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Editorial Note

"Raskolnikov took the magazine and glanced at his article. Incongruous as it was with his mood and his circumstances, he felt that strange and bittersweet sensation that every author experiences the first time he sees himself in print; besides, he was only twenty-three. It lasted only a moment."
(*Crime and Punishment*)

Removed as we might be from the circumstances of Dostoevsky's famous protagonist, the latter's observation resonates no less strongly for start-up writers and scholars today. It is an important moment, seeing oneself for the first time in print, because it evinces a reappraisal of the nature of one's work (as well as the writing process) as a public rather than a private affair. It entails taking the step from writing for oneself or one's professor to writing for a broader student readership comprising many different interests, intentions, pre-conceptions and knowledge backgrounds. In short, publishing means *contributing* to the scholarly community by revising one's paper with the reader's benefit in mind.

Hence, it is easy to see how publication at the undergraduate level serves a twofold purpose. Not only does it disseminate diverse points of view and promote a lively academic culture, it also fosters the personal and professional development of the student writer. The latter was indeed one of our aims for this year. Editors worked with writers for an extended period of time in a thorough editing process in order to produce the essays that are displayed in this issue.

With all the more enthusiasm, we would like to present the second issue of the *UBC Journal of Philosophical Enquiries* since its revival in 2017. Despite its title changes throughout the years, the journal's mission has remained essentially the same: to provide a venue for showcasing exceptional and promising undergraduate academic work in philosophy and adjacent disciplines.

We would like to thank our editors, without whose talent and dedication the journal would not be possible. Their names are credited on the page prior. Additionally, we thank the UBC Department of Philosophy for their consistent and faithful support, as well as the UBC Philosophy Students' Association for their support, and financial and administrative assistance.

Sincerely,

Brandon Bach and Patrick Li
Co-Editors-in-Chief

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Reopening the Question – Commitment, Autonomy, Complexity and the Political Relevance of Art

Fabio Cabrera

Cornell University

"Queer not as being about who you're having sex with (that can be a dimension of it); but queer as being about the self that is at odds with everything around it and has to invent and create and find a place to speak and to thrive and to live." — bell hooks

Turning away from the first death
The last birth in the bloodline
Asking to remember
To recognize the alien within
Dignity in the Abject
The first time you died
— Arca, Ryuichi Sakamoto

Introduction

In this paper I seek to recontextualize the debate between autonomous and committed art framed by Adorno in his 1962 essay “Commitment.” In doing so, I hope to disclose the ways in which thinking about art through the committed—autonomous dichotomy erases its political potential. In 2021, these categories do not disclose the relationship between ideology and art because, unlike Adorno’s characterization of it, a current theorization of the “status quo ideology” cannot ignore the role that dominant perspectives about oppressed minorities have in constructing such ideology. Adorno focused on how the dominant ideology of his time reduced everything, including art, to a calculative exchange: art was rendered as a means to an end. Thus, for him, the emancipatory character of art resided in the possibility of it escaping this “calculative thinking” by becoming an end in itself.

In this essay I will argue that, if art is to have any emancipatory character today, it must break through the dominant narratives about oppressed groups that are a part of the social imaginary in Western culture. I call the type of art that achieves this “complex art.” To characterize it, I will

focus on two case studies of contemporary artworks that come from queer perspectives: "The Kick Series" albums by Alejandra Ghersi, better known as Arca, and Lady Gaga's LGBT anthem "Born This Way." I will characterize Arca's project as a complex work of art, and Gaga's as a work that attempts to be so but fails. To achieve this, I will start by reconstructing Adorno's characterization of the commitment—autonomy debate. Then, I will analyze the potential value that such categories might have in the current world of social media and mass communication channels, proving that they are not fit for a contemporary analysis of the relationship linking art to politics. Thereafter, I will define "the complexity criterion," explaining both the notion itself and how it differs from the concepts of autonomy and commitment by presenting my case studies.

Autonomy and Commitment

In "Commitment", Adorno outlines the debate over the place occupied by artworks in the political spheres of the societies they arise in. For Adorno, the debate is characterized by two extremes: the view that art should have a specific political motivation and the view that art should not adhere to any specific political agenda, but rather it should exist for its own sake. According to Adorno, committed art is the product of a political motivation, whereas autonomous art refers to art created without any other intention or purpose beyond the art itself.

This controversy surfaces from a crisis in the art world, originated by the expansion of the art market and the cultural commodification of artworks. As Adorno describes it, the place of the artwork in this setting is brought into question. In a world where works of art are experienced in museums, galleries and the mass media, the "supreme effect" of such artworks is nullified.[1] No longer does the artwork generate a break in the meaning of words and images in our everyday life. Rather, it is introduced through commodification. The supreme effect of the artwork that Adorno refers to is precisely its capacity to break with the meaning of words, sounds and images in everyday life, to show the contradictions in its "rationale," and therefore to become the space where true political rebellion against the ideology of the time is possible. Per Adorno, the transformation of artworks into commodities hinders this effect. An artwork becomes something to be bought (either in original or as a postcard replica), something to be viewed in a gallery for

[1] Theodor Adorno, "Commitment," in *Aesthetics and Politics,* (Verso Books, 2020), 76.

the sake of entertainment or diversion. It no longer holds its place as a source of contradiction and contention, it becomes a mere artifact.

It is through this conception of the social value of artworks that Adorno frames the debate between committed and autonomous art. As a way of returning this rebellious potential to the artwork, committed art seeks to use the space of artistic creation as a place to "illustrate" and give life to the political intentions of its creator. Adorno writes: "A work of art that is committed strips the magic from a work of art that is content to be a fetish, an idle past-time for those who would like to sleep through the deluge that threatens them, in an apoliticism that is in fact deeply political."[2] What is particular to the committed approach is that it sees art as a tool for political awakening, something that aids in making people aware of the ideology in which they are immersed.

On the other hand, the autonomous work of art sees the conception of art for political purposes as a symptom of the very disease suffered by art, wherein it is stripped of its own autonomy. Through commodification and according to the committed view of art, art ceases to be an end in itself, and it becomes a tool for satisfying ulterior intentions. In the autonomous view of art, what gives artworks their own potential for liberation is the fact that art, when seen as an end in itself, can escape the commodification to which it has become subject.[3] Per Adorno:"The uncalculating autonomy of works which avoid popularization and adaptation to the market, involuntarily becomes an attack on them."[4] This "uncalculating autonomy" is the result of not seeing the work as a means to something, but as an end in itself. This autonomy is what generates the development of artistic genres at an aesthetic level and the potential to break through the calculative thinking that Adorno has diagnosed in contemporary society.

In Adorno's view, the current state of the artworld requires stepping away from the committed view and recognizing the political importance of autonomous art. Otherwise, art would lose its value as art. It is crucial to recognize the link between political liberation and ideological liberation that Adorno assumes in this argument. According to him, the ineffectiveness of committed art is that it still operates within the possibilities outlined by the ideology of the time.

[2] Adorno, "Commitment," 76.
[3] Adorno, "Commitment," 76.
[4] Adorno, "Commitment," 86.

His critique of Sartre's work, which he identifies with the tradition of committed art, is illuminating in this respect. Adorno reads Sartre's plays as examples of works that seek to communicate his ideal of radical freedom, according to which humans are "condemned to be free" and will always be free by virtue of their capacity to choose. Sartre used plays and novels to familiarize his readers with the "burden of freedom" and their obligation to confront it in order to lead an authentic life.

Internally, Adorno thinks this project fails because it does not recognize that the very possibility of choosing depends on the options available to the individual.[5] Sartre's plays are problematic because they lose sight of the overarching ideology that determines the way we understand and interpret reality; it is this ideology that shapes the very choices we can make in our daily lives. The problem is that it does not lead to any real political action. Its political potential for change is hindered by the artwork's failure to break through the very ideology that shapes the options for political action available. Another way in which Adorno highlights this failure is by pointing out the popular appeal of Sartre's work: "The combination of solid plot, and equally solid, extractable idea won Sartre great success and made him, without doubt against his honest will, acceptable to the culture industry."[6] The implication is that becoming acceptable to the culture industry can only be a sign of failure to generate a real rupture with predetermined paths of political action, much to Sartre's frustration since his art did not achieve the intended effect.

According to Adorno, works like Sartre's fail to break through the predominant ideology because they start from a misconception of art's role: "Sartre's theater of ideas sabotages the aims of his categories. This is not an individual inadequacy of his plays. It is not the office of art to spotlight alternatives, but to resist by its form alone the course of the world."[7] This is why earlier Adorno mentioned the "solid plot" and "solid ideas" in Sartre's plays as elements that damn them politically. The focus on getting an idea across fails the whole purpose of art, according to Adorno. The political potential of art lies in its form, not in its content. Put simply, freedom of form grants the artwork its potential for political emancipation.

[5] Adorno, "Commitment," 78.
[6] Adorno, "Commitment," 79.
[7] Adorno, "Commitment," 78.

Adorno emphasizes this again when he discusses Brecht's and Kafka's works later in the essay. He posits that the political success in Brecht's plays comes from his experimentation with the formal aspects of theatrical drama:

> "At times …[Brecht] too wanted to educate spectators to a new attitude, that would be distanced, thoughtful, experimental, the reverse of the illusory empathy and identification. In tendency to abstraction, his plays after Saint Joan trump those of Sartre. The difference is that Brecht, more consistent than Sartre and a greater artist, made this abstraction into the formal principle of his art, as a didactic poetics that eliminates the traditional concept of the dramatic character altogether."[8]

Sarte's intention to generate a certain type of "thoughtful" effect within his readers through his plays, is truly achieved by Brecht because of his artistic capacity to defy the very conventions of dramatic theater. It is this new form that has the real potential to awaken its viewers. This was the case in spite of Brecht's own intention to communicate a "lesson" through his work even if that meant compromising the form of dramatic theater. This intention becomes "in reality a formal device itself. The suspension of form turns back against its own character as appearance."[9] In relegating the conventional form of drama to a second plane, Brecht reimagined this very form, making art revolutionary *as art*. That is, he created autonomous art, as distinct from committed art. The reason for this was, per Adorno, that Brecht had a greater level of *artistry* than Sartre, not that either of them had better or worse political intentions, or was a better political actor.

This discussion of Sartre and Brecht is important because it emphasizes two crucial aspects for Adorno. First, unlocking the political potential of art needs formal experimentation. What distinguishes art from mere propaganda or other forms of cultural production is precisely its formal qualities. Thus, art that seeks to be politically emancipatory requires a revolution in form. Second, the gap between an artist's intention and the final artistic product with its public reception, is significant. As the Sartre and Brecht examples showed, the political intention of an artwork is not enough to grant it formal quality. In other words, a critical thinker is not necessarily able to produce art with political potential; only an artist that pushes the boundaries of their genre can produce art with such emancipatory effect.

[8] Adorno, "Commitment," 80.
[9] Adorno, "Commitment," 82.

Before I proceed to analyze the relevance of these categories in the contemporary Western political landscape, I would like to recount what had initially motivated this debate. That is, the need to rethink the political value of artworks in a time when they become mere commodities and means to ends, when art (or, in Adorno's terms, "the life of the mind") becomes prey to calculative thinking. The way to break through this ideology is not by fixing a specific (political) end to works of art – it is to pursue formal experimentation as an end in itself. With this in mind, I will question the relevance of this "solution" in the contemporary Western political and artistic world. By focusing on several examples of queer art, I hope to show that the dichotomy between autonomous and committed art is no longer relevant for assessing the political and aesthetic potential of a piece of art. Instead, I will propose a new aesthetic criterion for this purpose. I term this criterion *complexity*.

Moving Beyond the Dichotomy: Complexity and Queer Art

Adorno was quite pessimistic about the incorporation of art into the culture industry in his time. Indeed, given that he understood this process as the reduction of art to mere means to different ends (political, economic, etc.), he could only understand it as the extinction of truly emancipatory art. What is the current state of affairs regarding the "commodification of art" in 2021? If one sides with Adorno, one must accept defeat and recognize that this process has only grown exponentially since 1962. The advent of the internet and social media has massively increased the consumption and revenue of art. Platforms like Spotify, YouTube, and Instagram have not only heavily shaped the way art is shared – but also its meaning, value, and intention. These platforms give countless consumers access to the work of artists, and generate exorbitant amounts of revenue through advertising. As Naomi Martin explains in her article "How Social Media Is Shaping Art – The Impact of an Instagram Obsessed Culture,"

> "More than just reshaping the way we think about culture, social media is also, to an extent, transforming street art into advertisements for businesses, retailers, restaurateurs, or even gyms. Corporations are taking advantage of the selfie-taking demographic, luring them with virally geotagged murals – guerilla advertising that they will turn into profit. This "Instagram Street art" is in no way representative of the political and social underlying intent inherent to street art, but simply taps its appeal for branding kudos, followers, likes, and, ultimately, revenue."[10]

[10] Naomi Martin, "How Social Media Is Shaping Art." *Artland Magazine*, 2021, https://magazine.artland.com/how-social-media-is-shaping-art-the-impact-of-an-instagram-obsessed-culture/

Although Martin argues that the advent of social media has reshaped street art, this is plausibly the trend for every other artistic genre. In an ad-governed world, it seems implausible for a truly autonomous artwork to exist. Has art therefore lost any political potential?

I will argue it has not. However, to see how art can still have an emancipatory potential, it is necessary to think beyond the categories of autonomy and commitment. In the contemporary context, formal experimentation is no longer enough for art to have political potential. I agree with Adorno that formal experimentation initiates departure from the status quo, since it is *form* that distinguishes art from other cultural products. However, this does not mean that experimental art as an end in itself, regardless of the artist's intention, can be emancipatory. The formal quality of an artwork is not necessarily diminished because of its incorporation into the culture industry. The question of formal experimentation is only part of what gives an artwork political potential today. To fully flesh this out, I would like to first point out a blind spot in Adorno's ideological analysis: he fails to consider the *perspective* of the artist. By perspective, I mean the particular vantage point that an artist has by virtue of their lived experience and position in society.

Adorno (and Martin later) exposed the risk of incorporating art into the culture industry. I believe, however, that the link between art and social media has a huge benefit: it has granted access to artists and viewers whose voices were previously ignored and relegated from the artworld. Is it mere coincidence that Adorno's essay contains no discussion of artworks by women? I believe it is not. This is because Adorno's argument is completely oblivious to the question of perspective and the way in which it feeds into the ideological status quo he so feared. In analyzing the ideology of art, Adorno's main concern is "calculative thinking." He sees art as a form of liberation from it because of art's potential to become an end in itself. Today, when Kafka and Brecht have become mere "texts" to study in college classes (Adorno actually worried about this himself), and have entered the culture industry, it is hard to see whether art - even the autonomous pieces he mentions - can truly dismantle calculative thinking.

However, given the massive access that social media and mass communication channels have provided to artists and viewers alike, I think art has the potential to disturb another aspect of the dominant ideology that has permeated the history of Western culture: our socially available

narratives and images of oppressed groups. Art can be disruptive to the extent that it dismantles narratives about oppressed groups imposed by dominant ones. Art is emancipatory when it shatters the racist, white-supremacist narratives about Black people that have become dominant through the institution of racism and xenophobia. It is emancipatory when it shatters the homophobic and transphobic narratives about queer and trans people that dominate how they are viewed. It is emancipatory when it destroys misogynistic conceptions of womanhood. Art has the potential to do this when it centers the lived experience of those marginalized individuals, when it gives them a platform to make art that stems from their situation. Adorno failed to see how these harmful views are part of the general Western ideology. Today, however, identity politics is relevant, and the relationship between art and the oppressive ideology has become an important area of theorization.[11]

This is not to say that art can be emancipatory just because it comes from oppressed perspectives. Perspective is not a sufficient criterion to make art revolutionary *as art*. Like Adorno, I want to preserve a way of differentiating art from other types of cultural production (like propaganda). I want to differentiate between, say, Virginia Woolf's *Ms. Dalloway* and a feminist manifesto. Adorno's autonomy criterion allowed him to do this because he considered autonomy essential for a piece of art to succeed as art. I also want a criterion of this form, but contra Adorno, I maintain that an autonomous character cannot solely provide art with a political potential. This is because I intend to regard ideology beyond the narrow lens of "calculative thought," to consider the power that dominant groups have over how we understand oppressed groups. I do not see art's resistance to commodification as a prime requisite for its emancipatory potential, although, as I hope to show, liberating art will often lack the popularity that commercial art has.

By proxy, I do not see a political intention as inherently damaging to a work's revolutionary potential. I do not wish to reaffirm committed art as truly emancipatory, I want to think beyond this debate altogether. I want to reframe the ideological landscape as one where power differences between groups have led to the oppression of some. Part of this oppression is manifested in the dehumanizing narratives that dominate how we understand oppressed groups.

[11] An important avenue for such theorization comes from Critical Race Theory and related endeavors, as well as philosophical and sociological work on the relationship between body standards, aesthetics and racism.

Art, whether intentionally or not, whether pursued as an end in itself or not, has contributed to this oppression. Yet I still wish to differentiate art from mere propaganda, as I agree with Adorno that art's purpose or value is not derived from its successful delivery of a political idea.

To reconcile my intention to argue that art remains politically relevant with my intention to steer away from the committed view of art, I propose the *complexity* criterion. Its purpose is to highlight the political value of art in contemporary times. Complexity describes the way in which the intention or motivation for an artwork and its formal qualities come together through a particular perspective. To say that a work of art is complex is to pass judgment on how these three aspects interact in a work of art. A complex work of art is one where form, intention, and perspective create a nuanced, intricate relation with its content. By this I do not mean that a complex work of art is a "maximalist" or "baroque" piece, containing extremely detailed depictions of its subject matter. I am not referring to the content of a work of art, but rather to the relationship between the content and the form of the piece, as explored through a particular perspective with a specific intention. I believe that a complex artwork has the potential to be politically emancipating because it creates humanizing narratives of historically oppressed groups.

At this point I would like to introduce two case studies to further clarify this criterion. Through these examples I hope to illustrate how the complexity criterion can distinguish artworks with political potential from those without, as well as how this criterion differs from commitment and autonomy. The examples come from two different contemporary queer musicians: Arca and Lady Gaga. I will focus on Arca's latest project – *Kick ii*, *iii*, *iiiii*, and *iiiii* (2021)– as an example of a complex artwork. On the other hand, I will read Gaga's LGBT-anthem "Born This Way" (2011) as an instance of an artwork that is not complex, even though it comes from the perspective of an oppressed individual and has the intention of breaking through transphobic and homophobic narratives.

Alejandra Ghersi, better known by her stage-name Arca, is a Venezuelan singer, songwriter, producer, and visual artist that has, since the beginning of her career, defied genre expectations. From her earliest work in the EPs *Barón Libre* and *Stretch 1* and *2*, to the *&&&&&* mixtape and @@@@@, her work had displayed an unclassifiable and elastic character with no precedent in

electronic or popular music. @@@@@, for instance, was a 62-minute-long single that presented a labyrinth of sounds and soaring voices in which one loses any sense of orientation. All expectations are broken with the constant morphing of each section of the track – or, as she calls them, "quantum states"– into the other. Her music pays homage to her own understanding of queerness as a refusal to be reduced to a single, static, definable individual.

Between 2020 and 2021, Arca released a 4-album project entitled *Kick* where she sought to explore questions of transformation, desire, and identity from a trans, non-binary perspective. Seeing that she came out as trans earlier in 2018, and that this was her first project after her transition, her perspective as a non-binary indvidual is manifested in both the content and form of the records.

Kick ii starts by depicting Arca as a goddess – a "post-human diva" – that rests in an armchair nonchalantly while she strokes her new "faith." By that, she is referring to her new view of the world as a trans world, a world of constant transformation. In *Kick ii*, she explores this theme by mixing a traditionally Latinamerican music genre, reggaeton, with pop and industrial sounds resembling the sounds of knives and syringes cutting. At several points, she edits her voice to make it sound deeper or higher, adding to a sense of plurality in her songs, all while she sings about different aspects of her trans experience. Sometimes she expresses her feelings of being reborn through her transition in songs like "Luna Llena" [Full Moon]: "I want to transcend, get together more, let myself be loved/From the moment I saw myself born, ah/I want to transform, get together more, let myself be loved/From the moment I saw myself born."[12] Other times, she sings about the experience of sex after reconciling her non-binary identity, as in songs like "Prada":[13]

> "Daddy, if you want, I'll enter it/I get inside/See that I focus/Hard I enter/First, I give it slow, I shake it slow/Then you give me/You give me, then you give me/I give you/Then you give me, la/From behind, hey/Then you give me/I grab you from behind too (Hey, hey, hey)/Do you see, baby?/I grab you from behind too (Hey, hey, hey)/Do you see, baby?"

This song plays with stereotypes of trans women as passive servers to men, wherein they are seen as fetishes that need to be kept a secret, because desiring trans women would represent a

[12] All translations of her lyrics from Spanish are mine.
[13] Arca, "Prada," *KICK ii*, (XL Recordings, 2021), mp3.

detrimental threat to their perception of masculinity and manhood. Through an Instagram post in November 2021 Arca explained:[14]

> "Prada is a song about defying shame and healing ancestral wounds; about the futurity of desire and love as a moebius strip; about kink as an engine, about sex and love, and above all else about simultaneity of being able to surrender and submit as well as being able to overpower and dominate within a collaboratively created space of consent."

This relationship between sex and the image of the queer person is explored throughout the rest of the series too. In *Kick iii*, Arca focuses on the role of sex in her identity, and to do so she draws heavily from EDM and electronic music – genres typical of the nightclubs and underground bars where much of her sexual exploration took place – to create ever-shifting songs saturated with explosive sounds. Indeed, a crucial part of experiencing Arca is the feeling of disorientation and alienation, generated by characteristic sounds that emulate confrontation with the "abject." As the project progresses into more stripped-down sounds that draw from ambience in *Kick iiii* and *Kick iiiii*, acapella and synth-ballads, Arca starts showing a more vulnerable side, and "the abject" makes several appearances. This is a reference to Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection in her book *Powers of Horror*. She defines the "abject" as the visceral reaction humans have to a potential breakdown of meaning stemming from a loss of distinction between subject and object.[15] The dignity in horror that Arca emulates through the haunting sounds of the last two *Kicks* is a symbol of what being queer entails: embracing danger and shame as the source of new meaning.

The end result of this record series is a construction of transformation as an aesthetic principle. What was initially the intention of the artist – to portray as intricate a picture of the queer and trans experience as possible – becomes a formal principle. Arca's experimentation and deconstruction of pop, reggaeton and the industrial genres, and the way in which this creates the ideal medium to explore the themes of dysphoria, transformation, queer joy and abandonment, is what makes this artwork complex. Her perspective as a trans and queer woman is the starting point of an exploration of queerness, but ultimately the artwork points beyond itself – it seeks to create a new language for queer people to understand themselves in opposition to simplistic, dehumanizing homophobic and transphobic rhetoric ("a mutant faith," "post-human diva").

[14] Arca (@arca1000000), "Prada," Instagram photo, November 3, 2021, https://www.instagram.com/p/CV0j2rPFLFm/

[15] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of horror: an essay on abjection,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 2.

To achieve this, it creates the very spaces of celebration of queer identity that are needed for this purpose. The complex artwork leads to a complex picture of queerness and therefore breaks with the oppressive ideology that relegates queer identity as a sinful, shameful defect. Indeed, by providing an artistic medium to express the complexities of the queer identity, Arca reclaims those very judgements and reconfigures the narrative of queer identity as one of dignity in the "abject." The form of her work shows this as much as the content.

Reading Arca's work as either committed art or autonomous art would not be fully coherent. On the one hand, Arca is arguably advancing a particular political agenda. Her intention to create new narratives to understand the psychosexual development of non-binary people, for instance, is precisely a protest against a gap in ideology: a lack of queer narratives to theorize the queer person through. But, unlike Adorno's conjecture about the committed work of art, none of this is a hindrance to the development of the experimental form which he considered so important for the emancipatory potential of art. A listen to "Electra Rex Complex," a song from *Kick iii*, will show that it is not one isolated component of the song that gives it narrative potential. Of this song Arca said on Twitter in November 2021:[16]

> "In Alchemical terms I propose a new archetype, a nonbinary myth updated for the present and future in service of nonbinary modes of relating to Greek tragedy. If Oedipus Rex kills the father and inadvertently has sex with the mother, and Electra is the opposite — killing the mother and inadvertently having sex with the father, Electra Rex is the union of masculine and feminine. It kills both mother and father and has sex with itself. The hermetic androgyne is recognition of both the ancestral and futuristic, a merger possible because of the similarities."

It is what Arca does to the conventional pop song, as well as to the conventional myth, that gives the song its force as an aesthetically and politically provoking piece that rethinks preconceived theories of psychosexual development.

In this sense, Arca's project resembles the autonomous piece of art. But this resemblance ends here, since Adorno's need for the autonomous artwork to resist commodification is not met by Arca's work. If it is true that Arca's work poses a challenge to the listener, so that her work resists the popularization that many pop artists aspire to, she still relies on advertisement and

[16] Arca (@arca1000000), "Electra Rex," Tweet, November 9, 2021, https://twitter.com/arca1000000/status/1458112502991048704

social media to promote and sell her work. In fact, there is a sense in which this work seeks to be commodified: it aspires to be played in clubs and bars, it wants to be danced and vogued to, all for the sake of radicalizing those very spaces through a queer perspective, and to provide queer people with music that exists and supports those spaces. So, this piece cannot really be called autonomous, given its reliance on the culture industry and ulterior motives to create certain actions in the world.

The piece does show, however, the ambiguity of the commitment–autonomy dichotomy in a contemporary context. In contrast, the complexity criterion provides a way of understanding this piece that does not read formal experimentation as an opposite to political commitment. In fact, it is because these two were coupled through Arca's perspective of queerness that the artwork succeeds as a complex piece of art. Its emancipatory potential is rooted in how it provides, through form and content, new narratives for queerness that break from the dominant heteronormative ideology. Like Adorno, I believe that political action will first depend on a revaluation of the paths for action available for individuals in a society. Arca's work is path-blazing in this sense, for it does not merely incite us to act in favor of gay and trans rights but refigures the avialable choices for thinking about queernes .

