

Α Π Ε Ι Ρ Ο Ν

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APEIRON

Apeiron: [Gk. *απειρον*, *unlimited, indefinite, indeterminate*]

- n. 1. Name used by Anaximander to refer to ultimate reality; the unformed source of all that exists.
2. The *arche*, that is the beginning or principle of all things, the unlimited. (The term is capable of various constructions, depending upon how one understands the term 'unlimited'—indeterminate, unbounded, without form, without beginning or end, without internal limits.)
3. An undergraduate journal of philosophy for students of all majors at Washington College.

Foreword

With the publication of this seventh annual issue of *Apeiron*, we continue a tradition that was initiated by Professor Peter Weigel in 2003, and sustained by him for six straight years. The first six issues presented many very solid papers written by Washington College students on a broad variety of philosophical topics. While the authors of many of these papers were philosophy majors or minors, some of them majored in other disciplines. We note, too, that submissions of work with philosophical significance by Washington College students are always welcomed to be considered for publication in *Apeiron*—no matter what their major might be.

This current issue carries on the tradition that Peter Weigel started by presenting a series of five interesting, substantial, and provocative papers having to do with the *theme of identity* in one way or another.

First, Tessa Fox takes us on a lively whirlwind tour of the early sections of Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*. Among other things she focuses on the important epistemological notion of "perspectivity" in Nietzsche's thought; and she brings out the various ways that Nietzsche confronts many of the idols of the Western tribe that have shaped the very identity of most/many of us. However, after her exposition of Nietzsche, she also goes on to critically engage him in telling ways.

Next Nicholas Larmore deals with the theme of identity by engaging aspects of "Locke's Views of the Self"—that is, John Locke who was so influential in shaping the foundations of Western political thought. Two of Locke's views of the self are examined: one that holds that "personal identity depends solely on continuity of consciousness"; and another that holds that our "sense of being a self. . .[is tied to our being] concerned for how we live."

In a way that resonates with Locke's second view of the self Lauren Jakubowicz proceeds in the third paper to address the currently "hot" issue of human stem cell research. While taking some account of both sides of the issue, she presents a sort of utilitarian argument in favor of human stem cell research that is based on the striking ambiguity of when personhood begins. Essentially she argues that the very real suffering of millions upon millions of suffering human beings, that might potentially be alleviated by medical advances based on human stem cell research, far outweighs the tenuous religious and empirically unprovable position that personhood begins at conception.

In a fascinating paper she calls "Queerativity and Gender Resistance," Jess Hobbs engages the theme: "Women are not born, they are made." This feminist insight allows one to see the oppositional "gender binary" of masculine and feminine as a social and metaphysical construct. After explaining the restrictive and ultimately oppressive metaphysical construction of "woman," Jess explores various modes of feminist resistance against the gender binary. She looks to queer theory and feminist theory, and also considers interviews with women who implement gender resistance in their everyday lives. She offers an analysis of feminist gender resistance as a deliberate and pragmatic strategy to undermine oppression founded upon the masculine/feminine binary.

Finally, Elizabeth Trout in her exciting paper explores "the new philosophy of science" as it is presented in Harold Brown's *Perception, Theory, and Commitment*. She explains a) how the new philosophy of science takes as its *primary data* the actual history of the sciences, their phases of development, and the transitions between them (scientific revolutions); and b) how this new philosophy of science strongly challenges the traditional empiricist understandings of science—especially positivism & logical empiricism.

Matthew McCabe
Kevin Brien

Introduction

In this, our seventh edition of *Apeiron*, we are proud to present a broad spectrum of topics, which are thought provoking and challenging. These essays contend both with issues that are currently important, as well as with other issues that, despite being hundreds of years old, still play important roles in our daily lives, and help provide a foundation for the ways in which we interact with the world.

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Cover Image: The Anaximander Dial Depiction,
Artist unknown, 3rd c. BC

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Exploring Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*

Tessa Fox

Nietzsche was an incendiary thinker whose thoughts on the state of humanity remain truly provocative and revolutionary. His tone is thrilling, and cannot fail to command a reader's attention; at times he is mocking, while at other times he has the power to give one chills with his impassioned sincerity. Those who undertake to grapple with his work may find that his words are so charged with connotation that it can be difficult to feel confident interpreting his meaning – and there is no doubt that certain of his opinions will be disconcerting for many readers to encounter. However, this does not in any way diminish the power of Nietzsche's work.

In his book *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche immediately sets himself apart from other philosophers in that he frequently stresses the importance of perspectivity, which he believes is inescapable, “that fundamental condition of all life.”¹ Philosophers such as Plato, he says, argue their claims as though they have knowledge of absolute truth,² as though they have independently discovered something divine and certain without any lapse into personal belief or prejudice.³ Nietzsche points out the folly of such a superior attitude – philosophers are, after all, only human beings.⁴ In fact, he says, most often a philosopher writes as an unwitting advocate for some personal theory, parsing out a logical support for it *after* he has already developed it; the philosopher then defends his argument tooth and nail, having decided it to be nothing but holy and true.⁵ To such “propagandists,”⁶ Nietzsche says, “there is probably more value for truth in every little question mark that you place at

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. and ed. Marion Faber (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1998), p. 4.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., p. 8.

⁴ Ibid., p. 3.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 8, 26.

⁶ Ibid., p. 26.

the end of your mottoes and favorite doctrines...”⁷ When all is said and done, no philosopher has ever been proven to have the “right” answer,⁸ and it may well be that there is no such thing.

The entire first section of *Beyond Good and Evil* is entitled “On the Prejudices of Philosophers,” and in it Nietzsche exposes the numerous hypocrisies of philosophers who fall into this trap, this loss of perspectivity, and cautions others against it.⁹ He believes that those who are willing to embrace perspectivity – who are skeptical even of the reality of their bodies – are strong-willed, and may gain much insight through their scorn of ready assumptions.¹⁰ They will not be so easily blinded by a misguided urge to defend ‘the truth.’ Nietzsche points out that above all, philosophical propositions reveal the disposition of their authors,¹¹ and that every person’s interpretation is just that – an interpretation.¹²

Philosophers like Plato wrote and spoke not as omniscient gods, to know what such a thing as The Truth might be. No – they wrote and spoke as men. There are only ever interpretations – and, as far as Nietzsche is concerned, so much the better.¹³ This last may help to explain why Nietzsche included perspectivity in a book of philosophy without any apparent worry that it would risk invalidating his viewpoint. He honestly believed that “there would be no life at all if not on the basis of perspectivist assessments and appearances.”¹⁴ Whatever the pretensions of other philosophers, he knew that truth does not exist as a monolith.¹⁵ Furthermore, his viewpoint was just that: *his* viewpoint; and whether or not others agreed with him was of little consequence to Nietzsche (his notion

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 11-12.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 8-9.

¹² Ibid., pp. 22-23.

¹³ Ibid., p. 23.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 35.

¹⁵ Ibid.

that ideas had no need to be particularly accessible is repeated several times in *Beyond Good and Evil* in various contexts).¹⁶

What follows from perspectivism is a necessary rejection – or at the very least a reevaluation – of absolute opposites. Non-perspectivist philosophers are very convinced of truth’s value, very concerned with finding truth, and *very* anxious to identify and avoid truth’s ‘opposite’: the false. Nietzsche, however, raises some doubt as to whether “there is an essential difference between ‘true’ and false’ in the first place.”¹⁷ To assume that a person could separate one from the other in this way; that there are no subtle shades and levels of distinction between truth and appearance; that truth is a good thing and appearance a wicked thing;¹⁸ to believe these things is to massively oversimplify the world. It is simple immaturity to categorize things so unconditionally, and Nietzsche calls the taste for the unconditional “the worst of all possible tastes”¹⁹ – after all, one cannot pretend to know life if one does not allow oneself to recognize or experience its gray areas, or if one imposes moral values on so-called opposites to condemn this side and elevate that other. Early on in this work Nietzsche even suggests that valued things may derive their value from their very *relation* to their scorned opposites, that perhaps they are connected – inseparable! – or even identical.²⁰

Nietzsche recognizes how shocking such a concept will be to many. Yes, although people may on some level acknowledge that the parts of life that are distressing to them have a natural place in life, most of those people would be rid of the distress if it were at all possible, if they only *could*. Those same people would be bothered to think of a link

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 40. “‘My judgment is *my* judgment: no one else has a right to it so easily.’”

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 35.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 34-35. “It is nothing but a moral prejudice to consider truth more valuable than appearance; it is, in fact, the most poorly proven assumption in the world.”

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 31.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 6.

between their ‘good’s and ‘bad’s, discomfited at the thought of their morality being tainted so.²¹ Nietzsche, on the other hand, theorizes that opposites may actually be a temporary *perspective*, mere “foreground evaluations”, and nothing more; opposites may be relevant and valid if one does not look deeply, but after a certain point they cease to have meaning.²² As a survival skill for organic creatures, the ability to distinguish between things and make judgments based on everyday distinctions is crucial.²³ However, Nietzsche maintains that this perception is only a useful fiction.²⁴ It is even possible that there are no absolute opposites in existence at all.²⁵

Nietzsche’s criticism also attacks the notion of ‘immediate certainties,’ or concepts that a philosopher claims to be inherently and obviously true ‘in themselves’ (such as Descartes’ argument that God exists because God must exist, or his statement that he is a thinking ‘I’). First, Nietzsche comments that we are likely incapable of grasping a ‘thing in itself’ with any kind of purity.²⁶ Second, he exposes all manner of very dubious presuppositions contained within (for example) the phrase “I think.” To name a few: that thinking requires a thinker, that there is an “I” to speak of, that one knows what thinking is.²⁷ The last is especially no immediate certainty, since one must refer to *prior knowledge*; for when one knows what thinking is, one must compare this knowledge with other past experiences of other states of being to determine if one is currently thinking or not, and how then could this be said to be an immediate certainty?²⁸ Met with such presuppositions, then, questions arise such as where those presuppositions came from, why one believes in them – and

²¹ Ibid., p. 23 and 35.

²² Ibid., p. 6.

²³ Ibid., p. 7.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 6.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 16.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 16-17.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 17.

one loses all credibility if one clings to one's argument but does not answer them.²⁹

Nietzsche himself suggests that a thought comes when *it* wants to, not when an "I" wants it to,³⁰ and expresses his amazement that philosophers "who [take] this world with all its space, time, form, movement, to be falsely *inferred*" still seem to have trust in their thought processes, that process of inference, to lead them to the truth of it all.³¹ In any case, Nietzsche states outright that faith in immediate certainties honors no philosopher, that such faith is "stupid" and "naïve" from more than one angle.³² He further states that philosophers may have a right, even a duty, to be exceptionally distrustful.³³ He hopes that as "I think" slowly dissolves into the somewhat more accurate "there is thinking" (which still perpetuates the grammatical error) people will eventually get used to doing without the "there," as they learned to do without the fictional indivisible atom.³⁴

On the subject of atoms and what it is well to live without: Nietzsche also believes that philosophers must fight against what he calls "atomistic need."³⁵ People crave a unifying, solid, eternal thing that will survive, whole and independent – very similar to the craving for absolute opposites, each side of the contradiction remaining distinct and pure, unsullied. This is atomistic need. However, like absolute opposites, this is a comfortable simplification of a complicated, dynamic world of interwoven forces.³⁶ Moreover, this mindset has produced the concept of an atomized soul – a thing Nietzsche deeply

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 18.

³¹ Ibid., p. 34.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 17-18.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 14.

³⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, ed. W. Kaufmann, trans. W. Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), p. 550.

disapproves of, the eternal and indestructible soul of the Christian mythology.³⁷ In casting aside the atomized soul, Nietzsche hopes that new ideas about the soul's nature – the idea of a mortal soul might be examined, for example – can be generated within a healthier environment for such investigation, namely the realm of science.³⁸

Nietzsche then turns his focus to another misconception: the existence of a 'free will.' He argues that it would be impossible for a person to act with a totally free will, when there are so many factors that influence one's life that are beyond one's control such as society, coincidence, one's family and ancestors, and all the world.³⁹ Similarly, an attitude of fatalism (or what he calls the 'unfree will') is also in error because it relies on a mistaken concretizing of cause and effect. Cause and effect, Nietzsche says (as well as the concepts of relativity, reciprocity, purpose, reason, law, succession, coercion), are fictional, human inventions.⁴⁰ As long as one speaks of them as such, all may be well, but when one imposes purpose and symbolism upon cause and effect, when one concretizes them, "we act once more as we have always done, that is, *mythologically*."⁴¹

Nietzsche says that those who cling to one mindset have as much of a problem as those who cling to the other, but for different reasons. Fatalists who see purpose in causality feel helpless against the forces of the world; by choice, indeed, because deep down they seek to avoid guilt or responsibility.⁴² On the other hand, those who insist upon their free will are simply arrogant, demanding all the credit and responsibility for themselves.⁴³ The act of willing itself is something Nietzsche

³⁷ Nietzsche, *Beyond*, p. 14.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.14-15.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

believes to be much more complicated than many philosophers have thought; there are *numerous* feelings and impulses involved in the process.⁴⁴

There is a feeling of what state one is moving to, and the state we are moving away from – required for this is also the basic sense of ‘to’ and ‘away.’ Then comes a feeling in the muscles as a habitual response, not consciously orchestrated. There is, too, both thinking and feeling involved – but also an emotion, a sense of superiority, an expectation of results from one’s command.⁴⁵ For, as Nietzsche explains, when one wills one is “commanding a Something in himself that obeys, or that he thinks is obeying.”⁴⁶ In other words, although one’s inner monologue may disguise the division of our consciousness, people unknowingly command themselves and then obey their own commands; and as they are unaware of this, they often make the mistake of believing that will necessitates an effect, that will and action are the same.⁴⁷ As a result, they attribute the satisfaction they feel when their will is carried out *to the will itself*, believing that the will has freedom, authority, in itself – and *this* is the origin of ‘free will’ as an idea.⁴⁸

The interplay of wills in an important concept for Nietzsche, and he forms an extraordinary hypothesis from an examination of the will. He begins with the presupposition that there is no form of reality (such as heaven or hell) outside our own, and that the world we know has the same amount of reality that our thoughts and instincts do.⁴⁹ What explanation is there, then for our material world? He says, “we must not assume that there are several sorts of causality until we have tested the possibility that one alone will suffice.”⁵⁰ The one

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 18.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 18-19.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 19.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 19.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 35.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 36.

that he tests is the causality of the will. A will, he says, can only have an effect on another will, and it cannot affect matter. If the causality of the will were the only causality, then whatever effects are observed would be the result of a will impacting another will; this, then, would be the source and sustenance of all life and all organic functions, this flow of energy.⁵¹ Nothing more would be necessary; this single causality, then, would suffice to explain the existence of the material world.

There would be no need for God to exist, in order for our world to exist and function. All the world would simply be this *will to power*, and that is all.⁵² Earlier on in *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche explains the will to power further. Most believe that a being's first instinct is to preserve itself, its species, its life; however, Nietzsche contends that this is not the case. Rather, a being needs most of all to release its strength, to express its creative energies – this is what the will to power is, and not necessarily (as some might mistake it to mean) seeking domination over other beings. Thus, self-preservation may be a consequence of expressing one's will to power, but it is not the goal itself.⁵³ It is implicit here that those who have the opportunity to express their will to power in life affirming ways will probably do so, while those deprived of that opportunity are likely to express that will perversely.

Examples of the will to power even have their manifestations within a religious context. The Christian saint, Nietzsche says, is one whose will to power is so formidable that it turns against itself, aggressively denying the expression of that person's natural inclinations. Those who honor saints are in fact captivated by their will to power; they are honoring

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p. 550. “*This world is the will to power – and nothing besides! And you yourselves are also this will to power – and nothing besides!*”

⁵³ Nietzsche, *Beyond*, p. 15.

the strength of this force that they recognize in themselves.⁵⁴ Of course, saints also inspire awe because of the miraculousness of a person, perhaps a ‘bad’ person, suddenly being able to transform into a holy person, a ‘good’ person. However, seeing as this perception relies on moral value oppositions, Nietzsche believes that such miracles are only interpretative mistakes, taking value extremes like ‘good’ and ‘bad’ for granted.⁵⁵ Nietzsche did not have a good opinion of Christianity, or of dogmatic religion. He opposed all such dogmatism as the saints’ ‘miracle,’ for he believed dogmatism to be a beginner’s mindset, a childish error.⁵⁶ Perhaps as a developmental step, an era of dogmatism was necessary – it inspired humans, and the struggle against it produced an energy that Nietzsche hopes can now be directed toward finding new ideas, new possibilities.⁵⁷ However, any Platonic ideal such as transcendental goodness is no longer plausible or relevant.⁵⁸

The title of *Beyond Good and Evil* seems to refer to recognizing clear-cut dogmatic moralities for what they are, and moving beyond the need for such absolutism. As he wrote, Nietzsche seemed to believe that the time of this transformation was drawing near.⁵⁹ And so much the better – for most of all, besides its inaccuracies and oversimplification, Nietzsche seemed to believe that religion was actively poisonous to human beings. He recognized that perhaps strong-willed individuals could make some use of it; for them religion becomes a way to rule, to learn the secrets of the obedient, and to set oneself apart from rude society if one wishes. Even for the ordinary people, who necessarily live harsh lives, religion provides some comfort and stability.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 48.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 46.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 3.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 3-4.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 3.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 6. “And to speak in all seriousness: I see these new philosophers coming.”

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 54-55.

Thus religion as a means for “education and breeding”⁶¹ might have merits – but the price is a great one, particularly when religion becomes an end to itself. Religion perpetuates the notion that one should love mankind “for the sake of God” – that human beings would have no value were it not for God.⁶²

Over history, humans have sacrificed to religion first their own lives, then their nature – their strongest instincts – and, finally, they sacrificed God Himself to religion, sacrificed “everything comforting, sacred, curative, all hope, all faith in hidden harmony, in future bliss and justice”, and proceeded to worship stone and nothingness.⁶³ This “self-directed cruelty”⁶⁴ is perhaps the worst atrocity of the religious disposition. Certainly, Nietzsche speaks passionately about still other crimes: the church’s refusal to recognize inequality among people, its striving to keep humans weak – to encourage and reward weakness and docility – so that it can perpetuate itself as a crutch to the frail and suffering.⁶⁵ But Nietzsche truly strikes home when he speaks of a certain deep damage, as those of the religious disposition “reverse all love for earthly things... into a hatred of the earth and the earthly”, and seem “set on making man into a sublime deformity”.⁶⁶ The self-hatred – indeed, the life-hatred – that Christianity instills in many of its followers is a horrifying corruption of human joy and expression.

Nietzsche’s eagerness for the new philosophers he expects is therefore understandable. The philosophers of the future, who have gone beyond good and evil; Nietzsche names them “the experimenters.”⁶⁷ These will not be the dogmatists we are so used to, and will not insist on ‘common goods’ – what

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 53-54.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 56-57.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

works for one person will not be valuable or work for everyone, and the proud philosophers of the future would rather be disagreed with than followed by unthinking sheep.⁶⁸ No, they believe that the ideas of higher thinkers are not suitable for common people, who will not understand because they lack the perspective.⁶⁹ They will instead prefer to leave “everything extraordinary to the extraordinary.”⁷⁰ They will be free spirits – not the kind “without solitude”, superficial, concerned with equality and the elimination of suffering (concepts Nietzsche finds laughable, particularly since they require the assumption that suffering is a ‘bad’ thing and can/should be eradicated).⁷¹

Instead, they will believe that hardships and struggles improve humanity as much as nurturing can do, if not more, and they will be grateful to distress.⁷² Furthermore, they will not be dependent on any one part of their natures, even on some virtue of theirs, or even attached to detachment; they will not depend on people, on pity, on science, on their country, nor love money, honors, fame.⁷³ They will have a responsibility to the overall development of humankind.⁷⁴ With the passing of time and the coming of these new philosophers, Nietzsche imagines that one day, to the expanded mind, concepts such as ‘God’ and ‘sin’ will seem dim and far off and trifling, and all our struggles with them will have been nothing but training for new sights and new conflicts.⁷⁵ Perhaps some of us will achieve this insight, and new cycles of learning and discovery and evolution will continue.

Nietzsche is absolutely fascinating. There is a great deal that I find beautiful and deeply perceptive in his philosophy –

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 40.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 30-31.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 40.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 40-41.

⁷² Ibid., p. 41-42.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 39.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 54.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 51.

and also much that I cannot abide, if I have a correct understanding of it. For instance, Nietzsche seems to believe that there is a type of person who is by nature inferior, who has a specific and necessary role in life and yet should earn little regard for it. These are “the ordinary people...the vast majority who exist to serve and be generally useful and must exist only to that end”.⁷⁶ I find Nietzsche’s arrogant analysis of these people to be intolerable and poorly founded. “Who exist to serve” – and who is this man, to claim to know the *why* of a human being’s existence? For what purpose does *anyone* exist? This question cannot be so blithely answered, and considering Nietzsche’s caution of immediate certainties I might almost be surprised at him.

To expand on the question: I would say that from the perspective of society, or outside individuals, my existence probably *means* something specific to those bodies; I exist to be a voter, I exist to perpetuate the economy as a consumer, I exist to learn from teachers and apply what I learn, I exist to support those around me. Well, these may or may not be things that I *do* – but are they my purpose? Do I really exist *for* these things, that without them my life should cease to have any meaning or value? It might be more accurate to say that people *have purposes for me*, should I happen or agree to fit into them, while I have my own purposes for myself, at least as far as I can determine my own course.

For from another perspective – my own – I might have any number of answers as to what my existence is good for. Is my perspective then invalidated if some member of society says, “What else you do is of no consequence; you exist to be a contributing member of this institution, and must exist *only to that end*”? It seems to me that it is hardly that person’s decision or definition that matters. Perhaps I am only quibbling with a translation, and by “who exist only to serve” Nietzsche specifically and exactly means “whose only use (in hierarchical society) is to serve”. Still, even then, the latter part

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 55.

of the sentence gives some reason to pause: “and *must* exist only to that end.” Must they indeed? Who, then, can make them do so? Who designed them to do so? Have these people no private lives whatsoever?

