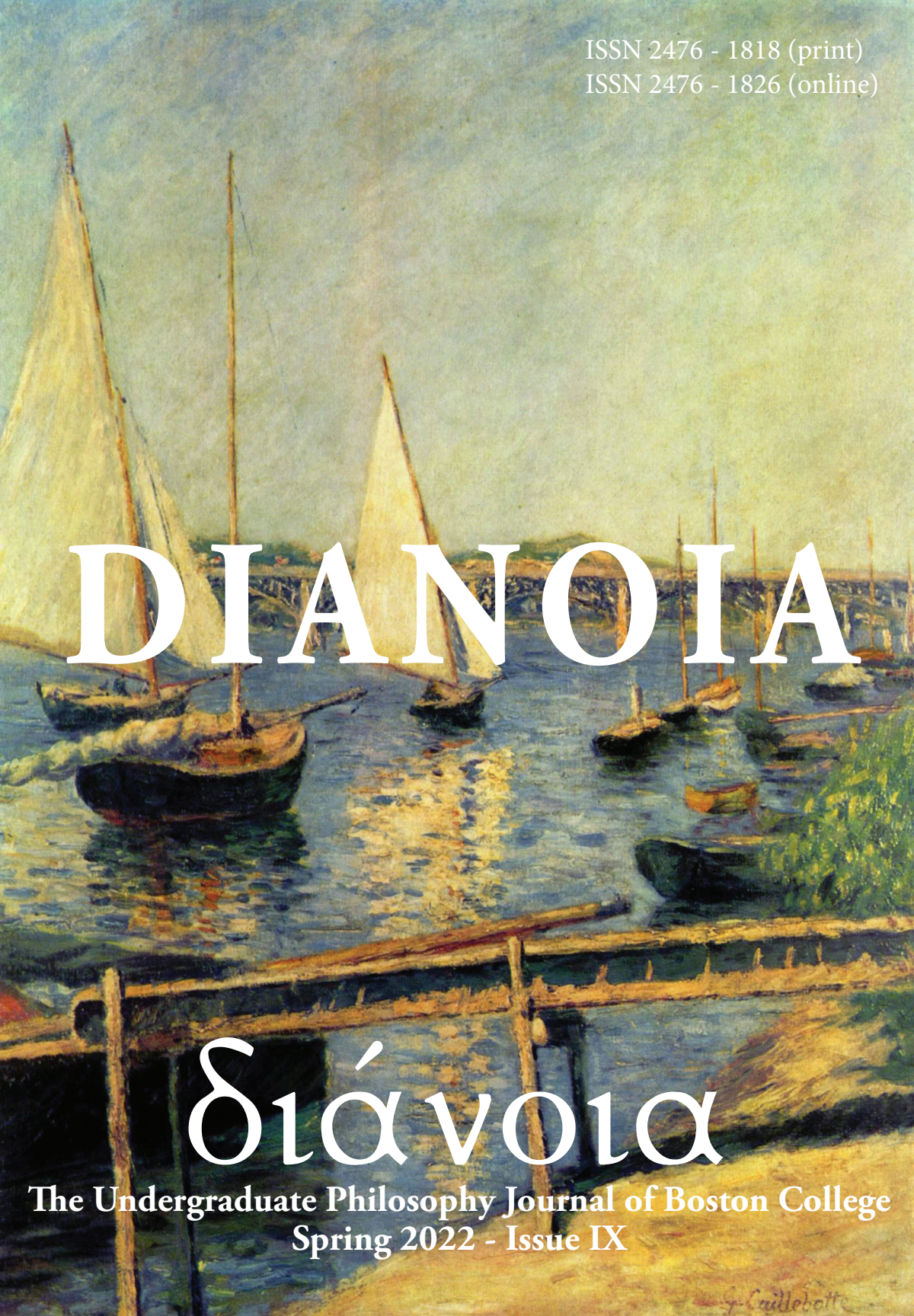
ISSN 2476 - 1818 (print)
ISSN 2476 - 1826 (online)



DIANOIA

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The Undergraduate Philosophy Journal of Boston College

Spring 2022 - Issue IX

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ISSUE IX
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Dianoia
The Undergraduate Philosophy Journal of Boston College
Spring 2022 Issue IX
Boston College
140 Commonwealth Avenue
Chestnut Hill, MA 02467
https://www.bc.edu/bc-web/schools/mcas/departments/philosophy/undergraduate/dianoia.html

Printed by Progressive Print Solutions.

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The Editorial Staff of *Dianoia: The Undergraduate Philosophy Journal of Boston College* would like to extend our sincerest thanks to the following individuals for their assistance in making this issue of Dianoia possible:

Mary Crane, Institute for the Liberal Arts

Kim Driscoll, Center for Centers

Stephen Hudson, Philosophy Department

Peter Klapes, Philosophy Department

Peter Marino, Center for Centers

Cherie McGill, Philosophy Department

Paula Perry, Philosophy Department

Sarah Smith, Philosophy Department

We would also like to thank Dr. Ronald Tacelli, S.J., of the Boston College Philosophy Department, for his invaluable assistance as our advisor.

Spring 2022

To the Reader,

Welcome to Issue IX of Dianoia: The Undergraduate Philosophy Journal of Boston College! We hope that you find you and yours safe and healthy as the COVID-19 pandemic winds down, and it is our pleasure and pride to present yet another installment of our journal. We were humbled to receive over two-hundred-fifty submissions from ninety-four different undergraduate institutions around the world, and have published what we believe, after countless hours of reading, discussion, and editing, are the five best and most thought-provoking essays. The subject-matter of these works range from: Kantian epistemology to Hirsch's deflationism and from the sociability of Spinoza's 'free person' to grounding and vigilantism. Thus, Dianoia's reputation as a diverse community of thinkers, committed to interinstitutional exchange, remains.

This year, the managing board chose Gustave Caillebotte's Sailing Boats at Argenteuil (1888) and Mikhail Zahranichny's Night to Venice as the journal's front and back covers, respectively. In publishing the fruit of this year's labor, I would be remiss if I did not thank the journal's various patrons, advisors, and advocates for their support. With your generous aid and freely-given expertise, Dianoia has flourished over the course of its decade-long existence, and today boasts a premier spot amongst undergraduate philosophy journals. To my senior managing editor, Maxwell Vogliano, and to my managing editors, Brock Daylor and Melissa Mao, you all have been nothing short of spectacular, and I am grateful for both your time and talents in crafting this year's issue. To our graduate advisor, Peter Klapes, your judgment and sagacious input have guided the journal more times than I can count; without your efforts, Dianoia would be nowhere close to the institutional endeavor that it is today. The Philosophy Department--in particular, Paula Perry, and Sarah Smith- deserves our heartfelt thanks for their assistance and hospitality. To the Institute for the Liberal Arts, we treasure your continued financial and legal support, and thank you for the opportunity, once again, to print the culmination of this year's review. To Susanne Hahs, our graphic designer, we are in awe of your artistry and digital adroitness, and greatly appreciate your patience in turning five essays into a fully-fledged journal. Lastly, I would like to thank our general editorial board for their incisiveness, their philosophical acumen, and their persistence in creating this year's issue. All my gratitude goes out to you; the managing board and I are truly in your debt.

As a senior, I will be leaving Dianoia after four years of service. My time on the journal has been one of the highlights of my undergraduate career, and to any future Editor-in-Chiefs, I hope that you find this publication's work as fulfilling as I have. To our readers, our submitters, and all our supporters not mentioned here, we wish you all the best and eagerly await your thoughts on our issue. Keep safe, stay in touch, and happy reading!

Sincerely,
Nicholas Arozarena, Editor-In-Chief

A DEFENSE OF THE SOCIABILITY OF SPINOZA'S FREE PERSON

DANIEL KLUGMAN

In *Ethics*[1], Baruch Spinoza describes the *homo liber*, or the free person[2], as his ideal moral agent. The free person is autonomous, acts entirely according to their own nature, and is supremely rational. In the texts where he discusses the free person's specific worldly character traits, he emphasizes the sociability of the free person. For instance, Spinoza claims that "only free men are very useful to one another, are joined to one another by the necessity of friendship" (EIVp71dem)[3], that "only free men are very thankful to one another" (EIVp71), and that "a man who is guided by reason is more free in a state, where he lives according to a common decision, than in solitude, where he obeys only himself" (EIVp73).

In his essay "Dr Fischelson's Dilemma: Spinoza on Freedom and Sociability,"[4] Daniel Garber claims that Spinoza is incorrect, however, to describe his free person as sociable. According to Garber, the free person does not have any use of sociability because it does not help the free person achieve freedom. Garber further argues that it is unnecessary to consider whether the free person has a use for sociability, because

1 Benedictus de Spinoza, *Ethics,* trans. Edwin Curley (Penguin Books, 1996). The copy of *Ethics* I reference was first published in *A Spinoza Reader* by Princeton University Press 1994. However, I reference the standalone publication of *Ethics* published by Penguin Books in 1996.

2 *Homo liber* is translated as "free man" in Curely's translation of *Ethics*. However, Steven Nadler, in *Think Least of Death: Spinoza on How to Live and How to Die* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), argues that the gender neutral "free person" is a legitimate translation of *homo liber.* In Latin, "the word *homo* can be used when the gender of the person is unknown or irrelevant" (35).

3 The parenthetical citation (EIVp71dem) should be read as: *Ethics*, book IV, proposition 71, demonstration. In addition, I use "preface" to reference a preface, and "def" to reference a definition. When the citation is within a larger section such as a preface, I will specify a page number.

4 Daniel Garber, "Dr. Fischelson's dilemma: Spinoza on freedom and sociability," *in Spinoza on Reason and the "Free Man"*, ed. Yirmiyahu Yovel and Gideon Segal (New York: Little Room Press, 1994).

the free person does not have the metaphysical capacity for sociability. Spinoza's free person, according to Garber, does not co-exist in the natural world with other human beings, and thus cannot socially interact with them. To be sociable, one must be able to engage on a physical and social level with other human beings. So, according to Garber, the free person cannot be sociable (Garber, 197-198).

In this paper, I address Garber's concerns with Spinoza's account of the free person. In part 1, I outline Spinoza's definition of the free person, defining some key Spinozistic terminology along the way. In part 2, I offer my interpretation of Spinoza's free person in contrast with Garber's understanding. On my account, the free person is an attainable ideal of human behavior who has the metaphysical capacity for sociability. I take the free person to be *practically* free. I argue Garber misinterprets Spinoza's definition of the free person as that person who is perfectly free. The perfectly free person is an embodiment of freedom in its most pure sense regardless of the metaphysical constraints of humanity; the practically free person expresses freedom as purely as a human being *actually* can. While the perfectly free person does not have the metaphysical capacity for sociability, the practically free person does. In part 3, I argue that the practically free person does not just have the capacity for sociability, but has a use for sociability. That is, the practically free person desires to be sociable, for sociability helps the practically free person become more free.

§1 Spinozistic Freedom

Before defining the free person, I will first explain the foundations of Spinoza's ethical theory. For Spinoza, ethics studies how best to live. Spinoza's answer is that the best way to live is in accordance with one's nature. Any individual being has an individual nature as well as a general species nature. A human, for example, has an individual nature as well as a species-wide human nature. The best human life, according to Spinoza, is one in which humans live in accordance with their human nature. Whatever human nature is, we can imagine some individual who lives entirely in accordance with such a nature, as opposed to living according to how other things, acting with their natures, affect him. That individual is the ideal moral agent after whom all other humans should model their behavior. The task of an ethicist is to investigate what human nature is so that we can set before ourselves a model of an ideal moral agent whose behavior we can imitate (IV preface, 115). Spinoza's ideal moral individual is the free person. Thus, my inquiry into Spinoza's definition of the free person is simultaneously an inquiry into what Spinoza takes to be the best, or the most moral, life. Since the best life is nothing but living entirely in accordance with one's nature, we ought to begin our investigation with what Spinoza takes human nature to be, and what living entirely in accordance with one's nature entails.

Spinoza argues the nature of human beings (and all beings) is, in part, to strive to persevere in existence (EIIp6). Human nature is not just a striving to persevere in existence, but a striving to persevere with the particular kind of *conatus* or power of acting that characterizes the human body and mind. In other words, human nature is striving to survive in such a way that one maintains and improves their power. The free person acts in accordance with human nature, so the free person strives to survive in such a way that they maintain and improve their power. The more rational or virtuous the free person is, the more they are able to exert power, and thus the free person strives to preserve their existence with a certain level of rationality to better exert power.[5]

The free person strives to preserve their existence actively. According to Spinoza, a person is active to the extent that they are the adequate cause of their own behaviors (EIIIdef3). A person is the adequate cause of their actions "when something in [them] or outside [them] follows from [their] nature, which can be clearly and distinctly understood through it alone" (EIIIdef2). So, when a person acts entirely from their nature, that is when a person is active, the resulting action can be understood entirely through that person's nature. Alternatively, a "passive" person behaves partially from their own nature and partly from the nature of the external things that affect them. If a person behaves partially from their nature, the resulting behavior can be understood only partially through that person's nature. If something outside of a person's nature determines the person's behaviors, it is possible that the person's actions would not follow from their nature, rather, they would follow from something else's. The free person thus strives to act actively as opposed to passively, for when the free person acts actively they act only from their nature, but if the free person behaves passively (which they cannot), they would behave from natures other than their own.

To become an active person, one must develop an adequate knowledge of the natural world, including the motivations behind human behaviors. Adequate knowledge of something is a true knowledge of that thing (EIIdef4). Suppose I overhear some classmate of mine, Larry, say, "Daniel's not very bright." As a result, I believe Larry hates me, so I return his hatred with hate. But, I am wrong to return Larry's hate with hate. I do so because I hear Larry expressing hate for me, and I imagine that such hate deserves hate in return. That is, my nature is to act in such a way that it preserves my power in existence, and I imagine that returning Larry's hatred with hatred will better preserve my power in existence. But, my reasoning comes from an unreliable source of knowledge: the imagination (IIp40sI and

5 For the purposes of this paper, I regard the free person as striving to preserve their existence in a rational or virtuous manner. That is, I hold that the free person strives to, through reason, exert power in existence. However, one could, on the other hand, argue that the free person strives to preserve their power (and rationality) to a greater extent than their existence. On this view, any actions which do not come from reason, and thus result in a decrease of power, ought not to be pursued. Even if, for instance, an action results in one's death, if the action violates the precepts of reason, the free person would not, on this view, pursue such an action.

II). Rather, we ought to consult reason in hope of gaining adequate knowledge (IIp40s2III).

Reason tells us what will best help us preserve our power in existence. As Spinoza claims, "it is within reason to perceive things as they truly are in themselves" (EIIp44dem). Reason tells us that although hating Larry is tempting, loving him better preserves our existence as rational individuals. If we love Larry, he may return love to us and help us preserve our power in existence. If we hate Larry, he may return hatred to us and prevent us from preserving our power in existence. When Larry maligns our intelligence we are affected both with hate and love, but if we listen to reason we adequately understand that love is better suited to help us preserve our power in existence. Thus, when we listen to reason we adequately understand things in their entirety and see how they best assist us in preserving our nature.

For Spinoza, the person who acts, who is an adequate cause of their own behavior, who listens to reason to acquire adequate knowledge, is free. The person who behaves passively, who is an inadequate cause of their behavior, and who allows inadequate knowledge to overpower the guidance of Reason, is "in bondage" (EIVpreface, 115). Spinoza claims "that thing is called free which exists from the necessity of its nature alone, and is determined to act by itself alone" (EIdef7). In other words, freedom is expressed through an autonomous expression of one's nature. The free person must be an active person who, under the guidance of reason and adequate knowledge, acts in accordance with their nature.

§1 Perfectly Free or Practically Free?

Spinoza's definition of freedom is slightly ambiguous and such ambiguity has significant implications for the sociability of the free person. When Spinoza claims in his definition of freedom (EIdef7) that something is free if it "exists from the necessity of its nature alone, and is determined to act by itself alone" he describes *perfect or absolute freedom*. This is the freedom that Spinoza attributes to God or Nature (EIp17). Garber interprets Spinoza as claiming the free person is perfectly free (Garber, 184). That is, Garber interprets Spinoza as claiming the free person possesses the same freedom as God. Such an interpretation creates great difficulty in conceptualizing the free person as a person at all, let alone a sociable person. In this section, I analyze Garber's interpretation of Spinoza's free person and conclude that he misinterprets Spinoza. On my account, Spinoza takes the free person to be *practically free* as opposed to perfectly free. That is, the practically free person is the freest given the limitations of their metaphysical disposition. By metaphysical disposition, I mean humanity's position in Spinoza's metaphysics, i.e., humanity's causal abilities and constraints. The practically free person, as opposed to the perfectly free person, does have the metaphysical capacity for sociability.