In contrast, Lady Gaga's "Born This Way" is an example of an artwork that does not fulfill the complexity criterion. "Born This Way" is the title track of Lady Gaga's second full-length studio album and came out in February 2011. The album deals with topics of taboo and sexuality, as well as with queerness, homophobia, and misogyny. The song is a celebratory anthem for LGBT folks, with soaring choruses that sign: "I'm beautiful in my way/cause God makes no mistakes/I'm on the right track, baby I was born this way!"[17] and a bridge that explicitly references equality for members of racial and sexual minorities. Accompanying the song is a 10-minute music video narrating "the birth" of Gaga's "little monsters" (Gaga's fans, particularly her queer fandom) from their "mother monster" (Gaga). Apart from these, "Born This Way" is a rather typical pop song; it relies on a catchy melody, strident instrumentals, and a soaring chorus to communicate a message of acceptance.

[17] Lady Gaga, "Born This Way," *Born This Way*, (Interscope, 2011), mp3.

Even though Gaga's song seeks to provide visibility for minority groups and popularize a narrative of acceptance and inclusion, the song does not have the political potential that Arca's project does. Her work lacks complexity because the relationship between content, form, and perspective is not a cohesive one. The content of the song itself serves as a catchy anthem, but actually lacks in depth. It proposes a rather static view of queer identity that is easily trivialized: "I was born this way!" The reliance of mottos like these makes this song incredibly easy to consume as yet another pop anthem by a big pop artist. The lack of formal experimentation contributes to the trivialization of the message, because instead of repurposing the structure of the pop song for the sake of rendering the experience of queerness as radical existence, it subsumes the queer experience to a typical form for the sake of popularization. Finally, Gaga's perspective fails to capture the intricacies of the experience of all the social groups she wants to represent in her song. As a bisexual woman, Gaga provides the perspective of a queer person, but besides singing to be recognized as an equal to heterosexuals, her perspective does not really provide a very nuanced depiction or narrative of queerness. Also, as a white woman, her appeal to racial minorities in the same song reads more as an attempt to appeal to as many listeners as possible rather than as a serious attempt to dismantle the oppressive structures that subjugate these groups.

Gaga's anthem does not fail as a politically emancipatory piece of art simply because of its lack of formal quality or because of its commitment to a specific political message. It fails because the overall result presents a rather one-dimensional work that is meant to attract popular taste through its formal qualities. There is nothing really revolutionary about this song, because it lacks the complexity to truly push forth a new narrative that breaks through homophobic ideology. It remains at the level of mere entertainment. However, I do not think that its roots in pop music and its ties to the culture industry are what render it trivial. It is rather the overall lack of connection between the form of the song, the intention to create radical narratives for queer people, and the perspective from which Gaga sings it that diminish its potential.

Conclusion

In this essay, I hope to have paved the way for a new understanding of the political relevance of art. By posing complexity as a criterion of artistic judgment, I believe it is possible to revitalize

Adorno's original concern to demonstrate the emancipatory capacity of art. Meanwhile, this new criterion also debunks the dichotomy between commitment and autonomy that did not allow Adorno to think beyond a narrow conception of the ideological implications of art. Theorizing art through the concept of complexity provides an opportunity to think about the ways in which art can break through harmful narratives about oppressed minorities that pervade our social imaginary. Neither the committed nor the autonomous view leave space for this consideration, but thinking historically and locating the meaning and value of art shows that neither of these categories are needed to recognize the emancipatory potential of art.

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Interpreting the Other: Prejudice, Appropriation, and the Limits of Reflexivity in Farah Godrej's *Towards a Cosmopolitan Political Thought*

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The word theory derives from the Greek word 'theoria', which signifies the acquisition of knowledge through travelling, and contemplation that derives from seeing and experiencing the world.[18] Yet, paradoxically, advances in theory have rarely entailed a departure from familiar places, institutions, or categories, with Immanuel Kant being the quintessence of this, conceptualizing some of the most influential works of political philosophy without ever leaving his hometown of Königsberg.[19] This lack of immersed worldly experience resulted in locally devised theories claiming universal validity, owing partly to the limitations of spoken and written language, but mostly to the imperial endeavour that shaped the political economy of knowledge production through a form of dislocation that consolidated and affirmed the onto-epistemological dominance of the West, while systematically Othering the people, institutions, and epistemologies that did not fit into these purportedly universal frameworks.[20] This parochial character of Western thought has been challenged by postcolonial and subaltern theorists in the fields of anthropology, literature, history, and those specialising in Othered areas, but has figured rather liminally in the field of political theory.

The emergence of Comparative Political Theory (CPT) has put the relationship of political theory with alterity in a new light, seeking to decentre Western traditions in order to represent the

[18] Herodotus, *The Histories* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008), 13; Susan McWilliams, *Traveling Back: Toward a Global Political Theory* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2014).
[19] Diego V. Vacano, "The Scope of Comparative Political Theory." *Annual Review of Political Science* 14, no. 8 (2015): 466, https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-071113-044647.
[20] Edward Said, "Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors." *Critical Inquiry* 15, no. 2 (1989): 208, https://doi.org/10.1086/448481; James Tully, "Deparochializing political theory and beyond: A dialogue approach to comparative political thought." *Journal of World Philosophies* 1, no. 1 (2016): 6, https://doi.org/10.2979/jourworlphil.1.1.05.

heterogeneity of political life that has been subject to erasure by universalizing and totalizing claims of what such life should constitute, reveal the power imbalances underlying such claims, and bring about engagement with Othered traditions to push the frontiers of political theory. In advancing the theoretical and practical endeavour of CPT, Farah Godrej calls for a hermeneutic methodology to interpret the Other through a strategic alternation between "internal immersion into the lived experience of the text," and external analysis and commentary to cultivate a cosmopolitan political thought where the non-Western is no longer confined to the periphery.[21] I argue that the hermeneutic methodology put forward by Godrej, with the aim of effecting a cosmopolitan form of political thought, is ineffective in decentring the presumed epistemic universality of Western thought and theory. While it is necessary to engage with theories that are unfamiliar rather than confirmatory, the act of bringing insights from this encounter into the realm of familiar discourse detracts from the work of CPT because it tends to reinscribe existing power imbalances. I further argue that dislocation from the world of the familiar must entail an interrogation of familiar practices and standards of knowledge production to advance a truly cosmopolitan form of political thought i.e., a field of inquiry and praxis that deconstructs Eurocentrism, identifies convergences and particularities in so-called canonical and Othered schools of political thought, and seeks to examine the transcultural application of these ideas.

The hermeneutic method advanced by Farah Godrej involves an internal immersion in the world of the Other, drawing on the phenomenological view that the separation of the subject and object is never total, and hence never neutral. This internal immersion is deepened by understanding the lives of adherents of the textual traditions concerned. Finally, a challenge that arises in the final "hermeneutic moment" is that of reconciling the lived experience of adherence with the demands of scholarship to "make unfamiliar texts familiar to Western audiences." [22] However, in advancing this approach, Godrej leaves uninterrogated the question of whether this method of hermeneutics is best suited to capture these power imbalances. Although hermeneutics has become more secular (in the crude sense of its use outside of biblical contexts), the phenomenological hermeneutics that Godrej calls for has its roots in German philosophy, specifically in the works of Heidegger and Gadamer, who sought to uncover the "lifeworld of

[21] Farah Godrej, "Towards a Cosmopolitan Political Thought: The Hermeneutics of Interpreting the Other." *Polity* 41, no. 2 (2009): 135, 138, https://doi.org/10.1057/pol.2008.28.
[22] Ibid, 151.

humans" and human experience that had been lost through the use of the empirical scientific methodology. Instead, they call for an approach that focuses on the meaning that arises from the interpretive interaction between the reader and the text.[23] In other words, the approach is not one that specifically considers the hierarchies of power that characterize the encounter between the Western scholar and non-Western Other, be it subject or text. In fact, many of Godrej's arguments that attempt to demonstrate the applicability of hermeneutic phenomenology in the textual encounter with the Other seem to inadvertently reinforce the power dynamics that the method seeks to dismantle, paradoxically rendering it another ineffective application of a parochial technique or tradition to a milieu outside of its own origins.

This is most evident in the first hermeneutic moment of existential understanding, in which the theorist is called upon to immerse themselves into the world of the text, learning to live by the ideas of the text, thereby shrinking the distance between the knower and the known. Godrej rightly identifies that prejudice i.e., one's "presuppositions based on immersion within the concepts and categories of our own traditions" potentially poses a significant barrier to this immersion in that it may give rise to misunderstanding through the employment of familiar concepts and categories to areas outside of their applicability.[24] By virtue of our existence in and affinity to certain ways of living and knowing, this prejudice can never be eradicated, meaning that the self-dislocation undertaken into the world of the text is never complete. Godrej states that this is not essentially harmful, as experiencing the Other brings attention to the scholar's subjectivity and prejudice as shaped by particular frameworks that are different from those in which the text is embedded. [25] However, this act of bringing attention to the scholar's subjectivity acts to undermine and further confine that of the text given the existing power imbalances between the West and non-West. Focusing on the subjectivity of the Western scholar in relation to the non-Western Other often skews attention away from the latter, which comes to be defined only in its affiliation with, or negation of, the former. Walter Mignolo displays an acute awareness of this reality in the preface to *Local Histories/Global Designs*, which also seeks to advance an approach to thinking outside of colonially constructed geographical and cultural

[23] Susann M. Laverty, "Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Phenomenology: A Comparison of Historical and Methodological Considerations." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 2, no. 3, Article 3, http://www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/2_3final/html/laverty.html.
[24] Godrej, "Towards a Cosmopolitan Political Thought," 140.
[25] Ibid.

silos. Despite the central role played by Hegel in constructing and furthering the Western sensibility of history in its spatio-temporal teleological form, Mignolo chooses to interact with Hegel minimally: "due to the coloniality of knowledge, the attention of the reader would thereby have gone to Hegel rather than to coloniality, border thinking and subaltern knowledge." [26]

A related problem that contributes to the seemingly inadvertent (though not inevitable) subordination of the Other to the subjectivity of the Western scholar is the fact that this encounter is seen as a matter of *interpretation.* The term interpretation can be variously defined as "to decide what the intended meaning of something is", "an explanation or opinion of what something means" or "a particular way of performing a piece of music, a part in a play, etc." [27] What is notable about these definitions is the unidirectionality of the act of interpreting, as something enacted on another entity. Hence, despite the phenomenological impulse of doing away with the (false) dichotomy between the knower and known that is characteristic of objectivism,[28] the encounter with alterity is still something acted *on* the text rather than something to be partaken in *with* the text, whether that be by the native adherent-exegete or the external reader. This renders the native point of view a hermeneutic object, denying it the agency and voice it seeks as a form of resistance to, or at the very least, divergence from, Western forms of knowledge as "direct agent[s] of political dominance." [29]

This denial of agency to the native perspective is perhaps most conspicuous in the second hermeneutic moment of the textual reconstruction of lived experiences, as it is often lived out by the scholar in relation to the interpretive embodiment of the text in the life of the native adherent. The task of reconstruction is crucial, according to Godrej, in making the non-West intelligible and discernible to the West. Thus, Godrej's cosmopolitan political theorist is both given a text, and is also expected to construct one.[30] While Godrej suggests that adherence serves as a point of contention to reconstruction by challenging the standards of scholarly representation, this may not be the case in several instances. A "scholarly text" cannot always be contested by the adherents of the tradition to which it is attributed. "Some traditions make an appearance only

[26] Walter Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), xi. https://doi.org/10.23943/princeton/9780691156095.001.0001.
[27] Cambridge Dictionary, "Interpretation," https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/interpretation.
[28] Godrej, "Towards a Cosmopolitan Political Thought," 142.
[29] Said, "Representing the Colonized," 220.
[30] Godrej, "Towards a Cosmopolitan Political Thought," 151.

when they're told";[31] storytelling and oral literature are often the prevailing "textual" and discursive forms in many non-Western traditions. In the second hermeneutic moment, these oral traditions and epistemologies must surrender to academic demands in one of two ways: either they are excluded because they are not textual in the literal sense, or they are appropriated into the requisites of writing, argumentation, and systematization. This is not to invalidate the act of translation, reconstruction, or exegesis, or to say that such acts are inherently disagreeable. There are certainly attempts at reconstruction that are genuine, just as much as there is a need to make hitherto insular and undermined traditions less so. The argument is that given the fact that, as Talal Asad notes, the act of reconstruction is entangled and implicated in various conditions of power– professional, cultural, international– there is a need to make reconstructions responsible by, at the very least, fostering a sense of correspondence and aspiring to reciprocity with the Other.[32] In other words, if adherents of the Othered tradition are to challenge conventional scholarship, should scholarship not be formulated in a manner that allows said Others to contest it? These are crucial considerations, without which the work of CPT risks continuing to undermine and peripheralize the Other, as well as hierarchize Others based on the ease of translation into familiar academic standards.

Even so, Godrej does provide some analysis of the question of the power imbalance involved in encountering the Other in stating that scholars no longer claim to be authoritative voices seeking to make the unfamiliar transparent; rather, they have now accepted the "partial, multiple and often somewhat fictitious nature of these accounts." [33] Moreover, there is also an increasing awareness across disciplines of how power relations and the positionality of the scholar affect such encounters. One could point to this act of self-reflexivity – which is becoming an increasingly established practice in academia – and state that it dispels any room for criticism of the hermeneutic methodology, as scholars are themselves aware of the consequences and implications of it. While the necessity of self-reflexivity is almost self-evident given the disparities in power that have been mentioned heretofore, what is at stake in this analysis is the question of its sufficiency.

[31] Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology.* (New York: Routledge, 2017 [1961]), 1-2. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315125855.
[32] Talal Asad, "The Concept of Cultural Translation in British Social Anthropology." In *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography.* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2010): 156, 159.
[33] Godrej, "Towards a Cosmopolitan Political Thought," 153.

Above all, self-reflexive scholarship stems from the concern with reproducing or reinforcing forms of socio-political exclusion by situating the self and overcoming the often-hierarchical distancing between the self and the text. Thus, it both acknowledges the scholar's prejudice as well as the relationality of this identity. Ironically, the acknowledgment of one's position of dominance sets one apart and could reinforce a sense of Other or impel a condition of detached alterity.[34] Furthermore, as Beenash Jafri notes in the context of settler-colonialism, while this acknowledgment brings to light the privilege of those in dominant positions, it does not emphasize the need to address why the settler (or the scholar, in this instance) is in this position, to begin with; in lacking this emphasis, the act of reflexivity does not necessarily engage with the methods and strategies that reproduce structural hierarchies.[35] Hence, self-reflexivity on its own is insufficient in acknowledging the disparity between the academic and the Other. This deficiency is further exemplified by the fact that self-reflexivity is often performative, stemming from disciplinary practices and conventions like 'negative case analysis' and reviewing processes that confine scholars i.e., prevent an unrestrained exercise of subjectivity.[36] Once again, while these checks are necessary, they should not be the sole or primary reason to practice reflexive scholarship. Such scholarship should stem from a place of seeking to dismantle structural hierarchies contributing to privilege, including those of scholarship and knowledge production, not one of seeking to operate within the confines of those structures.

The limitations of Godrej's framework, all of which reinstate or re-emphasize the power imbalances between the West and non-West, make the approach ineffective in advancing a cosmopolitan political thought that brings centrality to the 'comparative' in CPT i.e., the Other. The ineffectiveness of this hermeneutic methodology raises the question of how this work can be carried out, making it pertinent to explore alternatives to this approach to test out whether the author's assertion that there are no alternatives to her methodology – however flawed it may be – apart from the continued peripheralization of non-Western traditions.

[34] Audrey Kobyashi, "GPC Ten Years On: Is Self-Reflexivity Enough?" *Gender, Place and Culture* 10, no. 4, 2003: 346-348, https://doi.org/10/1080/0966369032000153313.
[35] Beenash Jafri. "Privilege vs. Complicity: People of Colour and Settler Colonialism," 2012, https://www.ideas-idees.ca/blog/privilege-vs-complicity-people-colour-and-settler-colonialism.
[36] Godrej, "Towards a Cosmopolitan Political Thought," 155.

A useful point of departure in this investigation is James Tully's conceptualization of genuine dialogue, especially given the lack of multilateral/intersubjective engagement in the act of interpretation. Defined in its negation, genuine dialogue is neither a form of interaction that cultivates a knowing ignorance of the conditions for genuine dialogue nor one of unknowing deception where one believes one is engaged in genuine dialogue when they are not. This form of dialogue often characterizes the encounter of Western traditions with non-Western, as evident in the interaction between the scholar with the non-Western text as an interpretive exercise onto which analysis and opinions are enacted, and the experiences of the adherents to be textually reconstructed for a Western audience.[37] Genuine dialogue, on the other hand, is a condition of mutual and reciprocal understanding between participants in dialogue by deparochializing political thought – realizing that theories that have laid claims to universality only pertain to particular spatio-temporal contexts.[38] Like Godrej, Tully too draws on concepts put forth by Gadamer (genuine/false dialogue) and views the objective of comparative political theory as one of decentring the West. However, unlike Godrej, Tully notes the need for sustained dialogue, as opposed to the "fast-time teaching, dialogues, negotiations, bargaining, and pre-scripted, transitional process [that] have proliferated." [39] In other words, the long-term engagement necessary for the process is a prolonged activity that takes place from the bottom up. Indeed, Tully argues that dialogue must be viewed as a form of storytelling and narrative making first, without affixation, both in the sense of attempting to create a new or different form of form of meaning (a reconstructed textual account) and the related sense of being attached to scholarly demands of comparison and criticism. This allows for a non-attachment to one's own ways of thinking and seeing through the act of 'deep listening' to the traditions of Others and an "ethos of openness and receptivity." [40] This narrative approach, with its origins in Indigenous oral traditions, has the ability to cultivate a form of self-reflexivity that emerges organically out of interaction. Founded upon mutual understanding and trust, this narrative approach gives rise to an intersubjective space that allows for a questioning of standards and ways of judgement, even in acts of translation. [41] In this light, this approach brings the practice of textual reconstruction as an established standard of representation and interpretation into the realm of contestation rather

[37] Tully, "Deparochializing Political Theory and Beyond," 4.
[38] Ibid, 3, 5, 6.
[39] Ibid, 5.
[40] Ibid, 11.
[41] Ibid, 17.

than the reconstructed account alone, which, as noted previously, may not be possible for people belonging to its affiliated tradition to challenge.

Venturing even further from established methods of knowledge production is María Lugones' concept of playfulness, which she describes as "an openness to being a fool, which is a combination of not worrying about competence, not being self-important, *not taking norms as sacred,* and finding ambiguity and double edges as a source of wisdom and delight" (emphasis added). [42] Additionally, Lugones points out that an agonistic playfulness that privileges competence and contestation is inimical to understanding others, especially racial and ethnic minorities that are often subject to arrogant perception, or the tendency of those in power to graft the substance of the perceived as subservient to themselves.[43] To understand the Other in a manner that does not arrogate them, there must be an openness to changing rules and norms.

Therefore, both Tully and Lugones further ways of addressing the dilemmas posed by the subjectivity of the knower/reader, and the power imbalance between the knower and the text – highlighting that in order to decentre the West and make CPT central, rather than peripheral, also entails questioning the standards of knowledge. Indeed, the purpose of this section is not to provide a comprehensive overview of all potential alternative ways of carrying out the work of CPT, nor is it to propose a singular solution to the dilemmas, but simply to explore and analyse the potential merits of other approaches that engage with alterity, and by extension, to argue against the author's contention that the latter would remain insular without a well-honed method of interpretation.

In this paper, I have set out to provide a critical appraisal of the hermeneutic methodology put forth by Farah Godrej with the aim of advancing a cosmopolitan political thought that questions what we commonly accept to be the disciplinary boundaries of political theory by engaging with the Other. In doing so, I have argued that while "an engagement with theories that are strange and estranging rather than familiar and confirmative" [44] is necessary to challenge the self-understanding that informs and defines political theory, the act of bringing insights from this

[42] María Lugones, "Playfulness, "World-Travelling," and Loving Perception," *Hypatia* 2, no.2, 1987: 17. https://doi:10.11/j/1527-2001.1987.tb01062.x.
[43] Ibid, 4.
[44] Godrej, "Towards a Cosmopolitan Political Thought," 158.

encounter into the discourse of familiar theoretical conversations and textual standards may significantly detract from the cosmopolitan objective due to the power dynamics implicated in the encounter between a Western reader/scholar and a non-Western text. Moreover, I have also demonstrated that there are possible avenues for furthering dialogue by discarding, or at least questioning, the standards of knowledge production that are also informed by the same power imbalances, and that far from sustaining the insular nature of non-Western traditions, these dialogical approaches further engage with alterity. As Shu-Mei Shih notes, while the limits of representation and interpretation and the presence of prejudice that may proliferate stereotypes pose a significant challenge to understanding the unfamiliar, "the other side of the stereotype is not an anarchic proliferation of irrelevant meanings and representations." [45] These limitations are not inalterable, and contrary to Godrej's contention, the *other* side – the subaltern – can provide insights on how to mitigate these limitations in a manner that is far from insular or insulating, as demonstrated by Tully's invocation of Indigenous narrative traditions.

As implied throughout the paper, this analysis is by no means an all-encompassing account of interpreting the Other and brings forth several objections, limitations, and ambiguities. As an objection to the alternatives explored in this paper, one could argue that they are vague and lack the structure to achieve meaningful dialogue towards a cosmopolitan end. However, given the various dimensions of power (racial, patriarchal, heteronormative) and the scales of its operation (professional, national, international), which give rise to multitudinous intersections, having a standardized approach may result in a conflation of Othered traditions and a lack of suitability to the realities of power that are experienced in varying degrees. As Murad Idris notes, given how comparison is a process of negotiating and reflecting on these entangled power relations, it must be addressed in relation to each theorist's aims and the distinct features of the encounter. [46]

A crucial question that arises is how to reconcile the unconventional, or non-scholarly, mode of inquiry and dialogue with the ultimately scholarly pursuit of engaging further within the discipline of political theory through comparison and cosmopolitanism. To this, I would argue that moving away from the norms and standards raises the question of why they are upheld so

[45] Shu-Mei Shih. "Global Literature and the technologies of recognition." *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 119, no. 1, 2004: 17. https://doi.org/10/4324/9780203721209-31.
[46] Murad Idris. 'Political Theory and the Politics of Comparison." *Political Theory,* 2016: 5, https://doi.org/10/1177/0090591716659812.

vigorously. When "relocating" oneself back into the disciplinary world of political theory and seeking to bring alterity into such conversations, these approaches can induce a realization of how existing standards also contribute to Othering. Moreover, these approaches are not non-scholarly. With heightened awareness of the need to decolonize academic institutions, including the university, non-Western scholars are further questioning such standards and bringing in Indigenous epistemologies to challenge the Eurocentric academic model.[47] The fact that this is occurring provides more opportunities for intersubjective dialogue and contestation, as this development makes it difficult to evade acknowledging the agency of non-Western Others. These dynamic shifts are immensely advantageous to both scholars and students of CPT. The emphasis placed on non-Western ways of knowing makes those producing scholarship under the purview of and within Western traditions aware of these traditions, and could potentially reduce the impulse to bring unfamiliar theories into the frameworks of discursive familiarity to understand them.

Another challenge raised by this analysis is how to mitigate the challenge of engaging in dialogue with texts, which are inherently oriented towards and rely upon the practice of internalization by the reader. To this, Edward Said proposes a partial solution by stating that viewing narratives in terms of the history that informs them and produces their categories and emphasizing the relationality of these categories which are often embedded in colonialism and imperialism.[48] Finally, there is the possibility that this engagement could end up placing an unfair burden on the Other to address existing curricular gaps and recount instances of trauma and Othering to deepen understanding. In a textual sense, this would include reading narratives only of struggle, confining the Other to its state of being undermined by the West or by other forces and not seeing it in its essence. Navigating this space between acknowledging and mitigating power imbalances that are often the result of imperialism, and ensuring that this power imbalance does not become the sole focus of dialogue remains a challenge for scholars and students of political theory.

[47] Achille Joseph Mbembe. "Decolonizing the University: New Directions." *Arts & Humanities in Higher Education* 15, no. 1, 2016: 36. https://doi.org/10.1177/1471022215618513.
[48] Said, "Representing the Colonized," 224.

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Plutarch the Historian?
An exploration of the Historical reliability of Plutarch according to modern and ancient standards and in comparison to Arrian

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The question of Plutarch's historical reliability can be explored in a myriad of different ways. Two ways in particular can be explored by contrasting ancient and modern standards for 'reliable' history and identifying the cultural and literary context in which Plutarch wrote. The modern notion of historicity is vastly different from the ancient Greeks and Romans, owing to different methods, criteria and literary traditions. Additionally, Plutarch is associated with the "vulgate" tradition of Alexander sources and as a result, is often overlooked in favour of other sources. This essay in particular will explore Plutarchs's treatment of Alexander, and the parallel life of Julius Caesar. This is contrasted with Arrian, who is assigned to the "official" more rational tradition. This essay contends, however, that both Arrian and Plutarch are legitimate sources when understood as a part of the literary tradition, and cultural and political environments of their times. Therefore the notion of historical reliability will have different criteria to modern historians than to an ancient audience. Modern standards are based on Von Ranke's notion of "what actually happened," whereas ancient standards adhere more to literary conventions. This essay will argue that Plutarch is too often dismissed, and is just as credible as other authors like Arrian, while also exploring the modern standards of historiography and how they differ from the ancient standards, with a particular focus on agonal mimesis.

This essay will begin by examining the larger cultural context in which Plutarch wrote his works: The Parallel Lives[49]. Plutarch was a Greek citizen living in the Roman empire. He wrote in the mid to late 1st century. One would do well to understand that the Greeks were far from an esteemeda rather stigmatized group in the late 1st century; the Roman regard for the Greeks was often quite discriminatory. Cicero describes in a letter to Quintus: "Seeing, as I did, that the

[49] Plutarch, "The Parallel Lives", in Vol. I of the *Loeb Classical Library.* 1914.

complaints of Greeks, because they have a genius for deceit, were allowed an excessive weight, whenever I was told of any of them complaining about you, I appeased them by every means in my power.[50]" Furthermore, there was a common insult for Greeks called *graeculus*, a pejorative diminutive, meaning "little greek." Finally, Cato the Elder is quoted by Pliny the elder to have said of the Greeks:

> I shall explain what I found out in Athens about these Greeks … They are a worthless and unruly tribe. Take this as a prophecy: when those folk give us their writings they will corrupt everything. All the more if they send their doctors here. They have sworn to kill all barbarians with medicine—and they charge a fee for doing it, in order to be trusted and to work more easily. They call us barbarians, too, of course, and Opici, a dirtier name than the rest. I have forbidden you to deal with doctors.[51]

All this is to demonstrate the general regard the elite class of Romans felt towards the Greeks. It also provides some context for the impetus Plutarch may have felt to begin his works on the Parallel lives with a comparison between a celebrated figure in Greek history and a famous Roman. Plutarch's aim was to cultivate a sense of kindredness between the elite Romans and the Greeks[52]. These are what one may consider *a priori* beliefs which will influence Plutarch's treatment of his sources. Another such *a priori* which may have influenced his work would have been his religious beliefs. He was a citizen of Delphi and a priest of Apollo, and was such a proponent of his beliefs that he may have acted as an ambassador of Delphi in meetings with the Roman emperors[53]. Finally, and perhaps most obviously, as Plutarch writes in the 1st century CE, he is nearly five centuries removed from the actual events of Alexander of Macedon's life. These are modern criteria for historicity, which would indicate that Plutarch may not be very historically reliable. But Plutarch tells his readers directly: "For I am not writing Histories, but Lives.[54]" History is not Plutarch's goal; rather, it is biography.

