Meditations

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Letter From the Editor

Dear Reader,

    As undergraduate philosophy majors, we are learning how to be philosophers. We learn how to think analytically, read critically, and write with clarity. However, due to the time and testing constraints that are part of any educational program, we don't always have the opportunity to *do* philosophy. This was the guiding motivation behind the formation of Meditations last year.

    Now, one year later, I am proud to see how both the journal and our goals have evolved. For any journal, I imagine the primary goal is to put out the best publication possible. For an undergraduate journal, I think a second goal is to provide a platform for undergraduates to learn and gain publishing experience. At Meditations, we have a third goal: to allow students an opportunity to engage in philosophy in creative ways, test their arguments, and challenge each other.

    This issue represents the marriage of all three goals. It also represents the thoughtful and dedicated effort that went into this project by our wonderful team of authors and editors. In this issue you will see the fruits of their labor power and the breadth of their justified true beliefs. From *arche* to Wittgenstein, from political philosophy to language, the passion and scope of philosophical research are reflected in these papers.

    For our readers, I hope this issue of Meditations is thought-provoking and informative. For our authors and editors, I hope their experience with this journal becomes part of a fun and fulfilling philosophical career. For myself, it has been a great privilege to serve as Editor in Chief of Meditations. A journal cannot exist without the support, encouragement, and hard work of many people, and I extend heartfelt thanks to the entire Meditations team and the UCLA Philosophy Department. I also thank Radhalila Reinhofer, my fellow co-founder who served before me, and Sarah Rafiqi, to whom I now pass the Socratic torch.

Happy reading!

Respectfully,
Mariko Green
Co-Founder and Editor in Chief, *Meditations*

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Coherence and Erotetic Model-Driven Discourse Structures

by Garrett Anglin

Garrett Anglin is a current Philosophy major at UCLA and will be tentatively attaining his Bachelor of Arts at the conclusion of Spring quarter 2014. Garrett's specific areas of philosophical interest include Philosophy of Language and Philosophy of Mind with emphasis on linguistic interpretation, semantics, and reference. Following graduation, Garrett will be moving to New Orleans to attend Tulane University School of Law with the goal of studying admiralty, international, and comparative law. Garrett's leisurely pursuits include lounging, sleeping, and staring intently at inanimate objects.

I. Introduction

In "Discourse Structure, topicality and questioning," Jan Van Kuppevelt presents a theory of discourse coherence that derives from "an internal, mostly hierarchical topic-comment structure"[1] motivated by an erotetic model that imbues coherence with the satisfactory answering of implicit or explicit questions. Kuppevelt introduces a systematic approach to the formation of coherent discourse in which topicality is formed through the induction of topic-forming questions. From here, the discourse can be segmented through contextual analysis into three subcategories: *feeders, topic-constituting questions,* and *sub-topic constituting questions*. Each of these subcategories follows operational guidelines of question and answer that break the discourse down into the hierarchical structure around which Kuppevelt's main thesis lies, and from which coherence may successfully arise.

The course of this paper will be structured as follows. First, I will explain the phenomena for which van Kuppevelt's theory attempts to account, followed by an explication of the model created under his hypothesis. Next, I will discuss two assumptions made by van Kuppevelt that lead to issues in terms of perceptual coherence: a) topicality at the sentence level may be determined by a question under discussion and b) coherence for an entire discourse remains when implicit questions can be reconstructed and placed back into the given discourse. Then, I will attempt to reconcile the perceptual coherence issues at play in sentence-level topicality and, subsequently, postulate ways in which coherence also remains for narratives in which implicit questions cannot be successfully recreated. Finally, I will claim that, although van Kuppevelt's topic-comment model can successfully function at the sentence level, it fails to extend to full discourses because of the perceptual coherences that arise outside of the applicability of a question-answer model.

II. Explication of the Erotetic Model and Topic-Comment Structures

The essence of Van Kuppevelt's hypothesis effectively depends on the utilization of an erotetic model to explain the phenomena of coherence in discourse. The hypothesis functions under the paradigm that the internal process of questioning governs structural coherence. The process of creating coherence through topic-forming questions gives rise to the presumption that the organization of discourse units

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1   Jan Van Kuppevelt, "Discourse, Topicality and Questioning," *Journal of Linguistics* 31, no. 1 (1995): 109-147.

agrees with an internal topic-comment structure. Van Kuppevelt takes the term topic to refer to the 'aboutness' of a set of utterances. In clarifying this definition, van Kuppevelt states:

> "The [topic] notion presupposes that a discourse unit **U** – a sentence or a larger part of a discourse – has the property of being directed at a selected set of discourse entities (a set of persons, objects, places, times, reasons, consequences, actions, events, or some other set), and not diffusely at all discourse entities that are introduced or implied by **U**. This selected set of entities in focus of attention is what **U** is about and is called the topic of **U**."[2]

Van Kuppevelt then presents a selection criterion for determining topic entities at the sentence level – and greater discourse units – that claims that, within the domain of entities introduced by a given discourse unit, only the subset of entities that can be made the subject of explicit or implicit questioning have topic functionality. The example below illustrates this topic determining operation:

F_1 A: Yesterday some people stopped by my house.

Q_1 B: Who stopped by your house?

A_1 A: Steve, Julie, and Robert stopped by my house.

In this dialogue, speaker B introduces an open proposition when he poses his question to speaker A. This *topic-constituting question*, according to van Kuppevelt, implies a topic set that is the subset of entities that can successfully fulfill this proposition and render it true. The topic set of the above dialogue are the true answers to the question "Who stopped by your house?" or rather, {Steve, Julie, and Robert}. The explicit or implicit questions that constitute a topic do not arise without a cause, but are "contextually-induced." A *feeder* is this contextual induction, which can be linguistic or non-linguistic, that initiates or re-initiates the process of questioning. The statement F_1 in the above example illustrates this parameter. Lastly, a *sub-topic constituting question* arises when a *topic-constituting question* is unsatisfactorily answered. In the event that such an unsatisfactory answer occurs, a set of sub-questions will be asked until the *topic-constituting question* has been adequately answered. In this paper, I will only be focusing on *feeders* and *topic-constituting questions* in order to illustrate Van Kuppevelt's question-answer model at a base level, which is the focus of this essay.

Using this model, Van Kuppevelt states that the topic of even a singular sentence may be determined by ascertaining the question that it answers:

Who went to the store?

It was Bill who went to the store.

The topic of the sentence "It was Bill who went to the store" is determined by the prior question to which the sentence is an answer. By determining this question, we can understand the topic that is constituted by that sentence. Again, the topic-forming question limits the domain of entities to only those objects or <u>persons that can</u> successfully answer the topic-forming question. From here, Van Kuppevelt's discourse

2   Ibid., 112

structure hypothesis may be extended through an entire discourse to determine and verify its coherence.

However, Van Kuppevelt points out that topic-constituting questions, especially in monologues or ongoing narratives, are not explicitly stated within the text, but remain implicit so as to allow for the fluidity of the narrative. Van Kuppevelt defines implicit questions as "a question which the speaker anticipates will arise in the listener's mind on interpreting preceding utterances."[3] With this in mind, and taking into account the prior groundwork laid for this model, Van Kuppevelt posits that a text may remain acceptable and coherent if these implicit questions can be successfully reconstructed and made part of the actual text.

The monologue (i) and reconstruction of implicit questions (ii) below shows the simplified application of Van Kuppevelt's method:

(i) A young man walked into a grocery store. He wanted to buy some microwavable items. He didn't have very much money, so anything more expensive would have been impossible. Being in school had soaked up any extra funds that might have otherwise been available.

(ii) A: A young man walked into a grocery store.

$[Q_1]$: Why?

A1: He wanted to buy some microwavable items.

[Q2]: Why microwavable items?

A2: He didn't have very much money so anything more expensive would have been impossible.

[Q3]: Why didn't he have very much money?

A3: Being in school had soaked up any extra funds that might have otherwise been available.

As can be seen by the above reconstruction, this small narrative is verifiably coherent according to Van Kuppevelt's hypothesis, because the implicit questions it raises can effectively be reconstructed and placed in the actual text and its coherence still remains. Thus, this narrative effectively demonstrates the application of Van Kuppevelt's hypothesis and the way in which it optimally functions in relation to discourse structures.

III. Problems with the Determination of Topicality at the Sentence Level

As stated in the above explication, Van Kuppevelt's hypothesis functions under the assumption that a topic set for a sentence is determined by a Question-Under-Discussion (QUD) which limits the domain of possible discourse entities to a subset of entities in focus of attention that can successfully answer the "topic" question. The sentence then presumes to answer that "topic" question and, thus, demonstrate the topic of the utterance. This presumption, taken as is, leads to problems in terms of linguistic and perceptual coherence, which I will clarify shortly.

3   Ibid., 117

Linguists attempt to distinguish between two parts of an uttered sentence or proposition: pre-suppositional content and at-issue content. In defining presuppositions, Kartunnen and Peters state:

> "Linguists have isolated features of sentences that contain certain lexical items or syntactic constructions and identified them as presuppositions of the sentences, propositions which the sentences are not primarily about but which have to be established in order for communications to go smoothly…presuppositions constitute an aspect of meaning distinct from the kind of semantic content that is the subject matter of ordinary truth-conditional semantics."[4]

These parts of propositions are not considered to be the "aboutness" of a sentence and are thus not part of the topicality to which Van Kuppevelt refers in his hypothesis. The part of the sentence that is considered to be what the sentence is about (in terms of a QUD) is called the at-issue content. Simons et al. present a cohesive definition for at-issue content: "A proposition [or part of a proposition] p is at-issue relative to Q iff p is relevant to Q."[5] These parts of propositions are the sections that are directly relevant to (and answers to) the Question Under Discussion. The at-issue content defined by Simons et al. is analogous to "the selected set of entities in focus of attention" to which Van Kuppevelt refers in his definition of the intended topic notion. Therefore, we can infer that the topic set of a sentence under Van Kuppevelt's hypothesis may be determined by analyzing whether the at-issue content of a sentence successfully fulfills the "open proposition" offered by the QUD to render it true. The hypothesis leaves the presuppositions as they are, outside of any truth-conditional semantics.

If we agree that the semantic analysis of a sentence in discourse may function in this manner, then we run into a problem in terms of our perceived coherence of a sentence. Anthony Sanford presents a perceptual phenomenon in sentence processing that illustrates this problem. Sanford takes up the phenomena of change blindness when semantic anomalies occur in sentences. He states that, usually, anomalous words in sentences will be detected automatically during reading, but evidence has shown that this detection does not always occur and that "lexical semantic processing is incomplete."[6] If we look at the sentence:

"Moses put two of each animal on the Ark."

Most people do not notice the anomaly of Moses occurring in the sentence as opposed to Noah, even if they know that it was Noah who put two of each animal on the Ark and not Moses. This phenomenon has been explained by the similarity of semantic meaning between the two words *Moses* and *Noah* that causes people to place less semantic focus on whether the word gels with the rest of the sentence. Furthermore, such change blindness occurs even more when attention is placed on a different part of the sentence.

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4   Kartunnen and Peters, "Conventional Implicature" *Syntax and Semantics* 11, (1979): 1
5   Mandy Simons, David Beaver, Judith Tonhauser, Craige Roberts, "What Projects and Why," (2010): 8
6   A.J. Sanford, "Context, Attention, and Depth of Processing During Interpretation," *Mind and Language* 17.1 (2002): 190

So, if the at-issue content, or selected set of entities in focus of attention, of the sentence were to be how many animals that Moses put on the Ark, phrased by the question "How many of each animal did Moses put on the Ark?" we would find many people perceiving the answer "two," as found in the sentence, as a logically coherent and semantically correct answer. In terms of Van Kuppevelt's model, people would only analyze the at-issue content of the sentence, assuming the rest true, as shown by Simons et al.'s definition of at-issue content, and perceive the sentence itself to be fully coherent. However, as is obvious, the correct answer to the QUD "How many of each animal did Moses put on the Ark?" would be "none" because Moses did not put any animals on the Ark.

This phenomenon presents a major problem for Van Kuppevelt's intended topic notion, if it is taken as is. If the at-issue content is placed in focus for the Question Under Discussion, and the presupposed content is left out of focus and outside of any truth-conditional semantics, then the presupposed content may be false. Our own incomplete lexical semantic processing, combined with the topicality assumption under which Van Kuppevelt's hypothesis functions, leads to a strange contradiction as to what the correct topic set should be. Under Van Kuppevelt's model, the topic set of the sentence, once analyzed through a QUD, should in fact be {none} because the question itself asks how many of each animal *Moses* put on the Ark. So, if we were using this model in the manner that van Kuppevelt claims, we *should* immediately determine the sentence itself to be incoherent. However, Moses is included under the presupposed content and assumed as true, leaving the at-issue content simply to be how many of each animal he put on the Ark. Without analyzing Moses semantically, we may end up with our topic set being {two}, which is intuitively correct given a context in which animals and Arks is discussed, but incorrect given the QUD.

Furthermore, if we do analyze a further topic discussing the animals being gathered and placed on the Ark, using as its feeder "Moses placed two of each animal on the Ark," we would find that the "intended" topic set *should* be {two} and not {none}. Thus, our minds have correctly interpreted the sentence and determined the correct topic set seemingly without the use of any Question Under Discussion, at least not one that Van Kuppevelt describes.

Van Kuppevelt does not take into account these cognitive phenomena that are our abilities to correctly cohere sentences even when their literal meanings are miswritten. In fact, if we take Van Kuppevelt's model as it is described in his essay, then it seems we will end up with unnecessary confusion in terms of rendering coherence from certain discourse structures at the sentence level.

IV. Solving the Topicality Flaws at the Sentence Level

Van Kuppevelt's question-answer model is not completely irreparable in its application. The method can still be utilized if we can articulate a slight modification to the standing assumption that will take into account areas where our minds correctly interpret sentences that are semantically incoherent. The problem we have demonstrated is that we do not determine topicality (or perceive coherence) in sentences

simply by applying the question-answer model that Van Kuppevelt prescribes. If we can still perceive coherence in sentences, even in instances when the literal meaning of the sentence does not cohere, then we must alter Van Kuppevelt's assumption about topicality at the sentence level to depict these cognitive phenomena. Such an alteration must explain what type of questions might arise in place of the one's Van Kuppevelt proposes.

Psychologist Daniel Kahneman presents a theory of cognitive processing that can help to explain the lexical semantic phenomena observed in the above examples. In his novel, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, Kahneman distinguishes between two systems in the mind that are evoked by cognitive stimuli in the world, including sentence processing. System 1 "operates automatically and quickly, with little or no effort and no sense of voluntary control," while System 2 allocates attention to the effortful mental activities that demand it, including complex computations."[7] The division of labor between these two systems is highly efficient by minimizing the effort exerted by the mind and optimizing its performance. When no salient problem arises to which System 2 needs to devote attention, then it will adopt the suggestions of System 1 with little or no modification. Thus, it is System 1 that does the majority of the work, finding ways to quickly answer and judge about cognitive stimuli without in-depth analysis or processing.

In relating these systems to sentence processing, Kahneman later illustrates the method in which System 1 generates intuitive heuristics of certain complex situations, such as with questions that are difficult to answer at first glance:

> "If a satisfactory answer to a hard question is not found quickly, System 1 will find a related question that is easier and will answer it. I call the operation of answering one question in place of another *substitution*…The target question is the assessment you intend to produce. The heuristic question is the simpler question that you answer instead."[8]

The example below illustrates an example of this cognitive process:

Target Question: How happy are you with your life these days?

Heuristic Question: What is my mood right now?

It seems that the target question is a very complicated question to answer in any succinct manner. When considering the mental processing of sentences as well as determining their topicality, it is usually the case that the literal meaning of a sentence will coincide with its perceived meaning. Thus, when you perceive a certain meaning of a sentence, it is usually the same meaning that the semantic meaning of the sentence expresses as well. However, sometimes our attention is directed towards different perceived meanings, as a result of the type of mental *substitution* operation that Kahneman defines, that do not coincide with the literal meaning of the sentence.

This operation of substitution can effectively describe how we can interpret sentences that contain

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7   Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2011), 20.

8   Ibid., 97

certain anomalies within them and still end up with perceived coherence even though the sentence itself is not (semantically) coherent. Furthermore, it can help to explain how we ascertain correct topic-forming questions under Van Kuppevelt's model, by creating heuristic questions that will adequately determine the topic set, without analyzing the semantic anomaly in cases such as the one Sanford illustrates. Thus, we do not face a situation in which the erotetic model is not being used at all, but being used in a modified way so as to incorporate the cognitive phenomena that Sanford and Kahneman describe.