Garber concurs with my summary of Spinoza's conception of freedom in §1. However, Garber interprets the implications of Spinozistic freedom differently. First, Garber cites Spinoza's claim that "He who is born free, and remains free, only has adequate ideas [knowledge]" (EIIIp68def). From this claim, Garber infers that the perfectly free person not only acts solely on behalf of his adequate knowledge but also that the free person only has adequate knowledge. Garber argues that it follows that the perfectly free person has no inadequate knowledge. Recall that when a person possesses adequate knowledge they are active; when a person possesses inadequate knowledge they are passive. An equivalent formulation of this claim is: when a person possesses adequate knowledge they act; when a person possesses inadequate knowledge they are acted on. Since the perfectly free person only has adequate knowledge, then the perfectly free person only acts, and thus is never acted on. Garber's perfectly free person then, cannot be caused to do anything by external sources; in fact, in Garber's reading the free person has no causal interactions with anything and is causally isolated from the rest of the world (Garber, 186-188).

In being causally isolated from the world, the perfectly free person does not have the metaphysical capacity for sociability. The causally isolated perfectly free person cannot be acted upon and, as a result cannot physically interact with other human beings. Any social interaction between human beings necessarily involves some form of mutual physical causation. For instance, if I shake hands with another human being, our separate forces of motion interact with each other. If I speak with another human being, we each impress images on each other's bodies and minds. The perfectly free person however cannot experience either of these forms of physical human interaction, for they cannot be acted on. For a person to be sociable they need to be able to physically interact with other human beings. Therefore, the perfectly free person cannot be sociable.

In effect, Garber's perfectly free person, entirely self-sufficient and causally isolated, violates Spinoza's conception of humanity's metaphysical disposition.[6] I argue that this is a problem for Garber's reading of Spinoza, for, on my reading of Spinoza, the free person possesses the same metaphysical limitation as human beings. In Spinoza's universe, humans are merely modes of a single substance: Nature. Insofar as humans exist, they exist within Nature. Spinoza writes, "It is impossible that a man not be a part of Nature, and that he should be able to undergo no changes except those which can be understood through his own nature alone, and of which he is the adequate cause" (EIVp4). In other words, humans cannot disentangle themselves from the causal web of Nature. As a mode of Nature, humans are first acted on by Nature itself. Then, other modes within Nature, such as other human

6 Garber claims "the perfectly free individual would not even need external support for his continued existence, needing neither food nor water nor air" (186). Human beings cannot survive without drinking water, eating food, or breathing air.

beings, act on one another. It is impossible that humans can transcend this causal structure of Nature, and thus human beings will always, in some capacity, be acted on. But, Garber's perfectly free person is never acted on. So, Garber's perfectly free person is an impossible ideal[7]. Humans can attempt to imitate the behavior of Garber's perfectly free person, but they can never *be* Garber's perfectly free person.

And yet, Spinoza asserts one of the more valuable aspects of the free person is their ability to serve as a practical model of human behavior. Spinoza's free person is meant to be a model of moral behavior that human beings *can* imitate (EIV preface 115). If I find myself faced with a question of action and ask myself, "how would the perfectly free person act?" I would not be able to imagine an answer at all. The perfectly free person is something entirely foreign; their abilities are unknown, their position in the world is unknowable. All I know about the perfectly free person is that they transcend Nature, but in reality nothing can transcend Nature. So, I have no answer as to how the perfectly free person would act. But, any model of human behavior should provide me with an answer as to how to act. Thus, we ought to seek out a model of human nature that we can consult in any situation, one that is grounded in humanity's metaphysical disposition.

As we will see, my interpretation of Spinoza's free person does just that: it is an attainable ideal grounded in human nature; humans can be my free person. In my view, the free person is *practically free.* That is, the practically free person is only free to the extent that a human can *practically* achieve. The practically free person never fails to abide by reason's commands and thus they act autonomously from their nature. But, the practically free person *does* exist within Nature. The practically free person, because they are a part of Nature, has the capacity for sociability. The practically free person is subject to all sorts of external causes, but they never act from such causes. Rather, the practically free person overcomes the inadequate knowledge they gain from external influences, and through Reason always act in accordance with their nature.

An example from Spinoza himself will help illustrate exactly how the practically free person, through Reason, always acts in accordance with their nature as opposed to the natures of external beings, while still having the metaphysical capacity for sociability. Spinoza claims "a free man [person] who lives among the ignorant strives, as far as he can, to avoid their favors" (EIVp70). Suppose an "ignorant" man, that is a man who is not practically free, confers a favor to a practically free

7 Garber is not the only scholar to argue that Spinoza's free person is an impossible ideal. For other arguments defending the impossibility of Spinoza's free person, look to: Jonathan Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1984), Herma De Dijn, "Ethics IV: The Ladder, Not the Top: The Provisional Morals of the Philosopher." In Yirmiyahu Yovel and Gideon Segal, eds., *Ethica 4: Spinoza on Reason and the "Free Man."*(New York: Little Room Press, 2004, 37–56), Charles Jarrett, "Spinozistic Constructivism." In Matthew Kisner and Andrew Youpa, eds., *Essays on Spinoza's Ethical Theory.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, 57–84), Matthew Kisner, "Reconsidering Spinoza's Free Man: The Model of Human Nature," *Oxford Studies in Early Modern Philosophy,* January 1, 2010.

person. That ignorant man will value his favor according to his own temperament, and "will be saddened if he sees it valued less by him to whom it was given" (EIVp70dem). If the free person were perfectly free, this entire scenario would be metaphysically impossible. That is, the perfectly free person cannot socially interact with an ignorant man, let alone a man at all. Here we must consider the free person to have the metaphysical capability for sociability. The free person has the metaphysical capability for sociability, insofar as they exist within Nature and are thus always, to some degree, acted on. In this case, the practically free person is acted on by the ignorant man insofar as the ignorant man's words impress images in the mind of the practically free person.

The practically free person here has two options: accept or decline the ignorant man's favor. And Spinoza claims that, *as far as he can*, the free person strives to avoid, or decline the ignorant man's favors. The practically free person seeks to avoid or decline the ignorant man's favors because they come from irrationality. But, the practically free person strives to act from Reason in accordance with his own nature, not from the irrationality of an ignorant man. So, the practically free person, *as far as he can*, declines the ignorant man's favor precisely because the ignorant man's favor comes from irrationality, and the practically free person seeks to do "only those things which he himself knows [from reason] to be the most excellent" (EIVp70dem).

Even so, Spinoza claims that the practically free person avoids and declines the favors of ignorant men *as far as he can*, meaning there are some situations where the practically free person accepts the favors of irrational men. Such a claim seems difficult to defend. The practically free person must always autonomously act in accordance with their nature. How can acting on behalf of another's nature (appeasing the ignorant man by accepting his favors) be in line with the practically free person's autonomous self-preservation?

Reason commands the practically free person to occasionally appease irrational ignorant men, for it can be better for the expansion of one's power in existence to form bonds with other men. If the practically free person accepts the favors of ignorant men, the ignorant men will feel bonded to the practically free person and will help the practically free person in times of need. But, if the practically free person declines the favors of ignorant men, the ignorant men will feel hatred towards the practically free person, and will seek to make their existence more difficult. Importantly, the practically free person still, in accepting the favors of ignorant men, acts from his own nature, not the nature of ignorant men. The underlying reason the practically free person accepts the favors of ignorant men is not for the sake of the ignorant man's pride, but for the usefulness that the ignorant man, in feeling bonded to the practically free person, provides to the practically free person. Thus, the practically free person still does not, in this case, act from external

causes, such as the temperament of the ignorant man. The practically free person, on the contrary, is subject to the temperament of ignorant men, but only acts in such a way that Reason commands, or that is best for their autonomous powerful self-preservation.

Before moving on, I will clarify my critique of Garber's reading of Spinoza. Garber notices that in his reading of Spinoza, the free person violates Spinoza's metaphysics. In response, Garber claims that Spinoza made a mistake; Spinoza formulated a free person who, by Spinoza's own metaphysics, cannot metaphysically exist as a human being (Garber, 196). I, on the other hand, take it that there is nothing wrong with Spinoza's account of the free person, rather, there is something wrong with Garber's reading of Spinoza. Namely, Garber thinks it is a problem *for Spinoza* that Spinoza's free person violates his own metaphysics. In reality, it is a problem *for Garber* that, in his reading, Spinoza's free person violates Spinoza's metaphysics. In other words, Spinoza would not posit a free person which violated Spinoza's own metaphysical theory. And, if we can defend the position that Spinoza posited a free person who does not violate Spinoza's own metaphysical theory, such a reading of Spinoza is preferable. My reading of Spinoza, in which the free person is practically free and does not violate Spinoza's metaphysics, is thus preferable to Garber's reading.

§2 The Usefulness of Sociability

The task of this paper is not just to defend the claim that Spinoza's free person is capable of sociability. Rather, I argue that, for Spinoza, sociability is useful for the free person- that is, sociability helps the free person act autonomously in accordance with their nature; sociability is a desirable character trait of the free person. Garber argues, on the contrary, that for Spinoza, sociability is useless for the free person; sociability does not help the free person act autonomously in accordance with their nature. Garber concludes then that the free person would not aim to be sociable as the free person only behaves in ways that help the free person act autonomously in accordance with their nature. In this section, I summarize Spinoza's defense of the usefulness of sociability to the free person. Then, I explain the differences between my and Garber's interpretation of Spinoza's argument. Additionally, I defend my interpretation of Spinoza's account of the usefulness of sociability to the free person. Having already dismissed the notion of a perfectly free sociable person, we need not discuss whether sociability is useful for the perfectly free person. Rather, we can focus on the usefulness of sociability for the practically free person.

For Spinoza, human beings are sociable, and useful to one another, insofar as they agree in nature. When human beings disagree in nature, or have contrary natures, they are hostile towards one another, and thus are not sociable (EIIIp4p5). Spinoza argues that "no thing can be evil through what it has in common with our nature" (EIVp30) and insofar as a thing agrees with our nature it is "necessarily

good" (EIVp31). For Spinoza, something is evil when it prevents us from acting in accordance with our nature (EIVpreface, 115-116). In other words, something is contrary to my nature if it prevents my self-preservation. If something agrees with my nature, then it cannot, through its own nature, which is the same as mine, prevent me from acting in accordance with my nature. Rather, when two individuals agree in nature, they are "necessarily good" for one another, meaning they help one another individually act in accordance with their nature. In other words, if some other human seeks to preserve their being in the same way I do, then, according to Spinoza, we necessarily cannot be harmful towards one another, and we must be helpful towards the preservation of each other's being. So, for Spinoza, humans ought to behave in a way that their natures agree with one another, for then they can easily help each other individually act in accordance with their nature, becoming more practically free.

To consider how human beings can aim to agree in nature, we must understand what it means for two human beings to agree in nature. Here, Garber and I differ in our interpretations of what it means for two human beings to "agree in nature."

Garber interprets Spinoza's claim concerning agreement in nature such that two human beings agree in nature insofar as their human nature is the same. But all human beings, for Spinoza, have the same human nature: to strive to preserve their existence while maintaining or expanding the particular kind of power characterized by the human mind and body. Thus, Garber argues that in his interpretation of Spinoza, all humans entirely agree in nature. Then, Garber contends, human beings cannot agree or disagree in nature to a greater or lesser extent, for humans always agree in nature as they have the same fundamental human nature (Garber, 188). So, Spinoza's claim that human beings can agree or disagree in nature to a greater or lesser extent becomes, for Garber, incoherent.

I, on the other hand, interpret two human beings as agreeing in nature when they act in accordance with their human nature to the same extent. One human may possess many adequate ideas, and, as a result, act nearly completely in accordance with their nature. But, another human may possess many inadequate ideas and few adequate ideas. As a result, the human with more inadequate ideas acts less in accordance with their nature. These two human beings do not agree in nature, for the extent to which their actions are in accordance with human nature varies.

The guidance of reason, Spinoza argues, is a tool which humans can utilize to agree in nature (EIVp35). Anyone who acts from reason acts from the same true human nature; reason does not produce different notions of human nature. When an individual acts from their nature, they act from their own understanding of their nature. Any individuals who understand their nature from Reason understand their nature in the same true fashion. Thus, if any number of individuals understand

their nature from Reason and subsequently act from their own understanding of their natures, they will act from the same true human nature. If an individual derived, from Reason, two different notions of human nature, then one of such notions of human nature would be true while the other false. But, Reason cannot produce inadequate knowledge; reason only produces adequate knowledge. As Spinoza claims "reason guides us to understand things as they are in actuality" (EIIp44). So, an individual cannot derive from reason different notions of human nature. Rather, an individual can, from Reason, only conceive human nature as it truly is. Thus, two humans agree in nature when they act in accordance with the same true human nature which they derive, and understand, from reason.

An example will elucidate this complex point. Suppose two individuals, Hannah and Olive, go on a sailing trip together. Unfortunately, they shipwreck on a small island in which they must survive indefinitely. Hannah and Olive, both hungry, find enough food for one of them to have a full meal while the other starves, or for both to have a sufficient amount of food for survival while remaining quite hungry. Although the imagination tells Hannah and Olive that taking all the food for oneself might seem like the best expression of one's nature (autonomous powerful self-preservation), Reason dictates that, in reality, Hannah or Olive need one another on the island to survive. In sharing the food, Hannah and Olive, elect, from Reason, to preserve each other's being in the hopes that they can each better preserve their own power in individual existence. If either Hannah or Olive elected, from the imagination, to take all the food for themselves, they would immediately feel less hungry and more content, but would have a more difficult time surviving long term. To take all the food then is to misunderstand human nature, or have an inadequate understanding of what best preserves one's power in existence. If Hannah and Olive both listen to the guidance of Reason, they will have an adequate understanding of human nature. And, as individuals have a true understanding of human nature, they better agree in nature. So, when Hannah and Olive understand their natures from Reason and subsequently act from their individual understandings of nature, they are useful to one another: they elect to share the food so as to preserve each other's being in the hopes that they can each better preserve their own existence.

Garber objects to the claim that insofar as things agree with our nature they are useful to us. According to Garber, since the nature of every individual is to preserve its being (EIIIp6), humans strive, from their nature, to maintain their "own existence, and that alone." Garber further argues that "there is nothing here to suggest that Spinoza thought an individual strives to preserve anything that happens to share its nature. What is preserved is existence, not nature" (Garber, 189). In the previous example, Hannah and Olive each individually seek to preserve their individual existences, and from Reason they see that in preserving each other's

existence they can better preserve their individual existences. Garber denies the validity of this move. It is not, Garber argues, in the nature of human beings to consider another's existence, rather they would only consider their own (Garber, 190). Here Garber overlooks the fact that the very reason humans who agree in nature are useful to one another is that they have a shared understanding that they both strive to individually preserve their existence, but that in working together they can better preserve their individual existence. It is not that Hannah and Olive each wish to keep the other alive so as to preserve the other's existence, but to better preserve her own existence.

As a final aside, I want to emphasize that for Spinoza, sociability is more than useful for the practically free person, it is necessary. The practically free person cannot achieve the highest degree of freedom possible for a human being without being sociable. When a human is sociable, they are able to exist within a non-hostile social order. And, although any human being, free or not free, can exist within a non-hostile social order, a free person cannot, according to Spinoza, exist in a hostile social order. This view is expressed by Spinoza in his *Theological Political Treatise*[8]*:*

> A social order is useful—necessary indeed—for living securely from enemies and also for getting things done in an efficient way. Men don't have the skill or the time to support and preserve themselves really well, unless they are willing to help one another in this. Men vary in what they are good at; no one man could provide for himself the things he most needs, let alone things he would like but doesn't outright need. No man would have the ability and the time to do his own ploughing, sowing, reaping, grinding, cooking, weaving, sewing, if he alone had to plow, to sow, to reap, to grind, to cook, to weave, to sew, and to do the many other things to support life—not to mention the acquisition of practical skills and theoretical knowledge that are also entirely necessary for the perfection of human nature and its blessedness. Those who live barbarously, without an organized community, lead a wretched and almost brutal life; and their ability to provide themselves with the few wretched and crude things they do have depends on the mutual assistance, such as it is, that they give one another (Spinoza, 46).

As Spinoza notes here, in an unsafe society that lacks any structural order, individuals would have no time for the concerns of adequate knowledge. Rather, individuals would be primarily concerned with ensuring their safety and securing their next meal. And, if individuals do not have the time or security to pursue adequate knowledge from reason, then they cannot achieve a state of practical

8 Benedictus de Spinoza, *Theological Political Treatise,* trans. Jonathan Bennett 2017.

freedom. So, humans must not, if they wish to be practically free, embrace antisocial behavior. Rather, they must adopt a sociable disposition towards one another where they can feel comfortable enough to discover through reason the correct way to act in accordance with their nature. That is, the practically free person is one who, through their own sociability, contributes to a safe and secure social order, and thus can devote themselves towards discovering, through Reason, the correct way to act in accordance with their nature.

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HEROES OR VILLAINS?:
A Lockean Approach to Justifying Vigilantism

REBEKAH LOCKE

§1 Introduction

It has long been argued that the state has a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence and imposition of sanctions. But what happens in cases where the state fails to effectively carry out its duties of punishment and protection? That is where vigilantes come in. Many philosophers deny that vigilantism can ever truly be justified. I disagree, and I believe more people agree with me than they know. Think of the vigilantes we see in movies and television. We call these people heroes, or even superheroes (just look to the massive success of the recent superhero "Avengers" movies). As an audience, we laud these rogue crime-fighters: the lonely cop against a crooked police force, a man seeking justice for a murder that was dismissed due to negligence or corruption, a serial killer who hunts and kills other serial killers. As an audience, we seem to accept vigilantism. Why then, are we so loath to accept it as politically justifiable? That is what I aim to explore.