Plutarch is credited by some as the first biographer,[55] but this essay would contest that biography as a means of historiography: approaching history through the lens of personality and will, has

[50] M. Tulli Ciceronis "epistulae" 1-2. In *Epistulae ad Atticum*
Vo. 2, Part 1. (ad Q fr 1.2).
[51] Pliny the Elder, "Natural history" XXIX.7
[52] Stadter, Philip A. 2015. "Plutarch's Lives and Their Roman Readers." *In Plutarch and His Roman Readers. Oxford: Oxford University Press.*
[53] Stadter, Philip A. "Plutarch: Diplomat for Delphi?" *In Plutarch and his Roman Readers.*
[54] Plutarque, Konrat Ziegler, and GärtnerHans. 2000. "Plutarchi Vitae Parallelae." Vol. 1, Fasc.1. Monachii; Lipsiae: K. G. Saur. 152. "ούτε γαρ ιστορίας γράφομεν, άλλα βίους"
[55] Rollyson, Carl. 2005. "Essays in Biography." in *iUniverse*. 25.

existed since the inception of history itself in the *Histories* of Herodotus. Plutarch fills his biography with examples of personality in anecdote and characterization, such as in Alexander's taming of Bucephalus:

> Straightaway he ran to the horse and, taking the reins in his hands, turned him towards the sun, as he seemed to have realized that the horse was distressed, seeing its own shadow lying in front of him, this made him rear. Having calmed the horse and stroked him a little, when he saw that he was filled with courage and had calmed his breath, he quietly took off his mantle and gently raised himself up to mount him..[56]

Furthermore, Plutarch's methodology prefers to focus on aspects of the personality, such as witticisms and jokes which reveal something more of each man's soul than great battles: "Indeed the most brilliant exploits often tell us nothing of the greatness or vices of the men who did them, while on the other hand a chance remark or some jest may reveal something more of a man's character than the mere feat of winning battles in which thousands fall, or of marshalling great armies, or laying siege to cities.[57]" This notion of biography can be understood as the Great Man Theory, the belief that history is driven by the wills of exceptional individuals, especially men. This theory was popularized by Thomas Carlyle (1869), in his work *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, & the Heroic in History*[58]. In his work, he described certain figures who were presented as ideal examples of individuals who irrevocably impacted the course of a society, and therefore history. The theory became widespread in the 19th and 20th centuries and still is understood by many as the legitimate method to understand history. This has fallen out of favour more recently, as historians have established new methods and criteria for historical reliability, some of which have been used in this essay. These criteria consist of a greater consideration of deterministic factors that affect individuals and therefore history, such as geography, heritage, culture and religion.

[56] Plutarch*, et al.* "Plutarchi Vitae Parallelae." 158. "εὐθὺς προσδραμὼν τῷ ἵππῳ καὶ παραλαβὼν τὴν ἡνίαν ἐπέστρεψε πρὸς τὸν ἥλιον, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἐννοήσας ὅτι τὴν σκιὰν προπίπτουσαν καὶ σαλευομένην ὁρῶν πρὸ αὐτοῦ διαταράττοιτο. μικρὰ δὲ οὕτω παρακαλπάσας καὶ καταψήσας, ὡς ἑώρα πληρούμενον θυμοῦ καὶ πνεύματος, ἀπορρίψας ἡσυχῇ τὴν χλαμύδα καὶ μετεωρίσας αὐτόν ἀσφαλῶς περιέβη.*"*

[57] Ibid. 152. *"*οὔτε ταῖς ἐπιφανεστάταις πράξεσι πάντως ἔνεστι δήλωσις ἀρετῆς ἢ κακίας, ἀλλὰ πρᾶγμα βραχὺ πολλάκις καὶ ῥῆμα καὶ παιδιά τις ἔμφασιν ἤθους ἐποίησε μᾶλλον ἢ μάχαι μυριόνεκροι καὶ παρατάξεις αἱ μέγισται καὶ πολιορκίαι πόλεων*"*

[58]Carlyle, Thomas. 1869. "Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History" in *Oxford, Clarenden Press.*

Because ancient 'historians' do not write according to these same standards, The modern perception of Plutarch's historical reliability is rather critical overall. Pierre Briant expounds on this point:

> [N]ot one of these ancient authors was a "historian" as we understand the term now, with respect either to method, to concept, or to procedure. Each had of course a somewhat different mode of approaching the subject, but it may be said of all of them that they were not so much "Alexander historians" as writers marked by the Roman milieu in which they were operating and, in some cases, also by their fascination with Greek "classical" culture. They were thus, first and foremost, concerned with establishing their credentials as literary figures, which demanded that they follow the literary conventions of the day. These called for imitating models from the past (mimesis [imitation]) and engaging in a contest (agon [competition]) with their literary colleagues.[59]

Briant raises a strong point concerning the context in which ancient authors worked; that is their adherence to literary conventions. A writer will treat a historical work differently than an oration, an epic poem or a biography. Different writers in different genres will have different aims for their work. One such literary influence was agonal mimesis. This was a well established concept in all genres of ancient literature: the imitation and emulation of a rival author, either contemporary or past, which had a great influence upon the material[60]. As a result, representing events as they 'actually happened' was not the sole objective but one of many, including: working within an established tradition and imitating and rivalling one's peers in the pursuit of acclaim and fame. This vastly different paradigm between the current and ancient criteria must be considered by modern scholars as one cannot evaluate Plutarch by the same 'scale' as modern texts.

Agonal mimesis was an important part of the ancient literary tradition, as Briant says: "Their works are generally more comparable to storytelling than critical history. How to take these factors into account is the problem: 'The reader is controlled by an increasingly artificial source tradition which turned the raw events of Alexander's reign into a literary construct.[61]'" I do not believe this should diminish the legitimacy of the ancient author's work, but should lead modern historians to conduct a more nuanced analysis of the sources.

[59] Briant, Pierre. 2012. "Alexander the Great and His Empire: A Short Introduction." Princeton, N.J. Woodstock: Princeton University Press. xvii.
[60] Again, this goes back to the beginnings of Greek history with Thucydides' intentional response in his work to his predecessor Herodotus.
[61] Ibid. 11.

Arrian in his work, the *Anabasis,* exemplifies agonal mimesis quite well:

> Consequently Alexander's deeds are far less known than the meagerest achievements of antiquity. For instance, the march of the ten thousand with Cyrus up to Persia against King Artaxerxes, the tragic fate of Clearchus and those who were captured along with him, and the march of the same men down to the sea, in which they were led by Xenophon, are events much better known to men through Xenophon's narrative than are Alexander and his achievements. And yet Alexander neither accompanied another man's expedition, nor did he in flight from the Great King overcome those who obstructed his march down to the sea. And, indeed, there is no other single individual among Greeks or barbarians who achieved exploits so great or important either in regard to number or magnitude as he did. This was the reason which induced me to undertake this history, not thinking myself incompetent to make Alexander's deeds known to men.[62]

Arrian makes a direct reference to Xenophon's work, the original *Anabasis*. He critiques the deeds of Xenophon, stating that Alexander's were superior and did not receive the proportional amount of praise. Arrian also parallels his own quality as a historian to the quality of Alexander as a king. This, however strange it may seem to a modern audience, compared to an ancient one of Arrian's contemporaries, would have been an accepted and even expected literary device. The understanding of angonal mimesis provides an even clearer lens through which to examine Plutarch's literary context. Plutarch followed two other authors who wrote on Alexander. The first is Quintus Curtius Rufus, a more obscure source, much of whose work is lost. He wrote in the 1st century CE. The second is Diodorus Siculus, some of whose work is lost, and who wrote in the 1st Century BC. Both of these author's writings regarding Alexander focused more on his military conquests supplemented with some anecdotal information relating to his personality.[63] Taking the context of the literary landscape in which Plutarch worked into consideration, it is understandable that he would choose to emphasize that he is focusing less on battles and more on biography, as he is actively responding to the work of other authors and is fitting into the available literary niches[64].

The biggest difference between modern and ancient historiography can best be described in the words of Von Ranke (1795), declaring that history must be founded upon the principle of *'how it actually was*[65].' Further to this point, he criticizes another historian, saying, "I cannot help

[62] Arrian, Pamela Mensch, and James S Romm. 2010. "Anabasis Alexandrous" in *The Landmark Arrian: The Campaigns of Alexander; A New Translation.* New York: Pantheon Books. I:12
[63] Albert Brian Bosworth. 2016. "Curtius Rufus, Quintus, Rhetorician and Historian." Oxford University Press.
[64] Plutarch et al, "Plutarchi Vitae Parallelae." 152.
[65] *"wie es eigentlich gewesen ist"*

regretting that he was not more available for the purposes of a historian than he is. If fiction must be built upon facts, facts should never be contorted to meet the ends of the novelist.[66]" Modern historiography places the emphasis upon 'what actually happened' above literary convention and niches. Thus, primary sources are of the highest value when doing history. Concerning Alexander and his conquests, there are no primary sources that survived into the modern era. As a result, historians must turn to these later authors of antiquity– one of whom is Plutarch–who had the opportunity to work with the primary sources themselves. Ironically, the principle of *how it actually was,* in the case of actual primary sources, is better upheld by the ancient authors than modern historians. Thus, an examination of the primary sources which were available to Plutarch is necessary. There are several historical works on Alexander which were written by men who either accompanied him on his conquests or lived shortly thereafter. **Ptolemy**, Alexander's childhood friend, later bodyguard and finally, one of his "Successors." **Aristobulus**, an engineer, whose written work focused on geography and ethnography. **Nearchus**, his admiral, who wrote about his voyages in the Indian ocean. **Onesicritus**, a helmsman, who wrote about Alexander's education. **Callisthenes**, a philosopher and Aristotle's nephew. He was appointed as the official historian of Alexander's conquests, but was later disgraced and ultimately executed by Alexander. There is also **Cleitarchus**, who wrote *History of Alexander* in c.250 BCE. It was known for its rhetorical excessiveness and sensationalism and thus it was not considered reliable in antiquity. All that is known of these authors is quite fragmentary, and is often dependent upon the references of later authors. Furthermore, modern scholars divide these contemporary and near contemporary sources into two categories: the reliable sources--sometimes referred to as the "official" tradition[67]--and the "vulgate" tradition[68].

The official tradition is generally described as having more historical reliability than the vulgate which is characterized as lending itself over to sensationalism and emotion[69]. Plutarch is generally regarded as part of the vulgate tradition, often drawing from the 'unofficial' sources, whereas Arrian is regarded as the more rational work, having chiefly based his history upon

[66] Leopold Von Ranke. 1887. "History of the Latin and Teutonic Nations (1494 to 1514);" London, G. Bell & Sons. Preface.
[67] Hornblower, Simon. 1981. "Arrian - A. B. Bosworth: A Historical Commentary on Arrian's History of Alexander. Vol. 1: Commentary on Books I–III. Pp. Xvi + 396; 6 Maps. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980." The Classical Review 31 (2). 185.
[68] cf. the Greek *Κοινή.*
[69] Another parallel to Herodotus and Thucydides.

Ptolemy's account, supplementing it with Aristobulus[70]. Because of this, Arrian was held as the 'most reliable' of the sources on Alexander, and Plutarch was categorized as a more sensational one. Bradley Buszard writes: "Indeed Arrian was considered our most reliable narrative of Alexander's exploits from the eighteenth century through the mid-twentieth, when his account was strongly defended by Tarn… Bosworth has since cast doubt upon Arrian's supremacy.[71]" This illustrates that Plutarch is often dismissed in favour of the more 'reasonable' Arrian. Though this consensus has somewhat improved in recent years, the division of the 'vulgate' Plutarch and 'reasonable' Arrian still exists, although it is gratuitous, as they both wrote according to the literary standards of their time. They both wrote in response to other authors, demonstrating examples of agonal mimesis. Moreover, Arrian also proves to have biases when he states his reasons for choosing his sources:

> But in my opinion the narratives of Ptolemy and Aristobulus are more worthy of credit than the rest; Aristobulus, because he served under king Alexander in his expedition, and Ptolemy, not only because he accompanied Alexander in his expedition, but also because he was himself a king afterwards, and falsification of facts would have been more disgraceful to him than to any other man.[72]

Arrian states that a king would have less motive to lie than an average man, as it would be more dishonorable for him. Indeed, this is not a fact,[73] but an opinion of Arrian's. Finally, this must not serve to discredit Arrian as a source, just as Plutarch must not be discredited, but only to illuminate the different standards by which the ancient authors wrote. Briant explains that: "every ancient book that we make use of is 'a literary work in its own right and... a product of its own particular context[74].'"

All this begs the question: was Plutarch historically reliable? The answer will be different depending from what age one would ask. To a modern historian, Plutarch's work would not be considered historically reliable in its entirety, but this essay would point out that he did not contend to write a history. He is criticized as if he were a part of a group which he clearly stated not to be a part of: historians. Plutarch, although stating he wrote on life rather than histories, used a variety of sources as any good historian should. Powell explains: "it comes as a shock to

[70]Steele, R. B. 1919. "The Method of Arrian in the Anabasis." Classical Philology 14 (2): 147.
[71] Buszard, Bradley. 2010. "A Plutarchan Parallel to Arrian Anabasis 7.1." 567. Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies (50). 567.
[72] Arrian, "Anabasis" Preface.
[73] Perhaps a king may even have *more* of a reason to lie than the average man!
[74] Briant, "Alexander the Great and his empire: A short introduction." xviii.

find that Plutarch cites by name no fewer than twenty-four authorities[75]." Indeed, Plutarch often cites his sources in his work. A few examples are: "But when Olympias sent Alexander on his conquest, as Eratosthenes says…[76]" and "This we have read in the memoirs of Aristoxenus.[77]" Writing for the Roman elite of his time, Plutarch's work would have been received as if it were historically reliable, as he often cites his sources and continues with the literary tradition established by his predecessors, responding to their work by identifying his literary niche of biography. He deploys devices of agonal mimesis, just as Arrian did, and although both had biases, they must not be dismissed as 'historically unreliable.' By recognizing the context in which Arrian and Plutarch wrote, the modern historian gains an even deeper and more nuanced understanding of their works; biographical, historical and literary.

[75] Powell, J. Enoch. 1939. "The Sources of Plutarch's Alexander." The Journal of Hellenic Studies 59 (2): 229.
[76] Plutarch et al., "Plutarchi Vitae Parallelae." 154. *"ἡ δὲ Ὀλυμπιάς, ὡς Ἐρατοσθένης φησί, προπέμπουσα τὸν Ἀλέξανδρον ἐπὶ τὴν στρατείαν…"*
[77] Ibid. 155. *"ἀνέγνωμεν ἐν ὑπομνήμασιν Ἀριστοξενείοις."*

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In Defense of Social Contracts: A Case for Hobbes' Command Theory of Law in H. L. A. Hart's Legal Positivism

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Thomas Hobbes' legal philosophy is in many contemporary legal theorists' views a relic of unconstitutional thought. According to what H. L. A. Hart describes as the command theory of law, Hobbes endorses a political system in which the decisions of a state's leader are sovereign and absolute. Despite Hobbes' being a fellow proponent of legal positivism in an earlier intellectual epoch, Hart does not believe that his political philosophy, like the ideas of Bentham and Austin, could be an adequate conception of modern legal systems. He critiques Hobbes' legal theory primarily for its propensity to identify laws with the wills or commands of the Sovereign, which he insists, in various works, cannot be the foundations of a legal system. What Hart diminishes, however, is the complexity and systematicity of the ways in which man consents to such a political arrangement in Hobbes' proposed legal society. To this extent, Hobbes' legal philosophy has not been holistically understood by its critics and cannot be epitomized merely as a situation of the gunman coercing actions from his victims. Instead, Hobbes' legal theory can be better understood in terms of contractual agreements between autonomous rational agents. In this essay, I will examine the propositions laid down in Hobbes' magnum opus, *Leviathan*, and Hart's "Positivism and the Separation of Law Morals" and *The Concept of Law*, to defend Hobbes' social contract theory against Hart's four challenges to the command theory of law.

As a preliminary note, I acknowledge that Hart makes salient improvements upon Hobbes' extant conception of the law in several notable respects. Hart does not, however, achieve this through the four arguments which he himself is convinced to have undermined the sovereign command theory as a valid concept of law. In the pages to follow, I will show why Hobbes' theory of law adequately satisfies the two essential characteristics of valid legal systems that Hart had himself posited: 1) private citizens must generally obey the primary rules of obligation, and

2) public officials must respect the secondary rules of recognition, change, and adjudication as standards of conduct.[78] Laws that impose duties or obligations on individuals are described by Hart as "primary rules of obligation".[79] It is important to clarify that for Hart, the command model does not fall short of imposing primary rules of obligation. But in order for a complex system of laws to operate effectively, Hart argues that secondary rules must be appended to remedy the defects of primary rules. The secondary rules of a legal system may thus include 1) rules of recognition, 2) rules of change, and 3) rules of adjudication. Therefore, it is the fact that sovereign command theory as a concept of law apparently does not acknowledge secondary rules of obligation that Hart takes to be an issue with its designation as a valid legal system.

Hart begins his assault on Hobbes by alleging that the formulation of laws under a framework of sovereign command only partly fits a criminal statute, but it cannot account for the body of conditional stipulations enabling individuals to make contracts, wills, and trusts. These laws are presented in different ways and serve different functions from laws that demand direct obedience from their subjects by conferring legal powers on individuals to create and modify structures of rights and duties ("Positivism and the Separation Morals" 604).[80] Legislation governing such activities are not enforced as commands, but provide a choice for subjects, and their application necessarily requires the willingness of subjects to endeavour them. Quoting Axel Hägerström, Hart argues that individual rights cannot exist in the face of pure commands, as commands are something "which we either obey or we do not obey" ("Positivism and the Separation of Morals" 606).[81]

This is not a salient critique against Hobbes' social contract theory, as Civil Society sufficiently allows for various modes of civil transactions to take place. In Chapter 14 of *Leviathan*, Hobbes details the transference of rights —that is, when some benefit is conferred to another— which men customarily partake in a State of Nature (88).[82] When both parties see a comparable opportunity for advantage, the mutual transference of rights becomes Contract (Hobbes 89).[83] To contract with others requires a bilateral keeping of promise between contracting parties, which is

[78] H. L. A. Hart, *The Concept of Law* (Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1961), 113.
[79] Hart, *The Concept of Law*, 90.
[80] Hart, "Positivism", 604.
[81] Hart, "Positivism", 606.
[82] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. J. C. A. Gaskin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 88.
[83] Hobbes, 89.

the very definition of justice (Hobbes 79).[84] But the feasible enforcement of individuals who are by nature self-interested and deceptive to keep their respective word requires the presence of a coercive power. Hence, men created artificial citizenship in the Commonwealth and corresponding artificial rules, known as *civil laws*, to structure their behaviour and the like behaviour of others. The role of the enforcer to ensure the obedience of subjects, then, is fulfilled by the Sovereign, and only under the managerial purview of the Sovereign can a variety of liberties be had, whether it is for subjects to buy and sell, to choose their own abode and trade in life, or to otherwise contract with one another (Hobbes 141).[85] Further, Hobbes notes that the Commonwealth's greatest liberty is derived from "the silence of the law" (146),[86] wherefore in the absence of direct prescriptions or proscriptions from the Sovereign, subjects are free to act "according to their own discretion" (Hobbes 146).[87] In many ways, the civil laws that flow from the social contract are merely an importation of the Laws of Nature to which men are universally subscribed in a State of Nature. All civil laws in Hobbes' legal philosophy can be described through Hart's words as the "mere transcription of hitherto unwritten laws", which defines the "rules of recognition" ("The Concept of Law" 92).[88]

Hart then argues that a legally unlimited Sovereign is not necessary for law, citing as evidence the alleged division of powers in federal regimes. In these systems, there exists conventions to guide legislation and the modifications thereof, such as the Rule of Law, that perdure irrespective of the person or group of persons who happens to be sovereign over society at any one time. Hart believes that the command theory posits no such provisions; the highest in command, whom he calls the "uncommanded commanders", simply contrive and enumerate all the rules for others to follow ("Positivism and the Separation of Morals" 603).[89] To this, Hobbes would respond by saying that a Sovereign unlimited in coercive power and legal authority is indispensable for the proper adjudication and enforcement of laws for several reasons.

For one, because individuals in a State of Nature are motivated chiefly by their own survival and everyone exists in perpetual war, one man's notion of good might be his own flourishing to the

[84] Hobbes, 79.
[85] Hobbes, 141.
[86] Hobbes, 146.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Hart, Concept of Law, 92.
[89] Hart, "Positivism", 603.

ruination of others (Hobbes 84).[90] Under such pretexts, the Sovereign functions as an arbiter of justice to which all further concepts of responsibility and obligation are anchored. Hart posits that secondary "rules of adjudication" are necessary for a legal system to resolve disputes over the interpretation and application of primary rules of obligation. Adjudication requires common standards of legal validity, which the Sovereign can alone provide, satisfying Hart's criterion of "rules of adjudication" at once ("The Concept of Law" 94).[91]

Beyond establishing a standard of justice, a Sovereign is also necessary for its enforcement by holding a monopoly on the discretionary use of coercive sanctions. Without them, widespread disobedience would pervade society. Consider twentieth century Sicily. If the local Mafia could enforce the compliance of citizens with greater sway than the State itself, such as intimidating a witness into withholding crucial testimony at a trial for murder, then the State's power to maintain law and order, as well as to ensure just judicial outcomes would be wholly uprooted, negating the function and ultimate purpose of laws to begin with (67).[92] This hypothetical is lifted wholesale from J. R. Lucas' *The Principles of Politics*.

If more concrete, modern examples are required, one need not look further than the unregulated realm of international relations to recognize that where there is no superior power, relations between subjects are chaotic and volatile.[93] Hart might argue that our international relations system is structured, and power is balanced among state actors through the decisions of international assemblies. While I do not doubt Hart's aptness to make informed observations about the disposition of world politics, we must consider that Hobbes charted his legal philosophy prior to the Westphalian model of interstate relations. Moreover, it is not unreasonable to assume that the international arena is permanently dominated by few unchallenged powers which shape the very international laws that govern themselves and all other sovereign actors. The same is true of federal regimes; a society governed by competing sources of moral and legal authority, such as the various orders of government, and populated by citizens with wavering ideas of justice has no permanent security and is a sure cause for frequent internal disputes.

[90] Hobbes, 84
[91] Hart, *Concept of Law*, 94.
[92] J. R. Lucas, *The Principles of Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 67.
[93] Hobbes, 71.

Hobbes reasons that a Sovereign must operate outside the constraints of civil laws because there would be no greater judge of his actions. To legally adjudicate for his actions requires the designation of a higher Sovereign and yet a higher Sovereign after that, plunging Civil Society into an infinite regress (Hobbes 215)[94] Hence, some semblance of a Sovereign power to deliver the final word on political matters seems to not only be politically prudent but is also a logical necessity. Note, however, that a Sovereign need not be conceptually or pragmatically limited to a monarch; it could be an oligarchy, or even a polity for that matter. Indeed, the Sovereign may just as effectively instantiate as The Thirty Tyrants for Ancient Greece as he does Queen Elizabeth II for England.

This is besides all the notable disadvantages of a federal system, such as the inefficiency of the different organs of government to arrive at common notions of the social good, as well as to enact and change laws in a timely manner that reflect the needs of the citizenry. There is also much cause for speculation that executive branches of government dominate national decision-making in most modern federal regimes. Taking collective action on issues of national importance has also been a well-known challenge with the decentralized federal system in Canada. All of these are prescient issues are a powerful testament to the failings of a legal system that suffers from the absence of strong authoritative voices.

Someone might raise the ancillary concern that Sovereigns may jeopardize the standards of justice if they decide to exploit the law for their own ends. But this fundamentally misunderstands the Sovereign, who remains consistently neutral precisely because he has already obtained the highest good of Civil Society, which is "absolute power", through the lawful exercise of his powers.[95] Hence, a Sovereign's unchecked power is not a genuine challenge to the administration of justice.

Hart's third contention suggests that sovereign commands are inconsistent with what he coins the "internal aspect" of rules ("The Concept of Law" 109).[96] In The Concept of Law, Hart holds that the general command theory, of which both the Austinian and Hobbesian formulas of law are variants, defines laws as the published will of the Sovereign backed up by the threat of force.

[94] Hobbes, 215.
[95] Hobbes, 213.
[96] Hart, *Concept of Law*, 109.

Under such an axiom, Hart explains, people's attitudes when following the law cannot be described as true 'obedience'. On the command model of law, men need only submit to a rule under the threat of penalty, but to truly obey, one needs to internally comprehend the purpose and necessity of laws as rules ("The Concept of Law" 108).[97] In Hart's words, in view of law as commands, one is obliged to obey but does not necessarily feel a personal obligation to obey. This phenomenon, wherein practical acceptance of a rule is done out of compulsion, is what Hart terms the external point of view, and it is differentiated from the internal point of view that refers to the circumstances in which certain patterns of behaviour are internalized by individuals through their own rational faculties and endorsed as a standard of conduct. To feel obligation further entails some degree of appreciation for the values and principles that a law intends to protect, as well as a thorough understanding of how laws achieve said aims. Hart argues that the latter must exist necessarily within subjects of a state for that state to have a proper legal system and that no person possesses such a perspective in societies governed by the command theory, according to which the simple trilogy of command, sanction, and sovereign is not unlike that of a gunman saying to his victims "give me your money or your life" ("Positivism and the Separation of Morals" 603).[98] The only difference is that in the case of a legal system, the gunman utters this directive to a mass of habitually complying victims, but Hart charges that "the law surely is not the gunman situation writ large, and legal order is surely not to be thus simply identified with compulsion" ("Positivism and the Separation of Morals" 603).[99] After all, if law is fundamentally about threats, then any notion of obligation is incoherent: no one truly believes that one has an obligation to forfeit their wallet to a robber at gunpoint, even if doing so would be prudent in the immediate circumstances.