Equally unconvincing is Nietzsche’s stance that the harsh conditions of the lives of the ordinary are necessary, that class structures are necessary. I would argue that there is at least room for doubt on that subject. Certainly I will concede that not all people have the same capabilities; thus they are not all suited to the same tasks, and the variable personal needs of all are satisfied by different and varied philosophical constructs. Some people have weaker wills, some stronger. People are not “equal” in terms of their talents. However, social structure as we know it is an artificial thing based on an artificial measurement: namely, currency. Classes do not naturally form out of who is best suited for what kind of work. To illustrate how birth (a coincidental placement in one environment or another) may impact a person: people born into a lower class and therefore lack currency may be kept from getting an education, and so in some respects are actively restrained, *prevented* from developing certain of their potentials which might have flowered otherwise. Yet Nietzsche has the audacity to speak of “the odor of little people.”⁷⁷ It is true that whenever Nietzsche speaks of the “common man” he may not always be talking about the middle or lower class; in the previous paragraph he clearly was (alluding to the harshness of their lives would not make sense for a small-minded yet wealthy individual); he may be referring more directly to all those of the herd mentality, those who do not think independently. Even so, one can still extend respect to people by virtue of their existence, instead of making comments such as “do not go into churches if you want to breathe *clean* air.”⁷⁸

I would also question certain values Nietzsche praises and defends. I believe I understand why he defends them; he is a

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

lover of the exceptional, the elemental, the sublime (which explains his taste for the Old Testament⁷⁹), and does not want to see beautiful, unique things degrade into mediocrity. He knows further that there are some who do not appreciate these things, and believes that they should not be wasted on such people. “Anything that is common never has much value. In the end...the great things are left to the great, the abysses to the profound, tenderness and thrills to the sensitive...”⁸⁰ I am not offended by a taste for the exceptional, knowing it well myself; I am more puzzled by certain qualities he seems to associate with greatness. He accuses the Church of attacking “everything autonomous, manly, conquering, and imperious – all instincts which are natural to the highest and most successful type of ‘man’”.⁸¹

I am certain he must be thinking in terms of heroics — but still – conquering? imperious? The extreme emphasis on power in regard to what he considers the best human beings is interesting. In context, it makes sense because he is speaking in opposition to the Church’s encouragement of docility and tranquil obedience, and because to break free of the herd and find one’s own path requires a powerful mind and will. However, surely there are other instincts that belong to the best-formed human beings. Does he emphasize power in this way because he believes it is the foremost instinct of this kind? If so, I cannot say whether I agree or disagree – it might depend on what kind of power he means.

All told, although Nietzsche’s work is never *comfortable* to read, his writing is undeniably courageous, compelling, and inspiring.



⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 48-49.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 40.

⁸¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil / The Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Thomas Common (New York: Barnes & Noble Inc., 1996), p. 70.

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Locke's Views of the Self

Nicholas Larmore

The question undoubtedly plagues many of us on a regular basis. It is nothing new. *Who am I?* Clearly extending further than merely knowledge of one's name, this question, which focuses on our very essence, is the main concern in John Locke's chapter in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* entitled "Of Identity and Diversity." Perhaps the most famous of all empiricists, Locke lays much of the foundation for further work in the area of political theory by examining in this chapter the nature of the self, ultimately arriving at the basic conclusion that personal identity depends solely on continuity of consciousness.¹ While this may seem somewhat vague at the outset, I will attempt to demonstrate how he arrives at such a conclusion, and show that despite a few possible flaws the theory maintains its validity, especially in the context for which it was intended, that is the development of basic legal theory.

Locke's explanation of what he holds "identity" to mean will be the first step in analyzing his approach. According to Locke, identity can be found by "considering [something] as existing at any determined time and place... [and comparing] it with itself existing at another time."² When we are able to look at a lot of different phenomena over time and see them as changes that a single object has undergone, we are assuming that that object has itself remained the same object, despite the changes. We are considering that object, insofar as it is supposedly the same, under what Locke calls our "idea" of a thing,³ and that is the respect in which the identity of that thing consists. Thus, in the example of an oak tree, even though all its material parts may change over time, it still counts as the

¹ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Ed. Roger Woolhouse (Penguin Classics. 1998), XXVII, 3.

² *Ibid.*, 1.

³ *Ibid.*

same oak tree if it “partakes of the same life.”⁴ “The same life” is the idea under which we conceive of the tree as being the same tree, despite the changes. This is true of all living beings, even ourselves insofar as we are biological entities or “men,” as Locke says.⁵ Someone counts as the same “man” or human being if, despite massive changes in the “particles of matter” in his body, it is the same life that continues through these changes.

But the identity over time of human beings, as biological entities, is not Locke’s primary concern. Instead, he gives far more attention to the identity of persons, as his main goal in the work is to develop suitable groundwork for his political theories. Therefore, in an effort to apply this theory of identity to people, he must begin by saying what it is to be a person; only then can he show what it is to be the same person over time. Locke rightly realizes that there is much more to being a person than merely having a living physical body. We are not persons simply insofar as we are biological beings. We are persons insofar as we are selves, and Locke defines being a “self” as a matter of being conscious of oneself: “When we see, hear, taste, feel, meditate, or will anything, we know that we do so. Thus it is always as to our present sensations and perceptions. And by this, everyone is to himself that which he calls self.”⁶

The fact that we are beings with a consciousness of ourselves – the fact that we are selves – seems to be separate from the fact that we have a physical body, or so Locke sees it. For instance, if one were to lose a finger in a tragic accident, understandably great trauma would undoubtedly affect the individual, but the “thinking being” inside would not have been diminished by the loss. Locke mentions several cases like this, thereby revealing his dualist beliefs. That is why he

⁴ Ibid., 4.

⁵ Ibid., 6.

⁶ Ibid., 9.

distinguishes between that “thinking being” – the person, or “self”—and the living physical body – the “man”.

By “man”, Locke refers to us as members of a certain biological species, as “human beings”. Person, on the other hand, he holds to be synonymous with our conscious being, insofar as we are conscious or aware of ourselves and of our various thoughts and feelings: “a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection.”⁷ Our consciousness and our being alive as biological beings are most certainly linked in some fashion. But since it is consciousness, what makes us thinking beings, that seems to be the most individual characteristic we possess, it is not hard to understand why Locke chooses to put so much emphasis on consciousness in order to determine the identity of the self. Since “it the same consciousness that makes a man himself to himself, personal identity [therefore] depends on that only”.⁸

Once he has determined that consciousness is the defining characteristic of the self, Locke can go on to apply his general conception of identity to this particular case. What is it to be the same self or person, despite the different thoughts and feelings one has over time? Locke’s answer is that since it is “by the consciousness it [the person] has of its present thoughts and actions, that it is *self to itself* now, so it will be the same self, as far as the same consciousness can extend to actions past or to come.”⁹ In other words, one is the same person only so far as, or to the extent that, one can consistently recall certain thoughts or actions as thoughts or actions that one has oneself produced. Locke tells a kind of science-fiction story to illustrate his point. If “the soul of a prince, carrying with it the consciousness of the prince’s past life”, were put into the living body of a cobbler, in place of the cobbler’s consciousness, then, says Locke, this cobbler would then be *the same person* as the prince, though not of course *the same*

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 10.

⁹ Ibid.

man, since the life in that body has remained unchanged, even if the consciousness has not.¹⁰

Needless to say, now that we see the basic shape of Locke's theory of personal identity, we can begin to see where the potential problems arise. Memory, as many undoubtedly are aware, is not a perfectly reliable ability. Quite often people can forget what they thought or did even as little as fifteen minutes prior. Does this mean that thoughts and actions that other people can have absolutely certain evidence to think were ours, but that we have forgotten, cannot really be said to be ours? That seems absurd. In fact, Locke acknowledges the limitations of memory. He says that "in all these cases, our consciousness being interrupted...doubts are raised whether we are the same thinking thing." But his reply to this objection is not very convincing. In cases where memory is only temporarily faulty, he says that going on to remember correctly what we thought or did reestablishes our personal identity with those events.

And "if I wholly lose the memory of some parts of my life", that is – if I forget them forever, then according to Locke those thoughts and actions can no longer be attributed to the person I now am, though they can be attributed to the man or human being that I am, since they were produced by the same living being that is me.¹¹ However, this reply does not work. If I have forgotten forever that I thought or did something, then there is some *knowledge of myself* that I now lack. To forget means to no longer know what one once knew. Moreover, the knowledge I have lost is not knowledge of some other self that happened to have inhabited my body at an earlier date. The knowledge that I lack, by virtue of having forgotten some earlier thought or action, is knowledge of the self that is me.

There remain some other difficult issues that confront Locke's theory of personal identity. If one agrees with

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 20.

Locke's argument for consciousness as the distinguishing feature of personal identity, then one must scrutinize how he proposes one should define the nature of the very person or self which is presumed to be identical over time. In his definition of personhood, he defines a person not only as a thinking being capable of reason and reflection, but as a thing which "can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing, in different times and places; which it does only by that consciousness which is inseparable from thinking...it being impossible for anyone to perceive without *perceiving* that he does perceive."¹² Charles Larmore, in his review of Jerrold Siegel's *Thought and Experience in Western Europe since the Seventeenth Century*, accurately notes a certain "ambiguity surrounding the exact way in which we must always be conscious of ourselves."¹³

Larmore, while largely in support of Locke's theory regarding the self, demonstrates that Locke's claim that it is impossible to perceive without perceiving that one is perceiving is problematic since "we do not literally perceive our own thinking, as though we had a third eye in addition to the other two we use to perceive the external world."¹⁴ Since our ideas are within us, it seems impossible to perceive them in the same way that we would a regular physical object in the external world. Perception as used in this context by Locke is really just a metaphor. Besides, we have plenty of unconscious thoughts, thoughts that we do not know that we have, and still these thoughts belong to our self. So it does not seem plausible to say that our self consists in our consciousness of ourselves.

But Larmore in his article points out another aspect of Locke's views on the self that is more promising. In certain passages Locke departs from the above definition of the self

¹² Ibid., 9.

¹³ Charles Larmore, "The Thinking Thing," *The New Republic*, June 19, 2006, 38.

¹⁴ Ibid.

and describes the relation to ourselves in virtue of which we are selves as “not a matter of knowledge so much as of accountability.”¹⁵ That is, while Locke sometimes defines being a self as being conscious or aware of oneself, he says in other passages that a self is essentially “concerned for itself.”¹⁶ As previously mentioned, the goal of Locke’s work on the self is to lay the groundwork for his political theory. This goal is better served by Locke’s second definition of the self, which is that we are selves, not so much by virtue of perceiving our own thinking, but by virtue of being concerned for ourselves.

For we are members of a political community and can assert the right to have the government respect our pursuit of our own happiness, as Locke maintains, primarily because we have an interest in our own welfare. The sense of being a self that matters from a political point of view is not so much that we perceive our own thinking, but rather that we are concerned for how we live. This second definition of the self also goes together better with Locke’s final characterization of the self: “*Person*, as I take it, is the name for this *self*. Wherever a man finds what he calls *himself*, there I think another may say is the *same person*. It is a forensic term, appropriating actions and their merit, and so belongs only to intelligent agents, capable of a law, and happiness and misery.”¹⁷ As he writes earlier in his chapter on personal identity, “in this personal identity is founded all the right and justice of reward and punishment; happiness and misery being that which every one is concerned with for himself.”¹⁸

When considering a legal context, one might object to Locke’s theory of the self in terms of consciousness and memory that there are guilty individuals who have committed crimes of which they have no recollection. On the surface, it may seem that by Locke’s definition of the self such people

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁶ Locke, XXVII, 17 & 25.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

might be correct to claim that “they were not themselves” when they committed the crimes, and thus are innocent. However, it is important to remember that despite Locke’s great emphasis on consciousness, he does not dismiss the value of the physical “man” altogether. It is probable that if Locke were addressing such cases, he would respond that despite the “person” inside the man having no recollection of having committed a crime, the man still committed the crime and is to be punished accordingly.

Locke has therefore a very complex understanding of the sort of being that we are. He operates with two different notions of the self or person, and he also rigorously distinguishes between the self and the man or human being. This complexity in his views allows him to account for a great variety of phenomena having to do with human existence.



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**The Ends Justify the Means:
Human Embryonic Stem Cell Research
&
The Promising Future for Juvenile Type-1 Diabetes**

Lauren Jakubowicz

I. Introduction: *hESC* and Juvenile Type-1 Diabetes

Though it is true of many fields, the minute any conversation moves to the mention of “life” and the “creation and/or destruction” thereof, ethical issues become the focus of conversation. Ethics deals with a wide range of what could be referred to as “grey” areas, and contains many rhetorical, unanswered questions lingering in its background. But, in a conversation such as this, everyone uses their intuitions and opinions to form a position. Concerning embryonic stem cell research, the question that we face takes a familiar form: does the end justify the means?

