind of being we are, how should we relate to the world and to one another? (Callicott 1993, 34)

While the above stance holds some weight (especially if one does not equivocate between “philosophers” and “academics working in Departments of Philosophy”) it is most certainly too strong, while also being overly generous towards intellectuals who often themselves show little concern about big questions or about real-world ethics, including, even, academic ethics.

It is not the case that all members of society who are not intellectuals – or widely taken as philosophers – show little interest in questions about who we are, whether our lives are jumbles of contradictions and violations of the values we take ourselves as holding dear, and how it is that we might best, or at least far better, respond to pressing challenges of the day. It seems to me that whether taken in 1993 or today, Callicott was / is wildly underestimating the extent to which the public is indeed interested in philosophy. What is needed is a revival of the protreptics and exhortations to philosophy that, in ancient Greece, were made by famous figures like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle who sought to ensure that people in positions of power were able to differentiate between true philosophy and sham philosophy in order to govern wisely.

5.6 From Bacon/Descartes/Newton to Darwin/Einstein/Leopold

Finally, we reach the third option, and that which Callicott champions. This is set forth in a chapter entitled “How Environmental Ethical Theory May Be Put into Practice.” Here it is argued that the educational-political approach “to the practical implementation of environmental moral theory. . . will only succeed through more subliminal methods of mass communication than the overt, direct, and self-conscious

methods that we believe to be at our disposal” (Callicott 1999, 51). Despite expectations his readers may have upon reading the above-mentioned chapter title, Callicott’s favoured position seems to relegate the desired ends of environmental ethicists as not the product of conscious attention, but rather as the afterbirth of a scientific revolution – that in which is included Darwinism and the New Physics, which he also refers to as the new science (Callicott 1999, 51).

Fortunately for us, Callicott suggests, showing uncharacteristic optimism, the popular Western worldview is already in the process of a positive shift. The pertinent ideas are as follows. We are currently mired in a non-ecologically-friendly Baconian-Cartesian-Newtonian paradigm, which has proved and is continuing to prove disastrous. (I find his takes on Bacon, Descartes, and Newton uncharitable, but will save that for future work.) The good news, he explains, is that there is an emerging Darwinian-Einsteinian-Leopoldian system that is far more conducive to the changes in worldview that we require if we are to move towards sustainability (Callicott 1993, 51). He indicates another favourable change as well: The emerging paradigm is influencing technological innovation, and the creation of products based on the new science which will subtly pervade the mentality of those who use them. He offers the following as an example of what he has in mind.

Think about the Underwood typewriter. One keystroke, one mark on the paper. The typewriter with its linked rods transferring the motion of the finger to the motion of the rods to the motion of the metal letter is a mechanism par excellence. With a PC, one keystroke can dramatically and instantaneously change the whole configuration of a paragraph or a spreadsheet or a graphic. Here we have a technological analog of an ecosystem in which the extirpation of a single keystone species can precipitate cascading reverberations throughout a biotic community. People who use PCs have grown accustomed to systems experience. The present

generation of kids, who grow up with computers in their bedrooms, will think systemically – including, I hope, eco-systemically. (Callicott 1993, 55-56)

Ideally, Callicott continues, the new technology will eradicate the continued production of items created using mechanistic science. New systemic-integrative technological products such as solar-electronic items, organic produce, and futuristic public transportation will become not only “cool” but also – eventually – more reliable and readily available. These will fashion a positive feedback loop; more novel technologies based on the new science will create a greater demand for similar items. This increased demand will allow for greater such production, which will provide the public with yet more subliminal messages that entrench systemic-integrative thinking. With the emergence of such products and the resultant shift of worldview, there will be a concomitant shift of ethos that orients people in ways that will make it far easier for them to take such problems as climate change seriously.

Such an encouraging position reflects a hopeful assessment of broader societal shifts being underway that are moving us towards the sorts of shifts in worldview or ethos that environmentalists generally agree to be needed if we are to arrive at far more sustainable ways of living. The changes that Callicott discusses as underway are also in keeping with his view, cited earlier, that “we live, move, and have our being in an ambient intellectual ether” (Callicott 1999, 35), which is in need of significant changes, as with the need for understanding ourselves in ways that are not marred by confused thoughts about the relationship between value and facts such as those he takes as playing a role in his students and the public at large who take environmental arguments as akin to religious sermons that fall outside the sorts of matters that have a solid foundation in

facts. The changes in our intellectual ether that he presents as underway include a shift towards systemic-integrative thinking which reflects a more accurate view of our ourselves and situation.

If taken on, such thinking would enculturate the public at large in ways that help to make it clear, in a deeply felt way, that our well-being and our prospects are dependent upon the well-functioning of the broader ecosystem of which we are part. Moreover, this shift in thinking could also help the public understand that even seemingly small changes, including those made over the course of many decades, may lead to consequences that eventually prompt quickly unfolding, far-reaching, and cataclysmic results. While engaging with new “postmodern technologies,” he explains, we are internalizing lessons that we need desperately to learn, which may help to bring about shifts in consciousness that “trickle down” and become part of our public consciousness. Such shifts help us move away from “our present unsustainable mechanistic civilization” in ways that would have us do as, he stresses, we need to do, and “rapidly evolve into a new more sustainable systemic configuration, not only technically, but socially, politically, and economically as well” (Callicott 1993, 58). The “political will” necessary to bring about “mutual coercion mutually agreed upon” might in this way be helped along.

Is Callicott’s technologically driven positive-feedback loop theory plausible? Rajni Kothari would respond with a clear “no.” While as we saw earlier in this chapter, Callicott aligns with a holistic ethic, Kothari would reject the idea that a continuance of Western technological consumerism could promote a Leopoldian attitude. Consider Callicott’s remark: “The new solar-electronic technologies have already shown themselves to be seductive. People want them” (Callicott 1993, 58). Kothari might cite

such consumerist salivation as evidence that Callicott's position does little to reduce "the great economic schism that is dividing the world into extremes of affluence and deprivation..." (Kothari 1990, 29). It is also far from clear that a population that is drawn to new (purportedly) environmentally friendly (or at least friendlier) technologies will choose to limit their consumption of them. It is possible that some be seduced more by greenwashing propaganda or otherwise take claims (even when reasonable) of significant environmental improvements as grounds for reducing worries about the need for other and far-reaching changes.

In *The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception*, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer suggest that popular culture thrives insofar as it perpetually promises what it perpetually denies (Adorno and Horkheimer 1947 [1993], 38). A lot and a little has changed in the interim. People are led to seek after upgrades to their computers and phones as many products are planned in ways that ensure their obsolescence, promoting significant waste. The continued creation of an over-abundance of technological products (even ones of a sort that Callicott refers to as postmodern) is environmentally damaging as it would require an unconscionably large depletion of natural resources. Electric cars, for instance, are seen as if environmentally neutral or better, but they also come with significant costs even if they are often less environmentally harmful than cars that run on gas. Even if consumerism that aims after (or pretends to) better business practices were less destructive than today's consumerism, it would nevertheless continue to propagate many of today's environmental difficulties. It may not do nearly enough to curtail our tendency to proceed in environmentally ruinous ways while chasing after "thneeds," to use a catchy term from *The Lorax*, which was first published in 1971, the same year that

Callicott led his first environmental ethics class.¹ Along such lines, Kothari advises his readers that ecological improvements “must lie in a curtailment of wants” (Kothari 1990, 34). Western people and likewise people in the developed world more broadly bear obligations to move towards improved, ecologically safer technology; but also far less gluttonous ways of life.

Further against Callicott’s technology-focused hopes for the future: Even were continued technological greed to result in an expansion of integrative-systemic thinking, this need not imply that people will think of themselves in this manner and apply the related thought-patterns into their ethical frameworks. For instance, would it not be abundantly clear for the modern person of today, for whom the ideal is not to be out-of-shape and fat, combined with Callicott’s expectation that people are oriented towards their ideals, come to recognize straightforward links from sedentary lifestyles and junk food diets to ill-health and excess weight? If so, why do such clearly harmful practices continue to persist? Even among those who claim to believe in a God who cares for and makes demands upon us, surprisingly few show signs of being seriously committed to living up to the commandments of their almighty Father, even when they also claim to believe that the duly faithful are rewarded with eternal salvation. Moreover, insofar as there is some truth to Callicott’s claim that we are living in an era of an ascending Darwinian-Einsteinian-Leopoldian worldview, and influenced as he suggests by postmodern, new science technologies, why assume that people will not orient such a paradigm towards unrealistic hopes of quick-fix technologies or come to think that things are far too complex for such beings as ourselves to understand what is going on or what

¹ An interesting discussion of *The Lorax*, including an account of its at-times hostile reception, is offered by Lisa Lebdukas’s “Rethinking Human Need: Seuss’s’s The Lorax” (1994).

to do about it? Just wait, some may say (and some do say) for AI to save the day (for those still left to be saved and for those who can afford and have access to it and who are not left impoverished, flooded and hungry refugees).

It seems to be the case that irrespective of worldview and the ethos that may or may not come with it, people tend to take the path of least resistance and are as in need of good character now as they were when Zarathustra, Confucius and Socrates were urging people to strive to orient their lives with what is good. Just as most people of today are not adequately reflective when it comes to leaving examined lives or striving to intelligently cultivate good judgment and to develop the character and relationships and society that would help them live in keeping with it, without significant changes to education from early on in life upwards, it is likely that such trends will continue. While such trends are common among humans, there do seem to be periods of history in which the public at large and its leaders are at least significantly more oriented towards the sorts of traits conducive to good citizenship and wise leadership than at other periods. A part of what seems to me to be called for is to push for a much needed twenty-first century enlightenment – one that learns from the strengths of past enlightenments while also learning from their oversights and blunders.

Alongside Callicott and the many others referenced at the outset of this chapter, Kothari also defends the position that shifts in worldview are vital if we are to move towards sustainable ways of living. For Kothari, a view such as one that puts significant hope in new technologies and in the public being swayed by subliminal paradigm shifts is sure to be futile insofar as it is “ethically vacuous” (Kothari 1990, 28). There are, Kothari argues, little prospects for people to change their conduct in ways that will align with

sustainable ways of living so long as their worldview fails to genuinely respect the rights of humans and other animals and fails to respect our shared need to be wise stewards (Kothari 1990, 28). For the necessary shifts in worldview to come about, Kothari recommends that people consciously re-view their institutional situations and carefully select and alter their actions for the betterment of Gaia, as it were (Kothari 1990, 33).

We have by now seen many reasons to be skeptical of approaches to sustainability that expect one and all to start acting as socially responsible, moral persons who take human rights, animal rights, and environmentalism seriously and show it in how they live their lives and run their businesses, schools, governments, and other institutions. Even as it would be wise to work towards inspiring such shifts, it would be unwise to downplay the impediments posed by the realities behind the unfortunate evidence of our species that most people conform to dominant practices and few are the sort that Diogenes sought after with his lamp, ever in search of an honest man.

Kothari mentions (decades ago) that current world crises might drive people into ethical reflection, “[f]or it is only in times of deep crises that major changes become possible, for better or worse, and human beings are capable of both” (Kothari 1990, 29). It is not clear that major changes only come out of major crises. Many people compartmentalize crises, including those who have the most power to make significant change and who also are most protected against harms brought on by poor environmental stewardship. A crisis with sufficient magnitude to drive people living largely comfortable lives into self-reflection and efforts towards bettering themselves and the world, if ever a likely result, may occur only after immense damage has mounted with the future prospects in an incredibly – yet not surprisingly – bleak prognosis.

5.7 Towards Sustainable Societies: A Pluralistic Approach

Works such as *The Social Construction of Reality* help to show what was not a revelation that Searle was first to discover: that the ways we live and interact do a lot to sustain human-made practices and to enculturate our children into taking practices that could and should be otherwise for granted and to follow after their parents and society in further entrenching practices that are ever more obviously long overdue for change. For those who (at least at some level) know better, to continue on with clearly harmful practices is essentially akin to voting for just such practices to continue. Yet, similarly, even if – as with Joe Bioregionalist – one casts all of one’s votes for the most sustainable practices one is aware of, one is still doing so in a world in which such dedication is extremely rare. Clearly, far more is needed. Likewise, far more is needed than for people to work as educators, and likewise, for people to push for better governments, or to make films and shows urging the public of changes that are needed and striving to inspire them in that way.

