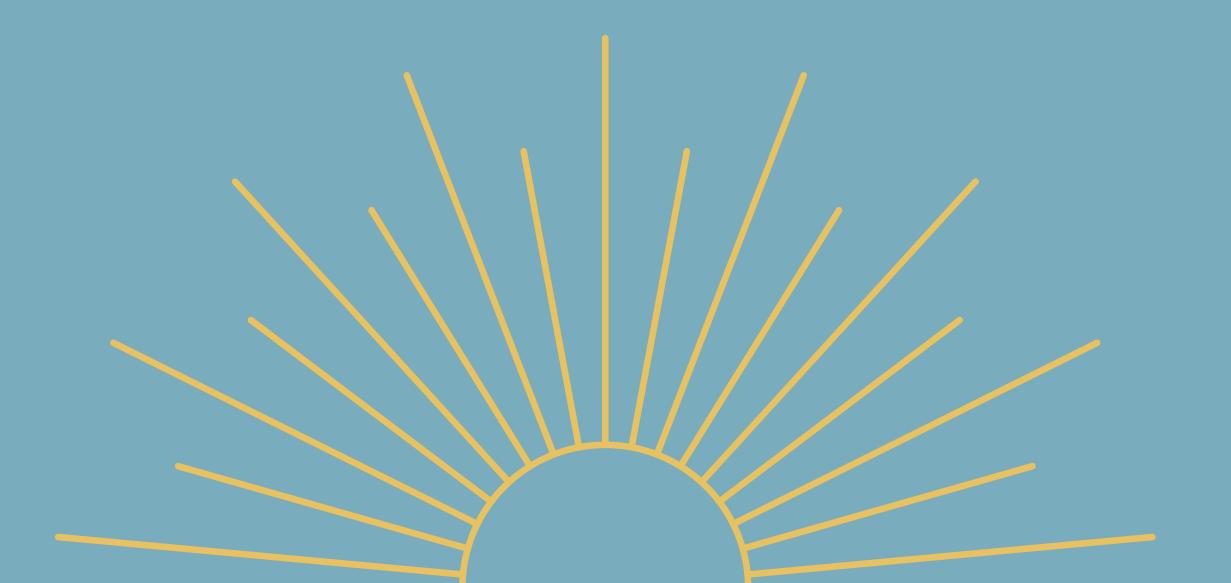# PENSE

The Journal of the University of Edinburgh Philosophy Society

PENSE — from Scots,
meaning 'Thought' or 'Mind'

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04

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome to the 4th issue of PENSE!

We are thrilled to present this collection of what we hope the reader will agree are insightful and thought-provoking contributions from our academic community.

In this issue, our contributors engage with a diverse range of philosophical inquiries. From discussions on the nature of grief to the philosophy of spoilers, our writers offer a range of perspectives that reflect the University of Edinburgh's intellectual community.

As editors, we have been privileged to witness the dedication and passion of our authors throughout the editorial process. We hope that the fruits of their labour inspire you, and we invite you to bring a critical eye towards the essays contained herein. We hope that PENSE can continue to serve as a platform for the exchange of ideas and the celebration of philosophical inquiry within our university community.

We extend our gratitude to all those who have contributed to the creation of this journal, from the authors who were brave enough to bare their work before us to our talented designer who made this issue so beautiful. We would like to thank our selection committee, Sophie Havenhand, Maja Longfors, James Ternent, and Ryoko Umemoto, for their considered notes. We would also like to extend special thanks to James Ternent for his patience and guidance, and for the scrupulous philosophical eye that he lent the journal.

Finally, we'd like to thank you, the reader, for finding the time to pause, and be pensive with us.

Sincerely,

Isabelle Woodcock & Henry Mobius

Editors-in-Chief

PENSE - The Journal of the University of Edinburgh Philosophy Society

Close Encounters: Remedying Alienation in Race and Gender Relations

Annika Cleland-Hura

The meeting of, and relationships between, self-consciousnesses is a subject explored by a number of important late modern philosophers, in particular Hegel in his picture of mastery and servitude. However, it is in existentialist philosophy that this topic is especially relevant to the explanation and remedy of the subjugation and alienation that arises from these meetings. In this essay, I will argue that, while relations between self-consciousnesses have historically resulted (and continue in our present time to result) in alienation for certain Othered groups, we can move beyond this alienation through various strategies of existentialist liberation. I will begin by defining the existentialist terms essential to this argument, then consider how our self-consciousness can be mediated through that of another by examining gender and race relations, as specifically laid out by Simone de Beauvoir and Frantz Fanon respectively. I will look at the two interconnected forms of alienation that arise from these relations, those of alienation from one's body (facticity) and alienation from one's transcendence (freedom), and how they manifest in each case. Finally, I will explain each author's proposed solutions to this alienation and how their use can lead to authentic relations between self-consciousnesses that do not result in alienation.

The existentialists describe being as a tension between the two aspects of self-consciousness: freedom and facticity. Freedom is our being; facticity is our situation. When one is a subject, these two aspects are balanced. But when one is made to be the Other, this balance is disrupted, resulting in alienation. Both Beauvoir and Fanon define being Other in their experiences as existing, not as oneself, but in relation to the (white) man. The woman, or the Black man, is a 'relative being', seen only by contrast to the default experience of white maleness (de Beauvoir, p. 6). In Hegelian terms, the Other is the Slave; they are objectified, their self-consciousness subjugated by the dominant Master. In existentialism, the Master is the white man, whom Beauvoir calls 'the Subject' or 'the Absolute', in contrast to the Othered Woman (*Ibid.*). While Beauvoir simply talks of the Man, she (nearly

always) seems to be discussing the White Man, given the privileges and deference he is given, and she does note that Black people encounter 'difficulties similar to those encountered by women' (*Ibid.*, p. 753). Thus, in considering Beauvoir's discussion of 'the man', I will take this figure to be the white man, unless otherwise specified. It is beyond the scope of this essay to discuss how racism and sexism compound in the alienation of Black women or other women of colour.

For Beauvoir, the act of 'othering' is an unavoidable part of the meeting of self-consciousnesses; it is an outcome 'as original as consciousness itself' (*Ibid.*, p. 6). An individual self-consciousness will naturally posit themself as the Subject since they see the world from their own perspective; and so, any other self-consciousness they encounter will consequently fall into the role of the other. This happens in both directions; there is a reciprocal relationship, each recognising that they are at once subject (in their own experience) and object (from the other's viewpoint). As a result of the contrast between oneself and another self-consciousness, one is able to recognise both one's own subjectivity and that of the other, thanks to the reciprocity of recognition. But in the case of the woman, this reciprocity is not present. The man sees her in relation to him, and so does she – as Beauvoir quotes, 'Woman does not think herself without man' – but neither ever sees him in relation to her, because 'a man's body has meaning in itself' (*Ibid.*). For this reason, says Beauvoir, woman is fundamentally, absolutely Other. Because the woman is not permitted the reciprocity that allows her to recognise herself as a subject, she seeks transcendence by attempting to attach herself to the man and see the world through his eyes, thereby gaining at least a glimpse of the 'Absolute' – as in the case of the woman in love – or by emulating him – as in the independent woman.

Fanon takes a similar view to Beauvoir, expanding on her diagnosis to explain the Black male experience. Like the woman, the Black man is defined and understood as leading a relative existence, always seen in relation to the default white male experience. He desires to experience subjectivity, yet is 'locked in suffocating reification', unable to simply exist as a man (and thus as a subject) thanks to the colour of his skin (Fanon, p. 89). And while, unlike the woman, his maleness may allow him to experience transcendence within his own community, he is unable to maintain his subjectivity in broader society, as the white man does not see his self-consciousness as worthy of

recognition. Even amongst his own community, the Black man may indeed be unable to experience transcendence because of his knowledge of his own otherness in the world at large. Like the woman, the Black man seeks transcendence through the white man, hoping that 'his liberating gaze … [would] put me back in the world' (*Ibid*.). But he finds no comfort there; 'the white gaze, the only valid one, is already dissecting me' (*Ibid*., p. 95). Instead of reaching transcendence through the acceptance of the white man, the Black man is treated as an object, a curiosity, a terror, a mystery – anything but a human subject. Like the woman, his being is preceded by the myths and legends that surround his entire category, and cannot break free from those perceptions and assumptions into his actual being.

Having outlined the two aspects of a self-consciousness in the existentialist view – freedom and facticity – and considered two related but separate versions of the meeting of self-consciousnesses, we are now prepared to look at how this meeting gives rise to alienation in these two aspects. The first form of alienation resulting from Othering is the alienation of the body, which represents facticity. In Beauvoir's critique of the woman in love, she especially looks at how the woman is alienated from her own body as a result of her attempts to gain transcendence through the man. Her body is a tool to attain transcendence through sexual intimacy with the man; and while she may glimpse (some version of) it, as soon as the act is done, she is once again Other. Worse, because she has abandoned herself in pursuit of the man's transcendence, she is now alienated from her physical being – at least, until the next night. Her body, which should be the home of her facticity, is instead used – by her in search of transcendence, and by him for sexual pleasure. The independent woman faces a similar dilemma between existing in her facticity and pursuing male transcendence, resulting in profound alienation. Instead of seeking transcendence *through* the man, she attempts to attain it by *acting* like the man, and in so doing, neglects to accept her facticity as a sexed, feminine being. The man is a sexed being, and also a subject; the woman is also a sexed being, but in abandoning her femininity in search of herself, she alienates herself from her body, and thus from her facticity. The woman in love and the independent woman thus both experience a fracturing of self in becoming alienated from their physical selves; they cannot exist as complete self-consciousnesses if they do not embrace both their freedom and their facticity.

The Black man is similarly alienated from his body under Fanon's view. Because he is perceived and defined in relation to the white man, he is 'aware of [his] body ... taking up room', looking, moving, and existing differently than a white man's body (*Ibid*., p. 92). He can feel people's eyes on him; sense their Othering perception of him; and thus is keenly conscious of his physical being. Because of this awareness, he can never forget himself, which, as Beauvoir explains, is necessary to gain transcendence (de Beauvoir, p. 756). But if he tries to remedy this by acting as much like the white man as possible, then he is alienating himself from his body, which continues to look and exist a certain way, regardless of his efforts. Much like the independent woman, he is denying his facticity by attempting to escape his Blackness and so compromises his being (and thus, his freedom) even as he attempts to reach it.

The alienation from one's own individuality, which is an aspect of one's freedom, is also discussed at length by both Beauvoir and Fanon. For Beauvoir, this is clearest in her formulation of the paradox of idolatrous love. Indeed, 'the love act requires a woman's profound alienation'; the woman ends up sacrificing her own freedom to serve the man's existence (*Ibid*., p. 706). It begins as an attempt toward transcendence, as I already discussed; lacking the recognition necessary to establish herself as subject, the woman searches for herself through the man's eyes. This is the paradox: in an attempt to save herself, she instead gives up her freedom. She is searching for recognition, but instead she has alienated herself from her own freedom, and thus, her very being. This is really the flip side of the alienation of her body – in idolatrous love, she must sacrifice one or the other; but since her freedom and facticity cannot be separated, she ultimately is alienated from both.

For Fanon, the manifestation of this is alienation from one's individual experience, independent of stereotypes, expectations, and the representation of one's entire culture. There is not one single, monolithic experience of being a Black man; and yet, each Black man is 'responsible not only for [his] body but also for [his] race and [his] ancestors' (Fanon, p. 92). He is not seen and recognised as he is, but rather 'woven ... out of a thousand details, anecdotes, and stories' (*Ibid*., p. 91). He must speak for his entire (perceived) race – which may be completely separate from his actual knowledge or situation – and thus is not permitted to have his own individual

experience of the world. He must 'behave … like a Negro', rather than simply like a subject in the world; he must conform to an established role that is defined in relation to the white man (*Ibid.*, p. 94). As such, the Black man is alienated from his individualism, his unique character and perspective on the world, and thus his freedom.