To illustrate this concept, we can analyze another sentence with an anomalous word that we still perceive as coherent: "The man married his widow's sister."
Although this is not technically a complex sentence with a difficult answer, the cognitive function that occurs may treat the sentence as such. Substitution might occur because System 1 does not take the time to analyze the semantic meanings of every word involved, especially the relation that the term widow has to a man, and his wife, and her sister. Rather, we read this sentence and our System 1 cognitive function quickly understands and interprets what is meant by the sentence by asking the simpler question: "Can a man marry his dead wife's sister?"
It is intuitive that the sentence intends to ask this QUD in forming its topic set even though the sentence itself does not say this. It would be absurd to think that a dead man desires to marry his widow's sister but, as we have stated, Van Kuppevelt's model would assume that we perceptually ask such a question (i.e. "What man married his widow's sister?"), a question that would have no plausible or logically coherent answer. We have further shown that we, in fact, do not ask this question in determining the topicality or coherence of the sentence, which is the problem with van Kuppevelt's model that we have sought to reconcile. Rather, we turn our attention to a simpler heuristic question, which captures the logical coherence of the intended sentence. The substitution operation accounts for these mental jumps to coherence allowing for the erotetic model to remain intact.

Therefore, the solution to the quandary of van Kuppevelt's flawed intended topic notion is by adding in this *substitution* modification that takes into account the fact that not only do we ask questions in determining the topic set of a sentence, but, instead of using purely data-driven lexical semantic processing to determine these questions (as Van Kuppevelt's model might assume), we turn to top-down simplified heuristic questions that are more easily answerable and more efficient in capturing the intended topic notion.

V. Problems with Implicit Question Reconstruction in Discourse

If we turn now to Van Kuppevelt's discourse hypothesis beyond the sentence level, we also find issues with specific base premises, namely that a discourse may remain coherent if the implicit questions induced by the discourse may be recreated and placed back into the dialogue, monologue or text. As a preface to the following discussion, we will consider a discourse to be any number of statements whose

combination creates extra meaning outside of the individual statements themselves.

Van Kuppevelt asserts that "it can be demonstrated that a text, with accent patterns and syntactic structures, remains acceptable and coherent when the implicit questions reconstructed on the basis of these formal characteristics are made part of the actual text." [9] Such a demonstration is shown above in my explication of Van Kuppevelt's model. However, this demonstrability of coherence in discourse is not always readily apparent, and, as I will seek to demonstrate, sometimes unavailable.

Daniel Kahneman presents another effect that the System 1/ System 2 dichotomy may have on our perceptions of coherence in a discourse. He states that there is a "complex constellation of responses that occur quickly, automatically, and effortlessly"[10] when we perceive two perceptual stimuli such as words or images. Look at the two images below:

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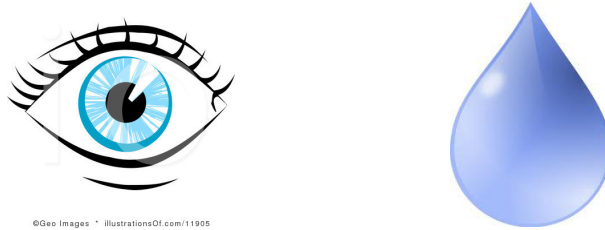
Kahneman postulates that System 1 creates a cascade of ideas that are all evoked by these two perceived images: an eye and a droplet of water. The essential feature of this intricate montage of ideas is the astounding coherence that the brain effortlessly and automatically creates between the two images without any sort of hint as to their actual connection. When seeing an image of an eye and a droplet of water, one might automatically create the phrase "eye drop" as the combined meaning of the two images. Our System 1 creates as much sense as possible out of the situation by "linking the words in a causal story,"[11] such as that the droplet of water is supposed to go into the eye thus making it clear of redness or dryness. Kahneman calls this evocation of connections between images *associative activation.* As we can see in this associative cognitive exercise, there is no implicit question driving the connection between these two images even though such a connection naturally arises in our minds. However, these two images are not discourses.

Nonetheless, if we turn this paradigm towards discourse structures, we actually find similar cases of mental coherence being created and perceived without the application of any question-answer model. By operating under a definition of discourse as "any combination of statements that together form an extra meaning aside from the their individual parts" (self-defined – there's nothing to cite) then we can find

9   Jan Van Kuppevelt, "Discourse, Topicality and Questioning," *Journal of Linguistics* 31, no. 1 (1995): 117.
10   Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2011), 50.
11   Ibid.

certain discourses such as poetry that do in fact retain coherence without the applicability of a question answer model. Look at this excerpt from the E.E. Cumming poem "If I Believe":

>if i believe
>
>in death be sure
>
>of this
>
>it is
>
>because you have loved me,
>
>moon and sunset
>
>stars and flowers
>
>gold crescendo and silver muting
>
>of seatides
>
>i trusted not,
>
>one night
>
>when in my fingers
>
>drooped your shining body
>
>when my heart sang
>
>between your perfect
>
>breasts

As you analyze the poem above, it must be noted that coherence arises through the imagery, format, and meter (or lack thereof) of the poem. The coherence that we perceive in poetry of this kind, the emotions and ideas evoked by the precise word usage and stylized appearance are more in line with the *associative activation* of Kahneman's System 1 and less because of any question-answer model. No question is raised about a moon or a sunset after the statement "because you have loved me." The descriptive imagery does not connect itself to the rest of the poem because it answers a question raised by a previous feeder or unsatisfactorily answered question. In fact, poetry seems to vehemently insist on resting outside of the bounds of this kind of discourse analysis. Its beauty, effect and emotional resonance, which are the main factors behind the coherence that we perceive, only function properly when read exactly as is without any deconstruction or translation. Thus, placing recreated implicit questions (if they exist at all) back into the form of the poem above would distract from its purpose and its coherence rather than help to affirm it. There doesn't seem to be any way to analyze poetry through an erotetic model as the associative cognitive function does the majority of the work in creating such coherence. More importantly though, if we still

perceive coherence under such seemingly disconnected words, then an erotetic model does not function as a method for affirming coherence at all. We don't really turn to questions as means of understanding dialogues or narratives, at least not for poetry.

However, one may argue that poetry doesn't rest within the boundary of the intended discourse structures targeted under Van Kuppevelt's model. Nonetheless, even if we were to analyze narratives that seem to parallel Van Kuppevelt's, we still run into problems. Take a look at this short paragraph:

The man walked into the post office. He stood in line to mail the letter to his aunt. It was

hot and sticky inside.

What we see above is a perfectly reasonably formed three sentences detailing a man going to a location to perform an action and a description of the setting surrounding this event. As stated, Van Kuppevelt posits that during a discourse, after a given sentence, such as a feeder, certain questions arise that have not been satisfactorily answered, thus directing the rest of the discourse to answer these questions to create coherence. However, the last sentence of the statement above does not respond to any unanswered question from the previous two sentences. Questions that may arise from a man standing in line at a post office to mail a letter might be: "What does the letter say?" or "Why is he mailing a letter to his aunt?" However, the question "How did it feel inside the post office?" does not seem to be one that would logically come to mind. Nonetheless, sentences describing a setting are perfectly coherent within a narrative and even necessary to understanding the story. I want to note that it *is* plausible to "recreate" a question *after* reading the sentence "It was hot and sticky inside." But, formulating an implicit question after reading the sentence seems to imply that the reader or audience already understands the coherence of the discourse and is merely taking an extra to step to formulate a question to explain this already comprehended paragraph. Van Kuppevelt also emphasizes that these implied questions arise *as* the narrative is being read and the coherence arises as these questions are answered. If we are merely thinking of questions after understanding the paragraph in order to show that we understand it, then the utility of the question-answer model seems dubitable at best.

Coherence is readily apparent in both the examples of discourse above, but a question-answer model, especially one prescribed by Van Kuppevelt, seems at best superfluous to our understanding of the discourse and at worst completely inapplicable. I also do not see any way to reconcile the theory he proposes with examples of the kind presented. Our ability to cognitively perceive coherence within discourse structures comes from a greater mental function than simply using questions and answers to uncover the connection between certain statements. Furthermore, if it was the case that an erotetic model was how our minds perceived coherence, then poetry would be a useless work of art and would have no grounding at all.

VI. Conclusion

As we've argued above, Van Kuppevelt's topic-comment structure hypothesis seems to face

difficulties at multiple levels. At the sentence level, his theory doesn't seem to explain how we cognitively correct anomalous sentences or perceive them as being coherent even when they do not literally follow logically. However, a topic-comment model is not entirely inapplicable in such cases. We merely need to explain what questions are actually being asked that might be different from those asked by Van Kuppevelt (the bottom-up question formulation based purely on the information provided in the sentence). I concluded that we actually turn toward simpler "heuristic questions" to better capture topicality without analyzing each and every part of the sentence itself. We turn to such questions, not only because our initial cognitive System 1 is quick to create connections where they may not in fact exist, but also because our attention many times is directed away from certain parts of the sentence, which have been *presupposed*. We only focus on the at-issue content in determining topicality. Thus, a heuristic question is more likely to explain how we would not notice anomalies in sentences and still allow for a proper erotetic model.

However, at the level of an entire discourse, we do not have the same issues and the difficulties are less reconcilable. There seem to be a multitude of cases where coherence may be perceived in a discourse (such as with poetry or narratives as described above) but a question-answer model is not readily available and, even if it is, it does not comply with the one prescribed by Van Kuppevelt's hypothesis. I have posited that these obstacles are impossible to overcome for Van Kuppevelt's theory unless he alters the method in which certain questions are used or recreated. But, I want to conclude more properly that it is apparent that our cognitive ability to perceive coherence extends far beyond the mere use of an erotetic model. Our cognitive ability to perceive connections and links between otherwise unrelated statements or ideas allows us to see intended connections that are not connected based on topics and comments or questions and answers. I therefore propose that if cognitive coherence of discourse structures is to be properly defined, it must take into account these associative cognitive functions.

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Limitations of the Libertarian Theory of Justice

by Karma Barot

I. Abstract

In this paper, I will argue that the libertarian ideal is a poor candidate for a theory of justice because (i) it fails to make life in the libertarian state morally permissible and prudentially superior to life in a realizable kind of stateless society and (ii) it presupposes the notion of personal full self-ownership without motivating it. Firstly, I will deliver the core premises of the libertarian ideal as the model for social organization. I will then demonstrate how the resulting structure undermines the justification of the strictly libertarian state. Thereafter, I will give reason why the libertarian must motivate, rather than presuppose, the premise that persons fully own themselves.

II. What is the libertarian ideal?

There are many versions and justificatory efforts of libertarianism. Here, I will present the core libertarian model as a response to the problem of social justice. What I mean by the problem of social justice is, specifically, the problem of distributive justice. That is, what makes a distribution of goods and burdens by an institution upon its members count as being socially just? The libertarian responds that the distribution is socially just only if it secures certain natural rights and liberties of its members. Among these natural rights are, chiefly, full self-ownership and private property rights. To say that these rights are natural is to say that self-ownership and property are possible prior to and independent of positive law, shared human conventions, or contracts, although they may be subsequently formalized in those manners. To fully own oneself entails fully controlling the use of one's person, which, when directed towards an external thing in the right way, e.g. labor, allows one to acquire property rights over that thing.[1] The full ownership of property requires (1) control rights over its use, (2) rights to transfer, e.g. by sale, gift, or loan, (3) immunities to non-consensual loss of these rights, and (4) rights to compensation if the right holder is wronged by being deprived of his natural rights.[2] A corollary of the libertarian priority to preserve rights and freedoms is that the state must remain neutral between any extensive rival conceptions of the good. Rawls defines what it means to be a conception of the good as such:

"A conception of the good is a conception of what is valuable in human life…of a more or

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1   Peter Vallentyne, "Libertarianism," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* 2012 ed.
2   Ibid.

less determinate scheme of final ends, that is, ends we want to realize for their own sake,

as well as attachments to other persons and loyalties to various groups and associations….

Moreover, we must also include in such a conception a view of our relation to the world…by

reference to which the value and significance of our ends and attachments are understood."[3]

By extensive, the libertarian means those conceptions that require more of persons than their minimal duty correlated with securing self-ownership and property rights, i.e. the duty to abstain from aggressing against another's person or property.

The libertarian ideal can be appreciated by understanding it as a response to the egalitarian distributive theory. Specifically, I will describe Rawls' egalitarianism and then address Nozick's criticism and his own libertarian entitlement theory of justice in distribution. According to Rawls, no one deserves their possessions because no one deserves the initial genetic or social endowment from which their possessions originate.[4] For some person *x* to deserve some object *y*, *x* must have a basis for receiving *y*, and this basis must be a fact about *x* that *x* is responsible for.[5] On the other hand, *x* is entitled to *y* just in case *x* qualifies for receiving *y* under a good set of rules, e.g. Nozick's principles of justice. Here, the idea is that an individual's holdings are a function of his/her genetic and social starting place, which is a matter of dumb luck, resembling a sort of "natural lottery" (Rawls' phrase).[6] On this claim, distributing goods on the basis of personal merit is analogous to distributing on the basis of skin color. Both are morally wrong because both reward/punish people for features about themselves out of their control as opposed to what they do, assuming the latter suffices, in large part, as a criterion for desert. Therefore, Rawls calls for an equal division of goods as the baseline from which any deviations must be specially justified, as conveyed by Rawls' second principle of justice.[7]

Now, it might be unreasonable to discharge a merit-based distribution due to the worry about whether anyone can ever deserve anything because goods and offices seem to be allocated on the basis of perceived, tested merit in real societies.[8] At the same time, it is reasonable to question how much of our holdings are a result of our genetic and social gifts. Perhaps, it cannot be positively known whether and to what extent one's holdings are a function of his/her genetic and social starting place. Nevertheless, even if people do not (or cannot be positively known to) deserve their possessions, they might still be entitled, i.e. have a moral right, to them. Nozick invokes this idea of entitlement in his objection to Rawls' move that the equal division of goods follows from the "natural lottery." For example, the entitlement theorist

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3   John Rawls, "Justice as Fairness: Political not Metaphysical," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 14 (1985): 233-234.
4   Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, 1974), 224-27.
5   Owen McLeod, "Desert," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2013 ed.
6   John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 64.
7   "Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both: (a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged, consistent with the just savings principle, and (b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity" (ibid., 266).
8   A. John Simmons, *Political Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 88.

would say, regardless of whether he deserves his functional kidneys, he is still entitled to the benefits derived from them such that he would be wronged if someone deprived him of them without his consent. According to Nozick, a distribution is just if everyone has all and only those holdings that they are entitled to.[9] To be entitled to a holding is to satisfy any of the following principles in the process of entitlement: principles of justice in acquisition, justice in transfer, and justice in rectification.[10] Principles of justice in acquisition inform us how to rightfully become entitled to unowned things. Principles of justice in transfer inform us how to rightfully become entitled to things that someone else is entitled to. Principles of justice in rectification inform us how to become entitled to holdings because of others' violations of the principles of justice in acquisition or transfer. On this account, whether or not a distribution is just is a function of its history, i.e. whether or not it arose by legitimate means, as opposed to the structure of its final state.[11] Though Nozick does not himself instantiate these three kinds of principles, Lockean-type principles are suggested. (1) In acquisition, one must fulfill the "Lockean proviso", i.e. leaving "enough and as good for others" of those resources available to all for distribution.[12] (2) In transfer, the involved parties must give consent. (3) In rectification for injustice regarding 1 or 2, things must be made for the individual harmed as they would have been had the injustice not happened.[13] On this view, where agents own themselves and can come to own property, society cannot rightfully redistribute all goods because not all goods are available for social redistribution, namely those goods that the property owner is privately entitled to.

Now, consider a society, Hooville, built upon this libertarian ideal. Each Hoo has the right to be left alone and the right to not be aggressed against, corresponding to all other Hoos' duties. Each Hoo can also come to own goods in a legitimate way. Having rights over goods means at least being free to use these goods in various ways, e.g., consume them, trade them, donate them etc. Socioeconomic differences would naturally arise in virtue of variations in genetic traits, disparities in social upbringing, cognitive abilities, talents, etc., that make it more likely for some to successfully advance their pursuits than others.[14] Moreover, no Hoo has the positive duty to help others, not even those in need, except voluntarily or as compensation for wrongdoing. Amidst this, the state is limited strictly to the role of an impartial umpire that resolves disputes and protects its members from especially aggressive pursuits of private interests.[15] For example, if a Hoo were to steal his neighbor's motorcycle, then that Hoo would be violating his neighbor's property rights, so the state might imprison the thieving Hoo unless he returns the motorcycle in at least the same condition or reimburses his neighbor. To meet these ends, additionally, it is permissible

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9 Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, 151.
10 Ibid., 150-153.
11 Ibid., 153-154.
12 John Locke, "Of Property," *Second Treatise of Government* (Hollywood, FL: Simon & Brown), sect. 33.
13 Simmons, *Political Philosophy*, 90.
14 The libertarian might endorse equality of opportunity, but as I will demonstrate later, this plan of action falls short of its substantive goals in practice in the libertarian state.
15 Ibid., 97.

for the state to enforce all and only those policies that secure the right of each Hoo to be left alone and not aggressed against, e.g. taxation to fund a police force. On the whole, the libertarian picture endorses a society, or more appropriately a bundle, of persons managed by a central authority designed solely to secure each member's natural rights.