When we take a look at human embryonic stem cell research (*hESC*), the goal that scientists hope to achieve is one that would end much of human suffering as we know it. Where is the controversy in that, right? Well, the “means” is the controversy! *hESC* uses donated human embryos that will never enter a uterus—all at the direction and discretion of the donors. One now must ask: Can we accept this life saving donation? Aristotle and Socrates were not presented with ends such as these, and therefore provide little direct guidance. Scientists in a lab cannot definitively tell us that a human embryo is, in fact, a living person, and therefore that destroying it would be murder. It seems that we are left to decide with our own intuitions about genuine morality.

The only data that we can apply our moral code to, though, come from the trials, tests, and physical proof that scientists have performed in laboratories. Shortly after the 1998 discovery of ways to nurture embryonic stem cells in the laboratory, the Director of the National Institutes of Health, Harold Varmus, M. D., described the promise of this frontier in testimony before Congress.¹ But, what people did not know is the extraordinary ability that cells taken from the embryo have. *hESC* possesses the attribute of *pluripotency*, which is simply the capability of issuing in any cell type except the placenta.² In contrast, an adult or developed human being possesses cells that are only capable of what they now do (muscle cells for muscle contraction, skin cells for UV protection, etc.).

The promise that these human embryos have is immeasurable, but one must decide how “they” should be treated—and if one can even call them “they.” Does a human embryo have “personhood”? Would research and experimentation be defined as murder? Would the sacrifice of one human embryo, arguably a potential life, be worth saving hundreds and possibly millions of others? Ultimately, religious views play an enormous role in the use of human embryos, but for now one must remain steady and impartial in determining whether or not the ends are worth the means.

One of the diseases and ailments that *hESC* has the possibility of curing is juvenile Type 1 diabetes. Type-1 diabetes is an autoimmune disease that occurs when cells of one type attack other cells in the pancreas that are needed to produce insulin. Without the capacity to make adequate amounts of insulin, the body is not able to

¹ Louis Guenin. “The Ethics of Human Embryonic Stem Cell Research”. *International Society for Stem Cell Research*, 2 February 2005, <http://www.isscr.org/public/ethics.htm>, 1.

² Ibid.

metabolize blood glucose and to use it efficiently for energy. Insulin is a hormone that is needed to convert sugar (glucose), starches, and other food into energy needed for daily life.³ The "Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation International" has done extensive research into the relation between juvenile Type-1 diabetes and the possible cure hidden in embryonic stem cell research. Stem cells that are derived from in vitro fertilization (IVF) have the unparalleled capacity to become any type of cell, tissue, or organ as they mature and develop, yet it is not possible for the stem cells to develop into a full human being. Scientists do not know why these cells alone have this ability, but they do know that they hold an incredible promise for the medical community—they can form any cell type in the human body. They are able to replicate themselves while remaining in an immature or “undifferentiated” state, thus offering a potentially unlimited source of cells for organ transplantation, as well as providing a model system for drug discovery and the study of human development.⁴ The JDRF entirely supports the study of *hESC*, even at the early stages it is in right now; as they say, such study “appears to offer great promise to quicken the pace of discovery for a cure for diabetes.”⁵

The question then turns to “How?” How are these stem cells derived from human embryos able to help people suffering from Type-1 diabetes? Well, one of the most hopeful ways of curing diabetes is to physically restore the function of what are called “islet cells.” These cells are the ones which basically produce the insulin in a person’s pancreas. Currently, there are two procedures that can be

³ American Diabetes Association. “Type 1 Diabetes.” *American Diabetes Association*. <http://www.diabetes.org/type-1-diabetes.jsp>, 1.

⁴ Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation International. “Stem Cell Research Answers and Questions.” *Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation International*, <http://www.jdrf.org/index.php>.

⁵ *Ibid.*

performed to replace these cells after they have completely stopped working; but both are quite unsuccessful and can cause even more damage than having diabetes in the first place. In both cases the body's autoimmune system responds and attacks the islets after transplantation, and most of the time anti-rejection medications fail. But, this problem could be entirely solved with implanted human stem cells because stem cells are primordial, all-purpose, cells from which all tissues of the body develop; it may be possible to genetically alter them too so that they will not be susceptible to an immune attack.⁶ Many may ask why not just stem cells from an adult, or even a child? The problem that is faced is once a human starts to develop cells divide into specific functions and are only able to do those things. There are several approaches now in human clinical trials that utilize adult stem cells, but ultimately these cells do not have the same capacity to multiply in culture as those obtained from fertilized egg sources.⁷ After analyzing just this surface research, it is fair to say that human embryonic stem cell research has the most potential of curing juvenile Type-1 diabetes.

This paper will explore the research, ethical issues, and concrete evidence that justify the use of human embryonic stem cells. The views of philosophers including Don Marquis and Katrien Devolder will be presented, analyzed, and will ultimately justify the use of embryonic stem cell research for the purpose of treating and eventually curing juvenile Type 1 diabetes. The philosophical research and opinions will be subsequently supported by peer-reviewed and renowned scientific research and medical trials. In this case, one can plausibly argue that the ends justify the means.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

II. The Ethical and Legal Aspects of *hESC* Research

There are many, wide-ranging opinions on *hESC*, including from one of the most influential persons in America—that of former President George W. Bush. The powerful position he had, and his almost immediate ban on funding for virtually all *hESC* research, left scientists and diabetics in a bit of a twilight zone in the ways of cures and treatments. In a 2001 speech, Bush acknowledged the wide-ranging disagreements about *hESC* research. He concluded, though, that he believes embryos, being “human life,” are “a sacred gift from our Creator” and thinks “embryonic stem cell research is at the leading edge of a series of moral hazards.”⁸ An influence such as this has been a critical obstacle in current research; and in passing we note that this brings religion into the political arena of a nation that established a separation of church and state 200 years ago. In a current event update, President Obama may have abolished contentious Bush-era restraints on federal funding of stem cell research on March 9, 2009, but a legislative obstacle still remains. President Barack Obama signed last week’s appropriations bill, and kept the Dickey-Wicker Amendment. Under this law, federal funding may not be used to create or destroy human embryos, but may be used for embryonic research done using stem cells gathered from embryos destroyed elsewhere.⁹

Staying in the political sphere, individual states began debates about what the benefits and dangers of the *hESC* research were, and what funding they might be able to provide. New Jersey, California, Connecticut, Maryland,

⁸ Laura Grabel & Lori Gruen. “Introduction: Ethics and Stem Cell Research,” *Metaphilosophy*, vol. 38, nos. 2–3 (April 2007): 2.

⁹ FOX News. “Obama’s Stem Cell Policy Hasn’t Reversed Legislative Restrictions.” 14 March 2009.
<<http://www.foxnews.com/politics/first100days/2009/03/14/obamas-approval-stem-cell-research-needs-congressional-action/>>

and Illinois have since allocated state funds for *hESC* research, and candidates even won elections on pro-stem cell research platforms during the 2006 mid-term elections.¹⁰ While *hESC* does significantly complicate social, political, ethical, and religious issues, the most important part requires developed communication on the scientist's parts so that politicians, and more importantly, everyday people, understand the great importance of what they are doing. Scientists working together with philosophers are in prime positions to help shape social perceptions about the direction in which we are headed, to help manage social fears and expectations, and to build public confidence.

Unfortunately, there is too little evidence that this is happening, which may not only slow scientific progress but also contribute to a climate of uncertainty about *hESC* research.¹¹ Among the many philosophical opinions concerning *hESC*, those of Don Marquis, Russell Blackford, Katrien Devolder, James M. Humber, and Robert F. Almeder are the basis for my research and comparative opinions in this paper. Their positions on the topic range from exceptionally conservative to very liberal, but each author brings incredible light upon human embryonic stem cell research and the morality behind the issue. The most obvious argument against *hESC* research revolves around the same issue as abortion—that is whether, at the very moment of conception, there is already a human being with rights just like any other adult human being?

Don Marquis explores the rights of a human embryo and what he calls the "moral-principle objection" to *hESC* research. The moral-principle objection is simplified into this: (1) obtaining *hESCs* involves intentionally destroying a human embryo, and (2) obtaining *hESCs* for medical research is wrong, therefore (3) it is wrong to end a human

¹⁰ Laura Grabel & Lori Gruen, 2.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 3.

life in order to pursue the ends of medical research, no matter how valuable that research. In his essay the term “embryo” refers to the precursor of an adult human being from the time of fertilization to the time of implantation.¹² Marquis clearly admits that such medical advances seem to be the best hope, at least in the long run, for people afflicted with pathologies that now resist cure or effective treatment and even cites Type-1 diabetes as an example: “[T]reating a patient who suffers from Type-1 diabetes by replacing his destroyed insulin-producing cells with normal insulin-producing cells could be better than the blood-sugar monitoring and the insulin injections that are essential parts of the lives of diabetics.”¹³

Marquis does an excellent job of exploring all possible objections to the moral-principle objection, ranging the political spectrum from left to right wing advocates. The claim by many religious conservatives that *hESCs* are “alive” is supported by the statement that the cells could not multiply unless they were alive. But, opponents do not find this argument convincing since *hESCs* can be obtained from frozen embryos. A frozen embryo does not exhibit signs of life, and therefore, some will claim that it is hard to believe it is alive.¹⁴ But, once the embryos are in the right conditions they will once again begin to function with “life” so that attempt is quickly thwarted. Marquis brings up cancer cells that could be present in an embryo. When we extract them and put them in a culture and watch them replicate, it is not considered morally wrong to kill them. It follows that the premise in the moral-principle objection, that says that intentionally destroying an embryo is always wrong, is therefore false.

¹² Don Marquis. “The moral-principle objection to human embryonic stem cell research.” *Metaphilosophy* vol. 38, nos. 2-3, (April 2007.): 190-206.

¹³ *Ibid*, 190-206.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 190-206.

For Marquis this is too quick a solution, and we must look deeper into the moral problem at hand. After a few more quick-to-end arguments, we are faced with a “future-of-value” argument. As the claim goes, “it is wrong to kill virtually all the human beings with whom we are acquainted because they have futures of value, that is, that killing them deprives them of the good things that they would have experienced had they not been killed.”¹⁵ Marquis places the embryo in the “future-of-value” position and pulls the reader directly into the moral question. If you were to suppose that you (as the reader sitting there) can trace back your existence to the time when you were a zygote, and that “you had a future (very much!) like yours and therefore a future such that it would have victimized you as much to kill you when you were an embryo as it would be to kill you now.”¹⁶ This is a very profound statement and could clearly pull at the heartstrings of any individual. Yet, it still seems that something is missing in the argument. The basis of the argument still relies upon the fact that one considers an embryo a human being, and thus that *you* had full personhood, from the moment of conception. For the objections that do not consider an embryo a human being, Marquis’ argument has no substance and can, therefore, just be entirely ignored.

Russell Blackford refutes Marquis’ argument with an interesting thought experiment. He presents an account of how moral traditions would develop on two possible worlds that are somewhat distant from ours in the space of possibilities, though surprisingly like our own in their inhabitants’ moral attitudes. Both worlds are populated by human beings very like us, with similar reasons to value and fear certain things. Like us, they are now embroiled in

¹⁵ Ibid, 190-206.

¹⁶ Ibid, 190-206.

controversies about stem cell research.¹⁷ In this way the reader can step back from all previous moral standings and see why some moral traditions that are presented are justified.