So what is the solution? With all this history of objectification and subjugation, is it naïve to believe that a meeting of self-consciousnesses without alienation is possible? Both Beauvoir and Fanon, though they recognise that the task is far from an easy one, take an optimistic view. Beauvoir's existentialist liberation tells us that 'authentic love', in the case of the woman in love, is the cure for alienation:

> *Authentic love must be founded on reciprocal recognition of two freedoms; each lover would then experience himself as himself and as the other; neither would abdicate his transcendence … together they would both reveal values and ends in the world…. [L]ove would be the revelation of self through the gift of self.* (de Beauvoir, p. 723)

This mutual recognition found in authentic love is also the key to overcoming alienation in more general types of relationships. We must recognise that we are all both subject and object at the same time; while the other is an object in our view of the world, they are a subject in their own. Because this solution requires reciprocity and mutual recognition, it necessitates something of a coalition between the Subject (the man) and the Other (the woman). He must acknowledge that her self-consciousness is not precipitated on his own; he must allow for her to be for herself instead of merely in relation, or even antithetical, to him. She, for her part, must assert her subjectivity, even when the social or psychological consequences are unpleasant or deeply uncomfortable (for instance, being ridiculed for acting 'unfemininely'; or, the weight of assuming responsibility for her destiny). She must also recognise other women as subjects as opposed to 'relative beings' – that is to say, she must recognise their independent existence in the world, outwith their relationships to men. Importantly, as Fanon points out, we must employ a range of strategies to this end, because different experiences result in different forms of alienation (Fanon, pp. 198-199). I take this to mean that, while the general approach remains the same, it will need to formulate

itself differently based on the circumstances; consider, for example, Beauvoir's solutions for the woman in love compared to the independent woman. Though each experiences alienation, it presents itself differently in each case; and though the overall remedy – mutual recognition – remains constant, the specific formulation of this remedy is different for each. For the former, the answer is authentic (romantic) love; for the latter, it is the chance to pursue her projects *and* retain her femininity without being held in relation to the default experience of white male subjectivity.

Fanon's method of 'disalienation' requires that we reject the concepts of 'destiny' and 'reality as definition', allowing the balance between the two poles of self-consciousness to be restored, rather than constraining one's freedom through one's facticity (*Ibid*., p. 201). We must refuse to 'fixate man' and so permit him to be his 'own foundation' (*Ibid*., p. 205). In short, we need to recognise that self-consciousnesses are not fixed; and while one's facticity has a bearing on who one is, it need not wholly define one's essence. We are what we determine ourselves to be, provided we are permitted subjectivity by the self-consciousnesses we encounter.

Though othering is an inevitable result of the meeting of self-consciousnesses, the encounter need not result in alienation, thanks to various forms of existentialist liberatory strategies. By establishing relationships that are balanced and reciprocal, we can mitigate, resolve, and prevent alienation through mutual recognition of subjectivity in other self-consciousnesses. Through a combination of Beauvoir and Fanon's solutions for Otherness and alienation, we may have a remedy not just for present alienation but for the very attitudes (and, perhaps in time, the systems) that underpin sexism and racism, resulting in an intersectional approach to eventual equality. The existentialist solution requires the cooperation of both the dominant Subject (the white man) and the subservient Other (the woman; the Black man). The white man, who already has the privilege of subjectivity, must be willing to recognise the subjectivity of the Other; and Othered groups must assert their own subjecthood and refuse to see themselves (and each other) as merely relative beings. 'Accommodate me as I am', says Fanon; 'I'm not accommodating anyone' (*Ibid*., p. 110). And these are the words every Othered self-consciousness should speak and live out in order to demand the recognition that will allow them to regain their transcendence.

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Sinn, Spoilers, and R.L. Stevenson

James Ternent

Imagine you had never seen *The Usual Suspects*, and I were to say to you, 'Roger Kint is Keyser Söze'. You wouldn't much like that, would you? This essay explores why identity statements like these that seemingly *should be* tautological constitute a problem for Gottlob Frege's and Bertrand Russell's accounts of language by being 'cognitively significant'. Further, I consider two possible responses: Frege's sense/reference distinction, and Russell's view that '*x* is *y*' constitutes a nested descriptive phrase. I find that Frege offers a better account of why giving away such spoilers is so heinous a crime, because 'sense' (*Sinn*) better explains the subject's role in determining whether an identity statement actually is cognitively significant. I finally offer a comparison with Maurice Merleau-Ponty's account of bodily motricity, and argue that cognitive significance is reducible to a phenomenological understanding of 'habituation'.

Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) concludes with the revelation that Messrs Jekyll and Hyde were in fact the same person.[1] Though hinted at throughout – the pair share the same handwriting (Stevenson, 2006, p. 27) – this twist nonetheless constitutes a shock. The referral to Jekyll as 'Hyde' is, then, cognitively significant – significant enough, even, to kill Dr Lanyon. When we make identity statements like 'Jekyll is Hyde', we are referring to the same person, and yet the information conveyed differs in the respective terms 'Jekyll' and 'Hyde'.[2] There is apparently a difference between the identity statements 'A = A' and 'A = B'; the latter seems to yield more information about 'A' by claiming identity with another term 'B', while the former appears tautologically true, and doesn't tell us anything we don't already know. Discovering that Jekyll is the same person as Jekyll wouldn't kill Dr Lanyon, but discovering that he was Hyde *would* (and did; *Ibid.*, p. 30). In Frege's words 'the thought changes [...]. Anybody who did not know that [Jekyll] is [Hyde] might hold the one thought to be true, the other false' (1997*c*, p. 156).

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[1] Spoilers, again.
[2] Assuming we agree that Jekyll and Hyde *are* in fact the same person. See Richmond 2022.

How is this possible? When we say 'Jekyll is Hyde', to say that the two names mean exactly the same thing, and nothing more, seems trivial. We often want to gain more information from identity statements (e.g., that 'Hyde' tells me something new about the object Jekyll). But if something is identical with itself, regardless of what we call it, it doesn't seem as though we *should* be able to gain any more information about it by calling it something else. Frege hints at this; he suggests that when two points '*A*' and '*B*' coincide, we know that point *A* is point '*A*' 'immediately through intuition'. But to say that point *A* is also point *B* involves further thought to understand that the points are now identical. He explains, '[that] *the same content* is actually given by *two modes of determination* is the content of a *judgement*. Before this judgement can be made, two different names corresponding to the two modes of determination must be provided' (Frege, 1997*a*, §8). Relations of identity concern the names as opposed to the object – as Frege later says, 'a relation between them would be *asserted*' (1997*c*, p. 151, my italics) by the identity of the names. We 'assert' the relation between names by deciding that, though they refer to the same object, they differ in the way we are presented with this object.

But Frege later comes to hold that if relations concern names rather than objects – if we call Jekyll/Hyde 'Jekyll' or 'Hyde' simply *because* – we aren't expressing any real knowledge (1997*c*, p. 152). The claim that identity relations hold for an *object itself*, as opposed to the names thereof, seems to dispel the 'arbitrariness' of abstracting the meaning of the sentence from the subject matter itself, and thereby the arbitrariness of saying 'Jekyll = Hyde'. If meaning pertains only to the name, and not to the object, then identity relations are only concerned with 'the mode of designation', as opposed to the object itself (*Ibid.*). Resultantly, the only thing that 'mediates' the identity relation, and decides its truth or falsity, is whether the two names co-refer.

When we hold instead that identity relations concern the object, these relations are grounded properly in the object, as opposed to the way we randomly choose to think about it. But the question of where this cognitive significance actually comes from now becomes prescient. Even in his earlier work, Frege had suggested that the identity claim itself united the names with a single referent. Resultantly, multiple names for a singular referent are united by sharing this singular referent, but are 'connected with different

modes of determination' (Frege, 1997*a*, §8). This is important for Frege's concept of 'sense'. The mode of determination, and therefore the cognitive value of a name, is contained in its sense, which 'attaches' to the *Bedeutung* – the meaning of the name.[3] The *Bedeutung* is the sum of components within the uttering of a name, including the object, the person uttering it, the thought expressed and, crucially, the sense. The sense of a phrase is, according to Frege, neither subjective nor objective (1997*c*, p. 155). It is informed by the other factors – the thought, the object, and the subject – and contains the 'mode of presentation' of a name (*Ibid.*, p. 152).

What explains the difference between 'Jekyll' and 'Hyde' is not, then, the object (both terms refer to the same entity 'Jekyll/Hyde') nor is it the subjective understanding of the object (Dr Lanyon came to believe that Jekyll and Hyde were the same person). What differs is the sense: 'Hyde' carries a different sense to 'Jekyll' and thereby changes the mode of presentation. To illustrate: when one thinks of 'Mr Hyde', one thinks of a violent murderer, 'like some damned Juggernaut' (Stevenson, 2006, p. 7). Conversely, when we think of 'Dr Jekyll', we are presented with a respectable man who keeps the company of 'intelligent, reputable men' (*Ibid.*, p. 18). On Frege's view, the cognitive significance contained in learning that the two names share identity with the same referent comes from the differing senses of the names themselves. We are given a differing mode of presentation in the usage and adoption of each name, conveyed through the differing senses of each, and thereby subjectively form different ideas of 'Jekyll' and 'Hyde'.

As a result of the differing senses, however, the ideas formed by each subject can never completely converge. Given that my perception/understanding can never be the same as my friend's, the ideas we both form of 'Jekyll' never completely overlap; we possess slightly differing knowledge and cognitive capacities. Both the senses and the way we interact with them produce different impressions upon the listener which cannot ever entirely match. Though there are a certain number of senses which attach themselves to an object, Frege claims that 'we can never attain' complete comprehensive knowledge of the *Bedeutung* (1997*c*, p. 153).

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[3] This term is difficult to pin down, both in translation and as employed by Frege. The author hopes that the *Jekyll and Hyde* example given below will shed some more light on how this term should be interpreted. In the meantime, for more on the difficulty in deploying the term *Bedeutung*, see Beaney 1997: 36-46.

Russell, meanwhile, argues that identity statements are actually nested descriptions. This is based on his account of denoting phrases, précised by terms such as 'the' and 'some'. A denoting phrase can designate anything, be it particular (e.g., The killer of Danvers Carew), ambiguous (e.g., some damned juggernaut), or non-existent (e.g., the pirate who kidnaps Jekyll; Russell, 1905, p. 479). When, for Russell, we say a phrase like 'Jekyll is Hyde', we can substitute either of these names for a definite description. Both sides of the phrase 'Jekyll is Hyde' are performing a different function for Russell, in that they both stand for a description of the form 'the x', or 'some y'. Take for example Hyde's murder of Danvers Carew (Stevenson, 2006, pp. 20-1). On Russell's view, when I say 'Hyde', I am talking about the person who is also the killer of Danvers Carew. His argument thereby runs that in identity statements like 'Jekyll is Hyde' each name is shorthand for one of these descriptions, précised by a denoting phrase that picks out the/an/some object in the world to which the description applies. Hence, instead of 'Jekyll is Hyde', we can say 'Jekyll is the killer of Danvers Carew'. Russell himself claims that 'A proposition about Apollo means what we get by substituting what the classical dictionary tells us is meant by Apollo, say "the sun-god"' (1905, p. 491). By this, we can take any co-referring names and substitute a description for one of them, which henceforth acts to *replace* the direct identity statement given in, for example, 'Apollo is Phoebus'.