III. Against the justification of the libertarian state

A. *What is the justificatory project?*

I will discuss the project of "justifying the state" to lay the groundwork for my argument against the justification of the libertarian state.[16] I understand the justificatory project as it is suggested by Simmons:

> "[To show] that some realizable type of state is on balance morally permissible and that it is rationally preferable to all feasible non-state alternatives."

For a state to be rationally preferable, it must be shown that its prudential virtues make it good to have that state instead of even the best state of nature that we can reasonably hope to live in. A state can be on balance morally permissible even it is comparatively worse than another kind of state or state of nature in different respects, just in case it does not practice any unobjectionable wrongs. The justificatory project is a response to the background objection of the justificatory anarchist, who claims that "states necessarily do and sanction wrong, or are necessarily in other ways prudentially inferior to life without the state," thereby rendering the state unjustified. This allows the libertarian state (and any state) to be justified without being best (or anywhere near best), so long as it is preferable to the state of nature.[17] So, whether or not a state is justified depends, in large part, on the background conception about the state of nature. It is this state of nature of that is meant by anarchy. In the words of Alexander Berkman, "Anarchism is not bombs, disorder, or chaos. It is not robbery and murder. It is not a war of each against all. It is not a return to barbarianism or to the wild state of man."[18] An anarchist society refers to any nonpolitical condition, i.e. any condition of social life lacking a sovereign, governing body.

B. *Alpha – the non-state alternative*

To capture the essence of the kind of stateless society (call it 'Alpha') that I will espouse as the standard to test the libertarian state against, I will say two things: (1) Alpha is devoted to cultivating a culture of self-respect and can-do character that is conducive to both personal and societal progress and (2) Alpha is sustained by the internalization of brotherhood and sisterhood by its members. In both cases, for a person to internalize the ideals means for him/her to be both intellectually convinced of them and unwavering in the disposition to act accordingly. The first ideal of Alpha answers, "What is my relationship to my self?" In the words of William Ernest Henley, "I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of

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16 This paragraph summarizes Simmons' ideas relevant to the justification of the state that are presented in Part I of his chapter on "Justification and Legitimacy." Full citation below.

17 The justification of the state should not be conflated with state legitimacy. The question of state legitimacy requires a further, independent consideration: what accounts for the state's right to authority over its members such that its members are politically obligated to obey its laws and support its institutions? (Simmons, *Political Philosophy*, 41-42).

18 Alexander Berkman, "Introduction," *What is Communist Anarchism?* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1929), 2.

my soul."[19] The culture of Alpha instills this attitude of self-reliance in the pursuit of one's goals and conception of the good.

The second ideal of Alpha answers, "What is my relationship to others?" by saying they are my brothers and sisters. This is not to say that every member of Alpha shares the same biological parents. Rather, it means to bring non-siblings into the scope of familial relations on the basis of being members of a shared race. The relation between biological siblings has virtues that depend on its biological nature but that cannot be explained entirely by it nor need to be restricted to it and can therefore be a model for interpersonal relationships more broadly for the human race. These virtues include acting in the interest of the sibling without any expectation of return, becoming a positive role model, and demanding excellence out of each other.[20] What seems to explain these virtues is not the shared intrinsic biological features, e.g. similar facial structure, but rather the realization of the relational fact that the person is *my* brother and the love that follows.[21] Certainly this relational fact is a biological one, but this physical matter-of-fact alone does not explain the manifestation of brotherly virtues in the relationship. In fact, there are many instances of full-sibling relations that are far from virtuous, e.g. brothers exploiting each other in a family business, brothers lying to parents to save face, etc. So, the acting out of these virtues is in large part a result of the subject's awareness and love towards the other as his brother. Since they are in part a matter of perspective, these brotherly virtues can be extended towards non-siblings on the basis of being members of a shared human race (and shared ancestors). Therefore, to treat others as my brothers and sisters is to extend the familial attitude and conduct towards them.

 In the following sections, I will argue that a strictly libertarian state is not a desirable arrangement for a social class, i.e. the poor, that naturally develops under its ideals. Because this class can arise from anywhere, this gives reason for everyone more or less to deny that the libertarian state is rationally preferable to Alpha. Then, I will demonstrate that the libertarian state is morally impermissible for two reasons: (1) it is unfit to appropriately treat poverty and (2) it does not seriously consider the holistic well-being of human beings.

C. *Against the rational preferability of the libertarian state*

To be poor can be understood as the failure to acquire for oneself those physiological needs, e.g. food and shelter, required for the prospect of a life of basic subsistence. In the libertarian state, it is not unreasonable to expect the development of a class of individuals in poverty. In fact, a poverty class is likely under the libertarian state as a result of two facts. Firstly, there is some non-zero likelihood of people

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19   William Ernest Henley, "Invictus," *One Hundred and One Famous Poems* (New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies, 1958), 95.

20   This list is certainly not exhaustive, and there are many more virtues about the relationships between siblings that are more easily and fully experienced than can be verbally communicated.

21   This explanation, though derived from my own experience and of those around me, can be experimentally tested in various ways. One way, in principle, would be to observe the difference in interaction between biological brothers before and after they become self-aware to the fact of their relationship.

living below the poverty line due to "bad luck in the natural lottery." Secondly, the libertarian denies that, e.g., food and shelter are natural rights, so the state is exonerated from allocating natural resources to its members. In fact, the libertarian intentionally distances the state from distributing these goods to reserve for its members this right to secure property rights via just acquisition or transfer. Consider that one person might be born into a poor family and another might have difficulties in learning. According to the libertarian, no member commits a wrong by abstaining from helping either. In fact, by not interfering, members are respecting each other's right to be left alone. The state cannot rightfully demand that its members provide aid without violating their natural rights, the preservation of which demands that the state is neutral to conceptions of the good.

One option available to the libertarian is to provide equal opportunity to level the playing field. Substantively, the equality of opportunity is met just in case "any individuals who have the same native talent and same ambition will have the same prospects of success."[22] Procedurally, however, the libertarian state is limited in the measures it can advance because it cannot interfere in the private life of its citizens. I do not mean to suggest a decision over whether or not the state should be able to involve itself in the private life. My point is to make aware this matter-of-fact issue that because the libertarian demands noninterference, the option of equal opportunity becomes severely less effective in practice because it cannot factor in, arguably, one of the most influential determinants of the prospects for success, namely the social milieu and familial upbringing. On the other hand, the individual in Alpha realizes that his relationship to his fellow humans is more intimate than the transactional nature of interactions between citizens in the libertarian state. This creates a desire to be productive for the society in whatever way befits that individual, harmoniously aligning personal and societal growth. Education now becomes an avenue of creativity and exploration for an already manifest desire to flourish in the youth of Alpha, as opposed to the only realizable measure for equal prospects of success (as presumably would be the case in the libertarian state). In this case, a state that is *strictly* libertarian is not rationally preferable because it fails to make life desirable to the non-state alternative for a class, i.e. the poor, and this class is expected to rise naturally from anywhere under libertarian ideals, i.e. there is some finite, non-zero probability for anyone to become poor. Now, I will argue that the libertarian state is morally impermissible due to its inability to effectively treat poverty, a condition that, I think, any rational, innocent human being should consider wrong. [23]

D. *Against the moral permissibility of the libertarian state*

A tacit qualification for the state to be justified is that it must be sensitive to the well-being of human beings. It is for this reason that a state is considered morally impermissible when it harms or neglects its members. While what the human life consists of is debatable, it certainly consists of more

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22   Richard Arneson, "Equality of Opportunity," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2008 ed.
23   There are obviously instances where depriving a person is not wrong, e.g. when he has wronged another's person or property. By innocent, I mean those individuals that are undeserving of being impoverished and am referring to the large majority of human beings.

than the animal life, in light of the asymmetry between human rights and animal rights. An animal life is essentially a struggle for survival. So, for any given life to be of the human kind, it must participate in more than securing reproductive success.[24] This can be referred to as the criterion to live *and* live well.[25] Human beings, then, have the personal responsibility to pursue well-being in virtue of the same nature that entitles them to enjoy their rights. To move from a state of being to a state of well-being requires some sort of development. That this development might pertain to different facets of human life (due to different notions of living *well*) presents no problem because, in any case, it at least consists of more than poverty can provide, precisely because poverty provides a struggle for survival more so than anything else.

Any justification of the state should be general. That is, the virtue(s) appealed to in justifying the state should make life for any and all of its members preferable to life in the state of nature, particularly when noting that the members being considered here have not committed any wrongdoing that might render their life in the state worse off. So, the scope of this claim includes, e.g., those born into poor families and those born with unfavorable genetic traits. While poverty is not unique to the libertarian state, the libertarian state uniquely requires no effective measure to address it. At most, the libertarian state can encourage acts of charity by its more affluent members. Charity, though noble, does not solve the problem of poverty. The case of the libertarian state in Part C delineates the role of the institution in the rise of poverty. However, if the intention is to put one's caring for human welfare into practice and the goal is to improve the quality of life for the poor, as philanthropy suggests, then poverty should be treated at the level of the individual, correcting his inferior attitude towards life – an attitude of self-doubt and dependency.[26] What charity does is that it temporarily raises the quality of life while neglecting to correct this attitude that at least in part contributed to the impoverished condition, and doing so leads the poor to continue believing that he will be provided for. This not only contravenes the libertarian virtue of self-reliance, but it is also less practical than building up the poor man for both his sake and society's sake in terms of effecting a deep-rooted, long-lasting development. All the while, the Nozickean distribution is just so long as the people start out entitled to their holdings and there are no wrongful dealings. So, the libertarian must concede that strict adherence to his ideals generates an unjustified state with a just distribution.[27]

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24   Abraham Maslow's "A Theory of Human Motivations" does a good job explicating the various kinds human needs and growth, e.g. physiological well-being, safety, love/belonging, esteem, self-actualization.

25   This is not to say that animals are undeserving of well-being, or that there cannot be better or worse lives for animals. Rather, it is to point out that what it means for animal to live well is different than what it means for a human to live well. For example, an animal life might go better by providing safety, sustenance and perhaps even belonging and love. However, these conditions are already prerequisites for human beings to pursue well-being. Well-being for human beings further requires nurturing the rational and moral faculties of human beings to allow for life prospects, which if at all present in animals, are currently rudimentary at best. If new evidence suggests animals are more significantly like humans than previously thought, then this does not subtract from the rights and duties of humans, but rather incorporates animals into the moral considerations till now applied strictly to human beings.

26   Philanthropy is derived etymologically from the Greek *philanthrōpìa*, meaning love for mankind (Dictionary.com).

27   Recall that, for the libertarian, a distribution is just so long as everyone is entitled to their holdings.

This is counterproductive to maintaining the libertarian state. The social and political institutions of a state should preserve that state's status as a preferable arrangement. The strict libertarian, however, finds that his social distribution generates inequalities that undermine the justification of his state. This is precisely because the libertarian does not designate any extensive duties to its members beyond securing each other's natural rights. Meanwhile, his limited political body is left handicapped from enforcing a redistribution in the appropriate way, i.e. one that alleviates the inequalities enough to justify the state on the whole, because any such redistribution would compromise what the libertarian appealed to in justifying his state in the first place, i.e. securing the rights to be left alone and to not be aggressed against. Thus, it seems the strict libertarian state must compromise its ideal to some degree to preserve its justification.

Additionally, it does not seem the libertarian has given serious thought to human development beyond material fulfillment. What a state requires tends to reflect what that state values. The libertarian state is structured only to provide legitimate means for its members to possess property, hence the minimal role of the government. So, the libertarian state values the interests of its members, yet it procures no measures to facilitate those interests when they surpass material well-being. Consider interpersonal relations. As social animals, the quality of our relationships are a large determinant of our happiness, and these relationships prosper when they are rooted in trust, compassion, and generosity. However, it is difficult to see how relationships can sincerely thrive in the libertarian state. It is prudentially unwise for any person H to expect another person/state to secure H's interests for H. This condition in the libertarian state certainly leaves open the possibility for H to advance himself by himself. At the same time, however, it makes it difficult, and even irrational, for any citizen to lose sight of his/her self-interest. For a relationship to thrive, each relative must give their time and energy for the other, which members of the libertarian state cannot afford unless it aligns with their self-interest. So, even when it does exist, there is reasonable suspicion that the relation is out of self-interest instead of selflessness because of the individualistic culture of the state.[28]

While self-interest does not necessarily undermine relations from developing, it does preclude those relations from achieving the happiness that arises from selflessness and sincere expressions of compassion and generosity. As a case in point, I urge you to reflect and/or experience the joy from helping others unconditionally as opposed to offering your service for a favor in return. I do not mean to say that the self-determined attitude harbored by libertarians is undesirable. In fact, it is a virtue that every individual should work to imbibe in order to improve himself. My point is that the libertarian state encourages a culture that renders facets of human life, such as interpersonal relationships, subservient to self-interest and material well-being, when it might be wiser not to do so for the sake of a broader, fuller and more

28   There are two things to say regarding the epistemic worry about whether it is in principle possible to know another's intentions. Firstly, the culture of individualism gives reason to believe that members of the libertarian state are inclined to behave in their self-interest more often than not. Secondly, the following bi-conditional is a way to test selflessness: a person is behaving selflessly just in case that person is acting without expectation of any return.

sensitive account of human well-being. In this respect, the libertarian state is a reflection of a severely deprived account of human potential.

IV. Against the justice of the libertarian distribution

In the objection above, the distribution of goods was granted to be just for the sake of argument. However, the justice of such a distribution can reasonably be called into question. The libertarian is committed to full self-ownership because it grounds the idea that persons have a natural right to property. A charitable version of the argument for property rights from full self-ownership follows (n.b. let 'Robert' refer to any person). Robert fully owns himself. This entails that Robert exclusively possesses the right to control how to use himself. Let us grant that there exists some principle, e.g. Lockean labor-mixing, that renders the acquisition of property rights legitimate. So, when Robert incorporates what he fully owns, i.e. his productive labor, with what is unowned, he comes to legitimately own all and only the products of his labor. Robert is entitled to this property such that it becomes morally wrong for others to take it without satisfying some just principle of transfer, e.g. Robert's consent.

In response, one might demand some justification for the first premise, asking in virtue of what do persons fully own themselves? This is a reasonable demand in reality. A significant population of real people consider themselves to be a part of the theistic community. A particular theistic view can raise doubt to the libertarian intuition about full self-ownership. If this theistic position is successful, then distribution on the basis of entitlement fails to be just. That is, if it is not the case that persons fully own themselves, then it is not the case that persons are fully entitled to their holdings, so the Nozickean distribution is unjust. I will argue below for the mere possibility of the theistic view. As an alternative to the view that persons fully own themselves, this will require the libertarian to motivate his previously tacit assumption of full self-ownership.

Consider this theistic position (call it View-T): God is the creator of the universe. So, persons do not fully own themselves. What this might mean in the relevant way for the theist is that God has endowed persons with their productive faculties, such as their body and intellect. So, persons do not fully own their labor because, although they still control in what way and for what ends to use their faculties, those faculties do not belong entirely to persons. Rather than being owners, persons are, more appropriately, caretakers of that which God has endowed them with. If persons do not fully own their productive labor, then they do not fully own themselves. It follows that persons are not solely entitled to the product of their labor.

The Lockean might respond that he fully owns himself with respect to other persons, but not with respect to God. So, he is entitled to his property such that he would be wronged if society were to redistribute that property in any way without his consent. However, if the Lockean has a moral right to his property on the basis of ownership, then God, too, is entitled to the Lockean's property on the

same basis. Again, this follows from the contribution of God to the productive labor of persons. Locke, himself, believed that God had offered the earth and lesser creatures to humankind as a gift, to use as humans choose so long as they do not breach natural law. Having done so, God is not owed a portion of the laborer's product; instead, the debt to God is discharged by worshipping Him and obeying His laws for mankind.[29] However, View-T holds one key advantage over the Lockean theistic account. It does not presume to comprehend the will of God. At most, it modestly considers God's role as the creator (a position shared by the Lockean theist and theists in general) to draw out a problem for the libertarian by incorporating God into his distribution. Specifically, securing what God is entitled to is incompatible with the libertarian demand that any just distribution must preserve the property rights of its members. Recall that to have a moral right to property P entails possessing the right to control how to use P, e.g. consume P, trade P, donate P, etc. However, given that God is entitled, some portion or other of the product of the Lockean's labor must be assigned to God, irrespective of how the Lockean decides to use that portion of the product. Moreover, if society were to redistribute the holdings of its members for this end, i.e. for God, then this would violate the members' rights to not be interfered with.

View-T is incompatible with the Lockean position because View-T alone brings God into the scope of distributive justice. That is, securing what God is entitled to is a necessary condition for the distribution of goods to be just. On View-T, the role of God resembles more so the role of an active partner to whom a share of the earnings must be offered. So, it is not the case that property rights for persons do not exist, but rather that persons and God hold a joint ownership. On the other hand, the Lockean trust-trustee model for the relationship between God-persons is not committed to this. Thus, under View-T, it looks like distributing goods according to what each is entitled to, including God, ends up violating persons' property rights. Having a moral right over property P entails having the freedom to use P in various ways, and this is incompatible with the idea of offering God what God is entitled to. That is, for the right holder to have a moral right over P means that he/she has a moral right over some portion of P (call it 'p').[30] Regardless of how the right holder desires to use p, he is obliged to offer p to God for the libertarian distribution to be just. Since the theistic position is at least a viable alternative, the burden is placed on the libertarian to motivate the claim that persons fully own themselves. The Nozickean libertarian must further demonstrate how this secures his distribution based on entitlement without violating property rights.