It would be a mistake, though, I think, to downplay such contributions in light of the magnitude of changes required. Instead we should expand upon the above list and consider the ever-growing list of ways that different people, with their diverse orientations, strengths and weaknesses, might be able to contribute – as factory workers talking with co-workers over lunch and making suggestions for change, as business people, as comedians, as doctors, engineers, chefs, farmers, lawyers, bankers, parents, children, families, communities, and so on.

But how best to influence those who tend to compartmentalize rather than hear

environmental pleas or who show no inclination of giving the matter much care at all, or worse, spread about misinformation? We should normalize the expectation that we and others we meet and engage with are taking climate change seriously. We should work towards making it a practice of asking ourselves and others – including institutions and people who have or seek far more power than most – what we are and what they are doing in response to the environmental crisis. We should work towards improving related public education and raising well-informed accounts of harms tied to our current ways of living, both now and into the future. We should also be aware of the importance of avoiding responses that are so full of bleak news and dire prognoses that we end up paralyzed in horror, overwhelmed, and end up leading others into states of depression or despair. Greta Thunberg’s experience is instructive: she learned about climate change at school, in a context in which no one around her understood the real-world crisis ever more overdue for a proportional response. Thunberg’s well-being improved when she was able to connect with others; similarly, we can help others to guard against such despair by cultivating solidarity, showing that environmentalists are not alone and others are doing their part to help to improve our well-being rather than wear us down.

No one should be left to feel like they are surrounded by apathetic people who do not care and can't be bothered. Such free-loading responses should be recognized as such and made taboo. The gamble attached to them should be made apparent. To simply go along with business as usual and hope for the best, or to take on an apathetic stance, or even hope for some cataclysm, are ways of entrusting our prospects to chance.

Assuming that people care and that they are considering their own role and have worthwhile contributions to offer can help other people to take on leadership positions.

When hearing about or seeing indications of efforts people are making, it would be helpful to be open to the possibility that they may have a lot to teach you and that positions they defend that seem wrong may have far more merit to them than appears to be the case. Likewise, rather than hold back concerns or information that may help someone to recognize a major problem with their understanding of the situation, it is more charitable to share them in a tactful way and assume that they are not closed-minded and may be grateful for the concerns and information passed along.

Of course, some forms of advocacy are far from tactful. If efforts are made to encourage people to share and to proceed in ways that most resonates with them, and to encourage them (and ourselves) to be open to criticisms as well as self-reflective (as Callicott models) so that we remain alive to the possibility that we might be engaging in misguided efforts and it might be best to make some major changes and try something else. When attention is paid to gaining a sense of the wide range of efforts to respond, and when we listen to a wide array of accounts of what people find inspiring or repellent, it is often fascination to learn that what one person finds repugnant and apt to turn people off from concern about the environment at times is just what lights someone else on fire to become involved. Kothari and Booth for instance seem inclined towards approaches that embrace spirituality whereas Milbrath and the academic Callicott are committed to more secular approaches that at times incline towards the academic (which is not to say that such positions cannot heavily overlap). For some, a secular or academic approach may be a big turn-off and a dead option whereas for others, a spiritual approach may not only be welcome but vital as an entry point, especially if for instance a person's spirituality is rooted in religious convictions and practices at the core of their life.

It is often common for people who pursue advocacy efforts to put little thought into their approach and to assume others are much like them while discounting a lot of evidence that that is not the case. To approach others in ways that pay no heed to their own interests or worldview, and to treat them as if they are another version of one's own self and so will be moved by whatever you find moving, is a poor way to meet our fellow beings and also unlikely to lead to good results unless they happen to be much like one's own self. Sometimes, for a secular academic to help make his passion for environmentalism legible to a person seated next to him on the bus it may help to learn about the person first, in which case, if the person shows interest, one might end up offering recommendations far more likely to appeal to that person than what one might, oneself, find most captivating. Thus, for instance, someone highly oriented towards science, reason, and logic might be captivated by academic works that most people would struggle to understand and be bored by. It would not be difficult for attempts to be heard by offering strings of academic papers to prove counterproductive or far less productive than having a slower conversation and meeting the person where they are, which, if one's aim is to do just that, and one is especially passionate about environmentalism, may have one learning about a wide array of efforts underway that appeal in different ways to different people.

People heavily seeped in academic philosophy may find popular works, films or songs to be akin to nails scratching a chalkboard if one is evaluating them as if they were works of analytic philosophy. While analytic philosophy may have a great deal to offer, it may also come with many biases. People can be inspired by inaccurate claims and leaps of logic – reasoning that would fare terribly if submitted as a term paper for a philosophy

class. Treating all such efforts as if they are nails to be hit with an analytic philosophy hammer risks missing many opportunities to learn and grow in ways that might help one to see significant oversights with one's own approach, e.g., elitist tendencies that make it hard to connect with people, that often end up intimidating or turning off people or coming off as arrogant.

To encourage oneself and others to cultivate and use their own best judgment can help bring about far more options that may appeal to far more people. At the same time, as mentioned above, approaches that are closed off to learning and to self-reflection may end up being misguided and in some cases, even hostile to efforts to show significant problems as when for instance a person thinks it is more sustainable to consume a diet high in animal products if those products are produced nearby. To be open and encouraging of efforts is not the same thing as proceeding as if a relativist or to remain silent when aware of significant oversights. To handle such disagreements and hard-to-hear concerns is, as stressed above, not something that comes easily to humans. There are often far more insights and helpful guidance in relation to dealing with such situations from traditional philosophy and other (often overlapping) spiritual and religious traditions (cf. Fox, 113-139).

Being open and encouraging thus is not a reason to hide disapproval when it comes to practices and ways of life that are environmentally ruinous. To construct a sustainable society, given that the changes needed are not only individual but also social and political, disapproval and the building of taboos against practices that are causing a great deal of harm seem to be necessary. We do not need to be rude to share related concerns, though in some cases, our efforts at tact may still be treated as rude. Decades

ago, when spending time with friends from my hometown, I would sometimes find myself being treated badly when sharing my criticisms of smoking in bars, when not laughing along with jokes about gay people, or when not mocking someone whose sex was not clear (“What is that *thing* over there?”). Times have changed as have the members of that group, most of whom would now respond with vitriol against the same sorts of talk and jokes they used to make or laugh along with. As changes that are needed to challenge the status quo, the truth is that it is to be expected that efforts will often lead to reactance or ridicule or evasion. Certainly one is setting oneself up for a lot of disappointment and anger if one expects everyone to quickly become an environmental crusader and make major life changes in short order and without ever looking back. That does not mean that we should stop working for necessary changes.

I think it likely that recognition of vastly different levels of abilities when it comes to ethics and spirituality contributed to the development of worldviews that take some people as having already lived and learned from many, many lives while others have experienced only a few lives and have far more to learn. I think it is a major disservice that it is so common to be fascinated with psychopaths and negative forms of deviance, and to pay much heed to musical or mathematical prodigies, while even the concept of moral genius is a rarity and when considered at all relegated to extremely rare saints. It is most often when a tragedy occurs and a child dies that people talk of rare gifts of being kind and caring. Perhaps current strong associations between ethics and female-associated traits have a lot to do with why there is so much attention paid to children showing artistic or mathematical or musical abilities, and the like, while a child showing a rare talent for ethics is rarely heard about. (To be clear, rare talents for math and music

and ethics can combine together. It may be that philosophy at its best is most likely when certain such combinations come together.)

Given that people are different and have different aptitudes and different strengths and weaknesses, people also invariably disagree about advocacy strategies. PETA may have excellent reasons to believe in the efficacy of their bawdy “I’d Rather Go Naked Than Wear Fur” and “Sexiest Vegan of the Year” campaigns. My own inclination, however, is to find PETA embarrassing and such tactics off-putting and opposed to my other deeply held ethical views, which I do not hold in a relativistic way. Perhaps it is an effective way to reach a population that is already bombarded with portrayals of girls and women that emphasize youth, sexual appeal, and attractiveness by a narrowly set standard. Or perhaps such campaigns are intended to be ironic. It is possible to dislike or even loathe such campaigns while also recognizing their potential to be effective.

Consider the following parallel scenario: As a high school student I felt a great deal of pressure to be thin, fueled in part by media portrayals of girls and women, and which led me to search out information, e.g., in teen magazines, relating to food and diet. Fortunately, before long, I became skeptical of the portrayals that had left such a big impression on me, aided by exposure to pertinent feminist critiques of sexual objectification, as well as pertinent life experiences. Most of my friends developed eating disorders and most of us were fading away. One day, at school, I watched in horror as my two best friends made a pact, each vowing to kill the other if she ever got fat (if I wasn't a feminist before that day, I have been one since). Around the same time, it was also becoming increasingly evident that the adult I was closest with as a child – my maternal grandmother – whose beauty in her youth was much revered, was coming to imagine that

as she aged, she was losing value at least in the eyes of the world at large and becoming someone so reviled that she would rather not see medical professionals as she imagined that physical examinations would disgust them. As I was putting such life lessons together, I found my way away from magazines that seem set to build insecurities and a shallow approach to life and sought out authoritative nutrition and fitness guidance. Part of my initial desire to be thin and attractive was also motivated by years of bullying. I came to be horrified (a common emotion of mine) when some of the same people who bullied me were treating me as if I were a different person altogether after I made some superficial changes. It did not occur to me until years later that there might have been other reasons for their improved treatment of me. The point in getting into so many details is to offer a sense – and barely a tip of the iceberg – of the various sorts of factors that can come together to share our view of ourselves and the world and our place in it. As I matured what began as concerns about my own appearance, transformed into a beneficial concern for nutrition and overall fitness and well-being.

Perhaps others (especially girls and young women) may experience a similar passageway if they are drawn at first into animal ethics and advocacy in ways heavily marked by self-focused reasons (sadly apt to already be all too alive to them) and then, as they learn more, they move from a more self-focused approach to their diet to an approach that is more socially and politically aware, which may, in turn, lead them away from the same sort of base reasons that played a role in pulling them into animal advocacy in the first place. This may in turn lead them to see connections between their concern for animals and concerns about sexism and about the environment and so on, in short, towards a more mindful approach to life and the world.

Advocacy efforts are unlikely to be successful if they do not reach people where they are at, even if that place is far removed from what we would hope them to ultimately embrace and endorse. Those who do make use of or promote such “Rather Go Naked” strategies and the like may themselves be doing so, at times, with some reservations or second-guessing and may themselves be glad to see some criticisms being offered as well. Such campaigns and criticisms of them could end up serving as a launchpad into a more expansive approach to ethics just as, for instance, one may go to a hotdog fundraiser for an animal shelter, and go home rattled by criticisms someone had shouted out, that it is ridiculous to help animals by eating animals, and sharing some horrifying information about how pigs are treated *en route* to becoming those hot dogs.

While some people brush off such unsettled exchanges, others are more inclined to stay up at night thinking about them and then to follow up, learn more and to make called for changes. The same person who was happy to buy hot dogs to save literal dogs might, three months later, have read a dozen books on the treatment of animals and related far-reaching harms which in turn may have led her into learning more about environmentalism.

As the above suggests, some advocacy efforts may be springboards for overlapping movements. Feminists who do not show much interest in animal rights or environmentalism and who respond with a scathing critique of what they see (and I think rightly) as PETA’s sexist and misguided campaigns often end up having discussions with animal advocates when such campaigns are shared through social media. That can at time offer a platform for other feminists who do take animal rights and environmentalism seriously to share information with critics of the PETA ad that can lead into lively and

influential discussions about the links between abuses to animals and to women and the environment. Much as I call for efforts to normalize the expectation that others are serious about our need to construct a sustainable society, I think an important part of that is to normalize and help to cultivate conditions in which people are more comfortable disagreeing with others and better able to do so in ways that are conducive to improvements.

Openness to concerns – while also paying heed to boundaries – can help to forge beneficial alliances while helping to move towards more integrative and holistic worldviews that in time will hopefully make it second nature for people to consider what we did not (yet) evolve to consider: how actions here may be tied to harms way over there and may moreover be tied to injustices that may be suffered by humans and other animals who are yet to be born. Rather than focus only on environmentalism, I think a wise environmentalist organization – certainly the sort I would be most eager to join – would take “environment” in more than sense most often associated with “environmentalism” and work towards building wiser environments at home, at school, at work, and locally, nationally, and internationally. An ability to be open about what matters most of all to us, and what concerns us is vitally important and sorely needed.