At present, it seems as though Russell is still missing something from his account. As it is, any descriptive term seems arbitrary – I can simply point to Hyde and claim 'This is the killer of Danvers Carew'. Even Russell's own example of Apollo seems to currently lack some designation of identity. To solve this, Russell sets out three rules to express identity between denoting phrases. Take the rules for the identity statement 'the F is G' as an example (Ludlow, 2022):

1. There must be one thing (F)
2. There must be no more than one such thing (the F)
3. And this thing must also be some other thing (The F is G).

According to these rules, we can see how the descriptions latch onto one another. It isn't simply the case that I can take the description 'The killer

of Danvers Carew' and arbitrarily assign it to 'Hyde'. Instead, there must be one and only one killer of Danvers Carew, and Hyde must be that killer. Or, to parse it out further, 'It is not always false of *x* that *x* killed Danvers Carew, it is always true of *y* that if *y* killed Danvers Carew *y* is identical with *x*, and Hyde is identical with *x*' (Russell, 1905, p. 488). This is where cognitive significance comes from for Russell: the description adds more information to the name – or rather to another description, since both names are connected to further descriptions, such as 'Hyde' being connected to 'The killer of Danvers Carew'. Since Jekyll and Hyde are the same person (see n. 2), Jekyll *also* killed Danvers Carew (Stevenson, 2006, p. 57). Hence, it is true of both Jekyll and Hyde that they killed Danvers Carew, and therefore the description 'The killer of Danvers Carew' unites the two by being a salient property in the use of both names.

This differs from Frege's theory by rejecting the subject-predicate format that Frege utilises. Frege would claim that 'Hyde is the killer of Danvers Carew' makes the name 'Hyde' the subject of the sentence, which fits into a 'concept' or predicate, such as '[ξ] is the killer of Danvers Carew' (Frege, 1997*b*, p. 140), and which can thereby be substituted at different 'occurrences' in a sentence (1997*a*, §9). Russell's analysis, meanwhile, asserts that the two terms 'Jekyll' and 'Hyde' stand for different descriptions. This means learning that Jekyll and Hyde are the same person is informative, because the terms have different descriptions, and that as a result the names cannot be substituted for one another. Russell can hence account for the informativeness of co-referring terms without needing to posit some extra *tertium quid* as Frege does in adopting the concept of Sense to bridge the gap between the statement and its reference.

Nonetheless, Frege's view is, I believe, a more promising account of why co-referring terms have differing cognitive significance. This is because Frege seems more able to account for the role of the subject in determining the cognitive significance of identity statements. I want to argue that the cognitive significance isn't a problem of meaning, as Russell has it, but of the interaction between the thought I form of a referent and the referent itself. When I hear 'Jekyll is Hyde' for the first time, and thereby learn that the two ostensibly different objects are in fact one and the same, this revelation is indeed cognitively significant. 'Jekyll' is presented in a different way to me by

its being given a different sense (i.e., by being uttered in identity with 'Hyde'). But when I hear it for a second time, it's no longer cognitively significant – or at least, less so. It seems that I am now in fuller possession of the fact that 'Jekyll' and 'Hyde' co-refer, and that I *can* unite them as tautologically true; I no longer feel as though I am learning something new or gaining new cognitive value from hearing the two names uttered in an identity relation.

Fregean sense successfully accommodates this example: the senses of 'Jekyll' and 'Hyde' have converged and thereby no longer have the same cognitive significance; in terms of the effect they have on me (aside from sounding different), the two names have now become tautological. When my friend and I talk about 'Jekyll equalling Hyde', though we still don't have *exactly* the same conception of the object, we both understand the one name as being in a relation of identity with the other, and the relation itself doesn't necessarily cause any cognitive 'upset' to either of us. Sense accounts for this by highlighting the need for a subject in order that such relations are cognitively significant in the first place, as attested to by the fact that when I think about Jekyll after learning that Jekyll and Hyde are the same person, I also think about Hyde. Though the mode of presentation differs, they are still united by both attaching to one object and *being attached* by the subject.

Parallels might here be drawn with the account of bodily motricity in Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*. Consider a woman instinctively avoiding any situation that would damage the feather in her hat. She doesn't do so having calculated each time whether a particular doorframe is too low to pass through without ducking, she simply ducks (Merleau-Ponty, 2014, p. 144). This is the result of 'habituation'; 'the power we have [...] of altering our existence through incorporating new instruments' (*Ibid.* p. 145). Habituation is similar to Fregean sense, as it allows the subject to grasp a better understanding of the 'instruments' around them, in this case the language expressing a certain identity-claim, which thereby make them more 'habituated' to its everyday use. When I hear that 'Jekyll is Hyde' for the first time, this revelation may open up other new information to me, other ways of interacting with the world in so uttering. It may never have occurred to me to say that Jekyll is the killer of Danvers Carew or to consider what consequences such a possibility might have for the rest of the tale. But, having once gained this information, when I later hear 'Jekyll is Hyde', I

instinctively consider Hyde's actions to be the actions of Jekyll, as when the woman begins to duck under doors to avoid damaging the feather in her hat.

The way in which I am acquainted with information is through motor action; I can only do so by means of my senses (seeing, hearing, etc.), and the physical processes that my body undertakes in order to facilitate these, whether I am conscious of my doing them or not. This motor action can, Merleau-Ponty would claim, be *drummed* into us, by virtue of our 'incorporating new instruments'. When I learn a new dance, he says, I 'catch' the movement (Merleau-Ponty, 2014, p. 144). That is, I latch onto the particular routine, and the actions it entails, such that I no longer need to think about the next move. Equally, when I come to understand the meaning of a co-referring expression, I 'catch' the significance that Jekyll's being Hyde seems to possess.

Sense takes the same form; it essentially *is* one of these instruments which we incorporate into our understanding of an expression. After all, 'Motricity is the primary sphere in which the sense of all significations is first given' (Merleau-Ponty, 2014, p. 143). Any understanding I have of an object, or its signification (i.e., the way it is presented to me), must be understood through my body and its existence as a motor subject. When my friend utters a statement, there is a progression of the signification, initially as audible soundwaves that I perceive by means of hearing, and my brain then processes such expressions by means of a schema of significations which I have become used to. Or, when she expresses a phrase in writing, the signification passes onto me by means of my seeing it through my eyes. As with all interactions with the world, the interaction I have with language and the significations it designates is done through various bodily apparatuses (speech and hearing, the written word and eyesight, for example). As such, any cognitive significance in co-referring expressions must come about through my interaction with the expression *as a motor subject*. Due to habituation, however, the expressions converge by coming to share the same sense, and I habituate myself with this cognitive significance, such that it no longer strikes me as odd. Thus, Fregean sense can be seen as a subcase of bodily motricity.

While Frege's view accounts for Merleau-Ponty's insight, that habituation makes us more attuned to the way we interact with the world

around us, both physically and linguistically, Russell seems less able to account for this process. If each name stands for a nested description, one cannot substitute co-referential terms. But if we have established the identity relation between two terms, it looks as though we should be able to come to think of them interchangeably and in tandem with one another, and they therefore should be substitutable. It intuitively seems that the more I hear or get used to the fact that Roger Kint is Keyser Söze, or that Jekyll is Hyde, the less shocking it should become. Cognitive significance should drop off at some stage for the subject who learns that Jekyll is Hyde as they become used to considering the two names as co-referential.

Russell might reply that his theory of descriptions applies to the *meaning* of the sentence, as opposed to its everyday usage. That is to say, his theory of descriptions doesn't account for the way we use language, but instead accounts for the semantic difference of the terms 'Jekyll' and 'Hyde'. But this neglects the way meaning changes as subject interacts with a phrase. The cognitive significance of 'Jekyll is Hyde' changes for me over time, in that, after a process of acclimatisation, I naturally associate the names with one another, and I interact with their meaning in a different way. On Russell's view, the cognitive significance of 'Jekyll is Hyde' cannot wane with use for the subject, whereas for Frege, because the subject further grasps the sense of the terms, this significance can diminish with use, and the meaning can thereby change.

If you've now got over the nasty shock from hearing for the first time that 'Roger Kint is Keyser Söze', your hearing it again should evoke a little less shock the second time round. I have therefore argued that Frege's sense is more promising in accounting for the cognitive difference between hearing 'Jekyll = Jekyll' and 'Jekyll = Hyde', thanks to the stress he places on understanding phrases as being an interaction between subject and object. Having outlined Frege's sense/reference distinction, in contrast to Russell's theory of descriptions, I find that Frege's is the more promising account because of its ability to account for the role the subject plays in analysing identity statements and differentiating tautological from cognitively significant identity relations. I have supported this with Merleau-Ponty's account of habituation, and have argued that coming to understand more fully (i.e. by learning more about the referent of a sentence) the sense, in

Fregean terms, of a co-referring expression is similar to a phenomenological account of learning more about one's relation to the wider world through one's bodily motricity, as when a woman ducks to avoid damaging the feather in her hat. Presented with the bare expression, there may be cognitive significance, such as when I drop a spoiler on you with no warning whatsoever, but upon habituating yourself to this state of affairs, this cognitive significance starts to vanish. If it hadn't killed him, this might well have been the case for poor Dr Lanyon too.

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Does Morality Originate in Reason Alone?

Jialiang Zhou

John Balguy and Samuel Clarke are two representative figures of the British Rationalism tradition. As rationalists, they assert that morality originates in reason alone. While David Hume, an empiricist, claims in his *Treatise of Human Nature* that morality does not. In this essay, I will argue that Hume has the more cogent position.

This essay has four parts. Part 1 summarizes the rationalists' position. Part 2 presents one of Hume's arguments against the rationalists: since reason alone cannot substantiate moral judgement, reason alone cannot be the only origin of morality. Part 3 formulates one potential response to Hume from the rationalists, challenging whether one of Hume's examples is apt. I formulate this response with inspirations from Samuel Clarke, another rationalist. Part 4 evaluates both positions and concludes. I argue that, despite both having their limitations in giving a full picture of morality, the one that the rationalists have is more fundamental.

1. Rationalists' Position

The rationalists hold that morality originates in reason alone. That is, reason alone is sufficient to substantiate moral judgements. Before establishing their argument, I will now develop three premises for the rationalists.

The rationalists' first premise is that moral truths are intrinsically *a priori* (Gill, 2007, p. 17), necessary, and immutable (Hill, 2013, p. 1), just like mathematical truths — this is just the way math and morality work by their nature, according to the rationalists. To develop this premise, compare the following math expression and moral statement:

$2 \times 4 = 8$
It is immoral to kill an innocent person.

Firstly, the rationalists would say that both are true *a priori*. To derive that the math expression is true, understanding how multiplication works and what equality means is enough. Similarly, to judge that the moral

statement is true, understanding what the sentence means is sufficient. For both, we see the truth without consulting experience; reason alone does the job. Secondly, both are necessarily true. It is inconceivable that $2 \times 4 = 8$ is not the case, or killing an innocent person is moral, in any possible world (Gill, 2007, p. 17). Thirdly, both statements are immutably true. Two times four always equals eight, and killing innocents is always immoral, everywhere. Finally, these three properties are intrinsic. If one property is missing, then math is no longer math, and neither is morality. These would explain how moral truths are intrinsically *a priori*, necessary, and immutable, just like mathematical truths.

Having their first premise developed, the rationalists proceed to their second one: the necessity and immutability of moral truth entails an everlasting *fitness* within them. To this, Clarke writes, '… from these different Relations of different things, there necessarily arises … a fitness or unfitness of the application of different things…' (1897, p. 3). Though Clarke is not clear about what fitness means, we may still approximate it by examining the commonality of math and morality. For the math expression, 2×4 always equals 8, and it is suitable and compliant to always relate '8' than any other number to 'the product of 2 and 4'. Correspondingly, killing an innocent person is always immoral, according to Clarke. Then it is not only always less suitable, but also incongruent, to judge killing innocents as moral. This commonality, then, has hopefully helped us conceive a coarse-grained impression of fitness.