This critique is likewise unsound. Regardless of whether an internal component to obedience is required for legal systems, Hart is mistaken to believe that Hobbes' theory somehow fails to promote this very criterion. Hobbes argues that laws in general are to every subject "those rules which the common-wealth hath commanded to make use of…by word, writing, or other sufficient sign of the will, for the distinction of right and wrong" (Hobbes 39).[100] It follows from

[97] Hart, *Concept of Law*, 108.
[98] Hart, "Positivism", 603.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Hobbes, 39.

this that the will of the Sovereign *eo ipso* embodies the will of the people. As such, the Sovereign's laws in Civil Society are much more than arbitrary commands backed up by the will of the Sovereign, "because every subject is author to every act the Sovereign doth" (Hobbes 141).[101] Hart might respond by saying that few people explicitly consent to the legal system of the societies in which they inhabit and are coaxed to accept, as, after all, express consent is not necessary for an internal view of the law.

To this conjecture, I would add that people already tacitly articulate their desires for a social contract and the terms therewith in view of the fact that a State of Nature is so repulsive that any individual can be assumed to prefer Civil Society over it at any time. Moreover, Hobbes maintains that since promises and contracts made under coercion are fully voluntary, fear alone as a basis for entering contracts is valid, for it is rational to want to avoid the courses of action that leads to one's own destruction (Hobbes 86).[102] Hence, if rationality is the fulcrum of distinction between performative obedience and reasoned obedience, then we can presume that all men living in Hobbes' civil society feel a natural impulsion to consent to its terms. Even if laws seem imbalanced or unfair under the Sovereign's reign, they are still preferable to the state of total war, where no more favourable arrangement exists (Hobbes 84).[103] Hobbes, like Hans Kelsen, Joseph Raz, and many others who made their mark in the command tradition of legal philosophy after him, casts the essential idea that the law is a system of norms that plays a special role in the practical reasoning of its subjects, which we have good reason to infer involves a lucid recognition of one's obligations to others and the practical function of laws in a post-legal world.

Finally, Hart commits to the view that the command theory of law is incoherent on account of its internal contradictions. Consider Austin's Habitual Obedience Model of Sovereignty, which states that X is the Sovereign of a given society Y if and only if (i) X is habitually obeyed by the members of Y and (ii) X does not habitually obey any of the members of Y ("Positivism and the Separation of Morals" 603).[104] If this model is true, then the whole of the legal system begins and terminates with the Sovereign's reign. Two troubling outcomes flow from this set of beliefs. The

[101] Hobbes, 141.
[102] Hobbes, 86.
[103] Hobbes, 84.
[104] Hart, "Positivism", 603.

first manifests as the dilemma wherein (P1) because there are no rules that exist outside of those made by the Sovereign in accordance with the stipulations of the Habitual Obedience Model, (P2) the death of the Sovereign would invalidate all of his rules. Yet (P3) his rules are still observed and remain in effect long after his replacement, thus causing (C) premise 3 to contradict premise 2. The second implication takes the following form: (P1) if the Habitual Obedience Model is correct, then no person is sovereign unless he is habitually obeyed; (P2) the next Sovereign, whom we will call Rex II, is not habitually obeyed; hence, (C) nothing that Rex II does counts as making a law. This renders absurd consequences for reality, as evidently, innumerable laws precede and continue to be enacted long after any particular Sovereign's death in virtually all human societies. Thus far, Hart might have the best technical argument against Hobbes' command theory, but I think Hart crucially misses the central tenets of Hobbes' social contract theory.

Hart's first objection can be countered by the fact that laws in Civil Society can persist across regime changes just the same as in modern societies through the mechanism of inferred, or tacit, consent. Tacit consent can be expressed simply by virtue of men being born into and enjoying the corresponding privileges and comforts of Civil Society (Hobbes 89).[105] Hence, if everyone expresses tacit agreement to living under the law in its current form and there exists a Sovereign, such laws can continue to obtain purchase on subjects. The role of the Sovereign is with great respect symbolic; so long as a Sovereign is appointed, regardless of who he may be, the Commonwealth does not exist in anarchy but in civility, and society can function indefinitely. A Sovereign need not abandon the legal ordinances already established in society; he need only see to the continued protection of the Commonwealth through the preservation of those laws. After all, the power bestowed upon Sovereigns can be exercised however the Sovereign deems necessary to secure "peace and security" for all (Hobbes 118).[106]

In response to the second implication of Hart's critique, I defer to Hobbes' assertion that the transfer of Sovereign titles, or succession of leadership, is "not through generation but through contract" (133).[107] This is to say that each change in regime affords the Commonwealth an

[105] Hobbes, 89.
[106] Hobbes, 118.
[107] Hobbes, 133.

opportunity to formally negotiate and redraft the terms of their contracts with their new Sovereign. Every time a society elects a new political leader, it indicates a Sovereign's successful renewal of their contract with the Commonwealth by adapting their policies to their changing needs. In modern societies, this process occurs with great subtlety, giving the appearance of continuity in our legal systems. Continuity of the law as such enables the authority of Sovereigns to be legitimated without habituating obedience from their subjects anew, effectively allowing for the possibility of Rex II to become the Sovereign on the first day of assuming office. But if it is logically sound, this interpretation of social contracts also enables Civil Society to meet Hart's secondary "rules of change" requirement for legal systems, as hypothetically, new political leaders hold the prerogatives to change any old piece of legislation.

In summary, Hart's fixation on dismantling the sovereign command model of law critically overlooks various aspects of the social contract in Hobbes' legal philosophy. His argument that the command theory fails to accommodate various formulations of laws other than direct orders is ultimately countered by the reality that the Sovereign enables all such activities to occur under his purview; they simply become legally binding. Further, Hart's concern for the unnecessity of the Sovereign's unlimited and unchecked powers is also unsound, for a supreme authority must exist to have the final word on matters of justice and establish standards of conduct in relation to it. Moreover, Hart's skepticism regarding the ability of subjects to have an internal view of the law is also misplaced, as Civil Society, along with the position of the Sovereign, are fully intended through the will of its body politic. Finally, Hart's two syllogistic arguments stemming from the claim that laws made under the command theory cannot surpass the reign of their Sovereigns can be effectively countered by Hobbes' principles on tacit consent and the succession of sovereignty. Through systematically analyzing and responding to all of Hart's four general critiques against the command theory of law, I have presented convincing reasons as to why Hobbes' legal philosophy cannot be accurately described as the "gunman situation writ large" and defended his social contract theory as a valid model of the union of primary and secondary rules of obligation.

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The Ethics of Anger: Expanding Nussbaum's Account of Retributive Anger with A Deontological Interpretation of Anger

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Amia Srinivasan's famous essay "The Aptness of Anger" recounts a debate between James Baldwin and William F Buckley Junior on anti-black racism in the 1960's.[108] She recounts how Buckley responds to Baldwin's frustration with the loss of livelihood with a pragmatic challenge, arguing that anger is counterproductive, and that rather than getting angry, Black people should instead focus on creating a better future. Srinivasan argues that Buckley's response is a type of pragmatic politics that focuses on creating good outcomes rather than dwelling in the past. This idea that anger is counterproductive has a long history in the literature of anger, dating back to Seneca, who conflated angry people to madmen. More recently, in Martha Nussbaum's essay "Transitional Anger," she contends that anger is normatively problematic because it is either irrational or morally wrong.[109] In this essay, I argue that Nussbaum mainly holds a Consequentialist position on anger. While she has incorporated Deontology into her framework, it only takes up a small part of her argument. Thus, I will attempt to modify her account by expanding her Deontological understanding of anger. I will do so by drawing on Srinivasan's account regarding intrinsic and instrumental reasons for anger.

For the sake of the argument, I will accept three things from Nussbaum's view. I will accept that anger conceptually includes the desire for retribution; the desire for the perpetrator to suffer, either psychologically, physically, or in terms of their status. From this assumption I will also accept that the path of payback is instrumentally irrational, the path of status-focus constitutes a moral error, and that the Utilitarian path is instrumentally rational.

[108] Srinivasan, Amia, "The Aptness of Anger," in *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 26, no. 2 (2018): 123-124.
[109] Nussbaum, Martha C., "Transitional Anger," in *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 1, no. 1 (Cambridge University Press, 2015): 41.

I begin the paper by outlining Nussbaum's conception of anger, which she argues conceptually involves the desire for retribution. This desire leads down three paths – the path of payback, path of status-injury, and the Utilitarian path. The first two paths are normatively problematic, and the third path is the most optimal due to its productiveness. From this general outline, I argue that Nussbaum's account is Consequentialist in two ways: the importance of anger lies mostly in its instrumental value, and that an action is rational only insofar as it is instrumentally rational - that it produces a productive outcome. Finally, I will attempt to incorporate a Deontological interpretation of Nussbaum's account of anger without altering her basic framework, where I argue that anger is both intrinsically valuable and rational by drawing on Srinivasan's idea regarding the intrinsic reasons of anger.

Nussbaum on Standard and Transition Anger

In her essay 'Transitional Anger', Nussbaum argues that our ordinary use of anger – Standard Anger - is normatively problematic because it is either irrational or morally wrong. Drawing on Aristotle's definition, Nussbaum understands Standard Anger as an intense emotion that takes place when the perceived wrongful act of another causes pain to oneself or people in our circle of concern.[110] [111] An act can be understood as wrongful when it threatens the beliefs and values that we regard as important in life. For example, we are angry at our friends for lying because we fundamentally believe that lying is wrong. However, this act is only 'perceived' as wrong because the wrongness of an act depends on the person's point of view – on what they 'see' as a wrongful act – even if their perception does not reflect their reality.[112]

Aristotle also thinks wrongful acts come with pain – the pain that something we deeply care about is damaged. Nussbaum builds on this view, claiming that pain is very often a type of status injury. That is, we see someone's wrongful act as a diminution of one's status. A focus on one's social standing, rather than the wrongful act itself, gives one's anger a "narcissistic flavour."[113] Pain could also stem from personal insecurity and the feeling that we lack control with respect to

[110] Nussbaum, "Transitional Anger," 42.
[111] Aristotle, in *Rhetoric*, trans. W. Rhys Roberts (New York: Modern Library, 1984)
[112] Nussbaum, "Transitional Anger," 42.
[113] Nussbaum, "Transitional Anger," 45.

our goals. Anger, therefore, helps us restore control or achieve an illusion of control.[114] Lastly, we mostly limit our anger not only to things that affect us, but also to things that affect people in our circle of concern. It touches on our core values when people we care about are negatively affected. We get angry when "a cause or principle we care about has been wrongfully assailed," even if our loved ones, not ourselves, are the victims.[115]

Standard Anger is mostly retributive in nature, characterised by its future-oriented double movement: the backward-looking appraisal of the pain inflicted, and the outward movement of striking back[116] To Nussbaum, there are two types of outward movement: the path of payback and the path of status-focus. In the path of payback, the person experiencing a perceived wrong-doing desires the perpetrator of the wrongdoing to suffer. Suffering can take many forms, like physical injuries, psychological unhappiness, or just an unfortunate future.[117] In this path, the angry person focuses on intrinsic attributes (e.g., friendship or love) that the offender has damaged. It is usually pleasant and linked to hope – by doing something "unwelcome" to the offender, it can somehow assuage our pain or cancel out the damage inflicted by the offender.[118] Nussbaum argues that anger in this context is irrational because inflicting pain on the offender does not remove the victim's injury. It is what Nussbaum terms "futile magical thinking."[119] Indeed, punishment, no matter how harsh, cannot reverse the offender's damage. Nor can we rid ourselves from pain merely through an act of revenge. Thus, Nussbaum concludes that this path is irrational.

The second type of outward movement is the path of status-focus. The wronged person goes down this path when they desire the perpetrator to suffer from a status injury. It is the belief that the offender's wrongdoing has affected one's status in a certain way, and that retaliation can restore the balance of status.[120] This type of anger is narcissistic and morally wrong since it focuses on one's social standing, rather than the wrongness of the act itself.[121] Nussbaum

[114] Nussbaum, "Transitional Anger," 45.
[115] Nussbaum, "Transitional Anger," 44.
[116] Nussbaum, "Transitional Anger," 45.
[117] Nussbaum, "Transitional Anger," 46.
[118] Nussbaum, "Transitional Anger," 45.
[119] Nussbaum, "Transitional Anger," 41.
[120] Nussbaum, "Transitional Anger," 48.
[121] Nussbaum, "Transitional Anger," 50.

believes that the desire for status-injury arises from a modern (and mainly Western) honour culture that is status-obsessed; a culture where people are always ranking themselves against one another. People remain intensely concerned about their social standing and are usually angry at actions that threaten their status.[122] However, despite arguing that it is morally wrong, Nussbaum argues that anger in this context is still rational, since retaliation could successfully nullify one's humiliation.[123]

Standard Anger, overall, is problematic regardless of how we look at it. When anger is rational, it is morally unjustifiable. When anger is morally justifiable, it is irrational. Nussbaum, however, still gives space for anger. After all, the desires for payback and humiliation are only a part of human nature. Yet, "in most sane people this cognitive error is short lived."[124] Therefore, Nussbaum proposes another form of anger: Transition Anger. Transition Anger is different from, but arises out of, Standard Anger. It is also known as the Utilitarian path, a third path that comes out of Standard Anger. It is a type of quasi-anger where one uses Standard Anger only as a healthy segue into "forward-looking thoughts of welfare" and compassionate hope.[125] The act of using anger as a middle ground is called the 'transition', illustrated as "How outrageous! Something must be done about this."[126] It is an "intelligent and imaginative effort towards justice", having its focus not on irrational impulses of retribution or narcissistic thoughts of social standing, but on improving the welfare of both the offenders and individuals in our society.[127]

A rational person, therefore, sees Standard Anger as "a brief feat or cloud, soon dispelled by saner thoughts of personal and social welfare."[128] Nussbaum considers this type of anger as a rare and exceptional emotion. She particularly admires Martin Luther King, who, in his 'I Have a Dream' speech, displayed high levels of self-discipline in controlling his emotions, yet still giving space for Black Americans to be angry. His speech is made during the peak of the 1960's civil rights movement in response to the rampant racism experienced by Black Americans every

[122] Nussbaum, "Transitional Anger," 45.
[123] Nussbaum, "Transitional Anger," 49.
[124] Nussbaum, "Transitional Anger," 49.
[125] Nussbaum, "Transitional Anger," 52.
[126] Nussbaum, "Transitional Anger," 53.
[127] Nussbaum, "Transitional Anger," 53.
[128] Nussbaum, "Transitional Anger," 51.

day. King started with Standard Anger, claiming that they "'will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream'".[129] However, he quickly turns to pragmatism and compassionate hope, wishing that one day "the sons of former slaves and …former slave owners" can form an alliance of "brotherhood".[130] Nussbaum argues that King's Transition Anger is partly made possible by empathizing with other people's motives and positions, since looking at the offenders' point of view can steer us towards correcting the harm, rather than irrational impulses for payback.[131]

A Consequentialist Position of Anger

In this section, I argue that Nussbaum's framework is mainly a Consequentialist position. It is worth noting that Nussbaum is not a Utilitarian, but a virtue-ethicist who mainly draws inspiration from Aristotle. However, her view on anger has changed further down the road as she engaged more in Utilitarian literatures, like the works Mill and Bentham. This pushed her to develop a Consequentialist understanding of anger. Consequentialism is a normative ethical framework that bases morality on the outcome of an action, rather than the action itself. Therefore, an action is right when it produces a good outcome, wrong when it produces a bad one. This entails that an action could still be right even if it is in itself morally impermissible e.g., stealing a loaf of bread to feed the homeless. How we define a 'good outcome' is subjected to debate, but the most popular idea is utilitarianism, the idea that a good outcome is one which produces the maximum utility or pleasure.

Since Consequentialism focuses on outcomes, actions are judged based on their instrumental value. In other words, an action is valuable when it creates a valuable outcome. Its intrinsic values are also valuable insofar as it contributes to said outcome. For example, while honesty is a virtuous act in and of itself, this virtue is only important insofar as it helps build trust and openness in a relationship.

Deontology is also a moral framework, but different from Consequentialism, focuses on the nature of the act in and of itself. Primary literatures of Deontology are centered upon philosopher

[129] Nussbaum, "Transitional Anger," 52.
[130] Nussbaum, "Transitional Anger," 53.
[131] Nussbaum, "Transitional Anger," 54.

Immanuel Kant, who proposes the Universalizability Law: "act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law."[132] That is, an action is only morally permissible if it is a law that everyone can follow. Thus, stealing a loaf of bread for the homeless is wrong because it cannot be universalized. The world would be in chaos if everyone is allowed to steal for their own gain, no matter what their reasons are.

Kant forms this law based on the belief that humans are rational, dignified beings that are intrinsically valuable, thus deserving our respect. This generates moral duties not only to humans themselves, but also to other human beings.[133] The Universalizability Law forms the basis for evaluating whether our duties are morally permissible. Consequently, actions are judged based on whether they conform to those duties – the focus being the actions in and of itself, instead of the consequences.

Consequentialism and Deontology are not limited to ethics; we can also apply them to other areas of philosophy, including anger. The former indicates that anger is only valuable by virtue of its outcome, while the latter claims that the value of anger lies within the emotion itself. Besides the fact that Transition Anger is also called the Utilitarian Path, Nussbaum's argument of anger also employs Consequentialism in two other ways.

Firstly, it indicates that anger is mostly important for its instrumental value. There are a few textual points in the essay that support this claim: Nussbaum thinks that anger has a very limited but real utility.[134] To Nussbaum, anger acts as a wakeup call that forces people to acknowledge the magnitude of the wrongs done and the way in which it affects people's well-being. Anger is also a source of motivation that pushes people to act, and a source of deterrence for protecting our rights. Apart from that, Nussbaum thinks that anger is an increasingly unnecessary emotion, especially in an age with "forward-looking systems of justice."[135] Moreover, considering that Nussbaum has only evaluated anger in instrumental terms, it seems that she either thinks anger is intrinsically problematic or has no intrinsic value.

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[132] Kant, Immanuel, in *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. Mary Gregor, trans. Jens Timmermann (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press 1998): xviii.
[133] Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, xxii.
[134] Nussbaum, "Transitional Anger," 54.
[135] Nussbaum, "Transitional Anger," 55.

Next, Nussbaum argues that an action is rational only insofar as it produces a productive outcome. But to understand this idea, we must press forward and examine the difference between intrinsic and instrumental rationality. An action or emotion is rational (in a broader sense) if it is an appropriate response to the reasons that one has in one's situation. According to Srinivasan, intrinsic rationality, or "aptness", refers to acting in a way that is proportional to and is properly motivated by an intrinsic personal reason (e.g., being angry because you're being lied to).[136] An intrinsically rational or apt response is proportional in that it corresponds to the magnitude of the wrong.[137] Harbouring lifelong hatred just because someone lied to you would be a disproportionate response.

The response should also be properly motivated by a reason. Person A who is angry about being lied to by Person B should be angry because Person B lied, not because Person A just gets angry at everything Person B does.[138] Lastly, the reasons for anger should be personal and intrinsic. It is personal in that one cognitively knows the reason to be angry, while intrinsic in that a person is angry because she feels like she is wronged, not because getting angry can get her attention.[139] Intrinsic rationality is Deontological in that it has its focus on the intrinsic features of rationality, as opposed to the external outcomes.

Instrumental rationality refers to responding to an instrumental personal reason in a way that serves your best interest. Having an instrumental reason could mean being angry because it helps raise awareness about social injustice. Instrumental rationality is Consequentialist because it has its focus on the effects of the action - on whether the action is productive. A person is instrumentally irrational if he is acting in a way that would be counterproductive. However, it is worth noting that a Deontological interpretation of anger does not entirely exclude considerations of instrumental rationality. This means we must understand anger in terms of both intrinsic and instrumental rationality.

Nussbaum's account of the ethics of anger is mostly concerned with instrumental rationality because the desire for retribution is irrational only insofar as it is counterproductive - it cannot

[136] Srinivasan, "The Aptness of Anger," 127.
[137] Srinivasan, "The Aptness of Anger," 130.
[138] Srinivasan, "The Aptness of Anger," 130.
[139] Srinivasan, "The Aptness of Anger," 127-130.

restore one's harm. On the other hand, the desire to diminish the offender's status is rational merely because humiliating the offender is a productive way of restoring one's status. Same goes for Transition Anger, which is the most optimal path because focusing on justice and social welfare is the most productive.

Nussbaum's Consequentialist Position Coupled with a Deontological Understanding of Anger

In this section, I shall modify Nussbaum's by incorporating elements of Deontology into Nussbaum's account, but in a way that does not alter her overall framework. This means maintaining that the desire for retribution is a conceptual part of anger, and that this desire leads people down three paths. While Nussbaum's account is mainly a Consequentialist one, there are some references to Deontology throughout her essay. She acknowledges that both human welfare and actions have intrinsic moral worth. She also argues that anger itself "embodies the idea of significant wrongdoing targeting a person or thing that is of deep concern to the self."[140] It would be interesting to see whether we could create a more well rounded understanding of anger by expanding Nussbaum's use of Deontology. Therefore, my main goal in this section is to expand elements of Deontology to other parts of Nussbaum's account by drawing on Srinivisan's idea of intrinsic rationality. I will do so by dividing Nussbaum's argument into three sections: path of payback, path of status-injury, and the Utilitarian path (Transition Anger).

3.1 Path of Payback

There are two ways to sidestep considerations of intrinsic rationality: either argue that 1) the path of payback is never intrinsically rational, or 2) instrumental rationality is more important when it comes to injustice. If these two options fail, she is left with the third option – argue that the path of payback can be instrumentally irrational and intrinsically rational or irrational. In the following section, I will pursue each of these options in order.

For option 1), if Nussbaum wants to maintain that the desire for payback is in general an irrational act, she can argue that it is never intrinsically rational to want retribution. That is,

[140] Nussbaum, "Transitional Anger," 54.

Nussbaum must explain why desiring the suffering of one's oppressor can never be intrinsically rational. Drawing on Srinivasan, I propose three requirements of aptness. I argue that one's anger should meet the following requirements to be characterized as intrinsically rational: 1) the inflicted damage gave victims intrinsic personal reasons to be angry, 2) the victim's anger is properly motivated by that intrinsic reason, and 3) their anger is proportional to the damage inflicted. It is sufficient to argue that option 1) fails as long as the path of payback *can* be intrinsically rational, even if it is not always the case. I shall discuss these requirements in order.

It would be helpful to use Nussbaum's analogy to aid our understanding. However, for the purposes of this essay, I will modify some details of the analogy. Angela's friend, Rebecca, was raped by O.[141] It is assumed that O has the capacity to comprehend the wrongness of rape, but still did it anyway. Angela is furious, not only because Rebecca is a friend she deeply cares about, but because O's action has threatened Angela's deeply held beliefs and values. I will also add that Angela acknowledges society's history of turning a blind eye to women's exploitation and letting sexual assaults go unreported. Therefore, Angela wants revenge; she wants O to suffer legal repercussions.

In this case, the reasons were personal: Angela cognitively knows why she is angry. The reasons are also intrinsic because she feels wronged. This fulfills the first requirement. Next, Angela is angry at O not because she has a general distaste for O (let's just assume she does not), but because O has sexually assaulted Rebecca. This simultaneously fulfils the second requirement.

Lastly, to understand whether Angela's anger can be proportional to the damage inflicted, we need to look at the kind of suffering that the victims desired of their oppressors and compare them to the magnitude of the injustice. We should again consider social and historical context behind sexual assaults. Women have long suffered from a history of sexual exploitation by men, and many feel generally unsafe in male dominated spaces. They see sexual assaults as almost a salient threat and are forced to protect themselves by equipping themselves with small weapons or self defense skills. Despite common instances of sexual assaults, however, they are rarely reported, and offenders rarely get charged. Society's neglect of women's exploitation has fostered both feelings of fear and anger among women.

[141] Nussbaum, "Transitional Anger," 46.

Angela knows this, and on top of her personal reasons, it seems perfectly proportional to wish that the offender suffers from legal repercussions. It would be disproportionate if Angela wants O dead, but that is not the case. Of course, what makes something proportional is more complicated than the arguments I have presented. We should bear in mind other important considerations: the other beliefs and values Angela might hold, her previous encounters with sexual assault, or her experience has a woman in general. It might be a different story if Angela strongly believes in 'an eye for an eye' and wants O to suffer from the same fate as Rebecca did. Some might argue that Angela is rational since it corresponds to her reasons and beliefs. Others might say that sexual assaults can never warrant the bodily harm of the offender. This, however, requires a deeper analysis into what constitutes a proportionate response to various wrongdoings, which is not the purpose of this essay. For now, it is safe to say that Angela has intrinsic reasons for being angry that are motivated by O's sexual assault of her friend, and there exists a proportionate level of retaliation for this wrongdoing (for example, attempting to get O to suffer legal repurcussions). Therefore, the path of payback can be intrinsically rational, even if it is not always the case. Therefore, option 1) does not work.

Option 2) is to argue that instrumental rationality is more important when it comes to injustice: we should focus on being productive and making constructive changes. This argument raises two objections. Firstly, this claim overlooks the intrinsic value of being angry. When we consider whether one is being intrinsically rational, we are recognizing that there is an intrinsic value in that action. Similarly, to consider the intrinsic rationality of anger is to recognize that anger has value in itself.