For the sake of the reader, and the sheer confusion that would surely follow after the specifics of Blackford's sci-fi thought experiment, it seems much easier to apply the scenario to real world terms. The thought experiment simply presents two distant worlds identified as Ovoid World One, and Ovoid World Two. The women in both worlds give birth to "babies" in a process much like that of a hen, and nurture and care for these babies to help them grow. The distinguishing difference between the worlds, though, is the innate emotional attachment that people of Ovoid World One have towards the "babies." Blackford's argument here is trying to show how people have an emotional connection to a child due to the symbolic value a child possesses in society. All the cultures of Ovoid World One perceive Ovoids as having enormous significance and value. Ovoid World Two, in contrast, is ruled much like that of the "nurture" concept, that people learn to care for these small beings because that is what they need to grow and achieve a "future-like-ours." In this world the most effective methods for looking after Ovoids were found by experience, since they were not instinctive, but the basics were worked out long in the past, hundreds of years ago. In all cultures on Ovoid World Two, parents love their Ovoids, and destroying someone's newly laid Ovoid is regarded as an almost unspeakable act. As on Ovoid World One, no serious thinker has ever proposed that human beings would do better to disown and suppress their pro-Ovoid attitudes. On that much, there is overwhelming inter-subjective and inter-cultural agreement.

¹⁷ Russell Blackford. "Stem cell research on other worlds, or why embryos do not have a right to life," *Journal of Medical Ethics: The Journal of the Institute of Medical Ethics*, vol 32, no. 3 (March 2006): 177-180.

For whatever exact combination of reasons, we are immediately moved by strong emotions when we hear, or read, of acts in which babies are murdered or treated cruelly. When we feel such emotions, however, it is not because we think automatically of the violation of “future-like-ours rights” that babies share with other “potential persons”, such as embryos. Most of the article concerns the relationship between mothers and their babies, and what the death of an infant, the breakage of that bond, can do to someone. This explanation is there to benefit the embryonic “life” supporters, but Blackford quickly stifles that by stating how this is all remote from our relationship to early embryos produced in vitro for use in scientific research.¹⁸

As Blackford states, unlike a baby an early embryo has not developed a nervous system, and it cannot feel terror or pain. Thus the alleged wrongfulness of a scientist’s conduct in destroying it, or discarding it, cannot consist in inflicting upon an entity something that it feared. It is difficult to identify any harm that should be recognized as morally impermissible. The predicament of an embryo that has been created for stem cell research may be contrasted with that of an adult human being who has been diagnosed with cancer, and fears the rapid approach of death.¹⁹ A prognosis of looming death from cancer is dreadful, but a proposal to remove an early embryo is nothing of the sort. Once we are *born* and begin to become part of a society, we soon then have a “future-like-ours.” Blackford soundly points out that the early embryo is marked for destruction. It does not fear death; it is incapable of planning books, of identifying with political causes, or falling in love.²⁰ An embryo has no wants, no want for a “future-like-ours.” No one can communicate what it is like to be an early embryo, and if “death” of the embryo does occur, it cannot be compared to a human adult, or even an infant.

¹⁸ Ibid, 177-180.

¹⁹ Ibid, 177-180.

²⁰ Ibid, 177-180.

Simply stated—we should not think of early embryos as having rights. There is no rational justification for thinking of them in the emotionally charged and culturally rich ways that we inevitably think of babies and young children.²¹ Stem cell research should be approved and funded, because our population has every reason to discover new, effective therapies, and no good reason to attribute a right to life to insentient entities at a very early stage of development. Moral weight should not be placed on that kind of “misfortune”—the death of an embryo. Certainly, one cannot attempt to sit here and state that the interests of an embryo outweigh those of adults and children suffering from lifelong diseases and afflictions—such as juvenile Type 1 diabetes. The ultimate fact of the matter is that the lives, wellbeing, and hopes for the future of adults and children depend crucially on the development of new medical therapies through *hESC*.

Even scientists recognize the ethical objections that arise. John A. Robertson in *Nature* magazine states that when stem cells are obtained from pre-implantation human embryos, ethical objections come to light. This is because it does require the destruction of the embryos to obtain those cells. Robertson recognizes that the conflict between these positions might ultimately be irresolvable, but he does state that two sets of distinctions are helpful to negotiate the terrain between them: symbolic versus rights issues.²² An important distinction in this ethical and legal debate is whether objections to *hESC* research rest on alleged rights or instead just on symbolic grounds. Robertson also recognizes people that might have a more middle view than the two extremes previously mentioned. Many people that reject the view that an embryo is a person may believe that the embryo is different from ordinary human tissue because of the unique potential it has to develop into a

²¹ *Ibid*, 177-180.

²² John A. Robertson. “Human embryonic stem cell research: ethical and legal issues,” *Nature Reviews Genetics*, no 2, (January 2001) 74-78.

new human being.²³ This view is how someone defines the “symbolic” meaning of an embryo—it’s all in the potential. The distinction between rights and symbols explains many of the laws that exist in countries that permit embryo research. Robertson is a bioethics law professor at the University of Texas, and after massive research and analyzing of ethical issues he concludes that because of the pre-implantation embryo’s elementary state of development, removing embryonic stem cells from the inner cell mass does not wrong them, and so should be permitted. Ultimately, the question of the ethical acceptability of creating embryos solely for research or for therapeutic purposes clearly implicates symbolic rather than substantive moral concerns.²⁴ This argument is ultimately not forceful enough to justify avoiding *hESC*. One cannot rely upon the symbolic meaning of an object. Humans mediate their environment almost totally through symbolic means and the meaning of a symbol simply grows out of interaction. The meanings may be agreed upon but are mutable and arbitrary. For example, the U.S. flag may be a symbol of patriotism, for some, and a symbol of oppression for others. Symbols allow for the creation of abstract concepts which have no existence whatsoever outside of collective thought, that is, no existence outside of our thinking about them. If one rejects the view that embryos have interests or are the subjects of moral duties, then using them for research or for therapeutic purposes does no further harm.

III. What Tangible Research Has Proven

One of the first recent success stories of *hESC* “curing” juvenile Type-1 diabetes was featured in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, and a *New York Times* article (probably reaching a much wider audience). 15 young patients with newly diagnosed Type-1 diabetes were given medication to suppress their immune systems followed by transfusions of stem cells drawn from their own blood. The *JAMA* study

²³ Ibid, 74-78.

²⁴ Ibid, 74-78.

provides the first clinical evidence for the efficacy of stem cells in Type-1 diabetes.²⁵ Sufferers of the chronic condition, which normally emerges in childhood or early adulthood, have to inject themselves at least four times a day. This study did only show an improvement in 15 people, and *embryonic* stem cells were *not* used; but if they had been it would be next to impossible for the body to reject them. It would also make it a lot easier to obtain stem cells for a specific person, and the stem cell would then be able to accurately adapt to whatever part of the pancreas needed to be repaired. Even though federal funding is banned, select universities and private funding continue to provide money for research and breakthroughs throughout the United States.

But, the most promising research has actually come to surface two months ago in San Diego, CA. A new study by researchers at the stem cell engineering company Novacell, Inc. report that they managed to convert human embryonic stem cells into insulin-producing cells. They have generated islets of Langerhans cells from human embryonic stem cells. Islet cells are the cells responsible for producing insulin in the pancreas. While they are not fully functioning islet cells yet, this is a big step in the generation of tissue that may help combat juvenile diabetes in the future. This step is more than huge—it is life saving for many! There are many years of work between here and the therapeutic use of these cells, but the ability to take the cells through all of the developmental stages that a differentiating stem cell has to go through to become a functional islet cell is amazing.

In just these two trial studies and reports, one is able to see the ground-breaking steps this research is achieving. Even though researchers admit there will be at least a couple of years before the islet transplants (etc.) can be applied wide scale, it is still crucial that society understands the benefits that would be reaped, and the lives that would be saved. The

²⁵ David Rose. "Diabetics cured in stem-cell treatment advance," *The New York Times*, (11 April 2007).

empirically based facts call loudly for the moral and ethical issues to be resolved in a way that is fully mindful of such enormously significant research. People need to see that the ends are justifying the means in cases such as this.

IV. Conclusion: The Ends Justify the Means

The Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation currently supplies funds for research in over 12 countries, but this is just not enough. Without *hESC* doctors are limited to attempting transplants with islets derived from other sources, which includes a high bodily rejection rate, and faces severe shortage in the United States. This is why the research needs to be expanded, but without federal funding companies are awfully limited.

One must view both sides of the argument here, but it is hard to ignore overwhelmingly convincing argument of one. The "Principle of Utility" is the most convincing and concrete argument for *hESC*. This principle states that the moral rules are justified when they produce the most utility for the greatest amount of people. The worth of an action is solely determined by its contribution to overall utility in maximizing happiness or pleasure as summed among all persons. It is more easily described as advocating the generation of the greatest good for the greatest number of people.

When that brief overview of utilitarianism is applied to *hESC* and juvenile diabetes, it is quite easy to see the justification for *hESC* research. One embryo that would never be nurtured in a uterus could mean the cure for millions of suffering and dying people worldwide. This could be a partial end to human suffering. Now one must not sound like a Miss America candidate here, but how can *hESC* be denied when the ends will clearly be justified by the means in this sort of case. One can determine that the action of *hESC* research will definitely maximize utility, and therefore this should be established as a moral rule.

If a woman has IVF to conceive a child, and 20 years later still has her frozen embryos still sitting in a fertility clinic (cases like this have arisen), why should these just be thrown away? The woman should be given a right to donate them to research and help the progression of life saving research these embryos hold. One may try and say that the embryos have a “future-like-ours.” But should the possibility of a future like ours outweigh the possibility of saving the life of an already living, breathing, functioning human being? To defend that point of view would be incredibly hard, and simply does not make sense. This view is how someone defines the “symbolic” meaning of an embryo—it’s all in the potential.

The embryo research controversy is a good reminder of the symbolic nature of many bioethical debates. The troubling question of special respect for embryos has existed since the late 1970s, when the development of in vitro fertilization first made embryo research feasible.²⁶ The meaning and scope of this concept remain the central moral problematic in embryo research. If the embryo has no rights or interests, how can it be owed special respect? On the other hand, if the embryo is owed special respect, is it not then a holder of rights, including the right not to be the subject of research. The symbolic nature of embryo research disputes is a strong argument for pluralism in determining the tradeoff between research needs and symbolic commitments. In legal and practical terms, author John A. Robertson points out that a public agency spending taxpayer funds is obligated to show greater symbolic sensitivity, than an institution using private research funds. In that case individual Institutional Review Board members should, when the circumstances warrant, be free to find research with embryos acceptable that could not be federally funded. Such independent institutional judgments are an essential part of the channel of communication that will determine the role of symbolic concerns in embryo research.²⁷

²⁶ John A. Robertson, "Symbolic Issues in Embryo Research," *Hastings Center Report* 25, no. 1 (1995): 37-38.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 37-38.

Potential and symbolic value does not help people like my brother who has to receive multiple insulin shots daily to function. An embryo's state, when the stem cell research and procedures take place, is so basic and elementary that removing embryonic stem cells from the inner cell does not wrong them. An embryo has no feelings, no thoughts, it has nothing but potential—and that is just not enough to justify an unwillingness to address the greater good that is at hand.



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Queerativity and Gender Resistance

Jess Hobbs

Flight Attendant:

“Can I ask you something—are you a man or a woman?”

Riki Wilchins:

“Not always, but sometimes I think I am.”

As Simone de Beauvoir said, “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.”¹ The implications of such a deliberate construction of a nationally (and perhaps universally) recognized identity lead one to wonder the possible *intentions* behind such a construction. In trying to ascertain what exactly the metaphysical components of womanhood are, it is not difficult to become entangled in femininity, or what a woman *should* be, contrasted starkly with masculinity, what a woman should avoid. However, as Judith Butler notes:

If being a woman is one cultural interpretation of being female, and if that interpretation is in no way necessitated by being female, then it appears that the female body is the arbitrary locus of the gender ‘woman,’ and there is no reason to preclude the possibility of that body becoming the locus of other constructions of gender.²

Still, though, society superimposes the feminine as the only accepted mode of expression for women. The persistence of these subconscious methods of thinking in terms of archetypes points to the ongoing celebration of “the housewife” and “the alpha male” in our culture. “Feminine” and “masculine” have moved from the realm of adjectives into that of ideals. Women are chastised on contemporary make-over shows for “abandoning” their femininity; boys are bullied with terms

¹ Judith Butler. “Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir’s *Second Sex*.” In *Yale French Studies*, no. 72, pp. 35-49. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 35.