Vigilantism refers to the non-state sanctioned punishment of criminals and is justified in certain specific instances, namely in a "pseudo-state of nature." A pseudo-state of nature is a state in between the chaos of a full-blown state of nature (the state into which man is born and exists until some form of order or government is put in place) and the order of an established socio-political state. This is a state wherein the established order has failed in some critical aspect, such as apprehension or punishment of criminals. I will elaborate on the concept of a "pseudo-state of nature" in section three. Using a Lockean approach to governmental rights (which I explain in

section two), I apply the "Natural Executive Right"—a right to punish transgressions that philosopher John Locke believed belonged to all people in a state of nature—in these "pseudo-states of nature," the end result of which is a philosophical justification for vigilantism. I believe that vigilantism is a reasonable and justifiable response to wrongdoings when the state fails to uphold its duties of punishing criminals and protecting its citizens. That is what I seek to prove in this paper.

§1 Defining the Phenomenon

In this paper I aim to justify only the specific phenomenon known as crime-control vigilantism. Crime-control vigilantism is what we normally think of when we think of vigilantism. As H. Jon Rosenbaum and Peter Sederberg define it, crime-control vigilantism "is directed against people believed to be committing acts proscribed by the formal legal system[1]." Vigilantes are concerned with the same criminals with which the state normally would be concerned. This type of vigilantism occurs especially when the state or establishment fails or is seen to be ineffectual:

> The primary causes of these activities [crime-control vigilantism] are disillusionment with the government's ability to enforce the laws and, apparently, the belief that the police are corrupt. These cases are examples where groups normally classified as potential participants in dissident violence share certain values with the established legal system and are attempting to extend the enforcement of these shared norms into their neglected communities.[2]

Crime-control vigilantism is characterized by actions that ultimately coincide with the norms of the state even though they may involve the transgression of those same norms.

Specifically, the term vigilante, as I use it, refers to a person or group of persons who protect and restore the establishment (except in cases where the establishment has enacted evil laws, but more on this later) through the use of extralegal actions in situations where the state or legal system has failed to function properly in some crucial way. In their essay "Vigilantism: An Analysis of Establishment Violence," Rosenbaum and Sederberg classify vigilantism as "establishment violence." Establishment violence is violence with the goal of maintaining or defending the established order.[3] It is not violence aimed **at** the establishment but rather at **restoring** the establishment. Vigilantes are concerned with the ideals and motives of the established order but feel they must resort to actions that violate the formal boundaries of that order to protect it. The idea that they must act outside of the established order to protect

1 Jon Rosenbaum and Peter Sederberg. "Vigilantism: An Analysis of Establishment Violence." In Vigilante Politics. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, (1976). 3-29. 10.
2 Ibid, 3.
3 Ibid, 4.

that order—the feeling that the existing order is so corrupt that one cannot feasibly correct it from within—is what makes "establishment violence" true vigilantism.

Moreover, for actions to be considered vigilantism they need to be both voluntary and completely divorced from the state; the vigilante cannot be accountable to the state in any way. Vigilantism occurs when the state has been rendered ineffective, or at the very least, when the state appears ineffective. Vigilantism, as I will use it for the remainder of my argument, is the use or threat of violence by voluntary agents acting without regard for state approval and directed toward protecting the reasonably just morality of a given community and maintaining objective security within that group.[4] Furthermore, and most importantly, vigilantism is a reaction to crime or transgressions of an established order, especially when that order has been rendered ineffective in some way[5]. I believe it is the "Natural Executive Right"—our individual right to punish all transgressors in the state of nature—that justifies vigilantism.

§2 The Natural Executive Right[6]

Before we discuss Locke's "Natural Executive Right," we must first explain his concept of a "state of nature." A state of nature is the state into which all men are born and in which there is no socio-political order. All men are free from laws and governance until some overarching order is formed. In his *Two Treatises of Government*, Locke argued that all men are naturally free—that they are born into a state of nature—and, as such, have certain inherent rights, such as the right to life, liberty, and property[7]. It is only in the formation of a social or political order or government that man leaves the state of nature. In this formation, man voluntarily transfers his natural rights to the state. It is through this voluntary transfer of man's natural rights that the state gets its own rights, such as the right to make and enforce laws. Therefore, when the state fails or is disbanded, man is returned to a state of nature and his natural rights are returned.

Among the natural rights that Locke believed man to have is the "Natural Executive Right," which includes the right to punish any and all transgressions of the law of nature. Let us begin this discussion of Locke's "Natural Executive Right" by examining why he argued that it is a right belonging to all people in a state of nature. In the *Second Treatise of Government*, Locke claims:

4 This definition is derived from two articles on the subject of vigilantism: Travis Dumsday's "On Cheering Charles Bronson: The Ethics of Vigilantism" and Les Johnston's "What Is Vigilantism?"

5 Travis Dumsday, "On Cheering Charles Bronson: The Ethics of Vigilantism." The Southern Journal of Philosophy XLVII (2009): 49-67. 60.

6 The existence of the natural executive right is a contentious one, with many detractors arguing that such a right is even paradoxical in nature. For a full yet ultimately unconvincing argument against the Natural Executive Right, see Jeffrie Murphy's "A Paradox in Locke's Theory of Natural Rights." For the purpose of this paper, however, because I am focusing on arguing for the legitimacy of vigilantism, I urge the reader to simply take the existence of the NER as a conditional; if the natural executive right as I argue for it exists then vigilantism is justified.

7 Alex Tuckness,"Locke's Political Philosophy", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries/locke-political/>

> To justify bringing such evil [punishment] on any man two things are requisite. First that he who does it has commission and power to do so. Secondly, that it be directly useful for the procuring of some greater good . . . Usefulness, when present, being only one of those conditions, cannot give the other, which is a commission to punish. [8]

Locke believed that punishment is only acceptable when those who execute it have the commission and power to do so. This authoritative power to punish comes from what Locke calls the "Natural Executive Right." This right gives all individuals in a state of nature the "right to punish the transgressors of that law [of nature] to such a degree as may hinder its violation[9]." It is from the transfer of this right from the individual to the state, Locke contends, that the government attains the power to punish its citizens. As the first of his three arguments for the "Natural Executive Right" has no bearing on my concept of vigilantism, I will skip directly to his second and third arguments.

Locke's second argument for the existence of a natural executive right links the natural executive right with the right to preserve humankind. Locke argues that it is an inherent right in a state of nature to protect and preserve humankind through punishment. Broadly construed, the right to preservation could include the right not only to defend others when they are under attack but also the right to create a "deterrent climate" through punishment and preemptive attacks[10]. For the right to preserve humankind through proper punishment, it must be construed in the broad sense because punishment involves much more than defense during an attack: "[P]unishment begins where defense leaves off[11]." It is to this broad construal of the right to preserve humankind that Locke appeals. Punishment of crimes, in the sense that it deters future criminals from acting, becomes a form of protection against future attacks, a protection in which all people have an interest[12]. This is how our natural right to protect mankind validates the "Natural Executive Right."

The third argument Locke gives for the "Natural Executive Right," the right that all people are endowed with to punish any and all transgressions in a state of nature, comes from an examination of the government's right to punish. The government has a right to punish criminals, but as the government gets its power solely from the voluntary transfer of natural rights from the citizens who agree to be governed,[13] individuals must have the natural right to punish before there is a government. It follows that individuals in a state of nature—existing before or outside of

8 Jon A. Simmons. "The Right to Punish." In The Lockean Theory of Rights. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, (1992). 121-66. 122.
9 John Locke. The Second Treatise of Government. (1689). Reprint, New York: The Liberal Arts Press, (1956). 6.
10 Simmons, 136.
11 *Ibid.*
12 *Ibid, 137.*
13 *Ibid, 123-4.*

government—have the right to punish wrongdoers themselves. It is from the transfer of our natural rights that Locke believes the government gains the commission and power to punish. However, in situations where the state has failed or does not exist, the rights of the people return to the individual. This gives individuals the right to punish when there is no state or when the state has failed in some critical manner (a "pseudo-state of nature"). This is why I believe that what Locke calls the "Natural Executive Right," applied in a "pseudo-state of nature," justifies vigilantism[14].

§3 The Pseudo-State of Nature

Having established the possibility[15] of a natural executive right that would allow individuals in a state of nature to punish wrongdoers, what impact does this have for our attempts to justify vigilantism? It seems quite obvious that most humans do not exist in a "pre-political" state; only rarely can one find individuals living without some form of socio-political structure, and states of complete political dissolution do not last long. But when the state ceases to function properly in important aspects such as punishment and crime-deterrence—if it fails partially with respect to some of its duties while still functioning in every other aspect—it becomes, in a very relevant sense, like a state of nature. I call these situations "pseudo-states of nature." These pseudo-states of nature are akin to a full-blown state of nature in the sense that the state or socio-political order in such a pseudo-state has failed in some critical way. It is not that a state or established order does not exist in these circumstances. Rather, the state or established order is so ineffective in certain aspects that it is as if it were absent in those respects. As I argue, crime-control vigilante justice is permissible in these "pseudo-states of nature" precisely because they are instances where the state fails in some ways but still maintains a semblance of governance in other ways. The relevant state failures for this discussion on vigilantism are the failure to punish those who transgress the laws (or morality in the case of a corrupt government) of the society it governs and the failure to protect its citizens from danger and loss of security.

The crucial characteristic of a pseudo-state of nature is that it is a state that has not yet degraded into chaos—there is still an overarching structure, the skeleton of the state. The laws, procedures, and all other facets of the establishment still exist in a pseudo-state of nature. The only thing that is missing, in the cases I am focusing on, is a properly functioning system of punishment, or, in some situations, a properly working legislative body. In these situations, the state simply fails in one or two aspects. As the state gets its right to punish from our right to punish others (Locke's

14 Together, all three of Locke's arguments for the natural executive right (including the one I have not addressed) make as strong a case as any competing explanation of the natural executive right, the right to punish wrongdoings in a state or pseudo-state of nature. What I have aimed to do here is make a case for the natural executive right as at least as plausible as any other theory.

15 There are still a great many detractors toward the "Natural Executive Right," and as I do not have room in this paper to argue all of these points, from here on my argument is conditional, operating under the assumption that the "Natural Executive Right" is real and that, applied in a pseudo-state of nature, justifies vigilantism.

conception of the "Natural Executive Right"), when the state cannot or does not punish, we can, and should, temporarily take back that right and punish wrongdoers ourselves. In these pseudo-states of nature vigilantes fill the gap, so to speak, stepping in, in many cases, for the state but also for the community as a whole. States that are only temporarily without a properly functioning system of punishment can survive if someone—a vigilante—takes over that one function until the state is working properly.

Although he does not specifically call them pseudo-states of nature, Travis Dumsday, in his article "On Cheering Charles Bronson: The Ethics of Vigilantism," outlines four situations in which vigilantism is permissible. I believe that all of these situations are examples of pseudo-states of nature and cover most, if not all, pseudo-state of nature circumstances relevant to vigilantism. The four situations are: 1) The state has enacted good laws but is failing to enforce them; 2) The state has failed to enact certain good laws; 3) The state has enacted evil laws; and 4) The state has enacted good laws and is enforcing them[16].

In the first circumstance, when the state has enacted good laws but is failing to enforce them, the legislative aspect of the state is functioning properly but the executive branch is not punishing transgressions of these laws. This can happen for a number of reasons. If the police force or other players in the justice system are corrupt,[17] have ulterior motives (such as racist agendas), or are simply inept, then they will ultimately fail to uphold the system of punishment the state has put in place. In such cases, individuals not only have the right to protect themselves from criminal activities, they also have the right to punish transgressors because the state has failed to do so. Such instances seem to be fairly clear examples of pseudo-states of nature in that the state is functioning properly in some aspects but has failed completely in others, mainly the punishment of criminals. Vigilantes are concerned with the same criminals with which the state should normally be concerned. Instances of grievous injustice, such as when a murderer is acquitted because evidence was obtained illegally or because he bribed or intimidated jurors, should be considered failures of the state under this conception of pseudo-states of nature. In such cases, the state is unable to punish wrongdoers and protect its citizens effectively. The state itself may not be corrupt or willfully blind, but, because of forces out of the state's control or mistakes made along the way, the state has failed to completely uphold its duties, becoming a pseudo-state of nature.

The second situation in which the state has failed to enact good laws is slightly more difficult to justify. Dumsday explains these circumstances as ones where a state has failed to prohibit actions that, from a rational point of view, would have been deemed

16 Dumsday, 58.
17 *Ibid.*

wrong or breaches of natural law[18]. For example, if a theoretical state did not prohibit murder or rape, or, in a more realistic example, excluded certain races, religions, or creeds from protection, then it has not enacted good laws[19]. Dumsday also includes under this category instances of a state enacting good laws but failing to endorse sufficient punishment[20]. In this case, a government may prohibit murder but attach a grievously insufficient punishment to its transgression—Dumsday uses the example of a one week jail sentence[21]. It is helpful, in defending Dumsday's argument, to use the idea of the morality of a state. If we look to the general morality of the citizens in a corrupt state as establishing the proper norms, it becomes easier to argue that the state has failed in some way by not enacting certain laws or sufficient punishment.

The same principle applies to Dumsday's third category, instances where the state has enacted evil laws[22]. It would seem impossible, to some degree, for a state to enact "evil" laws if the laws are merely a construct of the state alone. But if the state enacts laws that go against the overall morality of its community, such as the sterilization of mentally ill individuals or the prohibition or limiting of African American voting rights, when the community feels these actions are unethical, then the state has failed. Also, if the state itself is evil, such as in Nazi Germany, and is enacting laws that do not align with the majority morality of its community, then such laws can be considered evil, and the state has failed in its duties to protect its citizens.

The fourth and final situation in which vigilantism is permissible according to Dumsday is when the state has enacted good laws and is enforcing them[23]. Dumsday begins his explanation of these situations by noting that this is the hardest circumstance in which to justify vigilantism[24]. This last category does not clearly describe a pseudo-state of nature and is therefore an exception, but a very small one. The only types of vigilantism that are permissible in cases where the state has enacted good laws and is enforcing those laws properly, according to Dumsday, is when the vigilante has a certain skill that can aid law enforcement[25]. In these situations, the vigilante in question has some ability that the state does not. It is important to note, however, that the vigilante is not willingly accountable to the state; he is not working with law enforcement, hired by the state, or in any other way responsible to the state. The most prominent example of this would be superheroes with special powers that law enforcement officers do not have. Another more realistic example is the specialized skill of hunting and trapping runway criminals[26]. In either case, if the vigilante uses his skills to help the police but does not hold himself accountable

18 *Ibid,* 61.
19 *Ibid,* 61-2.
20 *Ibid,* 62.
21 *Ibid.*
22 *Ibid,* 64.
23 *Ibid.*
24 *Ibid.*
25 *Ibid.*
26 *Ibid.*

to the state and does not need the state's approval then this would be, according to Dumsday, an acceptable use of vigilantism.

§4 Objections to Vigilantism

The conception of vigilantism as "establishment violence" stemming from the "Natural Executive Right" and only applying in a pseudo-state of nature still does not satisfy some theorists. Alon Harel, an opponent of vigilantism, argues that the state has a monopoly on the use of force to punish or protect[27]. Harel argues that criminal sanctions are legitimate **only** because they are state inflicted. Although Harel gives three arguments against privately-imposed sanctions, only his integrationist argument pertains to vigilantism as I have defined it. In this section I will examine Harel's integrationist condition for the right to punish as it applies in a pseudo-state of a nature, and, as a result, will prove that it does not preclude vigilantism as I have argued for it.

Harel's most important argument for the legitimacy of state-exclusive criminal punishments comes from his integrationist, or state-centered, argument. This roughly means that the power to punish is an "agent-dependent" power; only the state can punish because state-imposed sanctions are designed to realize specific goals and perform specific tasks[28]. Another way to explain Harel's argument is to say that criminal sanctions are, fundamentally, an expression of the community's disapproval of criminal acts[29]. As such, only the state can inflict legitimate punishment because only the state, and not private entities or other individuals, speaks for the community. Privately inflicted sanctions may serve some of the other functions of punishment, such as deterrence or retribution, but they will never embody the symbolic significance that state-imposed sanctions do[30]. This view—that state-exclusive punishment is the only legitimate form of punishment because it is part of the duties and powers of the state—is what Harel calls an integrationist justification[31]. The state's right to punish, then, is entirely tied to its power to issue prohibitions in the first place[32].

This integrationist justification for state inflicted sanctions relies on the premise that punishment of criminal transgressions is part of the state's network of rights and duties. To take this away from the state—to allow for the privatization of punishment—would fundamentally disrupt its proper functioning[33]. The state sets

27 Harel has three arguments against the "Natural Executive Right"—instrumental, normative, and integrationist. Only his integrationist argument is germane to my premise and so that is what I will focus on. For Harel's full argument against the natural executive right see Alon Harel. "Why Only the State May Inflict Criminal Sanctions: The Case Against Privately Inflicted Sanctions," Legal Theory 14 (2008): 113-33.