After that, the rationalists develop their third premise: such fitness imposes on every rational agent an obligation to always conform to morality. This obligation substantiates moral judgement. For Balguy, the force of this obligation comes from the contradiction between moral reasoning and judgement of anyone who chooses not to conform to morality: 'To suppose reasonable Beings unconcerned with the Reasons of Things, is to suppose them reasonable and unreasonable at the same time' (1897, p. 76). If we can do basic maths, then we are forced to obtain 8 as the only correct product of 2×4, since obtaining any other product would clearly be incorrect, thereby denying our mathematical reasoning. Likewise, if we understand basic morality, then we are compelled to judge killing innocents as immoral, since to judge it as moral would, again, plainly deny our moral reasoning. This would then provide abiding force for rational agents to moral obligation,

which substantiates moral judgement — as rational beings, one cannot but conform to morality.

Once these three premises are developed, the rationalists can now establish their argument.

R1. Moral truths are intrinsically *a priori*, necessary, and immutable.
R2. Since moral truths are *a priori*, reason alone can discover them.
R3. Since moral truths are necessary and immutable, there is an eternal fitness within them.
R4. So, to morally rational agents, this fitness imposes an obligation to always conform to moral truths and substantiates moral judgement.
Conclusion. Since we derived this obligation by reason alone, reason alone substantiates moral judgements, and morality originates in reason alone.

2. Hume's Attack on Rationalists

In disagreement with the rationalists, Hume argues that reason cannot be the only origin of morality, since reason alone does not explain or substantiate moral judgement. To show this, Hume first asserts that we can only use reason in two ways: to derive *a priori* relations logically, or to infer matters of fact inductively. Then, he shows in turn that neither substantiates moral judgement. Finally, he concludes that since the only two types of reason cannot substantiate moral judgement, morality does not originate in reason alone.

First, Hume claims that reason can either be deductive or inductive (1978, T3.1.1.18). Reason is deductive when deriving *a priori* relations. For example, if $a = 2$ and $b = 2$, then we logically deduce that $a = b$, or 'a resembles b' (*Ibid.*, T3.1.1.19). Both Hume and the rationalists agree that we can discover this resemblance *a priori* using deductive reasoning alone. Additionally, Hume indicates that we could also use inductive reasoning. Reason is inductive when inferring matters of fact. For example, from the fact that I have seen the sunrise every day in my life, I inductively infer that the sun will rise tomorrow. These are the only two types of reasoning according to Hume. Now, Hume will show, respectively, that neither substantiates moral judgement alone.

On the one hand, Hume argues that deductive reasoning alone cannot substantiate moral judgement. He will show this by contradiction, assuming first that it can, and morality is both *a priori* and non-contingent. One implication of this is that if a predicate describes an immoral action and *a priori* resembles another, then a rational agent should contend that the other predicate also describes an immoral action (*Ibid.*, T3.1.1.24). Otherwise, morality is contingent, which contradicts the non-contingency assumption of morality. Since deductive reasoning alone cannot explain this, it alone cannot explain and substantiate moral judgement. Now, Hume suggests two predicates to consider.

P1. A human child kills their parents.
P2. A tree sapling grows and kills their parent tree nearby.

Predicate 1 clearly describes the immorality of the human. In addition, it resembles predicate 2, since both describe the offspring killing their progenitor. Then the rationalists should contend that both the human and the tree are immoral. However, Hume points out that while it may feel natural to condemn the human as immoral, we certainly feel strange when calling the tree immoral. So in this case, morality is contingent even for two actions that *a priori* resemble each other. We now have a contradiction against the non-contingency assumption of morality, and deductive reasoning alone cannot explain this contradiction. Therefore, deductive reasoning cannot substantiate moral judgement by itself.

On the other hand, Hume argues that inductive reasoning, too, cannot substantiate moral judgement alone. As explained above, we use inductive reasoning to infer matters of fact. But then Hume contends that morality, virtue and vice, are not within the domain of external matters of fact. Instead, they belong to our internal feelings. Therefore, we cannot make moral judgements based on matters of fact alone. To see this, consider the following scenario.

Bob was sitting on the street shivering on a snowy day. Alice walked by and saw Bob, then took off her only jacket and wrapped it around Bob's shoulders. Then, Bob spat on Alice's face, and Alice ran away in tears and cried every night that week.

Bob's ingratitude is vicious. A witness, who tries to show us this, may first tell the story verbatim. However, the story is only descriptive, and contains only matters of fact. So upon closer look, we discover that no part of the story is equivalent to Bob's vice itself. The vice is not in the snowy weather, the wrapping of the jacket, and not even in the spitting. Otherwise, whenever it snows, someone wraps a jacket, or spits, we may call the weather, the wrapper or the spitter vicious and immoral, which is absurd. Since the witness failed their first try, they may give another go: 'I *feel* so bad for Alice, she's such a kind person! It's really vicious of Bob to do such a thing to Alice.'

The witness finally shows us Bob's vice. But, the vice is substantiated by their feelings — regret towards Alice, and disgust towards Bob, not matters of fact that are inferable from inductive reasoning. Since we cannot infer moral status from inductive reasoning alone, it too cannot substantiate moral judgement. Hume writes, 'The vice entirely escapes you, as long as you consider the object. You never can find it, till you turn ... into your own breast, and find a sentiment ... towards this action' (Hume, 1978, T3.1.1.26).

Since the only two types of reasoning, deductive and inductive, cannot substantiate moral judgement alone, Hume concludes that reason cannot be the only origin of moral judgement. I now summarize his argument against the rationalists:

H1. Reason is either deductive or inductive.
H2. Deductive reasoning alone cannot substantiate moral judgement.
H3. Neither can inductive reasoning.
Conclusion. Therefore, reason alone cannot substantiate moral judgement, and morality does not originate in reason alone.

3. Rationalists' Response to Hume

In response to Hume, the rationalists may attack his example for H2, which was about humans and trees killing their parents. They debunk Hume's claim that if two actions formally resemble each other, then they should have the same moral value. Instead, they claim that just because two actions formally resemble each other does not necessarily mean that they have the same moral value. They then insist that we can actually find out that the human is indeed immoral and the tree is indeed not, using deductive

reasoning alone. If we end up having different moral judgements towards each, we would be right, and this is in accordance with reason. So the rationalists believe that deductive reasoning alone can still explain this difference in moral judgement. Then, according to the rationalists, Hume fails to show that deductive reasoning alone cannot substantiate moral judgement, and fails to show that H2 is true.

The rationalists may use the following math example. Consider the following two equations:

$$2 \times 4 = 4 \times 2$$

$$[1 \quad 0] \times \begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ 0 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ 0 \end{bmatrix} \times [1 \quad 0]$$

Since both equations have the same formal structure of $a \times b = b \times a$, they supposedly resemble each other. Using deductive reasoning alone, we derive that the top equation involving integers is true under the commutative property of multiplication, which is a mathematical principle. So according to Hume, the equation involving matrices should also be true under the same mathematical principle. Otherwise, this mathematical principle is contingent, and deductive reasoning alone cannot explain this contingency. Hume would then falsely conclude that deductive reasoning alone cannot substantiate our math derivation and that we do not do math using deductive reasoning alone. But in fact, only the top equation is true, and the commutative property is indeed contingent upon whether the multiplicands are integers or matrices: $2 \times 4 = 4 \times 2 = 8$, but $[1 \quad 0] \times \begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ 0 \end{bmatrix} = [1]$ while $\begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ 0 \end{bmatrix} \times [1 \quad 0] = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$. So, contrary to Hume, deductive reasoning alone can explain this contingency. Hume would then fail to show that deductive reasoning alone cannot substantiate our math derivation.

Now, the rationalists return to Hume's example for H2. Since both the human and the tree kill their progenitors, the killings supposedly resemble each other. Using deductive reasoning alone, we judge that the human is immoral under this moral principle, that child ought not kill parent. So according to Hume, if we do not judge the tree immoral under the same principle, then morality is contingent and deductive reasoning alone cannot explain this contingency. Whereas, more intuitively, while the human is immoral, the tree is not, and this moral principle is indeed contingent upon

whether it concerns humans or trees. The rationalists now argue that deductive reasoning alone can still explain this contingency, and Hume is wrong. First, they assume that we understand what it means to be human, tree, immoral, and to kill one's parent. Being a human intrinsically means being able to act voluntarily; being a tree, not being able to. If an action is immoral, then it must also be voluntary. And voluntarily killing one's parent is intrinsically immoral. If we understand these terms, then we can judge *a priori* that the human is immoral and the tree is not, using deductive reasoning alone. Since the tree's killing is involuntary, it does not pertain to morality. So, the tree's killing is neither moral nor immoral, which necessarily means that the tree's killing is not immoral. Therefore, Hume fails to show that morality does not originate in reason alone.

4. Evaluation and Conclusion

Despite the rationalists' response to Hume, Hume still has the more cogent position. This is because Hume can still viably challenge the rationalists, regardless of whether they are right about making moral judgements with deductive reasoning alone. This inevitably exposes a critical limitation for the rationalists: their over-reliance on mathematics makes their position tautological, void, and neglectful of a major part of our morality.

If the rationalists cannot make moral judgement using reason alone, then that invalidates their argument right away. But if they still insist on making moral judgements with reason alone, then they would achieve nothing but to judge the truth of meaningless tautologies that merely contain moral terms. A tautology has the form 'p is p'. Obviously true. If p is intrinsically q, then the statement 'p is q' is a tautology. Correspondingly, if voluntarily killing one's progenitor is intrinsically immoral, then the rationalists achieve nothing but judge, albeit using reason alone, that immoral actions are immoral. This tautological judgement is meaningless and still cannot substantiate morality. If reason alone could only yield such empty moral judgements, then morality still cannot originate in reason alone. This reveals that, by over-focusing on how morality is analogous to mathematics, the rationalists neglect a significant aspect of morality: our sentiment towards it. We certainly care much more about whether an action is moral than whether a tautology is true.

However, Hume's position, too, is missing another key aspect of morality: rigidity. For Humean moral agents, they risk weighing their sentiment over reason more than they should. When they do, they may not follow certain reasonable moral obligations, such as obeying criminal laws, when they do not feel like it. Whereas the rationalists capture this rigidity well: it seems that certain reasonable moral obligations do not easily change just because people's feelings do, just like how $2 + 2$ does not equal 5 even if one feels like it does.

Weighing the limitations of both views, the ones that the rationalists' have seem more fundamental. Even if they successfully showed that morality originates in reason alone, it would suggest that morality ultimately lacks content; a disappointing result. Then, in improving people's moral judgement-making, it seems that Hume's view is more helpful than the rationalists'. This makes Hume's position sound more convincing than the rationalists' one. Thus, in conclusion, I maintain that morality does not originate in reason alone.

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Freedom or Morality: Is It Racist to Have Race-based Sexual or Romantic Preferences?

Valena M. C. Reich

Sexual and romantic preferences are part of the private sphere, and it is thus often left for individuals to judge for themselves what they deem to be right or wrong, without necessarily consulting other perspectives than their own. However, actions that are classified as 'racist' can have an impact which not only is considerable in the private sphere but also goes well beyond it, affecting society as a whole. This paper will contribute to the debate of whether having race-based sexual or romantic preferences is a case of freedom, or morality *tout court*.[4]

Ideally, this paper would be irrelevant, if we lived in a world where the social construction of races did not exist, and hence, nobody would have race-based sexual or romantic preferences. Since we have not reached that state yet, this paper starts from a position where such preferences are still the norm and aims to dismantle the available arguments that support it.