Anger has value in that there are certain situations that "call for an angry response".[142] These situations usually have to do with "the threat to or destruction of value," especially with forms of injustice.[143] Thus, anger is a way of recognizing the importance of these values and why violating these values constitutes an injustice. Srinivasan compares this idea of recognition to our capacity for aesthetic appreciation, arguing that appreciating a piece of beautiful artwork is distinct from the mere knowledge that something is beautiful. There is similar intrinsic value in appreciating

[142] Cojocaru, Maria-Daria, "Turn Anger into Passionate Disagreement? A Pragmatic Proposal," in *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* XII, no. 2 (Associazione Pragma, 2020): 3.
[143] Cojocaru, "Turn Anger into Passionate Disagreement? A Pragmatic Proposal," 3.

injustice through one's anger. When we encounter a person who feels nothing in response to moral wrongs, it seems to indicate a moral shortcoming in the person's character. We'd think that it would be better if she were capable of feeling anger towards injustice. One might argue that the ability to appreciate the intrinsic value of anger is only important insofar as it contributes to an instrumentally good outcome. However, we can run a similar argument against our appreciation of aesthetics, arguing that such appreciation is only valuable insofar as it helps us respect aesthetically valuable objects. Intuitively, this argument does not make sense. We tend to believe that there are virtues in both the appreciation and knowledge of aesthetics. Similarly, then, both intrinsic and instrumental value of anger deserve our recognition.[144]

I would like to expand on this idea, arguing that anger is a sign of empathy, an emotional recognition of others' pain. Nussbaum argues that empathy puts ourselves in the offenders' point of view, which motivates us to turn away from anger and to instead focus on a productive good.[145] However, I argue that empathy is also a feature of anger, simply because we are capable of recognizing the victims' suffering. Angela's anger at O is valuable in that it recognizes Rebecca's trauma. Anger has value in being a glue that holds people together. It is a sign that one is willing to take on injustices that have befallen other people. As well, anger is an indication of love. A friend who gets angry for us or with us indicates that they love us enough to put themselves through intense emotions. This type of anger is in many ways healthy and important for forming emotional bonds.

Next, the idea that instrumental rationality is more important in injustices is vulnerable to the objection that a focus on productiveness could potentially send a harmful message. When we tell people to be productive rather than angry, we are suggesting that they do not have intrinsic reasons to be angry. In other words, we are suggesting that they are not wronged, or that the magnitude of the oppressors' wrongdoing is not enough to warrant their anger. It is in common with the oppressive ways of speaking about anger (e.g., women being dismissed by misogynists for being too shrill).[146] Telling victims to withhold their anger for the sake of productiveness also suggests that the victims themselves are primarily responsible for fixing problems of injustice,

[144] Srinivasan, "The Aptness of Anger," 132.
[145] Nussbaum, "Transitional Anger," 54.
[146] Srinivasan, "The Aptness of Anger," 128.

rather than the oppressors.[147] This is the same way as telling victims of sexual assault to stop being angry and learn self-defense instead. It is telling victims they are solely responsible for their own safety.

Even if anger has value on its own, we should not dwell on our anger for too long. No doubt, injustice cannot be addressed with emotions alone; it also requires practical action. What's important is to find a balance between both: allowing ourselves to feel anger only to the extent that we recognize the wrongness of the act and the pain that comes with it, but not too long that we are paralyzed by inaction. Both intrinsic and instrumental rationality are important. Therefore, option 2) fails.

We are thus left with option 3), which is to agree that the desire for payback can both be instrumentally irrational and intrinsically rational, depending on the victims' reaction and the magnitude of the wrong. The path of payback, then, is problematic only insofar as it is counterproductive, and that it could sometimes be an intrinsically inappropriate response. However, to claim that anger could be intrinsically rational is to claim that anger, to some extent, is a natural human impulse. Therefore, in cases where retribution is both a counterproductive but appropriate response, it is neither problematic nor rational - it's merely an apt, natural human reaction. Afterall, anger is a manifestation of one's passion for life. We should not go out of our way to avoid it.

3.2 Path of Status Focus

A similar strategy can be employed to implement Deontology into the path of status-focus. For option 1), we need to consider whether this path fulfills the three requirements of aptness. Referring to Nussbaum's analogy: not only does Angela believe that O's action is wrongful, but she also sees it as an insult or a status-injury to both Rebecca and Angela herself. Therefore, Angela wants O to suffer from status-injury as well, thinking that lowering O's status can compensate for one's humiliation.

[147] Srinivasan, "The Aptness of Anger," 133.

While the reason feels wrong (which I will discuss later), it is nonetheless personal and intrinsic. This is because Angela cognitively knows the reason for her anger, and her anger is not a way to garner attention. This fulfills the first requirement. Next, Angela is not angry at O in general; she is angry at O for hurting her status. Therefore, the reason is properly motivated. This fulfills the second requirement. Lastly, wishing unpopularity on someone who diminished your status is proportional, even if the reason for anger sounds selfish and wrong. This makes all three requirements fulfilled. The path of status focus can be intrinsically rational.

Since I've already argued above that instrumental and intrinsic rationality are of equal importance, I will not pursue option 2. This means that Nussbaum has option 3 left: accept that path of status-focus can be both instrumentally and intrinsically rational

Regarding the moral wrongness of the path of status focus, while it is clear that focusing on one's status is wrong, it is unclear what way in which it is wrong. There are multiple approaches, but I will only explore the Consequentialist and Deontological framework. A Consequentialist approach indicates that the path of status focus is wrong because the desire leads to an action – not the desire itself – that causes a lot of pain. To put it another way, wishing unpopularity upon someone, like hoping that they lose their friends, generates a bad outcome or more pain than pleasure.

However, what if the desire is never acted upon? There are little to no consequences to merely having a desire. The only people that get affected are ourselves because the desire to humiliate others generates an uncomfortable feeling. Yet, this approach does not speak to why we think the path of status-focus is wrong. It's wrong for some deeper reasons, which leads us to the other approach – a Deontological understanding of status injury.

A Deontological approach indicates that the path of status focus is wrong because it stems from the wrong intentions. We have these desires not because we care about the victims or the act itself, but because of selfish, usually unimportant reasons. Kant would indicate that selfishness disrespects the rational nature of humanity and is harmful to the extent that it dulls our moral receptivity to "sympathetic joy and sadness."[148] It seems to make more sense that status injury is

[148] Kant, Immanuel, in *The Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. Lara Denis, trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge University Press 2010), 456.

wrong to this extent. In conclusion, then, the path of status focus is instrumentally rational and sometimes intrinsically rational, but morally wrong because it violates our moral duties and fails to respect the rationality of humans.

3.3 Transition Anger

We need to employ a different strategy for Transition Anger because it operates in a different realm from Standard Anger. Transition Anger is only a type of quasi anger; it is a combination of anger and the 'transition' – namely, one's deliberate choice to turn to pragmatic action. The 'transition' is a reaction to one's anger in that the action is a response to the motivation offered by anger; and a reaction to the situation because one shifts to pragmatic action to correct the wrong committed by the offender.
When Nussbaum claims that Transition Anger is rational, it is rational precisely because one deliberately makes the decision to turn away from anger and focuses on something productive. The right question, then, is to ask whether this 'transition', or the immediate and deliberate decision to take practical action, is an intrinsically rational reaction to anger.

The requirements for evaluating the Standard Anger do not seem to work here. The question of whether the reasons for one's anger are personal is made under the pretense that anger could be an impulsive reaction that does not require much thought. When making a deliberate decision, however, it is generally accepted that one cognitively knows the reason for their action. They could not have made that decision without having a reason in the first place.

On the other hand, it does not matter if one's reason is intrinsic or instrumental. That is, even if Angela chooses practical action merely to raise awareness on sexual assault, it does not make her decision any more or less rational. It would be a different story if Angela desires payback on O just for the sake of attention. The same goes for the third requirement; considering that anger acts as a motivation for one's 'transition', the latter is properly motivated when the former is.

The only requirement we should consider, therefore, is whether the 'transition' is proportional to the situation. Suppose that we are Rebecca, who just told Angela about our traumatic experience.

Angela is furious, but immediately stops being angry and turns to pragmatic action. While we are grateful that our friend is standing up for us, we also cannot help but wonder why she is not angry enough.

Again, anger has important intrinsic values: it is a sign of empathy and love. When we see our friends quickly turning away from anger, it could indicate that either one does not love us enough, or one does not comprehend the magnitude of the wrongness. In other words, we feel like they have under-reacted, which also makes them intrinsically irrational.

Indeed, what makes something an underreaction rests on the magnitude of the wrongful act. For example, it would be perfectly rational if we were to experience Transition Anger when someone broke your vase (and not your favourite one). It is better to focus on buying a new vase rather than wallowing in our anger. However, the situation might warrant more anger if our beloved friend was put through a traumatic experience. As such, Transition Anger, while being instrumentally rational, could sometimes be intrinsically irrational in virtue of being an underreaction.

Conclusion

Thus far, the expansion of Deontology has changed Nussbaum's view in two significant ways. First, Standard Anger is not as normatively problematic as we thought. The path of payback is instrumentally irrational but could be intrinsically rational. Meanwhile, the path of status focus constitutes a moral error but is both instrumentally and intrinsically rational. Second, Transition Anger might not be the most optimal path since it could be intrinsically irrational. Even if it is a rational path, it is only insofar as it creates the best outcome/creates the most utility. This view of anger, then, seems to see anger as more of a natural human reaction to wrongdoings rather than an action we can easily control. Anger is a part of being human, as are other emotions like happiness, sadness, or fear. To quote Nussbaum herself, "the tendency to anger is deeply rooted in human psychology." When we ask people to turn away from anger, we are also asking them to turn away from their own humanity.

In conclusion, I have argued that Nussbaum mainly holds a Consequentialist position of anger. This is because she primarily considers the instrumental value of anger and argues that anger is rational only insofar as it produces a productive outcome. As a result, I have drawn on Srinivasan's idea of intrinsic rationality and incorporated it into Nussbaum's account without altering her entire framework. I have maintained that anger conceptually includes the desire for payback, and that this desire leads people down to the path of payback, path of status-focus, and the Utilitarian Path. Contrary to Nussbaum's analysis, I argue that the first two paths are not as problematic as we thought, and the third path is only optimal insofar as it creates the best outcome. This generates a view that sees anger more as a natural human impulse rather than as an irrational reaction.

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Putting the "Border" Back in "Borderline": Strong and Minimal Interpretations of the Medical Model and the Utility of Conceptualizing Borderline Personality Disorder as a Diagnosis Existing between Borders

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Introduction

Current psychiatric interpretation of the causation, classification, and treatment of mental illness is carried out through the framework of what has been termed "the medical model."[149] The medical model – while controversial in and of itself, and opposed by some working in philosophy of psychiatry – is itself not unitary, and contains a spectrum of interpretations and opinions that alter the underlying meaning of the model itself.[150] The strong interpretation of the medical model argues that the patterns of symptoms classified as diseases by psychiatry are so classified because each disease shares a common cause; that this cause is the actual origin of the symptoms of each disease; and that effective treatments can be developed after a proper understanding of the pathology that underlies each disease has been established.[151] Conversely, a minimal interpretation of the medical model claims only that diagnoses are similarly grouped clusters of symptoms that tend to follow similar patterns, without making the assumption that the similarity of these patterns necessarily implies a singular underlying biological cause that is the source of the clustered symptoms and a necessary target for treatment.[152] These differing viewpoints on what exactly is intended by classifying something as a psychiatric diagnosis have vastly different implications for what constitutes an effective clinical construct. The strong interpretation requires that "specific pathophysiological processes in the brain" actually cause a

[149] Dominic Murphy, "Conceptual Foundations of Biological Psychiatry," in *Philosophy of Medicine*, ed. Fred Gifford (Oxford: North Holland, 2011), pp. 425-451, 425.
[150] Murphy, "Conceptual Foundations," 425.
[151] Murphy, "Conceptual Foundations," 428.
[152] Murphy, "Conceptual Foundations," 428.

given disorder.[153] The minimal interpretation is agnostic about causes and commits psychiatry only to clinical utility and effectiveness.[154] On the minimal interpretation, it is possible that some individuals diagnosed with a given disorder experience different causal processes leading to the same diagnosis, so long as the diagnosis describes an actually existing syndrome of co-occurring symptoms and that classifying patients together provides useful recommendations for treatment.[155]

In this paper, I will examine the case of borderline personality disorder (BPD) and defend a minimal interpretation of the medical model that considers clinical constructs as constellations of symptoms rather than as attempts to uncover an actually existing underlying biological process. I will consider the legitimacy of BPD being understood as a condition that borders neurosis and psychosis based on the utility of this concept rather than its connection to causation. I will argue that the now-considered-outdated conception of BPD as a construct that exists at the borders of other categories of diagnostic experience is not a vestigial psychoanalytic relic to be removed, but is rather a framework that provides conceptual clarity useful for understanding the unusual psychotic-like experiences reported in the disorder, the high rates of comorbidities, and the uniquely complex relationship of patients with this diagnosis to the question of responsibility for their behaviour. I will also argue that the strong interpretation of the medical model cannot account for the multiple causal origins of BPD that vary from patient to patient and that where the strong interpretive framework fails, the minimal interpretative framework succeeds and supports the ultimate goal of psychiatric treatment – which is clinical utility, and not conceptual perfection.

Controversies on the Legitimacy of BPD as a Diagnosis

BPD is a psychiatric diagnosis that is precariously controversial, being described by those who consider it a legitimate clinical construct as "a debilitating mental disorder characterized by severe instability" that leads to "intensive use of mental health services" and "[f]unctional

[153] Maria Carla Galavotti and Raffaella Campaner, "Explanatory Pluralism in Psychiatry: What Are We Pluralists About, and Why?," in *New Directions in the Philosophy of Science* (Heidelberg: Springer International Publishing Switzerland, 2014), pp. 87-103, 92.
[154] Galavotti and Campaner, "Explanatory Pluralism," 91-92.
[155] Murphy, "Conceptual Foundations," 429.

impairment" that is "considerable," while elsewhere being described by critics as "little more than a sophisticated insult" that obscures the role of interpersonal and societal violence in the distress of the diagnosed, leading to those diagnosed being "accused of manipulation or malingering" and being "frankly hated" by the medical professionals who treat them.[156] Arguments have been made both that the diagnosis should be eliminated entirely in favor of other diagnoses that center the role of adversity in distress, such as the proposed diagnostic construct of complex posttraumatic stress disorder, and that the diagnosis is completely acceptable as it currently exists, and that with newly developed therapies and treatments there is no longer any reason to avoid diagnosing patients with BPD under the justification of preventing clinician discrimination and patient self-stigma.[157] The diagnosis has also been criticized for having "no core features" and being a "highly heterogeneous diagnosis" with 256 possible combinations of the symptoms listed in the DSM-5 being sufficient for diagnosis.[158] Further criticisms of the diagnosis have focused on the stigma that results from receiving the diagnosis in medical contexts; with the diagnosis being associated with negative stereotypes, invoking less empathetic responses in treatment providers, and shifting views of the patient away from being seen as one who suffers from a disease to one who is synonymous with the disease itself – a shift in which "an individual comes to be seen as the problem."[159]

It has been suggested the disorder be renamed for a number of reasons: a) because of the associated stigma; b) to reinforce the role of traumatic experiences reported by some with the diagnosis; and c) to distance the diagnosis from the psychoanalytic origins of the term "borderline," which was originally conceived as a state of pathology existing on the border

[156] Ioana A. Cristea et al., "Efficacy of Psychotherapies for Borderline Personality Disorder," *JAMA Psychiatry* 74, no. 4 (March 1, 2017): pp. 319-328, https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2016.4287, 320; Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence—from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2015), 123.
[157] Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 120-123; Anthony Bateman and Roy Krawitz, *Borderline Personality Disorder: An Evidence-Based Guide for Generalist Mental Health Professionals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 4.
[158] Dan Warrender et al., "Perspectives of Crisis Intervention for People Diagnosed with 'Borderline Personality Disorder': An Integrative Review," *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing* 28, no. 2 (May 5, 2020): pp. 208-236, https://doi.org/10.1111/jpm.12637, 210; Marialuisa Cavelti et al., "Heterogeneity of Borderline Personality Disorder Symptoms in Help-Seeking Adolescents," *Borderline Personality Disorder and Emotion Dysregulation* 8, no. 1 (February 26, 2021): https://doi.org/10.1186/s40479-021-00147-9, para. 2.
[159] Ron B. Aviram, Beth S. Brodsky, and Barbara Stanley, "Borderline Personality Disorder, Stigma, and Treatment Implications," *Harvard Review of Psychiatry* 14, no. 5 (2006): pp. 249-256, https://doi.org/10.1080/10673220600975121, 249-251.

between neurosis and psychosis.[160] When the controversy over whether or not BPD is a legitimate diagnosis is considered within the context of competing minimal and strong interpretations of the medical model, it becomes possible to understand what is at stake. According to a strong interpretation of the medical model, BPD is only a legitimate diagnostic construct if there is really a singular underlying process causing the distress that comprises its symptoms. In this view, the controversy over causes is integral to whether or not BPD is a legitimate diagnostic construct, and the question of whether or not psychoanalytic concepts of bordering between psychosis and neurosis can be used in clinical contexts depends entirely on whether or not psychosis, neurosis, and a borderline state exist "as genuine biological entities."[161] The minimal interpretation instead evaluates BPD only on its usefulness and accurate description of clusters of symptoms as they present in patient populations.

The Debated Scientific Legitimacy of Psychiatry as Context for BPD Controversies

Bateman and Krawitz frame the diagnostic origins of BPD as outdated and useful for historical context only. They claim that "this definition of BPD, being on the 'border,' no longer applies."[162] The categories of neurosis and psychosis are quickly replaced with contemporary diagnostic constructs of "anxiety and depressive disorders" for neurosis and "bipolar disorder and schizophrenia" for psychosis.[163] Bateman and Krawitz contrast the non-scientific nature of psychoanalysis with the "strikingly effective" treatments which they favor, namely standardized psychotherapies that have been the subject of randomized trials.[164]

Masterpasqua argues that the "mechanistic heritage and allegiance to the physical sciences" of those who study and attempt to systematically classify mental disorders leads to a desire to "understand complex systems as though they are reducible and predictable."[165] The desire for understandings of the human mind to be as predictable, formulaic, and easily legible to scientific

[160] Merri Lisa Johnson, "Neuroqueer Feminism: Turning with Tenderness toward Borderline Personality Disorder," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 46, no. 3 (2021): pp. 635-662, https://doi.org/10.1086/712081, 636; Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 120-123; Bateman and Krawitz, *An Evidence-Based Guide*, 2.
[161] Galavotti and Campaner, "Explanatory Pluralism," 92.
[162] Bateman and Krawitz, *An Evidence-Based Guide*, 2.
[163] Bateman and Krawitz, *An Evidence-Based Guide*, 2.
[164] Bateman and Krawitz, *An Evidence-Based Guide*, iii.
[165] Frank Masterpasqua and Phyllis A. Perna, eds., *The Psychological Meaning of Chaos: Translating Theory into Practice* (Washington, D.C: American Psychological Association, 1997), 30.

inquiry as other types of data are to other branches of science, such as the predictability of equations in physics, may lead to understandings of the human mind that deal inadequately with the unpredictable nature of human behaviour.[166] Masterpasqua claims that human behaviour – whether on the small scale of an indvidual's life and psychology, an intermediate scale such as family structures, or on the larger scale of human societies – is inevitably complex and hard to predict, and that attempts to understand human thoughts, desires, and actions as though they were variables in equations inevitably lead to descriptions of human psychology that are lacking in their ability to account for the full complexity of human behaviour.[167]

A further complicating factor is that psychiatry's status as a branch of medicine is a recent historical development, and as recently as the late 20th century controversy existed as to whether or not psychiatry should be so classified.[168] There thus exists the motivation to attempt to develop explanatory frameworks and systems of classification that further psychiatry's appearance of scientific legitimacy.[169] This question is further complicated by disagreements about which scientific disciplines should provide the basis for a scientific psychiatry. There are disagreements as to whether neuroscience or other scientific disciplines should provide the biological basis for psychiatry, making it possible for there to be a multiplicity of existing bases for a biological psychiatry.[170] This controversy is widened by it being the case that some argue that cultural and cognitive variables should provide equal scientific basis to psychiatry as neurobiological ones, yet those arguing for a broader scientific base for psychiatry are "nonetheless materialists who are fully committed to empirical testing."[171] It is thus possible that those who support the medical model from different perspectives may support conceptual frameworks "that are sometimes thought of [as] anti-medical" by those with differing conceptions of what it means to endorse the medical model.[172] From this context of there being multiple meanings of what constitutes a scientific psychiatry or an empirical method of categorizing mental experience, Murphy argues that "to just claim that theories should be tested empirically hardly distinguishes biological psychiatry from other approaches to the unsound

[166] Masterpasqua and Perna, eds., *The Psychological Meaning of Chaos*, 30.
[167] Masterpasqua and Perna, eds., *The Psychological Meaning of Chaos*, 30.
[168] Murphy, "Conceptual Foundations," 426.
[169] Murphy, "Conceptual Foundations," 426.
[170] Murphy, "Conceptual Foundations," 427.
[171] Murphy, "Conceptual Foundations," 427.
[172] Murphy, "Conceptual Foundations," 427.

mind," noting that various psychological, rather than psychiatric, approaches to mental experience – from psychoanalysis to standardized psychotherapy – believe their approaches have been tested, whether in clinical practice or randomized trials.[173]

Dawes argues that randomized trials of psychotherapy are not on equal scientific footing as randomized trials of medication due to differences inherent in studying psychotherapies rather than medications, such as the impossibility of a psychotherapy placebo that is truly equivalent to the double-blind placebos more easily available when studying medications.[174] This diminishes the suggestion of Bateman and Krawitz that standardized psychotherapies subject to randomized trials are innately more scientific than understandings that conceive of BPD as bordering between psychosis and neurosis. As the previous discussion indicates, the question of how to evaluate which specific claims, diagnostic constructs, and treatments succeed (or do not) as scientific enterprises is complex and nuanced, as there are disagreements about what constitutes appropriate evidence, what branches of science are capable of providing appropriate evidence for psychiatry, and how this evidence ought to relate to theoretical constructs.

Strong and Minimal Interpretations of BPD

Bateman and Krawitz seem to argue for a strong interpretation of the medical model, connecting the existence of "numerous further reports of effective treatment" in the literature on BPD to the claim that people with BPD have "a disabling condition that is often extremely severe and warrant[s] compassionate and effective treatment."[175] This attitude toward individuals diagnosed with BPD is contrasted with the supposedly now-historical stigmatizing attitudes toward individuals with the diagnosis, which are framed as the result of individuals with BPD not improving in response to historical treatments.[176] This strong interpretive approach to BPD presumes that in order for there to be effective treatment of BPD, a compassionate and respectful attitude from clinicians to those with the disorder, and an accurate understanding of the disorder itself, it must be the case that psychiatry has unlocked the previously inaccessible knowledge of

[173] Murphy, "Conceptual Foundations," 427.
[174] Robyn M. Dawes, *House of Cards: Psychology and Psychotherapy Built on Myth* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2009), 47.
[175] Bateman and Krawitz, *An Evidence-Based Guide*, 3.
[176] Bateman and Krawitz, *An Evidence-Based Guide*, 2.

the true nature of the disorder. From the strong interpretation, by discovering that there are treatments which appear to act effectively on the symptoms of BPD, science has in essence discovered the nature of the pathology that causes those symptoms. It is not possible to conceive of respectful, effective treatment having existed in the treatment modalities of the past, with their differing (and from this perspective, inaccurate) understandings of what BPD is.

From this strong interpretive perspective, psychoanalytic conceptions of BPD as bordering on psychosis must be diminished, as contemporary psychiatric constructs do not class BPD as related to disorders prominently associated with psychosis, such as schizophrenia. Bateman and Krawitz do indeed diminish the connection of BPD to psychosis, with it being emphasized that only "some people with BPD […] have occasional psychotic or psychotic-like experiences."[177] This strong interpretative framing declares that only a portion of patients diagnosed with BPD report psychotic experiences, and of those patients who do report these experiences, they are occasional in nature, thus separating the psychotic-like experiences of BPD from the true (and presumed biological) entity of psychosis.

I will, however, use a minimal interpretation to focus on the clinical utility of considering BPD's proximity to psychosis, rather than whether or not individuals with BPD are experiencing the same biological processes as may occur in schizophrenia. I agree with McHugh and Slavney that "[a] disease is not a tangible thing; it cannot be observed apart from its instances" and that the core nature of a clinical construct of a disease is "both conceptual and inferential" rather than biological and literally causal, although there certainly may be comparable biological processes occurring in two sick patients diagnosed with the same disease.[178] From this vantage point, I will defend the borderline quality of BPD.