28 Alon Harel, "Why Only the State May Inflict Criminal Sanctions: The Case Against Privately Inflicted Sanctions." Legal Theory 14 (2008): 113-33. 118.

29 *Ibid.*

30 *Ibid.*

31 *Ibid,* 123.

32 *Ibid.*

33 *Ibid,* 125.

the prohibitions, and so it must also set and consequently enforce the punishments attached to these prohibitions if these punishments are to be just[34]. Harel goes as far as to say that a society without a system of state-issued punishments for the violation of norms or laws is "tantamount to . . . a stateless existence[35] [36]." For the state to be effective—for it to govern justly—it must have the power to set norms as well as enforce them. I have no qualms with this claim. In fact, I agree with Harel for the most part. A state without the power to enforce sanctions is tantamount to a stateless existence in many respects: it is a pseudo-state of nature. But what Harel neglects to account for is an improperly functioning state. Harel's integrationist justification of state sanctions does have force in the situations in which it applies, but this theory of punishment justification simply does not pertain to actions in a pseudo-state of nature. Vigilantism is only permissible in those circumstances where the state cannot punish effectively, where the state's proper functioning has already been disrupted. In these circumstances, non-state inflicted sanctions would not strip the state of its power to punish, as Harel argues,[37] because the state has already lost this power some other way. Therefore, my argument for the legitimacy of vigilantism in pseudo-states of nature does not conflict with Harel's ultimately valid integrationist justification for state inflicted sanctions.

While Harel is unconvincing in his argument for the state's express right to punish, he does raise some very important concerns regarding non-state-imposed sanctions, concerns that frequently appear in the discussion of vigilantism. One of the first objections he raises toward privately inflicted sanctions is that when a punishment is not state-imposed it loses its ties with the state-imposed laws; there is a disconnect between the law being transgressed—a law imposed by the state—and the punishment for that transgression[38].

In response to Harel's argument that extralegal punishment severs the link between the body enacting the laws and the individuals enforcing them, I would argue that this is true to a small degree. But most often vigilantes enforce those very same laws of the state (except in cases where the laws are evil, but this difficulty is cleared when "state" is replaced with "morality of community"). Vigilantes are more than capable of enforcing the same or analogous punishments for criminal transgressions. And because the vigilante, under the specific paradigm laid out in section one, strives to uphold the morality of his community, he is likely to mimic state sanctions as best he can. Therefore, the vigilante is acting as a substitute for the state, enforcing the state's laws and, in most cases, keeping to the state's designated sanctions.

34 *Ibid,* 130.
35 Surprisingly, Harel's remarks re-enforce my classification of an ill-functioning state as a pseudo-state of nature.
36 *Ibid.*
37 *Ibid.*
38 *Ibid,* 114.

However, even when a vigilante acts as a substitute for the state, he is still only human, and so subject to extreme bias. This leads to the next problem Harel mentions, the same one that Locke notes in the *Second Treatise of Government:* non-state inflicted punishment is highly susceptible to the whims and fancies of the individuals doling out the punishments[39]. Extralegal punishment can quickly become excessive or too lenient, based on the interests of the punishers. Furthermore, who metes out sanctions for the non-state punishers in this situation?: **Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?** Who watches the watchmen? It seems unrealistic to expect all humans to judge themselves objectively. As Locke says, "[I]t is unreasonable for men to be judges in their own cases, that self-love will make men partial to themselves[40]."

The difficulty of bias and human error is the basis for another problem extralegal punishment faces: privately inflicted sanctions are grounded in private judgments[41]. When an individual imposes punishment for any transgression—whether a state issued prohibition or a moral transgression—he is governed by his own judgments of wrongness. This individual is also subject to his own conceptions of proper degrees of severity of punishment for any given transgression. Even if the vigilante is acting as a substitute for the state and his judgments coincide with those of the state, those judgments simply are not the **same** as the state's.

Both of these concerns are easily solved. The question of who watches the watchman is answered through appeal to Locke's original construction of the "Natural Executive Right." Because every individual in the (pseudo) state of nature has the right to punish all wrongdoers, any other individual can thus punish the vigilante if he should do something wrong[42]. If a vigilante oversteps his bounds and begins to punish indiscriminately and contrary to the morality of the community to which he belongs, he can be punished, too. In these situations, the vigilante himself has become a "wrongdoer" and can consequently be punished by another vigilante or the state, if it is functioning properly in that respect. This proviso also helps solve the other problem—that the vigilante, as a human, is subject to his own whims and may be driven by his own selfish motivations to committing undeserved vengeance. Together with the condition that in order for vigilante actions to be legitimate they must conform to, or at least tend toward, those actions of a maximally rational agent—the "system of vigilante checks and balances," so to speak—greatly diminishes the risk of unjust or unwarranted punishment. It is true that no human being is a maximally rational agent, nor can any person divorce himself from his emotions and personal motives, but neither can the state be completely unbiased and totally fair. If the

39 *Ibid,* 118.
40 Locke, 9.
41 Harel, 127.
42 Establishing what a vigilante could do that deserves punishment is somewhat difficult, as he is already operating outside of the confines of the law, so his simply breaking the law is not enough to warrant sanctions; in this case, we can again appeal to the idea of a general morality. When the vigilante transgresses the morality of the community then he can and shall be punished.

vigilante should fail to punish in a way that tends toward a maximally rational agent, slipping into vengeance and unnecessary and unnecessarily harsh punishments, then he is no longer a proper vigilante and should be subject to punishment.

Aside from the objections Harel raises, vigilantism is often charged with several other extreme difficulties. One such difficulty is an epistemic difficulty: how can any one individual know that another individual is guilty of committing a crime? This problem is inextricably linked with another difficulty facing vigilantism: the lack of procedural systems of justice and due process. Because vigilantes do not have to abide by the legal procedures that the state must follow, it seems that there is no standard of judgment for who is guilty in such pseudo-states of nature.

This is where I disagree. It is true that a vigilante is not subject to the same rules as the state, but this does not mean he should be allowed to make rash, uninformed decisions. In fact, vigilantes should be held to a higher level of certainty of guilt precisely because they do not have to deal with procedural red tape and legal technicalities. This is why I would like to add one last condition for legitimate vigilante actions: vigilantes must be certain of the guilt of whomever they seek to punish. They must have evidence or firm knowledge that a crime has been committed. A vigilante may even follow his own procedural process, collecting evidence (both legally and illegally), interviewing witnesses, and even giving the accused a chance to confess or make a case for his innocence. This stipulation—that a vigilante must have absolute certainty that an individual has committed some wrongdoing—solves the epistemic and procedural problems faced by vigilantism and precludes impulsive or reactionary violence as legitimate vigilante actions. Furthermore, I believe that the fact that a vigilante is not held to any procedural standards before acting saves him from the trappings of a corrupt state. For it is during this practice of "due process" that corruption is most likely to occur; crucial evidence gets thrown out on technicalities, witnesses lie under oath, judge and jury are bribed or threatened to give a sentence of not guilty. The vigilante, acting on his own and not tied to these procedural measures, is better able to assess guilt and assign punishment in a pseudo-state of nature.

There still lies the problem of what justifies the proclamation by the vigilante that a person is guilty. Without any procedural system in place to ensure justice, what makes the vigilante's judgment a correct one? Here is where I look again to the epistemic constraints put on vigilantism. Before he can act, a vigilante must know for certain that the offender has committed some wrong. As for what makes the vigilante's judgment just, I turn back to the "Natural Executive Right." In a state of nature, or pseudo-state of nature, everyone has the right to assess and punish transgressions of the laws of nature or the mores of his community. We all have an equal right to confer judgments on others. As John Simmons writes:

> Neither one's general level of virtue nor one's talents in the area of punishment (e,g,, special aptitude for being a judge, jailer, or executioner) are normally taken to establish any special claim to be the one who should punish others[43].

Everyone is equal in his or her right to judge others in a state, or pseudo-state, of nature.

Additionally, because vigilantism must coincide with the morality of a community and tend toward the actions of a maximally rational agent, the vigilante cannot simply punish what he believes is wrong but must punish what the community he represents believes is wrong. The vigilante must punish in a way that coincides with his community's beliefs. Simmons, quoting Locke, agrees:

> While "every man in the state of nature has a power to kill a murderer" (II, 11), "lesser breaches" of the law of nature must be punished less severely (II, 12). The executive right is a right only to retribute to him, so far as calm reason and conscience dictates, what is proportionate to his transgression, which is so much as may serve for reparation and restraint[44].

It is here that we must remember that while a vigilante is not beholden to the state, he does not operate completely free from the state. He is not isolated from the legislation and punishments of the state but, rather, is a free entity working outside the bounds of the state in order to protect and restore that same state. The vigilante acts outside the confines of a non-working state in an attempt to protect or improve the state and uphold the values of his community. Vigilante actions, going back to Rosenbaum and Sederberg, are establishment violence, violence aimed at protecting or correcting the existing establishment. That is why a vigilante's judgment of wrongs, in a pseudo-state of nature, is valid and can lead to the just imposition of sanctions while still being free from the state.

Conclusion

The goal of this paper has been to justify the highly specific phenomenon of crime-control vigilantism in a Lockean pseudo-state of nature. Ultimately, I hope to have proven that "Crime-Control Vigilantism" is a legitimate and just recourse when the state has failed to effectively fulfill its functions because of John Locke's conception of the "Natural Executive Right" applied in "pseudo-states of nature." My goal was to give credence to our intuitions of vigilantes as good guys, heroes, or even superheroes, while finding a proper foundation for extralegal punishment. I believe that Locke's "Natural Executive Right," the individual's natural right to punish, applied in a pseudo-state of nature, a situation in which the state has failed in some crucial aspect

43 Simmins, 312.
44 *Idid,* 318.

but exists in all other aspects, presents a solid philosophical justification for "Crime-Control Vigilantism."

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A NEW ATTEMPT AGAINST HIRSCH'S DEFLATIONISM

BAOYU DAI

In this paper, I will explain Hirsch's deflationary argument and Sider's objection to that argument. Furthermore, I will criticize Sider's objection and offer my own objections against Hirsch. In §2, I will explain the doctrine of quantifier variance theory, and I will reconstruct Hirsch's deflationism: debates among revisionary ontologists are merely verbal[1] because of quantifier variance, a theory stating that multiple equally good quantificational expressions (or languages) exist. In §3, I will present Sider's indispensability argument against Hirsch's deflationism. Sider claims that Hirsch's deflationism is problematic because it is based on quantifier variance theory, which is problematic because the quantificational structure is unitary due to its indispensability. To better explain his argument, I will also introduce Sider's metaphysical overview: there is a distinguished structure of the world, and metaphysicians' task is to discern this structure.

In §4, I will criticize Sider's argument and argue that it is implausible because quantifiers are not objectively indispensable. After I refute Sider's argument, I will find an alternative approach to reject Hirsch's deflationism. In §5, I will present my attempt to reject deflationism. I argue that deflationism is problematic not because it is based on quantifier variance; rather, I claim Hirsch's deflationism to be problematic for two reasons: [1] Hirsch does not explain why ontologists speak different languages, and [2] the conclusion that ontological debates are merely verbal leads to a problematic claim that metaphysicians are linguistically incompetent.

1 Revisionary ontologists regard that their discussions are about figuring out what is the most fundamental; however, quantifier variantists consider these discussions are merely verbal. The word 'verbal' indicates that these discussions are not about figuring out what is the most fundamental.

§2 Hirsch's Quantifier Variance

In this section, I will explain Hirsch's quantifier variance and his deflationary argument against revisionary ontologists. Hirsch's quantifier variance theory consists of two propositions: first, the idea of existence can be interpreted in various ways with different quantificational expressions (languages); second, these quantificational interpretations (or languages) are all equally plausible. In the following passages, I will explain these two claims in detail and show how the quantifier variance theory deflates revisionary ontologists.

Hirsch asserts that the quantificational structures in our languages and thoughts are variable. For instance, the expression "(there) exists" is one of the structures; there is more than one plausible way to use this expression because one can describe the world using different concepts of existence. Hence, one may choose any available way to use the expression "(there) exists"; Hirsch names such choices "linguistic decisions[2]" and considers this as the first claim of the doctrine of quantifier variance.

To demonstrate the first claim, consider the utterance u, "There exists a composite of Clinton's nose and the Eiffel Tower." The truth-value of this utterance u depends on one's linguistic decisions. For example, if the subject S decides to use plain English to interpret the meaning of existence, S will regard the utterance u as false. However, the subject S* is a universalist[3], and S* interprets existence in a universalist language; S* would consider the utterance u as truth. Different truth-values of utterance u are simply determined by different languages.

The second proposition states that all possible quantificational expressions or languages are equally good. In other words, one is not more privileged than another in terms of answering metaphysical questions. Reconsider the example in the previous passage: S determines the truth-value of utterance u based on plain English, while S* considers utterance u in universalists' language. According to the second proposition, neither plain English nor universalist language is better than the other.

Hirsch applies the quantifier variance theory to construct a deflationary argument against revisionary ontologies. The argument can be reconstructed as: [Premise 1] the first proposition; [Premise 2] the second proposition; [Premise 3] different revisionary ontologists speak different metaphysical languages; for instance, nihilists speak nihilists' language, and universalists speak universalists' language; [Conclusion]

2 Different linguistic decisions can be understood as different quantifiers or languages.

3 A person is a universalist if and only if she contends that composition is unrestricted (Korman & Zemack, 2020, p. 14). In other words, given any quantity of objects, a universalist would claim that there is a single composite object that is composed of these objects.

metaphysicians' debates are merely verbal[4]. Recall the example above. If S and S* have a quarrel on whether the utterance u is true, Hirsch claims that such a quarrel is merely verbal because the difference in language causes S's and S*'s different positions.

In this section, I have explained the two propositions in quantifier variance theory; one explicitly states that there are various quantifiers, and the other claims that all quantifiers are equally good. The quantifier variance theory deflates the discussions of which revisionary ontological view is better and argues that those discussions are merely verbal. Many serious metaphysicians reject Hirsch's view, and Theodore Sider is one of them. In §3, I will present Sider's indispensability argument against quantifier variance theory.

§3 Sider's Indispensability Argument Against Quantifier Variance

Sider offers four arguments against Hirsch's quantifier variance, and he regards the indispensability argument as the best and most powerful one to reject quantifier variance and all other forms of ontological deflationism. Sider's indispensability argument states that, because quantification's indispensability indicates that quantificational structure is unitary, the view that multiple equally good quantifications (quantifier variance) exist is problematic. In the following passages, I will explain Sider's argument in detail.

Before explaining the indispensability argument, I will offer some necessary background about Sider's metaphysical view because this preliminary knowledge will help to better understand Sider's argument. First, Sider claims that the world has a distinguished structure, and the world's structure refers to "right categories for describing the world" (Sider, 2011, 1). For example, there are only three objects in the world W_1; they are electron 1, electron 2, and a cow. It is natural to conclude that these three objects should be divided into two groups: electrons 1 and 2 are in the same group, and the cow is in the other group. Hence, the structure of W_1 is a structure that contains two groups (one contains electrons 1 and 2; the other contains the cow). Surely, some philosophers may reject the existence of such a natural structure; Sider responds to these objections and offers structure realism discussions in his book.

Second, Sider connects the structure of a world to the fundamentality of the world, i.e., a fact that reveals the structure of the world is fundamental or joint-carving (Sider

4 This argument is interpreted by Theodore Sider in his book *Writing the Book of the World* (Sider, 2011, p. 175); although Hirsch does not regard this argument as his genuine objection against revisionary ontology (at least not in his 'Against Revisionary Ontology'), it is still an important claim that he made to deflate the metaphysical discussions (Hirsch, 2002, p. 52). *Note:* In 'Against Revisionary Ontology,' Hirsch proposes that principle of charity offers explanation for why "there is always a strong presumption in favour of common sense" (Hirsch, 2002, 105). I choose to discuss the argument that Sider has reformulated because this paper intends to discuss and evaluate Sider's response to Hirsch.

uses Platonic notion "carving reality at its joints" to express "discerning the 'structure' of the world") (2011, p. 1). Sider also asserts that the main task for metaphysicians is to discern the world's fundamental reality or the distinguished structure of the world (2011, IX).

Third, Sider argues that a language can be regarded as fundamental if "all of its expressions carve at the joints" (2011, p. 8). In other words, if all of a language's expressions are used to discern the structure of the world, this language is fundamental. I will reformulate Sider's indispensability argument against quantifier variance as follows:

[P1] We should regard the ideologies[5] or concepts that are indispensable to our best theory as "carving at the joints."

[P2] Quantifiers are indispensable to construct our best theory (or every serious theory).

[P3] The quantificational structure is part of the structure of the world.

[P4] Quantification's indispensability indicates the unitarity of quantificational structure. In other words, there is one privileged quantificational expression.

[P5] Hirsch's quantifier variance is contradictory to P4.

[C1] Therefore, quantifier variance is problematic, and deflationism based on quantifier variance is also problematic.

I will clarify these premises and show how Sider justifies them.