To sum up the view of how we might construct a sustainable society that is sketched above: it is best to encourage environmental activists to cultivate and use their own best judgment about how best to pursue environmental sustainability and a better world for all, while encouraging openness to criticism and striving to make one’s ethical stances legible to others. Rather than focus only on our own individual practices, such as aiming, on one’s own, to leave a light footprint on the earth without paying much heed

about what others are doing,¹ it is important to attend to the bigger picture as well, including one's place in it. So doing may lead one to recognize that one may be more effective by being less focused on one's own strict adherence to far higher standards of conduct than more than a few people are remotely apt to follow. Personal well-being is vitally important and it would be a mistake to be too harshly critical of people who struggle to take stances outwardly that align with their inner values. People can find themselves going along with entrenched social norms to which they have strong moral objections, but that at the same time, they are afraid to challenge, worried about the reactions of their partner, family, friends, colleagues, and so on. Of course, they may have mistaken assessments of what might happen and might even be surrounded by others who are in a situation similar to their own and together riding the road to Abilene as it were.

When those with bold personalities, or who have fewer difficulties being open with their criticisms of the status quo, normalize disruptions and break silences that are in need of breaking, they can take on leadership roles in adjusting social norms in ways that make it easier for a wider array of people to be comfortable sharing their own related reservations and moving towards making related changes in their own lives. Some may be quiet and shy and want to help by lending a hand to a young mother in need without ever saying a word about the environment, yet that may be one of the most powerful things that can be done to help the environment. People who are cared for and helped when in dire need often in time become the most passionate helpers of others as they

¹ This metaphor is borrowed from Wackernagel and Rees (1996).

know first-hand what it feels like to be in desperate need for help and to be without as the world carries on as if all is good and well.

A wise approach to sustainability calls for the embrace of varied and at-times conflicting approaches, and also for an appreciation of the very imperfect beings we are and the very imperfect world we are in. Even as it calls for us to be aware of our weaknesses and vulnerabilities, a wise approach to sustainability also calls for us to pay more heed to the importance of inspiring role models and heroes, real and fictional. The greater the number of open gates, the greater the likelihood that ever more people will make beneficial changes in their lives and that our schools and governments and other institutions will make urgently required changes as well.

Chapter 6 Should Feminists Be Humanists?

Introduction

It has become common for feminists to (1) claim to be committed to the goal of dismantling all forms of oppression: sexism, but also racism, heterosexism, ableism, ageism, and so on, and (2) to take various forms of oppression as interconnected and mutually reinforcing. To take a prominent recent example, Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the highly influential term ‘intersectionality’ to convey the interconnected nature of social categories such as gender, race and class as they apply to a person or group, and how they create overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination and disadvantage (2017). Yet it is uncommon for feminists to include speciesism as a form of oppression that must be dismantled. Indeed, it is more the exception than the norm for feminist works to even mention the possibility that nonhuman animals can be oppressed. ‘Ecofeminists’ have sought connections between gender and the environment, though they tend to couch their views in radical feminist terms, invoking a female way of knowing, rather than appreciating that the struggle for gender equality logically entails an appreciation for the inequality between humans and other species (see, e.g., Booth 1997, Daly 1990, Gaard 1993, Griffin 2015, Warren 1996). Most feminists do not take nonhumans as an oppressed group, and do not agree that speciesism is a problem that must be included within feminist theory or practice. They are at least implicitly dedicated to humanism: the view that humans are the sole or pre-eminent bearers of moral standing.

This chapter first, calls attention to the fact that it is standard practice for feminist positions to at least implicitly embrace extreme forms of humanism; and second, questions such views in light of the sort of feminist positions captured above. I aim to

show that it is deeply problematic for feminists to endorse such extreme forms of humanism, making the case that feminists ought to consider embracing a more nuanced and less extreme approach to humanism, such as that articulated by David Sztybel. While Sztybel is dedicated to animal rights, he has articulated a devil's advocate argument in favour of humanism as part of a broader attempt to test his position against opposing views. Technically, he refers to the received humanist position as "Obligatory" Anthropocentrism (OA). Less technically and more playfully, he personifies it as Juggernaut; and not without good reason, as OA is often touted as the strongest defense of humanism to date. In addition to the Juggernaut, Sztybel offers a thorough review of various defenses of humanism.

I appeal to Sztybel's work for two reasons: first, to bring often implicit and unstated assumptions that are embedded in humanist positions to the fore so that feminists who embrace humanist positions can gain a sense of how unexamined and taken-for-granted aspects of their positions might appear if explicated and defended; and second, to demonstrate that Juggernautian humanism relies upon approaches to responding to difference and power over vulnerable others in ways that are in significant tension with feminist commitments. I hope to show that feminists ought to reject extreme forms of humanism and also consider whether even more nuanced and sensitive approaches to humanism are compatible with sound feminist theory and practice.

Most feminists are humanists. Why? To answer the just asked question calls for paying attention to what is meant by "humanism." A standard definition takes "humanism" as the "tendency to emphasize humans and their status, importance, powers,

achievements, interests, or authority”¹ (Honderich 1995 [2005]). Is this a position that it is sensible for feminists to endorse? This chapter argues that there are significant tensions between feminist commitments and humanism, or, at least, that that is the case when it comes to the most prevalent approaches to humanism which do not merely focus on humans but also, as a matter of course, pay extremely little or no attention to calls made in defense of other animals, or simply assume that humans should master other animals. It is time that we understood, especially in relation to the food industry, that other animals can also be oppressed and opposition to the oppression of other animals be incorporated into feminist theory and practice.

6.1 The Sounds of Silence: Still Playing After All These Years

There are many conflicting and incompatible and at times warring approaches to feminism, which has led to some to refer to feminism in the plural as “feminisms.” Yet, for all the disagreement among feminists and feminisms – including disagreements about who and what merits being counted as such – feminists on the whole have become increasingly aware of the need for feminism to pay heed to the diversity of women’s situations and plurality of women’s voices.² It has become common for feminists, on the whole, “to denounce totalizing theories, to celebrate difference, recognize ‘otherness’,

¹ The quoted material is an adapted version of the definition of humanism provided by the *Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, which retains language usage long critiqued by feminists, and presents humanism as the “tendency to emphasize man and his status, importance, powers, achievements, interests, or authority” (Honderich 1995 [2005]).

² Feminists would do well to rethink the exclusivity of their own constant and normative use of “women.” A girl ain’t a woman, but she is female and sexism harms her too. Perhaps the frequent silencing of girls by feminists is linked to feminist humanism? Some may recall my mention of ageism above which is pertinent through so too is the fact that feminist concerns about ageism have focused heavily on oppression against elderly women. Before ending this note, it is necessary to add that many feminists (and many others) would challenge the assumption that a girl (or a woman) is, as such, also female, a challenge that is particularly contentious when referring to girls rather than to women.

and acknowledge the multiplicity of feminisms” (Kemp and Squires 1998, 4).¹ In conjunction with this expansive shift, the goals of feminism are also taken as having broadened. While feminists at large can be safely expected to oppose and aim to eradicate sexism, it is now widely held that any sound approach to feminism requires a “plurality of resistance” that considers far more than discrimination and oppression that relate to sex. Today feminist theorists acknowledge that women are not a monolith and that ameliorating sexism also calls for attention to ways that women are harmed by other forms of oppression, such as that tied to race, class, or sexuality. Feminists frequently note that all forms of oppression are interconnected and mutually reinforcing (see Crenshaw 2016 above), or profess softer variants of that claim as, for instance, in Sandra Lee Bartky’s claim that it is “highly unlikely that any form of oppression will disappear entirely until the system of oppression as a whole is overthrown” (Bartky 1990, 32). Insofar as feminism is taken as resting heavily on efforts to ameliorate the oppression of women, and it is now common for feminists to recognize the need to factor in the many

¹ For other feminist statements along the same lines see (Warren 1996 172; Frye 1983, 41; hooks 1998, 2000); Young 1990, 40; and Tong 2002). But of course, few feminists would celebrate *all* difference and embrace and respect *all* perspectives and *all* views that women – a quite diverse lot – hold, let alone lay out blanket support for anything and everything that any woman anywhere does. That would be stupid. Karen Warren shares her own way of responding to differences among women’s positions through the following quilt metaphor that would, I think, be worthy of and would reward many hours of consideration and examination.

As I conceive of feminist ethics in the pre-feminist present, it rejects attempts to conceive of ethical theory in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions, because it assumes that there is no essence (in the sense of some transhistorical, universal, absolute abstraction) of feminist ethics. While attempts to formulate joint necessary and sufficient conditions of a feminist ethic are unfruitful, nonetheless, there are some necessary conditions, what I prefer to call “boundary conditions,” of a feminist ethic.

These boundary conditions clarify some of the minimal conditions of a feminist ethic without suggesting that feminist ethics has some ahistorical essence. They are like the boundaries of a quilt or collage. They delimit the territory of the piece without dictating what the interior, the design, the actual pattern of the piece looks like. Because the actual design of the quilt emerges from the multiplicity of voices of women in a cross-cultural context, the design will change over time. It is not something static. (Warren 1996, 183-4)

different positions that women are in, it is typical for contemporary feminists to oppose oppression in all its forms as a matter of course, which also seems to be entailed as a matter of coherence.

The legitimacy of feminist opposition to the oppression of women is bound up with the legitimacy of opposition to oppression. If oppression is wrong, it is a wrong, and for feminists to take oppression as wrong only when the oppression in question is that which oppresses women (and girls), they are modeling an approach to ethics and advocacy that suggests that it is somehow legitimate to pick and choose particular forms of oppression to count as injustices, and to disregard all oppression – including that which they may themselves be complicit with – that does not have women (or girls) as its victims. That is the sort of position that, especially when laid bare and put in explicit terms, is not a stance that many would consider reasonable or well thought out. Rather than fixate only on the oppression of women, then, or even only on oppression insofar as it is also experienced by a woman (as with a black woman, a disabled woman, and so on), some feminists take feminism itself as calling for an opposition to all forms of oppression, and not only in relation to women, but across the board, even if feminists as such tend to focus on the oppression of women.

As the above passage by Bartky suggests, one way feminists defend the position that sound approaches to feminism should be attention to all forms of oppression is by taking oppression as a “system.” A similar move is suggested by Audre Lorde in her often-quoted claim that “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House” (Lorde 1984). If we aim to ameliorate oppression, we are unlikely to succeed if we ourselves proceed in ways that oppress others and that otherwise perpetuate rather than

challenge the broader practices, structures, and institutions that emerged out of quite different times and continue to bear some legacies of oppressive practices were, not all that long ago, widely taken as natural and normal. Similarly, most contemporary feminists are at least theoretically committed to scoping out and doing their best to avoid participating in or otherwise condoning oppression of any kind. What Jane Meyering puts mildly, and directs at patriarchy, is by now common a feminist commonplace in relation to abuses of power and oppressive social structures and institutions more broadly: “I don't think we can strengthen our feminist struggle against one aspect of patriarchy by ignoring or accepting other aspects” (cited by Gruen 1993, 82).

While there may be good reason to separate theory and practice (a question worthy of a great deal of attention), some feminists prefer to consider their feminist efforts as “praxis” and take “praxis” as including a combination of theory and practice. “The personal is political” is a well-known feminist phrase. When feminism is taken as praxis, one’s personal conduct is not sensibly taken as separable from one’s theory. If a feminist lays out a feminist theory in a textbook and has it distributed throughout universities and read far and wide, her credibility is undermined if her conduct is wildly at odds with her written theory. When considering the theory aspect of her feminism, which is expected to be bound up with action, a feminist who takes feminism as praxis may take it that her *actual* theory should be taken as the implicit theory that corresponds with the way that she lives her life and her textbook theory (however nice it may sound) is more accurately considered as her *professed* theory. As life is messy and humans have limitations and weaknesses, the point here is not that feminists are expected to live as exemplars of their own (professed) ideals. Rather, my sense at least is that the emphasis

upon praxis is a sort of feminist's Hippocratic oath or a feminist version of an engineering ring (which is itself the engineering rendition of a Hippocratic oath).