BPD as Bordering on Psychosis

Recent investigations have found that psychotic-like experiences are prevalent in BPD. One study found that positive psychotic symptoms occurred commonly in patients diagnosed with BPD and were similar to the positive psychotic symptoms found in patients diagnosed with

[177] Bateman and Krawitz, *An Evidence-Based Guide*, 2.
[178] Paul R. McHugh and Phillip R. Slavney, *The Perspectives of Psychiatry* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 48.

schizophrenia," with findings that suggest the phenomenology of auditory verbal hallucinations in patients diagnosed with BPD does not differ from the phenomenology of auditory verbal hallucinations in patients diagnosed with schizophrenia; with there being no major differences in the location of the voices, the number of the voices, the presence of voices commenting on the voice-hearer, and the voice-hearer experiencing the voices as coming from a person with which the voice-hearer was not familiar.[179] Reporting experiences of being controlled by voices was actually more common in patients diagnosed with BPD than in patients diagnosed with schizophrenia.[180] The authors conclude that it is not possible to differentiate between BPD and schizophrenia on the basis of voice characteristics alone, as they are similar in each disorder, but only by noting that bizarre delusions, disordered thinking, and negative symptoms are more common in schizophrenia, and that severe dissociation and early childhood trauma are more prevalent in BPD.[181] Another study presented evidence against the tendency to "point to a relationship between BPD with affective rather than schizophrenia spectrum disorders" by testing BPD patients on cognitive biases associated with schizophrenia.[182] The results found that there are several cognitive biases associated with schizophrenia also found in BPD.[183] A separate review of the literature found estimates in one study of milder psychotic-like experiences in approximately 75% of BPD patients, and found estimates of more severe psychotic symptomology in 24% of BPD patients.[184]

Clearly, symptoms associated with psychosis can also be associated with BPD. From a minimal interpretive perspective, this suggests there may be utility to considering the association of BPD and psychosis. However, it is also clear that the psychotic symptomology found in BPD is not identical to and interchangeable with the psychotic symptomology found in schizophrenia. As cited earlier, negative symptoms, disordered thinking, and bizarre delusions are more likely to be

[179] Stefan Tschoeke et al., "Similarities and Differences in Borderline Personality Disorder and Schizophrenia with Voice Hearing," *Journal of Nervous & Mental Disease* 202, no. 7 (July 2014): pp. 544-549, https://doi.org/10.1097/nmd.0000000000000159, 547-548.
[180] Tschoeke, "Similarities and Differences," 547.
[181] Tschoeke, "Similarities and Differences," 547-548.
[182] Steffen Moritz et al., "Psychotic-like Cognitive Biases in Borderline Personality Disorder," *Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry* 42, no. 3 (September 2011): pp. 349-354, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbtep.2011.02.003, 349.
[183] Moritz et al., "Psychotic-like Cognitive Biases," 349.
[184] Sven Barnow et al., "Borderline Personality Disorder and Psychosis: A Review," *Current Psychiatry Reports* 12, no. 3 (March 31, 2010): pp. 186-195, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11920-010-0107-9, 187.

found in schizophrenia than BPD.[185] The resulting quality of borderline psychotic experience is that of a patient who reports severely distressing positive symptoms of psychosis, but without the associated experiences that commonly accompany psychosis in schizophrenia such as negative symptoms. This is due to psychotic experiences in BPD being birthed from a different psychological context than that of schizophrenia, one which is sensitive to and can be produced in part by historical trauma, interpersonal turbulence, and associated distortions in views of the self. (However, it is worth noting that some patients with schizophrenia do also report traumatic childhood histories, and that some have theorized adversity plays a role in the origin of schizophrenia spectrum pathology.[186])

One particular case illustrates the variety of psychotic experiences common in BPD. A patient describes hearing a voice that tells her she is "bad" and has no awareness of the voice being a product of her own emotional state and life experiences, yet does not demonstrate other symptoms of schizophrenia.[187] Eventually, she is able to own the voice experience as belonging to her own consciousness and reflecting the messages about emotions she internalized from her emotionally neglectful and abusive parents when it is pointed out to her in a therapeutic context that the voice only occurs when she is sad, and that as a child her parents had told her she was "bad" for expressing sadness and related emotions.[188]

Unlike in schizophrenia, the psychosis found in BPD is not preceded by a lengthy, gradual, significant decline in functioning, as in the prodrome of schizophrenia, and is not generally accompanied by a worldview consisting of bizarre delusions that are incomprehensible to outsiders. Rather, the symptoms in BPD border on psychosis, with the patient maintaining a higher degree of contact with reality than the patient with schizophrenia. The lack of insight in BPD instead is directed at the emotional source of the experience: the patient does not realize that her symptoms are caused by her relational anxieties and traumas, but rather perceives them

[185] Tschoeke, "Similarities and Differences," 547-548.
[186] J. Read et al., "Childhood Trauma, Psychosis and Schizophrenia: A Literature Review with Theoretical and Clinical Implications," *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica* 112, no. 5 (October 12, 2005): pp. 330-350, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1600-0447.2005.00634.x, 330.
[187] Dolores Mosquera and Kathy Steele, "Complex Trauma, Dissociation and Borderline Personality Disorder: Working with Integration Failures," *European Journal of Trauma & Dissociation* 1, no. 1 (2017): pp. 63-71, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejtd.2017.01.010, 65-66.
[188] Mosquera and Steele, "Complex Trauma," 65-66.

as a manifestation of her innate badness. This demonstrates the utility of seeing BPD as a borderline condition, rather than as purely identical to or separate from psychotic disorders, and from a minimal–rather than strong–interpretive perspective, this utility speaks to the legitimacy of conceptualizing BPD as occupying a borderline diagnostic space.

BPD as Bordering on Neurosis

The other conditions once conceptualized as being adjacent to BPD also have a complex relationship better illuminated by a concept of bordering than one of distinction. The types of mental distress that were once called neurosis are commonly comorbid with BPD, yet, like psychosis, in a manner that is distinct from when they occur separately from BPD. Comorbidity is more common than not in BPD, with one study finding 96% of patients diagnosed with BPD were also diagnosed with a mood disorder, 88% were also diagnosed with an anxiety disorder, 56% with posttraumatic stress disorder, 53% with an eating disorder, and 64% with co-occurring substance abuse.[189] Not only is it the case that patients diagnosed with BPD are more likely to be diagnosed with an array of comorbid disorders, but it is also the case that the pathology of these comorbid disorders is more severe in patients diagnosed with BPD. A study comparing mood disorder patients with and without BPD found that patients with BPD and unipolar depression had greater risk of suicide than unipolar depression patients without comorbid BPD, and that patients with BPD and bipolar depression had greater suicide risk and lower global functioning than bipolar depression patients without comorbid BPD.[190] Another study found that the majority of a sample of patients with diagnoses of BPD, depression, and anxiety did not improve in response to standard treatments for depression and anxiety as is typical of patients without comorbid BPD.[191] This pattern can also be found in the comorbidity of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Although there exist reliable treatments for both PTSD and BPD separately, "there is a lack of consensus regarding the appropriateness of these treatments" for individuals

[189] Mary C. Zanarini et al., "Axis I Comorbidity of Borderline Personality Disorder," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 155, no. 12 (December 1, 1998): pp. 1733-1739, https://doi.org/10.1176/ajp.155.12.1733, 1735.
[190] Zeinab Abd Sarhan et al., "Global Functioning and Suicide Risk in Patients with Depression and Comorbid Borderline Personality Disorder," *Neurology, Psychiatry and Brain Research* 31 (January 2019): pp. 37-42, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.npbr.2019.01.001, 40-41.
[191] Michelle E. Lopez et al., "The Unified Protocol for Anxiety and Depression with Comorbid Borderline Personality Disorder: A Single Case Design Clinical Series," *The Cognitive Behaviour Therapist* 12 (July 2019): pp. 1-14, https://doi.org/10.1017/s1754470x19000254, 1.

diagnosed with both.[192] Patients diagnosed with both BPD and PTSD have more severe symptoms than for either patients with only PTSD, or with only BPD, with patients with comorbid BPD and PTSD having worse BPD symptoms, more suicidality, self-harm, and "general psychological distress" than patients with only BPD, and worse PTSD symptoms, more suicidality, and worse quality of life than patients with PTSD alone.[193]

BPD is so deeply associated with severe presentation of comorbid disorders such as anxiety, depression, and PTSD that it has been theorized there is a singular "general psychopathology factor" that underlies all mental distress separate from any particular diagnosis, consisting of a lack of resilience formed in early relational environments that foster a lack of epistemic trust and best exemplified in the patterns of symptoms seen in BPD.[194] Whether or not this particular theory is true, it remains evident that BPD is highly associated with a variety of other diagnoses, especially depression, anxiety, and PTSD. While this frequency of comorbidities has been used to argue against the validity of BPD as a clinical construct, I will argue in a different direction.[195] Just as I have argued that BPD borders on psychosis in a manner that is neither identical to nor entirely distinct from psychosis, I will argue that BPD borders on neurosis, resulting in a cumulative experience that is qualitatively different from the mood, anxiety, and trauma-related disorders seen in those without BPD.

Understood in the context of the original conceptualization of borderline pathology, psychosis is considered to be on the higher end of severity, and neurosis on the lower end.[196] Correspondingly, a pathology which is borderline to both would be less severe than psychosis and more severe than neurosis. Earlier in this paper, it was possible to see that the psychosis in BPD is

[192] Richard J. Zeifman et al., "Optimizing Treatment for Comorbid Borderline Personality Disorder and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: A Systematic Review of Psychotherapeutic Approaches and Treatment Efficacy," *Clinical Psychology Review* 86 (June 2021): pp. 1-14, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2021.102030, 1.
[193] Zeifman et al., "Optimizing Treatment," 2.
[194] Peter Fonagy et al., "What We Have Changed Our Minds about: Part 1. Borderline Personality Disorder as a Limitation of Resilience," *Borderline Personality Disorder and Emotion Dysregulation* 4, no. 1 (April 11, 2017): pp. 1-11, https://doi.org/10.1186/s40479-017-0061-9, 2; Peter Fonagy et al., "What We Have Changed Our Minds about: Part 2. Borderline Personality Disorder, Epistemic Trust and the Developmental Significance of Social Communication," *Borderline Personality Disorder and Emotion Dysregulation* 4, no. 1 (April 11, 2017): pp. 1-12, https://doi.org/10.1186/s40479-017-0062-8, 1.
[195] Dan Warrender et al., "Perspectives of Crisis Intervention," 210.
[196] Simona Trifu et al., "Teaching Psychiatric Concepts of Neurosis, Psychosis and Borderline Pathology: Conceptual Boundaries," *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 203 (August 26, 2015): pp. 125-129, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.08.269, 126-128.

accompanied by more intact reality testing than in schizophrenia, with a focus more toward the emotional issues that drive BPD. Consistently, it is now possible to see that this model also holds true for the neurotic end of the spectrum, with depression, anxiety, and PTSD being more severe in those with BPD than in those without comorbid BPD. When BPD is understood as a borderline condition, it becomes possible to develop a conceptual framework that makes reference to the comorbidities that are so common in BPD, so severe, and so much less responsive to treatment, whereas without this conceptual framework, these realities become inexplicable and puzzling. From a minimal interpretive perspective of the medical model, this concept has legitimate uses if it accurately describes patterns of pathologies as they appear.

BPD as Bordering Culpability and Lack of Culpability

One final arena in which the concept of bordering between different categories is useful for understanding BPD is the question of the extent to which patients with the diagnosis are responsible for their behaviour. Kyratsous and Sanati have argued that patients diagnosed with BPD are less responsible for their behaviour than is commonly perceived, and that it is an epistemic injustice to hold these patients responsible for actions undertaken during moments of severe distress. They argue that the emotional instability and impulsivity associated with the disorder lead to the co-existence of "distal rationality" (an ability to "plan ahead and reason adequately in other areas" than what is the subject of emotionally-motivated impulsivity) and "proximal irrationality" (a loss of the ability to rationally consider the consequences of one's actions when one's emotional instability and impulsivity are triggered).[197] To frame patients with BPD as "manipulative, attention-seeking, annoying and in control of their suicidal urges" is to mistake the control and culpability these patients have while emotionally stable for the lack of culpability that emerges when overwhelming emotions arise and the capacity to rationally evaluate consequences is diminished.[198] Opposing arguments have been presented that "[b]orderline patients usually have insight into their problem, are capable of reasoning and making decisions without interference of psychotic delusions or thought disorder, and are able to change their behaviour in relation to personal treatment and psychotherapeutic interventions"

[197] Michalis Kyratsous and Abdi Sanati, "Epistemic Injustice and Responsibility in Borderline Personality Disorder," *Journal of Evaluation in Clinical Practice* 23, no. 5 (August 4, 2016): pp. 974-980, https://doi.org/10.1111/jep.12609, 978-979.
[198] Kyratsous and Sanati, "Epistemic Injustice and Responsibility in Borderline Personality Disorder," 978.

and that their "find[ing] it difficult to withstand short term destructive 'solutions' to their inner discomfort," such as self-harming or attempting suicide, should not be mistaken for true decisional incapacity.[199] Accordingly, in this perspective, requests from patients to develop advance directives that they be involuntarily hospitalized to prevent them from harming themselves should be denied, as they remain legally and ethically in control of their behaviour.[200]

These opposing views illustrate the complexity of attempting to discern whether or not patients diagnosed with BPD are responsible for their behaviour. While it is clear these patients experience severe emotional distress that appears at times to compromise decision-making capacity, it is also clear that patients diagnosed with BPD are capable of returning to a baseline state in which they resume the ability to make decisions rationally. Elsewhere it has been noted that standardized psychotherapies developed for the treatment of BPD "are united in treating service users [diagnosed with BPD] as responsible agents, capable of controlling their behaviour and deciding to change."[201] While patients with BPD may find themselves entrenched in harmful patterns of behaviour that they do not know how to stop and for which they "may lack alternative coping mechanisms," they remain capable of initiating change in their own lives, and therapies that effectively treat BPD do so by fostering responsibility for oneself in patients.[202] This understanding of BPD as a state where responsibility for one's actions is reduced but not eliminated provides further evidence of the clinical utility of considering BPD as a borderline diagnostic state. Just as BPD borders on the experiences found in distinct diagnostic concepts such as psychosis and neurosis, so too does BPD exist between the state of full culpability and complete lack of decisional competence.

The Benefits of a Bordering Conception of BPD

In examining the conceptual benefits of considering BPD to be a diagnosis that occupies a borderline space, it becomes clear that the diagnosis and the patients it describes exist adjacent,

[199] Antoinette Lundahl, Gert Helgesson, and Niklas Juth, "Against Ulysses Contracts for Patients with Borderline Personality Disorder," *Medicine, Health Care and Philosophy* 23, no. 4 (July 16, 2020): pp. 695-703, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11019-020-09967-y, 697.
[200] Lundahl, Helgesson, and Juth, "Against Ulysses Contracts," 699.
[201] Hanna Pickard, "Responsibility without Blame: Empathy and the Effective Treatment of Personality Disorder," *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology* 18, no. 3 (September 2011): pp. 209-224, https://doi.org/10.1353/ppp.2011.0032, 213.
[202] Pickard, "Responsibility without Blame," 213.

in several aspects, to other diagnostic spaces. This demonstrates the utility of retaining the name and concept of BPD as a borderline condition, rather than ejecting it. BPD is thus a diagnosis that upsets the explanatory paradigm of the strong interpretation of the medical model. It is widely acknowledged that BPD is not caused exclusively by biological pathology occurring in the brain, but that genetic vulnerabilities are one of many potential causal factors that can lead to the development of the disorder, and that early parental neglect, attachment difficulties, early childhood trauma and abuse, and a lack of validation from one's environment can all be factors in the development of BPD.[203] There is no singular pathway or pathology that leads to the development of BPD; rather, the specific genetic, environmental, social, and psychological risk factors present in anyone diagnosed with BPD interact in a way that is unique to each individual, and any specific factor, such as attachment, is capable of affecting each person differently.[204] This multiplicity of etiologies in BPD runs counter to the predictions made by the strong interpretation of the medical model, which insist that all diagnoses should describe discrete "genuine biological entities."[205] Is BPD thus an inaccurate diagnosis?

While some have argued this is the case, the strength of the minimal interpretation of the medical model is that it recognizes the true utility of this diagnosis. Studies of medical students, psychiatrists, and other mental health professionals have found that even among professionals who endorse a strong interpretative framework of disorders such as schizophrenia, BPD is still conceived in more minimal terms: as a diagnostic construct that groups together similarly distressed patients whose problems are likely to be psychological and social in origin, and not only biological.[206] The American Psychiatric Association's "Practice Guideline for the Treatment of Patients With Borderline Personality Disorder" also states that "most patients with borderline personality disorder will need extended psychotherapy to attain and maintain lasting improvement in their personality, interpersonal problems, and overall functioning" and that treatment with medication is "adjunctive"[207] This emphasis on psychotherapy over medication is

[203] Nicky Morris, *Dramatherapy and Borderline Personality Disorder: Empowering and Nurturing People through Creativity* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018), 19.
[204] Morris, *Dramatherapy and Borderline Personality Disorder*, 19.
[205] Galavotti and Campaner, "Explanatory Pluralism," 92.
[206] Galavotti and Campaner, "Explanatory Pluralism," 88-90.
[207] American Psychiatric Association, "Practice Guideline for the Treatment of Patients with Borderline Personality Disorder," Psychiatry Online, October 2001, https://psychiatryonline.org/pb/assets/raw/sitewide/practice_guidelines/guidelines/bpd.pdf, 10.

strengthened in a guideline watch published several years after the practice guideline based on new evidence, which emphasizes that "psychotherapy represents the primary, or core, treatment for this disorder"[208]

From a strong interpretative framework in which each disorder represents a distinct pathology, it is not possible for a disorder to have multiple origins. However, from a minimal interpretive framework, a diagnosis is a description of patterns of symptoms as they appear, and the purpose in classifying patients is not to uncover the biological origins that cause these symptoms, but to make useful recommendations about treatment. As a diagnosis, BPD does this effectively. In a clinical environment where there is a "trend in psychiatry toward placing an ever-increasing emphasis on biological over psychological phenomena," the diagnosis of BPD serves as a helpful indicator that a patient will respond better to long-term psychotherapy than to treatment by medication.[209] From the strong interpretive framework, patients with BPD would need to be subdivided into increasingly minute categories of causal origins, even though as a class they can all benefit from the same psychotherapeutic treatments. The benefit of the minimal interpretive framework is that it focuses on what is ultimately the end goal of psychiatric practice, which is the effective treatment of mental distress. BPD is a useful diagnosis in that it makes effective recommendations about how and how not to respond to a particular kind of distress. That it is possible for a psychiatric diagnosis to be practically effective while referring to a pathology with multiple possible origins demonstrates the weakness of the strong interpretation of the medical model and the strengths of the minimal interpretation.

Conclusion

While the medical model is generally prominent in psychiatric interpretations of mental distress, there are disagreements as to whether a minimal or a strong interpretation should prevail. A minimal interpretation conceives of diagnoses as clusters of symptoms which are useful in that they provide helpful predictions about an illness' course and treatment, and does not require a

[208] John M. Oldham, "Guideline Watch: Practice Guideline for the Treatment of Borderline Personality Disorder," Psychiatry Online, March 2005, https://psychiatryonline.org/pb/assets/raw/sitewide/practice_guidelines/guidelines/bpd-watch.pdf, 3.
[209] Michael A. Brog and Karen A. Guskin, "Medical Students' Judgments of Mind and Brain in the Etiology and Treatment of Psychiatric Disorders," *Academic Psychiatry* 22, no. 4 (December 1998): pp. 229-235, https://doi.org/10.1007/bf03340023, 229.

shared causal mechanism to underlie each clinical condition. A strong interpretation, by contrast, conceives of diagnoses as each having a unique causal mechanism that is the source of each unique disorder. These frameworks have different interpretations of whether or not BPD is a legitimate diagnosis. A strong interpretation would require that the diagnosis be caused by a singular pathology, whereas a minimal interpretation requires that the diagnosis accurately describes how symptoms present and have clinical utility. I have argued for a minimal interpretation, positing that the diagnosis of BPD does have utility that does not require there to be a single causal origin. Arguing against the position that the psychoanalytic origins of the term borderline are no longer accurate, I presented evidence that symptoms similar to those found in schizophrenia are also found in BPD, and that the experience of psychosis in BPD is adjacent to, but not identical with, the psychosis seen in schizophrenia, thus demonstrating the usefulness of a borderline concept. Moving on to the other side of the borderline, evidence was presented that the conditions once described as neurosis are also adjacent to BPD, though not identical. Another useful aspect to the borderline concept was found in the context of controversies over whether or not patients diagnosed with BPD are responsible for their behaviour, where I argued that people diagnosed with BPD can be construed as being on the borderline of responsible and not responsible for their behaviour, with some arguing that the heightened emotional distress experienced by those with the disorder can make them temporarily incapacitated, and others arguing that even when in the distress, those with the diagnosis remain in control of their behavior. Examining the different implications of strong and minimal frameworks of understanding BPD, I noted that patients diagnosed with BPD respond better to psychotherapy than to medication, and thus argued that the utility of the diagnosis of BPD is that it is an indicator to medical professionals to pursue psychotherapy over medication. BPD thus provides a compelling example of the strength and utility of a minimal interpretive framework of the medical model.

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The Right to Heterosexuality

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Introduction

According to the University of California San Diego LGBT Resource Center, homosexuality is "a sexual orientation in which a person feels physically and emotionally attracted to people of the same gender".[210] The term queer is often used to describe individuals who identify as homosexual. Although the meaning of queerness varies for different people, it can include, but is not limited to, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and asexual identities — collectively reffered to as LGBTQIA+ identities. Though offensive to some, having formerly been used as a homophobic slur, the term queer is becoming widely accepted as the umbrella term for the LGBTQIA+ community.[211] I will therefore employ the terms homosexuality, queerness, and LGB community interchangeably. These labels encompass all sexual orientations that deviate from heterosexuality.

In the seventeen years since the nation-wide legalization of same-sex marriage, Canadian society has progressed considerably from its previous prejudicial treatment of homosexual indviduals. Yet, LGB people in Canada continue to face the harmful effects of heterosexism. Heterosexism is defined as a system of attitudes, bias, and discrimination that recognizes heterosexual (male-female) relationships as the default orientation. The negative effects of heterosexism are vast, and particularly target queer people; numerous studies have linked heterosexist discrimination to heightened levels of psychological distress among queer people compared to their heterosexual counterparts.[212] With 69 countries still criminalizing homosexuality, the dangers of heterosexism are even more relevant for queer individuals who have to live a life of

[210] "General Definitions," LGBT Resource Center, 2019, https://lgbt.ucsf.edu/glossary-terms.
[211] "General Definitions," LGBT Resource Center, 2019, https://lgbt.ucsf.edu/glossary-terms.
[212] Dawn M. Szymanski and Renee Mikorski, "External and Internalized Heterosexism, Meaning in Life, and Psychological Distress.," *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity* 3, no. 3 (2016): 265–74, https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000182.

secrecy or risk a criminal — or even a death — sentence.[213] While there has been a noticeable shift for the better in attitudes towards homosexuality in the past few decades, I argue that queer people everywhere and under all circumstances should have the option to live a life free of fear and discrimination, and that the achievement of such life should not be contingent on an unrealistic, overnight transformation of society away from heterosexism.

In the near future, as more research into genetics is conducted, scientists may understand enough about the biological factors involved in shaping sexual orientation to develop technologies that redirect sexual and/or romantic attraction to the opposite end of the sexuality spectrum (homosexuality to heterosexuality and vice versa). Earp et al have called this hypothetical technology 'High-tech Conversion Therapy' (HCT).[214] In this paper, I will be postulating a reality in which HCT exists and is safe, effective, affordable, and reversible. I believe that, under these circumstances, HCT should be made available to adults who are mentally sane and who decide, for themselves, that they would benefit from converting to heterosexuality. Mental sanity, in the context of this argument, constitutes being capable of making healthcare decisions for oneself. Aware that some readers may have strong objections to my argument, I plan to spend the majority of this paper addressing potential concerns. However, I will first begin by outlining my argument. This form of therapy, as any other life-altering therapy, should be regulated. The subsequent section details how HCT would be regulated. I argue that as long as these requirements are met, HCT should be available to all queer people for three main reasons: (1) people should be autonomous in choosing the trajectory of their life; (2) queer people who live in less progressive countries and/or conditions should have the option to convert to heterosexuality for their own safety and wellbeing; (3) people of all sexual orientations should be able to explore and experience attraction in a way that may broaden their horizons. To support my claims, I will draw parallels between the availability of HCT and the availability of cosmetic surgery and abortion respectively. These examples are analogous to HCT insofar as they are similarly controversial and have the potential to yield negative results. In all three cases, however, I find

[213] Rachel Banning-Lover, "Where Are the Most Difficult Places in the World to Be Gay or Transgender?," the Guardian (The Guardian, October 6, 2017), https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2017/mar/01/where-are-the-most-difficult-places-in-the-world-to-be-gay-or-transgender-lgbt.
[214] Brian D. Earp, Anders Sandberg, and Julian Savulescu, "Brave New Love: The Threat of High-Tech 'Conversion' Therapy and the Bio-Oppression of Sexual Minorities," *AJOB Neuroscience* 5, no. 1 (January 2014): 4–12, https://doi.org/10.1080/21507740.2013.863242.

that the potential negatives are considerably outweighed by the necessity of upholding freedom of choice and bodily autonomy. I will also address objections to HCT as outlined by Candice Delmas and Sean Aas in their essay "Sexual Reorientation in Ideal and Non-Ideal Theory".[215] Delmas and Aas worry that HCT may hinder the progress of policies that advance gay rights, and that it may threaten the existence of LGB community overall and that people may be pressured to convert. I will respond to each of these concerns comprehensively in what follows.

Eligibility for High-Tech Conversion Therapy

In this section, I will provide a framework for my argument, which includes certain requirements that must be met before an individual gains access to HCT. First, high-tech conversion therapy should be made available to adults who, de jure, are mentally sane and choose for themselves that they would benefit in some way from converting to heterosexuality. People who do not have this capacity should not be able to make a life-altering decision like sexual reorientation, considering their heightened vulnerability to external pressures and potential coercion into pursuing HCT. The state of a person's mental health should be determined by the physician who would be conducting this therapy, and the results of their findings should be adequately justified in a nationally or internationally standardized way. Given the subjectivity of psychological evaluations, standardizing eligibility-determination and access to treatment can be difficult. The clinical use of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), however, has proven that there can be a successful process of diagnostic standardization for conditions that may otherwise be difficult to evaluate.[216] The DSM can therefore be used to determine a prospective patient's mental sanity. Assessing the patient prior to administering HCT will further prevent the risk of coercion by bringing motives and hesitations to light during in-depth consultations and screenings.

I recognize that this requirment may raise issues of accessibility and discrimination against disabled individuals. To clarify, every adult is presumed capable of consenting to medical treatment as per the Canadian Health Act. This includes older adults living in long-term care, as well as people with disabilities. Capacity to consent is fulfilled if and when a person has the

[215] Candice Delmas and Sean Aas, "Sexual Reorientation in Ideal and Non-Ideal Theory," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 26, no. 4 (April 10, 2018): 463–85, https://doi.org/10.1111/jopp.12159.
[216] "DSM-5 - Pros and Cons," *Verhaltenstherapie* 23, no. 4 (2013): 280–85, https://doi.org/10.1159/000356572.

ability to comprehend information relevant to the proposed treatment, and how it may impact them. A person's capacity to consent will vary depending on the circumstances, and the scope of their abilities may shift accordingly. This framework allows for disabled individuals to exercise their right to bodily autonomy, and choose to undergo HCT if they desire it.[217] I also want to draw attention to the issue of caretakers and substituted consent. Substituted decision-makers are entrusted with making medical decisions for those who, as described above, do not have the capacity to consent themselves. Additionally, there are some limitations to the ability of substitute decision makers, including providing consent for non-therapeutic sterilization.[218] I argue that providing substituted consent for high-tech conversion therapy should be prohibited. While HCT can be life-saving for many reasons, allowing substituted consent will undoubtedly lead to a higher rate of the technology's abuse, despite regulation. If an individual is unable to consent to HCT, as per the conditions above, it should not be available to them. The risk of coercion and oppression of queer individuals increases exponentially under these circumstances and as such, we must take precautions to mitigate any potential misuse of this technology.