Sider offers justification for [P1] in his book section 2.3, and his strategy is to first accept the Quinean view that the ontology of our best theory is reliable. Second, he extends Quinean thought and argues that necessary ideologies of our best theory should be regarded as fundamental. Quine asserts that good theories are simple, explanatorily powerful, and compatible with other good theories; he proposes that we should generally believe in these good theories. Hence, if a good theory produces ontological claims, we should believe it. Since good theories are reliable, we should believe in our best theory[6].

5 The term 'ideology' comes from Quine, it can be understood as 'concept.' The ideology of a theory is the concept expressed by a theory. For instance, the ideology of *a theory of mass and charge* is the concept of *mass and charge*. Also, expressions such as 'conceptual choices' and 'ideological choices' are used interchangeably in this paper.

6 Some might doubt the reliability of Quine's theory and argue that the Quinean view is implausible or unsatisfying. For example, Schaffer claims that the Quinean fundamentality question is trivial (Schaffer 2009). I realize that there are many debates between Quinean tradition and other metaphysical traditions (such as neo-Aristotelian). However, I do not plan to contribute to such debates in this paper; rather, I will accept Quinean tradition.

Sider accepts Quine's thought without furthering the defense, but he also modifies it. He argues that the ideology of a good theory is likely to carve at the joints because ideological decisions influence the success of a good theory. An example of physical theory may demonstrate the impacts of ideological choices. Consider changing the ideological choice in the original theory of mass and charge, then change the term *mass* to *schmass.* The schmass of an object refers to its mass if it has a unit negative charge and twice its mass otherwise. Although the new theory of schmass and charge has the same consequences about mass and charge as the original theory, the original one is a better theory because the new theory is more complicated.

Through the previous example, Sider shows that ideologies such as mass may be dispensable because the new theory, which does not use the concept of mass, has the same consequence as the original theory. However, the ideology of mass determines the plausibility of the *theory of mass and charge* because the new theory is worse than the original one in terms of simplicity, and simplicity is an important indicator for the plausibility of a theory. Since the original theory is better than the new one and the only difference is in ideological choice, it follows that ideology of mass is indispensable to a good *theory of mass and charge*. Sider thinks that if some ideologies are necessary for us to construct a good theory, they are more fundamental than the ideologies of bad theories. Furthermore, the ideologies that are indispensable to our best theory are the most "fundamental" or best-carving at the joints. Therefore, Sider has justified [P1]: necessary ideologies of our best theory should be regarded as fundamentally carving at the joints of the world.

Sider's justification for [P2] can be found in section 9.6.2, and he argues that there is no way for a physician or mathematician to generate theories that do not have quantifiers because a theory without any quantifications cannot be imagined. Hence, quantification is indispensable for one to formulate any theory, including our best theory. [P3] can be derived from [P1] and [P2]; according to [P1] and [P2], we can conclude that quantifiers best carve at the joints because they are indispensable to our best theory. Since quantifiers of our best theory best carve at the joints, the quantificational structure can be regarded as a part of the objective structure of the world.

Sider compares quantifications with particle physics, and he argues that the quantifiers should be unitary, just as "charge" and "mass" in particle physics correspond to unitary structures. Sider can validly draw such a comparison because both quantifiers and particle physics are part of the objective structure of the world. Thus, [P4] is justified as well. [P5] is obvious because the central claim of quantifier variance is that there are many equally good quantifiers. Since [P5] is contradictory to [P4] and [P4] is justified, it follows the conclusion that [P4] is problematic. Thus, quantifier variance is refuted, and all claims based on quantifier variance such as deflationism become ungrounded.

In this section, I have presented Sider's indispensability argument against Hirsch's quantifier variance. Sider's strategy is simple: first, he argues that quantificational structure is unitary; second, quantifier variance is problematic because it contradicts quantificational structure's unitarity. Although Sider's argument is rigorously formulated, his justification for [P2] is problematic. I will present my criticism against [P2] in the next section.

§4 A Challenge to Sider: Do Quantifiers Really Carve at the Joints?

In §3, I have presented Sider's argument that quantifiers carve at the joints because quantifiers are indispensable to our best theory, and Sider's justification for the indispensability of quantifiers is that one cannot think of a serious theory without any quantifiers. I do not think this justification is convincing because any theory with a quantificational expression can be converted to a theory without any quantifiers. Besides, the objection against Sider's justification for [P2] also indirectly impairs the soundness of [P1].

Consider a theory T_1, which states: *There exists an integer.* In predicate logic, T_1 can be expressed as ∃x(xEz). Hence, T_1 requires an existential quantifier. However, I argue that this quantifier is not indispensable to T_1 because T_1 can be converted to a theory T_2 without any quantifier. T_2 can be as follows: one is an integer or two is an integer or three is an integer or four is an integer …

Compare T_1 and T_2, although both theories express the existence of integer, it is obvious that T_1 is syntactically simpler than T_2. Hence, one may say that the quantifier is a necessary way for us to express the generality of the theory in a syntactically simple way. However, one should not regard the quantifier as indispensable to any serious theory because the statement that *a theory without any quantifier cannot be thought of* (Sider's justification for [P2]) is false. Hence, I am not convinced by Sider's justification.

One potential objection against my argument is that T_2 is impossible because T_2 is an infinite sequence. Since all men are mortal, it is not possible for us to really list infinite numbers of integers in T_2 to show that integers exist. I admit that the strategy of listing all integers is impossible, but those who hold such criticism ignore the function of the symbol '…'. If one inserts '…' after a statement that shows a clear pattern, the symbol '…' serves as a substitute for an infinite listing of cases that fit this pattern. For example, given the expression <1,2,3,4,5,…>, one may easily detect a pattern of listing integers, and one knows that '…' is a substitution for integers after number five. Since one can use '…' to avoid listing infinite numbers of integers, T_2 is not an impossible theory.

Furthermore, some dissenters might also argue that even though I am not convinced by Sider's justification for [P2], I still have to admit that quantificational expressions are necessary for constructing our best theory. Even if I agree with [P2], my criticism against the justification for [P2] does not influence the overall quality of Sider's indispensability argument. In other words, my criticism is insignificant.

My argument criticizing Sider's justification for [P2] infers an important proposition: quantifiers are just tools to demonstrate the generality of a theory in a simpler way. This statement (more or less) impairs [P1] because the indispensability of some ideologies does not correspond to the fundamentality or structure of the world. In Sider's justification for [P1], he first confirms that ideological choices contribute to the plausibility of good theories (through the schmass and mass example). Sider claims that the contributions of an ideological choice to the success of a theory give him a "defeasible" reason to consider that conceptual choices correspond to reality's structure. From my understanding of the previous reasoning, Sider may think that ideologies' correspondence with reality's structure reasonably explains their contributions (or indispensability) to successes as theories. However, Sider's explanation is not the only one. From my previous argument, I can infer that indispensability of ideologies might just originate from human practical purposes, such as simplifying the syntactic. My explanation is more plausible because [1] my explanation is more relevant, and [2] Sider's explanation is too anthropocentric.

My explanation is more relevant to the phenomenon because, given the discussion about T_1 and T_2 above, it is natural for one to conclude that quantifiers are just tools for simplifying the syntactical expressions. However, it seems abrupt for one to conclude that quantificational structure is part of reality's structure. I use 'natural' and 'abrupt' to express how possible one may think an explanation is. For example, one is very likely to think that quantifiers are tools for simplifying theories (my explanation); hence, my explanation is more natural. This naturalness corresponds to the relevance; the more naturally one thinks of an explanation, the more relevant (to the given phenomenon) this explanation is.

Sider's explanation is also too anthropocentric. Suppose one thinks that the indispensability of quantificational structure gives him or her a reason to consider it as corresponding to the reality's structure. In this case, he or she commits to a presupposition that what is indispensable to us is necessarily indispensable. In other words, this presupposition is too anthropocentric, and I think it is a dangerous position because ignoring other non-human civilizations is unwise.

In this section, I have proposed one objection directly against Sider's justification for [P2]. This objection states that theories without quantificational expressions can be imagined because all quantified theories can be converted to theories without quantifiers. I have also compared two theories T_1 and T_2 to justify my objection.

Also, the proposition that quantifiers are only practically necessary to our best theory can be inferred through the comparison between T_1 and T_2. This proposition weakens [P1] because the indispensability of certain ideologies may not originate from the fact that these ideologies relate to the structure of the world. Rather, some ideologies are indispensable to the world because they satisfy humans' practical purposes. Since [P2] is problematic, and [P1] is weakened, Sider's indispensability argument should also be considered as implausible. I should note that implausibility does not mean that Sider's argument is a complete failure; rather, I intend to show that although Sider's argument threatens Hirsch's quantifier variance, it does not reject quantifier variance theory completely.

Since quantifier variance cannot be rejected completely, it seems that Sider's strategy to refute deflationism is not successful. I, like Sider, consider Hirsch's deflationary argument problematic However, I have a different strategy of rejecting Hirsch's deflationism, a strategy that does not reject quantifier variance, I will present this alternative in §5.

§5 An Alternative Approach to Avoid Hirsch's Deflationism

A brief reconstruction of Hirsch's deflationary argument can be presented as: [Premise 1] there are various quantificational interpretations of a statement about existence, and [Premise 2] these different interpretations should be regarded as equally good. [Premise 3] Hirsch asserts that different ontologists use different quantificational interpretations to express their similar positions. [Conclusion] Hence, the disagreements among these revisionary ontologists are merely verbal. In other words, ontologists are not debating about which metaphysical view correctly carves at the joints. Unlike Sider, I will not attack Hirsch's quantifier variance theory; rather, I find Hirsch's argument problematic for two reasons: [1] premise 3 is uncharitable to metaphysicians; [2] the conclusion itself is impossible.

Premise 3 claims that ontologists speak different languages compared to plain English speakers. I think this presupposition is discriminatory against metaphysicians because it is unfair to claim that just metaphysicians speak different languages. Following Hirsch's quantifier variance theory, it seems completely valid to claim that everyone speaks a different language. For instance, person *X* speaks *X*-ese, *Y* speaks *Y*-ese, and *Z* speaks *Z*-ese; when they are arguing over the same discussion, they hold different views just because their linguistic decisions (the languages they choose to speak) are different. I contend that my hypothesis that everyone speaks a different language is problematic because most people would agree that they speak ordinary languages such as English or Mandarin. However, since my hypothesis is incorrect, quantifier variantists[7] need to explain the question of why only ontologists do not speak plain

7 The expression "quantifier variantists" refers to those who believe in quantifier variance theory.

English, but rather different ontological languages. If one cannot explain such a question, we will have a defeasible reason to regard premise 3 as unjustified and discriminatory.

My second objection is that even though premise 3 is correct, the final conclusion cannot be derived from previous premises. According to Hirsch, universalists speak universalists' language instead of plain English. Supposing some universalists claim that <there is an object that is composed of Clinton's nose and the Eiffel Tower>, and this claim conflicts with ordinary belief because plain English speakers would regard this claim as fallacious. However, on Hirsch's account, the disagreement between universalists and plain English speakers is merely linguistic. Hence, these universalists *do not really* mean that there is an *actual* object composed of Clinton's nose and the Eiffel Tower. Rather, the actual meaning that universalists intend to express may be the same as plain English speakers, such as <both Clinton's nose and the Eiffel Tower exist>. Hirsch's conclusion indicates that universalists are not able to express their ideas in plain English. In other words, if one accepts Hirsch's claim, one also admits that universalists and other metaphysicians are linguistically incompetent.

However, the claim that metaphysicians are linguistically incompetent is preposterous because metaphysicians are philosophers, and if philosophers are not able to express their own ideas in a communicative and comprehensible way (language), they should not be regarded as philosophers. I realize that my argument is quite intuitive; however, if we regard metaphysicians as linguistically incapable, it cannot explain that universalists' arguments actually convince people to be universalists (I myself is one good example). Since the claim that metaphysicians are linguistically incompetent is refuted, it follows that different metaphysicians precisely express their meanings about what exists. Hence, ontological discussions such as "is there a composition of Clinton's nose and the Eiffel Tower?" are not merely verbal.

§6 Conclusion

In this paper, I have first presented Hirsch's quantifier variance theory and his deflationary argument based on quantifier variance. Quantifier variance theory states that there are various equally good quantificational interpretations (languages) for every ontological position. Hence, the debates or disagreements among different ontologists are merely verbal. In §3, I have explained Sider's indispensability argument against quantifier variance and the deflationary claims that depend on quantifier variance. Sider's indispensability argument can be briefly stated as: *quantifiers' indispensability gives people a reason to regard quantificational structure as part of the objective structure of the world;* hence, the quantificational structure is unitary. Since quantifier variantists hold a completely opposite view, Sider claims that quantifier variance is problematic.

In §4, I have argued that quantifier variance is not objectively indispensable to our best theory. Also, I have presented that the quantificational structures are practically necessary. Hence, quantificational structure should not be regarded as a part of the distinguished world's structure, and the unitarity of quantifiers can also be refuted. Although I have criticized Sider's argument, I still agree with Sider's position that deflationism is problematic. Sider's strategy is to first attack quantifier variance theory, and once quantifier variance is defeated, all deflationary arguments developed from quantifier variance will be ungrounded. My discussion in §4 has shown that Sider's approach is implausible. In §5, I have presented my own argument against Hirsch's deflationary argument. My first objection is that Hirsch fails to show why only revisionary ontologists do not speak plain English. My second objection concerns that conclusion: ontological discussions are merely verbal. I find this conclusion implausible because accepting this conclusion will lead to another problematic claim. If one agrees with the conclusion, one also agrees with the claim that metaphysicians are linguistically incompetent; this claim is problematic.

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DON'T GET HUNG UP IN THE MIDDLE

YASH AGARWAL

Grounding is still a relatively young topic for philosophical inquiry amongst contemporary analytic philosophers, so there is still a lack of consensus on the subject. One unanswered question is the target of grounding: can it be a tool to explain reality? Is it a relation like causation or parthood? Among all this uncertainty,there seems to be, even at such a young point in the life of grounding as an area of philosophical inquiry, a certain consensus or rather a dichotomy among philosophers. I'm talking about the position of the fundamentalia, entity(ies) that are thought by foundationalists to ground everything.

Most philosophers take grounding structures to be either top-ist or bottom-ist. According to top-ism, everything is immediately or mediately grounded by the entity of which everything else is a proper part of. This entity is usually identified with the cosmos. According to bottom-ism everything is immediately or mediately grounded by the smallest entities, the mereological atoms, whatever they may be. Between top-ism and bottom-ism resides middle-ism, and it means exactly what it sounds like. Middle-sized entities constitute the fundamentalia, grounding smaller entities through a downward chain (towards the mereological atoms) and larger ones through an upward chain (towards the cosmos). This may sound peculiar at first but is not quite so when examined closely. Sara Bernstein, in her paper *"Could a middle level be the most fundamental?"* argues for the plausibility of middle-ism.

In this paper I attempt to show, offsetting Bernstein's arguments for middle-ism, how middle-ism is more problematic than its counterparts, in three ways. In carrying out this project, I don't think that middleism is just as plausible as top-ism or

bottom-ism. Despite this, I concede that taking a closer look at middle-ism and not simply dismissing it at the outset has its merits. This paper tries to be representative of that. I have three objections to make. The first one concerns the middle level itself and how the middle-sized fundamentalia can occupy neither one level nor multiple. The second one appeals to the unintuitive consequences that middle-ism has based on the notion of relative fundamentality. The third one is based on a problem that arises when talking about parthood, about how grounding direction goes both from wholes to parts *and* parts to wholes in middle-ism.

§2 The Middle Level

In this section, I will start off with a brief discussion of middle-ism and the advantage that Bernstein claims middle-ism holds over its rivals. This will be followed by an analysis of the middle level which will show how the middle-sized fundamental entities can neither occupy one level, nor multiple levels, that is, a portion of the chain. Finally, I will discuss a potential reply that a middle-ist could make and my response to it.

Let us look at middle-ism a little more closely. It might seem peculiar or absurd that the world would be structured in a way such that it is both ascending (upward chain, towards the cosmos) and descending (downward chain, towards mereological atoms) instead of either one. But, as Bernstein argues, it is equally imaginable that God, instead of going with a top-ist or bottom-ist structure, decided to go with a middle-ist view. Still, it seems as though it would be harder for God to create the middle-sized entities and let the smallest and the largest entities fall out of them rather than having to create just the mereological atoms since the mereological atoms are clearly simpler, more primitive entities. I don't mention the cosmos here since, in creating the cosmos, God would be creating everything and so among the three, creating mereological atoms seems to be the easiest.

Bernstein argues that middle level entities like iPhones, toasters, and amoebae have an (prima facie) advantage over the fundamental entity(ies) posited by top-ists (the cosmos) and bottom-ists (mereological atoms). The advantage being that these middle level entities are "perceptually available" and have "rich essences"[1] , which discourage doubts regarding the nature or the explanatory power of the fundamentalia. Middle-sized entities, like a human, instantiate (essential) properties like having the exact parents they have, which the cosmos and mereological atoms do not. Here, perceptual availability and rich essences are being considered advantages since the fundamental entity for the top-ist, the cosmos, cannot be perceived, at least not all at once. On the other hand, the fundamental entity for the bottom-ist would

1 Bernstein, S. "Could a middle level be the most fundamental?". *Philosophical Studies,* 2020: pp. 1-15.

be the mereological atoms, which we have not identified, at least not yet. Even if we did come to know of them, they would be out of the reaches of our perceptual abilities presumably owing to their small size.