² Ibid.

such as “faggot” for demonstrating even a trace of effeminacy, and thus are cured of any gender bending before the adult intervention TLC so generously offers. Outward expressions of gender are consistently rewarded or punished, depending on its subscription to enforced “norms.” These rigid groupings intentionally subjugate women—the weakness and submissiveness expected of women works to make them passive objects in the public (and private) sphere which men navigate and control. Given these rigid categorizations and assigned gender expectations, is there a successful and significant means of subverting this form of patriarchal domination?

This issue is of momentous import to feminists. Gender has been used as a means of leverage for oppressing women throughout history, and it remains apparent that this concept is still alive and well today: “Binaries create the smallest possible hierarchy of one thing over another. They are not really about two things, but only one.”³ Indeed, the creation of an either/or category simultaneously implies good/bad categories; in the case of patriarchal institutions, males, and thus masculinity, are good, while women, and thus femininity, are bad. In order to abolish assigned gender roles and gender as a mechanism of control, gender itself must be dismantled. In resistance to this patriarchal construction, women must reach for attributes outside contemporary society’s expectations: strength, autonomy, decisiveness, power; in a word, gender non-normativity. In reality, “each person is multiple, nonfragmented, [and] embodied,”⁴ and it is this embodiment which traps a person in a singular identity, not only prohibiting personal expression but concurrently enforcing the stereotypes which buttress male ascendancy. Indeed, it is in the

³ Riki Wilchins, “Queerer Bodies.” In *Genderqueer: Voices from Beyond the Sexual Binary*. Eds. Joan Nestle, Clare Howell, and Riki Wilchins. (New York:, Alyson Books, 2002), 43.

⁴ Maria Lugones. “Purity, Impurity, and Separation.” In *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition Against Multiple Oppressions*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 127.

deconstructing, redefining, and queering of gender that feminists will find the most effective forms of resistance to what is the root of all patriarchal domination.

The “feminine” and the “masculine” have evolved over time. What began as harmless adjectives have become mutually exclusive opposites defined almost solely by the absence of the other. A binary was constructed in which “female” and “male” (the only two sexes Western culture as a whole recognizes) were placed at opposite ends of a spectrum and assigned the possibility of only two genders: feminine females and masculine males. This is where feminist resistance comes into play. In efforts to disrupt this gender binary, feminists can choose to diverge from conventional norms through the redefinition, reshaping, or complete rejection of the potential of their femininity. Indeed, traditional “femininity can be understood as a costume or as a mode of performance that somehow does not fit.”⁵ Femininity is not, in Western culture, the definitional exposition of commonalities among females; instead, it is a list of dictatorial expectations for the behavior of women. Traditional femininity—in other words, the circumstances of subordination—can be incredibly uncomfortable for feminists, whether by means of innate non-feminine, androgynous, or masculine tendencies, or feelings of oppression and coerced submissiveness associated with assimilating into patriarchy.

The transgression necessary is the willful violation of a dictated social order. The calculated effort to enforce and uphold gender functions are “the attempt at control exercised by those who possess both power and the categorical eye and who attempt to split everything impure, breaking it down in the pure elements (as in egg white and egg yolk) for the purpose of control.”⁶ Those who fall outside the binary are no longer

⁵ Yvonne Tasker. *Working Girls: Gender and Sexuality in Popular Cinema*. (Routledge, New York: 2002), 24.

⁶ Maria Lugones. “Purity, Impurity, and Separation,” 127.

within the realm of manipulation for the patriarchal tradition. As queer theorist Riki Wilchins asks:

Quick: What is the name for the identity we use to refer to the infertile woman? How about women who have XXY chromosomes? Women who are masculinized because they produce too much testosterone? Mothers who like wearing suits and ties to work? There are no such identities, because these are not bodies we want to track and control.⁷

Even modern vocabulary does not allow a succinct discussion of these women: they cannot be discussed as specific and unique individuals, but only women *with exceptions*—there is no term for biologically masculinized women, only women *lacking* the ability or potential for real femininity. The women are not regarded as such in the truest sense of the word, yet there is no substitute term for their particular mode of embodiment. This is only because they do not offer what is expected of them to patriarchal wants; instead, they are excommunicated to a space between the binary and ignored.

The assumption, unfortunately, is that expressions of gender non-normativity for women are linked inextricably to dyke culture and thus outside the realm of heterosexual feminist resistance. Whether this assumption is dictated by overt or subconscious homophobia is debatable; in any event, gender is seen as expendable to the lesbian community, which implies its innate significance to the heterosexual realm. This unfounded assumption is misleading. As queer media theorist Julia Erhart puts it, “queerness has more to do with performance and the figuration of the body than with the matter of object choice, that is, with what I would call sexual presentation rather than sexual *orientation*....Queerness could materialize regardless of the self-termed identity” of the actress.⁸ The embodiment of women is the crux of our

⁷ Riki Wilchins, “Queerer Bodies,” 43.

⁸ Julia Erhart. “Laura Mulvey Meets Catherine Tramell Meets the She-Man: Counter-History, Reclamation, and Incongruity in

oppression, not sexual orientation; “bodies bear an enormous weight of cultural meaning.”⁹ Again, a woman’s body is biologically female, not *feminine*: it is the use of the female body for non-feminine activity which arouses the type of discord necessary to unsettle oppressive structures.

One of the most overt forms of this queerative resistance is found in cross-dressing. Cross-dressing can be (and is more commonly) defined, for women, as wearing men’s clothing; unfortunately, even the use of language such as this plays into the ideas of privilege and prerogative. The idea of purchasing “men’s” clothing in the “men’s” department gives a sense of entitlement to men of their power proxied in their clothing. Indeed, this apparel—defined as “men’s” and culturally recognized as “masculine”—worn on the female body disrupts casual perceptions; i.e., women in traditionally masculine attire will inevitably receive a second glance, typically followed by whispered questions and confusion, even insults. Cross-dressing, too, can be born not out of desire to attain the masculine, but to reject the feminine; as one self-identified genderqueer woman said:

I dress this way because it is how I feel most comfortable. I do not enjoy tight, revealing clothing. To me it seems that such clothing is designed primarily for women to attract men. I do not want such attention and would rather have my curves hidden, my breasts compressed and to appear masculine.¹⁰

The obligatory nature of the gender binary in Western society leaves individuals with few choices. Once one has rejected a feminine persona, all options have been exhausted save one: masculine. However the desire for queering gender comes about, its effects are unquestionable:

Lesbian, Gay, and Queer Film and Media Criticism.” In *A Companion to Film Theory*. Eds. Toby Miller and Robert Stam. (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 1999), 175, 176.

⁹ Riki Wilchins, “Queerer Bodies,” 35.

¹⁰ Lillian Muir. Interview by author, written notes, telephone, 24 November 2008.

Subtly suggestive of transgression, of the erosion of boundaries rather than crass opposition to binary logic, the appeal of cross-dressing...can be further situated within 'queer theory,' with its characteristic delight in the gender-fuck and its passionate, political challenge to binary concepts of identity.¹¹

Indeed, the cross-dresser issues a direct, corporeal attack on the elusive gender binary in an inescapable manner. The existence of an express genderqueer woman is a confrontation to the preconceived (and remarkably unfounded) notions of the codependence of femininity and womanhood. This tension exists on both ends; on being mistaken for a man, one butch woman said: "I can feel society projecting their idea of what a proper woman should be onto me when they find out that I am not a man. Their intention is to make me feel uncomfortable expressing myself in nontraditional ways, and it works."¹² It cannot be emphasized strongly enough that the act of queering gender by women—at least in so much as this gender rebellion establishes itself as feminist resistance—is *not* an attempt to pass as a male. Instead, the goal of this queering is a deliberate, manual breakdown of the metaphysical building blocks of binarily opposed genders, forcing casual viewers to visually engage in a confusing boundlessness. As opposed to being mistaken for a man, another butch woman said, "Instead, I want to be recognized as a woman who dresses and acts in some masculine ways, with the idea that I am broadening people's idea of what a woman is, how women look, and what a woman can do."¹³ The deliberate queering of stereotypes is a means of expanding the possibilities of gender expression, not merely being lumped into the other pre-existing category.

When genderqueer women "mismatch" attire and physical bodies, hairstyles, colognes, and so forth, people are forced to

¹¹ Yvonne Tasker. *Working Girls*, 21.

¹² Kimberly Proctor. Interview by author, written notes, telephone, 24 November 2008.

¹³ Jennifer Ruby. Interview by author, written notes, telephone, 24 November 2008.

acknowledge a division splintering deeper than dichotomy. This proves a serious challenge to the long-instilled patriarchal concepts of “female” and “male.” As with any form of resistance, those enacting such blatant disregard for the supposed sanctity of correlating sex/gender propriety are often met with disdain, intolerance, and hatred: “Because [American] culture assumes that ‘woman’ and ‘man’ are exclusive opposites, the butch’s failure to follow prescribed gender norms means she is disqualified from the category ‘woman.’”¹⁴ And yet—though they sometimes may pass—they are certainly not regarded with the same respect and privilege as men. As *Bitch* writer Keely Savoie puts it:

The problem is that women who take on masculinity as part of their identity violate two key rules of pop culture: They don’t play to the male-friendly aesthetic of sexy, and, in taking on masculine characteristics, they assume more power than our society is willing to give them. They are not fuckable in either sense of the term.¹⁵

This is the most concise explanation of the issue: if women work to consciously prevent themselves from being objectified, demand respect and equality, and exert the kind of assertiveness and confidence atypical of women in the public sphere, patriarchal constructs are destroyed. It is not only the fact that women are asserting themselves as legitimate competition, as peers, and as superiors, but most importantly, that *they are women*: “Figures that manifest the traits of both sexes...destabilize the opposition between masculinity and femininity.”¹⁶ It is this fusion of the two acceptable sexes/

¹⁴ Sherrie A. Inness, *The Lesbian Menace: Ideology, Identity, and Representation of Lesbian Life*. (Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 191.

¹⁵ Keely Savoie, “Screen Butch Blues: The Celluloid Fate of Female Masculinity.” In *BITCHfest: Ten Years of Cultural Criticism From the Pages of Bitch Magazine*, eds. Lisa Jervis and Andi Zeisler. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006), 99.

¹⁶ Julia Erhart. “Laura Mulvey Meets Catherine Tramell Meets the She-Man,” 175.

genders, the bridging of the gap between the two things which society teaches lay at opposite poles, which defies the foundation of systematic, patriarchal subjugation of women.