Likewise, children should not be able to gain access to HCT as they are not yet capable of making a decision of this calibre for themselves. Choosing to undergo HCT involves having a grasp over and a critical understanding of one's identity, heterosexism, and one's position within a heterosexist society. Most individuals under the age of 18 are not developmentally equipped to process these complexities. Even if certain minors are developmentally prepared to make such a decision, many are strongly influenced by their guardians' views. The risk of children undergoing HCT for the wrong reasons remains too high. Minors are also more susceptible than mentally-capable adults to giving into external pressures (from their families, friends, schools, society, etc.) to convert to heterosexuality. A study by Iyengar, Konitzer and Tedin found that 75% of children whose parents both share similar political beliefs will adopt, rather than

[217] Krista James, "Health Care Consent with Physical Distancing: Understanding Decision-Making Rights in Canada – British Columbia Law Institute," BCLI, 2020, https://www.bcli.org/health-care-consent-with-physical-distancing-understanding-decision-making-rights-in-canada/
[218] Krista James, "Health Care Consent with Physical Distancing: Understanding Decision-Making Rights in Canada – British Columbia Law Institute," BCLI, 2020, https://www.bcli.org/health-care-consent-with-physical-distancing-understanding-decision-making-rights-in-canada/

challenge, their parents' beliefs.[219] This shows how children are highly likely to be influenced by their families' values and ideals, and may undergo HCT under pressure to conform to them.

Beyond the aforementioned regulations and exceptions, any consenting adult should be able to access HCT for whatever reasons they choose.

Permissibility of HCT

In a heterosexist society, sexual orientations beyond the confines of heterosexuality are subject to discriminaion on an institutional level, in the media, and in certain conservative circles. This discrimination largely influences public opinion of homosexuality, and its effects can be as benign as incorrect identity labels, or as severe as targeted violence against these marginalized groups. Individuals who are openly queer are likely to experience some sort of discrimination throughout their lives, and the severity of the mistreatment will depend on their environmental circumstances, such as country of residence or family background.[220] Similarly, queer people who are openly queer will also be affected by the stigmas and messages they are subjected to. While they may not be directly harassed by friends or family members, they are likely to internalize the harmful narratives about homosexuality they encounter.[221] The discrimination faced by queer people has historically caused long-term mental health issues, like depression and anxiety, and in some instances, death by suicide.[222] The introduction of high-tech conversion therapy that is safe, effective, affordable, and reversible will reduce the suffering of the LGB community. If technologically possible, this biotechnology must be made available to queer people who meet the requirements detailed earlier for three main reasons.

Firstly, people should be autonomous in choosing both the trajectory of their lives and their bodily experiences. Therefore, queer people should have the freedom to choose what sort of

[219] Shanto Iyengar, Tobias Konitzer, and Kent Tedin, "The Home as a Political Fortress: Family Agreement in an Era of Polarization," *The Journal of Politics* 80, no. 4 (October 2018): 1326–38, https://doi.org/10.1086/698929.
[220] Genevieve Weber-Gilmore, Sage Rose, and Rebecca Rubenstein, "The Impact of Internalized Homophobia on Outness for Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Individuals," *The Professional Counselor* 1, no. 3 (January 2012): 163–75, https://doi.org/10.15241/gwv.1.3.163.
[221] Genevieve Weber-Gilmore, Sage Rose, and Rebecca Rubenstein, "The Impact of Internalized Homophobia on Outness for Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Individuals," *The Professional Counselor* 1, no. 3 (January 2012): 163–75, https://doi.org/10.15241/gwv.1.3.163.
[222] Dan Avery, "Nearly a Third of Young Gay People Have Attempted Suicide, Study Finds," NBC News, April 20, 2021, https://www.nbcnews.com/nbc-out/out-health-and-wellness/nearly-third-gay-youths-attempted-suicide-study-finds-rcna724.

life experiences they want to, or are able to, experience and tolerate. With the emergence of safe HCT, the LGB community would not be forced to continue experiencing and identifying with a sexual orientation they do not want, regardless of their reasons behind this. Withholding a technology that would allow a person to exercise their freedom of choice would truly be an injustice. Additionally, queer people should be able to choose who they are romantically and/or sexually attracted to as it pertains to bodily autonomy. In the same way that most people are allowed (and encouraged) to freely choose the person they will pursue a relationship with, selecting a sexual orientation should be regarded similarly, if the option to do so is made available. With HCT as a reality, a person who feels uncomfortable with their feelings and bodily reactions towards a certain gender should be able to control and change those feelings in a way that is most beneficial and comfortable to them. This should be the case even if the discomfort is a symptom of internalized homophobia, a phenomenon which occurs when queer people experience discrimination for their sexual orientation and subsequently turn those harmful ideas inward, believing them to be true.[223] This is because rectifying internalised homophobia requires therapy methods that not only are time-consuming but also emotionally and mentally taxing. So if a queer person opts for HCT because they find themselves unable to go through exhaustive therapeutic techniques to escape interalized homophobia, their access to HCT should not be inhibited.

Secondly, HCT needs to be permissible and accessible so that queer people who live in less progressive countries and/or accepting conditions would have the option to convert to heterosexuality for their safety and wellbeing. Their immediate safety should be prioritized over the fight for the rights of an individual or a group of people. The case of freedom of speech as a right illustrates the need for the prioritisation of safety in communities. While expressing oneself freely is crucial in a liberal democratic society, it is necessary to take precautions to ensure that doing so does not threaten people's safety. In the same way that minorities should not be sacrificial objects for the arguable good of preserving freedom of speech when, for example, a bigot uses this right to perpetuate a harmful stereotype, queer people living in unsafe conditions should not be sacrificial objects in the fight to eradicate heterosexism. Safekeeping human lives

[223] David M. Frost and Ilan H. Meyer, "Internalized Homophobia and Relationship Quality among Lesbians, Gay Men, and Bisexuals.," *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 56, no. 1 (2009): 97–109, https://doi.org/10.1037/a0012844.

remains worth more than the fulfilment of a goal, even if that goal has the noble intention of preventing oppression. If high-tech conversion therapy is able to save as little as one life from suicide, a hate crime, or a death penalty, it ought to be accessible to queer people. As mentioned earlier, queer rights have come a long way in many countries. However, we can not foresee the end of heterosexism, and it would be cruel to leave the suffering of the LGB community up to chance for an indefinite amount of time.

Finally, I believe that people of all sexual orientations should be able to experience attraction in a way that may broaden their horizons. My argumentation for this claim is two-fold. Firstly, there are many benefits that come with exploring new things, such as overcoming fears, developing a clearer sense of self, and stimulating creativity. Regardless of a person's willingness to experience something new, the opportunity to do so should be made available to them — insofar as it does not directly harm them or others — if they choose to seek it out. The accessibility of HCT will give both heterosexual and homosexual people the option to seek out new romantic and sexual experiences with people of other genders whilst learning more about themselves in the process. Secondly, the widespread use of HCT among heterosexual people may help combat heterosexism. HCT may encourage heterosexual people to experiment with their sexual orientations, in turn blurring the rigid societal boundaries of sexuality; we may come to find a more progressive society as a result. Their experiences may also influence otherwise homophobic individuals and organizations to try HCT themselves or reconsider their negative opinions of homosexuality.

Examples Relating to HCT

To support the claim that HCT ought to be made accessible to consenting adults, I will draw parallels between the availability of HCT and the availability of cosmetic surgery and abortion respectively. These similarly controversial examples both illustrate that bodily autonomy outweighs the risk of harmful consequences to society. The body positivity movement has gained considerable traction over the past decade, yet according to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, almost an additional 250,000 cosmetic procedures were performed in 2018 compared

to the previous year.[224] Many of these patients were women. There are many explanations for this shift, including self-esteem issues. For example, if a woman is insecure about the size of her breasts, she is given the option to alter her appearance. Today, most people would not take issue with this line of reasoning, as it coheres with the popular phrase "My body, My choice".[225] Even if a woman chooses to undergo a rhinoplasty for the 'wrong reasons' (e.g., pressures from a misogynistic society), why should she not be allowed to do so if it benefits her in some way? For instance, her new look could lead to increased confidence levels and more job opportunities.[226] While her decision to undergo cosmetic surgery could potentially have adverse effects on the body positivity movement, this does not override her right to bodily autonomy. In much the same way, queer people should be able to convert to heterosexuality, regardless of perceived harms to the LGB community at large.

Similarly, the pro-choice movement preaches the idea that pregnant people should be allowed to terminate their pregnancies if they so wish. Although some attribute rights to the unborn fetus and argue that abortion harms them, protecting the bodily autonomy the pregnant individual continues to take precedence, allowing the provision of legal and safe abortions to persist in Canada. Many people opt for an abortion in the face of social inequities, like poverty, which is normally regarded as a valid reason to do so. HCT should be treated the same way. Potentially negative consequences to the individual or the queer movement should not interfere with queer people's access to HCT. As with pregnant people, some queer people might go forward with conversion for reasons of social inequity, and they should be allowed to do so.

Progress Hindering Objection

In "Sexual Reorientation in Ideal and Non-Ideal Theory", Delmas and Aas argue that HCT should not be made available for queer people in the status quo. They suggest that while sexual

[224] March 11 Monday, "New Plastic Surgery Statistics Reveal Trends toward Body Enhancement," American Society of Plastic Surgeons, March 11, 2019, https://www.plasticsurgery.org/news/press-releases/new-plastic-surgery-statistics-reveal-trends-toward-body-enhancement#:~:text=American%20Society%20of%20Plastic%20Surgeons%20Report%20Surges%20in%20Body%20Sculpting%20Procedures&text=ARLINGTON%20HEIGHTS%2C%20IL%20%E2%80%93%20New%20data.
[225] Judith McAra-Couper, Marion Jones, and Liz Smythe, "Caesarean-Section, My Body, My Choice: The Construction of 'Informed Choice' in Relation to Intervention in Childbirth," *Feminism & Psychology* 22, no. 1 (November 2, 2011): 81–97, https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353511424369.
[226] Melissa Dittmann, "Plastic Surgery: Beauty or Beast?," *Https://Www.apa.org*, September 2005, https://www.apa.org/monitor/sep05/surgery.

reorientation is permissible, it should not be pursued by way of HCT. They also find that it would be better for the queer community if HCT did not emerge at all. Their first objection to the availability of HCT is that it will hinder the progress of pro-gay policies. If HCT is widely accessible and queer individuals are able to reorient themselves, Delmas and Aas worry that HCT "may demote homosexuality from being seen as an essential, innate, and immutable part of the self to a seemingly prosaic 'lifestyle choice'".[227] The choice to change one's sexual orientation will effectively reverse the progress that has been made using the 'born this way' theory. The 'born this way' theory argues that sexuality is akin to race or another innate and unchangeable part of one's identity; essentially, this theory posits that sexuality is genetic. Delmas and Aas believe that this theory has been a crucial part of the advancement of gay rights. If it collapses and the choice conception overrides it, Delmas and Aas worry that there would be set-backs in the LGB movement. Doing away with the 'born this way' theory, they find, may leave many people questioning their understanding of and beliefs about human sexuality, resulting in a state of confusion around the concept at best, and homophobic ideas of homosexuality as unnatural at worst.

While sexuality is fluid in their view, and the 'born this way' theory "[does not constitute] a rationally good basis for pro-gay policies," it is and has been publicly effective in granting rights to queer people.[228] Delmas and Aas do not believe that popular opinion will change immediately, and for that reason, doing away with this widely-held theory will cause the aforementioned large-scale issues.

Reply

While it is possible that the societal effects of HCT availability may hinder the progress of LGB rights for a time, it is a necessary sacrifice for the long-term acceptance of the queer community. There is soundness to Delmas and Aas' claim that the 'born this way' theory has been successfully used in the past few decades to convince the general public that queer people deserve equal rights to heterosexual people. However, these rights are afforded to the LGB

[227] Candice Delmas and Sean Aas, "Sexual Reorientation in Ideal and Non-Ideal Theory," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 26, no. 4 (April 10, 2018): 463–85, https://doi.org/10.1111/jopp.12159.
[228] Candice Delmas and Sean Aas, "Sexual Reorientation in Ideal and Non-Ideal Theory," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 26, no. 4 (April 10, 2018): 463–85, https://doi.org/10.1111/jopp.12159.

community under the false pretence that sexuality cannot be changed, which I do not believe to be true. The argument that sexuality is fixed attempts to draw sympathy for queer people as though they are stuck with their sexualities. It presupposes that queer people *must not* have a choice in their sexuality, because otherwise they would surely choose to be straight. Many queer people do not experience their identities under these constraints.[229] Sexuality is on a spectrum, and queer activists who continue to advocate for the 'born this way' theory misrepresent the experiences of the many that do not identify with the theory, even if their aim is to influence policy-making in an attempt to achieve equality. I want to recognize that some individuals do identify with the 'born this way' theory, which is why it should not be discredited. Still, this theory cannot explain the experiences of all queer people, since some recognize their queerness through exploration and experimentation. The argument for unchosen sexuality might once have preserved queer lives and identities, however it is no longer a suitable theory in societies working toward openness and equality. Queer people should not have to alter their understanding of how they their identities were formed to be palatable for the rest of society. At some point, queer activists ought to steer clear of using rigid theories of sexuality to justify queerness and introduce a more fluid understanding of identity to advocate for LGB rights instead. The availability of HCT fits into this fluid conception of sexuality and social justice; it means that all people of all sexual orientations ought to be respected and afforded their rights, even if they are chosen by the individual.

Pressure to Convert Objection

Delmas and Aas further argue against the availability of HCT as they believe it will create external pressures to convert to heterosexuality. Family and friends may pressure a queer individual to reorient for one of two reasons: intolerance of queerness, or genuine concerns for their wellbeing. So a mother may suggest HCT to her lesbian daughter out of disdain and distrust for queer people, or she may suggest it out of fear for her daughter's safety and wellbeing while navigating society as a marginalized person. Religious leaders may also pressure their queer followers to absolve themselves of what they perceive to be a sin. The authors claim that "such

[229] Christopher C. H. Cook, "The Causes of Human Sexual Orientation," *Theology & Sexuality* 27, no. 1 (September 16, 2020): 1–19, https://doi.org/10.1080/13558358.2020.1818541.

pressures would constitute a severe psychic burden on lesbians and gays" which would only add to the existing burden of being queer in a heterosexist society.[230]

Reply

The argument that coercion would become more prevalent in places where HCT is available falsely suggests that if sexuality remains 'unchosen' in the eyes of the public, LGB people will not be pushed to adopt a heterosexual lifestyle. Coercion is no less present in the status quo. Societies that widely believe in the 'born this way' theory are not exempt from homophobic hate crimes and institutional attempts to instill heterosexual ideals within citizens. This mainstream conception of sexuality does not dispel people's deeply rooted beliefs that homosexuality is wrong - chosen or not. For example, churches that advocate against homosexuality continue to do so even when they believe that every child is born with a fixed sexual orientation.Their perception of sexuality to be innate or 'God-given' in nature does not change their anti-queer position. The availability of HCT would not dramatically change these churches' views of homosexuality. Their issue is with queerness, not how one comes to be queer. A bigoted person who denounces homosexuality under the 'born this way' theory is likely to continue to do so with the conception of HCT.

The eligibility determination mechanism I outlined earlier in the paper will drastically decrease the risk of coercion, as hesitations and motives of the patient may be brought to light during pre-therapy consultations. These requirements coupled with the benefits that HCT brings to queer people (bodily autonomy, safety and new experiences) both manage and outweigh the worry about potential coercion.

Jeopardy of LGB Community Objection

Delmas and Aas also worry that the availability of HCT may threaten the LGB community as a whole. They posit that queer people will succumb to the aforementioned pressures and reorient themselves, which will cause considerable harms to the collective community, even if the conversion 'benefits' the individual. The community will shrink, and there will be significantly

[230] Candice Delmas and Sean Aas, "Sexual Reorientation in Ideal and Non-Ideal Theory," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 26, no. 4 (April 10, 2018): 463–85, https://doi.org/10.1111/jopp.12159.

fewer resources afforded to those who do not choose to undergo HCT. According to Delmas and Aas, this condition where "members of oppressed groups choose the most advantageous option available to them … but these individually rational decisions aggregate to socially suboptimal outcomes" often emerges in the heterosexist status quo.[231] However, they worry that the availability of HCT will exacerbate this, effectively deterring people away from queerness and reducing LGB communities to ghost towns. For Delmas and Aas, the loss of these subcultures will stunt innovation and societal progress as diversity forces us to confront unfamiliarity, thus making us more creative and innovative.[232]

Reply

LGB communities first acted as a refuge for queer individuals who were ostracized by society.[233] The spaces provided queer individuals with freedom to express themselves, access to a chosen family, and resources to safeguard themselves. While LGB communities continue to exist around the world, the need for them in their original form slowly diminishes as equal rights for queer people are achieved. For example, many gay bars in North America have closed (or are less prominently a place of queer refuge) as a result of more accepting attitudes towards the LGB community.[234] Once a certain status of equality between heterosexual and homosexual relationships has been achieved, LGB communities are no longer needed to protect queer groups. However, LGB spaces continue to exist as a means of community-building. These LGB communities are of of value to many individuals, they offer a subculture and a sense of community enjoyed by many queer people. Even if many queer people in any given community chose to undergo HCT, there will still be many who are drawn to the community and do not want to do so. These individuals will keep the culture alive by creating queer art and living as their most authentic selves. As previously stated, queer people's right to bodily autonomy right largely outweighs the importance of preserving spaces that were mainly brought about to defend queer

[231] Candice Delmas and Sean Aas, "Sexual Reorientation in Ideal and Non-Ideal Theory," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 26, no. 4 (April 10, 2018): 463–85, https://doi.org/10.1111/jopp.12159.
[232] Candice Delmas and Sean Aas, "Sexual Reorientation in Ideal and Non-Ideal Theory," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 26, no. 4 (April 10, 2018): 463–85, https://doi.org/10.1111/jopp.12159.
[233] Mike Givens, "Gay Bars 101: The Rise and Decline of Gay & Lesbian Bars," www.gofreddie.com, November 27, 2021, https://www.gofreddie.com/magazine/gay-bars-101-the-rise-and-decline-of-gay-lesbian-bars.
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people against the dangers of a heterosexist society. Their memories and communities must be preserved, but we should not aim to sustain specifically LGB spaces as they appear today if it hinders relieving the hardships of some queer people by making HCT inaccessible.

Conclusion

In the past few decades, there has been a considerable shift in the attitudes expressed towards queer people internationally. Despite this positive trend of acceptance, this paper shows how the availability of high-tech conversion therapy would afford the LGB community bodily autonomy, ensured safety, and new perspectives for all. This is why the technology ought to be made accessible for all consenting adults. To support these claims, I have addressed multiple objections from “Sexual Reorientation in Ideal and Non-Ideal Theory” by Candice Delmas and Sean Aas. All adults, regardless of sexual orientation, should have the option to undergo HCT if it were to be developed in a safe, effective, and reversible way. We must not wait for ideal conditions to grant queer people safety and autonomy.

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Head to Head, then Hand in Hand: Conversations between Ecofeminist Theory and Poststructuralist Feminist Theory

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Introduction

Social and political theorists often make the mistake of viewing feminism as a subsection of mainstream theories. However, a closer look into feminist theory reveals a thrilling amount of depth and a plethora of contrasting, yet harmonious, strains of thought that encompass numerous different facets of the theory. With the risk of unmanageable ecological destruction threatening our well-being as individuals and as societies, our conceptions of ourselves and our relation to others are additionally impacted, thus, a deep exploration of these understandings and conceptions is necessary to not only discover existing imbalances of power, but also reveal the strengths of previously overlooked identities moving forward. Within this paper I will be analyzing ecofeminist and poststructuralist feminist theory, and exploring the ways in which the two are in conversation in order to gain a more nuanced understanding of femininity and nature in the context of the climate crisis. I will be doing this by first providing definitions of each theory, followed by a discussion of how both theories began with explicit critiques of each other, but evolved together to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between patriarchy and nature. I will be furthering this analysis by demonstrating the ways in which the cooperation of the two streams allows for the following: 1) An understanding of how the woman-nature nexus is created, 2) how patriarchal language can be deconstructed and subsequently destabilize oppressive binaries, and 3) the relevancy of each topic to the climate crisis. I will be concluding the paper by discussing some of the shortcomings of the two theories, and proposing a potential empirical study to further research this topic.

Defining Ecofeminism and Poststructuralist Feminism

Ecofeminism

The term ecofeminism has a contested history, mostly due to the poststructuralist critiques that I will be exploring later within this paper. However, the term was initially coined by French feminist thinker Françoise d'Eaubonne in 1974 in her book *Le Féminisme ou la Mort*[235]. Within the book, d'Eaubonne explored the role of patriarchy in environmental destruction and argued that women would be able to better manage the natural environment due to their position at "the interface of nature and culture."[236] After D'Eaubonne, many ecofeminists within the 1980's agreed with the theory, and specifically her argument that the feminine is "central to reversing the trends of environmental degradation."[237]

Another key thinker of ecofeminism is Carolyn Merchant, who published her book *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* in 1982. The main insight that Merchant provided within this book is that the rise of what came out of the scientific revolution, such as technology, modern science and capitalism, all relied on the "death, domination, and exploitation of a nature gendered female" and that this further reinforced the subordination and exploitation of women.[238] Though the definition of the term ecofeminist evolved throughout the decades as a response to poststructuralist critique, it is widely agreed that "[g]enerally, ecofeminism has been concerned with the complex interrelationship between environmental degradation and women's subordination" within a patriarchal system.[239]

Poststructuralist feminism

Also coined within the 1980's, the term poststructuralist feminism was first discussed by feminist theorist Chris Weedon.[240] Prior to Weedon, most poststructuralist work was done by (male) theorists such as Jacque Derrida, Karl Marx, Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, Ferdinand

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[235] Françoise d'Eaubonne, *Le féminisme ou la mort*. (P. Horay, 1974).
[236] Emma Foster. *Ecofeminism revisited: Critical insights on contemporary environmental governance*, (Feminist Theory, 2021), 192.
[237] Foster, *Ecofeminism Revisited*, 192.
[238] Charis Thompson, *Back to nature?: Resurrecting ecofeminism after poststructuralist and third-wave feminisms: Getting back to the death of nature: Rereading Carolyn Merchant*. (Isis, 2006), 506.
[239] Foster, *Ecofeminism Revisited*, 192.
[240] Chris Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructural Theory. (*Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1987), 12-42.

Saussure or Louis Althusser. However, Weedon furthered the theory through her own work by asserting that poststructuralist feminism can bring specific and insightful lenses to feminist discourses as the theory deals with concepts such as subject creation (and by extension, the abject) and meaning-making practices that help us deconstruct existing power structures. Weedon states that poststructuralist feminism can "explain the assumptions underlying the questions asked and answered by other forms of feminist theory, making their political assumptions explicit."[241]

This "making [of] political assumption explicit" requires taking a deeper look into the creation of the (female) subject, as well as what meanings are assigned to actions taken as previously mentioned, and this, as many poststructural feminists argue, is done through language. For Weedon, language is "important to poststructuralism as it is the place where forms of social organization and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested."[242] Moreover, it is also where our sense of ourselves— or our subjectivity— is formed. This sentiment is echoed by other poststructural feminist thinkers such as Annette Gough and Hilary Whitehouse[243] as well as Charis Thompson.[244]

First, In Opposition

Though ecofeminism rose in popularity within the 1980's due to d'Eaubonne and Merchant's work, it was quickly discarded and pushed to the edge of feminist discourse by the 1990's due to poststructuralist critiques stating that ecofeminists were too "conservative in how they interpreted gender, relying on conventional stereotypes linking women to care and nature."[245] Further, poststructuralists argued that by reducing women to care-takers and solely as maternal figures, ecofeminism excluded not only women who did not want children or were unable to have children, but also reinforced an existing women-nature nexus that linked femininity and the natural through parallel forms of oppression under the patriarchy, resulting in a historical

[241] Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructural Theory,* 20.
[242] Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructural Theory,* 21.
[243] Annette Gough and Hilary Whitehouse, *New vintages and new bottles: The "nature" of environmental education from new material feminist and ecofeminist viewpoints*. (The Journal of Environmental Education, 2018), 336-349.
[244] Thompson, *Back to Nature.*
[245] Foster, *Ecofeminism Revisited*, 191.

exclusion of women from public domains.[246] Other thinkers were concerned with the binary-oriented thinking that ecofeminism seemed to encourage through its division of the world into women/men and nature/culture, which included a hierarchical power dynamic between each set of binaries.[247]

Ecofeminists in turn argued that though certain aspects of ecofeminism can be interpreted as problematic, the theory brings important insights that cannot be overlooked, such as the undisputable connection between patriarchy and environmental destruction, and the parallel oppression of women and nature. Ecofeminists state that the simplistic association of women and nature was done due to the fact that most ecofeminists were activists rather than academics, and were motivated to simplify their message to help the public more easily digest the concepts of their activism.[248] Further, a careful reading of Merchant reveals that she "argues explicitly against the idea that there is a universal female behaviour and against depictions that uniformly cast women as a nurturer."[249] Moreover, ecofeminists argued that women and nature have a parallel experience in that they both are harmed by existing systems of power that privilege men, rather than through an inherent connection. As Emma Foster states "the affinity between 'women' and 'nature' is not a biological one, but an experiential one as it originates from shared oppressions and exploitations under patriarchal capitalism."[250] Phillips in fact argues that most of the critiques of ecofeminism were unfair, inaccurate, and taken out of context, but nonetheless persisted.[251] This resulted in any mention of the feminine body, in addition to feminine subjectivity, to be widely avoided by all ecofeminists.

Though there was an abundances of critiques from poststructuralist feminists regarding the association of women and nature, ecofeminists had their own critiques of the poststructuralist's approach to the environment, or more specifically its lack thereof. Ecofeminists stated that although poststructural feminism has had a significant influence on feminist thinking about nature, "few poststructuralist feminist theorists have paid much attention to the environment and

[246] Foster, *Ecofeminism Revisited*, 193.
[247] Gough and Whitehouse, *New Vintages and New Bottles.*
[248] Foster, *Ecofeminism Revisited*.
[249] Thompson, *Back to Nature,* 509.
[250] Foster, *Ecofeminism Revisited*, 196.
[251] Mary Phillips *Re-writing corporate environmentalism: Ecofeminism, corporeality and the language of feeling* (Gender, Work, and Organization*,* 2014), 443-458.

environmental issues."[252] In other words, though poststructuralist feminism had made remarkable contributions and critiques that were taken up by ecofeminists, by deconstructing concepts such as gender and nature, poststructuralist feminists left almost no tools or resources to discuss environmental problems. This then resulted in any conversation regarding the environment and its impact on women's lives specifically, to be sidelined.[253]

Then, in Harmony

After the surge of critiques in the 1990's and a few decades of being overlooked, ecofeminism has slowly been resurrected since the 2010's, with theorists arguing that it is possible to move beyond the essentialism of the theory and focus on the insights that it provides. Perhaps even surprisingly, feminists have utilized both ecofeminist and poststructuralism theory to highlight the impossibility of overlooking the ways in which the oppression of nature and women go hand in hand within the existing patriarchal system.[254] Where ecofeminism draws a connection between women, nature and patriarchy, poststructuralism helps "make explicit,"[255] the ways in which this is done through analyzing the creation of a feminine subject, the language used in professional and academic discourse, as well as by deconstructing the binaries that lead to this subjugation.