I will begin by providing a definition for racist acts (requirements (R1) and (R2)) and race-based sexual or romantic preferences. In Section I, I will be using Robin Zheng's Mere Preferences Argument (2016) which she uses to depict the generally adopted view on the matter. To reject this argument, I will present two replies to its second premise, which are founded on the work of Zheng. In Section II, I will introduce the Harm Reply, providing a justification for qualifying such preferences as (generally) racist, thereby fulfilling the first requirement (R1) for an action to be considered racist. As a critique of the Harm Reply, I will consider three objections from Stephen Kershnar (2018) and provide the replies. Section III will contain the Discrimination Reply, qualifying race-based sexual or romantic preferences as racist, according with the second requirement (R2); I will consider its strongest counterargument, raised by Raja Halwani (2017), which I will refer

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[4] This paper was written as part of the Philosophy of Race module at King's College London (2023), lectured by Dr Alexander Franklin, along with Chiara Zucchelli. The paper does not suppose what individuals involved in exclusion or fetishism dating are personally experiencing.

to as the Enjoyment Probability Counterargument. I will reject this counterargument due to the presence of social meaning. As both requirements (R1) and (R2) of a racist act will be met, I present the Racist Preferences Argument (Section IV), and how it survives the Freedom Objection. I will conclude that it *is* racist to have race-based sexual or romantic preferences.

I am not going to evaluate whether a person is classified as an 'overall racist' (Halwani, 2017, p. 193). The aim of this paper is to provide arguments for qualifying race-based sexual or romantic preferences as racist and thereby justify avoiding such preferences, especially when they create an exclusionary dating pool. Megan Mitchell and Mark Wells (2018) refer to racially exclusive dating pools when a person either *rejects* (and) or *solely focuses* on potential sexual or romantic candidates from a specific race group. To differentiate both instances, I will refer to the former as 'discrimination dating' and the latter as 'fetishism dating'. Discrimination dating can, for example, be represented by white individuals excluding Black individuals from their dating pool. Fetishism dating can be found, for instance, as white individuals having a unique preference for Asian individuals. According to the phenomenon of 'yellow fever', such white individuals 'resort' to Asian women, the 'easier' and 'inferior' targets, because they are unable to attract another white individual (Zheng, 2016, pp. 411-412). It is important to note that 'preferences' might have a positive connotation, but the word will be used to denote dislikes too (cf. discrimination dating). For instance, I have a strong preference for tea with milk, I slightly less enjoy tea without milk, and prefer not to have milk on its own. Preferences do not have to be logical and are likely affected by (potentially racist) social norms and past experiences.
An act is considered racist if it fulfils the following two requirements:

R1. It causes harm to the targeted racial group and
R2. It is part of or reinforces an established social structure of racial oppression.

The second condition therefore insists on the significance of the action, which cannot be merely interpreted as a single instance by the actor but

should be understood as part of the larger cultural context. For this paper, I specify that an act does not need to be intentional in order to be called racist (see Haslanger, 2015). I will therefore not focus on analysing a person's level of acceptance of racial stereotypes or the moral meaning of having implicit preferences. Moreover, it will not matter *how* the belief about a racial group arose, only the *effects* being correlated with the empirically proven negative consequences of having those beliefs will matter (see Chou, 2022; Zheng, 2016). Lastly, I will assume that qualifying an act as 'racist' means that the act is also morally wrong.

1. The Mere Preferences Argument

The Mere Preferences Argument (Zheng, 2016, p. 402) goes as follows:

P1. There is nothing morally objectionable about sexual preferences for hair colour, eye colour, and other nonracialized phenotypic traits.
P2. Preferences for racialized physical traits are no different from preferences for nonracialized phenotypic traits.
Therefore,
C. 'Mere' preferences for racialized phenotypic traits are not morally objectionable.

Zheng provides this argument to represent the general attitude behind the justification of having racial preferences for sexual or romantic partners. She claims one could indeed defeat the argument by rejecting the first premise (p. 404) but focuses on rejecting the second premise as it relates more closely to the debate at hand. I select two responses to do so: the Harm Reply and the Discrimination Reply.

2. The Harm Reply

Zheng provides the following reason to justify qualifying race-based sexual or romantic preferences as morally wrong due to the harm they cause (p. 407).

H. Race based romantic preferences, or the actions they motivate, harm the respective racial group.[5]

The main types of harm involved are the emotional labour of trying to fulfil stereotypes of one's racial group (Zheng), sexual harassment (Chou), depersonalization involved in being reduced to a 'type' (Zheng), otherization in being held to a different standard (Zheng), and a decreased welfare level due to lower sexual wellbeing and self-confidence (Abbate, 2022; Bedi, 2022). Note that Zheng does not claim that all instances of Asian romantic preference and the action it motivates *necessarily* produce harm, they generally do.[6] In order to assess the rejection of the second premise of the Mere Preferences Argument, based on Harm, I will consider three of Kershnar's objections from his paper 'In Defense of Asian Romantic Preference' (p. 248).

First, Kershnar questions (H) by stating that it is 'unclear' if the cost of fetishism dating outweighs its benefit. He alludes to the harms, being negligible compared to the overall benefit a racial group such as Asian women would receive, in sexual encounters or relationships with White men. However, this critique is far from showing that (H) is false. Kerhsnar's objection aims to question things on a consequentialist level, suggesting the involved harm is worth the sacrifice for the overall good consequence that affects one or both parties of the sexual desire.

Nevertheless, even according to consequentialist reasoning, it would be morally wrong not to seek the most optimal consequences, by avoiding the harms involved. Preventing the resulting harms may be challenging, but not impossible. It could require various measures such as questioning one's race-based preferences, communication from the persons involved to express their desire in a non-racial way, etc. This first objection therefore does not work in undermining the first premise of the Harm Reply. At best, it can be used to justify measures to avoid the involved harms.

A second objection further challenges (H) on the lines that it is unclear who is the subject of harm resulting from fetishism dating. Kershnar claims

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[5] Based on the first premise of what Kershnar calls Zheng's 'Harm Argument' (p. 248).
[6] I am not considering Kershnar's 5th objection (p. 248), insisting on the fact that race-based preferences do not always produce harm, since it is undermined by the evidence Zheng provides and Kershnar, on the other hand, provides none to support his view.

that in that case, the racial group that is fetishized *or* their competitors might be harmed. Indeed, Zheng for instance fails to mention the harm competitors might face due to exclusionary preferences. For instance, Black individuals might not be considered as 'adequate' or 'satisfying' sexual partners when Asians are being fetishized. Again, this objection could bring the debate further, but would not undermine the Harm Reply. There remains no hesitation on whether there are subjects of harm, which can be the fetishized racial group *and* their competitors simultaneously.

The third objection I consider tries to undermine (H) based on the correlation between harm and wrongness. Kershnar states that 'by itself, harm does not make an act wrong' (p. 248).

As empirically justified by Zheng and Elaine Chou, harm is a product of such exclusionary racial preferences. Both argue that this type of harm *does* entail wrongness because it sustains a system of racial preferences, thereby supporting racial inequalities.

Kershnar takes the point further by arguing that harm can often be considered in a positive way, just as a painful medical procedure would be useful for a better outcome of health, and therefore does not justify the immediate 'jump' to qualifying such harms as wrong. Nevertheless, the harm at hand resulting from discrimination or fetishism dating is not used for a future, better, outcome. The owners of such racial sexual preferences do not possess them to sustain better future outcomes, they are merely (innocently or not) fulfilling their desires. Even if they did have these preferences with that aim in mind, it would thereby reduce the subject of their desire to a mere means to an end (Mitchell & Wells, p. 949).

Additionally, subjects of such sexual interactions are often unaware of the reason behind their discomfort and therefore convince themselves to ignore it (Chou; Zheng, p. 404). This concept is known as 'hermeneutical injustice', describing a person's 'inability to make sense of their own experiences due to marginalization from the collective framework of understanding ... due to a colour-blind ideology that centres White experience and ignores racial dynamics salient from other points of view' (Zheng, p. 404). This results in a potential underestimation of the actual harms which are being experienced. The Harm Reply (H) thus remains unshaken.

3. The Discrimination Reply

This section will look at the Discrimination Reply, providing justification for racial sexual preferences as meeting the second requirement (R2) of a racist act.[7] The Discrimination Reply is inspired by the works of Mitchell and Wells (2018, p. 953) and Abbate (2022, p. 430):

D1. Having race-based sexual or romantic preferences qualifies the targeted racial group as inferior in terms of 'dating material'.

D2. This negative judgement thereby further reinforces social racial inequalities based on stereotypes.

The first premise aligns with the view that discrimination or fetishism dating essentially categorises the targeted racial groups as inferior, because they should not be dated, or should only be dated by unsuccessful individuals of the racially 'dominant' group. (D1) already provides support for the second requirement (R2) to categorise an action as racist. The first premise can also be used to explain why having a preference for individuals with a Scandinavian appearance is fundamentally different from having a preference for individuals with an Asian appearance. The former has an entirely different cultural significance, with a history of representing racially dominant individuals compared to the latter with a history of individuals of racial inferiority (for instance, Asian women having a past of being sold as brides or sex workers to White men).

The second premise alludes to the harmful stereotypes that motivate exclusionary dating and aligns with Zheng's reasoning: she states that 'individuals' racial fetishes always depend on racial stereotypes rather than pure aesthetic features' (p. 405). The source of such preferences cannot be innocently reduced to aesthetic preferences as they are tainted with racial stereotypes, which reinforce racial disparities in society. For example, if White women would avoid Black men because they are stereotypically considered as aggressive and not elegant, or if sexually unsuccessful White men would express a preference for Asian women due to them being stereotypically described as submissive and sexual. Knowing where such

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[7] The phenomenon of 'otherization' also provides further support for requirement (R2). It asserts that subjects of racial sexual preferences are 'separated and held to a different standard' (Zheng, p. 408) than those of other racial groups, especially the standard of the 'superior' racial group.

race-based preferences come from is crucial in determining whether they are racist or morally acceptable.

Overall, the disrespect involved in (D1) carries a deeper meaning of characterising the targeted racial group as 'dysfunctional' human beings (not classified as 'dating material'). This inability to participate in human sexual or romantic relationships with racially 'superior' individuals, has a direct effect on racial inequality on the societal level (D2).

I will now consider what I deem to be the strongest counterargument to the Discrimination Reply: the Enjoyment Probability Counterargument. This counterargument is based on Halwani's claim that increasing the probability of success of sexual or romantic enjoyment is not wrong (p. 185). He explains that human beings tend to rely on preferences, which one could also describe as patterns for success, to achieve a desired goal. Supposedly, we thus increase our enjoyment probability by acting in line with our sexual preferences based on race. Let's illustrate this with the following example of a person's choices in cars, according to their colour preferences, in the three contrasting cases:

A. I dislike yellow cars and will always choose a different coloured car.
B. I only like yellow cars and will never consider using any different coloured car.
C. If I have a choice between a yellow, red, or blue car, I always have the following preference: yellow > blue > red.

Case (A) represents discrimination dating and case (B) represents fetishism dating. As I have argued in this paper, both are harmful and discriminatory. What about the third case? There is nothing morally wrong with such preferences regarding the colour of a car. However, consider the parallel hypothetical case for skin colour in dating preferences: when a person X has a choice between a person of White, Black, or Asian type, X always has the following preference: White > Asian > Black. As opposed to the colour of a car, the skin type of a person holds social meaning. It will matter to which racial group X belongs and the status that group and the other involved racial groups have. The moral permissibility of an action is thus context-dependent, with regard to the socio-political racial hierarchies.

The context reflects how a racial group is perceived by society, has access to opportunities, etc. Therefore, there will not be a clear-cut general rule to determine the moral status of such non-exclusionary racial dating preferences. In short, one ought to ask oneself: 'Is my preference reinforcing a pre-existing racial hierarchy?'