V. Conclusion

In this paper, I have demonstrated that the libertarian ideal by itself is a poor candidate for a theory of justice by challenging the justification of the libertarian state and libertarian distributive theory. I argued against the justification by showing the libertarian state to be both rationally undesirable a non-state

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29   Alex Tuckness, "Locke's Political Philosophy," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2012 ed.
30   In fact, it entails that the right holder has a moral right over all and only P. However, for the sake of argument, consider only portion p, which if God were to exist, God would be entitled to given his contribution to acquisition of p by the right holder.

alternative and morally impermissible. The libertarian state is not rationally preferable to Alpha because it fails to make life desirable to the non-state alternative for the poverty class, and this class is expected to rise naturally from anywhere under libertarian ideals. The libertarian state is morally impermissible for two reasons. It is unfit to appropriately treat poverty, a condition a large majority of human beings have good reason to regard as wrong. Also, the libertarian state has not seriously considered the holistic well-being of human beings. Together, these arguments render the libertarian state unjustified and a poor model by itself for social organization. Furthermore, I suggested that the libertarian presupposition that persons fully own themselves could be challenged. One account that accomplishes this is View-T. In doing so, the burden has been placed on the libertarian to motivate personal full self-ownership.

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Reasoned Cooperation

by Stuart Chapin

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In his book *Force and Freedom,*[1] Arthur Ripstein characterizes Immanuel Kant's theory of political freedom as "one in which each person is free to use his or her own powers, individually or cooperatively, to set his or her own purposes, and no one is allowed to compel others to use their powers in a way designed to advance or accommodate any other person's purposes." Per Ripstein's characterization, a person is free to act towards whatever purpose they please if and only if this person is not, in acting, compelling other people to act towards this purpose. Likewise, instances of cooperation should not include the compulsion of others. However, requiring that cooperation and compulsion remain mutually exclusive puzzles me. I think (at least some) instances of cooperation will in fact be brought about by instances of compulsion. This is to say, there are intuitive cases in which an agent *compels* another agent to cooperate.

Imagine a student sitting in the library. The student finishes reading his books. The student packs up his books and walks to the library's open front door to head home for some much needed sleep. As the student is about to walk through the open door, the student notices a teacher standing on just the other side of the doorway. As it turns out the teacher wants to likewise walk through the door. To put it more plainly, both the student and the teacher have the intention of occupying the same space in the doorway at the same time. Unfortunately the physical constraints of the doorway only allow for one human to pass through the doorway at any given time. This situation intuitively calls for the student and the teacher to work cooperatively towards occupying the space in the doorway at appropriate times. We can now identify a preliminary instance of compulsion in our example. An agent can compel another agent by continuing to exist in a particular time and space that prevents another agent from existing in that very same time and space. The student or the teacher, whichever person occupies the space in the doorway first, will compel the other to wait to occupy the space of the doorway until the first is done occupying that space. To escape this instance of compulsion, and to avoid standing in front of the doorway for an eternity, both student and teacher will likely reason cooperatively. This is an intuitive example which conveys that two agents who cooperate are actually compelled to cooperate. However, this is not the only kind of compulsion within this example. A second type of compulsion takes place during the dialectical processes of cooperation.

Embracing cooperation, perhaps the student says, "I don't have time to wait for you to go first,

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1   Arthur Ripstein. *Force and Freedom: Kant's Legal and Political Philosophy*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2009.)

I need to go sleep now" and the teacher replies, "Ok, go ahead". Through this dialectic, the student has introduced a second type of compulsion: compulsion by means of persuasion. As the student and teacher engaged in deliberation in order to formulate which action they will cooperatively take, the student has persuaded the teacher to allow him to occupy the space in the doorway first. Here, I am thinking that persuasion is an instance of compulsion. The general purpose of my paper is to examine the two instances of compulsion noted above which arise when agents cooperate. Stated formally, the two instances of compulsion are:

1. Agent 1 compels Agent 2 by occupying a particular space at a particular time, appealing to the laws of nature that restrict two agents from occupying the same place at the same time.

2. Agent 1 compels Agent 2 through persuasive dialogue.

To begin, let's get a better understand of compulsion. *Prima facie* let's consider compulsion as something close to coercion. Robert Nozick postulates a contemporary characterization of coercion in his essay *coercion*.[2] His example: P coercing Q

1. P aims to keep Q from choosing to perform action A;

2. P communicates a claim to Q;

3. P's claim indicates that if Q performs A, then P will bring about some consequence that would make Q's A-ing less desirable to Q than Q's not A-ing;

4. P's claim is credible to Q;

5. Q does not do A;

6. Part of Q's reason for not doing A is to lessen the likelihood that P will bring about the consequence communicated in (3).

Consider a robber with a gun. The robber pulls out his gun and exclaims, "Give me your money or I will kill you." The victim quickly hands over his wallet. Let P represent the gunman. Let Q represent the victim. The action, A, is *keeping his money*. The robber (P) aims to keep Q (the man with the wallet) from performing the act of (A): keeping his money. The robber communicates his claim to Q by yelling "Give me your money, and if you don't then I will kill you!" The robber yelling this threat communicates that if the man does not perform the action the robber desires then the robber will in fact kill him, a state far less desirable than being alive. The man takes the robber's claim as creditable insofar as he has a gun and guns can easily kill people. Thus the man gives up his wallet because if he does not, the gunman will kill him. Nozick's example of coercion clearly conflicts with freedom according to Ripstein's characterization. Holding someone at gunpoint is a clear case of Ripsteinian compulsion "Compelling others to use their powers in ways designed to advance or accommodate any other person's purposes."[3] This however is not

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2   Robert Nozick. "Coercion," *Philosophy, Science, and Method: Essays in Honor of Ernest Nagel* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1969): 440–472.

3   Arthur Ripstein. *Force and Freedom: Kant's Legal and Political Philosophy*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2009.)

the type of compulsion we have in mind. If we return to my opening example of a student and teacher, we are hard pressed to find out how the student was *coercing* the teacher, or vice versa. Neither student nor teacher proposed a threat, nor does either want to inflict harm on the other. Instead, both the student and the teacher have a goal they want to accomplish, namely walk through the doorway. We could think of compulsion as a subset, or type of coercion. However I will leave a more in depth consideration of the nature of coercion to better minds. Even though our student and teacher example does not include threats of force as a method of compulsion, it does seem to contain two other forms of compulsion a stated above in (1) and (2). Let us now consider the first instance of compulsion further.

The first instance of compulsion does not require that someone "state his threat" or "have his claim be credible." Instead, he simply has to exist, in a particular time and space, such that another person is limited from also existing in that time and space. In my previous case, the student wants to occupy a space that the teacher would also like to occupy: the doorway. This is not an *ad hoc* understanding of compulsion. In his paper *Independent People*, AJ Julius[4] calls this problem "the occupying space problem." Julius holds the view that when an agent occupies a space it hinders any other agent's ability to occupy that same space. Someone might resist this version of compulsion by arguing that inanimate objects, such as chairs, desks, trees, and houses likewise effectively inhibit our ability to occupy certain physical space yet *we would not say that those objects are compelling us*. This is because agents possess two characteristics that inanimate objects do not, *freedom* and *reason*. Agents are free to occupy whatever space-time they want, but inanimate objects are not. Furthermore Agents have the ability to reason with each other regarding which particular space-time they occupy. To better understand this distinction let's consider an example.

Agent 1 wants to have a picnic. He places fruits and a blanket in his favorite wicker basket and heads to the park. Upon arriving at the park, Agent 1 finds it to be pouring rain. Unfazed by the rain he decides he will have his picnic under a giant tree. The rain is limiting his freedom to have a picnic away from the tree. The rain's limit on the man's freedom is simply a result of the physical state of the world around the agent. You cannot reason with rain. Accepting this state of the world around him, he walks towards the giant tree to have his picnic in a dry area. Upon arriving at the giant tree, Agent 1 realizes that Agent 2 is already under the tree having a glorious picnic! Agent 2 is having a picnic which limits Agent 1's freedom to have a picnic. This type of limit on freedom is a result of Agent 2's choosing to occupy the space under the tree. Agent 2 has the ability to stay under the tree or to leave. Agent two also has the ability to reason with Agent 1 regarding the space they both want to occupy. Agent 1's freedom is dependent on the free actions of Agent 2. Agent 2 is compelling Agent 1. Both Agents can cooperate. I will now consider a competing solution to the occupy space problem which does not involve cooperation.

Another competing solution to the occupy space problem is the *first some first serve* model.[5] First

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4   AJ Julius. "Independent People," *Freedom and force: essays on Kant's legal philosophy*, forthcoming
5   I should once again credit A.J. Julius.

come first served might provide an answer to the picnic example. When Agent 1 realizes Agent 2 is already under the tree, Agent 1 can simply wait until Agent 2 leaves in order to take his turn under the tree. We see this often with lines at the restroom, whoever gets to the bathroom first uses it, and others must wait until the previous occupant has finished and leaves. An agent who embraces first come first serve considers other agents in the same way he views inanimate objects. He would consider the Agent under the tree no differently than the rain in the park. First come first serve might initially solve the occupy space problem for the agent in the rain, however it fails to provide a method for solving the problem of the student and teacher in the doorway. If the student and teacher followed a first come first serve model, then whoever occupied the door to the library first would have done so rightfully. However, if the teacher and student adopted this model for this case then the teacher could stand in the doorway for an eternity: never letting the student leave the library. The first come first serve model fails to provide a method for our teacher and student to cooperatively work towards their purposes uncompelled. We might also wonder how the first come first serve model was adopted. An argument could be made that the first come first serve model was a product of cooperation from long ago. With first come first serve failing to provide a solution we return to cooperation as the proper method to overcome the occupy space problem.

Let's now consider the dialectical process of cooperation. In our example both the student and teacher need to find a method in which they each can occupy the space in the doorway appropriately. *I think cooperation is a process of conveying and aligning reasons agents have for their personal actions. Once cooperative agents have conveyed and aligned their reasons for action they, as a unified group, proceed to act for their aligned reasons.* In my example, the student, in an attempt to cooperate, exclaims his reason for occupying the space before the teacher "I don't have time to wait, I need to go sleep now." The student states his reason, he needs to sleep now, as an attempt to motivate the teacher to cooperate towards letting him go through the doorway first. However we might wonder, "Aren't reasons that motivate me to do something dependent on that fact that the action benefits me?" Why should the student's reason, "I need to sleep now" motivate the teacher? Why should the teacher care? On this view the reason which motivates the student, might only motivate the student.

To better understand the connection between reasons and action let's consider a game of chess. We might say that the reason I have to win at chess applies to me alone because I am the person who would benefit from winning at chess. In this game of chess the movement of a rook would place the opponent into checkmate.[6]

1. (I) Stuart is playing a game of Chess

2. <u>Moving Stuart's rook across the board would put Stuart's opponent into checkmate</u>

C: Stuart has a sufficient reason to move his rook

6   Thomas Nagel. *The Possibility of Altruism*. N.p.,Web. 23 Apr. 2014.

This conception limits the motivating power of the given reason to the subject in the argument, Stuart (me). If I was not the subject of which the reason-is-motivating then the argument for subject reasons fails. This is to say that if moving my rook put someone else's opponent into checkmate, then the reasons explicated in this argument would fail to motivate me, Stuart. It might help to think about this argument in terms of perspective. This argument works when it is uttered from the first person perspective. From Stuart's perspective, or more aptly put, *my perspective*, this argument motivates Stuart. In this case the reason is being formulated from the perspective of the agent who would benefit from his own decision. Perspective dependent reason-motivation is often called an *agent relative reason.*[7] However, the agent relative reason does not motivate others to act. It likewise does not provide a means for reasons to motivate more than one person to act. Let's consider the agent relative reason as it applies to our student trying to pass through the library doorway.

1. Student is trying to pass through a doorway

2. Student is very tired

C: Student has a sufficient reason to proceed through the doorway first.

The student's reason does not motivate the teacher to do anything. We can however imagine cases in which reasons are not first person perspective dependent, but can motivate anyone in the student's position to act much like our student acted. After all, anyone who is in the student's place might likewise be motivated to let the teacher proceed through the doorway. This is often called *an agent neutral reason.*[8] I will now explain one flavor of agent neutral reason called *objective principles*.

Thomas Nagel, a philosopher who pioneered a classical version of *agent natural* reasons and *agent relative* reasons, noted that behind every motivating reason which could motivate an agent, stands an *objective principle* justifying that reason. These guiding objective principles provide justification for why reasons that personally motivate agents towards action, should in fact motivate agents towards action. If Chess Player 1 has a reason to move his rook, it is because the reason he has to move his rook is grounded in the objective principle the Agent holds about chess. His objective principle might be "winning chess is good". Consider a case when Player 1 is playing chess and he holds the objective principle "winning chess is good". With this principal in mind, let's review the chess example arguing for *agent relative* reasons:

0. Winning chess is good. (Objective principle)

1. (I) Stuart is playing a game of Chess

2. Moving Stuart's rook across the board would put Stuart's opponent into checkmate

C: Stuart has a sufficient reason to move his rook

This player relative reason is justified because it follows the objective principle "winning chess is good" and then applying that principle to Player 1. Here the objective principle allows Player 1 to move his rook

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7   Derek Parfit. *Reasons and Persons*. (Oxford, 1986).

8   Ibid.

into checkmate position. Player neutral reasons likewise adhere to objective principles.

1. Winning chess is good. (objective principle)

2. For all X, if moving X's rook to a particular space on the chessboard puts X's opponent into checkmate, then X has a reason to move his rook to that space on the board.

3. Moving X's rook to a particular space on the chessboard does in fact put his opponent into checkmate.

C: X has a reason to move his rook to a particular space on the chessboard.

This example shows a case in which anyone agent could be X and have reason to accomplish the end of putting his opponent into checkmate. When X arrives at the reason "I should move this rook to win the game of chess" it is in fact because I (Player 1) have recognized the objective principle "Winning chess is a good thing." So, the reasons which motivate agents have a corresponding objective principle.

Now consider two chess players who both recognize the objective principle "Winning a fun game of chess is good." Sharing the objective principle allows for individual agents to act for whatever reason they desire so long as it is in line with the shared objective principle. Stuart is playing chess with John. John and Stuart both share the objective principle "playing chess for fun is good." With this principle in mind they both can form independent reasons. Stuart could even have agent relative reasons that are in line with the objective principle. Stuart could have the agent relative reason to place John into check. Of course, we could say the same thing about John. John might have an agent neutral reason to move his pawn to block Stuart's rook. This example is particularly interesting because it allows two agents to share an objective principle even when like they hold reasons for their personal actions which intend to prevent the other from completing their actions. Stuart has a reason to checkmate John and to not be placed into checkmate by John. John likewise has a reason, namely to put Stuart into checkmate and not to be placed into checkmate by Stuart. Both chess players are actively trying to prevent the opposite player from achieving their purposes yet they both share the objective principle "Winning a fun game of chess is good."

Nagel's objective principles argument seems to solve the occupying space problem in my doorway example. To cooperate the student and teacher should share an objective principle "Crossing through doorways without running into anyone is good." So let's consider our student and teacher one final time. There they stand, not sure who should do what for what reason. They just need to agree on an objective principle. After some deliberation the student and teacher agree that they share the objective principle "crossing through doorways without running into anyone is good." They each then can form reasons that motivate their individual actions towards their agreed objective principle. The student has the motivating reason "I want to sleep now and I want to follow the objective principle: *walk through doorways without running into anyone is good*" and the teacher has the motivating reason "I want to go read and I want to follow the objective principle: *walking through doorways without running into anyone is good.*"

Cooperation that embraces objective principles is a flavor of cooperation that allows both the student and the teacher to cooperate while having different reasons to cooperate. As we finally decide on a method of cooperation to overcome the compulsion related to the occupy space problem, we run into yet another instance of compulsion.