In other words, when a feminist is thinking of her praxis, she is called home as it were, to take stock and attentively consider – and reconsider – the legitimacy of her conduct in light of her considered worldview and, likewise, when engaging in one or the other to have an eye on the whole. As I have come to take the term “praxis,” it is a call for mindfulness and for being open to the possibility that one may veer off track or find oneself riding along a track that, really, isn't a track that is a good idea to be riding along. Another aspect of feminist praxis, and how demanding it can be – which calls for a nod perhaps, jokingly, about how miserable and humourless feminists tend to be – is that it is not enough to feminists to pay heed to their theory and their action as those terms are standardly taken, but they are expected to recognize that oftentimes, what is missing and is not said, done or considered is what may most merit attention or at least may be unjust or otherwise problematic to keep in the dark as it were. In its most demanding forms, a feminist may take it as her obligation to do her utmost to realize, acknowledge, and speak up against / act against all forms of oppression that she encounters. It is oppressive, according to some especially demanding forms of feminist praxis, to fail to acknowledge oppression that one ought to be able to recognize wherever and whenever it emerges. Failing to acknowledge oppression implies that it does not exist, or worse yet, that it is not problematic at all, and not only do such failures do nothing to help those who are oppressed, it is also taken as a form of complicity to live one's life in ways that have one aware of oppression and yet just carry on with one's day , which is all the more loathsome if one's day comprises of pricey lattes, time at an expensive gym, drinks with

one's friends, and one's corporate day-job. Even if one is writing on injustices, and striving to ameliorate them, it is important to consider ways that one may be operating in ways that come with some blameworthy silences that mask significant oppression.¹

To be ever on guard against even the slightest indication of oppression whatever would have one training oneself to act much as a severely traumatized person acts – in a hyper vigilant mode that is primed to detect dangers that are either not at all likely or apt to be interpreted in an exaggerated way. Nor should one feel obliged to speak up and clearly acknowledge every (so far as one can tell) major oppression one encounters (which if one is in frequent proximity to vulnerable and severely disadvantaged populations, may be routine). Such high standards may quickly lead to overwhelm or burnout and sets as a standard a martyr level of personal sacrifice as though one should strive to live as a saint.

It is important to pay heed to ways that speaking up may be supererogatory or foolish and likewise to be attentive to ways that well-intended attempts to challenge oppression may prove counterproductive, may reinforce degrading stereotypes about feminism in ways that make it more difficult for feminists to be taken seriously. Feminists risk coming across as hyper-sensitive and easy to anger and prone to offence, which may then contribute to more seriously grievances going unheard and being assumed as overblown whining and attached to allegations of having a “victim complex” or the like. Other practical considerations also show that there are good reasons to accept

¹ For example, Sandra Lee Bartky faults Foucault for focusing on corporeal punishment of males throughout *Discipline and Punish*. In so doing, she argues, he has silenced the oppressive discipline of women's bodies (1990, 65). Likewise, she faults Frantz Fanon's (otherwise excellent) account of colonialization for treating only of colonized “black men,” and failing to notice the oppression that occurs between these men and “their” women (1990, 22-32).

limitations on much it makes sense for a feminist (or other advocate) to say or do as part of her praxis without undue personal risk such as the loss of employment, damaged or broken relationships with friends and loved ones, threatening one's ability to meet other significant obligations (as to one's children), or being burned at the stake. There are clearly no easy one-size fits all answers in attempts to consider what makes for an adequately feminist position.

One can look through volumes upon volumes of feminist literature and find nothing whatever about the possibility that nonhuman animals are oppressed. Indeed, one scarcely sees any signs, even, that feminist authors are aware that there are other animals at all. Apparently, most feminists do not think that this silence speaks against their feminist commitments, or that they should take the issue of animal liberation seriously. When the topic does arise, as for instance with specifically feminist calls urging other feminists to take animal ethics seriously, the feminist making the call is often met with silence. To take some key examples of quite possibly the most widely read feminist accounts of oppression – Marilyn Frye (1984), Alison Jaggar (1984), and Marion Young (1990) – do not question whether nonhumans can be oppressed. The default stance is a stance that assumes and remains within a humanist worldview. As David Sztybel explains in “Empathy and Rationality in Ethics,” like other humanist literature that aims to “defin[e] oppression, . . . they typically define it as certain treatments of ‘people,’ or ‘humanity,’ or ‘human beings,’ and this logically excludes animal liberation from the start” (2000a, 88-89).

Young, for her part, claims that her account is “comprehensive, in the sense that it covers all the groups said by new left social movements to be oppressed and all the ways

they are oppressed” (1990, 42). Surely animal liberation is a new left social movement. But she does not mention it, and even if she had, her account of oppression precludes the possibility that nonhumans can be oppressed.¹ Perhaps things have changed in the past decade? Unless the change has been growing underground and is soon to bud, this is not the case. The silence continues. When she is in the counting house, bell hooks claims that *Feminism is for Everybody* (2000). In the politics of her reality, though, hooks does not count nonhumans as part of the “everybody” that feminism is for. They, and the possibility of their oppression, are erased from existence.² But ain't they a somebody? Apparently not. They are nowhere to be found in the “comprehensive” scope of the *Feminist Frontiers* (Richardson, Taylor, Whittier, 2001), the most widely used feminist anthology – a veritable tome of feminist scholarship. Another such tome, simply titled *Feminisms*, also forks a steak into this silence (Kemp and Squires 1997).

Perhaps I am mistaken and buried somewhere in one or more of the above-mentioned sources is a footnote, a sentence here, a snippet there, dedicated to the plight of nonhumans and those who raise their voices for them.³ But what do such token

¹ This is the case insofar as she argues that oppression must be understood in terms of social groups, as she argues that it is in virtue of membership to a social group that one is oppressed. “A social group is a collective of persons differentiated from at least one other group by cultural forms, practices, or way of life. Members of a group have a specific affinity with one another because of their similar experience or way of life, which prompts them to associate with one another more than with those not identified with the group, or in a different way (Young 1990, 43). Most readers of this passage, I conjecture, would not think that nonhumans qualify as members of a social group.

² Here I am unabashedly borrowing ideas from Marilyn Frye’s “To Be and Be Seen,” from her *Politics of Reality* (1983, 152-173). She is not speaking of nonhuman animals, but of women in general, and of lesbians in particular.

³ Feminists have long called attention to the importance of paying heed to silence (see, e.g., Olsen 1978, Rich 1979). One familiar sort of example is found in the following:

When I decided to write a history of women in Canada, it all seemed pretty straightforward. I would go to the library and gather information until I understood what women had done in creating this country. It was a nice idea until I got to the library. Nothing! Well, the general histories did mention women. I know-because I looked in their indexes and found... Queen Victoria and Lake Louise. / Surely it was my mistake, I thought. Maybe if I read through the

snippets even matter if they are only that? In any event, the near-complete eclipse of the reality of nonhumans “is a truly remarkable feat of silence” (Frye 1983 160).¹ Even more remarkable is the feat of this in spite of² the *fact* they are sentient, breathing, loving, lonely, suffering beings, billions upon billions of whom are subject to “factory farms” on any given year – and the *possibility* that this just might be oppressive. It is shameful, to say the least.

6.2 What’s All the Noise About Humanism?

books Well, yes, there were a few general references to women, as in “the women and children were. . . left at the fort, or drowned in the river, or starved in the winter, or abandoned on an ice floe.” I ached to see even one mention of “the men and children.” / So much for the general histories. It was clear that their authors were so preoccupied with wars, politics, and the machinations of railroad building that they had no thought for the people who actually did the work, particularly the women. / I was indignant and insulted. And worried, as I realized what a difficult task I had undertaken. . .” (The Corrective Collective 1974, 1).

¹ Here, again, I am unabashedly borrowing from Marilyn Frye’s *Politics of Reality*, which has a bird on its cover, and uses a cage metaphor to offer an account of oppression, but yet does not show any signs of including concern about animals as part of her feminist theory and action.

² Perhaps this silence is, literally, in spite of the fact that nonhumans are living sentient beings who have so much in common with us. In “The Scaling of Bodies,” which is Chapter 5 of *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (1990), Young offers interesting ideas about our failure to realize the oppression of others (1990). While her title offers a metaphor for the comparison of human to nonhuman others (i.e., fish), she does not make this connection. She argues that it may be the case that we cherish “wholeness of the self” and a homogenous personal identity because we are not willing to come to terms with the fact that we are each complex, heterogeneous subjects. We fear that we too may become ugly, handicapped, gay, old. And, the easier the boundary can slip between “me” and “them,” the easier it is to resist this connection and respond with a deepened prejudice against this group. Hence, she argues, homophobia is prevalent even amongst those who are anti-sexist and anti-racist. What is more, they might become gay too. As a fascinating demonstration of the validity of her own claims, Young does not question our fear of being animals. While I do not think she does this intentionally, had she made this connection, her entire book would have required corrective surgery. A second of Youngs’s own fears, is a common one: the loss of rationality. Thus, while she occasionally pays lip-service to the disabled people throughout *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (1990), she focuses almost exclusively on those who are fully rational, such as an “otherwise normal” women in a wheelchair. But of scaled bodies in our society, are not the severely mentally and physically disabled held to be the most grotesque? To further highlight her own fears, she refers to disabled people who have a diminished mental capacity as “the mad and feebleminded” (1990, 127). She also links blindness as somehow belonging within this category, as in the variant of deaf, dumb, and stupid,” that is found in her claim that “The oppressed groups, on the other hand, are locked in their objectified bodies, blind, dumb, and passive” (1990, 127) Do these derogatory epithets not speak volumes? While I think that *Justice and the Politics of Difference* is a commendable work, I think the removal of these insults and silences would improve the work tremendously.

Do feminists who are humanists realize just what they are committed to? I think not. To draw out what a commitment to humanism entails, I will not be able to appeal to feminist literature. As indicated above, it is common for feminists – or at least academic feminists – to proceed as if there is no need to consider nonhuman animals in their theory or practice, and show few signs of taking the questions raised as worth their attention.¹ In order to gauge the merits and demerits of humanism, I have chosen to focus on the work of Sztybel, as found in “Empathy and Rationality in Ethics” (2000a, henceforth ERE) cited above, and “Taking Humanism Seriously: ‘Obligatory’ Anthropocentrism” (2000b, henceforth THS).

Though Sztybel is dedicated to animal liberation, he “think[s] that an indispensable step in articulating an adequate animal liberationist framework requires both a discovery of the strongest possible humanism, and, indeed, its refutation. For one cannot fully defend one theory without refuting other views which are incompatible with one’s own” (THS, 181). Thus, Sztybel has done his best to uncover and amend the flaws that he has found to pervade humanist (and animal liberationist) defenses, and in so doing has articulated an improved and rigorous devil’s advocate argument in favour of humanism (ERE, THS), what we note above he calls both “Obligatory”

¹ There is one notable exception that I am aware of: Kathryn Paxton George, who argues that feminism is incompatible with ethical vegetarianism and animal liberation in *Animal, Vegetable, or Woman?: A Feminist Critique of Ethical Vegetarianism* (2000). George raises many interesting and important considerations about the link between feminism and animal liberation, and offers at least *prima facie* compelling arguments. However, as I have extensively argued elsewhere, her arguments against animal liberation have consistently evaded the central questions, and the argument that she does offer is not convincing for a number of reasons, not the least of which is her equivocation between dietary and ethical veganism, and her reliance on outdated studies of nutrition to support her central claims (Lucas 2002, 2005). But even George – the leading (and, I might add, very lonely) feminist anti-animal-liberationist – herself maintains that a deep concern for the interests and well-being of nonhuman animals belongs within the feminist agenda. I commend George highly for defending her position, even though, she received very little support from her humanist feminist colleagues (at least not in print).

Anthropocentrism (OA) and personifies as Juggernaut.¹ Given its success over earlier defenses of humanism – and perhaps even over animal liberationism – I will appeal to Sztybel’s Juggernautean humanism to address the question at hand; namely, do feminists have a sound justification for their silences regarding the oppression of nonhuman animals? Perhaps they do have defense, and it is so obvious to them that it need not be uttered. In any event, it is not obvious to me, and so I will proceed to examine what a commitment to humanism entails as part of questioning whether feminists should reject humanism or whether they should, at least, reject extreme forms of it.