The Enjoyment Probability Counterargument thus ends up representing a one-sided perspective (of those who enjoy, not those who are experiencing harm) and does not hold much weight when faced with the overall possible harms and discrimination that might arise from it. The counterargument could simply be showcasing ignorance, which might provide further support to raise awareness of diversified perspectives, especially of those from minorities.

4. The Racist Preferences Argument

In line with the two requirements for an action to be considered racist (see Introduction), I suggest the following Racist Preferences Argument:

P1. If an act causes harm to the targeted racial group (R1) and is part of or reinforces an established social structure of racial oppression (R2), then it is racist.
P2. Race-based sexual or romantic preferences meet condition (R1).
P3. Race-based sexual or romantic preferences meet condition (R2).
Therefore,
C. Having race-based sexual or romantic preferences is racist.

(P2) was demonstrated in Section II with the Harm Reply and (P3) was established in Section III with the Discrimination Reply. I assess a final objection, targeting the conclusion of this argument, based on our freedom of acting according to our personal sexual desires: the Freedom Objection. Kershnar argues that race-based sexual or romantic preferences are not morally wrong if they are constituted by a desire, and desires are not under our control.

Nonetheless, this remains a question of responsibility. Consider Abbate's counterexample to the Freedom Objection: 'sexual[ly] assaulting children is not morally defensible just because the assaulter was acting on a personal preference he couldn't control *having*' (p. 424). Even if we are not

fully able to control our desires, they can still shape actions which can be unintentionally racist, resulting in harm we ought to avoid. Taking responsibility for our desires can be done in various ways, such as retraining or at least questioning our biases and preferences and providing clear communication of (non-race-based) intentions to the subject of our desires.

5. Conclusion

The Mere Preference Argument does not hold, due to the Harm Reply and the Discrimination Reply to its second premise. The Harm Reply survived the three selected objections from Kershnar, thereby meeting the first requirement (R1) of a racist action. Furthermore, the Discrimination Reply also overcame the Enjoyment Probability Counterargument for reasons of the presence of social meaning, providing support for the second requirement (R2). Since both requirements are met, the Racist Preferences Argument is valid and provides a response to the Freedom Objection. This paper demonstrated that it *is* racist to have race-based sexual or romantic preferences, *at least* when those shape an exclusionary dating pool due to discrimination or fetishism dating.

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Heidegger's Ecstasis—a Shortcut to the Existential Problem

Liya Zou

Understanding Heidegger's being as Da-sein, or 'being-in-the-world' involves comprehending its temporal-spatial relationship with tools. This temporal movement that encompasses the past, present, and future is an interconnected structure, where human beings stand outside of each horizon while simultaneously interrelating with them (1973, p. 377). This structure, known as ecstatic temporality, defines the being's existence. The paper, therefore, aims to challenge Heidegger's ontological foundation of being, that is, the ecstatic temporality. To do this, the paper concerns two interlinked arguments. One argument articulates that Heidegger's ecstasis is a common-sense bias of temporal structure. I suggest using the brain-in-a-vat (BIV) thought experiment to illustrate that Heidegger's concept of ecstasis simplifies the existential dilemma by establishing a dual relationship as the foundation of being's ontological connection with objects. BIV suspends the continuous and stable past/future worldhold of being, revealing that Dasein becomes the present-at-hand entity in an instable world. The second argument discusses a possible solution in addressing Heidegger's temporality provided by Levinas. The paper will evaluate why Levinas' concept of the absolute existence of the Other avoids the BIV criticism. On the other hand, I will assess that Levinas's infinite temporality within the absolute existence may potentially become self-limiting due to its emphasis on the Other.

1. Existence—What Does It Mean for Heidegger?

The essential problem 'What is Dasein?', or 'What is the meaning of *to exist*?' can arise from a simple question, 'What do we mean when we say 'there is a chair'?' The phrase 'there is a chair' seemingly illustrates an interdependent relationship among three elements: the inquiring subject, the material object (in this case, the chair), and the contextual framework within which the subject poses the inquiry. Nonetheless, Heidegger's intention is to examine the very act of inquiry itself, that is to say, the *a priori*

ontology that underpins and enables such inquiries to occur (1973, p. 31). The emphasis is placed on the underlying structure that presupposes the human being's experience, such as the understanding of the chair, of the intended entity (in this case, the chair). This task therefore falls into the examination of the inquiring subject in its mode of being, which differentiates other beings as entities from its existential Being and whose 'ontologies themselves [...] are prior to the ontical sciences and [...] provide their foundations' (1973, p. 33). The chair reveals itself in its unique mode to human existence, while human existence has already manifested itself in its access to the chair (1973, p. 81). This distinctive Being of human existence is termed *Dasein*, which can be translated to 'there-being' (Da-sein). It implies an ontological horizon where the 'Understanding of Being is itself a definite characteristic of Dasein's Being' (1973, p. 32). Thus, Dasein is an *a priori* structure that makes the human being's implicit understanding of entities possible. Take an example, when we observe a wooden chair and assert 'the chair is wooden', our understanding moves beyond mere materialistic notions like 'chair' and 'wood'. The chair's attributes come to life through its interaction with humans, that is to say, we are confirming the existence of an entity that shapes our experience and constitutes our comprehension of the world (Davies & Stapleton, 2014). We encounter attributes like durability, solidity, and comfortability, these attributes find their basis through the openness of Dasein, rather than the inherent and independent qualities of the chair (Christian, 2000, p. 43).

Heidegger asserts that in our lived experience of the world, we come across entities as objects that serve a purpose or function, which are often referred to as *equipment* (1973, p. 97). The equipment reveals itself through its manipulability for human beings. Material objects acquire the significance of '*being-for*' through practical human action, so to speak, objects are perceived as tools *for* a specific purpose and are immediately related to that purpose in order to immerse in the ontological context with humans (Schmitt, 1965). Heidegger categorises this distinctiveness of the tool's being as 'ready-to-hand'. The readiness of objects signifies that material objects acquire the significance of '*being-for*,' that is to say, objects are perceived as tools 'for' a specific purpose and are immediately related to that purpose in order to immerse in the ontological context with humans (*Ibid.*). When tools or equipment like hammers are used, activities such as

holding and hammering will shape the relationship between the human and the object. When we see a hammer, we anticipate using it to strengthen nails or hammer iron on an anvil. During the act of hammering, the worker's sophisticated technique enables the worker and the tool to become so integrated that the worker does not notice his own existence is something different from the existence of the hammer. The hammer essentially becomes a 'part' of the human in this action and ceases to be merely a physical object with observable attributes.

Conversely, if the tool loses its functionality, it will shift from being 'ready-to-hand' to 'present-at-hand' (1973, pp. 82-83). According to Heidegger, the present-at-hand represents a theoretical state of objects that can only manifest after the ready-to-hand experience with tools (Tanzer, 1998, p. 98). It signifies that these pieces of substance have no ontological relation in the world of being and are exempt from the equiprimordial understanding in the first place. For example, if the hammer breaks and its parts become separated, at that moment, the worker suddenly realizes that the hammer is merely a combination of two pieces of material. The broken hammer loses its ontological connection with Dasein since it no longer carries human-derived meaning and no longer contributes to the immediate human experience.

2. What Is Ecstasis?

Heidegger presented the argument of temporality, through which the equiprimordial Dasein is delimited (Luchte, 2008, p. 15). For Heidegger, Dasein's temporality is described as ecstatic, signifying 'to stand outside', implies the subject's inner self extends into the external world, resulting in Dasein's existence extending beyond its immediate self (1973, p. 377). This ecstatic structure, which inherently embodies the concept of 'being the unity of the outside-of-itself,' cannot be ascribed to mere sequential and linear time. Imagine a worker unintentionally tossing a hammer into the air, causing it to eventually plummet to the ground. At the exact moment of impact, the hammer separates into its constituent parts—the wooden handle and metallic head. The projection of the hammer embodies a temporal unity of its own being. Dasein is in the world with tools for it can be equiprimordially temporalised in the present as a unity. Its past is determined by the worker's initial act of throwing, establishing the

unchangeable fact that the hammer has been launched into the air. The future, interconnected with the past, arises from the past and anticipates the hammer's impending state—falling to the ground. Meanwhile, in the present, i.e., when the hammer is in the air, the presence temporalises itself out of its past and future, yet it has not fully realised its potential. The hammer is temporalised by Dasein's observation in the present, therefore 'the world is already presupposed in one's Being alongside the ready-to-hand concernfully and factically' (1973, p. 417). The temporalised presence is perpetually projecting toward the future while returning to its past self, as each appearance reaffirms Dasein's identity. The cumulative experience of the past ecstasis constitutes Dasein's present ecstasis and continually presupposes the futural ecstasis. Consequently, Dasein withdraws from temporal entanglements, maintaining a distance from each horizontal schema while uniting each one. Therefore, Dasein undergoes a process of becoming, directed towards its own future, which is shaped by what it has been.

The tripartite structure of temporality uniquely binds Dasein through the mood of 'care' (*Sorge*). This mood signifies that human existence is inherently concerned with the future 'to be,' the past 'having-been,' and the present 'not yet been' (Naimo, 2014). The three temporal horizons correlate and cooperate to unify existence under the mood of care (Polt, 2011, p. 71). Dasein, embedded in this temporal flow, finds itself has already been 'thrown into the world' while projecting itself into potential futures (Heidegger, 1973, p. 279). By discovering this thrownness and projection, the being who exists for its own purpose cares about its future possibilities. The care is the 'ahead-of-itself [...] which, as a potentiality-for-Being for Dasein itself, has not yet become "actual"' (*Ibid.*, p. 279). The ecstatic temporality is culminated as care 'as a process of temporalizing in the unity of the ecstases' (*Ibid.*, p. 377). Consequently, ecstasis can be primarily summarised by two characteristics: 1) ecstasis is the unity of being's engagement in the world, which is embodied through the mood of care. 2) ecstasis is not 'an entity which first emerges from itself' instead, it is always already outside of itself and ready-to-hand.

3. 'Brain in a Vat' in Ecstatic Temporality

While Heidegger proposes an ecstatic temporality to reconfigure the transcendental dimension of beings and the world, he overlooked the paradox inherent within the ecstatic temporality. This paradox involves the independence of the ecstatico-horizontal ontology from Dasein's existence and the dependence of Dasein's existence on ecstatic temporality. Arguably, I contend that this paradox can be illustrated through a thought experiment known as the 'brain in a vat' (BIV). The BIV questions the ontology of being while avoiding the idealistic suspicion of the external world that Heidegger opposed in Division One, section 43 (a).

Hilary Putnam (1981) introduced a scenario in which a human brain is placed in a vat filled with nutrient liquid and connected to a supercomputer via electrodes and wires. The computer sends signals and stimuli, creating lifelike experiences for the brain, making it believe it is in the real world. For instance, the computer can send electronic impulses to nerves to simulate actions like walking, eating, and drinking. The brain responds accordingly, experiencing these activities in a manner indistinguishable from the activities that the people in the external physical world will do. Within this interaction, every engagement with a tool encompasses past, future, and present moments. Over time, the simulated subject regards the simulated experience as authentic and genuine without any doubts. The system creates a 'subjective experience' that is independent of the physical presence of an actual human being.

As the wires and the computer naturally deteriorate over time, the brain inside the vat will eventually lose its hallucinatory experience, leading to the cessation of its biological functions. The mimetic subjective experience will gradually detach from its simulated representation, resulting in the diminishment of the being's cognitions and substantial entities, one by one. The question at hand is: Will the simulated human being, who is gradually diminished with the world by an unknown force, still perceive itself as a distinctive entity where ecstatic temporality occurs? I posit the answer to be No. In this scenario, the brain as the animated organ is experiencing the change in time caused by the degradation of wires and the computer in the laboratory. The simulated 'Being', who experiences the decay of the 'world', immediately notices the collapse does not originate from itself but from some external forces to the world, thereby this external force goes

beyond Dasein's *a priori* understanding of the 'Being'. This temporality stands in isolation from the 'Being', as the imprisoned 'Being' finds itself in a passive state of temporal observation. It remains incapable of self-disclosure to the authentic world through its ecstatico-horizontal unity and is deprived of the capacity to compare itself with other entities, thereby impeding its quest for a distinctive identity and ontological understanding of the world.