This leads to an interesting but incredibly sensitive topic of feminist debate: the trans community. While the *transgender* community tends to embody almost precisely the ideals of this sort of resistance—and reworking of the genders to create a queer new reality—the *transsexual* community, who actually elect to undergo at least one form of major surgery in an attempt to overcome diagnosed gender dysphoria, remains controversial. Is this group undermining the feminist community’s queer efforts by reinforcing gender archetypes, or aiding the community by bringing to light a fuller spectrum of sex variances? In either case, there is a significant amount of tension, as Halberstam described. Unasked, one soft butch woman confessed:

After reviewing the literature on FTM [female-to-male] transitions, I have a problem with them. Essentially, when women transition to men, they abandon their roots as women and live lives as men, assuming the privileges of manhood. I think that this occurs because society has made it so impossible and embarrassing to be a butch woman. You are constantly told you are ugly and unlovable. I think that the amount of women transitioning to men has increased because it erases the social pressures of living a life of resistance. The transition may be difficult, but in the long run, fully transitioned transsexuals face less resistance than butch lesbians because they have the privilege of passing.¹⁷

A self-identified genderqueer woman shared similar sentiments:

I feel a sort of pressure to do that, to transition, to get top surgery and to take on that masculine identity...I don’t know, it’s weird...I feel like there’s a lot of hate between butch lesbians

¹⁷ Kimberly Proctor. Interview by author, written notes, telephone, 24 November 2008.

and FTMs, and I've never been put in that position, but, I kind of feel angry, too.¹⁸

This underlying resentment speaks to the harsh realities faced by butch women daily: staring, questions, pointing, laughter. Living outside the binary is a treacherous task, but also one that allows gender non-normative women to express themselves. This expression, proudly worn, works to undercut preconceived concepts about the supposed limitations of women and what exactly it means to *be* a woman. Existing as those who not only fell between the cracks of sex/gender expectation, but who reside contently there, articulates the desire and the need for a more flexible social order.

Alternative modes of resistance exist within a gender framework which do not necessarily overlap with express, external queering. Though taking on a (soft) butch/gender-queer identity is not desirable for those cisgender feminists, this does not put queerativity out of reach. Leslie Feinberg, for instance, author of *Transgender Warriors*, prefers to be addressed by the pronoun “hir.” While Feinberg is demonstrably genderqueer, the insistence of alternate vocabulary both points to the melding of binarily opposed gender opposites into everyday speech, as well as makes a point about hir refusal to assimilate into an unaccommodating system to those unable to visually process her resistance. Additionally, this queerativity is available for femme women as well. Because gender is not only a costume but also a performance, gender non-normative behavior for women—assertiveness, confidence, intelligence, appetite, and so forth—can be just as powerful. Coming from a more approachable source (the feminine female), this conduct allows those who may not have otherwise been exposed to express genderqueering a glimpse. There is no form of gender rebellion useless to feminist resistance.

¹⁸ Lillian Muir. Interview by author, written notes, telephone, 24 November 2008.

While there have admittedly not been any major shifts in the national discourse, this does not negate the local currency of such resistance. As one soft butch woman said, “I think that my gender [expression] has made my immediate family and some of my heterosexual friends change their perception of how men and women should construct their identities.”¹⁹ Another butch woman’s express objective is “to widen people’s understanding of what a woman is or can be, and by extension, to broaden what men can be.”²⁰ These changes take place on a local level. While butch women have gained significant ground in the media—Ellen Degeneres, Rachel Maddow, Dani Campbell—they are consistently feminized to some degree in order to be palatable for the general public. The only way for people to be exposed to a true range of gender identities, to see women truly embracing the alternative, the masculine, the queer, is in their neighborhood coffee shop, on the streets, or, most powerfully, in one of their family members. The only way to rationalize and legitimize the existence of butch, queer, and other gender-nontraditional women to otherwise unwilling participants in this type of gendered resistance is to introduce at an individual level the women who actively and expressly resist misogynistic constructs. In this way, the individual is given an identity, a face and a name, and those who resist feminist values are confronted with the fact that these women are human beings. With this inevitable humanization, the local value of resistance is significantly increased.

The construction by patriarchal institutions formally known as “gender” and the subsequent binary dichotomized by those same patriarchal mechanisms is the foundation for all sexism against which other oppressions buttress. While gender stereotypes are some of the most deeply rooted doctrines in Western society, they soon will not be the strongest. The

¹⁹ Kimberly Proctor. Interview by author, written notes, telephone, 24 November 2008.

²⁰ Jennifer Ruby. Interview by author, written notes, telephone, 24 November 2008.

queering of gender—that is, the reshaping, meshing, or attempted absence of gender—serves as a powerful tool in “the reworking of gender and the resistance to oppressive and abusive systems.”²¹ It is critical to analyze “how we function in a phallogocentric order so as to resist and reformulate that order,”²² and active gender queering—whether via costume, performance, or a combination of the two—serves as an invaluable tool in firm feminist resistance.



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Muir, Lillian. Interview by author, written notes, telephone, 24 November 2008. Quoted with permission.

²¹ Shameem Kabir, "Introduction: Desire, Dyke-Icons, Mothers and Other Matters." In *Daughters of Desire: Lesbian Representations in Film*. (Herdon, Virginia: Cassell, 1998), 8

²² *Ibid*, 4.

Proctor, Kimberly. Interview by author, written notes, telephone, 24 November 2008. Quoted with permission.

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***Perception, Theory, and Commitment:* An Analytical Exploration**

Elizabeth Trout

Science, as any child learns, takes root from facts and from those facts attempts to engender understanding regarding the world we observe around us every day. But a great deal more goes into the scientific process than the simple pursuit of truth via experimentation. Scientific knowledge employs theoretical models that involve a number of important factors, including: various preconceived notions of scientists, their philosophical presuppositions, sets of various paradigmatic observation statements, sets of laws, and an understanding of the processes of choosing between rival scientific theories, of scientific discovery and revolution, as well as various methodological tools. Even the ideas of truth and knowledge come into play, although not in their traditional sense. At first glance these things appear unconnected, perhaps even disjointed. However, all of these factors connect together on a deep level, and those connections motivate the entire scientific process. To understand how this occurs we will move first through a discussion of presuppositions, and use this idea as a jumping off point to discuss how all of these varied concepts interconnect.

Just as a house cannot be constructed without a foundation to rest upon, so the effect of presuppositions on the scientific community cannot be understood without first discussing the presuppositions themselves. While we certainly lack the space to discuss each individual scientific presupposition, as the list is indefinitely large, the broad concept can be easily understood. As Brown discusses in his work, *Perception, Theory, and Commitment*, each individual observes the world in a slightly different way.¹ While the process of “seeing” may

¹ Harold L. Brown, *Perception, Theory and Commitment: The New Philosophy of Science* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977).

remain the same for different observers, as does the retinal image of different observers (assuming they look at the same thing from the same angle, the same distance, etc.), the interpretation of that image differs, sometimes dramatically, from person to person. Moreover, Brown distinguishes mere "seeing" from what he calls "seeing as" in which what is seen is identified in some way, yielding what he calls "significant perception."² The root of differences in the significant perceptions of different observers lies in many things, not the least of which is our cultural and educational backgrounds. We all bring unique ideas and knowledge to a given situation, and these things influence the way we interpret those situations.³

Moreover, our presuppositions allow us to interpret such situations in the first place. This seems complicated at first, but an example might help clear up any lingering confusion. In this case the one used by Brown fits very well.⁴ Say a child and a scientist happen to walk down the same street, as a nearby factory emitted sulfur dioxide. Both individuals would notice the smell of rotten eggs, but the child would likely not understand what he or she smelled, and so could not interpret the information. The scientist on the other hand, with his or her preexisting lexicon of knowledge, would recognize the smell of sulfur and quickly deduce what had occurred. So, although two people observed, in this case smelled, exactly the same phenomena, it is only the scientist that really understands that phenomenon. Additionally, because of greater understanding, the scientist will be able to do more with the information obtained, thus giving his or her perception more value.⁵ For instance, the scientist might even go so far as to confront the factory about the emissions and bring an end to that particular factory's production of sulfur dioxide.

² Ibid., pp. 81-86.

³ Ibid., pp. 86-90.

⁴ Ibid., p. 83.

⁵ Ibid., p. 94.

This represents a very clear, albeit somewhat extreme, example. But the concept holds up even in less dramatic situations. If two scientists happened to walk down the street, say, for instance, a chemist and an environmentalist, they too would perceive different things. The chemist would smell the sulfur and understand the chemical formula, its production, and possibly even how to prevent that production. The environmentalist would perhaps be unaware, or less aware, of these things and focus instead on its impact on the atmosphere and the ecology of the area. In this case, both these observations have great value. But they do differ because of the prior knowledge of both individuals, and thus both individuals will apply the information they gain in different ways.

In fact, the way we use the data we gather may be the most important facet to the idea of differing sensory perceptions. Each individual uses their sensory perceptions to help them form thoughts, beliefs, and sometimes statements about the world around them. But we cannot do this based purely on the raw data we take in via sensory perception. Essentially, the information we thus receive must be funneled down into something that we can use to process reality. That funneling process would be impossible if our minds did not first strain out the information that it deemed to be irrelevant to the matter at hand.⁶ In a sense, we all already understand this process. For instance, the first time you hear a noise, you stop and notice it, but as it goes on it fades into the background, allowing us to pay attention to more relevant information. However, this filter forms part of the way that our presuppositions influence our sensory perceptions, as it is those preconceptions that decide what represents relevant information. Now, on the one hand, we need this filter, as the knowledge we carry with us allows us to identify objects and assign them meaning, thus processing reality. Essentially, we would be unable to do this without our preconceptions. Our interpretation of the world is

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 89-90.

concept-laden, but it really cannot be otherwise.⁷ Essentially, without our presuppositions to guide us, we would have no way to wade through the morass of our observations. The world would become a veritable deluge of sight, sound, touch and taste.

As essential as those presuppositions are to helping us to interpret the world around us, they can also stand in our way. As discussed before, those presuppositions influence the way we interpret the sensory perceptions we base our world on because they help us to filter the information. But what if they happen to filter out something vital? Even just one small fact that our preconceived notions might cause us to miss skews our interpretation of the world. Often we must actively seek out new phenomena to be researched. Moreover, once we do this, we must find out whether that new information meshes with our previous theories. In many cases, however, it does not. When this occurs, and our existing presuppositions cannot account for the phenomena we observe, we must alter our preconceptions in order to suit the new information.⁸ Thus the world at large, and the scientific community in particular, must constantly adjust and readjust their beliefs in order to learn more about the world.

Thus far, most of the discussion regarding preconceptions has concerned the population at large as well as scientists, but the construct applies to the scientific community in particular. Science is based on a series of preconceived notions known as 'paradigmatic presuppositions'. Essentially, these consist in philosophical and other sorts of presuppositions that work in unison to allow scientists to interpret raw data to generate information. They have a great deal in common with general presuppositions, but they go farther in that they exist as dimensions of specific scientific theories. Scientists use these paradigmatic presuppositions to determine how best to

⁷ Ibid., p. 85.

⁸ Ibid., p. 105.

research the phenomena they observe in the world.⁹ Then scientists use the information they got from their research to generate more paradigmatic presuppositions that help them to understand the world. Perhaps the best example of this lies in the idea of a geocentric universe. Scientists of the time used their observations of the night sky to come to the conclusion that the earth rested at the center of the universe. They made this concept available to the Western world at large and this influenced the thought process of an entire population of people. The ultimate switch to the heliocentric view of the universe shook the very foundations of science, as well as the general public.

The reason why this shift from a geocentric to heliocentric universe made such an impact on the scientific community, and the world at large, lies in the attachment scientists form to their presuppositions. Much like the general public, scientists will try to make any new information they have conform to the theories they already hold to be correct. However, as discussed, the observed phenomena do not always fit the existing presuppositions. Should this occur, scientists must be able to adapt those paradigmatic presuppositions to suit the new data. In some cases, they must be abandoned entirely and the scientists working with them should be prepared for this eventuality.¹⁰ The ability to change paradigms to suit new information represents one of the most important aspects of the scientific field.

Now, this by no means implies that each new observed fact or phenomena should lead to the abandonment of a theory that successfully guided scientists for years. Only the truly stubborn facts should generate new theory, and modify or eliminate preexisting concepts.¹¹ Thus all new data need not be treated as a potential threat to old theory. Rather, any new data or phenomena would be best treated as a research problem.