Let us begin by examining the middle level. The objection is against the advantage they supposedly have over the fundamentalia posited by top-ists or bottom-ists, that is, of having rich essences and being perceptually available. I object by saying that the list of middle level entities is indeterminate. The consequence of this is that they lose the aforementioned advantage of being perceptually available, and so it turns out to be a disadvantage. The question to be asked here is: are these middle-sized fundamental entities on the same level or do they occupy multiple levels? The former may seem like the obvious answer since multiple levels would imply a hierarchy, that is, one level grounded by ones below it, which would disqualify those entities from being fundamental, but I disagree for the following reason. If they are all on the same level, one must ask: what happens when a successor of an existing middle level entity comes into existence? Say for example, what would happen when the new iPhone comes out? A middle-ist might answer that the new iPhone would just be added to the list of the middle level entities. The list is dynamic.

However, the list cannot be dynamic because two models of the iPhone cannot both be a part of the same list. This is because any single model of the iPhone can explain all the previous models and the ones to come. Having two entities of the same species will result in the fundamentalia having grounds (the older generation being a ground for the newer one and vice versa, which is to say that some middle-sized entities would ground other middle-sized entities) which would disqualify them as fundamentalia altogether. This disqualification I mention is based on the notion of independence, as the criteria for what counts as fundamental, as defended by Bennett, over the notion of completeness, in her book Making Things Up. Fundamentality as independence, according to Bennett, is simply the idea of being ungrounded. To say a thing is fundamental (according to independence) is to say that there are no other entities below it that ground it. Completeness on the other hand is the idea that the fundamental entities must build everything above them. It does not specify that they must be ungrounded[2]. Going back to the question of the fundamentalia occupying one level, the issue is not only that the fundamentalia would be grounded but also that an entity and its grounds cannot be on the same level of fundamentality. This might be clear for artifacts but let us consider a non-artifact too. For example, a progeny has the genetic material to trace its family tree upward and downward.

Therefore, since middle-sized objects cannot all occupy one level, it seems as though they must occupy multiple levels, that is, a portion of the chain will constitute the fundamentalia, which is absurd. I say it is absurd because of two reasons. First,

2 Bennett, K. "Making Things Up". Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017: pp. 141-160.

there would remain no definite qualification that dictates which levels count as fundamentalia and which do not. For example, with the addition of new levels due to inventions or births of new members such as the latest iPhone, or an amoeba undergoing cell division, there will not be any reason sufficient to make the cutoff at a specific level rather than the level right before or after it. Since the list of middle-sized fundamentalia isn't determinate, one risks having to call all levels fundamental, in which case the notion of fundamentality becomes too expansive to be meaningful. This makes it hard to pinpoint from exactly which level onwards do entities stop counting as fundamental. It becomes an instance of the infamous Sorites paradox (Hyde, Dominic, and Diana Raffman, SEP) like the infamous sand heap problem where there is no distinct point when a heap of sand, during the removal of grains of sand one-by-one, stops being a heap[3]. Second, going by Bennett's account of independence as the criterion for what counts as fundamental, a portion of the chain won't be fundamental since the entities wouldn't be ungrounded. Here, the middle-ist might prefer the completeness picture of fundamentality, but I follow Bennett in her arguments for independence over completeness, and so, devote no further discussion on it.

Another prima facie objection against middle-ism is the idea that middle sized objects are objects that can come into existence at any time between the beginning and the end of the universe's life. For example, trees, rocks, and humans all pop in and out of existence at multiple times in the universe's timeline. This is not the case for top-ism or bottom-ism. The cosmos and mereological atoms aren't something that can cease to exist and reappear during a universe's life. They are metaphysical, mysterious, out of our reach, or other-worldly. But in the case of middle-ism, the fundamentalia are rather short lived; they are transitory.

Through this objection, I have shown how the supposed advantage of being perceptually available and having rich essences held by middle-sized fundamentalia in middle-ism is actually a disadvantage because middle-sized entities are readily perceivable and conceivable. They are not mysterious or unknown entities. It is a disadvantage because of the problems that arise when looking at the question about them occupying one level or multiple levels.

To the problems raised above, a middle-ist might reply that this issue, that of one or many levels, is not unique to middle-ism and hence does not disqualify it or make it less plausible than its counterparts. Even for top-ism or bottom-ism, we do not know for sure whether the fundamentalia populate one or many levels. This idea has been discussed by Jonathon Schaffer in his paper *Is There a Fundamental Level*? and T.E. Tahko in his paper *Boring Infinite Descent*. Maybe, what we might believe to be mereological atoms are grounded in quantum energy fields which are grounded in

3 Nolan, D. "Cosmic loops". *Reality and its structures: Essays in fundamentality.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017: pp. 91-105.

smaller and smaller portions of the same fields. In such a case it is equally unclear, as in the case of middle-ism, where to draw the line for what counts as fundamental. Also, what comes right above the mereological atoms is unclear. Again, it seems unlikely that right above the mereological atoms would there be something clearly perceivable like an iPhone or a washing machine. It might be something like a cluster of mereological atoms, or rather, something built by mereological atoms but still equally imperceptible and with an essence almost as scant as a single mereological atom. Similarly, for top-ism, what comes just below something like the cosmos is not clear. It seems unlikely that right below the cosmos there would be something perceptual, or easily comprehensible, like say, a toaster. It would probably be something along the lines of the universe-minus-one-atom. The problem raised against middle-ism, that of where to draw the line, is present for the counterparts too, especially for bottom-ism, since there is not just one but many of these 'atoms' fulfilling the role of fundamentalia. Since there isn't a clear qualification in top-ism and bottom-ism that tells us why the fundamentalia are the way they are, it is not something that should devalue middle-ism as a plausible candidate to explain grounding structures.

To the middle-ist's reply, I concede that the problem, in the way she puts it: that we do not know what comes right below the cosmos or right above the mereological atoms either but, there is a determined line for top-ism and bottom-ism. The cosmos and the mereological atoms are entities which are determined as fundamental. Not knowing what might come right next to them does not matter since the fundamentalia are clearly defined. This is not the case for the middle-sized entities since the list of fundamentalia is itself indeterminate, and as shown above, they can neither occupy one level nor multiple levels.

§3 Relative Fundamentality

In this section, I will show how, if one chooses to accept middle-ism, it results in an absurd conclusion. To do this, I will use Werner's account of relative fundamentality and then discuss a potential objection the middle-ist can make. Finally, I will use Werner's theory to dismiss that reply. The middle-ist can still attempt to argue for middle-ism by taking another route, which I will also argue against.

As shown in §2, the middle-sized fundamentalia cannot occupy the same level due to the problem of entities of similar species, like newer generations of iPhones. Despite this, a middle-ist might still argue that middle-sized fundamentalia do occupy one level by including only the first member of any species of entities, like the first-generation iPhone, but this too, I argue, is not possible for the following reason.

It is obvious that all the mereological atoms would be at the same level since they are identical. But, having perceptually available middle-level entities (even if it is

only first-generations that count as fundamental) such as iPhones and toasters on the same level create a problem. My objection is that accepting middle-ism would lead one to the conclusion that all the mereological atoms *do not* lie on the same level of fundamentality. This comes about as follows. Let us take an iPhone and a toaster to be among the middle-sized entities that are part of the fundamentalia. It is obvious that an iPhone is more complex than a toaster, whether that is in terms of merely the number of components involved in its assembly, the scientific complexity, or the level of engineering that has gone behind the product. So, from the difference in the natures and complexities of these two middle sized entities at hand, it follows that the number of steps of immediate grounding it takes to reach down to the level of the mereological atoms would be different. The number of steps from the iPhone to a mereological atom would be more than that from the toaster to the mereological atom. For example, the steps from the iPhone would be as such: iPhone; motherboard; integrated CPU; CPU; GPU; silicon lattice structure; silicon atoms…… mereological atoms. The steps from the toaster would be as such: Toaster; heating coil; copper atoms…… mereological atoms. Hence, we arrive at the conclusion that the mereological atoms are not all on the same level of fundamentality, which is absurd. And so, the middle-ist cannot say that the middle-sized fundamental entities occupy one level.

The middle-ist, adamant on her stance, might still argue that the middle-sized fundamental entities do occupy one level. This she justifies by saying that one can take different numbers of steps from the fundamentalia and yet get to the same level of fundamentality. Which is to say that one could take a different number of steps of immediate grounding to go from the fundamental level to that of the mereological atoms in different cases, as shown with that of the iPhone and the toaster.

This violates the account of relative fundamentality as drawn out by Werner. Roughly, on his account, relative fundamentality can be measured by counting down the number of steps of full immediate grounding it takes from the entity or node at hand, to the fundamental entity or entities (depending on how many fundamentalia one takes there to be)[4]. It is a violation of this account since despite the move made by the middle-ist which puts the mereological atoms at the same level by taking different number of steps from the fundamental level, the mereological atoms arrived at in both the cases, via the iPhone and via the toaster, would have different values or degrees of relative fundamentality. This is due to there being different numbers of steps between them and the fundamental level. At this point the middle-ist can take one of two paths.

4 Werner, J. "A grounding-based measure of relative fundamentality". *Synthese,* 2020: pp. 1-17.

The first path the middle-ist could take is that she can accept the violation of Werner's account of relative fundamentality and take there to be indiscrete levels of fundamentality. This will allow the middle-ist to place two mereological atoms at the same level of fundamentality even though there are different steps between them and the fundamental level. This makes the levels indiscrete because equal lengths, the toaster-mereological atom and the iPhone-mereological atom, would have an unequal number of levels of fundamentality. My only response to this would be that it is overly bold to reject the best account of relative fundamentality we have in order to accommodate an already suspicious middle-ist structure of grounding, especially when no alternative has been given to explain the notion of relative fundamentality, let alone one as elaborate as Werner's.

The second path the middle-ist can take draws on the idea of plural grounding from Shamik Dasgupta's *On the plurality of grounds.* The idea is that a certain set of facts would together ground another fact without any one or many of the facts from the set being sufficient for the explanation of the grounded fact[5]. Following from this, the middle-ist could say that the middle-sized fundamentalia ground everything above and below. One cannot get any more specific than this and so, pinpointing which middle-sized fundamentalia are grounding the grounded entity at hand is consequently not possible.

I would reply to this with a different proposal, which eventually fails, like before, due to Werner's notion of relative fundamentality. My proposal is a modification of Werner's notion of arbitrary grounding, which he talks about in his paper *Arbitrary grounding.*

Arbitrary grounding says that if we have a specific set of grounders, *ff*, we cannot specify which groundee *g* they will ground among a group of groundees *gg*. Borrowing Werner's example, if there are two identical doughnuts *a* and *b* on a table and you were to pick one, there is no specific reason why you pick, say, a over *b*. It's an arbitrary choice. With the *ff* at hand, one cannot pinpoint which groundee will emerge. So, for any given set of grounders, we cannot specify the groundee.

My proposal involves flipping the position of non-specificity in arbitrary grounding. The middle-ist could say that for any specific groundee, one cannot specify the grounder(s). So, if we talk about mereological atoms, one cannot claim which specific grounder(s) any mereological atom(s) came from. Did a particular mereological atom come from an iPhone or a toaster? One can never tell. The only thing that can be said is that the mereological atom(s) is grounded by the middle-sized fundamentalia. But this proposal runs into trouble. Even if we cannot specify which middle-sized entity is grounding which mereological atom(s), two mereological atoms coming from different middle-sized entities, even though

5 Dasgupta, Shamik. "On the Plurality of Grounds". *Philosophers' Imprint*, 2014.

unknowable which, can still be on different levels of fundamentality with no explanation as to why that is the case. This is problematic for Werner's account of relative fundamentality as noted earlier, so this proposal must be rejected too.

In the end, maybe the Dasguptian view proposed earlier could be the answer for the middle-ist to hold on to, but this view is just too generic and lacks explanatory power. It gives us no information apart from the idea that middle-sized entities ground the smaller and larger entities, which is circular since that is exactly the definition of middle-ism.

This Dasguptian proposal is similar to an approach that is implicit in Kevin Richardson's paper *On What (In General) Grounds What.* The idea is that one should not take specific instances, as I do with the iPhone and the toaster. We should build from a generalized picture, starting with a broader idea and then extrapolating that to specific cases. For example, when talking about middle-sized fundamental entities, start by taking all of them at the same level since they are fundamental, or rather, equifundamental. In other words, we should go from broad categories to narrow cases to ensure that the central idea, that the middle-sized entities are fundamental, remains intact, and consequently that those entitites would be equifundamental, occupying one level. I object by saying that we must do exactly the opposite. It is a bad strategy to go from the broad to the narrow since the generalization can lead to dismissal of cases that are actually counterexamples to the broader idea. We must build from the narrow, specific cases, and only when we have enough narrow cases to build a generalized picture should we translate that notion to the broader picture. It would be wrong to start off with a set-in-stone idea and try to force individual cases to conform to it instead of building up the idea based on the specific cases. Bennett also endorses this idea in her book *Making Things Up*. She argues that singular claims are prior to generalizations. Broad claims, like *ff* ground the gg, are reached by quantifying or generalizing which do not provide a reason to believe them. Rather, singular claims, like this mouse is grounded by complex proteins, are what are true[6].

§4 Parthood

In this section, I will make my final objection against middle-ism based on an issue that arises for the middle-ist when thinking of the direction of grounding and parthood. The issue is that a middle-ist, in trying to avoid simultaneously taking opposite monistic and pluralistic stances, would still have to take restricted versions of monism and pluralism to be true, which is problematic. Like before, I will follow this objection with a potential reply from a middle-ist, and my response to it.

6 Bennett, K. "Making things up". Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017: pp. 141-160.

Before we get into my objection, let me clarify the way in which I am using the terms monism and pluralism since these terms can have different connotations in different contexts. For my purposes, a monist, or rather a priority monist, is someone who takes wholes to be prior to their parts and a pluralist, or a priority pluralist, takes parts to be prior to the whole that they are a part of.

This objection stems from the difference between monism and pluralism. In middle-ism, middle-sized entities acting as the fundamentalia would have to satisfy the conditions that are demanded both by the monist and the pluralist. Let me explain using an example. Almost every smartphone nowadays has an integrated chip, that is, they have multiple components like the CPU, the GPU, antennae, memory cards, etc. all soldered together onto one chip that runs the entire smartphone. For a monist, the smartphone would be prior to the integrated chip which would then be prior to the individual components of the chip. For a pluralist, the individual components would be prior to the integrated chip which would then be prior to the smartphone. So, the problem for middle-ism is that the middle-sized fundamentalia have to come prior to both the larger and the smaller entities, that is, the integrated chip will have to be prior to both the smartphone and the individual components of the chip. In other words, the middle-sized entities, in some sense, have a higher function to perform as the fundamentalia for middle-ism than in the case of the counterparts.

Middle-ists have to ground the chain in two directions which would mean, in some sense, that they have to possess the explanatory power of mereological atoms in a bottom-ist structure (upward chain) and the cosmos in a top-ist structure (downward chain). One might ask at this point: where is the objection here? The integrated chip having to be prior to both the smartphone and the individual components is just the definition of middle-ism, that is, the middle-sized entities grounding the smaller *and* the bigger ones. In a way, yes! But the point I am trying to make is that middle-ism is more complicated than top-ism and bottom-ism in trying to ground both larger and smaller entities, and there is not sufficient reason for why this extra complication is needed. In other words, being a middle-ist, one cannot also be a proponent of priority monism or priority pluralism.

The middle-ist would have to (individually) deny both parts-ground-wholes and whole-grounds-parts and take some restricted version to accommodate their stance. She might do this by quantifying, maybe based on size or level of relative fundamentality, which portion of the grounding picture must follow the parts-ground-whole order and which must follow the whole-grounds-parts order. But this quantification is also problematic for the same reason as was the fundamentalia occupying multiple levels. There would be no exact qualification by which the middle-ist can pinpoint exactly where the middle-sized entities stop being fundamental. As a result, middle-ism violates the Occam's razor principle

which says that one should prefer the simplest explanation for anything and only complicate the explanation if needed[7]. Middle-ism, in trying to explain reality through grounding structures, further complicates our understanding without providing new insight relative to its two counterparts.

The middle-ist could have said that the advantage that middle-sized fundamentalia possess, that of being perceptually available and having rich essences, justifies the complication, but as I have shown in the second section those traits are actually disadvantages. She might in turn use a similar strategy as earlier by saying that since the explanatory powers or abilities that the cosmos or the mereological atoms possess are still beyond us, that is, we do not have knowledge of what they are, it is equally plausible that there be middle-sized objects possess explanatory powers such that they can ground things above and below them. Maybe God decided to make the world such that middle-sized entities qualify as fundamentalia. Hence, the problem regarding the higher ask for the fundamentalia in middle-ism, that of grounding larger entities going up *and* smaller ones going down, does not necessarily make it any less plausible than its counterparts.

Again, I reply that the problem raised may not be unique to middle-ism, but there are definitely higher hurdles for middle-ism to overcome, like those highlighted in sections two and three, due to the disadvantage they possess, that of their perceptually availability and rich essences.