How do two agents deliberate on which objective principles to embrace without compelling each other? It is likely that a teacher could persuade a student towards their purposes. Maybe the teacher could persuade the student to embrace the objective principle, "Letting teachers go through doorways in good because it is a sign of respect." I would say that holding that objective principle is compelling the student to cooperate. Some philosophers have made attempts at providing method in which compulsion via *deliberative persuasiveness* can be avoided. In his paper *Economic Basis of Deliberative Democracy,*[9] Joshua Cohen postulates four main guiding principles for ideal deliberation that I take to be working towards persuasionless deliberation:

1. Ideal deliberation is free.

2. Ideal deliberation is reasoned.

3. Parties participating in deliberation are equal.

4. The aim of this deliberation is to arrive at a rationally motivated consensus.

(1) Agents participating in cooperative purpose setting should consider themselves free and are only subject to the decision of themselves and by extension, the cooperative body. (2) The deliberative process should be reasoned insofar as if the aim of the deliberation is to bring about the best possible state of cooperation, and if reasons are what motivate people to act, then we should only allow the most well-reasoned ideas in the deliberative arena. (3) All agents participating in the dialectal process of cooperation are to be considered both substantially and formally equal. They are formally equal in regards to the rules set up to allow this discussion to take place. They are substantially equal when the cooperative group takes every agent's participation in the deliberative process as an equal contribution. (4) The aim of the deliberation is to arrive at a well-reasoned, rationally motivated, consensus that will produce the best course of action for the cooperative group. Cohen's conception is helpful because it emphases the need for *reason* to participate in deliberation. If we take reason to be objective then maybe we can achieve dialectic free of persuasion. Even Cohen's meticulous attempt to prevent compulsion within the deliberative process cannot guarantee the absence of compulsion. Even in this ideal deliberative process we can imagine a highly skilled orator persuading others. I leave this second instance of compulsion open ended and up for debate. Is an ideal deliberative process even possible?

In this paper I have argued that the first instance of compulsion between agents is when one agent's persistence to occupy a physical space such that another agent cannot proceed towards his purposes. This instance of compulsion necessitates the cooperation between agents to overcome the laws of nature. I

9   Joshua Cohen. "The Economic Basis of Deliberative Democracy," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 6 (1989): 25-50.

have also argued that cooperation which utilizes Nagel's *Objective Principles* may seem like it provides a method to overcome the occupy space problem, but in fact fails to account for a second instance of compulsion, compulsion through persuasion.

Taken as a whole my paper has broad implications. It displays the need for philosophical work to be done in areas such as first come first serve, how reasons motivate agents, and how context effects deliberation.[10] At the very least my paper pressures Ripstein to articulate a concise account of compulsion. Failing to account for compulsion via the occupy space problem helps us to better understand one less obvious instance of compulsion that Ripstein's characterization must overcome. Consider an alternative examination of Ripstein's characterization which considers compulsion as something closer to Nozick's understanding of coercion[11]. If we thought of compulsion as close to coercion then we would not consider occupying space as coercive insofar as occupying space does not utilize a threat of force. Furthermore an alternative examination of Ripstein's characterization of Kantian political philosophy might marginalize the likelihood of my second instance of compulsion. The persuasive abilities of agents seem to be marginalized by the assumption that all agents have equal reasoning abilities. Thinking of agents as having equal reasoning abilities might not be too far off from Kant's own view.[12] A presupposition I, and other philosophers, should rightly resist.

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10   Obviously work of this type exists. See Christine Korsgaard, Gerald Cohen, and Alexander Julius.

11   Although Nozick might consider the persistent physical presence of agents as a threat. Nozick and I could say more here.

12   I am thinking here how Kant perceives the mind. For Kant everyone seems to have a coequal about [amount?] of reasoning ability, both metaphysically and epistemologically. See the Critique of Pure Reason and the Metaphysics of Morals. Clearly more needs to be said here.

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Is There a Benign Form of Epistemic Circularity?

by Aaron Joshua Dolin

Aaron Joshua Dolin is currently a philosophy major in his junior year at California State University, Northridge where he is studying epistemology under Tim Black. Aaron currently serves as the president of the student philosophical society at CSUN. He is primarily interested in epistemology and philosophy of religion. Aaron will be applying to several philosophy graduate programs for fall 2015 enrollment with the tentative goal of researching religious epistemology. He is happily married to his high school sweetheart, Camille.

A fundamental assumption regarding knowledge production is that we are constituted with *reliable* belief forming mechanisms (BFMs)—that our reasoning, perception, introspection, memory, etc. are reliable sources to yield knowledge. Yet constructing a *non-circular* argument in support of this assumption seems impossible. How can we defend the reliability of our BFMs without relying on our BFMs? It seems we are caught in *epistemic* circularity (as opposed to *logical* circularity). It could be argued that the process of evolution would have selected reliable BFMs for their survival/reproductive success or perhaps a successful track-record of the reliability of our BFMs is sufficient to infer that they are indeed reliable. The problem with these arguments is that the *evidence* favoring evolution and the *research* of track-records are obtained by our BFMs, so the question remains whether or not they are reliable.

Epistemic circularity is a problem since—given that we are without a non-circular argument in favor of our BFM's reliability—it seems to lead to skepticism. To avoid skepticism some philosophers have accepted the charge of epistemic circularity, but reject the claim that it leads to skepticism. For example, Michael Bergmann distinguishes between 'malignant' and 'benign' epistemic circularity. For Bergmann, a 'malignant' epistemically circular belief is a belief that *S* has when *S* is in a 'QD-situation,' which is a "situation where, prior to the [epistemically circular] beliefs formation, the subject *is or should be* seriously questioning or doubting the trustworthiness of X or the reliability of B's formation." A 'benign' epistemically circular belief is a belief that *S* has when *S* is in a 'non-QD-situation' wherein "… the subject *neither is nor should be* seriously questioning or doubting the trustworthiness of X…"[1] To avoid skepticism Bergmann advocates a form of Reidian common sense epistemology which argues that we *should not* seriously question or doubt the reliability of our BFMs because we have non-inferential grounds to believe our BFMs are reliable.

In this essay I will first argue that any belief which maintains that our BFMs are reliable is an epistemically circular belief because we must depend on our BFMs in sustaining the belief that our BFMs are reliable. Further, I will argue that appealing to common sense epistemology does not solve the problem of epistemic circularity leading to skepticism since epistemically circular beliefs are 'malignant'; that is, we

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1 Michael Bergmann. "Epistemic Circularity and Common Sense," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 73 (2006): 199.

should seriously question or doubt the reliability of our BFMs, even after considering the non-inferential grounds that Reidians suggest we have. Thus I can formulate the abovementioned considerations into my main argument in the following way:

Main Argument

1. *S*'s belief that her BFMs are reliable is an epistemically circular belief.

2. Epistemically circular beliefs are 'malignant.'

3. Therefore, *S*'s belief that her BFMs are reliable is a 'malignant' belief.

> **Sub-Argument in Defense of Premise 1:**
>
> 1. If *S* depends on her BFMs in sustaining her belief that her BFMs are reliable, then that belief is an epistemically circular belief.
>
> 2. *S* must depend on her BFMs in sustaining her belief that her BFMs are reliable.
>
> 3. Therefore, *S*'s belief that her BFMs are reliable is an epistemically circular belief.

Premise 1 is trivially true since the antecedent defines an epistemically circular belief. Premise 2 is defended on the grounds that it is inconceivable to step outside of our BFMs in order to evaluate their reliability. We might think that a track-record of instances in which an adequate sample of subjects affirm *p*, and *p* is true, would lead us to reasonably conclude that the BFMs of the subjects involved do in fact tend to produce true beliefs. However, we cannot justify our beliefs about the subjects in question without relying on our own BFMs to verify that *p* is true.

To illustrate this, William Alston gives an example of determining the reliability of sense perception, namely, vision.[2] He concludes that there is no conceivable way of ascertaining the reliability of our visual perceptions without employing visual perception. For example, suppose I have a ripe tomato in my hand. By looking at it I form the belief that I see a shade of the color red. How can I affirm that my belief that I'm seeing red is produced by reliable BFMs? Perhaps I could hold the tomato up to a chart which delineated the colors of the visible light spectrum and compare the tomato to the disparate wavelength and frequency intervals. I could then confirm that the intervals which correspond to "red" closely match the tomato. But obviously I must rely on my visual capacities in order to see the color chart aright. Moreover, conducting several such track-record tests for our perceptual faculties will not ameliorate the circularity involved here because the accuracy of sense perception that we're trying to ascertain equally depends on our BFMs in one case as it does with several cases. Since in order to ascertain the reliability of my BFMs I must rely on my BFMs, I am in an epistemically circular situation.

Further, appealing to less direct evidence in support of the reliability of our BFMs does not free us from epistemic circularity. For instance, one could argue that the process of evolution would have selected reliable BFMs for their survival/reproductive success. This suggestion merely pushes the problem back one step since evidence for evolution such as observable homologies and fossil discoveries are themselves

2   William Alston. "Epistemic Circularity," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 73 (1986): 323-324.

perceived by the senses. Thus postulating selective advantages wrought by evolution as an assurance of the reliability of our BFMs is itself an *empirical* claim, one that relies on our BFMs to confirm.

Another question is whether we can rely on one BFM, say, *a priori* reasoning, in maintaining that another BFM, say, our visual perception is reliable. Here we find the problem merely pushed back one step, or, at any rate, a finite number of steps. If we can ascertain that our vision is reliable *a priori*, then we may ask whether our *a priori* reasoning is reliable. From this point we can either use *a priori* reasoning to verify its reliability or we can employ yet another cognitive faculty, and another, and so on. Perhaps we can use one BFM to ascertain the reliability of a different BFM, but, since we have a finite number of BFMs, we will inevitably end up looped around in epistemic circularity since a crucial premise will invariably end up relying on the BFM in question.

So far we have seen that if one depends on one's BFMs in sustaining one's belief that one's BFMs are reliable, then that belief is an epistemically circular belief. And since one must depend on one's BFMs, whether it be sense perception, reasoning, or testimony, in sustaining one's belief that one's BFMs are indeed reliable, then that belief is an epistemically circular belief. Any attempt to evade epistemic circularity with a track-record argument fails. We now turn to premise 2, that epistemically circular beliefs are 'malignant', which is more of a controversial claim.

<u>Sub-Argument in Defense of Premise 2:</u>

1. Epistemically circular beliefs are either 'malignant' or 'benign.'

2. There are no 'benign' forms of epistemically circular beliefs.

3. Therefore, epistemically circular beliefs are 'malignant.'

Premise 1 is trivially true given that the technical terms of 'malignant' and 'benign' exhaust logical space in the sense that one arrives at an epistemically circular belief in either a 'QD-situation' or a 'non-QD-situation.' (Q is for questioning and D is for doubting.) Premise 2 is defended against Bergmann's claim that we should *not* seriously question or doubt the trustworthiness of our BFMs. Yet the reliability of our BFMs *should* be questioned or doubted to the extent that one withholds—as opposed to positively disbelieving—the claim that our BFMs are reliable, as I shall argue. In arguing that epistemically circular beliefs are 'benign', Bergmann appeals to the work of Thomas Reid.[3] According to Bergmann, the Reidian position "includes the following two components: (a) we often form non-inferentially justified beliefs in the reliability of our faculties and (b) such beliefs are based on an experience—the emotion of ridicule."[4]

Let's begin with the latter. For Reid, we are endowed with a belief source called 'common sense':

[O]riginal and natural judgments are […] apart of [the] furniture which nature has given
the human understanding. They are the inspiration of the Almighty no less than our notions
of simple apprehensions. They serve to direct us in the common affairs of life, where our

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3   Bergmann, "Epistemic Circularity and Common Sense," 198.

4   *Ibid*., 203.

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reasoning faculty would leave us in the dark. They are a part of our constitution, and all the discoveries of our reason are grounded upon them. They make up what is called the *common sense* of mankind, and what is manifestly contrary to any of those first principles is what we call absurd.[5]

Common sense, then, is a source we are naturally endowed with that produces non-inferential beliefs in so-called 'first principles,' one of which holds that our BFMs are reliable. Reid thinks the function of common sense is to evoke an emotion, namely, an 'emotion of ridicule.'[6] Consider Mordecai, for example. After watching Peter Weir's 1998 film *The Truman Show*, Mordecai came to seriously question whether his whole life consists in being the star of a television show. After all, this fact could be covered up far more adroitly these days. This momentary belief has now lead Mordecai to be reluctant to use the bathroom. Suddenly, *without inference to the contrary*, Mordecai comes to believe he is not in a Truman Show-type situation based on a feeling that believing so seems ridiculous. Mordecai thus shakes his head with incredulity, feeling stupid that he would even entertain such a thought, and proceeds to use the bathroom. Similarly, for Reidians, the faculty of common sense will lead us to think the denial of a first principle (such as *human BFMs are reliable*) will evoke an emotion of ridicule. This emotion prods us along the path of common sense. As such, the emotion of ridicule serves as the basis for rejecting the denial of the reliability of our BFMs.

The problem with appealing to emotions of ridicule is that it is not clear what the epistemic value of this emotion is. Why think the emotion of ridicule has any evidential value? It's conceivable that, as Baron Reed points out, placing the status of the emotion of ridicule to the level of a cognitive faculty is tantamount to allowing wishful thinking or prejudices the same status:

> It is part of our folk epistemology that emotional reactions of this sort are very often the product of prejudice and wishful thinking. Simply imagine the response you might get if you told a homophobe that restrictions on same-sex marriage are unconstitutional or told a certain kind of gambler that his ship is almost certainly *not* going to come in. In any case, it is *very* far from self-evident that the emotion of ridicule is suited to play a cognitive role of any sort—indeed it is doubtful whether experiencing this emotion when considering a given proposition even makes it more likely than not that the contradictory is true.[7]

To be sure, we all experience emotions of one sort or another that lead us to believe certain propositions. I experience something like the emotion of ridicule whenever I doubt the existence of God, but I'm also well aware that the verdict is still out on the truth of theism. Similarly, even if we do in fact feel an emotion

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5   Thomas Reid, "An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense," *Modern Philosophy: An Anthology of Primary Sources*. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2009), 649.

6   Thomas Reid, "Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man," *The Works of Thomas Reid, vol. I.* (Edinburgh: Maclachalan and Stewart 1872), 567.

7   Bergmann, "Epistemic Circularity and Common Sense," 195.

of ridicule when doubting our BFMs, it does not seem to provide any evidential support for believing that *our BFMs are reliable* is a first principle that should not be doubted. The reason for this is that it is not at all clear how to distinguish allegedly reliable emotions of ridicule from unreliable ones. In order to support the claim that the emotion of ridicule has evidential value it is incumbent on the Reidian to offer an argument as to why the emotion felt when doubting the reliability of our BFMs is significantly different from feeling emotions brought about by prejudice or wishful thinking.

Moreover, if Reidians wish to hold that the faculty of common sense is itself a first principle that provides an assurance of the alleged first principle that our BFMs are reliable, then the onus is on the Reidian to provide a conceptual analysis of a first principle and how the reliability of our BFMs meets the relevant criteria. For Reid, the mark of a first principle is that it is self-evident. He makes a distinction between two types of self-evident first principles: necessary truths and contingent truths. Reid's account of first principles that are necessary is as follows:

> A first principle may admit of a proof *ad absurdum*. In this kind of proof, which is very common in mathematics, we suppose the contradictory position to be true. We trace the consequences of that assumption in a train of reasoning; and, if we find any of its necessary consequences to be manifestly absurd, we conclude the supposition from which it followed to be false; and, therefore, it's contradictory to be true.[8]

Here Reid states that there are first principles that we come to know by an *ad absurdum* proof. Certain truths of mathematics and logic fall into this category. But if we allow this criterion as a condition for an unquestionable first principle, it doesn't apply to the assumption that our BFMs are *un*reliable. Tracing the consequences of the assumption that our BFMs are unreliable does not result in a 'manifestly absurd' consequence since there is nothing absurd or inconceivable or contradictory in the proposition *human BFMs are unreliable*. What's more, tracing the consequences of that assumption in a train of *reasoning* is itself an assumption that our BFMs are indeed reliable.

Perhaps Reid means to suggest that the belief that our BFMs are reliable is a first principle of the contingent sort. Indeed this seems more reasonable, but what reason do we have to believe we are not in a situation to question or doubt such a claim? It's difficult to see how the reliability of our BFMs admits of self-evidence. As Copleston points out:

> [Reid's] first principles are of different types…can [self-evidence] be said of the validity of memory or the existence of the external world? Reid can hardly have thought that it could; for he classifies the relevant propositions as first principles of contingent truths. In what sense, then, are they self-evident? Reid obviously means…that there is a natural propensity to believe them.[9]

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8   Reid, "Essays on the intellectual Powers of Man," 571.
9   Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy* (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, 1994), 369.

Now it seems that all Reid means to suggest is not that the proposition *our BFMs are reliable* is self-evident in the sense noted above, nor that it is analytically true. On the contrary, what Reid means is that that proposition is usually evident to "selves". This interpretation of self-evidence completely strips it of its contemporary meaning. If all Reid is arguing for is statistically usual belief patterns in humans, then he's right. However, this does not get neo-Reidians what they want; the fact that human BFMs are reliable is a belief that most people share does not provide grounds for thinking we are not in a situation where we *should* question or doubt the reliability of our BFMs. It's easy to conceive of a universal belief that is false; thus we should not refrain from seriously questioning propositions in virtue of their being easily accepted to all or most people.