To present the paradox in a clearer manner, a slight adjustment can be made to the experiment. Imagine that the brain of the experimental subject remains within the head, yet is still controlled by electronic wires and the computer. These wires, connected to a computer system, simulate the brain activities of subjects by transmitting signals that create an illusionary environment for them. The machine eventually degrades day by day, resulting in the deactivation of the computer and the subsequent deterioration and cessation of functioning of all the equipment that had been sustaining the subjects' bodies. This abrupt disruption wakes up the subject from their unconscious state and brings her into her physical existence.

Establishing the primordial temporality in Dasein's existence, as Heidegger does, raises a challenge in imagining the origin of temporality once machinery starts to degrade. While the experimental subject regains perception and finds herself in an entirely unfamiliar and unknown spatial-temporal reality, the presence of the computer and the wires, which previously dominated her brain, becomes apparent to the being. The conscious Being is passively confronted with a temporal rupture caused by a set of deteriorating machines. This abrupt exposure of the Being to the present, devoid of any tangible past or potential future, leads to a lack of understanding regarding its own factual existence. During this process, being itself becomes the present-at-hand within the world. The equipment though has provided an ontological context for the subject, it did not establish a connection with the body's being-in-the-world, and further did not provide a sufficient condition for the being's entrance into the world. Facing this radical rupture with the world, a question emerges: Can human beings continue to temporalise themselves without the ontological connection with objects? In simpler terms, can the subject *care* about its existence in a temporal space that she has never experienced before? I believe the answer is no.

Our understanding of the transcendental world and our encounter with tools are constructed upon a common-sense ontology that assumes an ecstatic temporality is imbued in Dasein. The *a priori* world is presupposed by Heidegger to be stable for Dasein's immersion and absorption with tools. As demonstrated in the BIV case, all existence and ecstasies are ontologically conditional. Ecstasis cannot manifest in a being characterised by a discontinuous ontology or no ontology altogether, otherwise, it can be disconnected from Dasein's experience. In an ontological rupture, Dasein ends up coming to recognise itself as the present-at-hand while holding the belief that only the material objective world pertains to the ecstatic temporality. As a result, temporality appears to be oriented towards the reality of tools and equipment rather than focusing on the present-at-hand human being. Heidegger's theory of time assumes a fixed ontological framework for comprehending the *a priori* state of beings, whereas the assumption becomes untenable when confronted with the possible ontological fissure. He places great emphasis on how the ecstatic temporality acts as the horizon for conscious Dasein to unfold its existence inseparably with tools, while he does not delineate how a constant and stable ontology naturally comes to confirm Dasein's interpretation and understanding of the ecstasis.

4. Levinas' Improvement and His Fallacy

The existential problem in Heidegger's temporality is also recognised by Emmanuel Levinas in his book *De l'existence à l'existant* (1993). Levinas discerns that Heidegger's concept of existence is centred around subjectivity, rather than the irreducible and absolute existence of the human being (Drabinski, 2014). Levinas employs the notion of 'insomnia' to elucidate a dual existence passively received by Dasein. Insomnia refers to a state of being that disrupts the continuity or access to human sleep at night, suspending rest in a manner that does not lead to either consciousness or unconsciousness – a perpetual state of being almost unconscious but never fully arriving there. At night, this vigilance remains active, ready to awaken human beings at any moment to evade potential dangers (Levinas, 1993, p. 110). Vigilance takes part in daily life through a mode of non-participation and represents a response to the anonymous Other (Levinas, 1994, p. 79).

Levinas refers to this non-content vigilance towards the night as the impersonal being, that is, the being in general (Levinas, 1978, p. 57). This forced existence stands independently of both negative absence and positive presence, known as 'il y a,' that is, 'there is.' *Il y a* signifies the de-subjective human existence that does not rely on consciousness nor immediate experience. When we use phrases like 'it is raining' or 'it is not snowing,' we employ an anonymous subject: 'it.' This pronoun carries no specific meaning and refers to no individual, yet simultaneously represents an undeniable existence irrespective of the sentence's content. The 'it' still suggests a presence of a fact that remains detached from the situation that might happen, despite the statement conveys a negative aspect of existence, namely the absence of rain. This anonymous and absolute existence persists, transcending all other forms of being:

> *C'est le retour même de la présence dans le vide laissé par l'absence— non pas retour de quelque chose, mais une présence ; c'est le réveil de l'il y a au sein de la négation—c'est une infaillibilité de l'être où ne se relâche jamais l'œuvre de l'être, c'est son insomnie même.* (Levinas, 1993, p. 110)

This absolute existence 'Il y a', which maintains a consistent presence across all modes of existents, finds its foundation in infinite temporality, a temporal continuum generated through encounters with the Other. For Levinas, within this temporal framework, the existent engages with a dual temporality—the interiority, which signifies the same, and the alterity, which signifies the difference. The former represents the identity of the self, encapsulates my synchronous continuous subjectivity that encompasses my chronological past. Conversely, the latter, concerning my relationship with the Other, embodies diachronous temporality, suggesting an absolute difference. When facing the Other, I encounter a distinct interiority, shaped by her unique past, asynchronous with mine, presenting herself as entirely unfamiliar. This hiatus, stemming from my inability to comprehend her past, leads to ongoing deficiencies or excesses in our conversation. To bridge this gap, the Other continually recaptures her past for me to interpret accurately, internalizing her presence within me, disrupting my sameness, and reshaping my future. This diachronic relationship with the Other creates a

temporal infinity, integrating her into my future-oriented relationship (Morgan & Mensch, 2019, p. 350; Levinas, 1994, p. 77).

In the BIV scenario, Levinas' temporal exploration remains coherent despite abrupt ontological disruptions. This scenario resembles the experience of an insomniac, where individuals exist within their interiority—a distinct essence which is both irreducible and unattainable. Upon awakening from illusory brain-controlled memories, subjects' brains and bodies remain unchanged, preserving their original being without substitutions. Organic functioning reaffirms the absolute existence of the self, with bodily organs serving exclusively, regardless of subjective changes. This interiority does not require prior ontological understanding or readiness in the world. Even when subjects face ontological and temporal disconnection, their existence remains undeniable. 'Il y a' affirms the negation of existence, as intentional absence of BIV from the real world doesn't negate existential certainty.

Nonetheless, Levinas' proposed infinite temporality places significant emphasis on the encounter with the Other, which introduces a new challenge of temporality. According to Levinas, the notion of inaccessible existence arises from the absolute difference with the Other. This engagement with the Other bestows ontological significance upon the entirety of human existence, unveiling an infinite temporality that transcends individual understanding and experiences. However, this existence becomes overly reliant on its interaction with the Other, which subsequently detriments the being. If the altered BIV scenario involves only one experimental subject, Levinas' existential analysis may struggle to elucidate the subject's existence in the absence of the Other. In such a case where the subject regains autonomy over their body and confronts a desolate environment without the Other to provide the future, this scenario will conflict with the concept of absolute existence, ultimately leading the being to fail again in recognising their own existence.

5. Conclusion

Heidegger constructs an ecstatic temporality to shortcut the ontology of Dasein in a tool-context world. This ecstasy forms the foundation for Dasein's being in the world and its thrownness, yet it falls short of resolving the fundamental existential issue of Dasein. This is due to the reason that it

presupposes a stable, common-sense ontology, which is unjustifiable. In order to illustrate this, I have employed the brain in a vat (BIV) thought experiment, which argues that ecstasies become irrelevant in being if the being loses its immediate experience in the world during an ontological rupture. I contend that ecstasis requires a common-sense horizon between human beings and d tools and can particularly be established in a stable and unchanging world.

On the other hand, I discussed that Levinas' concept of infinite existence appears to offer a potential remedy for this ontological problem within the temporal framework. By embracing a stance of non-comprehensible existence, Levinas avoids the BIV criticism of Heidegger's ecstatic temporality. However, Levinas' approach can once more fail in the BIV argument, for his emphasis on the Other places an excessive significance on the interaction between human beings, leading to a similar outcome as seen in the BIV case. Ultimately, I contend that Heidegger's ecstatic temporality lacks justifiable conditions, as it assumes that subjects are inherently the fixed framework. Levinas' argument, although not without its limitations in fully elucidating temporal reality, nonetheless provides a resolution to the Heideggerian predicament.

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Is the Inability to Grieve a Benefit or a Harm?

Helly Yurdakul

1. Introduction

In tackling this question, I will use Meursault, Camus' protagonist in *The Stranger* (1954). Meursault is portrayed as being unable to experience grief at the death of his mother which plays a role in his subsequent prosecution. This leads to the important question: should Meursault's incapability to grieve be seen as a harm to him or should it be seen as beneficial insofar as grief is a distressing experience? For the purposes of this essay, I will define grief using Michael Cholbi's assumption that is 'the specific and personal emotional reaction individuals have to death of others' (Cholbi & Timmerman, 2021, p. 184). I will also rely upon the account of grief presented in C. S. Lewis's *A Grief Observed* (1961).

I will first outline Cholbi's practical identity account of grief as presented in *Grief: A Philosophical Guide* (2022), in which he employs Christine Korsgaard's (1996) conception of practical identity. At its essence, Cholbi's (2022) argument is that we grieve a person's death—-and it is appropriate that we grieve a person's death— to the extent that our practical identities are invested in their existence. I will then advance an argument in support of grief being harmful to us, drawing upon Clive Staples Lewis' *A Grief Observed* (1961). Through Lewis' writing, the emotionally demanding and overwhelming nature of grief will be illustrated. I will then consider a salient objection presented by Moller (2007), though notably not endorsed by him, which can be levelled against the harmful nature of grief by emphasising the universal resilience of humanity. Moving on to assess the benefits of grief, l will examine Cholbi's (2022) account that grief's distinctive good resides in how it fosters substantial self-knowledge for our practical identities. I will consider a potential tension with the applicability of self-knowledge, in particular, for those with less sizeable practical identities, exemplified in the character of Meursault. Next, I will evaluate whether it would be more favourable for Meursault to invest his practical identity in others, in this way,

becoming more open and susceptible to grief and if, successful is sufficient to demonstrate the force of Cholbi's argument. This essay will conclude that grieving is beneficial for us and therefore, Meursault's inability to grieve is a harm to him.

2. Why Do We Grieve?

One of Cholbi's projects in his *Grief: A Philosophical Guide* (2022) is to construct an account as to why we grieve. In formulating his account, Cholbi draws on the notion of practical identity, rooted in Korsgaard's *The Sources of Normativity* (1996). For Korsgaard, a person's practical identity is 'a description under which you value yourself, a description under which you find your life to be worth living and your actions to be worth undertaking' (1996, p. 101). As I interpret Korsgaard's conception, we should think of practical identities as being sets of commitments, values, and concerns, which guide our choices and direct our lives (Cholbi, 2022, p. 30). I will now clarify Korsgaard's notion of practical identity with reference to the identity of Nicola Sturgeon, the former Leader of the Scottish Nationalist Party. Sturgeon's practical identity could be, in short form, characterised by being the former First Minister of Scotland, being a member of the Scottish National Party, being a fan of the Danish television series Borgen, and being the spouse of Peter Murrell. As I interpret this, these elements are all central to Sturgeon's conception of self and her self-understanding and thus give direction to her life. To illustrate the point further, Sturgeon makes policies for the Scottish Government due to the fact she serves as the First Minister of Scotland.