§5 Conclusion

In this paper I have shown three ways in which middle-ism is a less favorable method of grounding compared to its counterparts, namely top-ism and bottom-ism. The overarching problem that leads, in one way or another, to all my objections is the supposed advantage of perceptual availability and rich essences in middle-sized entities, that Bernstein appeals to, which I have shown to be a disadvantage. The perceptual availability and rich essences possessed by the middle-sized fundamentalia makes their nature clear, or at least clearer, than the counterparts, namely the cosmos and mereological atoms. Since this clarity, that of perceptual availability and rich essences, is achieved, middle-ism faces problems such as those shown in this paper.

One can look at it from an epistemic lens. It is very likely that we never come to know what the structure of the world is and so, I concede that saying that God could very well have structured the world on the basis of middle-sized entities could be just as plausible as saying that the sun, tomorrow, will rise in the west rather than the east. Still, I think the problems I raise against middle-ism show, at the very least, that it is a view less plausible than its counterparts.

7 Baker & Alan, "Simplicity", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* Winter 2016 Edition, Edward N. Zalta (ed.)

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THE NATURE OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE
in Light of Empiricism After a Critique of Kantian Epistemology

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It is generally thought that humans, by nature, have a tendency to question and know. We never feel satisfied with the amount of knowledge we have, but rather, always seek more, wholeheartedly believing that knowledge is power. Although we think that knowledge is exceptionally valuable, do we really examine the nature or real source of this power? Discourse concerning the nature of knowledge has pervaded the history of philosophy. One of the conspicuous investigations of this inquiry is related to the origins of knowledge; how do we acquire, constitute, or reach knowledge? It can be said that there are two main epistemological approaches that try to give an answer to questions of how we really know: *rationalism and empiricism*. The former, essentially, claims that knowledge derives from reason and that through the use of reason, we can directly comprehend certain truths such as logic, mathematics, ethics, and metaphysics. The latter, in contrast, suggests that the source of knowledge is not reason, but sensory experience based on perceptual data. It is not difficult to realize that these two opposite philosophical doctrines pave the way for divergent worldviews stemming from the radical differences in each method's mechanism for the acquisition of knowledge. These approaches, on the grounds of their foundational attributes, are so influential that the divide between them persists in areas outside of their original philosophical domain. While a rationalist philosophy can attempt to explain logic, mathematics, or metaphysics through the existence of an ideal world

which is independent of the material world in which we live, an empiricist philosophy can try to do this by appealing only to sensory experience. However, how can we know which approach is true? Do we have to choose one of them?

§1 An Overview of Kantian Epistemology

Immanuel Kant attempts to solve the problems of knowledge through a synthesis of rationalism and empiricism. Rationalism, which neglects the importance of sensory data acquired by perceptual observation, gives rise to groundless metaphysical conceptions, and that mere empiricism, which underestimates the capacity of reason, prevents us from learning any necessary truths about experience. Put simply, he makes a distinction between that which we can know and that which we cannot know by positing two different realms: the realm of phenomena to which we have access, and the realm of noumena (the world of things-in-themselves) to which we do not. Along with that, he argues we can only have knowledge of what we can experience in the realm of phenomena. Our mind processes information acquired from the external world by dint of sensory experience, and this gives it order to provide us the skill of comprehension. In parallel, he proposes some general categories by which human understanding operates and makes judgments like quantity, quality, relation, and modality. While Kant repudiates the idea of obtaining knowledge from the noumenal world, "he [holds] that we *can* discover the essential categories that govern human understanding, which are the basis for any possible cognition of phenomena."[1] Even though he agrees with empiricists that knowledge stems from experience, he champions the existence of *a priori* knowledge that can be reached without experience or sense data as opposed to *a posteriori* knowledge that requires experience to be known. Concerning Kant, H. J. Paton elucidates that "We can have [*a priori*] knowledge by means of the categories, only if the categories are due to the nature of the mind and are imposed by the mind on the objects which it knows."[2] In other words, it is argued that the human mind has attributes that make a priori knowledge possible. In this vein Kant makes another distinction in the categorization of knowledge to show how different types of knowledge are revealed: the analytic-synthetic distinction.

According to Kant, propositions, similar to the difference between *a priori* and *a posteriori*, can be examined within the analytic-synthetic distinction on the linguistic-judgmental ground. While analytic propositions are true or not true only by virtue of meaning, synthetic propositions are true or not true in their meaning-relation to the world. For example, the statement that all bachelors are unmarried demonstrates an analytic proposition because we do not have to confirm, by observing the world, that it is the case. Instead, this is necessarily and universally true solely by virtue of the meaning of the concepts "bachelor" and "unmarried men."

1 Amie Thomasson, "Categories", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2019 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2019/entries/categories/>.
2 H. J. Paton, *Kant's Metaphysic of Experience*, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1936), 258.

Quite the contrary, the statement that some bachelors are bald is a synthetic proposition since in order to test the veracity of this claim, we need to make some observations in the world and see if this is the case.

At this point, it becomes possible to address a conceptual scheme which consists of the concepts "a priori, a posteriori, analytic, and synthetic" by their combination in the expression of human knowledge. For Kant, propositions like "All bachelors are unmarried men" and "All squares have four equal sides" represent *analytic a priori* judgments, because we can know whether or not they are true before experience, and it is analytic on the grounds that they are true in virtue of their meanings instead of their truth-relations to the world. *Analytic a posteriori*, on the other hand, establishes an empty category. Analyticity is that which implies necessity and universality, and posteriority is that which depends on observation and that has the capacity to create different possibilities. Therefore, there is a contradiction between the two terms. *Synthetic a posteriority* refers to observational judgments that can also include different possibilities (e.g., the car is red, it is raining). Hence, this category, as the exact opposite of *analytic a priori,* represents the cluster of observations that are not necessary and universal. Lastly, *synthetic a priority* seems contradictory like *analytic a posteriori,* but in Kant's account of knowledge, it remains a significant element. For him, mathematics and causality, for instance, show *synthetic a priori* knowledge. Consider "7+5=12." Kant briefly argues that we cannot regard this equation as analytic, since, as he writes in the *Prolegomena*, "[t]he concept of twelve is in no way already thought because I merely think to myself this unification of seven and five, and I may analyze my concept of such a possible sum for as long as may be, still I will not meet with twelve therein" [4:269]. That is, we cannot think of this proposition in the same manner as, say, "All bachelors are unmarried," because those simply do not have the same logical structure in that the concept of bachelor is equivalent to the concept of unmarried in terms of meaning, whereas the concept of twelve is not equivalent to the concept of the sum of seven and five. Rather, we *infer* twelve from the sum of seven and five by our empirical intuitions. Other than that, this mathematical proposition is *a priori* for the reason that it is also possible to know the proposition independently of experience. Likewise, causality is *synthetic a priori* in that in order to comprehend this phenomenon, we need to first experience the cause and effect relation. Besides, it is *a priori* for the same reason — it is possible to know the proposition independently of experience. Inferring their truth and knowing these independently of experience may seem contradictory, but Kant expounds this issue by asserting that the human mind operates through categories in relation to perceptual data within space and time and makes judgments. These judgments about mathematics and causality, like any other judgments, are subject to the mind's processes. In other words, the grounds or foundations of synthetic a priori knowledge reside in the principles and regulatory structure of the mind. "[T]he concept of cause is not empirical but rather a pure category of the understanding, required to make

sense of the relation of events within experience."[3] We put the mind into action through sensory data in the investigation of the knowledge of reality and in this way, we reach the necessary and universal knowledge of the phenomenal world and laws of nature. As Kant puts it in *Critique of Pure Reason:*

"Even laws of nature, if they are considered as principles of the empirical use of the understanding, at the same time carry with them an expression of necessity, thus at least the presumption of determination by grounds that are a priori and valid prior to all experience."[4]

After all, in Kantian epistemology, the obvious synthesis of rationalism and empiricism becomes easier to discern by the clarification and combination of the concepts "a priori, a posteriori, analytic, and synthetic" and in this way, we can understand Kant's suggestion as to how to acquire knowledge and know reality.

§2 Does Kantian epistemology really work?

It is no question that the Kantian conception of knowledge has attracted many philosophers. It has been thought that it provides a consistent and cogent solution to the shortcomings of rationalism and empiricism by allowing the existence of both "knowledge-before-experience" and "knowledge-after-experience" within a conceptualization of the analytic-synthetic dichotomy. Kant's conception of *synthetic a priori* knowledge, particularly, deserves attention at this point, because he makes an extraordinary move in opposition to the classical conception of knowledge at his time by introducing synthetic a priority. Before Kant, David Hume, in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, claimed that human knowledge consists of "relations of ideas" and "matters of fact." To clarify, "recent Empiricists have formulated Hume's challenge in the a priori–a posteriori, analytic–synthetic terminology. Their position, the modernized version to the extent that it is directly inspired by Hume's doctrine, can be formulated in this way: *All knowable propositions are either analytic a priori or synthetic a posteriori."*[5]

That is, Hume's understanding of knowledge only consists of analytic a priori and synthetic a posteriori, and unlike Kant, excludes synthetic a priori. The reason that Kant's introduction of synthetic a priori knowledge is of great importance is better comprehended through the difference between the ways Kant and Hume understand laws of nature. In simple terms, according to Kant, by means of observation (not being confined within meanings or in short, syntheticity), we can discover necessary

3 Antony Flew, *A Dictionary of philosophy,* (London: Macmillan, 1979), 102
4 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (Paul Guyer, Allen W. Wood, Trans.), (Cambridge, United Kingdom; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press. 1999), [A159].
5 Georges Dicker, Hume's *Epistemology and Metaphysics: An Introduction,* (London; New York: Routledge. 1998), 41.

and universal phenomena of which we actually have knowledge before experience. Yet, Hume argues that it is impossible to reach necessary and universal knowledge of

the world through experience, but rather, the only knowledge that we have through experience is *synthetic a posteriori* in that we observe the world (syntheticity) and reach probable knowledge that can be known after experience and that, in principle, has the chance to change in lieu of being necessary and universal knowledge. For instance, Kant would consider gravity to be *synthetic a priori* because unlike analytic truths, the knowledge of this phenomenon can, firstly, be learned through experience, and then, it can be discerned that gravitational attraction is necessary and universal on the grounds that "[gravity] cannot be viewed as simply an *[empirical fact]* about the true motions […] for without this property we are unable to define the true motions in the first place"[6] Hume, quite to the contrary, would regard gravity as simply an empirical fact. In other words, the reason that objects fall down to the ground cannot be explained through the law of gravitation, but rather, this phenomenon is synthetic a posteriori, and there is no rationale to claim that objects will fall down every single time necessarily and universally. What makes us think that objects will fall, in fact, is not the law of gravitation, but our *past experiences*: we make generalizations as to how nature works by relying upon our past empirical data and apply them to the future events. However, Kant, as a response to Hume, holds that it is not the case that we cannot reach necessary and universal laws of nature, but instead, we can have this knowledge by the active role of human mind in the formation of knowledge: as Kant, in the *Prolegomena*, says, "The understanding does not draw its (a priori) laws from nature, but prescribes them to it."[7] That is, we have laws of nature in our minds before experience, but in order to know or make sense of them, we need to experience or see how they work in nature. This reasoning, at first glance, may seem quite convincing today, as we have learned a lot through modern science about how human beings perceive and experience the world. We can consider this example: we see different colors via certain cells in the eyes that enable us to perceive them. When some light waves reflected from an object come to our eyes, we can see its color if this biological system works properly, and this shows, like gravity, a use of laws of nature and thus, indicates a priority, necessity, and universality in its epistemic possession. In Kantian terms, it could be paraphrased in such a way that even if we did not see any object, we would still come to know, owing to the related cells in the eyes, that we have the concept of color in our minds, but so as to understand or make sense of this concept, we need to see an object: understanding, say, redness becomes possible only after seeing a red object. Yet, the question is: how can we really know whether we have such a priori concepts, laws, categories, and so on in our minds without

6 Michael Friedman. *"KANT ON SPACE, THE UNDERSTANDING, AND THE LAW OF GRAVITATION: 'PROLEGOMENA' §38."* The Monist 72, no. 2 (1989), 243.

7 Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to any future metaphysics that will be able to come forward as science: with selections from the Critique of pure reason* (Gary Hatfield, Trans.). (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), [4:320]

assuming their presence? If our genes or physiological systems are different names for those, then this claim is absolutely true, but at this point, that which is implicated, in fact, is that we already have the knowledge of colors (or other a priori laws and principles), but we simply do not understand those before experience. A color-blind person cannot see some colors as a person who is not color-blind can see. Does it mean that color-blind people have the deficiency of some inherent concepts in their minds? The Kantian answer could be that they do not have such a deficiency, but nevertheless, they cannot comprehend or make sense of colors as non-color-blind people can do due to the fact that they do not possess adequate and propitious biological equipment that enables them to catch the required sensory data. The same question arises once again: what is the rationale behind assuming the pre-existence of such concepts? Our biological instruments, surely, play a significant role in what we understand and how we experience the world in accordance with our development and adaptation in the evolutionary history of humankind. In parallel, our genes can provide us the opportunity to know or experience certain kinds of things in the world as discussed in the example where we can see redness through particular cells, but does carrying certain genes mean that we have the knowledge of what these genes carry? What is knowledge, then? Our congenital tendency or capacity to walk, for instance, does not express that we have a priori knowledge of walking even before starting to walk, but rather, it only shows that our biology enables us to act in such a way. Thus, we can say that our genes or physiological systems are not concepts, categories, or knowledge, but our equipment to have knowledge, because knowing that we can walk or understanding redness is a conscious phenomenon of which we become aware through establishing beliefs about ourselves. or the world by means of observation. What Kant means here is the existence of such a framework consisting of *a priori* concepts, categories, and so on from the abstract and rationalist standpoint, but the proposal of such a framework, in fact, implies a groundless metaphysical assertion, since how can we claim, for example, that a color-blind person has the concept of redness, or that a healthy person who has been unconscious since his or her birth and who has no experience about the world has such a structure in the mind? Alternatively, claiming that making such abstractions and creating concepts or categories *after* experience is much more compatible with our knowledge about ourselves and the world, and seeing that becomes easier when we test the compatibility between so-called a priori knowledge and what we see when we look at the world.

Kant's proposal of *synthetic a priori,* in this way, comes together with such criticisms in its reformulation of mathematical and scientific knowledge. Although the idea of *synthetic a priori* seems difficult to disprove, we can ultimately see that it fails. Besides mathematics and laws of nature, Kant holds that formal logic is also *a priori*,

that is, it has nothing to do with empirical data in its epistemic status and analysis.[8] Considering that logical rules, laws, or principles are totally abstract, and that they, in a way, manifest the structure of our minds, it, at first sight, seems again plausible to hold such a view that our knowledge or possess concepts, laws, principles, and so on that are a priori, necessary, and universal, then what we expect, when we look at the world, is that we never make a mistake in our conception of a priori, or that we never understand a priori things differently in relation to the physical world, since they are necessarily and universally true; and known or possessed before experience. However, as science and technology develop, nature continues to surprise us. A groundbreaking discovery has shown that our a priori and certain logical rules that we think of as necessary can tell us a different story. It has been found, after the emergence of quantum logic, that one of the laws in formal logic, namely the distributive law, is not always true in quantum logic. "The distributive law is sometimes false in quantum logic because of the superposition principle (and the projection postulate) in quantum mechanics."[9] This situation has enormous implications as to the nature of human knowledge. While the aforementioned law works in the macro-cosmos in which we live, it does not on the quantum scale. The reason can obviously be propounded through the explanation that the universe works differently on different scales, but the actual question that we must ask in our inquiry is: why do we call such laws (and other forms of *a priori* knowledge) a priori, and along with that, necessary, and universal? The example of the distributive law, clearly, indicates that this is not the case. For, if these are *a priori* elements in our minds with such and such qualities, then how can we be mistaken even once? There should be a different explanation as to the nature or origin of logic and, in the broadest scope, of human knowledge, as we see the implausibility of the presence of a priori knowledge. All these points suggest that empiricism provides the only solution to the question of the origin of human knowledge.

§3 The real leading roles in epistemology: syntheticity and a posteriority

Once we intend to eliminate the possibility of a priori knowledge, we are left with, as expected, only a posteriori knowledge. Thus, it becomes natural to claim that knowledge, in fact, only stems from experience, and that it has nothing to do with any pre-given knowledge. Yet, it is still too early to arrive at this conclusion based on what we have covered so far, since there are other aspects in the defense of knowledge-before-experience that we should examine. Notwithstanding the problematicality of a priori knowledge, some characteristics of human knowledge seem to show that there is a priority, but as we shall see, we can actually explain these through a posteriority.

8 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason,* (B170).
9 Gibbins, P. F. *"Why the Distributive Law Is Sometimes False."* (Analysis 44, no. 2, 1984), 64.