So much for Reidian claim (b). The other Reidian claim fares no better in persuading that epistemically circular beliefs are benign. The claim is this: we often form non-inferentially justified beliefs in the reliability of our BFMs. Bergmann offers four reasons he thinks gives *prima facie* support of this claim: (1) the sane response to skeptical challenges is to think that they are not true; and it seems sane to believe that one's faculties are reliable against skeptical hypotheses; (2) by considering how beliefs about the reliability of one's faculties are formed, they seem (introspectively) to be formed non-inferentially; (3) we don't seem to have any adequate inferential basis from which we are inclined to infer that our faculties are reliable; (4) our perceptual, memorial, and *a priori* beliefs seem to be sane and justified; they seem to be formed non-inferentially too. From all this Bergmann concludes that they are non-inferentially justified.[10]

Let's take each claim in its turn. First, it's not clear what Bergmann means by a sane person. Is he claiming that skeptics suffer from mental illness or that skeptical hypotheses are irrational? If the former, then, of course, it is nothing more than an *ad hominem*. If the latter, Bergmann owes us an argument for why skeptical hypotheses are irrational to hold. Second, the fact that the belief *human BFMs are reliable* is formed non-inferentially is a moot point since the question at hand is whether or not it is *true* that our BFMs are reliable, not how we seem to apprehend the *belief* that they are reliable. Third, being devoid of an adequate (non-circular) inferential basis for the reliability of our BFMs is merely stating the problem of epistemic circularity leading to skepticism; that is, we have no non-circular basis for justifying that our BFMs are reliable. Last, enumerating particular BFMs and stating that they seem reliable and non-inferentially formed is Bergmann's position, not a reason for his position.

All that has been added to his position is that it *seems* to be the case. We can safely conclude that Bergmann's admittedly *prima facie* reasons for accepting that we usually do form non-inferentially justified beliefs in the reliability of our BFMs is irrelevant. What we want to know is *not* how things seem or what is statistically usual regarding how we form beliefs. What we are interested in is whether or not it is *true* that our BFMs are reliable.

10   Bergmann, "Epistemic Circularity and Common Sense," 205.

We can add to this the fact that we can easily conceive ourselves in a 'QD-situation'—that our BFMs may be *un*reliable. It was mentioned above that evolution does not give us reason to think we're not in an epistemically circular situation. Let's set that aside for now and assume that evolution is true in order to illustrate how our BFMs might be unreliable. Let's add to this assumption, what a good many philosophers believe today, the further assumption that naturalism is true. The point of adding this assumption is to preclude the possibility of a worldview that affords the possibility of guaranteeing the reliability of our BFMs such as theism or panpsychism. Alvin Plantinga thinks one who holds these beliefs together is irrational since the probability of having reliable cognitive faculties given the truth of evolutionary theory and naturalism is low. This isn't entirely relevant for our present purposes though an illustration from Plantinga's argument is, I think, helpful to see that our BFMs may be *un*reliable. Plantinga writes:

> Paul is a prehistoric hominid; the exigencies of survival call for him to display tiger-avoidance behavior…perhaps [Paul] thinks the tiger is a large, friendly, cuddly pussycat and wants to pet it; but he also believes that the best way to pet it is to run away from it… belief-cum-desire systems fit a given bit of behavior where the beliefs are mostly false.[11]

So according to Plantinga if evolution and naturalism are both true we can well imagine our situation with respect to our BFMs to be similar to Paul's beliefs about tigers; that is, for all we know, our BFMs may be reliable insofar as they are conducive for survival, but not necessarily reliable guides to truth. By this I don't mean to argue for the thesis that our BFMs are in fact *un*reliable, I merely intend to show that we are not without a reason to question or doubt the reliability of our BFMs.

In defense of premise 2 (epistemically circular beliefs are 'malignant') of my main argument we have seen that the Reidian common sense position does not solve the problem of epistemic circularity leading to skepticism for three reasons. First, even if we have non-inferential grounds that Reidians suggest we do, such as the emotion of ridicule, they do not carry the evidential value required to ascertain (or lend to the probability of) the reliability of our BFMs. Second, since the belief that our BFMs are reliable is not a necessary first principle, then that belief should be open to question or doubt inasmuch as any other contingent proposition is open to scrutiny; that our BFMs are reliable is a popular belief does not lend to its veridicality. Third, we saw that Bergmann's *prima facie* reasons to hold that our BFMs are reliable is irrelevant and we added to this that we can easily conceive of our predicament as a 'QD-situation' like Plantinga's example of Paul and the tiger. Therefore, any argument in support of the belief that our BFMs are reliable will involve 'malignant' epistemic circularity.

Objections:

Although I have answered some criticisms along the way, I will now consider three more objections to malignant epistemic circularity in general.

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11   Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 225-226.

The Pragmatic Argument:

A possible objection to malignant epistemic circularity is that our BFMs seem to work. We seem to have success in biology, archeology, medicine, etc., all of which depend on our BFMs. When different people from different parts of the world conduct the same experiments, the data often agrees. In short, we have *pragmatic* reasons for rejecting malignant epistemic circularity. Unfortunately, pragmatic arguments miss the crucial point that when discussing the problem of epistemic circularity we are not concerned with the way the world *seems*, but the way the world truly is. Further, pragmatic arguments do not evade epistemic circularity. As Alston points out:

> How do we know that predictions formed on the basis of observationally based principles are often correct? By looking to see whether things came out as predicted, or by using instruments to determine this, which in turn…How do we know that different observers generally agree on what is before them? By listening to what they say. Once more we have to rely on sense perception to gather the data that are being used in the argument for its reliability.[12]

Given a moment's thought it becomes clear that appealing to a pragmatic argument is yet another assumption of the reliability of our BFMs in order to hold that our BFMs are reliable. It's fair to hold that we *seem* to have reliable BFMs, but that is irrelevant to our present concerns.

Hinge-Propositions:

In Wittgenstein's work *On Certainty* he holds that there can be no doubt regarding propositions pivotal to cognition insofar as we want to inquire of anything at all:

> [T]he *questions* that we raise and our *doubts* depend on the fact that some propositions are exempt from doubt, are as it were like hinges on which those turn. That is to say, it belongs to the logic of our scientific investigations that certain things are *indeed* not doubted…if I want the door to turn, the hinges must stay put.[13]

So in our present context Wittgenstein would hold that we *should not* (or cannot legitimately) deny the reliability of our BFMs since we need them to swing conversations in motion. According to Markus Lammenranta, Wittgenstein thought hinge propositions cannot be doubted because "he took hinge 'propositions' to have no factual content and thus to be neither true nor false. Thus our concepts of knowledge and justification would not apply to them." If true, epistemically circular beliefs are 'benign' since we cannot—and therefore *should not* attempt to—doubt our BFMs by stepping outside of our cognition in order to appraise it.

There seems to be a problem Wittgenstein's objection. It seems very unintuitive to hold that the reliability of our BFMs is neither true nor false. As we saw above with Plantinga's Paul and the Tiger

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12   Alston, "Epistemic Circularity," 325.
13   Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1972), 44.

example, we can easily conceive that we are in fact in a situation in which our BFMs are *un*reliable. As Lammenranta points out "Surely the sentence 'Sense perception is reliable' appears to express a genuine proposition that is either true or false. If it does express such a proposition, we can have doxastic attitudes to the proposition, and these attitudes can be evaluated epistemically."

The Recoil Objection:

It may be objected that any argument which leads to a skeptical conclusion suffers from being self-referentially false. According to such lines of thought, the skeptic is employing the tools of cognition in order to undermine cognitivism and is thereby committed to the very thing she wishes to deny. Hence, skeptical arguments recoil. This might apply to the present argument in that the author must employ his BFMs in order to argue that there is no 'benign' form of epistemic circularity.

Any such argument against skepticism evinces a misunderstanding as to how the skeptic makes her case. The skeptic merely *adopts* the tools of the cognitivist in order to show that applying those tools to cognitivism itself will lead to what cognitivists themselves deem fallacious. In the present context one may employ a BFM (reason) to show that, *if* we follow the rules of cognitivism—one of which disallows circular reasoning—then (given the abovementioned arguments) it follows that we are devoid of a sound argument in favor of the reliability of our BFMs; and, *if* we follow the rules of cognitivism, we can see that the emotion of ridicule does not have any evidential value, and so on.

Concluding Remarks:

The main conclusion of this essay is that the belief that our BFMs are reliable is a 'malignant' belief; we are indeed in a situation to seriously question or doubt the reliability of our BFMs to the extent that one withholds—as opposed to positively disbelieving—the claim that our BFMs are reliable.

The best defense of 'benign' forms of epistemic circularity is to postulate non-inferential grounds for the belief that our BFMs are reliable. However, as we have seen, it is doubtful that any such non-inferential grounds could have any evidential value greater than that of repulsion, prejudice, wishful thinking, etc. Passions, intuitions, emotions of ridicule, etc. are precisely what the quintessential philosopher has historically determined to eradicate from her grounds of belief. By allowing non-inferential grounds in forming our beliefs, especially the fundamental belief that our BFMs are reliable, we swing the door wide open to philosophy's archenemy—dogmatism.

If, on the other hand, we deem circular reasoning permissible with respect to the reliability of our BFMs, why not permit circular reasoning in believing in any given proposition? Further, in order to get started on any inquiry, philosophical or otherwise, we must first affirm that our BFMs are reliable; but by depending on non-inferential grounds to legitimize the reliability of our BFMs and refraining from questioning or doubting their reliability, why not legitimize, without suspicion, just any belief based on any non-inferential grounds?

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How Larry Wright's Reduction of Functions Leads to Either Eliminative Materialism or Teleological Commitments

by James Johnson

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Introduction

Often a narrative is heard that early modern philosophy and Newtonian physics successfully displaced the Aristotelian paradigm characteristic of Scholasticism. Essential to Aristotelianism is the commitment to the reality of teleology in the guise of final causation. Hence, those proposing a mechanistic natural philosophy targeted the existence of final causation in due course. However, certain features of biological organisms became mysterious for these mechanists. That is, so the narrative goes, until 1859 when Charles Darwin published his *On the Origin of Species* advancing his theory of random mutation and natural selection. Darwin's ingenuity supposedly provided "the death blow" to teleology,[1] thereby completing the banishment of teleology from science.

In this essay, I will not be so much concerned with the accuracy of these historical episodes, nor with whether or not science actually does require the dissolution of teleology. Instead, I shall evaluate the following proposition: Teleology is reducible to efficient and material causes (TEM). I will evaluate TEM according to Larry Wright's attempted reduction, culminating in a dilemma: choose teleology or choose eliminative materialism. I will begin with an explication of the problem that biological phenomena raise for those who reject the existence of teleology.

What's the Problem?

Why, someone might ask, is the advocate of TEM pressed to give an account of his reduction of teleology in the first place? Darwinian evolution, i.e. minimally, random mutation and natural selection, provides an account of the adaptations of organisms that shows "how every feature of the world *can* be the product of [a] blind, unforesightful, nonteleological, ultimately mechanical process."[2] That is, given the veracity of Darwinian evolution, teleological *explanans* of adaptations are antiquated.[3] Despite this, it is freely admitted by even the staunchest of antagonists to teleology that biology is replete with unfiltered language ascribing functional behaviors to its *explanandum*. Alex Rosenberg, for example,

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1   James Lennox, "Darwin *was* a Teleologist," *Biology and Philosophy* 8 (1993): 409-421.

2   Daniel Dennett, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea* (London: Penguin Group, 1995), 315.

3   John Searle aptly puts the point as follows: "Indeed, Darwin's major contribution was precisely to remove purpose and teleology from evolution, and substitute for it purely natural forms of selection. Darwin's account shows that the apparent teleology of biological processes is an illusion." John Searle, *The Rediscovery of Mind* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1992), 51.

unhesitatingly confesses, "The whole vocabulary of biology is teleological."[4] Rosenberg continues by enumerating a litany of biological items, e.g. "codon, gene, promoter, repressor, organelle, cell, tissue, organ, fin, wing, eye, coat, stem, chloroplast, membrane", that are "defined—at least conventionally—by what the thing *does*, or what it does when working normally."[5] Rosenberg is saying that many of the fundamental items biology studies are usually explicated in terms of its function. But to admit as much without giving a successful reduction of this biological discourse is just to admit that biology consists of real teleological *explanans*. In order for the proponent of TEM to substantiate his claim, then, he will have to explain away or reduce functional language to merely efficient and material causes. How might this be done?

Wright's Reduction

Larry Wright offers a formidable attempt at such a reduction. Wright looks to the etiology of functional adaptations - or "how the thing with the function *got there*"[6] - in order to explain away the otherwise salient teleological activity of the organism. Wright says:

The function of X is Z *means*

(a) X is there because it does Z

and

(b) Z is a consequence (or result) of X's being there.[7]

So, according to Wright's analysis:

The function of the heart is to pump blood.

can be reduced to the conjunction

(a') The heart is there because it pumps blood.

(b') The pumping of blood is a consequence (or result) of the heart's being there.

In effect, so the proponent of TEM argues, (a') will appeal to natural selection in the reduction since it is the *raison d'etre* for the origin of the heart. Wright, himself, expresses his sympathy for such appeal to natural selection when he says, "The natural function of something, say, an organ in an organism-is the reason the organ is there by invoking natural selection."[8] Putatively, natural selection is non-teleological, so that (a') does not resort to teleological phenomenon. Moreover, (b') just offers an efficient causal explanation of the pumping of blood; namely, the contracting of the heart actualizes the pumping of the blood. This, too, does not require teleology.[9]

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4   Alex Rosenberg, Daniel McShea, *Philosophy of Biology: A Contemporary Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 13.
5   Ibid.,13-14.
6   Larry Wright, "Functions," *The Philosophical Review* 82, no. 2 (1973): 19.
7   Ibid., 24.
8   Ibid., 22.
9   Unless one thinks that efficient causation requires final causation. Cf. Klima, Gyula "Whatever Happened to Efficient Causes?" and Hoffman, Paul "Does Efficient Causation Presuppose Final Causation?"

Assessment of Wright's Reduction: Don't look to (b)

Does this mean Wright's reduction is successful? It seems our assessment should focus on the veracity of (a). For, without (a), (b) becomes trivially true in one sense and problematic in another. By itself, (b) is trivially true if taken to just express an efficiently causal relation between the heart and the blood being pumped. Since X's having caused Z does not necessarily mean that the function of X is Z (e.g. my leg could kick a rock without the displacement of the rock being the function of kicking), it fails in its reduction. Further, taken independently, (b) is problematic in the sense that some products of the heart's activity are not included in its function. For example, a thumping noise is coextensive with the pumping of the blood, but the thumping noise is not integral to the function; it's a free-rider. So, even if (b) by itself is relevant to the reduction of the function of the heart, it would be insufficient since its scope would be too broad. By itself, (b) would allow for things that are not part of the function of X to be included in the functional reduction of X. Independently, (b) cannot stand. So, the success of Wright's reduction will require an adequate defense of (a).[10]

Assessment of Wright's Reduction: Wright cannot use Interpretation #1 of (a)

How does (a) fair? That depends on how we interpret (a). Caveat: there appear to be two interpretations available.[11] I'll now argue that Interpretation #1 fails, but that Interpretation #2 is only successful given what is commonly taken to be a counterintuitive commitment, namely a commitment to eliminative materialism. However, I will not argue either affirmatively or negatively that its being counterintuitive is insuperable.

Interpretation #1: Natural selection's role in elucidating the 'because' in (a) is that of selection-for. Meaning to say, natural selection operates *for* whatever it is that is adaptively advantageous. This appears to be the route taken by Francisco Ayala. For example, Ayala says, "There is a *directive process* that counteracts mutation and results in order and adaptation – natural selection (emphasis added)."[12] James Lennox, too, attributes this approach to Charles Darwin based on his memorable dialogue with Asa Gray, his account of exaptations, and his use of teleological language in *Various Contrivances.*[13] In fact, Darwin's recognition of teleology was so pervasive in the aforementioned work that Lennox is compelled to say it is "chuck-full of teleological explanations."[14] For these reasons, among others, Lennox says, "Far from leaving the doctrine of Final Causes [i.e. teleological explanations] just where it

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10   Regardless, Wright's reduction requires that both (a) and (b) be true in conjunction, so the falsity of one means the reduction as a whole fails.

11   An alternative interpretation of (a) to circumvent teleology not considered here is the identification of natural selection as a law of nature. Discussion of this alternative would require a treatment beyond the limits of this paper. For treatment of this subject see Jerry Fodor's *What Darwin Got Wrong* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010), 122-123.

12   Francisco Ayala. "Teleological Explanations in Evolutionary Biology" p. 3.

13   Lennox, James "Darwin *was* a Teleologist," *Philosophy of Science* 37, no. 1 (1970): 1-15.

14   Ibid., 3.

was, Darwin had given it a fundamentally new theoretical base."[15] Meaning to say, if this interpretation of Darwin be correct, he never repudiated teleology *per se,* rather he thought of natural selection as operating in a different teleological sense than his predecessors had. Nevertheless, given this reading of Darwin, he thought natural selection is teleological. We see here, then, reputable authorities maintaining that a selection-for understanding of natural selection elicits teleological commitments.

Interpretation #1, however, is not open to the proponent of TEM since it postulates directedness or teleology in natural selection which is what it purportedly was meant to undermine. Rosenberg recognizes this when he says, "Literal *selection for* requires foresight, planning, purpose."[16] If this is the correct interpretation of (a), then Wright would be explaining teleology away with more teleology. This is hardly satisfactory for the proponent of TEM. So, let's see how Interpretation #2 fares?