Sztybel’s critical review demonstrates that, like those who advocate animal liberation, academic advocates of humanism are anxious to separate their ethical commitments from speciesism. This is not surprising, given what speciesism is: the arbitrary oppression of a being based on their species membership. Of course, and thankfully, there are only a few who consciously choose to advocate a prejudiced “ethics” that allows for the doling out of arbitrary harm. But yet, as with mainstream feminists, the vast majority of humanists do not feel a need to argue that they are not speciesists. Humanism flows smoothly along the status quo, whereas animal liberationists are thought of as hyper-emotional and overly sentimental idealists; the “reality” they envision is out of whack with nature, malaligned to the economy, practically impossible, and not at all desirable.”² If animals are liberated, what will we eat? What will we wear? Rabbit food

¹ For example, both Michael A. Fox and Evelyn Pluhar have indicated this in print, and L. W. Sumner has repeatedly invited Sztybel to present his Juggernautean humanism to interested others, claiming that it is *the* case for animal liberationists to beat.

² Incidentally, these same arguments were offered to curtail the freedom of slaves and they are still being offered to curtail the freedom of women and girls.

and pleather? Merci, mais pas pour moi. Why argue with these swoon-eyed Bambi lovers when there is *important* work to be done?

Perhaps for no greater reason than to humour us, some humanists choose to defend themselves.¹ It is their task to demonstrate that, contrary to the appeals of animal liberationists, the limitation of significant moral status to humans is based on relevant factors. Sztybel indicates that humanists follow a “definite pattern” in their attempts to show that this is so.

First, they almost invariably focus on describing how animals are different, in various key respects, which supposedly makes it appropriate to deny that animals need to be “liberated.”

Second, anti-animal-liberationists often, either explicitly or implicitly, point to the fact that normal human life is somehow “richer” than that of any nonhuman animal. (ERE, 7)

The key difference that humanists inevitably cite is the vast superiority of “our” ability to reason, and “their” relative lack of this capacity. This key leads to many doors, each of which opens a vista of goods that “we” have and “they” lack:

¹ Of course, there are also humanists who are genuinely committed to ethics and want to do what is best. I do not mean to question the dedication of these rare individuals. I have in mind most humanists, who are apt to respond to a vegetarians’s passionate and personal convictions with ridiculous and thoughtless responses such as the infamous “But carrots have feelings too!” Or, “You don’t know what you are missing!” And then there is “I might as well die right now! You can’t live without causing some harm in the world.” And, then there is the illustrious: “But they’re only animals! We are at the top of the food chain! They eat animals too!” Is there any reason to believe that those who utter such dismissive claims as these respect ethical vegetarians, or have given a full half-hour to honestly reflect about why it is that they are not vegetarians. Have they spent so much as ten minutes reflecting on why it is that they so nonchalantly ridicule, silence, and add to, the suffering of nonhumans? Even those who do not side with animal liberation must feel something for the horrors that go on in “factory farms.” They must want, at the very least, for the animals they eat to be treated decently. Surely, one hopes, they are appalled at the idea – and the reality! – of a massive industry that forces pigs and chickens, for instance, to spend much of their lives cramped in cages scarcely bigger than their own bodies.

[The ability to] use things... [a soul]... intelligence, ... moral agency... a moral vocabulary.. reciprocity, ... moral reflection, moral autonomy, ... members[hip] of moral communities, [The ability to] recogniz[e...] just claims against [our] own interest... [and] reciprocate recognition of rights and duties . . . self-consciousness. . .[the] ability to carry out obligations imposed by [having rights, and the ability to] enjoy rights claimed by others... ability to utilize concepts in complex ways and to use sophisticated languages, to manipulate, reflect, plan, deliberate, choose, accept responsibility for acting, form a life plan, and self-actualize... an interest in [our] own welfare... cultural lives... falling in love, marrying, helping children and young people grow, working purs[ue] cultural interests and hobbies... human freedom is worth more. . . individual[ity]... [and the] capacity to enjoy the good life. (ERE, 7-17)¹

The point of raising these criteria is to demonstrate that humans are superior to nonhumans, and this superiority is such that it justifies the vast difference of moral standing between humans and all of the other – “lesser” – animals. This is not speciesist, they argue, because it just so happens that humans are better than the other animals. If an alien species were to arrive on earth, and they had an equal or greater amount of goods than we have, they would, of course, also deserve full moral standing (ERE, 7)

Nonhumans lack (a sufficient supply of) the relevant goods, and as such, it is specious to compare their alleged oppression with ableism, ageism, classism, racism, sexism, and so on.

Sztybel notes that, almost invariably, humanists do not articulate why it is that the traits they appeal to are relevant, and why, by extension, the fact that nonhumans do not have these traits renders the comparison of speciesism and racism or sexism as specious and overblown. This is not to say that humanists fail to offer logical arguments for their

¹ The humanists from whom this list is culled include: Aristotle, Aquinas, Kant, Hegel, Hume, Richard Watson, Rod Preece, Lorna Chamberlain, Bonnie Steinbock, Michael Leahy, A. I. Meldon, Carl Cohen, Alan Holland, L. B. Cebik, Ruth Cigman, Michael Allen Fox (who has since become an animal liberationist), Meredith Williams, R.G. Frey, Peter Miller, and David DeGrazia.

position. However, they all tend to bottom out at the assumption that human superiority is itself sufficient to defy animal liberation. But yet many – if not most – animal liberationists agree that most human beings have superior capacities in comparison with non-humans; unlike the humanists, however, they disagree that this provides a sufficient justification for humanism. Thus, and in many other ways, each side begs the question against the other. For the last two decades, Sztybel argues, they have reiterated the same arguments (or slight variants of them). Each of the two camps is certain that their base assumptions are right and self-evident. Each claims to be arguing from “common sense.” And, as we saw above, Sztybel argues that the way to move forward with the debate is to unearth, examine, and challenge these clashed assumptions.

Note the emphasis above on “most.” Just what can be extracted from this “most”? A sweet cup of victory? Many animal liberationists think so and squeeze it for all that it’s worth. What is the nectar? Much to the distaste of humanists everywhere, this “most” – or rather, the exceptions to it – leads to the so-called argument from marginal cases.¹ While humanists will deny full moral standing to nonhumans and rank them along a hierarchy of most meriting of our concern to most unworthy of it with little ado, the vast majority of them are neither willing nor inclined to rank humans in such a way. But what is this unwillingness, this clinging to “marginal” humans, this gut reaction that it would be horribly wrong to do to them what “we” do to nonhumans without a second thought. . . What is the intuition that only a sick, perverted person would so much as think to do such

¹ I raised this argument once during a humanist’s lecture about “universal” rights. With an upturned lip, he wrote it off, claiming that “it is very dangerous and problematic to compare severely mentally retarded and other ‘marginal’ case humans with animals.” His distaste, I conjecture, was rooted in the fear that rather than increase the “rights” of nonhumans, one could respond to the argument by reducing the status and “rights” of human “marginals.”

a thing . . . What is it, many animal liberationists ask, but bold-faced speciesism? If humanists really do not arbitrarily prefer their own ilk, the reasoning goes, then as with nonhumans, those humans who fail to meet the humanist's lofty criteria should also be vamoosed from full moral standing. Almost invariably, humanists are not willing to reduce the full moral standing of humans who are infants, children, senile, severely cognitively disabled, comatose, and so on. But come now, the animal liberationist insists, as tension in the room mounts, a baboon, a dog, even a chicken, all of these beings enjoy a richer life than do many "marginal" humans. But yet you scarcely hesitate to condone the meatification, extreme confinement, and vivisection of these other beings. If not speciesism, then in virtue of what do these nonhumans fail to deserve the full moral standing you are so eagerly grant to the human population at large?

Evelyn Pluhar gives a very thorough account of humanist responses to this question and found that all of them are resounding failures. I invite the reader to consult with her work and see for themselves how badly these arguments fare against her challenges (Pluhar 1981, 67-123).¹ After her comprehensive survey and rebuttal of these defenses, Pluhar concludes that "Homocentric appeals are shown to be resounding

¹ The following offers a sense of what you can expect. Some humanists, such as Ernest Partridge, Charlie Blatz, Theodore Vitali, and C.E. Harris "fail... to address the issue" (1981, 67). Despite the title of Blatz's article, "Why (Most) Humans Are More Important Than Other Animals," he fails to question what happens to the exceptions (cited in Pluhar 1981, 68). "Theodore Vitali argues that we do not violate the rights of those who essentially lack the capacity for (full) personhood when we hunt or kill them for pleasure, because moral rights are restricted to those who have that capacity (even if it is undeveloped, as in normal babies, or inactive, as in the case of senile adults. As far as we know, he says, no nonhumans can be persons, so killing them for sport is justifiable. May we then declare open season on humans who have never been and can never be (full) persons?" (Pluhar 1971, 68). He does not say. C. A. J. Coady argues that "It is of course true that there are immature, senile, and defective members of the species, but only an inordinately individualistic ideology can hold that such members should be given treatment that takes no account of their species membership. We have a vital interest in the immature, the retarded, and the defective of our kind since, apart from anything else, we normal adults have been immature and may become damaged or handicapped" (cited in Pluhar 1981, 95). Aside from mentioning that Coady's choice of language is very offensive, I will leave it to the reader to discover what is wrong with the argument. I do not reckon that this will take much effort.

failures” (cited in ERE, 5). The only remaining humanist contenders are those who are willing to deny full moral standing to human “marginals.” Perhaps a few votes will go in this unpopular direction.

For the rest of us, however, such consequences are unacceptable. Some of us, turning to take a long, and we hope less prejudiced, look at the treatment of nonhuman animals who are at least as sensitive and life-loving as a child or a retarded adult, have come to regard such treatment as equally unacceptable... [humanists] who resist the exploitation of marginal humans but see nothing wrong with the continued exploitation of nonhumans must become speciesist instead. (Pluhar 1981, 123)

Unless one wants to shut down all such comparisons and declare them tasteless and unworthy of attention, which seems an evasive move that is more concerned (and not without any good reason) that some humans in vulnerable and precarious positions will lose protections and have their status lowered rather than that recognition of arbitrariness will be granted in ways that elevate the status of and protections for other animals, it seems that animal liberationists are indeed calling attention to hard-to-hear but genuine examples of unjust and arbitrary treatment of other animals based on no reason other than their species membership.

Can we rest content with our present arguments?¹ Is there any way that feminist-humanists (and, of course, all other humanists) can overcome this challenge? Surely,

¹ Of course, I do not claim to have covered these here. Most animal liberationists, in my experience, seem to accept a conductive argument. That is, they are swayed by a wide variety of arguments that all lead to the conclusion that nonhuman animals are oppressed (or abused or discriminated against or however else wrongs they suffer might be put) and thus it is imperative that they be liberated from such unjust treatment. Included amongst these arguments are compassion (usually piqued by awareness of the horrors that occur in “factory farms”), environmental reasons, world hunger, empathy with nonhumans, dissatisfaction with an unjust “world meat economy” (Fox 1999, 159), health reasons, humanist reasons (the poor treatment to nonhumans can be generalized to humans), spiritual or religious reasons, and the realization that the current treatment of nonhumans parallels other forms of oppression (especially sexism and racism). For a comprehensive review of these arguments, see Michael Allen Fox’s *Deep Vegetarianism* (1999).

while it is reasonable to be guarded about possible losses of respect and protections for so-called marginal humans, and to approach all such thinking with a great deal of concern, the discomfort attached to such thinking should not be permitted to discount what seems to clearly be the case: that we do indeed impose often immense harms upon other animals based on factors that are arbitrary and that disregard highly pertinent information that, when heeded, helps us to recognize the extent and magnitude of the suffering and injustices they are being subjected to and that we would readily recognize as horrific and profoundly unjust if they were inflicted upon any of our fellow humans.

6.3 The Juggernaut: “Obligatory” Anthropocentrism

As can be gleaned from the above, there are two things that feminists (and others) who hope to offer a convincing account of humanism must do. First, they must cite a morally relevant difference that exists between humans and nonhumans and explain what it is about this difference that justifies relegating a far more significant moral status to humans than to nonhumans. That is, they must explain the exclusion of nonhumans from full moral status in a non-arbitrary and non-question-begging way. And second, they must successfully respond to the argument from “marginal” cases. Can this be done? As indicated above, the strongest defense of humanism comes from an unlikely provider: Sztybel, animal liberationist. But, whoever the source, the best defense is the best defense. Thus I will proceed to articulate a condensed version of Sztybel’s Juggernaut – “Obligatory” Anthropocentrism – an amalgam and improvement of earlier humanist arguments. Unlike pre-Juggernaut humanist appeals, OA offers a solid answer to each of the two challenges listed above. Where its predecessors drowned, Juggernaut quells

the current of animal liberationism and floats along with the status quo. Or so it seems. If Juggernaut is successful, perhaps feminists can climb aboard and accept a Juggernautean justification for their silence.