In contemporary epistemology, one of the most controversial aspects is perhaps the presence of the analytic-synthetic dichotomy. The consensus has been that the distinction between analytic and synthetic knowledge is as obvious and natural as that of a priori and a posteriori. The latter distinction is totally understandable, because the origin of knowledge is either experience or mind, whereas in the former, learning becomes a matter of either observation or of appeal to language. The problem concerning a priori appears within the context of its relation to analytic propositions: if there is no *a priori*, how can we then explain analytic truths? Let's again consider the statement "All bachelors are unmarried men." Though it seems to be a matter of language, do we actually know *before experience* that this is the case? Do all these clear analytic descriptions or inferences not require the existence of a priority because of the fact that analyticity implies a priority or knowledge-before-experience?

The most well-known attack on the analytic-synthetic distinction, indubitably, comes from W.V.O. Quine. He attempts to show the nullity of this dichotomy through indicating that analyticity is circular. That is, to learn the veracity of synthetic statements, we make observations or look at facts without appealing to the statements themselves, but for analytic propositions, we show this through analyticity itself, even though we believe that those propositions are true solely in virtue of their meanings. Along with Quine's conclusion, it can be ascertained that analyticity, in fact, is fundamentally grounded upon syntheticity, and in this way, we come to the conclusion that the only way to have knowledge is foundationally syntheticity. This paves the way for a posteriori knowledge by revealing facts in the world by means of experience, that is, empiricism is the only successful philosophy compared to rationalism or Kantian epistemology, which combines empiricism and rationalism. To comprehend how analyticity fails and is rooted in syntheticity, we should briefly delineate Quine's argumentation.

To begin his argument, he makes a distinction between analytic propositions with regards to their ways of justification. He compartmentalizes analytic statements into two categories: the propositions that are logically true and the propositions that are true by synonymy. Consider this sentence: "No unmarried man is married." In this classical example, we can logically see the truth of this sentence without any consideration of the interpretations of "man" and "married" when "no", "un-" and "is" have their ordinary meaning.[10] On the other hand, we need to dissect analytic statements from the perspective of synonymy when we encounter this sort of example: "No bachelor is married." Recalling that analytic propositions are true or not true only by virtue of meaning, the meanings of "bachelor" and "married" become important elements in this inquiry in a way that this sentence, by the synonymy between "bachelor" and "unmarried man," can turn into "No unmarried

10 W. V. Quine. *"Main Trends in Recent Philosophy: Two Dogmas of Empiricism."* (The Philosophical Review 60, no. 1, 1951), 23.

man is married." Analyticity by synonymy is ultimately understood via analyticity by logic, but this transition, Quine points out, is problematic in that it is circular, and this will later show us how possible it is to surmount the difficulty of understanding analyticity on the grounds of syntheticity without falling into circularity.

A first strategy could be to use the definitions of "bachelor" and "unmarried man" in order to demonstrate how they are synonymous. Surely, a dictionary can help us find out their definitions, but because a dictionary only provides a *report* of the definition of a word which is already known, this method does not represent the synonymy between them. If so, what is the way then to know that they are synonymous and hence, constitute an analytic statement that is true only in virtue of meaning without requiring any empirical data? At this point, Quine tries to use *interchangeability* in their synonymy.[11] According to this conception, if two terms are interchangeable in all contexts without any change in their truth-value, they are synonymous. For example, "'Bachelor' has fewer than ten letters." This statement gives a quality of "bachelor," but it also indicates that "bachelor" and "unmarried man" are *not* interchangeable in this sentence, since obviously, we cannot say "'unmarried man' has fewer than ten letters." Therefore, we have no reason to justify the analytic sentence "A bachelor is an unmarried man" under these circumstances. However, when we attempt to appeal to interchangeability for synonymy, that which we are really concerned with is not the formal structure of the words, but rather, Quine argues, *cognitive synonymy*, how we actually understand them. Yet, at this point, another issue arises. The problem is that we have to presuppose the knowledge of the meaning of analyticity to expound cognitive synonymy. To put it another way, it is simply asserted that we know the synonymy between "bachelor" and "unmarried man" by claiming that they are synonymous, or by referring again to their meanings: using analyticity. In contrast, Quine states, "What we need is an account of cognitive synonymy not presupposing analyticity."[12] We can, hence, say that putting forward cognitive synonymy or proposing that we know the synonymy between the words simply in virtue of our cognitive ability to know their meanings without any further justification is another way to use analyticity.

As another attempt to resolve this problem, Quine suggests the use of "necessarily" in order to circumvent this situation. He argues that if we use such an adverb, it becomes possible to avoid using meanings, and thus, analyticity. Nonetheless, the same problem comes to the surface for the reason that the concept of necessity applies only to analytic propositions; justifying a sentence through including "necessarily" still presupposes analyticity. Consider the statement "Necessarily all and only bachelors are bachelors". Since we hold that "bachelor" and "unmarried man" are interchangeable, this proposition turns into "Necessarily all and only bachelors

11 *Ibid,* Pg. 27.
12 *Ibid,* Pg. 28.

are unmarried men." We try to explain this interchangeability through an appeal to necessity as an alternative to the use of meaning and avoid analyticity, but indeed, what is done here is to change the site of analyticity from the synonymy between the words "bachelor" and "unmarried man" to "necessarily." Analyticity, in this situation, is used by means of necessity, because "[t]o suppose that [necessity makes sense] is to suppose that we have already made satisfactory sense of 'analytic.'"[13] Therefore, only the acceptance of analyticity can establish synonymy, and in fact, propositions like this, theoretically, show no difference from statements that are logically true in terms of their justifications.

Quine argues for the circularity of analyticity to explicate the impossibility of analyticity. We can conclude, therefore, that the fundamental logic behind analyticity is that analytic statements are true, because they are true. However, there is still a question: if there is no analyticity, how do we still know "All bachelors are unmarried men" or "All squares have four equal sides" before experience? Perhaps, the real question should be: do we *really* know them before experience? This question is difficult to answer if they are a priori self-evident knowledge that require no further justification to be held. In other words, what if they are self-evidently true in virtue of necessary and universal a priori knowledge as manifestations of our a priori logical reasoning that has nothing to do with our presuppositions or the way we use language?

Language is a way to express our thoughts or beliefs in accordance with some logical structures in our minds, and especially in analytic propositions, it is crucial that true statements are the ones that comply with our logic. That is the reason that Quine states that when we use analyticity, we indeed turn statements that are true by synonymy into statements that are logically true. Thus, along with his argument that analyticity is circular, the major takeaway from his argument is that analyticity depends on the idea of a priori logic. This allows us to claim that "All bachelors are unmarried men" is true because it is logically true and requires no further justification. However, when it comes to the original way we know them, the dispute between rationalism and empiricism arises: is it something we know before experience, or are there really such a priori concepts or categories that shape our judgments, etc.? In this case, what is in question is the origin of logic since, as we have shown, analyticity is fundamentally grounded upon logic.

Yet, in our discussion of the distributive law, we saw that the idea of a priori logic could be wrong. So, does this totally eliminate the presence of a priori logic in the context of analyticity? After all, we can roughly express that the purest form of analyticity is "X is X" or "X=X" Therefore, the question turns into "How is 'X is X' or 'X=X' true?" and in fact, other than how synonymy occurs, this is the fundamental

13 *Ibid*, Pg. 29

goal of analyticity.. Is "X is X" or "X=X" known before experience? The answer is that it is indeed known *after* experience even though this appears counter-intuitive. In order to create a proper conception of X in our minds and argue that it is identical with itself or the same as something else, we need to experience X in relation to other things. Similarly, to understand "A bachelor is a bachelor" or "An unmarried man is an unmarried man," we first need to understand the meanings of bachelor and unmarried man. Consider the first example. If this statement were an analytic proposition in a way that it is argued, then we would only comprehend this sentence by reading it. Yet, what guarantees that the former bachelor and the latter bachelor are the same? The former could mean an unmarried man, whereas the latter could mean a person who holds a first degree from a university. So as to establish the sense of analyticity in the form of "X is X," we need to ensure that they have the same meaning, but we can only do that empirically.

Thus, we leave the realm of analyticity and enter syntheticity, and this brings about the emergence of a posteriori knowledge. This situation may not happen for "An unmarried man is an unmarried man," since the meaning of "unmarried man" is understood more precisely unlike "bachelor." Considering, however, that the meanings of words in a language depends on the context or language in which they are being used, this could apply to *any* word, and that shows the empirical aspect of language and the necessity to appeal to the external world to verify its true meaning. Hence, it is not surprising to see that we can understand "All bachelors are bachelors" after experiencing and creating a suitable conceptualization of what is being experienced. We can claim, therefore, that analyticity lies on the ground of *syntheticity*, and that the knowledge acquired from so-called analytic statements like "All bachelors are unmarried men" or "X is X" is indeed *synthetic a posteriori* because we need to check the veracity of these statements, according to the way they are being used, through observation, and this *syntheticity* gives rise to a posteriori knowledge rather than necessary and universal a priori knowledge.

The same process occurs on the grounds of not only language, but also our conceptualizations in the sense of understanding the existence of ourselves and the world. For example, when we state, "All squares have four equal sides," we describe an abstraction based on experience in the sense that after seeing squares with the same property —four equal sides—we conceptualize this shape and claim to know, in an *analytic a priori* manner, that "All squares have four equal sides." This demonstrates how we come to know the world through generalizations. As we have seen, empirical generalizations, according to Hume, are synthetic a posteriori and cannot be considered to be necessary or universal. Therefore we cannot reach any certain knowledge of the world like laws of nature, and unlike his idea of "relations of ideas", or in modern version analytic a priori it can be said that these sorts of propositions, laws of nature or logical principles, can be known in a synthetic a posteriori way by

rejecting analyticity and a priori through unfalsifiable scientific generalizations of our experience of reality.

For instance, we have discussed the distributive law and suggested that since it does not work under the conditions of quantum mechanics, it cannot have a necessary and universal property, and hence, we cannot regard it as *a priori*. Instead, as we do for every phenomenon, we can think of this law as *synthetic a posteriori* knowledge, but this does not mean that it cannot be generalized and count as certain or universal. Before quantum logic emerged, this law had worked perfectly, and nobody questioned the truth of it. However, once quantum physics changed this, its truth, necessity, or universality started to be questioned. Does this suggest that we should abandon this law while speaking of human knowledge? The answer, of course, should be no. Just because the law does not always work on the quantum scale does not mean that it is wrong in every situation. Likewise, Newton came up with several laws in order to describe how the universe works, but it was said that Newtonian physics is wrong after Einstein. Yet, it is still used in science and technology. If it is wrong, why is it used? The reason is obviously that it does work particularly in machine parts, fluids, planets, spacecrafts, and so on, but it does not within the context of Einsteinian physics or quantum mechanics. Furthermore, we still call Newtonian laws laws. If these are wrong, how can they be called laws?

To conceive what is really happening here, we should understand how laws, principles, axioms, logical rules, etc. come into existence on the grounds of unfalsifiable scientific generalizations. When we say, for example, that the sum of the interior angles of a triangle is 180 degrees, through the scientific method, it is ultimately concluded that this is true and represents a law, rule, or principle. A law then is something that is unfalsifiable. This is indeed how we know facts about the world and our logic.

Similarly, logic is an extension of the external world in the sense that after making observations and generalizing facts, we conceptualize what we see in the world and state some certain rules or principles. However, as science and technology develop, we gain a broader understanding of how the universe works and start questioning what we think of as certain. We found out that the laws of Newtonian physics or some logical laws like the distributive law do not work in all cases. Yet, these still work well in the conditions that we most often encounter. After Einstein and quantum physics, it was understood that Newtonian physics is wrong, but it still describes the world that we experience by common-sense with high precision. This shows that those are unfalsifiable in *this* world, because their veracities were tested in *this* world, and along with that, they have become laws in *this* world. Yet, when we discover other areas of the universe, new laws, rules, or principles concerning the different mechanisms of these areas emerge.

Thus, we can eventually see that our whole knowledge of the world and logic can be expressed via syntheticity and a posteriority, since all these facts require experience to be known and lack necessity and universality in the broadest scope. The distributive law, for example, can count as a law when it is observed only in the world where it is unfalsifiable, but in quantum mechanics, it cannot. It is synthetic, because we need to look at the world or the specific conditions where it is being used in order to see if it is true, and it is a posteriori, since we come to know it only after experience through unfalsifiable generalizations under certain conditions. This endorses the idea that human knowledge stems only from our empirical observations, not from a priori phenomena. This argument, therefore, strongly supports the repudiation of knowledge-before-experience, and thus rationalism. Notwithstanding all those points, there are two aspects of the issue to be explained such as the knowledge of the things about which unfalsifiability is not always used and as a more fundamental subject, the knowledge of the self.

§4 The Knowledge of the Self and the External World

When we see a chair, for instance, we think we know that there is a chair. We do not think there is a need to rely upon the cumulative knowledge of humanity to make sure that our knowledge about the presence of the chair is unfalsifiable. Moreover, what guarantees that this holistic and shared knowledge of humanity is true? How can we be sure that what we are seeing is true? What if there is no chair, and we live in a delusion? Surely, this can only bring us to Cartesian skepticism. If only empiricism can explain the nature of human knowledge, and if the world where we live might be a delusion, then how can we really experience and know the world or trust empiricism at all? At this point, the only knowledge we can have, it could be argued, is our individual existence. We can only say, "I think, therefore, I am." However, is this not known independently of experience? What we have seen so far champions the view that knowledge independent of experience is impossible, but can we argue that the knowledge of the self is the only a priori knowledge, and thus, empiricism ultimately fails?

Descartes makes a strong case when he argues, "I think, therefore, I am." It is, most of the time, held that he proves his existence independently of the external world by doubting everything. At the most fundamental level, he, in fact, knows nothing, but his a priori existence. He knows it, because it is *self-evident* to him, and this situation requires no further justification. This is a crucial point in any inquiry of human knowledge, since after considering skeptical arguments (particularly, the Agrippan problem) that cast a shadow over the possibility of human knowledge and argue that epistemic justification is impossible, we can more easily establish the importance of having self-evident truths upon which the rest of human knowledge. That is to say, we need self-evident knowledge, at least at the fundamental level, to speak of the

possession of knowledge. If so, what is this basic and self-evident knowledge, and is it a priori?

At this point, seemingly, we agree with Descartes with regards to the existence of self-evident knowledge, but when it comes to its origin or how it is found,there is an apparent difference. We will focus on the idea of the self-evident existence of the self which, in this argumentation, is independent of the external world, and this independence, indeed, is the element that causes a problem here. In order to conceive this issue, we should first comprehend how we come to know ourselves. The process of knowing the self only occurs in relation to things that we perceive in the external world. In other words, this knowledge becomes a process of self-perception only after the perceiver perceives himself or herself, and becomes aware of his or her existence. However, once we try to isolate ourselves by focusing on our own distinct self as though it is totally independent of the external world in a way that Descartes does, we find ourselves in a delusion in respect of the origin of the self by thinking that it can be known even in the absence of experience. Descartes argues that we can know that we exist without experiencing anything, but the knowledge of the self only arises *after* experience, since self-realization occurs after understanding that we are the perceiver. Even if we think that the only thing we know is our a priori existence, the properties or nature of this existence will be limited to what we have experienced so far. It can be proposed, therefore, that the knowledge of the self is not analytic or a priori, but rather, more precisely, synthetic a posteriori in that it requires experience every time by realizing the distinction between the perceiver and what is being perceived, and it cannot be known before experience.

After all, although the knowledge of the self arises as a result of experience, we can still argue that it is self-evident, since regardless of its origin this knowledge ultimately appears to our consciousness in a way that it is known directly or self-evidently. When it comes to the knowledge of objects in the external world we can say that their existence is also self-evident because of the fact that, regarding our relationship with the external world in terms of the emergence of our self-awareness, it can be inferred that their existence is a main requisite to realize our own existence that emerges as a part of the physical reality, and thus, similar to how we self-evidently know the self, their existence appears to us as self-evident. Moreover, this direct shift in our comprehension of existence allows us to look at reality in a much more comprehensive manner in the sense that we can no longer grasp reality from the internal perspective in which we can only know our own existence, but only from the external perspective in which we can look at ourselves as a part of the external world. However, we know that we are living beings that consist of physiological systems that could have malfunctions or that could cause illusions, etc. That is to say, we could sometimes be wrong in our judgments, but under normal circumstances of our biology, when our body works without any problem, we will not be mistaken

very often. When one is drunk, one could argue that there are two chairs in the room actually when there is one, or there could be an illusion for a sober person, but if more people independent of each other test this claim several times, then it will eventually be confirmed that there is one chair in the room. This perfectly describes the scientific method with the notion of unfalsifiability. This is how certain facts, laws, or principles are established within the synthetic a posteriori framework. Yet, as we have said, this is valid for the world we examine. When electrons and protons are considered, on this scale, there will be no chair, only particles. Does it, however, mean that what we see, in fact, is a delusion? After considering that the existence of the chair in the room is self-evident to us, we can conclude that the world we experience is not a delusion, but it represents reality to which we have a direct access, and that at the same time, it is not the ultimate reality. We cannot know the ultimate reality due to the fact that our experience and knowledge are limited. This situation does not necessarily mean that we are wrong as to our judgments of reality, but instead, as we develop new instruments that broaden our horizon by making more empirical data visible to us, expanding our knowledge about reality in various aspects becomes possible.

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