It is important to acknowledge here that elements of our practical identities necessarily also involve social dimensions. Put simply, other individuals' practical identities— friends, families, colleagues—are identity constituting and render one's choices intelligible. For instance, Sturgeon would not have had the option to change her surname to Murrell if she had not married Peter Murrell. In this way, our practical identities assume the existence of other people to propel our identities and choices we can and do and do not make; our practical identities would be impossible or incoherent without them (*Ibid.*, p. 31).

Following this, Cholbi (*Ibid.*, p. 31) moves to connect people's practical identities with his conception of grief: the specific and personal emotional

reaction individuals have to death of others. For Cholbi (*Ibid.*, p. 36), we grieve a person's death—and it is appropriate that we grieve a person's death— to the extent that our practical identities are invested in their existence, in terms of attachment or in terms of well-being, for example. To see that this is so, it would be appropriate for Sturgeon to grieve the death of Peter Murrell (were it to happen) due to his pivotal role in her practical identity, say by being a romantic partner, by sharing the values of the Scottish National Party and by his support of her—all of which influence Sturgeon's well-being. In this way, the loss of Murrell would present a threat to her practical identity and sense of self since she can no longer rely, depend on and thus, orient her identity around him. By appealing to practical identity, we can, therefore, see the appropriateness of grief. I will now examine the dominant question: whether grieving is something that is a benefit or harm to us.

3. Grief Is a Harm to Us

I will now present an argument in support of the assertion of grief being a harm to us and thus something we should want to avoid. Thankfully for our purposes, C. S. Lewis's *A Grief Observed* (1961)— his reflective account on his experience of bereavement following the death of his wife Joy Davidman— provides support for this position. As a preliminary, it should be noted that *A Grief Observed* was initially published pseudonymously, perhaps marking Lewis' embarrassment from his grief. In his account, Lewis presents a variety of feelings and intense pain surrounding his grief stemming from the ramifications on his practical identity following Joy's death, or as Cholbi (2022, p. 184) deems it, an emotional cavalcade. By way of illustration, Lewis (1961, pp. 3, 5) notes feelings of '*being mildly drunk or concussed*', '*being afraid*', '*laziness*' and '*moments of agony*'. All vastly different responses to his grief but nonetheless highlight its powerful influence over the mind and body. Key to Lewis' account is the fact '*you don't merely suffer but have to keep on thinking about the fact that you suffer.*' For Lewis (*Ibid.*, p. 10) '*not only live[s] each endless day in grief but [he] live[s] each day thinking about living each day in grief*'. As I interpret this, grief is presented as being all-encompassing to one's life and intensely painful in nature. The force of the argument that grief presents a harm to us is illustrated by Lewis' (*Ibid.*, p. 5) striking exclamation '*Where is God?*'. Lewis,

prior to this writing had been a profound Christian and in numerous of his works had attempted to explain and defend the Christian faith. However, in his state of overwhelming grief, Lewis (*Ibid.*, p. 6) initially appeared to have a crisis of faith in which he felt, upon turning to God, that a door had been slammed in his face, with a sound of '*bolting and double bolting on the inside*'. This, I argue, emphasises the extreme personal attack grief can render on one's belief system and its force in undermining elements of one's identity, such as that of being a Christian in Lewis' case. In this way, and as Lewis' first-hand account depicts it, grief haunts us, alienates us from our surroundings and from ourselves, and impedes our ability to pursue good things in life (Cholbi, 2022, p. 185). Drawing on Lewis' depiction of the harmful nature of grief— and considering we expect similar reactions to that of Lewis' by others experiencing grief— this long- lasting and emotionally intense response does not seem like something we would want to experience. It can, therefore, be concluded that grief can represent a harm to us and in this way, we should aim to transform ourselves into the character of Meursault.

4. Objection

However, a salient objection can be advanced against this interpretation. Recent studies into the behaviours of bereaved spouses present evidence that seems contrary to the harmful depiction of grief we find in Lewis' account. Dan Moller in his paper *Love and Death* (2007) presents this evidence. Broadly stated, the evidence indicates that bereaved spouses are surprisingly muted in their responses to their loss and that after a few months many of the bereaved return to their emotional baseline, namely the level they were at before the death (Moller, 2007, p. 301). This can be categorised as *resilience* in the face of loss (Bonanno et al., 2005, p. 827). Although the bereaved may be initially traumatised, they quickly recover and manifest little long-term distress (Moller, 2007, p. 303). This raises the question: are we more resilient than we think in the face of loss? As I interpret the findings, the influence of grief stemming from losses to one's practical identity does not seem to be as intolerable or overwhelming as Lewis initially suggests and also seems to be at odds with the commonly held view of what we would expect from the bereaved. However, it must be noted that these findings are not representative of or true for everyone. Despite this,

I contend that they still provide ample evidence against the picture of grief presented in Lewis' account and are enough to bring into question the force of the grief argument presented earlier. In this respect, grief does not seem like something we must avoid based on its cripplingly harmful impacts. As frightening as the pain of loss can be, most of us are resilient (Bonanno, 2009, p. 8). Due to the challenge of these empirical claims, I will now seek to mount an argument for grief as something beneficial to us by looking to Cholbi's *Grief: A Philosophical Guide* (2022).

4. Grief Is Beneficial

Put simply, Cholbi's account of grief centres on its opportunity for building self-knowledge. As a preliminary point, it is important to acknowledge that for Cholbi (2022, p. 99) self-knowledge has instrumental value: knowing ourselves— our beliefs, desires, aspirations —provides the means to achieve much of what we want and is a rational way to seek self - improvement. Cholbi (2022, p. 84) likens this self-knowledge to Quassim Cassam's (2015, p. 28) notion 'substantial self -knowledge'— 'knowledge of our values, emotions, abilities, and of what makes one happy'. Self-knowledge, therefore, as I interpret it, requires us to make sense of ourselves— a sort of biography—which determines how we 'improve' ourselves. Self-knowledge is also *intrinsically* valuable; it is worthwhile for its own sake (Cholbi, 2022, p. 101). To illustrate, self -knowledge provides *intrinsic value* through the updated knowledge it purports for ourselves. It allows us to contemplate and understand ourselves and this is an intrinsically valuable way of caring about ourselves (*Ibid.*). We should, thus, be grateful for grief as an opportunity for expanding our self-knowledge (it should be noted that few are likely to grieve consciously pursuing self-knowledge). As we discussed earlier, for Cholbi (*Ibid.*, p. 82) the deaths of those in whom are practical identities are invested in us something of a personal identity crisis. Their deaths have made it such that our prior practical identities, in which the deceased played a pivotal role, cannot be intelligibly endorsed, or pursued further. This for Cholbi (*Ibid.*), offers the crucial opportunity for the bereaved to examine their values, to emerge with a regenerated practical identity and a more stable sense of self. In this manner, grief can be beneficial to us through affording us the opportunity for

self-knowledge, whilst this does not detract from the pains of grief, it has merit in that it helps us appreciate why the burdens are worth bearing.

To see how this works, I will present an example to illustrate the potential of the attainment of self- knowledge. It is possible to imagine a situation in which one's spouse has died because of a disease. There is no explanation for the disease's epidemiology or data surrounding its symptoms. After the spouse's death, and during the process of grieving, a decision could be prompted for the bereaved to develop themselves, for instance, to become more ethically oriented. The bereaved could perhaps make it their goal to spread awareness of the disease and raise money for research into its epidemiology. In this way, knowledge has given the bereaved a new understanding of what is important and a new direction to take in their life— in the face of the pains of grief. A new element of their practical identity has been crafted. Grief thus demands that we wrestle with the question at the core of philosophical inquiry, 'how shall I live?' and this provides a fruitful pathway to obtain self-knowledge (Cholbi, 2022, p. 86). Grief's dual role as both a powerful source and motivator of self-knowledge is, therefore, beneficial. This value of grief is made more prominent when we consider the earlier findings surrounding the resilience of humans to loss. This paves the way to my conclusion that, with the resilience of humans combined with the distinctive opportunity for self-knowledge, we are better off being susceptible to grief despite its painful nature. Does this conclusion then apply to Meursault?

I will now look to examine this concept of self -knowledge, specifically in relation to Meursault. In summary, Cholbi (*Ibid.*, p. 102) notes that grief provides vast opportunities to attain deeper and profound levels of self-knowledge for the bereaved due to the extent their practical identity is invested in other people. My fear here is that for Meursault, the benefits brought through self-knowledge may not be as pronounced! I will now illustrate my point: as I interpret the character traits of Meursault, it appears he lacks a distinct and substantial practical identity. In other words, the sort of practical identity which we would expect of someone in society. Meursault's character in *The Stranger* (Camus, 1954, pp. 4, 21, 28) is characterised by an absence of deep and meaningful relationships (in which his practical identity is invested), including his mother, Marie Cardona, and Raymond Sintes, and he is portrayed as blithely indifferent to the presence

of others. This is typified, for instance, in his lack of reaction to the death of his mother. Following this, I contend that Meursault would not be able to grieve (on Cholbi's practical identity account) and thus would not learn anything about himself through self-knowledge. The self-knowledge obtained from examining what he has lost and how he should continue would be unattainable for Meursault due to the absence of his practical identity constituting any investment in others. This renders my prior conclusion less persuasive in relation to Meursault.

5. So, Should Meursault Be Susceptible to Grief?

This leads to a new inquiry: would we prefer Meursault to invest his practical identity in others and thus be susceptible to grief and attain the goods of self-knowledge in the same way as others do? I argue that we would base on two main contentions. Firstly, based on my contention that life is less desirable if one does not form meaningful relationships with others. This point is evidenced by the meaningless and morally sub-standard nature of Meursault's life. On Cholbi's (2022, p. 29) account of practical identities, it was shown that we gain purpose and value from relationships with others. To see how this is so, we can look to the positive effects on our wellbeing from our investment in our practical identities, be it in the form of companionship or romantic love, for example. My second contention relates to the fact that one's inability to grieve can be disadvantageous. It has been previously demonstrated that the attainment of self-knowledge following a grieving period presents a means for one to decipher what they found valuable or invaluable in their past relationships and to look to areas of improvement for themselves. Grieving periods help build self-knowledge and thus are a distinctive good. Broadly stated, we are glad we are able to grieve and prefer to be creatures who grieve. The opportunities for self - knowledge Meursault could be open to following his grief of his mother's death (upon investment of his practical identity in her), I believe, are much more advantageous than the lack of the potential pains from experiencing grief. This leads to my conclusion that it is morally and rationally better for Meursault to take a less solipsistic position—to invest his practical identity into others and thus become susceptible to grief. This musters further support for the robustly sufficient nature of Cholbi's account of grief.

Conclusion

This essay has sought to show that grief is a good thing for us and as such Meursault's inability to grieve is a harm to him. Whilst Lewis' account of grief was shown to provide support for the view that grief is harmful to us, the extremity of his stages of grief were shown to be at odds with recent evidential findings concerning personal resilience. I then explained an argument for grief being beneficial to us, which was presented by Cholbi. On examining Cholbi's account, the good of self-knowledge was presented, in particular, the opportunities it provides for us to learn about ourselves, to seek self-improvement and grow in terms of personal ethics and goals. This shows, as I have argued, that grief has beneficial characteristics. However, these goods were shown to be unobtainable for Camus' Meursault due to his deficient practical identity. A new inquiry was then considered: would we prefer Meursault to be susceptible to grief and to attain the goods of self-knowledge in the same way as others do? It was concluded that due to the practical benefits of identity investment and the good the good of self-knowledge, we would indeed want Meursault to be susceptible to grief. This essay has shown that grief is beneficial, and Meursault's apathetic stance to grief is harmful to him and would also be harmful to others who may find themselves in a similar position of grief.

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"On ne voit bien qu'avec le cœur. L'essentiel est invisible pour les yeux."

— Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

PENSE