Juggernaut begins with the claim that “ethics is a pursuit of the good, or ‘the good life,’ and aspires to what is best” (THS, 7). This is, of course, where the “obligatory” later comes into play, as we shall soon see. The best life, according to Juggernaut, is the life that contains the most good. The life that contains the most good, in turn, is the richest life. But what are the goods that add to the richness of life? According to Juggernaut, these goods consist of qualities that are better to have than to lack. So what then are these? Juggernaut agrees with Aristotle’s dictum that ethics is not a precise science and does not attempt to offer a definitive set of goods, nor does it maintain that such a set exists. Rather, Juggernaut offers the following stipulative set of goods that it takes to be demonstrative of qualities that almost everyone will agree are better to have than to lack and encourages humanists to use their own sense of the good, and their own preferred interpretations of the particular goods that are listed.

Artistic or creative capacity / Awareness of self / Beauty / Capacity for play (games, dancing, music, etc.) / Cultural or societal interrelationships / Exchange of goods and services (i.e., general reciprocity and economic productivity) / Freedom / Health / Humour / Intelligence (sometimes conceived less formally than rationality) / Language usage (or perhaps advanced communication, as well; language is richer) / Legal engagement / Moral capacity / Physical prowess (strength, agility, speed, physical senses, rending power, endurance, sexual vigour, dexterity) / Political participation / Self-determination / Sentience (ability to feel pleasure and pain) / Sociability (friendship and love) / Spirituality (religious pursuits would be optional here) (THS, 5)

Juggernaut refers to this list as “Q,” which is short for “quality of being, or the potential to experience and create goodness” (THS, 5). It is, on Juggernaut’s account, better to have all of these qualities than to lack some of them. The more of these goods that a

being has, the more worthwhile and valuable the life of that being. While some of the criteria are found in humans more so than in nonhumans (or not found in nonhumans at all), the criteria are not speciesist. Traits that are common to both humans and nonhumans are included, and everyone is measured by the same set of criteria. While there are traits that are not common to both groups, it is not in virtue of their predominance among humans that these traits are good. If they were to exist in nonhumans, or in an alien species, it would still be good. Furthermore, if the traits are not found in humans, the human life also contains less good, and is thereby less valuable.

Since Q is directly related to morality (as morality is the pursuit of the good and Q is pre-eminently good), then those with more Q are of greater moral significance than those who lack some Q. To determine the relative Q of different beings, we could give each Q capacity a ranking of 10 and evaluate each being in terms of the average of her or his total cumulative score (ERE, 20). While this number is bound to be hazy, it need not be definitive-an approximation of Q will suffice. To ensure that no being is judged as having less Q than is the case, Juggernaut advises that we weigh heavily whenever in doubt (ERE, 47).

Given that humans are pre-eminent bearers of Q, ethics should be principally concerned with promoting and cultivating their being. Ethics should take their interests as far more important than [the interests of those beings] who have only a minimal participation in Q. To do otherwise, Juggernaut argues, is to choose the lesser good in favour of the greater good, which runs contrary to the goals of ethics. Indeed, since Juggernaut is ethical, and ethics advocates that we must always prefer that which is more good over that which is less good, then the cultivation and satisfaction of a high-Q being,

as well as his or her misery and unfulfilled desires, are of far greater ethical concern than are any of the same that stem from a low-Q being. To take the interests, needs, pain, and desires of a low-Q being, or even a medium-Q being as anywhere near as important as a high-Q is immature and against the goal of ethics.

But yet, Juggernaut respects all beings who have Q and advises that they are each due practical respect and consideration. This respect and consideration, however, are to be given to each being according to her or his due. Thus, beings who are low in Q deserve less practical respect than beings with a surpassing degree of Q. In cases of conflict between a low-Q and a high-Q, the needs or desires of the high-Q must be given precedence, even if these are relatively trivial in comparison to the interests and/or needs of the being with low-Q.

Just how much Q is necessary for full and robust moral standing? According to Juggernaut, participation (or potential participation) in all of Q is necessary and sufficient, and this will be met by any normal adult human (or person who is destined to be such an adult). There will be, of course, those who have greater or lesser degrees of Q than others. As Q increases or decreases, so too does moral standing. Thus, we find that, amongst humans, there is quite a varied range of moral standings even though all normal adults will enjoy a robust set of “rights.” Those who exceed normal adult human standing deserve an increased status, as they contribute more good to the world. Those with less than normal adult human standing, on the other hand, have the same direct moral standing as do nonhumans of the same capacities: while there is a range here too, since these beings lack all of Q, they do not merit much direct moral status at all. Juggernaut realizes that this works against most intuitions held by contemporary Westerners. But,

Juggernaut argues, our intuitions are often wrong. If the humanist does not like this conclusion, he argues, yet wants to be consistent with his or her ethical position, then they should trade camps and join animal liberation. But, at least according to Juggernaut, they do this at the risk of following false intuitions and supporting an immature conception of the good.

Aware of how contentious of offensive such notions as “moron barbeques”¹ and the vivisection of incurably psychotic humans are to widespread ethical beliefs and intuitions, Juggernaut offers several possible ways to augment the moral status of low-Q humans. While we cannot nonarbitrarily raise their direct moral standing – that is, how the being is ranked in and of herself or himself, just because they are human (as this would be speciesist), we can do much to increase their indirect moral standing. That is, we can give them special protections for preferential treatment based on their relationship to beings with high-Q. It may even be the case, Juggernaut argues, that humans are naturally predisposed to care for their offspring (whether low-Q or not). But, alas, however successful this augmentation, Juggernaut maintains that our considerations for low-Q humans do run against our ethical commitment to promoting the best good. Thus, this respite for low-Q humans and those who love them will be something that we should work to overcome, to the greatest extent possible. This is not to say that Juggernaut despises low-Q humans or nonhumans. Juggernaut respects everyone who participates in the good and is opposed to hostility or violence towards low-Q beings (or anyone else).

¹ This provocative term is borrowed from Pluhar (1981, 229). It now reads as if deliberately made to be offensive but perhaps it was less contentious and surprising when it made its way to print in the early 1980s.

6.4 The Juggernaut: Problems with “Obligatory” Anthropocentrism

In this section, I offer a critical examination of the strategy that Juggernaut deploys to arrive at “Obligatory” Anthropocentrism. I demonstrate that this strategy is itself full of contentious assumptions, some of which are inconsistent with other commitments of OA, and others that simply lead to ludicrous and counter-intuitive results (even beyond those that Juggernaut admits to). Furthermore, I demonstrate that, despite its assumed full moral status of “normal” adult humans, the logic of Juggernaut does not entail that this must be so, nor does the logic of Juggernaut demonstrate that it is justifiable for those with high-Q to override the vital interests of (or otherwise cause harm to) those with low-Q in order to meet their own trivial needs and wants.

The Problem of Totalizing Theories

As indicated above, the foundational claim of Juggernaut is that “Ethics is a pursuit of the good, or ‘the good life’ and aspires to what is best” (THS 7). Here, Juggernaut is already expressing commitments that, I dare say, most contemporary Westerners (at least) are not willing to swallow. Namely, that there is such a thing as “the good” and that this good necessarily corresponds to – or is congruent – with *the* good life. This problem expands further when we find Juggernaut maintaining that any life-enriching good makes life more valuable in an ethically relevant sense. But I will set that criticism aside for now.

The main point that I want to make here is that the view that there is such a single good that ethics aims at, as well as the view that there is a normative good life against which to measure all other lives (whether plant, alien, God, or animals), is hardly an accepted view. But yet Juggernaut aims to choose among competing theories of the Good and select the True theory. How is it ever to justify its preference for Reason its list of Q, with

its history of Eurocentrism, and very much the same kind of criteria that have long been used to indicate that Black people, children, women, nonhuman animals, and others are “natural slaves”? How is Juggernaut going to convince us that, this time, it is right and it has properly set the boundaries on who can be justifiably exploited?

Perhaps the difficulty is merely semantic and Juggernaut can survive or fend off postmodernist and feminist critiques of enlightenment rationalism and totalizing theories. In any case, though, Juggernaut does seem to beg the question and assume its legitimacy over these counterposing views. While some readers of Juggernaut may themselves share Juggernaut’s intuitions about the goals of ethics, others will not. Most feminists, I believe, are amongst those who will not accept these intuitions.

The Problem of Gluttony and Perpetual Desire

Atop the Aristotelian starting point that ethics aims at the good, and particularly at the good life, Juggernaut adds the (also Aristotelian) premise that “That which is best is that which has the most good” (THS, 7; ERE, 25). Let’s consider this premise. That which contains the most good is best. Good is almost always conceived of as a relative term. It seems too relative in this case as well, given that the point of raising the premise is to discuss the Q of various living beings. The raises a host of questions: What kinds of goods are being spoken of? Who/what are they best for? What kind of life do they enrich: The life of a God? Human life? Cow life? Cockroach life? And by whose standards: A pig’s standards? A child’s standards? A priest’s? Juggernauts? And in what context: Siberia? Canada? A hole in the mud? The bottom of the ocean? Outer space? And to what end (if any) are they good: Hedonism? World peace? Acceptance into the afterlife? Nirvana?

Juggernaut claims that the goods it means to refer to include prudential goods and moral goods, and, in short, anything that enriches life; indeed, on Juggernaut's count, "ethics provides for all sorts of goods" (ERE, 66). Juggernaut claims to include goods that would enrich any life – goods that are, quite simply, better to have than to lack. And, Juggernaut claims that we should be able to arrive at a reasonably widespread consensus of what goods are better to have than to lack (which will be made by adult humans of at least "normal," but preferably greater-than-"normal" capacities). As indicated above, Juggernaut also claims that the life that has the most goods is the life that is richest. And the life that is richest is the best life (THS, 7; ERE, 24). Let's assume, for the sake of argument, that humans can determine a widely accepted list of things that are better to have than to lack.

So, the life that is best – and that which ethics pursues – is the life that contains the most goods. And by goods, Juggernaut means goods that enrich life. I do not find this very convincing. There are countless goods that can enrich life, and it is not at all clear that the life that contains the most of these goods is necessarily the best life. At least for life on Earth, there comes a point when yet more of the same good, or even the introduction of a new good, will not enrich a life in the least, and will quite possibly take away from it. If political and legal action are goods, as Juggernaut claims, it does not follow that more is always better. Likewise, we can think of the same conclusion as following when one begins to add ever more criteria onto the Q-chart. Even if each of them is good for life, the entire collection might not enrich life at all.

What seems preferable, no doubt, is not a mere collection of as many life-enriching goods as can possibly fit into a single life (keep piling these on and they will,

quite simply, cease to enrich life and may even detract from it), but a perfect balance of as wide variety of goods that makes for the best life possible. This way, also, one can be satisfied in life, and is not perpetually chasing after an impossible (and quite gluttonous) ideal. But still, the problem of pluralism remains: why should I agree that what enriches one life is apt to enrich another, and why should I agree that the higher Q of the various qualities increase the value of the life in question? There is no reason to believe that the life of a being who is more intelligent than most others is, for this reason alone, more valuable than that of other less-intelligent beings. We who live in the midst of first world splendour should know best that in terms of the good life, it is not the case that more is always better.

The Problem of Arbitrariness

Juggernaut indicates that we need not agree to the list of Q that it has provided, and that “humanistic thinkers are invited to choose their favourite meanings of terms as well as their favourite list of terms to begin with” (THS, 5-6). The list, then, need not be arranged and compartmentalized as Juggernaut does. Let’s suppose that “we” – even the conscientious humanists – think it more prudent and just to unpack some of the criteria that Juggernaut lists, to ensure that we really lay out all of the goods that enrich life and judge beings according to the best criteria possible. We may choose to emphasize the importance and “life-enrichingness” of each of the senses, for example, by listing them individually: sight, touch, smell, taste, and hearing. We might also expand upon physical abilities, again, to emphasize those which we prize most, such as the ability to get around without aid, and the integrity of the body (i.e., it has all of the parts that would be

expected of a member of its kind). We might also expand upon beauty, paying special attention to such goods as proportion, grace, complexion, and so on.