Assessment of Wright's Reduction: The Superiority of Interpretation #2 of (a)

Interpretation #2: Natural selection's role in elucidating the 'because' in (a) is that of selection-against. Selection-against emphasizes that, "The whole point of Darwin's theory is that in the creation of adaptations, nature is not active, it's passive." According to Rosenberg, it would be more apt to refer to natural selection as "blind variation" and "environmental filtration."[17] What this means is that there is no selecting going on. Organisms' genes mutate with no end directed at and whatever phenotypic traits come about in light of this either survive or die depending on their compatibility with their environment. Those organisms that survive continue passing down these genes that served them well to further generations of progeny which, in turn, have their genes mutated, and so on with no directionality whatsoever.

Assessment of Wright's Reduction: Where Interpretation #2 Leads (a)

Interpretation #2 is more amiable to TEM, but does it succeed? That depends on whether the proponent is willing to stomach what comes along with it, namely eliminative materialism (EM). (EM) is just the thesis that the reality of intentional mental phenomena is to be eliminated from our ontology. Basically, all propositional attitudes, i.e. "[mental] states with propositional content",[18] such as beliefs, desires, intentions, hopes, et al. don't actually exist. Conventional locutions such as "I believe that X" or "I hope that X" will require revisions of the most scrupulous sorts such that much of this ordinary language will be discarded. The radical nature of this ontological overhaul should be daunting; as Edward Feser warns, "If eliminative materialism does not sound utterly bizarre, you haven't understood it."[19]

But, why think Interpretation #2 leads to (EM)? If it is true that Wright's reduction of teleology is

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15   Ibid., 9.
16   Alex Rosenberg, "Eliminativism without Tears," forthcoming: 8.
17   Alex Rosenberg, "The Disenchanted Naturalist's Guide to Reality," forthcoming.
18   Jaegwon Kim, *Philosophy of Mind* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1998), 204.
19   Edward Feser. *The Philosophy of Mind* (London, England: One World Publications, 2005)*,* 193.

successful, then we officially have no teleology in nature. "Great!" says the reductionist. However, there is a price to pay here. If there is no teleology, no directionality, no purposiveness, no intentionality, then what comes of mental phenomena that appear to be essentially intentional? Any sort of mental content typically thought of as being teleological or exhibiting intentionality will have to be sequestered to mere instrumental linguistic use or altogether eliminated from our ontology much as phlogiston and the ether have in chemistry and physics. In short, it appears that by rejecting teleology *tout court*, intentional mental phenomena themselves are to be excommunicated from our ontological commitments. Admitting as much just is admitting that (EM) is true.[20]

Assessment of Wright's Reduction: Eliminative Materialism or Teleology

Notice, I have not argued for the veracity of (EM), nor have I argued that (EM) is false. Rather, I have merely argued that the success of (a) in Wright's reduction, in part, hinges on the coherence of (EM). If someone finds (EM) to be perfectly coherent, then Wright's reduction understood through the lens of Interpretation #2 might be successful. This could be formulated as a simple *modus ponens* argument:

(1) If Interpretation #2 of Wright's reduction is true, then (EM) is true.

(2) Interpretation #2 of Wright's reduction is true.

(3) Therefore, (EM) is true.

However, one man's *modus ponens* is another man's *modus tollens*. Those averse to (EM) can take this to be a *reductio ad absurdum* of the extirpation of teleology.[21] Here's the simple *modus tollens* argument:

(1) If Interpretation #2 of Wright's reduction is true, then (EM) is true.

(2') (EM) is not true.

(3') Therefore, Interpretation #2 of Wright's reduction is not true.

To reiterate, I make no claim as to whether or not (EM) is true. My point is just to argue that Wright's reduction requires a commitment to (EM), if it is to be successful. If (EM) is thought to be dubious, then the reality of some account of teleology should be seriously considered.[22]

If one opts for some account of teleology, then I make no suggestion in this paper which account of teleology this should be. I fully recognize that there are multiple types of teleological models one can argue for. To name just a few, there is Platonic teleology, Aristotelian teleology, Thomistic teleology, Darwinian teleology, etc. However, to fully explicate these different models is beyond the scope of this

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20 John Searle avers. He puts the point in the following way, "You cannot reduce intentional content (or pains or "qualia") to something else, because if you could they would be something else, and they are not something else." John Searle, *The Rediscovery of Mind* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1992), 51.

21 This is precisely Edward Feser's approach. Cf. Feser, Edward "Rosenberg Roundup."

22 For a good discussion of these various models of teleology see the following works: Ariew, Andre "Teleology" in *Cambridge Companion to the Philosophy of Biology*; Feser, Edward "Teleology: A Shopper's Guide"; Feser, Edward "Between Aristotle and William Paley: Aquinas's Fifth Way."

paper.

Conclusion

  The purpose of this paper is to assess TEM. We looked to Wright's attempted reduction and saw that understanding (a) is of paramount importance in the assessment of Wright's project since the reduction fails if (a) fails. We also saw that (a) has two interpretations. Interpretation #1 fails since it relies on teleology, so that Wright's reduction requires the success of Interpretation #2. Interpretation #2, however, was shown to lead to (EM). Wright's attempt to vindicate TEM, therefore, stands or falls on the veracity of (EM).

  I made no determination as to whether or not (EM) is true, so I made no determination as to whether or not Wright's attempt to salvage TEM succeeds. That, however, has not been my point. My point has been to argue that if we follow Wright in this reduction, then we follow him to (EM). Consistency demands that one accept (EM), or some account of teleology. I end by quoting J. B. S. Haldane: "Teleology is like a mistress to a biologist: he cannot live without her but he's unwilling to be seen with her in public."[23] I challenge the proponent of TEM of the Wright-ian persuasion to either take up the mantle of chivalry and marry his teleological mistress, or take the vow of celibacy and profess allegiance to eliminative materialism.

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23 J.B.S Haldane. in Denis Walsh, "Teleology" *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Biology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 116.

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Arche as *Telos*

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שֶׁמֶּשֶׁ תַּחַת שֶׁדָּחָ־לְכָ וְיאָן הַשָּׁעָיֶּשׁ אוּה הַשָּׁעַנֶּשֶׁ־הַמוּ הְיֶהִיֶּשׁ אוּה הְיָהֶשֶׁ־הַמ[1]:

τί τὸ γεγονός αὐτὸ τὸ γενησόμενον καὶ τί τὸ πεποιημένον αὐτὸ τὸ

ποιηθησόμενον καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν πᾶν πρόσφατον ὑπὸ τὸν ἥλιον[1]

QUID EST QUOD FUIT IPSUM QUOD FUTURUM EST QUID EST QUOD FACTUM

EST IPSUM QUOD FIENDUM EST NIHIL SUB SOLE NOVUM[1]

-Ecclesiastes, 1:9-10.

From the torched ashes of Saussurian structuralism—with its emphasis on stable, finite systems whose elements were understood via opposition and intrastructural relation—arose the chimerical phoenix of poststructuralism. With this turn toward the indeterminate came the sanction "*ex officio*"[2] of a hermeneutics of suspicion,[3] poised at an unveiling of the Truth[4] obscured beneath the ostensibly given. Criticism becomes an irrigating process, digging to the unseen roots of a text so that the wellspring of hidden meaning might flow to the reader and thus elevates the critic to the status of hero. Poststructural theory has reached its limits, however, and a return to the surface has been heralded (looping back to structuralism by the strangest of routes). For fiction writers, of whom I take David Foster Wallace to be par excellence, this has meant an abandonment of postmodern/metafictional antics and a return to "single-

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1   † "The thing that hath been, it *is that* which shall be; and that which is done *is that* which shall be done: and *there is* no new *thing* under the sun." (Authorized King James Translation, from the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin).
      † Re footnotes: "I have made free use of footnotes to help the flow of the main text. There are those who look down on footnotes, but I think they are one of the great pleasures of life" (Galen Strawson, "Panpsychism?" in *Consciousness and Its Place in Nature* [Charlottesville, VA: Imprint Academic, 2006]), p. 185. My "flow," however, follows a far more jagged bed of armor.
2   David Foster Wallace, "Another Pioneer," in *Oblivion* (New York: Back Bay Books, 2004), p. 121.
3   To use Brian Leiter's coinage; taken from Paul Ricoeur's "tactic[s] of suspicion" and his "school of suspicion" comprising Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, in *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1970), pp. 26-36.
4   Seemingly hypocritical, or at least disingenuous given the dire emphasis on the absence of majuscule-tee 'Truth" in a postmodern context—though anyone in the postmodern camp would surely deny that the truth they expose is, 'in fact,' the cap-tee Truth (myself included).

entendre"[5] verities that would seem dated, "naïve, pious, and complaisant"[6] to the wizened eye of the deconstructionist.

In this paper I'll be examining a late story of Wallace's, "Another Pioneer"[7] from his *Oblivion* collection—set as an oration in which a central myth is told through the immediate narrative lens of some sort of board meeting and the mediated narrative lens of an overheard conversation taking place between two passengers on a United Airlines flight. The myth concerns the birth and development of an omniscient child in a "literally paleolithic or perhaps mesolithic"[8] village, and how the child's illimitable knowledge eventually leads to his castigation by the rest of the village. I'll look to this story's points of contact with both poststructural concerns and the entreatments of Surface Reading while scaffolding it around this crucial position of Omniscience, seeing how any path toward Authenticity can be paved through it. This focal point of Omniscience will be considered in relation to three broad compositional and diegetic categories: form, community, and time. I've chosen these themes both for their relevance to the narrative and for the latitude they afford a critical lens. A final *caveat lector*: while I wish to treat these notions on their own terms, the interpenetration of the levels of interpretation (between surface/depth; hermeneutics of recovery/of suspicion; reparative/paranoiac reading) seems inevitable and inextricable to the production of exegesis. My method entails a traversal of oscillatory positions, rather than adhering to strict stages or ideologies of criticism[9]—or does wishy-washy, rule-bending mysterianism make for poor scholarship?

Form

Derrida's perspective on the structural center—the *arche*,[10] or organizing/originating principle—is of utmost relevance to both the thesis I wish to illustrate and to Wallace's story, seeing it as "paradoxically, *within* the structure and *outside* it… The concept of centered structure—although it represents coherence itself, the condition of the *episteme*[11] as philosophy or science—is contradictorily coherent."[12] In the case of

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5   Wallace, "E Unibus Pluram," in *A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again* (New York: Back Bay Books, 1997), p. 81.

6   Eve Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You're So Paranoid You Probably Think This Essay is About You," in *Touching Feeling* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 126.

7   Wallace, *Oblivion*, pp. 117-40.

8   Ibid, p. 119.

9   Sedgwick, p. 128, writing on Melanie Klein's idea of position as one denoting "a much more flexible to-and-fro process between [the ego and its object] than is normally meant by regression to fixation points in the developmental phases" (Sedgwick quoting Hinshelwood's *Dictionary of Kleinian Thought*), contrasted with "normatively ordered *stages*, stable *structures*, or diagnostic *personality types*." Dynamism trumps rigidity, in psychology as much as philosophy. Advancing any tendentious position, however, does seem to require obstinacy in its own right, lest the thesis lose whatever rhetorical traction it may have and just become an opinionated musing or innocuous pondering.

10   The legacy of the *arche* goes back to the dawn of pre-Socratic philosophy in ancient Greece, with Thales taking the *arche* of the world to be *hydor* (water). In the case of poststructural thought, Anaximander's *apeiron* (the unlimited, unbounded, indefinite) would be most apposite; Heraclitus's *pyr* (fire) resonates with the imagery of "Another Pioneer."

11   The notion of *episteme* is central to Foucault's work, where it describes the historically given foundation of discourse, thus describing and prescribing the limits of what can be known in a given era through a given paradigm of understanding.

12   Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in *Writing and Difference* (London: Routledge, 2001): 352.

language—the ubiquitous mediator of experience—the center beyond the structure is the absence sought after or pointed toward: the physico-phenomenal world. Language, or the Symbolic (to co-opt Lacanian terminology) ultimately has as its sole object a *nothing*, or a displaced referent that language requires for stability to obtain.

A confusing consequence of this absence is that language is a self-enclosed sphere, only ever referring to itself (found in Nietzsche's tautology of language,[13] in Barthes's narration[14] and citationality,[15] and in Derridean *différance*). Looking to form as structure, then, we can distinguish between the instances of language and the circumscribed meaning at its center, which I term the Ineffable.[16] Rather than taking faith in this Ineffable as an absence, as the poststructuralists argue and advocate, I instead opt for the Ineffable as *presence*. This presence encompasses what is knowable—the Omniscient; from which flows understanding of self and world, inciting and revealing an authentic mode of living (here construed as a cognitive consonance between knowledge and interpretation, or affective instinct and linguistic thought).

A corollary to this absurd[17] claim of transcendental[18] omniscience is that no 'original' *meaning* can be exposited or propounded (hence the chosen epigraph); 'novelty,' as unseen and thus embodying the spontaneity of temporal unfolding, comes by way of *form*. In the case of "Another Pioneer," the narrative is disjointed and subject to authorial interjection (not taking Wallace as the author but rather the first-person narrator who orates the central "*exemplum*" to a group of "gentlemen"[19] listeners). Spanning twenty some-odd pages across a single paragraph, Wallace assimilates vernacular from the computational to the religious (paralleling the distinct descriptive approaches of the "analytical younger man on the United flight"[20] and the narrator's acquaintance's emphasis on talk of divinity); from the rhetorical to the colloquial (analyzing the central myth in terms of "protasis,"[21] "epitasis,"[22] and "catastasis,"[23] with the context of the myth's

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13 "On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense," in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010), p. 766. Cf. p. 767: "We believe that when we speak of trees, colours, snow, and flowers, we have knowledge of the things themselves, and yet we possess only metaphors of things which in no way correspond to the original entities. Just as the musical sound appears as a figure in the sand, so the mysterious 'X' of the thing-in-itself appears first as a nervous stimulus, then as an image, and finally as an articulated sound."

14 "The Death of the Author," in *The Norton Anthology*, p. 1322: "As soon as a fact is *narrated* no longer with a view to acting directly on reality but intransitively, that is to say, finally outside of any function other than that of the very practice of the symbol itself, this disconnection occurs, the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death, writing begins."

15 Or intertextuality: the weaving of language as reference to past usage in text and discourse; q.v. Kripkean proper naming for an analytic parallel.

16 Alfred Korzybski also referred to the physical world as the "Unspeakable" in his magnum opus, *Science and Sanity* (Brooklyn: International Non-Aristotelian Library, 5th ed., 2000), p. 20: "It follows that the only link between the objective and the verbal world is exclusively structural, necessitating the conclusion that *the only content of all 'knowledge' is structural*. Now structure can be considered as a complex of relations, and ultimately as multi-dimensional *order*" [emphasis added].

17 Absurd in both scope and just plain risibility.

18 In the Kantian sense of a prerequisite condition which gives rise to the phenomenon.

19 Wallace, "Another Pioneer," p. 117.

20 Ibid, p. 120.

21 Ibid, p. 118.

22 Ibid, p. 126.

23 Ibid, p. 130.

transmission being "unknown to me [the narrator] as anything more than 'quotidian' or 'everyday'"[24]); as well as incorporating technical jargon and snippets of six languages beyond English (Latin, Greek, French, German, Gaelic, and Nigerian Igbo). The story is an amalgam of disparate configurations of language, of form uncoordinated prior to its moment of composition, yet depicting an "archetypal narrative"[25] which neatly fits into the "cycle"[26] described in the plot—novel form surrounding a perennial meaning.

The act of writing, and for that matter, a crucial aspect of any act of production becomes a process whose defining characteristic is repetition—circumscribing the central Ineffable (comparable to the Lacanian Real) in infinite variations. The form is historically (and perhaps metaphysically) contingent;[27] the meaning remains singular and all-encompassing.[28] At the "precise geometric center of the village,"[29] perfectly representing that all-knowing absence at the heart of structure, each villager supplicates and offers tribute to the opaque-yet-present omniscient child. In esoteric literatures[30] there is mention of an extradimensional repository of all possibly accessible information pertaining to both spiritual and physical knowledge, called the "Akashic library." Bracketing any speculation as to the 'objective authenticity' of such an experience, the notion/symbol of a Grand Library in etheric planes of reality is borne out of such an impulse for omniscience,[31] for being the "courageous critic"/"critical barbarian"[32] who knows all—so too for Wallace's messianic pioneer.