Creation of Woman-Nature Nexus

A poststructuralist feminist approach to the issues raised by ecofeminism makes clear the existing and unbalanced structures of power. Within the contemporary imaginary, the world is organized based on sets of dualisms, such as masculine/feminine, culture/nature, mind/body, reason/emotion, where one half of each dualism is given more power and establishes itself as the ideal.[256] The existing binary system works to privilege the masculine and all other characteristics attributed to it, such as reason and rationality, to establish men as the 'ideal human.' In extension,

[252] Thompson, *Back to Nature,* 511.
[253] Thompson, *Back to Nature.*
[254] Foster, *Ecofeminism Revisited*.
[255] Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructural Theory,* 20.
[256] Warren, K. *Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Perspective on What It Is and Why It Matters*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000) 23-29; Val Plumwood, *Nature, self, and gender: Feminism, environmental philosophy, and the critique of rationalism*. (Hypatia, 1991) 3-27

any group that does not possess or value the traits associated with the masculine is viewed as either sub-human or Other, and is therefore subject to domination.

Within this system, men are made to transcend nature using their logic and rationality, thus differentiating themselves from attributes such as emotion, which are associated with the body, women and the natural.[257] Within this system "the body is devalued in opposition to the mind as it is the body that is more aligned with women and the expansive category of otherness named as 'Nature,'"[258] resulting in the subordination of women and the justification of using nature only as a resource to be exploited.[259] This is widely discussed in environmental studies through the term anthropocentrism, which states that values in nature are human-centric,[260] and thus if human is synonymous with man, all value is given to men and masculinity.

The notion of anthropocentrism is highly criticized by Indigenous philosophers such as Leanne Simpson, who emphasize the significance of recognizing the land and animal nations as beings with inherent intrinsic value, and not as entirely separate and subordinate to humanity.[261] Taking this poststructuralist lens to the relationship between women, nature and the patriarchal system aids in clarifying how deep the subordination of women and nature goes. In the context of the climate crisis, this sheds light on the fact that the fight against climate change is not merely a fight against capitalist and colonial systems, but the patriarchal one as well; women are both subordinated along with the natural, as well as one of the first to experience the most dire consequences of the crisis.[262]

Deconstructing Patriarchal Language

As mentioned previously, language plays an integral part in poststructural feminism. As ecofeminists (*and* poststructuralist feminists) Gough & Whitehouse state "speaking the world into existence provides multiple ways of thinking about and comprehending environmental

[257] Phillips, *Re-writing Corporate Environmentalism.*
[258] Gough and Whitehouse, *New Vintages and New Bottles,* 339.
[259] Phillips, *Re-writing Corporate Environmentalism.*
[260] Helen Kopnina, Haydn Washington, Bron Taylor, and John J Piccolo, (2018). *Anthropocentrism: More than just a misunderstood problem*. (Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics, 2018), 110.
[261] Leanne Simpson, *Looking after gdoo-naaganinaa: Precolonial nishnaabeg diplomatic and treaty relationships,* (Wicazo Sa Review, 2008) 29-42.
[262] Beth A. Kaplin, *Global conservation, for and by women: The global conservation act targets developing countries throughout africa, asia and latin america, where women often suffer most from environmental destruction*, (New Hampshire Business Review, 2010), 17.

knowledge and the way we experience ourselves in space, time, and place." [263] Language does not only "speaks into existence" the modern subject and dictates how the Other is conceptualized;[264] it also frames environmental problems and helps conceptualize the path towards a better future. Foster states that the masculine way of thinking that has been dominant in the environmental discourse views the issue as a problem to be 'fixed,' whereas ecofeminists believe that we exist in a time where nature needs 'healing.'[265] The distinction between 'fixing' and 'healing' impacts the choices made when implementing solutions.

Ecofeminist thinkers also state that feminine writing, whether in scholarship, activism, or for any other purpose, can work to counteract the language of patriarchy that has led to the existing oppressions. Foster asserts that in using poetic or spiritual language, ecofeminists challenge the very scientific and technological approaches to nature and the environment that have arguably worked to nature's detriment[266]. Furthermore, Phillips believes that "feminine writing can defy the masculine and bring about new relations between the subject and other." [267] Through these discourses, it is evident that deconstructing patriarchal language is integral not only to understanding the relationship between environmental issues and patriarchy, but also to opening new doors for conceptualizing the future.

Destabilizing Binaries

There has been general agreement within ecofeminists up-taking poststructuralist views that the root of the power imbalance has been hierarchies within existing binaries. As previously discussed, idealized hegemonic masculinity is viewed as authentically human, and it is defined in direct opposition to the natural, physical, and biological world. Within this conception "the feminine, women and nature are rendered as abject; 'othered' to justify their subordination."[268] The same has been applied to the culture/nature binary as stated by Foster.[269] Culture, which is associated with humans and rationality is opposed and "placed in higher esteem" than nature, which is associated with the non-human, and corporeal. [270]

[263] Gough and Whitehouse, *New Vintages and New Bottles,* 336.
[264] Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructural Theory*, 21.
[265] Foster, *Ecofeminism Revisited*.
[266] Foster, *Ecofeminism Revisited*.
[267] Phillips, *Re-writing Corporate Environmentalism,* 451.
[268] Phillips, *Re-writing Corporate Environmentalism,* 444.
[269] Foster, *Ecofeminism Revisited*.
[270] Foster, *Ecofeminism Revisited*, 201.

Ecofeminists however, argue that by maintaining the principles of interconnectedness established by ecofeminism, these binaries can be destabilized. [271] By establishing that the attributes of all beings are of equal importance and value, and "by refusing to separate 'culture' from 'nature' we are able to destabilize the culture/nature binary and develop further ethical and political positions to contend with the ecological realities we are now facing."[272] The utilization of both ecofeminism and poststructural feminism once again demonstrates a better understanding of the intersections of gender and the environment, and presents a path towards a better future that is not divided into unequal halves.

Going Forward

The existing literature that draws on both ecofeminism and poststructuralist feminism provides us with great insight regarding the most intricate parts of the systems and structures that we as individuals partake in. By becoming aware of these systems and our place within them, we are faced with the choice of accepting the structures as they are, or rejecting them and working towards a more just, balanced, and equitable future with every choice we make on a daily basis. Though both perspectives make astute observations between the subordination of women and nature by men, there is little exploration of what individuals who fall outside the gender binary could bring to the table. In order to both have a more empirical basis to the arguments made by the aforementioned authors, as well as to examine the role of gender non-conforming individuals within this discourse, I propose a qualitative study examining language within academic and non-academic literature.

The question guiding this research would be: "How does the wording of existing literature regarding the environment differ between authors of different genders?" The data will be collected by analyzing 10 academic articles discussing the environment or nature written by one or more female authors, 10 by one or more male author and 10 by one or more gender non-conforming authors. Additionally, data will also be collected by analyzing 10 pieces of non-academic literature discussing the environment or nature, such as poetry or fictional work from one or more female authors, 10 by one or more male authors, and 10 by one or more gender

[271] (Foster, *Ecofeminism Revisited*; Phillips, *Re-writing Corporate Environmentalism*; Gough & Whitehouse, *New Vintages and New Bottles*).
[272] Gough and Whitehouse, *New Vintages and New Bottles,* 339.

non-conforming authors. Researcher(s) will analyze wording utilized within each piece of literature and make note of the ways that the authors relate to the natural world and the environment, with the aim to gain a better understanding of the way different genders conceptualize and relate to the environment and the concept of nature. This paper synthesized ecofeminist and poststructural feminist theory to highlight the ways in which the two theories have evolved throughout the years to enrich each other, demonstrating that through cooperation, new and more nuanced levels of understanding can evolve within the field, thus allowing us to work towards an increasingly equitable and just future. With the aid of the empirical data that the proposed study could provide, these theories can move beyond abstract concepts towards practical solutions.

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Chris Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructural Theory. (*Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1987), 12-42.

The Power to Be Seen: Contingent Being and Performative Gender in Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*

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Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* distinguishes itself as a source of radical insight in the fields of feminist philosophy and identity politics. Its intellectual footprint brings forth the significance of queer theory, with inquiries into the ontological importance imposed on gender and sex and the way that it has failed to free us from fears of meaningless selfhood. Butler reasons for the contingent nature of human existence, and unambiguously asks us to reassess the ways we have been limited and alienated by the predetermined meanings of our sex, gender, and desire. They[273] reflect on how binary gender identification has robbed our existence of profound authenticity more often than it has ever given to us. This article inspects Butler's argument that gender is performative, suggesting how our perception of gender is muddled by the illusion of fixed and universal truths about our identity while it is merely constituted by acts expected of us by heterosexist hegemony. Furthermore, I highlight how Butler's thesis stands as an improvement on some past interpretations of gender by feminist thinkers such as de Beauvoir, Wittig and Irigaray whose identity politics all uniquely yet perpetually centralize the feminine and the masculine as stable and ontological markers of gender. Butler's critique examines and expands on how each argument potentially carries real-world consequences while methodically deconstructing the naturalized knowledge of sexual norms and gender relations. As a result, I propose that gender as a performative aspect of a person is ubiquitous in the gender unreality[274] of drag and the theatrics of gender-reveal parties where gendered identity enters the world as a dynamic performance that inevitably acquires spectatorship and witness.

[273] A clarification that the ambiguous subject in sentences may be due to Butler's pronouns being they/them.
[274] Judith Butler, "Conclusion: From Parody to Politics," in *Gender Trouble*, (London: Routledge, 2000), xxii.

A large part of feminist theory, predating Butler's *Gender Trouble*, emphasizes that women as a category is officially delegated as whom the movement pursues political representation, visibility, and legitimacy for[275]. This group consensus had worked to gain women (mainly White women for a while) equal rights from the women's suffrage movement to The Equal Pay Act in the US, and near the end of the second-wave feminism period, all recognized female citizens in North America had the same rights as their male counterparts. Yet, their economic freedom and political mobility were only extended as far as the law for equality that protected them went. For, women still faced discriminatory attitudes for their sex in social and professional spaces previously occupied by exclusively men, casting women as the Other—the deviance from the only sex, the masculine male, as Irigaray claims[276]. Other second-wave feminist philosophers also produced substantial conceptualizations of "woman" in regard to how it relates to pre-established notions of "men" in grasping the disparity between the two as separate categories. However, Butler expresses concerns with this philosophical standpoint which at this time had become a convention in feminist thought. They argue that it has led many prominent thinkers to the unfounded assumption that the fundamental structure of ontology is binary. Insofar as de Beauvoir's proposal that one is not born a woman but becomes one validates the presupposition that women ought to aspire to be perceived as subjects like men; as they are historically subjugated as the passive, observed objects in the subject-object power regime. On the other hand, men, perceived as subjects, are in control of the views and beliefs that dominate society. While this serves as the basis for male gaze and phallogocentric critiques, it pertains to the practice that buys into an artificial division of gender held by hegemonic beliefs[277].

In contrast, Butler holds a position that aims to deconstruct rather than uphold the coherent identities that institute oppositions within the dichotomy of feminine and masculine[278]. Their project stirs up questions into how sex and gender are given, critiquing the traditional discourse of gender for its presumed alliance with a system of compulsory heterosexuality. As it is typically understood, sex is biological and scientifically observable, whereas gender is "a psychic and/or cultural designation of the self"[279], and desire or sexuality is heterosexual and stands in

[275] Judith Butler, "Subjects of Sex/ Gender/ Desire," in *Gender Trouble*, (London: Routledge, 2000), 3.
[276] Butler, "Subjects," 24.
[277] Butler, "Subjects," 12.
[278] Butler, "Subjects," 23.
[279] Butler, "Subjects," 30.

opposition to the other gender it desires. Butler sees this as how heterosexuality has been naturalized and made compulsory since it requires gender to be acknowledged as the relation between feminine and masculine; and the two are differentiated from one another through the practices of heterosexual desire[280]. Furthermore, Butler acknowledges the limitations that have emerged from some previous arguments against heterosexual constructs. Namely, how the postgenital view of sexuality ignores the way power relations continue to devise constructs within a "liberated" sexuality[281]. Feminist philosopher Irigaray, whose works are often criticized as essentialist, extracts a monolithic feminine sexuality from the phallogocentric economy which she argues is predicated on the exchange of currency alongside women, albeit she shows no resistance against the sexual difference that constitutes heteronormative binary thinking[282].

The issues that pervaded feminist philosophy at this time are at best genuine attempts at differentiating the feminine sex as its own source of empowerment outside of the normative masculinist structure of society. At their worst, as Butler points out, they preserve the heterosexual constructs—the building blocks of compulsory heterosexuality—that psychologically burden everybody. In addition, the idea that we must search outside of what is considered normative and universal for something women can identify themselves as suggests that past definitions of feminine ontological existence often inadvertently render it secondary and too subjective to be a universalism like the masculine. Thus, it is inherently useful to intercept these frustrations with past definitions by allowing the idea that gender is a performance choreographed by the acts we do in everyday routines, typically as an unaware response to the heterosexist paradigms of cultural life. That is to say, the norms of heteronormativity act on us before we can act on ourselves; and so, we reiterate these acts in "new or unexpected ways, but still in relation to norms that precede and exceed us"[283]. This means that even in non-heterosexual contexts, heterosexual constructs and expression remanifest themselves in ways that denaturalize and mobilize gender categories[284]. In short, Butler argues that there is no original origins of sex or gender—no naturalistic identity that becomes or is born from the core

[280] Butler, "Subjects," 30.
[281] Butler, "Subjects," 39.
[282] Butler, "Subjects," 40.
[283] Judith Butler, "Performativity, Precarity and Sexual Politics," *Antropólogos Iberoamericanos En Red* 4, no. 3 (September 2009): 11.
[284] Butler, "Performativity," 41.

of one's ontological being—that gets copied and pasted into queer realities. Moreover, going further against the naturalization of sex, Butler rejects Wittig's subscription to metaphysical substances such as "woman" and "lesbian" as they also enforce an artificial and all too simplistic order of things, similar to how the heterosexual matrix of sex, gender and desire does[285]. Butler's argument, therefore, seeks to redesign our perception of gender, specifically its significance to the scope of our internal freedom as individuals. As Gieseler articulates, the attention to sexual differences and identity binarism raises the borders of "self and Other, normative and deviant, known and unknown"[286], excluding the other manifold and significant parts of ourselves that do not conform to binary expectations from normalization.

In recent years, platforms for mainstream entertainment have seen more representations of subcultural praxis. In particular, the increasing popularity of reality shows like *RuPaul's Drag Race* exposes the general moderate audience to dramatized reproductions of gender and, consequently, the reconceptualization of gender norms, challenging gendered reality and negotiating power[287]. Drag performance, in a literal sense, visualizes and corroborates with Butler's claim that gender is performative. Drag performers adorn themselves with not only extravagant costumes and makeup but technical, body-altering shapewear and sculpting paddings to animate their intricately designed characters. One's character is usually distinguished by that it is not the gender that the performer necessarily identifies with when they are not performing. And since drag queens are typically cisgender sexual minority men, many drag critics have argued that drag does harm to women by further reinforcing feminine gender stereotypes such as cattiness and hyper-femininity—a predilection for the superficial indulgence in external beauty and material opulence—qualities associated with excess made out to be especially negative in women by popular media and masculinist culture[288]. Even so, many see the art of drag as a strong form of resistance, subverting the expectations of hegemonic masculinity. It spotlights the peculiar and stilted nature of gendered reality in a setting that normalizes queer bodies for their lavish, fantastical expression of selfhood. Marrying Butler's theory into practical reality, drag

[285] Butler, "Performativity," 27.
[286] Carly Gieseler, "Gender-reveal Parties: Performing Community Identity in Pink and Blue," *Journal of Gender Studies* 27, no. 6 (2018): 664.
[287] Butler, "Performativity," 1.
[288] Heidi M. Levitt, Francisco I. Surace, Emily E. Wheeler, Erik Maki, Darcy Alcántara & et al., "Drag Gender: Experiences of Gender for Gay and Queer Men who Perform Drag," *Sex Roles* 78, (July 2017): 368.

investigates and enquires into the meanings and functionality that the heterosexual matrix has attached to gender[289]. In drag, the functionality of gender is merely one aspect of the performance; having no fixed gender in drag does not existentially cripple or socially alienate one like in hegemonic life. As drag is not deviance from one's usual self—at no point does drag require one to entirely conceal or omit the gender they go with off stage. Anyone can be anything they want at any moment. For drag peels back the fabricating mechanisms of a stable identity and inner truth that supposedly constitute gender, Butler says[290].

New York City in the 1980s and 1990s saw some of the most iconic drag events ever where performers competed at balls and were judged based on how "real" or charming their portrayal of a certain gender role was[291]. Performers achieved high scores based on clever and impressive costume choices and on how entertaining and dramatic their imitations of unaware and self-serious hegemonic customs were. Through elaborate sequences of poses, catwalks, and voguing—drag parodies of the heterosexist world—we see how forcibly distinct, divided, and reductive the social and class structures that uphold the essentialization of gender ultimately are. As in the present day, drag styles have evolved in various grown directions. Drag queens and kings do not hide the fact that they are in disguise. Even when some strive to look like a "real" (or "biological" as often joked by drag performers and trans people) man or woman, they still retain much of the same dazzling and novel reconceptualization of movements and emotions that accompanies performative art. In a later text, Butler notes that gender performativity is about "who" can become produced as a "recognizable subject"[292], which is to say that gender is not an inherent truth that can be sought out by one assuming the specific roles associated with the subjecthood of a coherent gender, but that the performative nature of gender is about claiming the power to be seen[293]. Others see the potential danger that drag may impose on transgender communities. Criticism comes from a place of fear that drag performance paints an undesirable and untrue image of transgender people, especially transwomen as no more than just men in dresses[294]. This is a gravely dangerous and unjustified belief that has resulted in the murders of

[289] Levitt & et al., "Drag Gender," 367.
[290] Butler, "Subjects," 174.
[291] Levitt & et al., "Drag Gender," 368.
[292] Butler, "Performativity," 12.
[293] Butler, "Performativity," 3.
[294] Levitt & et al., "Drag Gender," 369.

many transwomen by cisgender heterosexual men, in spur-of-the-moment repulsion, who could not come to terms with the fact that they chose to engage either knowingly or unknowingly in sexual activities with a transwoman and by those (mostly men) who simply refuse to tolerate the existence and sustained thriving of trans people altogether. One prominent concern raised is that since most cis drag queens have the ability to resume their regular masculine identity after the performance is over, the privilege to shed away a costume and return to an appearance more aligned with hegemonic masculinist values undermines the continuous reality of trans bodies[295].

As strongly as I would agree that drag is not immune to criticism for the transphobia that has infiltrated its scene, reflecting in its mainstream representation, and that this position holds a considerable extent of validity, I would like to argue that by accepting this objection as it is, one suggests that drag performers' usual identities are irrelevant to their character conceptualizations. I imagine that Butler would expand their thesis that gender is a collection of performative gestures that constantly repeats and reproduces cultural and hegemonic conventions[296]. And that drag as a way that one performs another gender is consistent with other ways that one may perform their usual gender identity. Another defense would claim that gender expression should not be limited to the binary markings of what is real and what is not, what is performance and what is reality. For this would counterproductively resist Butler's reasoning that gender is, after all, performative, as there is no internal truth hidden under the deeds we engage in to navigate our way through heterosexist constructs. Additionally, Butler contends that the totalizing logical structure of presumed fixity constitutes the matrix of intelligible identities which naturalizes and reifies gender despite its historical and contingent richness[297]. The authoritative account of gender is delicately held together by reifying and naturalizing claims that insist on the "present and necessary form"[298] of gender—as something that predates law and culture. What drag analogously demonstrates, simply put, is that gendered roles are completely reenactable, performable, and that throughout the course of life, one's gender goes through transformation and acclimatization, confronting the heterosexual production of desire and gender in ways that can lead one to live more authentically.

[295] Levitt & et al., "Drag Gender," 369.
[296] Levitt & et al., "Drag Gender," 756.
[297] Judith Butler, "Prohibition, Psychoanalysis, and the Production of the Heterosexual Matrix," in *Gender Trouble*, (London: Routledge, 2000), 53.
[298] Butler, "Prohibition," 45.

Carly Gieseler denotes that the process of gender naturalization and reification is evident in mediated events like gender-reveal parties where the fetus is snatched "from the mystery of the woman's body" and thrown into the mechanical system of binary-signaling[299]. Like Butler, she also sees individuals filling out expectations linked to specific gender identities as well-rehearsed actors competing for the power to be recognized as the most competent performer. She further writes, "performance reveals the potential of identity politics through issues of materiality, representation, subjectivity, language and spectatorship"[300]. Gieseler postulates that gender is parallel to our choice of material goods—clothing or costume, things we put on every day and repeated practices that will eventually get forgotten as just the essential fact of language[301]. Our misconception of gender is often rooted in the lack of critical enquiries into the most repeated acts in our lives. So, most of us start to narrate our bodies at an early age in ways that fits the heteronormative categories taught to us. Phrases like "I feel like a woman" and "I feel like a man" may be indicative of genuine empowerment, yet they conflate the totality of a person's substance with mere passing acts that signify the accepted and visible norms of gender. Hence, by structuring our lives to uphold these historical categories, we allow hegemonic culture to essentialize our beings, confining our potentially abundant self-understanding to a mere position of opposition to the unknown "other" and the supposedly essential divisions of sex, gender, and desire.

The North American pre-birth ritual of the gender-reveal party has faced more scrutiny in recent years for the catastrophic environmental accidents several parties have caused. Besides the physical harm that these parties are associated with, they essentially provide expecting parents a few hours of collective attention from a close community of friends and family in anticipation of the unveiling of the fetus's assigned gender. A moment that one would regard to be quite intimate and private has become a rather trendy way to flash the joy of having a child who is now visible to the world with the gender that will be locked in on all legal papers for them. As the "sedimentary Otherness of the unknown"[302] settles elsewhere, comes the inpour of gender-specific gifts, branded visuals, and advice on how to raise the child curated based on the

[299] Carly Gieseler, "Marking the Unknown," in *Gender-Reveal Parties as Mediated Events: Celebrating Identity in Pink and Blue*, (New York: Lexington Books, 2020), 56.
[300] Gieseler, "Gender-Reveal," 664.
[301] Gieseler, "Gender-Reveal," 664.
[302] Gieseler, "Gender-Reveal Parties as Mediated," 55.

little amount of information given about their existence. When looked at from this angle, Butler's previously established points come together to posit that gendering is a process that predetermines how an individual will navigate their life journey through the heterosexist matrix.

Gieseler is critical of the risk that gender-reveal parties take, as they superficially reaffirm the biological categories of sex through ritualization. In other words, they ignore the ramifications of framing an unborn subject in permanence[303]. A closer look suggests these rituals represent a yearning for unambiguous outcomes and sound answers from childbirth, but detrimentally, they reveal the fear of 'risky' contingencies outside of the normative account. In a sense, the ritualization of gender is actually the normalization of gender. Gender-reveal events, moreover, mark a "collective belief in identity and witnesses"[304] of one becoming oneself—from something unknown and Other to something known and "true" to the self. This recalls de Beauvoir's famed notion that one is not born a woman, but one must become one. Here, the becoming here is not so much done by the unborn child but by the celebration that hopes to witness that done one day. Our identity is oftentimes already determined for us before our physical entry into the world.

Unexpectedly like drag, gender-reveal parties seek for an audience to reassure that our existence, especially the markings of our achievements for the being itself, is worthy of being witnessed and celebrated[305]. Although well-intended, I suggest that gender-reveal parties usually support the consequential underpinnings of a cultural project much more complicated than the mere act of publicizing one baby's identity. Since raising a child non-binary is yet to be observed on a large scale in Western society today, I believe, similarly to Butler, that it is on us to start deconstructing the heteronormative constructs that limit our perception of gender and sex—of our own and others'.

Gender Trouble signifies the progressive shift in feminist philosophy from traditional ontology to a more comprehensive and integrated study of gender and queer theories. With it, Butler investigates the problems with the naturalization of gender and sex, the binary rationalizations of intelligible identity, and the hetero-sexualization of desire. The postulation that gender is

[303] Gieseler, "Gender-reveal," 665.
[304] Gieseler, "Gender-reveal," 669.
[305] Gieseler, "Gender-reveal," 663.

performative and thus pertains to the power of visibility is maintained through this article as I discussed de Beauvoir's shortcoming in her definition of "woman" within the assumed framework of subject-object relations which emphasizes the binary meanings that men are natural subjects whereas women must overcome the state of being objects to distinguish themselves as subjects among men. Irigaray's assumptions also encounter the issue of designating women as the Other and men the universal sex in explaining how women struggle with prejudices in a male-dominated society. Even as Irigaray pays attention to the relationship between power and sex, Butler is not satisfied with this thinking for it repeats the shortcomings of binary positioning. Then, I examined how Wittig's metaphysical substances do not challenge hegemonic modes of signification. I furthermore explored how the art of drag attests for the performativity of gender. Drag demonstrates why gender is best understood as performative in nature, for it is subject to revision and free expression as seen in performers' constant improvisation and stylization. Gender-reveal parties, on the other hand, normalizes gender by ritualizing the difference between boy and girl. These two seemingly separate and unrelated means of communal celebration are indeed significant to Butler's theory in the sense that they both reflect the human yearning to flourish and to be witnessed as we do so.

To display our bodies as testimonies to truths about the significance of our existence, we engage in repeated routines that are valued as visibly intelligible to heterosexist hegemony. Fundamentally, Butler's project aims to help us reconcile the contingency of being and gender with the way we have perceived the inner works of our wholeness as accounted for by the authority of coherent identities. *Gender Trouble* aims to illuminate our capacity for alleviating this historical and social weight of existential unease, the sense of inadequacy and lifelong trauma that we experience from attempting to fill in the shape of life that heterosexist constructs have blocked out for us. Although, it is hard to determine that deconstructing heteronormative reality is the only good answer to overcoming its implications right now, it is certainly one of the first necessary building blocks of personal and collective liberation from repressing narratives that coerce total existence into becoming a mere matter of coherent, identifiable "truths" that predispose us to the stifling effects of normative selfhood.

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