Given that Juggernaut is committed to including whatever goods enrich life, however arrived at, we may find its articulation of Q to be missing several vital factors. How about contextual goods? Surely (unless my own good shines best in times of war) we cannot expect life in a war-torn part of the world to enrich life, any more than living in an impoverished region that makes meeting biological and social needs all-but-impossible (again, unless my good shines best when I can be generous and help others). These needs are vital for most life forms and should be included. We do not want to leave out any important Q, if we do so, we may not arrive at our best possible evaluation of the worth of various lives. So, I should also include a wonderful, safe, and comfortable place to live and an ample supply of resources to meet my needs (or perhaps too much of this will lead to tedium and gluttony? For some this may be so, for others, it will allow them leisure to develop their artistic, rational, compassion, etc.).

We might expand upon social relationships and love. These are also important. We want respect, love from parents, perhaps from siblings. After much deliberation, we can rest satisfied with our complete Juggernaut-approved list of goods that enrich a life. Now Juggernaut makes a surprising move, and claims that “Q is both necessary and sufficient for full moral standing” (ERE, 24), i.e., those who participate in all of Q have full moral standing (THS, 7; ERE, 24). This will include all “normal” adult human beings (whoever these turn out to be is another question). As with these humans, other beings who fail to fulfill all of Q have lesser degrees of moral standing, and this, according to their participation in Q. While this list works to give Q to most of those who humanists

perhaps think pre-eminently deserve it (“normally” functioning adult humans and their “superiors”), it is not at all clear that this delimitation is well-founded. Juggernaut indeed says that it is an assumption made because to be taken seriously, it must grant full moral standing to these individuals. But what is this but a deeply engrained intuition and prejudice about the superiority of “normal” and “above normal” adult humans?

Fortunately, at long last, this prejudice, or at least formal commitment to it – has been overcome, at least in many parts of the world. If Juggernaut wanted to follow our intuitions about who deserves full moral standing, as it claims to do, and to offer an ethic that would be taken seriously by more than an idiosyncratic few, it should draw the line of Q such that they are included too. So doing, of course, would mean that Juggernaut would have to grant full moral standing to nonhumans of the same or greater Q than these “marginals.” This would lead once again to the kind of assuredness about the success of the argument for marginal cases for which Sztybel faults his predecessors. Yet might this assuredness not be warranted given that the vast majority of humans will, indeed, stand by human “marginals”? Perhaps it is no wonder that the Juggernaut was offered by an animal liberationist. Most humanists, it seems, are unwilling to accept what at least appear to be the logical conclusions of their own positions and are instead inclined towards a stance that requires some special pleading in favour of bias towards humans. When entailments are spelled out, Juggernaut and OA might serve best as a deterrent to humanists rather than as an ally to such positions, and may call for humanists to attempt to show that Sztybel’s Juggernaut is not a Juggernaut at all and, instead, to offer a more compelling defense of humanism than is presently available.

Consider for instance that even if, for example, many humanist ethicists do have (or develop) an intuition that low-Q beings bear reduced moral consideration on account of that (purported) fact – most often due to their “lesser” ability to reason – how are they to account for the fact that their process of assigning differential moral standing could also be applied in ways that deny full moral standing to humans who are blind, deaf, ugly, paraplegic, poor, live in the “Third World,” or who do not have loving siblings or parents? If the vast majority of humanists already stand steadfastly behind so-called marginal humans, surely they will stand all the more firmly behind these humans as well. Perhaps we can augment their less-than-full moral standing too? But who would agree that they do not have full moral standing? And who would dare suggest that their poor Q-ranking can be supplemented by indirect factors, i.e., their relationship to high-Q beings, as though those among them who are isolated are “therefore” less deserving of moral consideration?

In addition to claiming that “marginal” humans lack full standing, Juggernaut also adds that all humans and other beings can and should be ranked according to a hierarchy and those at the top – however they ended up there (plastic surgery, genetic manipulation, access to technological goods, “moral” luck) – deserve special attention. Is this not an argument that does a good job at defeating itself? Take for example a consequence that follows from it. Children who have degenerative diseases and will not make it past their fifth birthday cannot be given full moral standing. They lack both all of Q and the potential to develop it. But do we really value children highly only in virtue of their potential as adults? Are they really worth so very little today, aside from that potential? Most of us will full heartedly disagree and maintain that all children deserve

full moral standing for who they are now, and this, whether they are severely cognitively disabled, ugly, or apt to die while still children.

6.5 God, Aliens, and Ideals

Juggernaut steadfastly maintains that Q is good for life and this holds irrespective of species, and that participation in all of Q guarantees full moral standing. That this list just happens to mesh with “normal” adult humans, Juggernaut argues, is not arbitrary. These beings are qualitatively better than most other life forms and as such deserve special consideration in ethics (as ethics aims to promote the good). Juggernaut is convinced that normal adult humans are so good, so Q, that aliens or even God would have to respect their interests and grant them full moral standing. God, according to Juggernaut, would score a magnificent 200, or even jump off the chart, and so should be treated with all kinds of reverence (ERE, 32). Even though God “might not exist,” Juggernaut maintains that we can still think of God as “a conceptual ideal” (ERE, 39). So let’s do just this, perhaps thinking through our ideals will help to improve our list of Q.

Once again, Juggernaut must decide what kind of ideal to use as ideal. There are, of course, a great many contending theories about “the good” – e.g., Jainism, Buddhism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Hedonism, Nihilism, Rationalism. The view of the good, much less the good life, that is held by each of these and other contenders are not consistent. “Native Americans, Ancient Egyptians, some African tribes, and many other ancient and aboriginal cultures the world over have worshiped various [nonhuman] animals as gods or messengers to god” (Spiegel [1998] 1997, 16). Can Juggernaut accommodate all of the ideals that arise in a pluralist society such as ours with OA? Can it, furthermore, provide a convincing account that explains why some theories of the Good, or some aspects of

these theories, cannot be used as part of Q? For example, Juggernaut may want to discount some of the ideals held by certain fundamentalist Muslims. For example, that women are meant to serve men and have less Q than men, and that a suicide-bombing “martyr” (or is it satyr?) is rewarded with 72 virgins in the afterlife. How is Juggernaut to argue with these people that having 72 virgins to do with as one pleases does not belong amidst Q?

In claiming that OA is not speciesist, Juggernaut cs that “Any rational extraterrestrial being, with his or her or its own love of the good, could be expected to embrace a view that is similar to OA, although it could not then be called anthropocentrism, but rather, some other, more species-neutral name” (THS, 11). Let’s assume that there is just such a species, the Alpha Superions, and they have decided to move to earth. It will be theoretically helpful to rank them, as well as God, according to Q.

Our updated list of Q might look something like this:

| Quality of Being | Average Dog | Average Human | Nietzschean Übermensch | Alpha Superion | Christian God |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Ability to perform miracles | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ∞ |
| Artistic / creative endeavours | 1 | 6 | 9 | 20 | ∞ |
| Awareness of self | 3 | 8 | 9 | 25 | ∞ |
| Beauty | 6 | 8 | 9 | 23 | ∞ |
| Capacity for play | 7 | 8 | 9 | 15 | ∞ |
| Cultural / social relationships | 2 | 7 | 7 | 20 | <i>n/a</i> |
| Extra Sensory Perception | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 | ∞ |

| | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-------|------------|
| Eternal life | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ∞ |
| Exchange of goods / services | 2 | 7 | 7 | 24 | ∞ |
| Freedom | 3 | 7 | 8 | 25 | ∞ |
| Health | 8 | 8 | 9 | 25 | ∞ |
| Humour | 2 | 7 | 8 | 12 | ∞ |
| Intelligence | 3 | 6 | 9 | 25 | ∞ |
| Language usage | 1 | 7 | 9 | 25 | <i>n/a</i> |
| Legal engagement | 0 | 5 | 8 | 30 | ∞ |
| Moral agency | 2 | 6 | 9 | 26 | ∞ |
| Omniscience | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ∞ |
| Perfection | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ∞ |
| Physical prowess | 4 | 6 | 8 | 26 | <i>n/a</i> |
| Political participation | 1 | 5 | 7 | 20 | ∞ |
| Rationality | 2 | 6 | 9 | 26 | ∞ |
| Self-determination | 2 | 6 | 9 | 30 | ∞ |
| Sentience | 9 | 9 | 10 | 26 | ∞ |
| Sociability / friendship / love | 7 | 7 | 8 | 25 | ∞ |
| Spirituality | 0 | 6 | 9 | 25 | ∞ |
| <i>TOTAL</i> | 65 | 135 | 170 | 557 | ∞ |
| <i>MEAN SCORE OUT OF 10</i> | 2.6 | 5.4 | 6.8 | 22.28 | ∞ |

No one, on the above list, even God, participates in all of Q. Does this mean that no one has full moral standing? Perhaps we might take scores of 5.0 and above as an adequate standard for full moral standing and adopt a species-neutral name for OA. How, though, does 5.0 compare to God's infinite greatness? What great hubris Juggernaut has to maintain that the difference between God and humans is less than that between humans and nonhuman animals! While a score of 5.0 will surely correspond to the humanistic vote, the Alpha Superions may think otherwise. They too may be Juggernautean and may

opt in favour of “Obligatory” Alpha Superiorism. Why should they be species-neutral when their good far exceeds ours (even though they do not participate in some of our “primitive” Q’s, such as legal engagement and political action)? The difference between us and them may be equivalent, in relation to what they value most of all, to the difference between a typical worm and a typical human. If we are far closer to cows, dogs, pigs, and baboons than we are to them, why, if we ourselves take Juggernautean reasoning as sound, should we think that they ought to treat their obligations to us as a matter of great moral consequence? To adhere to its own logic, Juggernaut will have to grant that humans no longer deserve much consideration, especially when the needs of far higher Q Alpha Superiors may be significantly helped along through the use of humans in experiments and the like that they are unable to do through any other available means.

6.6 Fair Trade?

Does Juggernaut provide a sound justification for a robust, strong humanism? No, it has not. Before I proceed to show that Juggernaut has not aptly defended this thesis, it will be helpful to review how it is that Juggernaut aims to prove its legitimization of difference as a death warrant.

According to Juggernautean logic, “it is precisely a morally better world in which people aspire to what is best overall. . . . It is a morally worse place where the best criteria for moral standing, as found in Q, are either ignored, or else actively opposed and subverted” (ERE, 42). To favour a being with low-Q over a being with high-Q is to do just this, i.e., to oppose and subvert the interests of a greater good for those of a lesser good. Since beings who are rich in Q have the most value, and the intent of ethics is to

cultivate and pursue value, “beings with the most Q. . . have to be favoured, bar nothing. They [should] always have higher priority, for anything else would be a deviation from favouring what is best” (THC, 9-10).

Many animal liberationists, such as Peter Singer, argue that interests that are of equal value deserve equal consideration, even if they occur between beings who are of unequal standing. To illustrate this point, Singer compares the difference between a slap to the rump of a horse, and a slap to the rump of a baby, administered such that the horse and the baby suffer the same amount of pain. Since the harm done to each being was of equal intensity, there is, on his account, no reason – aside from speciesism – to conclude that the one offense (to the baby) is more ethically significant than the other offense (to the horse). Thus, in cases such as these in which the interests of nonhumans and humans are equal, the beings in question deserve equal consideration (discussed in ERE, 43).

Juggernaut argues that the egalitarian consideration of interests proposed by animal liberationists wrongly separates abstract characteristics from the unequal beings who have them, and in so doing loses “sight of the moral significance of the beings which give those interests a context and meaning” (THC, 10). To ignore the greater Q of the infant when considering a moral offense instigated against her or him, and consider it as an equal offense to that instigated against the horse who is of lesser Q, is “immature, exaggerated, and disproportionate to the ... actual significance [of the respective slaps], namely, as mere parts of whole lives,” the one being of substantial value, and the other “comparatively impoverished in value” (THS, 10). To suggest that we routinely grant equal consideration to the equal interests of unequal beings is to suggest that we continually treat the lesser good as though it were of equal moral weight to the greater

good. But it is not. On Sztybel's account, there is a morally relevant difference between graffiti in a slum and graffiti in a church. Harming a baby is worse, by far, than harming a horse. We should not forget this. We should aim for a "holistic view that regards the whole being" (THS, 10) and is thus mindful of the Q of the beings involved in our ethical decision-making. Only in this way will we prefer the greater good over the lesser good and make the world a morally better place.