⁹ Ibid., p. 97.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 106.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 109.

Essentially, this means that before any alteration to prior theory can occur, the new data must be studied to ensure that it does not already fit with the working paradigms.¹² This takes dedicated work, as scientists must carefully check their data against all prior knowledge. But it also takes a certain flexibility on their part as well. People become attached to the knowledge they hold to be true, and the scientific community is no exception to this rule. The ability to abandon old paradigms takes a real dedication to the scientific field, especially because no scientific paradigm exists in a vacuum; they all form part of the theoretical web whereby all theories connect and build upon one another. Therefore, for one paradigm to change, many must change. Thus any paradigm shift dramatically alters the scientific community.

When this sort of paradigm shift occurs, the resulting alterations generate a scientific revolution, a vital dimension of scientific development. Brown characterizes such a revolution as "a fundamental change in the way we think about reality";¹³ and he employs a web metaphor to help us understand what is involved in a scientific theory. Thus he construes a scientific theory in terms of a theoretical web composed of various strands interconnected with one another by knots. The knots represent various scientific concepts, while the strands represent various scientific propositions stating scientific laws, paradigmatic presuppositions, paradigmatic observations statements, etc. In turn, a scientific revolution represents the dramatic alteration in the network of various 'knots' and 'strands' in the theoretical web.¹⁴

To illustrate this notion in a preliminary way, take the theory of global warming. This states that the earth has become increasingly warmer within the past century, and that this increase in temperature occurred because of the artificial raising of carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere via the

¹² Ibid., p. 97.

¹³ Ibid., p. 127.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 120, 139.

burning of fossil fuels. Now, the world cannot understand and act upon the theory without an awareness of the concepts it builds upon. To name just a few, the theory that carbon dioxide warms the atmosphere by trapping heat, or that the process of combustion produces carbon dioxide all contribute to an understanding of the theory of global warming. If science abandons even just one of these background concepts the entire theory crumbles.

So we can see that, in a sense, scientific revolutions can occur at any time. Each new scientific discovery calls into question our paradigmatic presuppositions as scientists. Accordingly, there have been many scientific revolutions.¹⁵ When we undergo a scientific revolution, we reach new theories and ideas, but the concepts we base our scientific knowledge on change as well. While this concept alteration represents only a small part of a scientific revolution, it has dramatic implications. Take for instance the shift from the geocentric to heliocentric view of the universe. Before the scientific community adopted this theory, the earth existed as a category unto itself. With the creation of the heliocentric universe, the earth had become a planet, and so the definition of 'planet' had to be broadened to include the earth.¹⁶ This seems a subtle shift in definition, but still a very important one. It represents the deepest level of a scientific revolution, a shift, in not only the presuppositions of the scientific community, but also the concepts those presuppositions are interconnected with.¹⁷ Thus we can see that a scientific revolution represents multilayered change, with implications for nearly every aspect of the scientific process.

Yet for all their importance scientific revolutions do not easily occur; for if they did we would see a great deal more of them. The usual understanding is that for a revolution to come about, a scientific discovery must first be made, and then, that

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 126-27.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 116..

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

discovery must be carefully justified. But such justification really represents perhaps the most important aspect of a scientific discovery, as the process of discovery cannot truly be separated from the process of justification.¹⁸ For nothing counts as a scientific discovery unless it has first been justified. But how can a scientist hope to adequately test and justify his or her discoveries? Essentially, they must take the risk and make their findings available to the scientific community as a whole. From there, as large a group of scientists as possible can test their findings.¹⁹ A confirmation of the conclusions justifies the experiment and from there, a scientific revolution can occur.

However, the justification process must occur as described. The strictest of scientific method should be observed, and the conclusions confirmed as logically as possible. And yet, how can we ensure the logic of an experiment? The scientific process, the testing of those conclusions, and the original discovery, should be logical, but occasionally, a scientist must make intuitive leaps in order to reach their conclusions. Science possesses a creative element that can be clearly seen in the process of discovery.²⁰ For instance, with the discovery of penicillin, the mold had no part of the actual experiment being done. The scientists in question decided to test it on a whim. Their decision followed neither inductive nor deductive logic, but it did incorporate the scientific knowledge that those individuals had of their field, and thus their experiments had a logical base and in fact led to one of the greatest medical breakthroughs of the past century.

Those scientists used a version of logic known as dialectical logic, and this logic forms as important a part of science as the scientific method. In fact, without dialectical logic scientific discovery would likely not occur. Dialectical logic calls on the entire lexicon of knowledge available to the

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

scientist. It incorporates past and present working theory, and allows scientists to make connections between existing concepts in order to reach new conclusions.²¹ According to the tools of formal logic, which refers to inductive and deductive logic, the most important aspect of a logical progression lies in the *form* that progression takes. For instance, according to deductive logic, if all apples are red, and I have an apple, therefore my apple must be red. This represents a simplistic example, but a very solid one that expresses the problems that formal logic can present for scientific community. Deductive logic possesses a determinate form: for example, given that 1) 'Proposition A implies proposition B'; and also given 'Proposition A'; then 2) if Propositions A and B are *in fact true*, 'Proposition B *must* be true'. But in this case, as can be seen by anyone who has eaten a green apple, the form does not matter if the content does not accurately reflect reality.

Inductive and deductive logic both represent viable logical progressions, but they alone would not work within the context of scientific exploration. Dialectical logic aims to answer the questions posed by our presuppositions as scientists.²² But instead of forcing scientists to use a determinate logical form, it focuses instead of the ability of those scientists to synthesize all the knowledge they have available, even knowledge that comes from the history of science, so that it incorporates the entire theoretical web. Thus any conclusions reached via dialectical logic immediately impact the theoretical web.²³ Dialectical logic also lacks the rigidity of its inductive or deductive cousins, for it allows for the flexibility required to create new theory, or to question old theory. In a sense, it introduces a touch of the creative human mind into science. While inductive and deductive logic have great value to the scientific process, dialectical logic can be used to supplement these logical forms, allowing them to incorporate both form and content.

²¹ Ibid., p. 134.

²² Ibid., p. 133.

²³ Ibid., p. 139.

Dialectical logic also forms an essential part of the process that allows scientists to make distinctions between rival theories. As discussed, the process of scientific discovery involves the justification of all scientific breakthroughs. But if the scientific community proposes two theories at once to explain the same phenomena, or if a working scientist proposes a new theory that challenges a commonly held belief, how can a distinction be made between the two concepts? The hope would be that the scientists working with those theories would be able to appeal to a higher standard. With such a standard, scientists would be able to ascertain quickly and easily the validity of their theories.²⁴ However, such an eventually cannot occur. Scientists working in the field can only appeal to the lexicon of knowledge, and the standards involved in it, that exists at the current moment. The scientific community has no direct, irrefutable access to the ultimate truths of the universe; we derive what knowledge we do have from extensive experimentation, and such knowledge represents the best conclusion possible based on our current experience of the world.²⁵ Thus, scientists must appeal to all that existing knowledge, potentially flawed or not, and to standards inherent to a given phase of scientific development, and this requires that they employ dialectical logic.

As discussed before, groups of scientists must work together to review the data available, and carefully test all scientific discoveries. But while scientists must understand the concepts that work together to support the new theory or discovery, they must also appeal to standards and concepts that have little to no influence on the theory being tested. In order to properly test a hypothesis, scientists cannot use the theory in question, or any theory closely related, to generate the experiment, because if they did the experiment would presuppose the conclusion. If the concepts involved in the experimentation process have nothing to do, or as little to do as

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

possible, with the theory in question, then they have created a solid base for the theory to be tested.²⁶ This seems perfectly logical, although difficult, due the interconnected nature of all scientific theory. But with careful planning and testing, it will be possible to mitigate this issue.

Should a scientist be fortunate enough to have his theory confirmed by the scientific community, that theory then becomes part of the body of scientific knowledge. Now, as discussed before, we can never be absolutely certain that our theories accurately reflect reality, as we have no perfect universal standard to appeal too. But if we appeal to what we do know and confirm the theory beyond reasonable doubt, we can then treat it as knowledge. Scientific knowledge represents any theories, laws, or concepts that help scientists to make new discoveries, or test new hypotheses.²⁷ Of course, scientific knowledge exists in a state of change, and with each new discovery old theories can be called into question. That being said, scientists cannot realistically question all of their guiding knowledge every time they test a theory. To a certain extent they must trust what knowledge they have, or no forward progression can be made. Essentially, we must change the way we look at truth and accept that a distinction can be made between an absolute truth, and truth as based on the best knowledge we have available.²⁸ This contrast has a great deal in common with Plato's contrast of the realm of Being and the realm of Becoming. Absolute truth would be seen as belonging to the realm of Being, since it represents the ultimate form of reality. Our scientific truth, on the other hand, has more in common with the realm of Becoming, although to be sure it strives to match the absolute truth. Scientific knowledge in some domain might ultimately reach absolute truth after many years, decades, or centuries of careful testing and experimentation. However, even if it does, we have no way of knowing when we have reached this point, and must simply

²⁶ Ibid., p. 140.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 151.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 153.

accept what we believe to be true on the basis of the best evidence we have. Luckily for the scientific community, however, the possibility does exist that what we believe to be true and the absolute truth could be one and the same.

All scientists working in the field must accept this distinction. Once a scientist accepts this construct, he or she can move on to embrace the idea that a general agreement regarding the evidence at hand represents the best to be hoped for.²⁹ However, even though it may not be absolute truth, this consensus represents a viable, well-tested, scientific theory. The scientific community does not arrive at scientific theory arbitrarily; rather all scientific breakthroughs must be carefully tested and only enter the realm of scientific fact if all the available evidence supports the proposed theory. Scientists do a number of things to ensure that not only do they test a theory adequately, but also that their tests represent the best possible reflection of reality. If those experiments show that the presuppositions and theories do not reflect reality, the scientific community discards them.³⁰ So, while scientists must bear in mind that their presuppositions and theories can change, they must trust those theories in the interest of pursuing their scientific work. The theories that make it into the lexicon of scientific fact ground themselves as firmly as possible in reality, and attempt to accurately reflect that reality. These facts have been tested and supported countless times, and while they might ultimately be discarded, they represent the best efforts of science to explain the world around us.

In conclusion, much like the theoretical web employed by scientists, all the topics discussed thus far interconnect and build carefully off one another. Moreover, while the concepts themselves provide the foundation for science, the interconnections between them motivate the scientific process. These interconnections represent, in a sense, the entire process

²⁹ Ibid., p. 152.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 155.

of scientific discovery. The initial step lies in our theory and concept laden perceptions, which shape the way we process sensory information. In turn, this reflects our paradigmatic presuppositions, which allow us to observe and explain the phenomena we encounter in the world around us. However, when we encounter phenomena that do not fit within our lexicon of knowledge work must be done to explain these new phenomena. Occasionally, our presuppositions must be altered or abandoned as a result. When this occurs, it sews the seeds of a scientific revolution. As discussed, however, scientific revolutions take a great deal of work. First, the discovery must be made, but that represents only a fraction of the effort involved. From there, the discovery must be justified. At this point the idea of dialectical logic comes into play, as it allows scientists to use all of their available knowledge to carefully test and re-test the theories they encounter. Ultimately, a scientific consensus will be reached and one theory above all the rest proposed will enter the realm of scientific knowledge, and come to be treated as truth.

Clearly every step of this process represents an essential portion of the scientific method. Without each interlocking concept, there could be no discovery, no justification and exploration, and no alteration in our commonly held scientific knowledge. Thus there would be no pursuit of science. Just as the theoretical web depends on all its parts, so too does the scientific method, and without even just one portion the web falls apart. Thus, any scientist seeking to further the scientific quest for truth must ensure that they work within this method, and carefully use each of these essential steps.



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