A psychological and systemic consequence of omniscience, or access to the eternally timeless, manifests through reflexivity—self-reflexivity being the catalyzing compulsion toward Wallacean irony and authenticity. This compulsion is evident from his corpus as well as in the text at hand, particularly that the child's transformation (in one of the central myth's variants) is cued by the visiting shaman's remarks that the villagers will "turn fickly against you [the child], and then because of their own turning become disoriented and anxious and blame you further for it"[33]—prophecy engaged specifically in reference to the child and his conception of himself. By this self-consciousness comes the child's attempt to enlighten

24   Ibid, p. 122.
25   Ibid, p. 118.
26   Ibid, p. 117.
27   Whether in the sense of a physical event occurring specifically at a single spatiotemporal nexus rather than another, or in the more experiential sense of Harry Frankfurt's formulation of the principle of alternate possibilities, where the possibility of doing otherwise imbues moral responsibility. In this case, though, it merely points out that what one actually does is only one of many possible formal enactments, thus making the chosen one as arbitrary as any other.
28   An isomorphically reiterated substance of tautological dimensions—something omnipresent, omniscient, and endemic to extropic systems.
29   Ibid, p. 122.
30   Q.v., for instance, Helena P. Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine* or Rudolf Steiner's *Outline of Esoteric Science*.
31   Even God Itself represents the yearning for the eternal and total in man. The point I gladly stress, however, is that should such an Absolute realm/being/thing actually exist it would most likely defy all form of linguistic distillation and possibly be of an utterly different order from the conceptions (*der* Hegelian *Begriffe*) of the average sober, Western (or at very least American) mindset. The Ineffable, while being a literary and symbolic construct in the sense used in this text's body, could reasonably be identified with the notion of 'God', whatever that may mean.
32   Shifting between the "fairy" (external meaning is a projection/production of self) and "fact" (projection/production is objectively determined) positions. Bruno Latour, "Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam?" *The Norton Anthology*, 2292-7.
33   Wallace, p. 138.

the village, eventually revealing the "oracle-to-Laius-type irony of fate"[34] in the shaman's warning for the child to store his food offerings, as the villagers expectably turn on the child and (knowing the child has no practical hunting-and-gathering skills) figure he'll starve to death on his central dais. The access to authenticity, at its most fundamental depth, is known only to the child by virtue of his omniscience and consists in *living out the role one is meant to play*. Self-knowledge, and self-transparency (coming to terms with who and what one is), entails insight into one's place in the cosmos—the story of reality within which we, as conscious beings, find ourselves as players.

Egoic recursion crops up again in the seminar held by the consultant caste after the child has undergone his maieutic[35] metamorphosis. The villagers discuss and speculate as to what question the visiting shaman might have uttered into the child's ear that caused the child's transfiguring coma, "with all the different versions' and sub-versions' seminars' hypothesized questions sharing an essentially recursive quality… whose lethal involution resonates with malignant self-consciousness themes in everything from Genesis 3:7 to the self-devouring Kirttimukha of the *Skanda Purana* to the *Medousa's* reflective demise to Gödelian metalogic."[36] It is also through the inward bent of the post-transformation child that he suggests a revaluation of the village's draconic "Yam gods," resituating the villagers' animistic views in the hopes of advocating social authenticity and spiritual "*agape*"[37]—love[38], a concern of fundamental interest for Wallace. Reason and rhetoric, however, do little to sway the concrete grasp of habit and fate, and so the villagers decide to raze and flee from their home.

The child ultimately remains planted on his dais in the burning village, after "the entire community simply gave up and abandoned the village"[39]—because (to tie it back to the prenominate promissory point), he knows that this is how the story goes. Someone might finally ask, *Why would the child ever go along with his own demise?* For this, I offer a quote of inestimable value from Eve Sedgwick and Adam Frank: "Freedom, play, affordance, meaning itself derive from the wealth of mutually non-transparent possibilities for *being wrong* about an object—and by implication, *about oneself*"[40] [emphasis added]. Without risk and the threat of failure, living ceases to have any significance. The fun and point of playing lies in [its] *mystery*, i.e. the ineffable presence at the true heart and limit of knowledge.

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34   Ibid.
35   One could even see the Platonic epistemological theory of *anamnesis* as capturing the notion of human omni-science; the critical difference being that knowledge gained via recollection is a product of past incarnations rather than being any sort of direct access to the objective Truth of reality (though the soul does encounter the Formal realm while between life and death, and so a leap to omniscient access wouldn't be too implausible). Regardless, if *all* knowledge (be it *doxa* or *episteme*) discovered in living comes from this latent anamnetic reawakening, one could see it as existing always already in the soul, encompassing all possible epistemic content and form.
36   Wallace, p. 136.
37   Ibid, p. 133.
38   Q.v. Eve Sedgwick's examination of Melanie Klein's take on paranoid reading, where "[a]mong Klein's names for the reparative process is *love*" [emphasis added] (*Touching Feeling*, p. 128).
39   Wallace, p. 139.
40   "Shame in the Cybernetic Fold: Reading Silvan Tomkins," in *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 21, no. 2 (Winter, 1995), p. 511.

Community

There is respite from the burden of the implacable Will to Omniscience in the bonds of community, in finding common ground with the disparate enfolded nodes of one's social and historical network. Even in regression, back toward the stages of development discarded and/or sublated into newly revealed possibilities and realities, the village comes to a unison agreement that the child—their social and historical *arche*—is too dangerous, too much for the villagers' "primitive CPUs"[41] to handle; whose way with words and "glyphs"[42] deranges a rather precocious warrior of the village (after the warrior asks the child how to best conquer the neighboring war-tribe) and incites mortal fear in the rest of the village. The child transforms, to use Latour's terminology, from a matter of fact (the object by which the village prospers and tradition grounds itself) to a matter of concern (a thing to bring about gathering, calling on collective scrutiny and judgment). It is, however, due to the child's (the individual's) singular access to the unknown that the community originally reorganizes itself for the better (and eventually for the worse).

The child, as the all-knowing prophet-genius, constellates the village and ignites the collective will for production and development, elevating the community beyond its initial foraging and ritual-magic economy. That "there was evidently nothing like actual barter or trade until the advent of the child"[43] evinces an inversion of the base-superstructure relation of Marx, where the knowledge provided concerning the material conditions of the village in turn reorganizes the conditions themselves. With new opportunity comes the possibility of exploitation, as always, leading to the creation and flourishing of the "consultant caste."[44] Composed of the former shamans and midwives displaced by the instantiation of omniscience, this new social stratum eventually leads the 'revolt' against the child and spearheads the terminal move to finally abandon the village (hoping to reclaim an atavistic authenticity threatened in the wake of immanent totalization).

In his initial incarnation, the child would answer the villagers' ceremonial questions "in an almost idiotic, cybernetically literal way,"[45] according to a sort of "G[arbage] I[n] G[arbage] O[ut]"[46] protocol, which prompts the consultant caste to step in and refine the villagers' questions (for a nominal foodstuff fee, of course) in order to maximize the yield of the child's answer. After the triune epitasis, however, the child awakens from his coma into newfound expansiveness of thought:

> [T]he child will sometimes answer a villager's question just as before, but now will also
> append to this specific answer additional answers to certain other related or consequent

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41   Wallace, p. 134

42   Ibid, pp. 118, 127 & 130—this term recurring across radically different contexts, though I'd be "quick to admit that the same phenomenon" can assume significance across radically different contexts "if one looks intently enough for long periods" (130).

43   Ibid, p. 122.

44   Ibid, p. 121.

45   Wallace, p. 131.

46   Ibid.

questions which the child apparently believes his initial answer entails, *as if he now understands his answers as part of a much larger network or system* of questions and answers and further questions instead of being merely discrete self-contained units of information.[47]

This integrative/holistic turn deeply troubles the village, for breaking with custom and precedence as much as it does, while also rendering the consultant caste obsolete. The *arche* of the village begins to break off, "sowing the seeds of political unrest and ill will simply by having apparently evolved."[48] This turn ultimately heralds the rejection by the *arche* against the structure appended upon it. Where the *arche*-as-absence (in the sense of being detached, or cognitively unassimilated) once ruled in harmony within the confines of an incipient tradition built around it, the *arche*-as-presence soon becomes "irritable and captious"[49] with his obtuse followers incapable of personal and cultural insight.

Soon the child goes from "interpreting, contextualizing, and/or anticipating the ramified implications of a given question"[50] to attempting dialogue with "his queued interlocutors,"[51] launching into a long diatribe that implores the villagers to rethink their station in relation to tradition, convention, and "empty custom,"[52] possibly admitting that they have no idea what they believe or what they're doing, and from this communal doubt actually forge bonds of authentic belonging and understanding between each other. The village is expectably dumbstruck. They brand the child "insane or… possessed,"[53] with once appreciable answers now regressing to the child "simply ranting."[54] With the charge from the Ineffable to confront their own limited perspectives—to admit a fundamental *want*[55] of all-encompassing Truth—the villagers retreat into ideations of stability rather than confront their latent prismatic integrity. Omniscience (or rather, the contriving of it) has driven authenticity from those most in need of it. For one embedded within omniscience and historicity, it's difficult to not fall prey to the crippling doubt of "asking rhetorically what the point of all this is"[56]—seeing with bitter clarity the tragic missteps that temporal beings must endure, as constitutive of what they are, and hoping vaguely that it won't turn out for naught.

Time

As in all things, time is utterly paramount—in relating to form (as the pattern or ordering through which time manifests itself and enacts such ordering) as well as community (in accreting norms and mores into tradition and societal structure). Wallace's story, as a depiction of myth, hits at the nature

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47   Ibid, p. 130-1, emphasis added.
48   Ibid, p. 132.
49   Ibid, p. 135.
50   Ibid, p. 131.
51   Ibid, p. 132.
52   Ibid, p. 133.
53   Ibid, p. 134.
54   Ibid, p. 134
55   Both in the sense of desiring, and of lacking.
56   Ibid, p. 135.

of recurrence in relation to the notion of an Omniscience: the title itself, "Another Pioneer," merges the progressive with the conservative, the expansive with the recursive, in that a pioneer blazes new trails and yet there'll always be another on the way—it's only a matter of time. This story, and indeed the thesis I've been struggling with as it shifts in relation to poststructuralism and theories of Surface Reading, places at its focal point the relation which John McCumber[57] sees as the foundational concern of philosophy: between the temporal and the atemporal, between *change* and *eternity*.

Human beings, having our ground—our *arche*—in the timeless (in the Omniscient, Ineffable 'Other'-world), seek a return or end—a *telos*—in this same origin. Phenomena (and phenomenology), however, is decidedly *not* timeless or all-knowing: we are fragmented, digressive, obscured, historicized, contextualized, and pervasively linguistic. It is the *logos* which cleaves us to time, simultaneously attenuating and magnifying (to each instance its accorded relation); the hermeneutic which mediates, aggravates, and ameliorates conflict. To take a page from Gadamer, "Language is the fundamental mode of operation of our being-in-the-world and the all-embracing form of the constitution of the world."[58] Our exigency to "debate various theories"[59] regarding what went wrong with our *arche*—our source— propagates our sense of distance. We've been exiled from our origin (*arche*) and thus our globalized village is alienated from its goal (*telos*), an unremitting process that acts as a "perverse banishment at the precise geometric center of a village whose center everyone now goes far out of their way to avoid."[60] So it seems that where we started was where we've wanted to go all along. Theory has sought the center in all places, including the infinite, and yet muddled itself in uroboric profundity; having lost sight of the surface, we've reified centers that distend and obscure with little solace beyond an infinitesimal step closer to the Omniscient. The Omniscient already lies within us always;[61] we're simply a half-second too slow.

Affect theorist Brian Massumi describes the "realm of intensity"[62] as the "unassimilable"[63] domain of sub-/preconscious affect, within which lurks the incipient, habitual 'will,' yet to reach linguistic cognizance. Now comes my cavalier conjectural leap: perhaps this realm of intensity is the closest we can get to the portal of prescience, the Omniscience at work in this pseudo-fatalist metaphysics where "the skin is faster than the word."[64] Far from anchoring oneself in this immanence and erecting social edifices that develop

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57   Q.v. his *Time and Philosophy: A History of Continental Thought*.
58   "The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem" in *Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008): p. 3.
59   Wallace, p. 135.
60   Ibid, p. 138.
61   Strikingly akin to an Althusserian notion of ideology and subjecthood that we, as citizens of a State and members of a society, are "always already" apart of and embedded within—a lens of viewing the world ingrained via socialization and naturally assumed to be a natural given ("From *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*," *The Norton Anthology*, 1355).
62   "The Autonomy of Affect," in *Cultural Critique* 31 (1995): p. 90.
63   Ibid, p. 88.
64   Massumi, p. 86. Put differently, you always know exactly what you're going to do before you do it, or before you even consciously know about it.

hunky-dory unto utopia, the *cogito*[65] must rebel and antagonize (like the pubescent, post-transformation messiah of "Another Pioneer"). Through this incitement comes the burning of conventional and traditional idols for the sake of trailblazing into nascent possibilities of tradition—for is this not the tendency of the avant-garde, to polemicize and dismantle until inevitably the status quo achieves equilibrium with these extremist and radical forces?

Nietzsche greets us warmly at the end of this path (as Foucault says of Hegel), asking for our *Yea* in response to an interminable recurrence—that time is a strange loop, whose core trait (or one of them anyway) is *ergodicity*; that is, the tendency to imitate former iterations of the cycle and possibly recreate them entirely (á la Franco Moretti's "*longue dorée*"[66] of literature, or Poincaré's recurrence theorem re the second law of thermodynamics). Whether we've been here and lived through this once, twice, a finite $n>2$ times, or an infinite number of times before, we must still participate, confront, and encounter life as though it is original, as though omniscience and a static timeline weren't just out of reach: without this novelty, our freedom appears hollow, sheer, and foundationally illusory.[67] We are walking contradictions (not the child or the villagers, but the village itself)—minded and puppet-like—walking on a flat circle,[68] but there remains much to be done and the matters of concern multiply exponentially as these days unfold. No single rubric will decipher the text, the world, or individual identity, and we must merge the binary with the Heideggerian fourfold,[69] the 1:1 with the $n<2$, and maybe then we'll be a little closer to the world as impacted in the affect.

Behind poetic and literary caprice exists a Void—the Ineffable world—of which language skirts the surface;[70] grounding the profound and substantive meaning we disillusioned subjects of postmodernity can only wistfully pine for. Those who ride this tangent out to its most obsessive extent will only find the surface remaining, that everything ceases to be a symbol or glyph and is instead taken for what it is—for an understanding that discloses itself to its fullest, inherently limited[71] extent. My project in this paper has been to "assemble and confer plenitude on an object that will then have resources to offer to an inchoate self,"[72]

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65   To once again borrow from Ricoeur's phenomenological hermeneutics, in turn co-opting the infamous agential and substantial ego of Descartes.

66   Franco Moretti, "The Slaughterhouse of Literature," in *Modern Language Quarterly*, vol. 61, no. 1 (March, 2000): pp. 223-225. Note: "form is precisely *the repeatable element of literature*: what returns fundamentally unchanged over many cases and many years" (225).

67   The pet term of the New Atheist bunch (esp. Sam Harris and Dan Dennett), reducing the phenomenal and the immediate to the noumenal and the neuronally mediated—a hermeneutics of suspicion to captivate a technophilic culture.

68   Matthew McConaughey as "Rustin Cohle" @ 20:19-21:02; *True Detective*, "The Secret Fate of All Life," HBOGo, 58:12, Feb. 16, 2014.

69   "Earth and sky, divinities and mortals." Q.v. Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), esp. pp. 147-149.

70   Take heed of the inanity in this: that the inert symbols manipulated in the minds and bodies of literate agents can only, at best, vaguely *approximate* superficiality (a recording of a depiction of a portrayal that was once, yet always is, *about* something that it can never *be*). This accretive/embedding process mirrors the narrative structure of "Another Pioneer".

71   A point being that if a limit is the native pregiven of the phenomenon then it ceases to be problematic, that it simply *is* and is entailed by the discourse as a matter of course.

72   Sedgwick, p. 149.

and is thus largely synthetic. Analytics tend toward discernment and divergence, emphasizing instances of difference where none may actually exist (a modernist inclination); synthetics tend toward collapse and convergence, generalizing to the detriment of the subtleties of the phenomenon under scrutiny (anathema, in large part, to proper treatment of matters of concern). Interpretation (ceaseless and assiduous, rational or otherwise) requires an interpenetration of these localizing and globalizing tendencies—a merging of the analogic and the digital, to give due observance to Sedgwick and Frank.[73]

Communication thrives/supervenes upon matters of connection and conflict being given their due care and attention; from the earnest appraisal of the literal into the elusive expositing of the symbolic, all planes of contact are lush reticulations of understanding brought on by the fusion and reconciliation of horizons. In finding roots we regain our sense of direction, but these roots seethe and wither until we must lose ourselves once again. This is to be expected; and while fear may drive us from our homes it may very well bring us back, as would love in either instance. We will look back on what once was and see the flames spreading, like the little "keen-eyed child, hanging extrorse in its sling on a mother's back,"[74] and the *arche* will be nothing more than torched ashes driving us onward to *telos*—to home—again, and again, and again.[75]

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73   "Shame in the Cybernetic Fold," esp. pp. 515-518.
74   Wallace, p. 140.
75   Infinite appreciation to those making it to the end; here's to hoping that this "whole thing might not, in fact, be a waste of everyone's time" (Wallace, 135).

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