Prior to tallying the Q of each being, Juggernaut was committed to the view that it now rejects: that each element of Q is worth the same irrespective of the being who has it, and that considering each of these Q equally is morally relevant to avoid speciesism – the arbitrary and discriminatory privileging of one species over another. It was on this premise that Juggernaut tallied the various Q of different beings to determine where they stand within the hierarchy of Q. But now that Q has been established, Juggernaut declares that we must now disregard each of the individual criteria and focus instead on the average Q of the being, and where this average fits into the Q hierarchy. Now that our Juggernautean calculus is complete, "beings with the most Q to be favoured, bar nothing" (THC, 9)

Is there not a difference between unremittingly favouring beings with full Q and pursuing the good? – even if, as Juggernaut claims, beings of high-Q are of far greater moral significance than beings of low-Q. And, is the "fact" that one being is (on average) "superior" to another a morally relevant reason for favouring his or her trivial needs and desires over the death or suffering of his or her "inferior"? No, and no. The mandate to favour those with high-Q because they have high-Q is elitist. Contrary to Juggernaut's suggestion, following this rule is not a necessary way to ensure that we favour that which

is better over that which is lesser. Rather, what following this rule accomplishes is the arbitrary privilege of certain beings based on their (supposed) moral status. Suppose that a professor graded two papers and gave one an A+ and the other a D. Soon after, the professor learned that the exceptional paper was written by a student with Down Syndrome, and the awful paper was written by a highly esteemed youth considered to be a child-genius. Upon learning who authored each paper, the professor swaps their grades to align with them prejudicial expectations. On my take of the situation, the professor has cheated the first student of her due and given an undeserved reward and encouragement to the second student.

But on Juggernaut's view, it could be that this is warranted as it has promoted the good, insofar as the higher-Q being has been noted as such. But how has this prejudice promoted the good? How does this prejudice cultivate the good of either of the two students in question? The first loses hope, and drops out of school; the second continues to submit garbage in exchange for straight A's. Perhaps Juggernaut would notice that I treated the qualities in isolation of the full being.

It is wrong to follow Juggernaut and assume that "normal" adult humans are always to be preferred to everyone who falls below them according to Q. Dogmatically preferring even the most trivial needs of "normal" humans over the life-and-death interest of nonhumans (and those humans who have low-Q) does not necessarily increase the good of the world. It is difficult to see why Juggernaut thinks that in every ethical decision that involves a clash of interests between a nonhuman and a human, it is always relevant to remember that the "normal" human has more Q than a nonhuman has. Elizabeth Telfer offers a possible response to Juggernaut's position.

Suppose there is an opinion poll among the readers of a women's magazine about whether children are more important than husbands or vice versa, and there is general agreement that children are more important. This does not mean that a wife should always do exactly what suits the children, whatever the cost to the husband. At most it means that, in cases where the children's and husband's interests are similar and in conflict, the children's interests should take precedence. In every other case the question is what degree of additional importance justifies what degree of privilege. In the case of humans eating animals, however, the interests are not similar: our interest in eating them is a mere preference, but their interest in not being eaten is fundamental. So even if humans are more important, that still does not justify that degree of privilege. (Telfer 1996, 74-5)

Juggernaut would, it seems, immediately note that this is not a fair example. Telfer appeals to intuitions about the difference between two beings who have equal Q and attempts to transport them into a quite different situation in which two beings are of vastly different Q. Thus she is guilty of a truncated narrative and question-begging. Of course it is wrong to prefer one being with full-Q over another being with full-Q, even if one thinks that one is more important than the other. But the question at hand is whether the interests of a being who is *genuinely* "superior" should take precedence of a being who is *genuinely* "inferior." And, Juggernaut could still insist, it is relevant to prefer beings in this way. Why so? Juggernaut argues that when "full-Q" beings override the interests of nonhumans, it is almost always (in an attempt) to increase our own good. Thus, we are increasing the greater good over the lesser good and what more could we aim to do, as ethically motivated beings?

A trivial interest of a supposed high-Q is not worth as much as Juggernaut would have us believe, and complacently satisfying each such trivial interest does not promote the good of the world (which includes human and nonhuman animals). Juggernaut is wrongly assuming that, in every instance, the petty interests of a "normal" human are

worth more than the entire being of the nonhuman. But what does the addition of a hamburger add to my Q? What is this pleasure worth in terms of Q? Not much. These trivial pleasures could easily be gained from another source that does not obliterate the entire Q of a nonhuman animal. I thus add an insignificant pleasure to one of my Q's while wiping out, say, 40 Q's – the *entire* set of her or his qualities. Could I not choose interests that promote my own ends and do not violate or prevent the cultivation of the riches of others? Might I not be *required* to do this, if ethics aims to cultivate the most riches overall? Though the riches of a cow's life are not as great as that of a "normal" human, it is the case that the collective riches of the cow and the human are greater than those of the human alone. Thus, it seems preferable for humans to learn to retain our own full good while not taking away from the good of others. In order to do this, I need not value a cow as much as I value a high-Q human. Indeed, I need not even value her very much at all.

But even so, is it really the case that just because a being is (supposedly) worth less, it would be wrong to consider the being's equal interest as on par with that of a (supposedly) more valuable being? And why is this so in every case? And why should I also treat grossly unequal interests in ways that invariably favour those who are allegedly superior? Why should I take \$10 from a person who has next-to-nothing in order to give it to a person who is full of goods already and will scarcely notice the difference? Why, in turn, should I agree that it is worse to take \$10 from a wealthy full-Q person than it is to take \$10 from a "normal" adult human who is very impoverished, and worse again if the victim is severely depressed and traumatized, and worse again if she is also quadriplegic, and worse of all if she is impoverished, severely depressed and traumatized,

quadriplegic, and covered in festering wounds? But is this not the very opposite of our intuitions? At the very least, there is clearly something appealing to many humans about figures like Robin Hood. Is it not clear that more feminist-aligned position to take it as worse to take from the vulnerable and needy than it is to take from those who are already strong and are not at all likely to even miss the resources taken from them?

6.7 Silence Like a Cancer Grows

We live in a world in crisis – a world governed by politics of domination, one in which the belief in a notion of superior and inferior, and its concomitant ideology – that the superior should rule over the inferior – effects the lives of all people everywhere, whether poor or privileged, literate or illiterate.

—bell hooks (1988, 19)

Extreme forms of humanism are routinely taken for granted and are significant contributors to major crises that we are facing or, as is often more accurate, failing to face. This chapter has considered the humanist position developed by animal ethicist David Sztybel, which he intended to be the most robust case possible, supposedly as an effort to move on to build a counter-offensive on behalf of animal rights. Yet his work simply shows how such extreme forms of humanism are unjust and indefensible, even on humanist grounds. In considering his argument, we nonetheless saw how deeply entrenched extreme humanist views can be, with related practices hidden underneath the bedrock of our culture. There is a temptation to remain silent about our treatment of nonhuman animals, especially as thinking about the suffering and exploitation of

nonhuman animals may be met with rejection or ostracism. Facing animal cruelty calls for significant changes to our actions, institutions and our very self-concepts, as we expose the many contradictions with our worldview (Bartky 1990).

When feminists dare to inspect our feelings and beliefs about nonhuman animals, and the ways they are made to suffer, we realize that our humanism is intertwined with and reinforces oppressive modes of considering and treating others that are repugnant when considered against our own theories and practices. It is far from clear how we could possibly recognize ableism, ageism, racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression as unjust and intolerable while giving discrimination and oppression tied to species a free pass, even when the harms involved are clearly extreme and even when we grant that there is no need for us to treat other beings in such ways in order to meet our own needs. The Juggernautean thinking, with its blatant lists of hierarchies and its flagrant ranking of some beings as more worthy of moral consideration than others, should be repugnant when considered through a feminist lens. Even if we did not find such thinking thoroughly repulsive, and even if we considered the most compassionate versions of such approaches to ethics – as with a stance that takes great care to avoid all harm to other beings save when deemed mandatory to meet human beings' genuine needs, that would call for profound changes to how we are living our own lives in relation to other animals. It would also call into question our ways of living with other humans, as so much of the harms that our ways of living and our political structures impose on others are not at all oriented towards meeting our needs and often function at odds with our best interests. For example, the exploitation of animals is tied up with unhealthy diets and practices that

are environmentally unsustainable, both of which are not in human beings' longterm interests.

If feminists reconsider the animal issue, they will come to see that at the very least, extreme forms of humanism are deeply at odds with any sound approach to feminism, and routinely harm not only other animals, but also other humans. Why have feminists long failed to show much indication of having put serious effort into such long-called-for rethinkings? The clues are all around us, and they are not very subtle. Feminists have long been aware of “factory farms” and a small minority of feminists, at least, have long argued that, context permitting, we can and should meet our dietary needs in ways that pay due respect to other animals and to the environment at large. But even in relation to such obvious wrongs as behind “factory farms,” feminists, on the whole, including those with ample resources to choose otherwise, routinely continue to proceed as if oblivious. We know that Peter Singer, Carol J. Adams, Tom Regan, and countless others have been claiming that nonhuman animals are oppressed for decades, and that such concerns routinely bring in environmental concerns and concerns about the allocation of limited resources as well. Why do feminists continually fail to question whether nonhumans are oppressed? Why have we failed to discard even extreme forms of humanism that, if laid bare, we would recoil from in disgust? Why are feminists failing nonhuman animals and, clearly, not only them?

Comfort. It is almost embarrassing. If we acknowledge the connection between these systems of exploitation, we will have to make a change in the way we live—in what we eat, in what we wear. And it is simply not convenient to make such a change. The pleasure of our palates is more important than the agony of thousands of animals who live painful lives ending in brutal and violent deaths. Yet if we can see the intertwining oppressions of women of different colors and different nations, if we can understand how racism and classism function like sexism, if we can understand, in essence, that it is the claim of difference that authorizes these

oppressions – what prevents us from understanding the oppression of other animal species?

More than comfort, it may be the fact, horrifying to some, that we too are animals. And the inability to accept this simple fact recalls the liberal split between mind and body. It is a split that denies the body, denies our feelings. (Gaard 1993, 301)

When feminists do take the time to reflect about nonhuman animals, and indeed about abuses and injustices bound up with our lives, institutions and broader social and political structures, we find that Juggernautean “logic” violates many of our fundamental ethical convictions while being far removed from a position we would want to claim for our own.

Were another species far more sophisticated than ourselves to land on earth, and apply a variant of the extreme humanism we routinely embrace upon us, it would not be mere arbitrariness if we found them to be an unethical and despicable species. When we consider what our own ideals would call for, we generally take an ideal being – a God – as sensitive even to simple beings, much as we routinely say of an especially kind person that he or she would not even hurt a fly.

As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, it is increasingly common for feminists to oppose all forms of oppression and feminists often make the claim that different forms of oppression are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Whether that is the case, if we are serious about opposing oppression, the same reasons that explain why it is wrong to oppress girls and women seem clearly to apply far more broadly as well. Feminists increasingly talk in ways that present it as imperative for feminists to oppose all forms of oppression. We admire those with the strength, integrity, and determination to refuse to go along with unjust privileges that are bound up with the oppression of many others. Feminists routinely point to instances of oppression and urge

that significant changes are called for even if they may disrupt business as usual and even if such changes may be hard to face. Yet too often we refuse to rethink unjust privileges that permeate our own lives and practices. Feminists should lead the way and cultivate the ability to step back and truly listen to even the most hard-to-hear criticisms, be open to recognizing when entrenched practices rest upon unjust hierarchies and abuses of power and need to change. Feminists, especially, should be mindful of pressures to silence their own consciences and to ignore or brush off inconvenient realities in ways that help to keep unjust practices in place. As Simon and Garfunkel put it, “silence like a cancer grows.” As unpleasant as it may be to confront, feminists have long embraced, and by and large continue to embrace, extreme forms of humanism. It is increasingly overdue for feminists to rethink the humanism that is often bound up with their theory and practice, and to become far more attentive to ways that it may be impeding progress towards a world in which oppression is taken with due seriousness and becomes a thing of the past.

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